

ON LONGING FOR LOSS: A THEORY OF CINEMATIC MEMORY AND AN AESTHETICS OF NOSTALGIA

by

Zoë Anne Laks

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submitted by Zoë Anne Laks in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

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Examining Committee:

Lisa Coulthard, Theatre and Film

Supervisor

Brian McIlroy, Theatre and Film

Supervisory Committee Member

Chelsea Birks, Theatre and Film

Supervisory Committee Member

Abstract

Nostalgia is everywhere in media today – be it films, television, ads, or social media. But what does it mean to say that a media text is nostalgic? Beyond simply presenting nostalgic narratives, media texts also express nostalgia through their form and style. So how does this nostalgia look and feel? This thesis explores the aesthetics of nostalgia in the context of film studies, positing that “pastness” becomes synonymous with fantasy when films and other nostalgic media rely on an artificial audiovisual style – most often a hazy and hyper-coloured image. By pairing stylistic analysis and film theory with a philosophy of nostalgia, this project argues that this aesthetic serves as both a theory of cinematic memory and a reflection of the experience of lived nostalgia, which is effectively always a longing for the inaccessible, the impossible, the lost – in other words, fantasy itself. Relying on theories by Edward Casey, James Hart, and Steven Galt Crowell, this study takes a phenomenological approach, describing nostalgia as the experience of a dialectic between proximity and distance to the past. This contradictory position between emotional proximity and distance points toward a radically critical nostalgia, an area that remains relatively underexplored in nostalgia studies. This thesis also takes its cue from key works by Christine Sprengler, Rebecca Comay, William Beard, Jane M. Gaines, and Bliss Cua Lim, discussing nostalgia via two case studies on films by Canadian director Guy Maddin. Chapter Two applies this theory of nostalgic aesthetics to *Careful* (1992), using a melodramatic framework to explore how nostalgia inheres in the form of the film itself. Chapter Three interrogates these ideas on a more abstract level, positing that the spectral imagery in *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary* (2002) serves as another way of expressing nostalgia as a dialectic between past and present. Ultimately, this nostalgia locates nostalgic audiences not in a static and idealized relic of the past, but in the present moment, where time splinters into its heterogeneous parts and is rendered in subjective, emotional terms, so as to be experienced as the loss of a past so inaccessible that it never was.

Lay Summary

With the popularity of nostalgic media today, this thesis considers some of the basic philosophical questions in the field of nostalgia studies – what does it mean to be nostalgic? How might visual media like films or paintings themselves exhibit or transmit nostalgia? This project explores an underdeveloped area in nostalgia scholarship, creating a theory of a more critical form of nostalgia that embraces the past even as it recognizes it to be lost. Such a nostalgia can exist as part of the look and feel – the aesthetics – of audiovisual media, and this thesis demonstrates this through case studies on two films by Canadian director Guy Maddin, *Careful* (1992) and *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary* (2002). Later chapters explore how this theory of nostalgic aesthetics works through the language of melodrama (the emotionally excessive) and the spectral (the ghostly and fantastic).

Preface

This thesis is the original, unpublished, and independent work of the author, Zoë Anne Laks.

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To Wolfie,

Who I will always remember with the greatest love and nostalgia

Introduction

A starry sky, lights just a bit too vivid, twinkling madly. A slow dissolve to orange haze, a spectral sunset on the horizon above a barely glimpsed gleam of ocean waters, panning incongruously to the looming and artificial facade of a ship bound for the fantasy land of Mandragora, where the sun never sets...

So begins Guy Maddin's 1997 feature *Twilight of the Ice Nymphs*, a film that is nostalgic for a past that never could have been. The aesthetics¹ of this film are hazy and hyper-coloured, presenting a quality of "pastness" despite their self-conscious roots in the realm of fantasy. While this may be considered a "fringe" film, belonging to the obscure category of Canadian experimental cinema, this aesthetic trend where nostalgia becomes linked to the iconography of fantasy (i.e. the overtly stagey and the unreal) extends beyond the realm of Guy Maddin, to popular films, television, video games, and other visual media in global mainstream circulation today. We are in the midst of a contemporary nostalgia boom, with scholarship following the trends we see in today's media.² Accordingly, in recent years scholars and media creators alike are consistently revisiting narratives that invoke the past, whether through remakes, period pieces, or aesthetic styles that construct or mimic a sense of pastness, often through sepia, burnishing, or other retro, "aging" digital and analog filters. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a large portion of contemporary nostalgia scholarship focuses on nostalgia's commercial applications, often considering how and why a nostalgia-inflected product appeals to a target demographic of consumers.³ However, now more than ever, nostalgia discourse as it grows in both size and importance,

¹ Throughout this thesis the term "aesthetic" describes a visual *and* auditory formal logic.

² For instance in just the last twelve months, nostalgia studies has seen books published on nostalgia, tourism, national identity, diaspora and transcultural experience (*Globalized Nostalgia* by Christina Ceisel, Soyoung Lee's *Diamond Mountains*, Louisa Söllner's *Photographic Ekphrasis in Cuban American Fiction*, and *Homemaking* by Anindya Raychaudhuri); on the nostalgic dimension of Western popular culture icons like *Stranger Things* (Kevin J. Wetmore Jr.) and *Grease* (Barbara Jane Brickman); on nostalgia and the sublime (*Cultural and Political Nostalgia in the Age of Terror* by Matthew Leggatt); and on digital media and childhood nostalgia (Elisabeth Wesseling). Social scientific studies from the past year include considerations of nostalgia's links to financial risk-taking (Xi Zou et al.), preventing ageism (Rhiannon N. Turner et al.), and adverse weather (Wijnand A. P. van Tilburg et al.), just to name a few.

³ See works by Emmanuelle Fantin (2014), Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley (2014), Ryan Lizardi (2014), Cristina Rizzardo (2015), Jeremy J. Sierra and Shaun McQuitty (2007), and Beáta Beke (2016).

is in greater need of a theoretical and nuanced understanding of nostalgia as a lived and represented phenomenon. Accordingly, one of the goals of this project is to work toward a more comprehensive and critical view of nostalgia and the discourse that surrounds it.

In doing so I come up against the widespread academic wariness of engaging with nostalgia as a critical tool – in general, and even within nostalgic discourse, nostalgia is marginalized, treated pejoratively as a mere object of commodification or simple escapism, and is thereby assumed to be unworthy of further scholarly interest or deep investigation. Scholars of nostalgia studies reinforce these assumptions when they treat nostalgia as a given – a mere tool to be exploited in our commercial-capitalist systems of exchange.⁴ Accordingly, the field of nostalgia studies is in need of more rigorous contemporary theoretical frameworks to push forward. This project offers a starting point, which involves re-opening investigations into the basic tenets of nostalgia – what is it to be nostalgic? What does it mean to create nostalgic media? I do so to work toward a theory of nostalgia and a theory of an accompanying nostalgic aesthetic. My approach blends the social dimension of contemporary theories in Western memory studies with a phenomenological approach to nostalgia – as a personal longing for a generalized past being – in the context of cinema studies; I hope to demonstrate that nostalgic media does not always work in the service of commercialization, but instead has the power to communicate and invoke a nostalgic lived experience of memory through an aesthetic – through the formal logic of visual and auditory artifice.

The central idea that guides this project as a whole is that the phenomenological (lived) aspect of nostalgia can⁵ involve a dialectic of embrace and disavowal,⁶ where a nostalgic subject occupies an

⁴ Katharina Niemeyer has remarked on such approaches to nostalgia, claiming that these studies consider nostalgic marketing strategies that function as a tool to “petrify” nostalgia by framing the past in certain ways (“Introduction” 13).

⁵ In making this assertion, I wish to leave space for other nostalgias to operate through different means. Other less critical nostalgias need not rely on these same dialectics.

⁶ My use of the term “disavowal” throughout this project is meant to rely on the pedestrian meaning of the term, not to invoke a psychoanalytic framework for these ideas.

oscillating and contradictory position between yearning, a position of emotional⁷ “proximity,” and a recognition of the impossibility of the fulfillment of this yearning, a position of critical “distance.” I am interested in both how this type of nostalgia (which I am calling “nostalgic artifice”)⁸ works formally, where nostalgia becomes an aesthetic mode (associated with melodramatic and spectral registers, as we will see in later chapters), and memorially, or perhaps even mnemonically, as a form of memory with a particular attitude toward the past. Throughout this project I argue that nostalgic artifice as a mode (i.e. an attitude or lens) within filmmaking and other audio-visual media is an artificial aesthetic associated with a past time and rendered in the language of fantasy – it portrays a time nostalgically removed from the present and coded as reflexively unreal. Of course nostalgia as an aesthetic mode may come in many shapes and forms – nostalgic artifice, as far as it describes one particular kind of nostalgia and an attendant aesthetic, is only one among a plurality of nostalgias.⁹ This kind of nostalgia and nostalgic aesthetic relies on an artificial look and feel: hyper-coloured props and excessively adorned *mise-en-scènes*, soft focus and blurry filters and lenses, melodramatic acting styles, masking techniques from silent-era filmmaking, affectively disjunctive sound effects, and so on. However, this aesthetic comprises a stylistic range – some more spectral, others more colourized, as we will see in Chapters Two and Three.

Fundamental to this aesthetic is the dialectic that results from its contradictory audio-visual juxtaposition between an evocation of nostalgia (a genuine emotional longing achieved through emotional proximity to the nostalgic object) alongside a self-reflexive recognition of the artifice of this

⁷ Throughout this study the terms ‘emotion’ and ‘affect’ are largely used interchangeably. This is because nostalgic emotion when present in a media text is tied to the lived emotional experience of the viewer (by definition – it can only be nostalgic media if it is experienced as such) while also simultaneously functioning as a generalized affect unspecific to an individual (by working as a “story about” nostalgia, working through a nostalgic logic). In doing so I wish to depart from Paul Grainge’s nostalgic mood/mode binary which would separate the two functions.

⁸ Given the recognition of the multiplicity of nostalgias, I believe relying on neologisms might help clarify the field as opposed to further obfuscating it through language that reinforces a collapse into the singular, and so falsely posits one nostalgia that operates consistently across history, culture, and individuals.

⁹ Many contemporary nostalgia scholars now work with this notion of plural nostalgias – for example Svetlana Boym (17-18) and Katharina Niemeyer (“Introduction” 6).

aesthetic (representing a position of critical distance to the nostalgic object). In this way, nostalgic artifice as a mode of mediamaking has the potential to function as lived nostalgia in someone who experiences this dialectic – this is because the staging of this dialectic corresponds to the same dialectic inherent within many nostalgias more generally, where a nostalgic may long for an object (the nostalgic *noema*¹⁰) even as – and, indeed, *because* – she recognizes it to be impossible to attain. In this way, nostalgia’s inherent dialectics between embrace and disavowal, proximity and distance, exist as necessary to one another – two opposite halves of a contradictory whole, as the very essence of the nostalgic experience itself. These dialectics ultimately represent the relationship we experience between past and present, as the ultimate expression of the relation between absence and presence, or experience and representation. This is because, as temporally imbricated beings, we are bound irrevocably to the “now,” whether that be in terms of the present instant or the (Bergsonian) duration of the present. Either way, the “now” in contrast to the “then” defines temporal presence or proximity. In later chapters I will examine further why dialectics provide a useful way of conceiving of these relationships – in brief, because of their simultaneity and potential for resistance, dialectics serve to nuance the discreteness of each binary pair, demonstrating instead their overlap and mutual imbrication.¹¹ The implication of this dialectic, which may, as we shall see, root the nostalgic in a heterogeneous present, points to the potential for myriad critical functions for nostalgia – for instance as an antidote to homogenous time and other teleological historical narratives, as well as working as an alternative form of mourning.

¹⁰ From the Greek νόημα, referring to the object of thought.

¹¹ In making this move toward dialectics I also wish to complicate any assumptions that might place emotionality and rationality as unentangled opposites. As I hope will be clear throughout this study, the nostalgic positions of proximity and distance, or embrace and disavowal, in no way reproduce a simple binary between emotion and rationality – in fact each phenomenological position involves a dialectical imbrication of both thinking and feeling, just as with lived experiences.

Nostalgic artifice as an aesthetic is evident today across a wide range of mainstream and obscure media alike,¹² though it has received little visible scholarly attention in light of nostalgia's wider academic dismissal. Christine Sprengler's 2009 book *Screening Nostalgia* is one of the few treatises on the subject of artifice-bound nostalgia. In it she makes an argument about the spread of artificial nostalgic aesthetics in a specifically American context. She argues that the modern Western association between artifice and nostalgia arose from the Populuxe aesthetics of the 1950s (a visual style resembling Douglas Sirk's melodramas, for instance) that was co-opted in the disillusioned American 1970s, which, Sprengler posits, turned back to an idealized vision of the '50s as an object of nostalgic desire. Sprengler argues that as a result of this nostalgic turn in the '70s, artificial nostalgic aesthetics became adopted on a wider scale through its repetition in visual media and a wider cultural association (39-64). While this interpretation may be both insightful and useful, Sprengler's historical perspective is limiting on broader (global, historical) scales, and it also excludes any incorporation of nostalgic sound into a wider nostalgic aesthetic. This is why it's important to probe deeper into the theoretical underpinnings that link nostalgia with artificial-fantasy aesthetics. While there may be psychological avenues to explore regarding this association,¹³ this study focuses on articulating the shared nostalgic logic between the lived experience of nostalgia and nostalgic aesthetics – I argue that both involve an embrace and disavowal of a fantasy-inflected past. As to how this association became popularized,

¹² Since nostalgic artifice only operates nostalgically on an individual basis, an exhaustive list of media texts I find invoke nostalgic artifice will not be particularly useful to readers with their own lived experiences and personal nostalgia. That being said, to help define my terms I will provide here some interesting cases from my own personal experience across a wide range of media: the stained glass works of Art Nouveau artist Louis Comfort Tiffany, the horror films of Dario Argento which specifically align themselves with childhood desires and traumas (e.g. *Suspria* (1977)), the 2000 historical epic *Gladiator* (Ridley Scott) and its use of artificial aesthetics in its flashbacks, and the popular RPG *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015)'s *Hearts of Stone* expansion and its portrayal of a "painted" memory world rendered in impressionistic brushstrokes, just to name a few examples.

¹³ Perhaps such psychological explanations for nostalgia's connections to artifice might concern learned associations between memory and childhood media (e.g. associating picture-book aesthetics with nostalgia) or might result from a shared aesthetic in our subjective memory perception and visualization (perhaps allowing the blurriness and/or hyper-coloured dimension of memories to take on connotations of pastness in a general sense).

perhaps this occurred in a similar manner to Sprengler's Populuxe aesthetics, that is, through (perhaps unconscious) cultural association it became a convention for representing visual nostalgia.

As a result of taking this deeper theoretical perspective, the kind of ahistorical argument put forward in this study might raise objections that point toward the problem of an assumed universal spectator, on whom an arbitrarily determined example of nostalgic artifice may always operate. In the past, scholars of nostalgic aesthetics have attempted to address this problem through nostalgic typologies, where nostalgia versus its corresponding aesthetic might be considered or abstract in comparison with real, affective lived nostalgia (such as with Paul Grainge's mood/mode distinction). However, this is not an ideal approach because if a nostalgic formal logic becomes an abstract idea, its lived and affective dimension – what nostalgia actually is – becomes lost. Instead, my project seeks to resolve nostalgia and a nostalgic aesthetic into both personal (emotional) and shared (abstract) terms. In this sense, while nostalgic artifice functions as a kind of Baudrillardian simulacrum – as an empty signifier for an abstract idea of loss, it does so only in so far as nostalgia itself is also a simulacrum, or an unreal representation of abstract pastness. In this sense, there is no difference between real (lived) or unreal (staged) nostalgia – both are equally “empty.” This is because both nostalgia and nostalgic artifice function as representations without a real *noema* (i.e. it has a *noema* that is absent or lost), though it requires critical distance to be recognized as such.

Even though lived and represented nostalgias are both in this sense “empty,” they are still phenomenologically meaningful. Accordingly, I posit that just as nostalgia is a lived experience, nostalgic artifice too is phenomenologically determined – that is, I define nostalgic artifice as the aesthetic which produces the contradictory dialectic position of embrace and disavowal of a fantasy past. This aesthetic is thus formally undefined, so that the particular formulation of nostalgic artifice of concern in this project (hyper-adorned, spectral) is only one potential articulation. In this sense, if media audiences experience this dialectic, the media text is exhibiting the mode of nostalgic artifice. Accordingly, then,

nostalgic artifice is individual-specific, and is thereby interlinked with wider cultural systems, norms, and associations as well as being bound to a specific time period and historical outlook. My nostalgic artifice, then, may not overlap with yours, and it may not operate in the same way across different media, cultures, time periods, or personal experiences. As an example of this, Georges Méliès's or Douglas Sirk's films may operate differently today than in the 1900s or 1950s – though given the limitations of phenomenology as a theoretical approach, this is, of course, impossible to determine for certain. So while it might be tempting to posit that nostalgic artifice is a phenomenon specific to postmodernism, where it seems that today media audiences are more critical and educated and might thereby better enable dialectical relationships with their media, this is a simplification of the heterogeneity and complexity of lived reality. This is all to say that the case studies throughout this project will only therefore reflect my own personal experience of nostalgic artifice – though even if they are not universally applicable examples, I believe they do stand to articulate underlying dynamics at play in nostalgia and its attendant aesthetics that are nonetheless worthy of critical study, especially as they provide potential insights into a deeper evaluation of how nostalgia functions in general.

My methodology, then, is primarily phenomenological, and not, for instance, psychoanalytic, as it considers nostalgia to be a lived (rather than psychological) experience. The approach my project takes will be twofold, relying on earlier phenomenological approaches to nostalgia and memory studies in addition to textual analysis, in order to describe how nostalgia is able to operate as an aesthetic mode and form of cinematic memory with a distinct temporal outlook. As a result of this phenomenological basis, I posit that the nostalgia of nostalgic artifice is affective – it comprises a longing for something lost; and since loss across space retains a hope of gain (e.g. in the case of nostalgia for a homeland), only displacement across time results in true, irretrievable loss. Nostalgia then becomes associated with a certain temporal attitude, one that conceives of time as a (melodramatic) experience of loss (Chapter Two), and the present as a heterogeneous complex shaped by spectral forms from the past (Chapter

Three). In temporal terms, then, nostalgia effectively “punctures” the flow of time – it ruptures teleological history and the notion that past and present sit adjacently side by side; as nostalgia demonstrates, this spatializing metaphor is misleading – instead, nostalgia renders the past lost, an aspect of fantasy that is discontinuous (yet not absolutely cut off) from the present. Instead, it posits that the past touches the present through fantasy – for example, through the mechanism of spectres. This resulting rupture in time might then function as a sort of mourning for the past, an affective relationship that tries to negotiate an experience of loss from within the moment of the present. This “time as loss” idea thereby links to nostalgia’s affect and ties nostalgia’s mechanisms directly to temporal perception and memory.

In distinction from the common perception that nostalgia is inherently uncritical and escapist – functioning as a melancholia “entertaining the possibility of gain” (Comay “Mourning” 110) – my formulation of nostalgia allows it to retain a critical dimension, where there is in fact no hope of future gain. Nostalgic artifice is founded on a recognition of the impossibility of nostalgic fulfillment, where the nostalgic object may never join the present without the mechanisms of fantasy. As a dialectic, nostalgia’s operation is often driven by this very recognition, where we may long all the more for what we know to be lost. The result is that the nostalgic becomes rooted in the present moment, the only temporality where loss can be felt or experienced, and from which other temporalities may be fantasized. Nostalgic artifice thereby works reflexively, as a commentary on its own attachment to the past, given that it functions simultaneously as an attachment to the nostalgic *noema* and in recognition of that *noema*’s fantastical relationship with the present. In this way, nostalgic artifice gestures to an “elsewhen” that is overtly false and incompatible with the present.

At its core, then, nostalgia is a yearning – a pull toward an amalgam of idea, place, and time (given that there is no time without space) that offers up a myth of wholeness and a metaphor of “homecoming.” However, it also necessitates an emotional or critical awareness of the impossibility of

that myth's fulfilment, a push toward distancing that works dialectically alongside the opposing and simultaneous position of proximity. As a result, instead of nostalgia simply functioning as a regressive, indulgent fantasy, or, in Svetlana Boym's terms, a "defence mechanism" in today's modern "fragmented world" (10), here nostalgia might become an offensive, critically useful tool when it is recognized and deployed as a dialectic. To continue under Boym's framework, this kind of nostalgia is "reflective," one which "reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another" (15). Adam Muller sums this type of nostalgia up as follows: "In reflective nostalgia, the past provides opportunity for reflection in the present, for the novel exploration of time's strange and surprising nonlinearity, on the passage of time not as a static inevitability but as a dynamic opportunity to become clearer about one's self, one's hopes, and one's regrets" (755). This nostalgia is not, as commonly assumed, fundamentally passive or escapist in nature, but instead has the potential to drive insights on the relationship between past and present and the place of memory, subjective experience, and imagination within that relationship.

There are several key theoretical lenses that inform and frame my thinking about this type of nostalgia.¹⁴ My work follows a model proposed by memory theorist Alison Landsberg, who attempts to make sense of media's relationship to personal memory through her notion of prosthetics. She writes that these memories allow us to have "intimate relationships" to events through which we did not live, yet they remain personal to us as they arise from our individual engagement with media and technology (148). Landsberg goes on to argue that as a result, these memories are thereby rendered public, leading

¹⁴ Several additional theoretical approaches also undergird my own schema in thinking through nostalgic artifice, though they are not addressed specifically as such throughout my thesis. To briefly outline two here, nostalgic artifice functions as a form of Bolter and Grusin's "hypermediacy" (see their *Remediation: Understanding New Media* from 2000), as an aesthetic that draws attention to the fantasy that separates us from the past, serving to emphasize the layers of mediation that separate us from other times and places. Additionally, nostalgic artifice may also evoke a sense of both canniness and uncanniness. This is because nostalgic artifice familiarizes and defamiliarizes a nostalgic with the past. However, nostalgia tends more toward the pleasing qualities of canniness, while at the same time avoiding a form of returning home that might be expected of the *heimlich* or homely (as in Boym's so-called "restorative nostalgia"). Instead, nostalgic artifice's home (or "homemaking") lies in the present moment, as far as it recognizes the past to be unreal, effectively rendering the original home uncanny, or strange.

to “a past that is not at all privatised” (149). In this way, an aesthetic (here nostalgic artifice) serves as a prosthetic for personal nostalgia, allowing a (sometimes moving) image or sound to work as a phenomenologically based narrative (or story) about nostalgia which expresses the experience of an individual in abstract, universal terms. Though the nostalgic experience represented by a nostalgic aesthetic has not been lived by any specific individual, the mediated experience in the present that results from dialectically engaging with nostalgic artifice has. In other words, the referent experience is not what validates this “prosthetic” nostalgia as nostalgia – instead, Landsberg’s model suggests that it is the “recall” experience in the present that defines a memory event; this model works particularly well for nostalgia as a subset of memory because nostalgia’s *noema* is located definitively outside real experience to begin with.

As previously mentioned, this study also shares much in common with Christine Sprengler’s work on artificially nostalgic aesthetics. While her approach diverges from mine in its focus and scope, Sprengler’s analysis nevertheless serves as a groundwork for this thesis’ understanding of nostalgic aesthetics. In particular, this project expands on Sprengler’s observation about artifice’s ability to reveal the presence of historical mediation and our corresponding limited access to history (153-54). Since it is impossible to escape mediation, whether it be physical or mental, nostalgia merely takes this one step further – into hypermediacy, to invoke Bolter and Grusin’s terminology, so that through nostalgia, the past is rendered entirely out of reach. Accordingly, my argument is non-indexical and it takes up case studies that refer to no objective past reality, unlike many of Sprengler’s arguments and films (e.g., *The Aviator* (Martin Scorsese 2004) and *The Good German* (Steven Soderbergh 2006)). The case studies in this project refer to a spectral, fantasy past that is inaccessible to the present without being rendered in artificial audio-visual language. Nostalgic cinema, then, to match a phenomenological description of nostalgia, must involve a dialectical embrace and disavowal of lost existence, so that all that is left is mediation, the artifice itself. Accordingly, the case studies throughout this project concern films with

fantastical relationships with the past – Guy Maddin’s *Careful* (1992) and *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin’s Diary* (2002). Maddin’s films form ideal models for nostalgic aesthetics because they are primarily occupied with the past in a general sense, often a past that is self-consciously filtered through a lens of personal fantasies and the corresponding visual and aural artifice and genre conventions. Chapters Two and Three will explore these films in turn, arguing that this artifice coalesces around melodramatic and spectral modes, respectively. Maddin’s particular brand of pastness is steeped in emotion alongside an ironic or parodic distance, which intensifies the dialectics at play in nostalgic artifice. Though his films will certainly not produce the nostalgic dialectic in any or all audiences, his films nonetheless represent a coherent crystallization of the fundamentals behind nostalgic artifice as a more generalized aesthetic.

Chapter One will review in greater depth what nostalgic artifice is vis-à-vis important theories and paradigms in nostalgia studies and beyond. It covers early theories of phenomenologically based nostalgias (primarily in the writings of James Hart, Steven Galt Crowell, and Edward Casey); salient works in modern memory studies (from Janet Walker, Alison Landsberg, and Marianne Hirsch, to David Shulman’s work on Hindu philosophies of memory) that help position nostalgia as part of the subset of memory studies discourse that accommodates memory’s affective and non-indexical dimensions; studies on nostalgia as a formal and aesthetic logic (through works by Christine Sprengler, Eli Friedlander, and Paul Grainge, and others); and some theories of primarily Benjaminian dialectics (by Rebecca Comay, among others) in order to better work through how nostalgia as a phenomenological, memorial, aesthetic, and dialectical entity operates. Later chapters will expand and apply these ideas to explore how this theory of nostalgia interacts with genres and genre conventions – namely the melodramatic and the occult, supernatural, or spectral. In these applications, my investigations centre around nostalgia’s relationship with time, making arguments about its temporal outlook and the resulting implications. Approaching nostalgia as alternately melodramatic or spectral provides slightly different affective relationships with the past, but both approaches to nostalgia yield a temporal mode

that views the past as an aspect of fantasy, one that is not necessarily teleologically linked to the present.

In Chapter Two I explore the melodramatic dimensions of nostalgic artifice through one of Guy Maddin's most melodramatic films: *Careful*. I argue that nostalgic artifice is melodramatic in its emotional and temporal outlook – the logics of melodrama and nostalgia in fact both dictate an oscillating subject position between emotional proximity and critical distance to an object often self-consciously positioned as constructed, fantastical, artificial, or excessive. Viewing nostalgia as melodramatic allows a reconceptualization of nostalgia's disruptions of temporality – not only does it point to the incongruities between past and present, locating a nostalgic in the present moment, it also brings out the subjective, lived dimension to time, where temporalities blur and overlap, bound together by desire. In this context, time has the potential to become circular and doubled, disrupting linear and objective characterizations of time. Ultimately, this chapter argues that melodramatic-nostalgic artifice brings out a sense of lived time, where the experience of passing time becomes an experience of loss.

Chapter Three, this project's final chapter, takes another case study from Guy Maddin's oeuvre – *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary* – in order to expand on nostalgic artifice's spectral dimension. This film, as we will see, can be considered an example of spectral cinema, though it remains in the bounds of melodrama; in this chapter I refer to this niche subgenre using Lindsey Green-Simms's classification of the "occult melodrama." In a manner similar to Chapter Two, Chapter Three argues that nostalgic artifice is analogously spectral, allowing the past to shape the present in a specifically fantastic context – as the ghostly and liminal, unreachable, and, ultimately, false. Chapter Three goes further in its elaboration on nostalgia's temporal critique, arguing that the spectral-nostalgic outlook presented renders time heterogeneous in its disjunction which results from spectral times haunting within the present. Using as a guide Bliss Cua Lim's work on the supernatural as a disruption of homogeneous time,

I posit that the temporal disruption involved in spectrality brings out an important critical dimension to nostalgia.

This study concludes with a brief coda, in which I draw together some important implications to considering this configuration of nostalgia, particularly concerning the consequences of nostalgics locating themselves in the present moment. This view of nostalgia is antithetical to the common assumption that nostalgia is inherently regressive, backwards-facing, or fundamentally escapist in nature. Instead, it puts forth the wider imperative that we must learn to view the past from the position of the present, dealing with the consequences that come from the ghosts that haunt the present, while recognizing that what's done is done, and what's past is past – all we ultimately have is the complex but lonely present. Through this analysis I work to show that it is in fact the here and now that is the most important when we consider history, memory, nostalgia, or the past in general – now is when we must decide whether to face the ghosts of the past or wave them away and forge ahead, and in doing so point ourselves toward both the branching possibilities of a nostalgic past and even, perhaps, a nostalgic future.

Chapter One: Classifying Nostalgia and Nostalgic Artifice

In attempting to solidify a definition of nostalgia within the wider landscape of nostalgia studies, this project immediately encounters the most fundamental challenge facing this wide-ranging field: the question of semantics, for what in fact does “nostalgia” mean? I don’t intend this question to act as the hackneyed and perhaps well-anticipated segue into the same etymological definition that seems to begin every essay ever written about nostalgia (on the word’s Greek roots *nostos*, ‘return home’ and *algia*, ‘longing’ – though in pointing this out, the resulting irony is not lost on me). Instead, I wish to emphasize that in attempting to lay out a lexicon for this fraught and at times politically charged word, the difficulty in defining one’s terms rears its hydra head(s), for the field has as many nostalgias as it does theorists. Accordingly, this chapter will argue that the particular configuration of nostalgia of concern throughout this project is as unique and personal as it is interconnected with the diverse and equally individual nostalgias that comprise the discourse.

I have termed the type of nostalgia of concern to this thesis “nostalgic artifice,” and it operates in four fundamental ways: as phenomenological, as a form of memory, as an aesthetic, and as a dialectic. These four lenses set the bounds of what nostalgic artifice means for this project – namely, they demonstrate how nostalgic artifice articulates a longing for a lost being through a hyper-artificial aesthetic which invites a push/pull dialectic in its spectator (between a genuine emotional connection to a nostalgic object alongside a recognition of its own artifice and falsity). It’s worth noting before delving deeper into the tangle of literature, that while nostalgic artifice is phenomenological, memorial, and dialectical, it is above all an aesthetic (one both visual and auditory), and as such, the central methodology of this study is examining nostalgia’s relationship with audio-visual media objects that communicate a shared look, feel, and perspective; this aesthetic is one that indulges in overtly artificial objects (often represented by props), saturated colours, and a spectral mood. The growing importance of this relationship between nostalgia and media has been recognized in much of recent nostalgia

discourse, perhaps best exemplified by the 2014 anthology *Media and Nostalgia*.¹⁵ Editor Katharina Niemeyer in her introduction states that it is new (media) technologies that might be “adding another ‘false’ nostalgia: a pleasure-seeking yearning for former times that we have not in fact, lived” (“Introduction” 9). Whether or not this is true, an acknowledgement of nostalgia’s peculiar link to media objects seems unavoidable in today’s cultural climate, dominated as it is by retro styles, revivals, and remakes.¹⁶

In addition to tackling these four pillars of nostalgic artifice in their own individual sections, this chapter will undertake a broader survey of nostalgia discourse to help frame the importance of nostalgic artifice in the field more generally. In so doing, nostalgic artifice will weigh in on some of the most contested debates in nostalgia studies, including whether nostalgia in fact erases the past, whether it centres around time or space, and whether it is inherently regressive, postmodern, private, and affective in character. For the sake of wieldiness, this chapter coheres around three central propositions that define nostalgic artifice as such, each of which will be treated at various points throughout this chapter. These propositions, which serve as theoretical hinges through the forthcoming discussion, are as follows: nostalgic artifice is always affective; as a form of “unreal” (staged) nostalgia it does not fundamentally differ from “real” (lived) nostalgia (i.e. nostalgic artifice is always phenomenological); and it expresses a longing for a sense of pastness, expressing a sense that time is loss.

Literature on nostalgia, diverse and interdisciplinary as it is, can be organized according to its differing functions – there are, for instance wider classification-based studies, mostly concerned with definitional problems of the field; works that rely on a more historical lens, focusing primarily on

¹⁵ For more, see also Zala Volčič (2007), Alex Bevan (2012), Göran Bolin (2016), Elisabeth Wesseling (2018), and Tim Wulf and Diana Rieger (2018).

¹⁶ At the same time, however, I also would not like to suggest that all nostalgia is necessarily linked to media, nor even that nostalgic artifice may always only arise from and through media – nostalgic artifice’s aesthetic may also occur as a result of other states, perhaps hallucinogenic or psycho-imaginative in nature, though any exploration of these related forms of nostalgic artifice lies outside the scope of this project.

contextualizing nostalgia's relationship with history (often arguing that it is, as a result, anti-progressive); a marketing- or advertising-based approach, where nostalgia is applied to media objects and treated as an ideological tool; and the philosophical stream, which often takes the form of theorizing a phenomenology of nostalgia – what it is as a lived reality. In order to venture into the field, the first part of this chapter will briefly survey some of the influential and important works within these streams vis-à-vis their relation to nostalgic artifice before turning to a discussion of nostalgic artifice in more detail.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF NOSTALGIA STUDIES

Two primary classifications that remain canonical points of reference in contemporary nostalgia studies and are most relevant to this project, are Svetlana Boym's classifications of reflective and restorative nostalgia, and Paul Grainge's classifications of nostalgia as a mood or mode, though there remain too many others to mention at length here.¹⁷ Grainge's postmodern study on nostalgia as a retro style (black-and-white imagery) lays out two forms of nostalgia, and differentiates them on the basis of their emotive potential. In this sense, Grainge's nostalgic mood describes a state of "loss and longing" (*MM* 21) and nostalgia as a mode "is a consumable style that has been commonly characterized as amnesiac" (11). While Grainge presents these two as a sliding scale rather than a binary opposition, nostalgic artifice is simultaneously both – a consumable style that is based around genuine longing and loss. On the other hand, Svetlana Boym similarly divides nostalgia into two categories, restorative, which "attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home" and reflective, which dwells on a longing for the past, genuinely and ironically (13) – "reveal[ing] that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment, or critical reflection" (15). As with Grainge's binary, nostalgic artifice exists somewhere between the two poles, but leans more toward the idea of reflective nostalgia, especially regarding Boym's point that reflective

¹⁷ For instance, see Fred Davis (1979), Barbara Stern (1992), and Clay Routledge (2016).

nostalgia may be both affective and critical. This dual function represents a fundamental insight on the way many nostalgias operate, one which unfortunately much of the field still leaves unacknowledged. Boym also recognizes other dialectics within nostalgia and its attendant aesthetics (and indeed, including nostalgic artifice), pointing out that they are always dual: “A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images—of home and abroad, of past and present, of dream and everyday life” (7). This dual character of nostalgia is especially relevant to nostalgic artifice’s dialectical nature.

Boym, like many nostalgia theorists, classifies nostalgia as a modern phenomenon, arising from a dissatisfaction with contemporary life. She says, “nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress” (8), claiming that this comes down to a longing for a nonextant home (7). Helmut Illbruck, in his landmark book opposing nostalgia with Enlightenment thinking, puts a similar sentiment in different terms: as “the dream of a return to particularity in the age of hyperreality” (24), one that results in a homogenized modern world where you can feel at home anywhere (216). This notion that nostalgia encompasses a rejection of the present has become a common perspective on nostalgia, so that it, like other trends toward memorialisation in recent times, has become synonymous with a conservative or even regressive position, whereby all that seems to matter to a nostalgic is the past, and future progress is thereby forestalled. Scholars often place modern nostalgia as part of an escapist trend that creates a sense of comforting stability or containment of uncertainty in an uncertain present (Hoskins 122), as a commodification (Potts 216) and idealization of the past, and rejection of the future or the ability to do work on or in it (Niemeyer and Wentz “Serial Nostalgia” 132).

On the other hand, there isn’t exactly consensus on this issue – Adam Muller, in his article on nostalgia in heritage films, rejects the idea that the nostalgic past is idealized and abstracted from concerns of the present day (749). Instead, he argues, it is symbolic, constructing a place that allows a projection of what we wish to be (750, 752), and thus for him, nostalgia maintains a peculiar relationship

with the present; Muller puts this in terms of “an erotic attachment to some aspect of our present selves” (753). Illbruck takes this further, attempting to view nostalgia’s impact on the present as one that creates possibilities for the future, writing, “To repeat must not be a simple return to *the* past but a repetition that brings the end to be repeated back into a present capable of opening a future” (250, original emphasis). In contrast to these other theorists’ nostalgias, nostalgic artifice asserts that nostalgia need not be either inherently progressive or regressive in its attitude toward the future or past,¹⁸ and that it is instead only fundamentally bound to the present, as a heterogenous weave of past, future, and the durational now.

Despite a lack of general consensus on this question (as well as many others), much of today’s nostalgia scholarship is focused elsewhere, on nostalgia’s ideological applications to and use in marketing and advertising.¹⁹ Many studies and essays on the topic simply take for granted that nostalgia in media idealizes, obscures, and abstracts us away from the real past, positing a false simulacrum in its place, in keeping with Grainge’s conception of the nostalgic mode. In Niemeyer’s view, these kinds of approaches to nostalgia concern marketing strategies that are “tools to frame memory and the past in distinct ways” (“Introduction” 13), essentially freezing, or “petrifying” (13) nostalgia as a static, not dynamic process. One such “petrifying” approach is typified by the kind of nostalgia treated by Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley on what they call “retrotyping.” This is a nostalgic marketing strategy that uses stereotypical and selective imagery of the past (93) to create a sense of unity and belonging in the present (86) alongside a “static view of the past” (93). Their ideological analysis posits that this type of regressive nostalgia “appeal[s] only to the component of backwards longing in nostalgia and conceal[s]

¹⁸ This assertion follows Christine Sprengler’s views on the subject of nostalgia being neither inherently regressive or progressive (87).

¹⁹ See, for instance, Cristina Rizzardo (2015), Jeremy J. Sierra and Shaun McQuitty (2007), and Beáta Beke (2016), among many others.

or den[ies] the loss and painful sense of lack” (84). It is exactly this type of marketing-based nostalgia that typifies Niemeyer’s petrification of the past, which is as a result presented as idealized and static.

In a similar way, Emmanuelle Fantin, in her 2014 study on a Citroën advertising campaign and its baroque aesthetics, also locates her marketing-based nostalgia within a static conception of the past. She argues that this nostalgia privileges affection over reflection (99) and aligns this kind of nostalgia with consumption, both of which “symboli[ze] the quest for the unreachable” (103). In this view, nostalgia as represented through visual media becomes a tactic to reinforce regressive and consumptive patterns that discourage critical engagements with the past. Ryan Lizardi, in his book *Mediated Nostalgia*, which takes a postmodern stance on nostalgic media that generates its own ready-made and “consumable past” (31, 36) “stripped of its critical, comparative bite” (27), also reinforces the idea that nostalgia promotes an inherently regressive logic. He says, “We cannot learn from the past, because we cannot see it as any different from the present” (77), though he acknowledges toward the end of his book that there may be a potential for resistance within these strategies (155). Lizardi also echoes the familiar view that nostalgic emotion precludes rationality, stating that among nostalgic media, “there is the tendency to appeal, through affective connections, to contemporary structures of feeling, which is easier and more lucrative than catering to a critical edge” (27).

It seems, then, that approaching nostalgia as an ideological tool often leads to a limited focus on what nostalgias can be and how they may operate. To take a different, yet complementary stance on what certain nostalgias are or can be, this project endorses a phenomenological approach, where nostalgia is treated as a lived experience. This approach is useful especially for nostalgic artifice, which exists as a dialectic experienced by individuals, and is thus inherently experiential in nature. As such, the following four essays serve as the main theoretical underpinning to nostalgic artifice. Steven Galt Crowell, in his largely overlooked 1999 article on nostalgia, lays out a nostalgia that mostly clearly resembles the nostalgia conveyed by nostalgic artifice – as that which longs for loss. His existentialist

phenomenology locates nostalgia in a longing for being past (a “having been” (95)) and a sense of completeness. This nostalgia is a function of an individual’s personal identity and experience, the content of which has what Crowell refers to as “intrinsic significance” as opposed to memories’ “extrinsic significance,” as they are incorporated into and validated by narratives and histories (94). Instead, nostalgia’s *noema* – its object of thought – is validated by personal affect (and indeed, intersubjectivity (92)) rather than public or historical significance (as is the case with memory). As Crowell says, “And because this world is given affectively it is also a past that was never present, for it never had that unity that it gets only through the nostalgic affect itself” (96). Yet, for Crowell, nostalgia is not simply meaningful as a result of this affect – in fact it is the contrast between this longing for past illusory wholeness and the present that brings out the *algia* of nostalgia. Here it is worth quoting him at length:

The time of *this* I is the living present, something that neither changes nor flows. Hence this I belongs to the absolute continuum of temporal consciousness neither as its source nor as its product; it is nothing but the absolute unicity of the first-person. And yet it *has been!* Nostalgia is the sudden and painful experience of *this* ‘having been’-an uncanny and inexplicable ‘difference’ that, because it is attributable to no change of content, cannot be bridged or mediated by any narrative continuity. (98, original emphasis)

Crowell’s description of an affective, phenomenological nostalgia that heterogeneously splits the present into a painful recognition of now and then, thereby acts as both emotionally and critically engaging in a similar way to nostalgic artifice. Its affective proximity – nostalgia’s pain – in no way undermines its simultaneous emphasis on the mediated, distant relationship of its *noema* to the present moment. In fact, as Crowell indicates, it is this dialectic that drives the experience of nostalgia in the first place, manifesting as a longing for loss.

In his 1973 article on nostalgia, James Hart similarly underlines this dialectic between a recognition of distance and an affective closeness. He describes nostalgia as a process where time, or moments within one's life are "gathered" into a "synthesis" or whole (405) through the operation of affect, invoking a Husserlian framework to explain this connection: "...between that which in the present calls forth (through association) that which is fallen into the obscurity of the past there is a prior unity in the 'unconscious' which binds together the present and past intuitions. This prior synthesis which makes association possible is, for Husserl, an affective bond or communication" (404). Yet, alongside this affective bringing together, Hart, like Crowell, remarks on a simultaneous distance: "Nevertheless we recognize ourselves to be separated from this *noema*. The nostalgic *noema* presents itself as a horizon which includes our present possibility but we cannot reenter it and can only, as it were, see it from afar" (409). Hart differs from Crowell on what the nostalgic object is, however. Whereas Crowell specifies that the nostalgic experience is iconic rather than precisely generic or individual, "speak[ing] not of the way things were, but of the way things are" (94) (Crowell 93, 94), and thereby neither purely belonging to fantasy or memory, Hart locates nostalgia in an "aeonic" time (that is, enshrined outside of time (Hart 406)), one that also corresponds to a former present experience, or "region of our past" (399). To Hart, then, there is a fundamental difference between a nostalgia for a "real" past and a "false" one, whereas Crowell's nostalgia admits both.

There are also several more recent essays which detail phenomenological approaches to nostalgia. For instance, Jeff Malpas takes up a similar stance as Hart, drawing a line between true nostalgia as an experience of a personal past (100), and what he calls the "mythophilic." He writes, "*mythophilia* – a longing not for what is remembered, but for what is known only through its retelling, through story and myth. Such longing falls short of nostalgia precisely because of the mythical character of that which it desires and valorises – a past of which we ourselves have no experience and in which we were never ourselves engaged. Such mythophilia is not nostalgic..." (95). In this sense, both Malpas's

and Hart's nostalgias are unlike nostalgic artifice, which remains closer to Crowell's sense of the iconic – somewhere between the individual and the universal, between memory and fantasy. Nonetheless, there are also ideas within Malpas's essay that carry great import for nostalgic artifice – for one, another recognition of the dialectic of presence and absence within nostalgia, between a return home alongside a simultaneous recognition of its loss (89), and its ultimate location in the present (100). Malpas also remarks that this nostalgia is both spatially and temporally bound, because as an experience of past being, it involves a sense of self that is always positioned in time as well as space (95): “a remembrance of one's own being-in-place” (94). This recognition that experiences (nostalgic experiences included), whether they be of memories, fantasies, or present events, are always as entwined with place as they are with time, is fundamental – to separate the two is to distort the nature of human experience. In phenomenological terms, then, the nostalgic object is temporal as well as spatial in nature.

Malpas's claims echo in several ways Edward Casey's 1987 treatise on nostalgia, which claims that nostalgics are nostalgic for a past being-in-the-world, one that is inherently situated in place as well as time (363). Casey also clarifies the relationship between imagination and memory, writing that because this past is “radically anterior” (375) – an “absolute past” (379) – it requires the operation of imagination to “make present what is absent, that is, absent from perception as well as from memory” (367). He adds that this past “*was never strictly present*” (365, original emphasis), and is one we may never rejoin “precisely because we cannot re-experience it” (365). Yet he specifies that what he calls “a world-under-nostalgement” is not a pure product of imagination, and in fact “must incorporate one's sense of being in a given place as conveyed by memories” (368). Casey suggests that it is this dynamic between imagination and memory that yields nostalgia's dialectical nature, writing: “Perhaps it is just this paradoxical interplay of the definite and the indefinite in space as well as in time that gives rise to nostalgia's baffling combination of the sweet and the bitter, the personal and the impersonal, distance and proximity, presence and absence, place and no-place, imagination and memory, memory and

nonmemory” (379). He also claims that nostalgia’s relationship with the so-called “memory trace” functions as a record of time passed rather than as an indexical link to a past (379), which falls into the realm of memory or history rather than nostalgia. In Casey’s words, “We are nostalgic about this passage [of time] itself, in its action of creating temporal distance and difference” (380). Casey’s essay thereby articulates another fundamental aspect of nostalgic artifice that will be of concern in Chapters Two and Three: that it expresses a relationship to passing (lost) time.

These four phenomenologically based articles present some core insights into nostalgia as a lived experience: that it is affective, dialectical, spatio-temporal, emplaced, existing between imagination and memory, and inherently connected to loss. Before moving on, though, I would also like to draw special attention to a more practical approach to defining a phenomenology of nostalgia. Each of these previous four articles provides theoretical answers to the question: “what is nostalgia?” On the other hand, Annika Lems, in a recent case study on nostalgia as a lived experience, attempts to combine this more abstract approach with a personal account, recounting a specific individual’s experience of nostalgia in the context of an interview with the author. Her phenomenology of nostalgia accounts for both a narrative nostalgia and a narratively resistant nostalgia (432), one that is “a bodily, immediate experience” (428). Her conclusions are especially interesting given that this specificity in approach yields similar claims as other phenomenologies of nostalgia. For instance, like others, Lems remarks on the dialectical presence and absence of the nostalgic experience (429), its blend between imagination and memory (431), its import in the present moment as a “a direct and active engagement with the world” of the here and now (430), and its connection to an essential loss (433). However, Lems, as with many more recent modern nostalgia theorists, feels compelled to recuperate nostalgia’s image as an inherently regressive phenomenon that is opposed to change (434). She raises the critical idea that the nostalgic experience, while remaining seemingly pleasant and positive, also contains a recognition of the impossibility of nostalgic experience, or at the very least its irreconcilability with the present, and

further, “the impossibility of ever arriving at a fixed and stable home and with the instability and moveability of being-here (*Dasein*)” (434, original emphasis). In these terms, Lems’s nostalgia, like nostalgic artifice, hinges on an affect of longing inflected (and, indeed, enabled) by a recognition of its own impossibility. It is this central dialectic that constitutes nostalgic artifice’s operation as such. From these basic tenets laid out by this canon of phenomenological nostalgia, I will next sketch the outlines of nostalgic artifice from a phenomenological perspective.

NOSTALGIA AS PHENOMENOLOGICAL

Nostalgic artifice makes three basic claims vis-à-vis the debates raised by these earlier thinkers. First, nostalgic artifice, like James Hart’s nostalgia, is always affective. Especially given the contemporary context of nostalgic media, the question of the place of affect in modern nostalgia has been a central concern in recent research. Can media truly be nostalgic? Can it evoke nostalgia through falsified aesthetics, or is this merely a simulacrum of affect? Invoking Paul Grainge’s terms, can nostalgia function simply as a mode, an aesthetic style, and nothing more? As we have seen argued, many nostalgias, particularly phenomenologically based ones, present a particular position on the relationship between past and present, fundamentally one that hinges on an emotional and rational recognition of loss – the messiness and temporal confusion combined with a sense of temporal heterogeneity, where past and present meld and blur while simultaneously being rent apart. Is this nostalgic position one that can occur without affect? This project on nostalgia follows Hart (and Husserl) (404) and argues no – that this simultaneous joining together and splitting apart of past and present (or, perhaps more accurately, pastness and presentness) requires affect, or at least an affective position. Thus, even in media, which contains no given, a priori emotional content, an expression of nostalgia (which of course can only be present in a media text’s audience), is premised on an affective bond between past and present, a bond of longing and simultaneous recognition of loss. As a lived phenomenon then, nostalgic artifice is always affective in nature.

In a related way, nostalgic artifice, even as it presents a nostalgia that is “staged,” crafted or manufactured, not organically occurring and not bounded to personal memory, I argue that this form of nostalgia does not differ in any meaningful sense from lived “everyday” nostalgia. This is because, as a lived experience, any phenomenologically based nostalgia’s meaning inheres only in the present moment (engaging with the past only as far as it is meaningful to the present), rather than functioning as a validation of past events or experiences in and of themselves, as memories and histories do. This distinction harkens back to Crowell’s description of nostalgia’s intrinsic significance versus memory’s extrinsic significance (94). Thus even if nostalgia’s *noema*, its object, has not been lived in the past, the present nostalgic experience has (necessarily) been lived, whether or not we are nostalgic for a previously experienced or manufactured past, and thus either way, nostalgia obtains its significance from a personal experience occurring in the present rather than as a socially or historically validated phenomenon. Therefore, if we treat nostalgia in this way, there is no meaningful difference between Jeff Malpas’s real nostalgia and so-called “mythophilia.”

Critics like Malpas often go on to posit that in the case of nostalgic media, this staged nostalgia only functions as a mere simulacrum of true nostalgia, yet in doing so they fail to recognize that everyday nostalgia’s *noema* is similarly detached from the reality of the past. In these terms, nostalgia that is treated as a lived experience, whether manufactured or otherwise, obtains its meaning (significance) in intrinsic, not extrinsic, terms. This question of “real” and “unreal” nostalgias is a point of major debate throughout nostalgia discourse, but especially becomes important in the case of scholars of nostalgic media, who are concerned with reconciling nostalgia as a social as well as personal phenomenon. This debate on how it is possible to “share” nostalgia (especially through a commodified form like media) even as it functions as an inherently personal experience, exists in a similar form in the field of memory studies, as we will see in the following section. The key to reconciling the social with the personal lies in repositioning focus onto these experiences’ lived function, rather than their

representational function (though, of course, in the case of memory, these two functions become difficult to disentangle, for instance in the case of false or non-believed memories).

The third proposition I wish to pin to nostalgic artifice is that it is nostalgic for a past embodied being that is at the same time iconic (Crowell) and experiential; in this case, then, in answer to the most basic question in the field (“what are we nostalgic for?”), nostalgic artifice answers simply, pastness, in its most abstract sense (i.e. a past that is non-indexical, fantastical, and imaginative while at the same time being linked to memory as an experiential, embodied phenomenon). Thus rather than longing for a past home, childhood belonging, or a prior unity of self, nostalgic artifice distilled down to its most basic relationship with time articulates a longing for pastness. It may be tempting to include an explicit spatial dimension to this equation, yet if pastness is treated as experiential, an embodied, emplaced aspect is already folded in, because experience (whether present, memorial, or nostalgic) is always both spatial and temporal. Additionally, a displacement in space alone is unable to account for nostalgia’s most constitutive characteristic, its relation to and expression of loss; a sense of absence, lack, and irretrievability is what drives (many) nostalgias, and only a temporal relationship is able to express this. Thus, the longing or affective aspect of nostalgia is temporally bound, stitched to a sense of time as loss.

NOSTALGIA AS MEMORY

We have already seen how the field of nostalgia studies often raises the spectre of memory and memory studies, though the two fields (unfortunately) rarely come into dialogue with one another. Of course, there are, as with nostalgia, many different kinds of memory, of which only a few are of chief concern today in Western memory studies. Thus, instead of focusing on social memory theories (the most common form of memory explored in Western literature today),²⁰ this section will draw attention to alternative forms of memory that instead emphasize memory’s often affective and non-indexical

²⁰ As Kilbourn and Ty note in their 2013 anthology *The Memory Effect*, the idea of collective memory was popularized in 1950 by French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (14).

properties, properties shared in common with many nostalgias. For though nostalgia's *noema* is often iconic and imaginative, the nostalgic experience itself is undoubtedly connected to memory – as Katharina Niemeyer puts it, “Nostalgia is related to the concept of memory, since it recalls times and places that are no more, or are out of reach” (“Introduction” 5). The basic tenet that *seems* to unite the two, then, is their experiential, not representational properties. However, nostalgic artifice indicates that this notion is limited to confining one's definition of memory to that outdated model of memory as repositories or traces of the past; if non-indexical memory is admitted into the lexicon of memory studies (which, of course, it should be; as we shall see, it often becomes the focus of popular modern theories of memory), then nostalgia can be memorial both experientially and representationally, as what both may represent (at least in the case of some nostalgias and some types of memory), is pastness in an abstract sense.

Before wading into memory studies proper, I would like to clarify this idea that nostalgia is a form of non-indexical memory by returning to the basic experientially (not neurologically) constitutive elements of memory. At first glance, it may seem that memory requires a synthesis of two (or more) experiences – the original/referent (whether it be real or imagined event like a dream) and the recall experience; these primary and secondary memorial experiences would echo and intertwine across one another as recall events and contexts shape the original content they are recalling. Were we to stop here, nostalgia could not be classified as a form of memory, given that it requires only one experience – the present recall, which needs only an idea, image, affect, or sense of an imagined pastness to stand in for an original experience. However, prying a bit further uncovers that not all (or in fact, few if any) original memorial experiences are in fact indexical to the past. Indeed, in the case of false or non-believed memories, for instance, the link between the referent/recall experiences is obscured to the point of being lost altogether, so that the object of this memory is more of an abstract idea rather than an experience. This way of understanding memory is phenomenological, rather than historical or social

(or neurological or psychological, for that matter), where it might be possible to validate a memory extrinsically (to return to Crowell's terminology); conceiving of memory in phenomenological terms, then, necessitates a shift in thinking away from how well memories agree with the past, to how memories impact ourselves and the people around us in the present.

Taking this one step further, media objects, then, also have the potential to stage both nostalgia and memory, as they may set up a recall-event analogue (whether it be image or narrative event) that evokes a non-indexical referent of pastness. Just as recall in human memory can distort, reform, and even create an original referent experience or idea, then, so too does a "screen memory" fabricate a non-indexical memory. This recall event, though, doesn't become an experience until the media audience engages with it as such, and so "screen memories" may thereby arise only through the interplay between text and audience. In this sense, screen memories need a feeling, thinking subject to experience a represented idea as pastness, or as memory – without a human interlocutor, screen memories then remain mere representations. It is in this way that we may allow for an experience of pastness that is manufactured or even culturally determined, like in the case of Instagram retro filters, Super 8mm home movie aesthetics, or nostalgic artifice, which all have the potential to become memories of pastness, invoking memory in the abstract sense. Perhaps this notion of memories of feelings and ideas seems too abstract as a theoretical discussion – we must keep in mind that experientially, these memories of pastness always are coloured by a rememberer or nostalgic's personal relationship with the media text, and in order for something to be experienced as past (even just the idea of pastness), it must be rooted in individual experience. In this way, the finale of *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk 1955) (for example with its artificial and picturesque winter scene at the window, complete with anomalous green-screen deer) has the potential to become memorial, or even nostalgic because of an individual's personal associations, perhaps of memories of Christmas cards or an association with holiday film aesthetics from childhood. This is a clumsy example, but I wish to

emphasize that in such a scenario, the scene may become anachronistic to a viewer, existing outside of the present moment, and is instead perceived as containing an (often unplaceable) pastness – this scene is then not merely a mnemonic, conjuring a separate memory of a specific Christmas, for instance, but also contains its own experiential and representational properties as memory.

This kind of memory, one that is abstract, idealist, is not often considered part of memory proper in modern-day conceptions of memory in Western literature. The field of memory studies often debates the validity of alternative forms of pseudomemory, the role of mediation in memory, the status of public memories, the veracity of memory, the relation between involuntary and voluntary (“intellectual”) memory (Proust), etc. Often, these questions turn on the assumption of a presumed indexicality of memory or an inherent link to history. Instead, this project will emphasize memory’s gaps, discontinuities, and contradictions rather than focus on its faithfulness to some irretrievable fantasy past.

Many memory studies scholars have already laid the foundations for such work, defining subsets of memory with an imaginative or strongly affective dimension. For instance, Janet Walker has termed two alternative forms of memory, “rememory” and “disremembering,” to account for responses of memory to traumatic events. She explains rememory using Caroline Rody’s words, explaining that it “is to use one’s imaginative power to realize a latent, abiding connection to the past” (TC 17). Walker similarly describes disremembering as “The process described by psychological literature as that of conjuring mental images and sounds related to past events but altered in certain respects” (17). Walker writes, “If rememory is a means of maintaining a picture of something that is absent, then disremembering may be a means of disassembling a picture of an absence” (18). She claims that re-enactments and other “fictive strategies” can also help disremember events (26). Alison Landsberg similarly roots her “prosthetic memory” in empathetic affect rather than simple indexicality to the past – prosthetic memories, then, are “memories of events through which one did not live” that retain a

personal, sensuous, and experiential dimension (148) that are unfixed and have the power to shape individual subjectivity (155) while existing as publicly accessible entities (149). Marianne Hirsch's "postmemory" too is based in familial affect and connection – this form of memory describes traumatic experiences that are transmitted, often by photographs, to a younger generation, "experiences that they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up" (106). Like Walker, Hirsch makes it clear that this form of memory is not memory proper, though at the same time it is similarly embodied (111) and "it approximates memory in its affective force" (109). She claims these pseudomemories take on greater import as a result of their deep and affective familial transmission (107).

These three cultural memory theories break from a conception of memory as record, emphasizing instead memory's potential for accommodating imagination and affect. However, each approach (inadvertently, perhaps) implies a schism between "real" memories and the more abstract post-/prosthetic/dis-memories, as (seemingly) less ontologically valid than more indexical memories. However, if memories are treated instead in terms of their import on the present, rather than in terms of their ability to reflect the past, all these forms of memory have phenomenological validity of equal or lesser degrees depending on the rememberer. Of course, in allowing personally significant memories to contain a social dimension (or the potential for media representation through the mechanism of imagination and fantasy), it also remains important to avoid flattening or conflating lived experiences into interpersonally transmissible entities. Shared memories are still intrinsically significant, to return to Crowell's terminology, and so they may not be validated as a result of their truth status – to do so is to exit the realm of memory (a personal, intrinsically significant experience) and to enter history (a socially validated construct). This dilemma of reconciling personal and shared aspects of memory, then, is a similar dilemma faced by nostalgia, as a personal memorial experience that may be communicated en masse, often through media objects. The consensus from Hirsch and Landsberg is that an affective

dimension is needed to bridge between the personal and the social, though I believe an aspect of imagination or fantasy is also necessary to this bridge; more specifically, to make this move between personal and social, it remains necessary to recognize the fantastic dimension that is always inherent within different forms of memory including nostalgia, where some original part of the past (be it idea, affect, experience, or physical trace, etc.) is filtered and altered as a result of its transmission through a medium, be it film, photograph, story, or human being. Many scholars have also paid mind to this mutability of memory: its ability to shape and be shaped by media (José van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*); its plastic forms (Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*); and its unfixed, non-referential properties (*False and Distorted Memories*, edited by Robert A. Nash and James Ost). There have been several scientific studies on non-believed memories, including, among others, Giuliana Mazzoni, Alan Scoboria, and Lucy Harvey's from 2010, where they drew attention to these memories' affective and perceptual power despite their lack of credibility (1339).²¹

Contrary, then, to assumptions about memory's archival function – its ability to store traces of the past – there has been a healthy recognition of the mediating role lived experience plays in shaping memory affectively. This affective context of memory recall has also been scientifically measured (see, for instance, Weizhen Xie and Weiwei Zhang's "Mood Dependent Retrieval" (2017) and *Neural Substrates of Memory, Affective Functions, and Conscious Experience*, by Carlo Loeb and G. F. Poggio), and this link between affect and memory has been explored in greater depth outside of Western memory studies, for instance, in the traditional Hindu conceptions of memory, which do not make a distinction between actual or imagined events of memory (Gerald James Larson 374). This Hindu tradition also explicitly emphasizes the connection between longing (nostalgia) and memory proper – the two are in fact viewed as intimately interlinked. This philosophical tradition serves as a fascinating contrast to the modern neurological/sociological turn in memory studies in the West, where admitting

²¹ See also Clark et al. (2012), Scoboria et al. (2014), and Mazzoni et al. (2014).

nostalgia into its lexicon might face greater resistance. Christian Lee Novetzke explains Hindu memory's links to affect as follows: "In Sanskrit literatures, especially philosophical literature, the study of memory surrounds the key verbal root, *smṛ*, which demonstrates all the manifold complexity that has bedeviled Western memory studies. The verbal root can indicate a wide variety of things: to remember, of course, but also to feel nostalgia, sorrow, or regret and to teach or pass on" (237). David Shulman expands on this link between feeling (often longing) and memory, explaining that in certain Hindu stories and Sanskrit love poetry, a sense of intertwined longing and unease arising from encountering beauty comes from the memories of earlier karmic lives (123). This involuntary memory is called *vāsanā*, literally translated as 'odour' (123). Shulman goes on to say, "*Vāsanā* makes the past present again, but at the same time, as with any memory, it establishes a gap, a distance, a sense of loss" (123). This "painful distance" (123) from the past and recognition of its absence, combined with an immediacy of "yearning and desire" in the present (124), one independent even of an object of longing (125) generates the selfsame dialectic present in nostalgic artifice. Put in these terms, we should have no trouble folding nostalgia into memory, as similarly affective and non-referent experiences of a present-yet-absent past, a past that is experienced viscerally while simultaneously recognized to be irretrievably lost to the present. Given the alternative forms of memory glossed in this section, I believe memory and nostalgia studies both serve to be enriched through dialogue that may help expand the bounds of both ideas.

NOSTALGIA AS AESTHETIC

So far, we have discussed what kind of nostalgia nostalgic artifice articulates – I have posited that this nostalgia is both memorial and phenomenological. However, this nostalgia manifests as an aesthetic, communicated through a distinctive visual (and at times auditory) style, one of hyper-artifice and visual saturation. In this section to follow I will describe why the association between this aesthetic and nostalgia is significant, and how it relates to other visual representations of memory and nostalgia

discussed in previous literature. This project does not set out to chart the cultural development of this association, as such a link has over time become a visual convention for a sense of pastness, unwittingly or otherwise; Christine Sprengler's work on the Populuxe aesthetic, which I will discuss below, fills in some of these gaps by taking a historical perspective on why this association between visual Sirkian-inspired artifice and nostalgia has arisen that I hope will serve as a complement to my own theoretical approach to the same (or a similar) question.

The incredibly vast and diverse connections between media and memory/nostalgia have been mapped by scholars from a wide variety of disciplines, in attempts to characterize the manifold ways of portraying the past, memory, and nostalgias through an aesthetic, many of which I do not have room for here.²² Rebecca Comay has discussed the aesthetics of the ruin in the memorial artwork of Doris Salcedo – she argues that since all ruins look similar, there is a possibility that they threaten “to efface the historical contingencies of the disaster to which they attest” (“Material Remains” 52); to Comay, one solution to this is a technique of denaturalization, art that emphasizes the fabricated nature of ruin in art because, in her words, “it denaturalises the disaster and positions the work explicitly within the genre of constructed or fictional ruination” (51). In other words, Comay emphasizes that when presenting art as a representation of the past, the best strategy toward truthfulness is to emphasize art's fictionality. Dominik Schrey takes a different perspective on the representation of ruins and decay in a digital context, using Laura Marks's work on the decaying image as a framework. He discusses the digital simulacrum of artificial decay as an “analogue nostalgia” that serves to provide new life or soul to the digital image, describing this aesthetic as “analogous to the artificial ruins of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as it involves the artificial, or, rather virtual, ruins of the digital age” (35), going on to say that “these ruins are no longer ‘signifiers of absence’, as Böhme (1989) once defined the lure of

²² See also Christina Baade and Paul Aitken (2009), Mark Crinson (2013), Annah Elizabeth Mackenzie (2014), and Arild Fetveit (2015), among many others.

ancient ruins. On the contrary, the purpose of this digitally simulated analogue decay seems to be the signification of presence: as it simulates exactly the life or 'soul' that the digital was always accused of lacking" (35-36). To both Comay and Schrey, an aesthetic of ruin or decay is inextricably tied to a sense of pastness, and even overt nostalgia in Schrey's case. This style of visual pastness evokes the spectral aspect of presence/absence at play in aesthetics of decay, and functions as an important aspect of nostalgic artifice as well.

Other nostalgic aesthetic strategies are considered by Giuseppina Sapio, who explores the changed aesthetics in home movies toward a granularity and warmth that resembles low-budget analog film stock to "compensate for dematerialisation" in wider society (44), and Gil Bartholeyns, who discusses the popularity of photographic filters as a "an effective formula" (65) for artificially creating an impression of age and concomitant nostalgia through burnishing effects and texturization (62), thereby creating a sort of visual marker of pastness. He goes on to remark that "It is precisely this sense of time passing, this feeling of distance, that lies at the heart of our visual nostalgia" (60). Maël Guesdon and Phillippe Le Guern also describe auditory nostalgia through the spectral repetition present in pop songs that provides a core hypnagogic nostalgia to this music (73).

There are also several scholarly discussions of styles of visual pastness and nostalgia that fall closer in line with nostalgic artifice's distinctive style, often centring around uses of immersive colour. For one, Eli Friedlander discusses the associated colours and mood of childhood in and through the works of Walter Benjamin. He argues that an image immersed in colour creates a certain mood (by "bring[ing] out the texture of experience as an interrelated totality" rather than from a set of isolated coloured objects (41)), one specifically associated with a child's way of looking, because, according to Friedlander, children "[absorb] color, as though it is his [sic] environment" (43). He follows Benjamin in positioning this attitude toward colour as one of fantasy, a faculty that deforms the world by perceiving it as an interrelated totality through colour (46), whereas in contrast, "discoloration creates detachment

from the world” (45). This approach to colour as a unifying force is why, he argues, homesickness occurs upon encountering images of childhood: “It is precisely the gathering power of the images that allow the surroundings to come together in meaning as a world. For the child color is the medium of such relationships” (49).

With a goal similar to Friedlander, Ute Holl also makes an argument for an association of colour with nostalgia or homesickness, taking a more historical perspective in contrast to Friedlander’s psychological approach. Holl explains how our relationships with colour are culturally and industrially conditioned, writing: “Historical films exploit these impacts of colour (the greenish tones of the 1930s, the specific reds of the 1940s) to evoke the feeling of a certain historical time. Acting as parasites on colour-memory, those films create a sense of ‘pastness’ through stylistic connotations...” (161). She describes colour as “an instant affect connecting present and past” (171) and “as physiological affect and memory” (174). Holl explains that this use of overly present colours, as in nostalgic artifice, self-reflexively points to an image’s own artifice and mediation, rendering past and present disjunctive – in her terms, colours are used symbolically “to irritate, to disturb and to point out an irreconcilable element” (166), to “fissure” (164), alienate (166), and “[resist] closure” (174). In this way, Holl’s provides her form of visual nostalgia a similar dialectical function to that of nostalgic artifice. Holl’s explanation for this connection between colour and nostalgia differs from Friedlander’s, suggesting that the hyperreal is connected to a fantasy space of what “would have been” (174), thereby “erasing history” (167).

Paul Grainge also has written an essay on colour’s relation to memory in film in a postmodern context, using *Pleasantville* (Gary Ross 1998) as a case study. He argues that the film’s use of colour serves as a self-reflexive spectacle of a hyperreal past (“Colouring” 208), to “articulat[e] a discourse of cultural remembrance in a moment where the textuality of memory has, itself, become increasingly hyperconscious” (217). He claims that this use of colour puts past and present in dialogue, writing

“...colour in *Pleasantville* is used to draw out cultural and temporal disjunctions; the infusion of colour is a device that signifies the unmistakable trace of the present as it intervenes with, interprets, and transforms, the semiotised realm of the past” (214).

Each of these three works illustrate a recognition of the phenomenon where hyper-saturated colour becomes linked to a sense of pastness, but nostalgic artifice comprises more than simply a colour-inspired mood – it also often involves an artificial quality in mise-en-scène and a spectral quality in the cinematography, aspects that come out particularly in the case of Guy Maddin’s films, which will serve as case studies over the following two chapters. Christine Sprengler’s 2009 book *Screening Nostalgia* goes into more detail on the former, discussing an artificial mise-en-scène comprising primarily colourized costumes and props and positioning it as a historical phenomenon in line with the Populuxe aesthetic (an exaggerated and luxurious style of consumer goods). She argues this aesthetic became popular in America during the tumultuous 1970s because of an idealized nostalgic attachment to a mythical conception of the 1950s (a myth which Sprengler refers to as the Fifties), and as a result of cultural association, the aesthetic remains linked to nostalgia today. Sprengler’s approach is ideological, linking nostalgia to a form of consumerism, where both have “...a fleeting instant of pleasure followed by the return of desire; deferring sustained satisfaction by keeping the ultimate transformative object forever out of reach, while in neither case does such an object actually exist” (61). While Sprengler agrees with Grainge that affect is not necessary in modern nostalgia (33-34), she especially emphasizes that this nostalgia’s critical potential alongside its possibility of affective resonance allows nostalgia-inflected films to demonstrate that “critical distance need not come at the expense of affective pleasure” (64). She locates this critical potential in her visual nostalgia’s capacity for anachronism and a heterogeneous splitting of temporal constructs, “bring[ing] into collision disparate visions of the same construct, fracturing the Fifties into its constituent parts” (112), contrasting it with the present (121), and thereby “reward[ing] the engaged and critical spectator” (113). As a result, nostalgic media can raise

“an awareness that our access to them, like our access...to history itself, is always mediated, yet not necessarily any less meaningful or historically significant as a result” (153-54). Sprengler’s project lays a groundwork for nostalgic artifice, even as the latter is more spectral and phenomenologically based than Sprengler’s nostalgia. The most critical aspect – nostalgia and its attendant aesthetics’ dialectical nature – is addressed but not explicated in detail in Sprengler’s work. It is to this idea I turn in the final section of this chapter.

NOSTALGIA AS DIALECTIC

As we have seen, many theorists of nostalgia and nostalgic media point to the ambiguity and contradictory nature inscribed into nostalgia as an idea and as a lived experience. Nostalgia is repeatedly characterized by opposed pairs of ideas: past/present, experience/representation, presence/absence... However, the dialectic that defines nostalgic artifice is primarily phenomenological – that is, the aesthetic itself induces an oscillating position in its spectator between a position of present-bound emotional proximity (connecting a nostalgic emotionally to a representation of a past ideal through a longing for what is lost) and critical distance from the past (allowing the nostalgic to recognize that this lost object is artificial, false, and unattainable), just as the same theoretical dialectic is at play in some nostalgias in an abstract sense. It is, then, the recognition that a representation is unattainable, irretrievable, a signifier of pure pastness that provokes an affective response: a rush of nostalgic feeling. Nostalgic artifice as an aesthetic, then, is defined and fuelled by this very dialectic – if a visual or auditory style induces such a contrary position where one effectively longs for loss, then it is nostalgic artifice. I chose Guy Maddin’s films as case studies because they provoke this dialectical position in me, yet they need not for every viewer. The resulting phenomenological position, one of oscillation and, in macroscopic terms, paralysis, between two opposing nodes, then, neither fully commits a spectator to a position of critical distance or emotional proximity, leaving one in a contradictory, ambiguous position that might be considered anti-productive, that is, opposed to productivity. Throughout this section I use

the framework of dialectics, touching on both Hegelian and Benjaminian approaches, to treat the implications of being placed in a liminal position between two opposing phenomenological positions. I will posit that nostalgic artifice's dialectics result in a disruption of the hegemonic ideals of progress and homogeneous time and provoke a space of reflection. Nostalgic artifice's dialectics accommodate contradiction, de-stabilization, and evolution, and ultimately demand a thinking, feeling, and remembering subject to reconcile the two positions of proximity and distance (and past and future) either, and alternately, homogeneously or heterogeneously.

As such, given how central this oscillating, contradictory audience position is to nostalgic artifice, it's worth investigating the consequences of similar dialectics in previous literature. Walter Benjamin's dialectical image as it relates to memory, history, and the present moment, serves as a useful starting point. Karl Ivan Solibakke puts the dialectical image in terms of a "mnemonic membrane" (95) sitting between past and present, and David Pierson echoes this idea, conceiving of Benjamin's perspective as centring around the notion that "an historical awakening occurs in the dialectical relationship between the historical image and the uses and needs of the present" (148). In Benjamin's seminal "Thesis on the Philosophy of History," he critiques the ideological notions of progress and "homogenous, empty time" (261), describing the dialectical image as a disruption of this process, allowing the past to "[flash] up" in the present (255). Max Pensky in his commentary on Benjamin's works clarifies that Benjamin conceived of these images as constructed directly from raw historical materials (180), and thus they hold more indexical weight than just any historical representation. Pensky positions Benjamin's overarching (and ultimately incomplete) project on the dialectical image as one which contrasts past and present: "...Benjamin sought a way to actualize historical material that would *uproot* and shock what has been constructed as 'the present,' that would disrupt the very relationship between past and present that hermeneutics assumes" (181, original emphasis), and thus claims he conceived of this as a kind of revolutionary act (191). Though Benjamin's dialectical image is evidently more indexical than nostalgia's

dialectics, given that the former contains an actual trace of the past, it remains useful in the way it elucidates the relationship between past and present as dialectical – opposing and in dialogue, thereby disrupting any sense of hegemonic homogenous time.

Rebecca Comay also uses Benjamin's dialectical model for conceiving of history, memory, and our relations to the past, demonstrating that dialectics have the potential to disrupt the hegemonic notion of progress. Her varied works often take a psychoanalytic perspective, drawing on Freud in addition to Hegel and Benjamin. She insists that according to a Benjaminian conception of mourning the past, history comes to resemble Freud's melancholia – as "a mourning play or play of mourning...the staging of unredeemable loss" ("Mourning" 123) where the past is neither living nor dead. Comay speaks of "the impossibility either of reanimating or of neutralizing the past, whether as the site of hermeneutic fusion or as the inert object of contemplative detachment (that is, whether to be relived or to be safely buried)" (105), which would thereby render mourning work futile and disrupt a sense of productivity or forward momentum. It is worth noting that in this early article Comay also briefly considers nostalgia vis-à-vis melancholia, suggesting that nostalgia (unlike melancholia) entertains a hope of gain for its own nostalgic object (110); while Comay's work on the dialectical past is relevant to articulating the dialectics between present and past as anti-progressive, this conception of nostalgia has nothing to do with nostalgic artifice, which recognizes its own impossibility and irreconcilability with the past ideal. Accordingly, the dialectics at work in nostalgic artifice posit alternative temporalities – both past and future – as fantasies, and thus bind a nostalgic to the present moment. In a later essay Comay expands on her conception of melancholia, which does resemble the nostalgia of nostalgic artifice in several ways, internally self-divided and eternally oscillating (between over- and undervaluation) ("Perverse History" 52); she argues that melancholia, as a form of fetishism, creates a recuperative and comforting "image of totality" in order to "alleviat[e] the pain of an irredeemably fractured existence"

(55), invoking language reminiscent of that used to describe nostalgia. Here melancholia's loss and gain exist in a sort of dialectic similar to what I'd argue is present in some nostalgias – Comay writes:

The split that maintains the contradiction between knowledge and belief – traumatic loss, on the one hand; redemptive totality, on the other – provides no protective containment of its antitheses but, rather, implicates both within a contaminating porosity and a movement of incessant oscillation of one term into the other. Could such a perverse simultaneity of acknowledgement and disavowal be the very condition of historicity? (53)

She goes on to claim that this fetishistic melancholia is thereby placed in a temporal state of stasis (55), being left in a fundamentally ambiguous position “between loss and recuperation,” resulting in either “a tranquilizing neutrality or...a destabilizing tension” (58). Comay posits that these dialectics further fragment an object, a process that is ambiguous in its own right: “Fragmentation is here overcome precisely in being hyperbolically escalated to the point where, in a wonderful variation on Zeno's paradox of motion, the total fissuring of appearances becomes indistinguishable from a new totality” (61). In her critiques, then, Comay repositions for us what it means to be anti-progressive – unlike assumptions about nostalgia's inherent regressiveness (as an escape to a false past), conceiving of nostalgia as a dialectic allows us to view this appeal to the past in terms of an anti-progressiveness, with a revolutionary potential to undermine hegemonic ideals of homogenous time and capitalistic progress.

Comay also more recently has turned to Hegel for another position on dialectics, using the notion of resistance to restore a radical potential to Hegel's dialectic, allowing it to overcome a sense of stasis, fragmentation, and paralysis. She discusses Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a text of resistance as it tends toward inefficient tangents and overindulgent repetition (“Resistance” 263) in order to provoke or enable change through a paralysis: “Hegel's most brilliant insight is that the category of ‘change’ is in itself an empty abstraction—it provides the perfect alibi for its own denial—while the resistance to change can be the greatest impetus to transformation” (263). This paralysis, Comay argues, forces

reflection, as a sort of stoppage, because “Thinking demands a constant dilation with the material...” (264). In other words, the very experience of paralysis is what “forces us to reinvent the entire field” (266), thereby provoking radical change from a position of resistance. In this sense, by invoking Hegel, Comay provides a radical potential to a dialectic that leaves us suspended between oscillating positions. It is this sense of dialectic that I wish to stress in nostalgic artifice – that which inspires critical reflection on nostalgia and its *noema* and necessitates a thinking, feeling subject to contain this dialectic. It is in this way that nostalgic artifice is fundamentally anti-progressive and reflective, not in Boym’s terms but in dialectical ones.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the previous five sections, this chapter has surveyed a wide range of literature in the order to define nostalgic artifice through four essential characteristics. We have now seen how this nostalgia is phenomenological, aesthetic, memorial, and dialectical, as it expresses an affecting longing for pastness. As a result, nostalgic artifice even as a simulacrum and representation functions as a “true” nostalgia by producing an experienced dialectic in its audience, where we long for loss even as we recognize that lost object to be false and out of reach. This type of nostalgia resolves to bring nostalgics into the present moment through a collapse of temporalities and dialectical resistance. In the two chapters to come, nostalgic artifice will be considered in applied terms by taking media objects as models: specifically, two films directed by Guy Maddin. First, through an analysis of *Careful* (1992) and melodrama theory, nostalgic artifice will be additionally characterized as melodramatic, given that it communicates an affective temporal position where time is conceived of as circular, orienting around a sense of loss. In the third chapter, nostalgic artifice will be treated as spectral through a probing of Maddin’s *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin’s Diary* (2002). Here I will argue that nostalgic artifice also communicates a sense of heterogeneous time. These two case studies are intended to articulate what

nostalgic artifice is as an experiential, applied phenomenon in complement to this chapter's conception of it as an abstract concept.

Chapter Two: Melodrama and Nostalgia in Guy Maddin's *Careful*

Nostalgia and melodrama have historically both occupied marginalized positions in cultural discourse, often dismissed as unworthy of critical study for a variety of reasons.²³ Given that both share a similarity in their emphasis on emotionality, it is perhaps unsurprising that each term frequently pops up alongside the other (though often in passing) in scholarly and non-scholarly literature alike. This chapter aims to map the spaces where melodrama and nostalgia overlap and meet, in order to posit a theory where nostalgia becomes melodramatic, and vice versa. I argue that nostalgia becomes melodramatic as a result of its emotional outlook, because both melodrama and nostalgia have the potential to invoke dialectical positions between emotional proximity and critical distance, where we are invited to feel “too close” to the melodramatic/nostalgic object alongside an oscillating position of critical distance to that object, which is simultaneously recognized as constructed, fantastical, and false. In order to demonstrate this dialectical junction between nostalgia and melodrama, this chapter will take a close look at *Careful* (1992), which serves as an exemplar of both melodramatic excess and nostalgic artifice. To conclude, I will examine the case of when melodramatic desire becomes attached to the past, as it does in *Careful*. As a result, nostalgic artifice disrupts a sense of hegemonic time within a melodramatic framework (where time becomes circular, doubled, non-linear), asserting a “lived” attitude toward time that is grounded in emotion, as an experience of loss.

In order to make this claim, this chapter relies on Peter Brooks' and Thomas Elsaesser's classical melodrama theory (outlined in the 1970s) that says (Sirkian) excess lies at the heart of melodrama. Matthew Buckley sums up this kind of melodrama as “a finely-honed, keenly synthetic, often coldly logical art of excess, developed slowly over centuries by the combined efforts of all manner of affective arts” (23). The rationale for limiting this endeavour to this very specific form of melodrama is twofold:

²³ While such reasons are best left unexamined in this particular project, I would imagine we might make some educated guesses on the roots of this marginalization, with greater and lesser degrees of cynicism.

because Guy Maddin's *Careful* engages with the type of melodramatic emotional "excess" that seems more in line with early American silent film melodrama rather than any other;²⁴ and because "excess" is culturally specific – as Gledhill and Williams point out, "one culture's excess may be another's aesthetic normal" (8). In this way I wish to avoid muddying the waters by applying different culturally specific forms of melodrama to Maddin's films indiscriminately. This is not to suggest, though, that nostalgia or nostalgic artifice might not overlap with other forms of melodrama, nor that the type of melodrama referred to in this project is the default or even broadest form (and to suggest otherwise risks further inscribing the modern American tradition of melodrama as the hegemonic norm). Accordingly, I rely on the term "melodrama" simply as a shorthand for this excess-inscribed brand of melodrama (occasionally containing irony and "cold logic," in Buckley's words), not positing it as a catch-all term, so as to implicitly preserve the complexity and plurality of melodrama's many forms within the bounds of the single word.

This plurality remains important to keep in mind because, as is the case with venturing into nostalgia theory, the melodramatic is similarly multi-faceted and does not comprise a cohesive and singular mode of filmmaking.²⁵ As Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams state in their introduction to their 2018 anthology *Melodrama Unbound*, in spite of customary beliefs to the contrary, "...melodrama has never been limited to the isolated genre of antirealist excess supposed by film studies" (1). This compendium of new scholarship expands the field of melodrama studies, "unbinding" melodrama to

²⁴ William Beard makes the argument that Maddin's filmmaking is a definitively *Canadian* form of melodrama as a result of its cynicism and disavowal of feeling ("Maddin" 90), irony "which sets the spectacle at a distance through its very excessiveness" (91) and rejection of the classical Hollywood model of neat and tidy storytelling (91); yet he also points out that "On the other hand, the historical melodrama that Maddin transports into his films does have classical qualities. Indeed its simplicity and innocence, the wholeheartedness of its fervour, are classical...but it is far from the Hollywood variety" (91).

²⁵ Given that melodrama can be understood as either a genre or a mode depending on context, these terms will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter in tacit endorsement of the "slippage" that already exists between the two approaches to melodramatic texts.

admit transnational forms into the previously narrowly defined area of study.²⁶ In binding together nostalgia and melodrama here, I wish to avoid an overly simplistic comparison between the two that would lead to each uncritically taking on the other's "baggage," whereby nostalgia might pick up melodrama's gendered associations (as an expression of a specifically feminine emotional position) or melodrama might take on a charge of regressiveness (as far as promoting an unhealthy, static outlook on the past). However, I wish to emphasize that some of this "baggage" could be productive – for instance, in conceiving of nostalgia as melodramatic, nostalgia is granted a home in so-called "genres of excess" (as in Linda Williams's well-known formulation). This is because these genres better accommodate visual and auditory artifice and fantasy, given their affective (not realistic) appeal – genres like horror and melodrama could thereby accommodate emotional and visceral proximity to the unreal (the terrifying and the tear-jerking) alongside the recognition that it is a construct, and, often, part of a generic pattern.

ON METHODOLOGIES – WHY MADDIN? WHY CAREFUL?

Guy Maddin's cinema often aligns itself with themes of the past – representations and aesthetics of memory tend to interweave throughout his filmmaking, and his films also rely on a chiefly melodramatic register in their storytelling and formal style. Some films reconstruct Maddin's own past as quasi-autobiographical works, such as his "Me Trilogy,"²⁷ whereas others engage with a more abstract or fantastical sense of pastness; it is this non-indexical engagement with the past that most clearly aligns with nostalgic artifice and will be of concern throughout the textual analysis of *Careful* (an entirely fictitious film). Maddin's filmmaking thereby serves as a condensation of cinematic memory, nostalgia,

²⁶ For instance, *Melodrama Unbound* includes chapters on the melodrama-inflected evolution of Christian imagery and narratives (e.g. reading in melodramatic terms the pietà, mystery plays, and "the reconceptualization of the Passion of Christ within medieval Christianity as a mise-en-scène of empathetic suffering" (Richard Allen 32)); the transnational modern phenomenon of Japanese melodrama ("as a dominant articulation of the persistent crisis of modernity in Japan" (Hannah Airriess 70)); and the "elastic category" of *wenyi*, a form of Chinese melodrama (Zhen Zhang 89); among others.

²⁷ *Cowards Bend the Knee* (2003), *Brand Upon the Brain!* (2006), and *My Winnipeg* (2007).

and melodrama, and represents an ideal object of study for this project. This is especially the case because Maddin's films enact the same push/pull dialectic between proxemics in their staging of both melodramatic and nostalgic tensions, by both drawing into (past-directed) emotion and pushing away from it.

Scholarship on Maddin's works has not been remiss in examining these dialectical features of Maddin's cinema – William Beard, for one, positions this dialectic in terms of Maddin's unique combination of postmodern irony and a naïve wish for the genuine emotion of the past. Beard argues that Maddin “has elaborately reconstructed these old forms [of thought and of filmmaking] because they can carry feelings and beliefs, and varieties of pure aesthetic expression, that are no longer possible in the contemporary environment” (*ItP* 10), and are therefore impossible, and are recognized as such (11); this is, Beard posits, a distinctly personal experience of the past, and as a result, Maddin's films may be seen as effectively manufacturing personal found footage from the past (8). This chapter aligns these contradictory positions of embrace and disavowal of feelings and beliefs within a specifically nostalgic framework, to argue that it is this oscillation between a simultaneous rejection and desire for the past that stages nostalgia, specifically here through melodramatic emotional means.

Beard notes several forms of these dialectics at play in Maddin's films, between juxtaposed and simultaneous moods (21); between positions of disavowal and embrace;²⁸ and between fantasy and reality (66). He writes, “The simultaneity or fusing of these opposite qualities (fantasy-historical-world meaning, real-world ethical knowledge and scepticism) is one iteration of the project going on throughout Maddin's cinema: the project to hold incompatible paradigms somehow together” (66). Other scholars have remarked on similar dialectical tensions in Maddin's work. Carl Matheson has noted that Maddin's films create an emotional distance as a result of an old-fashioned form (137) and

²⁸ On Maddin's 1990 film *Archangel*, Beard says that audiences are placed in a dilemma between an attraction to and derision of “dead beliefs” – idealism and naivete (58).

archetypal characters (137) that are difficult to empathize with (135). However Matheson juxtaposes this distancing in remarking on Maddin's films affective potential (or "emotional immediacy", in Matheson's terms), which he argues function as lived, subjective experiences – as he says, the films are "compelling when viewed as dreams, or, better, nightmares" (133).

Steven Shaviro also has examined these contradictory phenomenological positions between emotional distance and proximity in Maddin's cinema, explaining this dialectic in Maddin's filmmaking through the lens of camp, or, rather, reverse-camp: "it would be wrong to say that emotion is emptied out and turned into camp. The logic is rather the reverse: camp is the enabling condition for a particular kind of emotional expression" (72). Shaviro locates this dialectic specifically within a melodramatic framework marked by excess and the hyperbolic, one that is in line with the tradition of self-conscious melodrama most commonly associated with Douglas Sirk and Rainer Werner Fassbinder (71). He remarks on Maddin's films' melodramatic excess, arguing that the hyperbolic levels of feeling "becom[e] the source of a new kind of alienation effect" (71). Shaviro, like Beard, frames this emotional impetus within Maddin's attitude toward the past, arguing that his films engage with the past self-consciously and from the perspective of the present, portraying the past through stereotypes we hold about it now, in order "not to return to an earlier time, but to dramatize the impossibility of such a return" (73). Shaviro eloquently sums up this connection between dialectical proxemics as an attitude toward the past, writing that Maddin's filmmaking evoke aged genres "in order to produce the sense that everything in them is already past, already out of date, already lost. Another way to put it is that these films are not about remembering, or about bringing the past back to life in the present. Rather, they are about forgetting: watching the present slip away into the past, consigning that past to oblivion, and yet remaining enthralled by such oblivion" (75). Shaviro goes on to contextualize this within nostalgia, specifically an "ironic nostalgia" (76), though he argues that as a result Maddin's films (here *Twilight of the Ice Nymphs* (1997)) exist in a realm of pastness over the present – "Each event in the film is

shadowed by the ghost of all the things that did not happen. That is why the film cannot take place in the fullness of a living present. Things are always in process of fading away and saying their farewells” (78). I would suggest that in fact it is this very position of losing the past, or, rather, recognizing that it is already lost (or, indeed, recognizing it as a past “that never was” (76)) that constitutes being in the present moment: perceiving time over a duration (à la Bergson), or in terms of a past that inheres within the present (à la Deleuze), so that the past is allowed simultaneous presence and non-presence within the present, which is thereby revealed as heterogeneous. This, as we will see, is the sense of temporal disruption at play in nostalgia; melodrama and spectrality (which is of greater concern in Chapter Three) are what provide the framework for this disruption and so enable it to occur, so locating us in a heterogeneous and “lived” present.

Accordingly, this chapter’s case study will consider a film that uses its melodrama to present a nostalgic attitude toward the past. *Careful* has been described as one of Maddin’s most hyper-artificial and melodramatic films, where its use of colour “is perhaps the most deliberately and elaborately artificial concoction ever seen in a narrative film...” (Beard *ItP* 90). In fact, Beard goes beyond melodrama as a generic marker, claiming that Maddin’s brand of melodrama is better regarded as “melodrama” rather than as a part of melodrama proper. In this way, Beard disagrees with Shaviro that Maddin belongs in the same tradition as Sirk and Fassbinder; Beard argues that, for one, nothing like the level of scepticism as a kind of blockage against feeling existed in Sirk’s cinema (“Maddin” 82). Instead, he views Maddin’s dialectical relationship with the past specifically as a function of the postmodern condition (and form of melodrama), because, he writes, our time is one of emotional repression – “Around us now everything that is idealist in culture is endangered, and we see repeatedly the desperate attempts to rediscover and rehabilitate innocence and belief in the face of a ruling sentiment of incredulity and cynicism” (87).

Despite this caveat, it's clear that *Careful* is indeed in most senses a true melodrama. It tells the story of two families embroiled in incestuous and illicit love affairs in the fictional mountain town of Tolzbad. A young couple, Klara and Johann, who are engaged to be married, end up becoming infatuated with their father and mother, respectively. Johann's mother Zenaida betrays her husband's ghost ("living" in the attic with her eldest son Franz) by shacking up with the Nosferatu-esque figure Count Knotkers in his cliffside castle, so that Zenaida's third son Grigorss must duel him to the death over his father's honour. The film's narrative is hyperbolically melodramatic, with its complex love stories, duels, overwrought emotions, and overarching moral imperative (here encouraging utter and total repression of emotions under the threat of oncoming avalanche).²⁹ It is also hyperbolically melodramatic in its music and mise-en-scène, which in classical melodrama theory functions to externalize emotion, for instance through lighting, framing, and set décor (Thomas Elsaesser 52) body language and figural gestures (which can "intentionally leak the character's covert thoughts and emotions" (Helen Day-Mayer and David Mayer 111)) and costume (which can serve as an "extreme display" (Drake Stutesman 289), "expose life beneath the pose" (292) and "'speak' visibility" of marginalized communities (294)); here visual aesthetics serve to externalize feeling, creating a "performative 'language' to express what cannot otherwise be articulated" (E. Deidre Pribram 247). *Careful* then provides us with a melodramatic framework for its hyper-artificial aesthetic, and its concern with the idea of pastness (more than a more indexical representation of a real past), is "something unique – a fantasy on themes from the historical past" (Beard *ItP* 65). The next section considers exactly how this becomes nostalgic artifice.

²⁹ The film's absurdist moral imperative for silence and decorum throughout Tolzbad also works as a self-reflexive commentary on the viewing audience at large, conditioned as we are to adhere to a strict discipline of silent filmgoing, as good and socially upstanding citizens who don't talk during movies.

CAREFUL AND NOSTALGIC ARTIFICE

At its most basic, *Careful* can be read as a representation of melodramatic nostalgic artifice because it uses a melodramatic language of visual excess to invite a phenomenological push/pull dialectic between longing/disavowal (or emotional proximity/distance) to the past and present, which are thereby set in dialogue. Most clearly, this formal nostalgia applies to the visual aesthetics of the film, though it is also echoed in the aural aesthetics and narrative of *Careful* as well, which both create dialectical positions toward past and present. This occurs because, firstly, the overall look of the film's artificiality is emotionally and aesthetically affecting, thereby creating a dialectic of proxemics. As Shaviro writes, "When I watch Maddin's films, I am *absorbed* by beauty, *pulled into* a state of ravishment. At the same time, I am *distanced* by the films' flagrant display of phoniness, their stagy sets and highly mannered acting" (72, emphasis added); here he demonstrates how in watching Maddin's cinema, we are constantly undergoing a dialectical oscillation between positions of distance and proximity. Secondly, this is because in the case of *Careful*, as with many Maddin films, this hyper-artificial film-world appeals directly to an aura of pastness.

This association between artifice and pastness emerges in two ways – through the artificial aesthetic's historical reference to (or stereotype of) the visual style of early days of cinema, with rickety sets looking on the verge of collapse at any moment, and through its artificial, often spectral aesthetic of age, reminiscent of those aesthetics explored by Giuseppina Sapio and by Gil Bartholeyns detailed in the previous chapter; Sapio's essay explores simulated forms of visual nostalgia through low-budget grainy film stock that adds a certain texture and "warmth" to the images (44-46) and Bartholeyns discusses the use of filters which produce artificial burnishing and texture effects to instantly "nostalgise" images (57-62). Both aesthetic representations of pastness are to a degree present in *Careful*, inviting us into this fantasy-past world, and encouraging nostalgia through an affective proximity, where we are drawn into a warm and comforting "pastness" that simultaneously broadcasts its own falsity and its place within

melodrama as affective excess. As audiences we are then invited to behold from shifting positions of proximity and distance a past that is inaccessible, indeed so inaccessible that it never was, belonging only to a realm of fantasy. Through these aesthetics the past is shown to be false – fragmentary, flat, dream-like, vague, immaterial, ephemeral – and the film’s attitude toward that past is as much about remembering as forgetting, emphasizing the amnesiac gaps in reality. In short, this film evokes a nostalgic mood of longing and loss and stages a nostalgic logic between a dialectical embrace and disavowal of pastness.

Careful evokes this first sense of an aged aesthetic by constructing a low-budget fantasy world seemingly held together by glue and paper clips, with grainy film stock, old-fashioned costuming, and stagey melodramatic performances. Many of Tolzbad’s backdrops are painted in a style uninterested in concealing its own artifice; the mine where Klara goes to work looks to be constructed out of papier-mâché; and the town’s trees look like cobbled together stick-and-flower arts and crafts projects – as Beard has said of *Archangel*, “The beauty of the snowfall is undiminished by the fact that it consists of potato flakes” (*ItP* 68). Similarly, the cardboard façades of Tolzbad’s houses and Zenaida’s painted bedroom set both look like they walked straight out of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene 1920) – Beard describes this kind of aesthetic in Maddin’s films as “an aggressively stylized painting of sets and props” (124). This miserly, constructed, and heavily mediated visual quality becomes associated with a pastness we might associate today with early fantasy films like those by Georges Méliès. Melodrama here serves as the enabling logic for this aesthetic excess – as in traditional melodrama theory, melodramatic mise-en-scène expresses repressed interior states of the characters as a form of hysterical loss of emotional control. Here, past-directed longing (i.e. nostalgia) for the naïve illusion connoted by this historical reference (whether or not it bears out with how audiences actually engaged with these films in the past), expresses itself through the aesthetics and visual form of the film. Nostalgia thereby

becomes a formal property in *Careful* and functions as the bearer of affective meaning in the melodramatic tradition.

Careful also evokes an aesthetic of pastness through (artificially created) indexical markers of age, where the imagery and sounds become spectral, “lost” to time, existing in a liminal space somewhere between past and present; this largely becomes the case because of filters that distort and blur the images, and the poor audio quality with scratchy ambient noise, both of which make the film look and feel somewhat degraded. This aged aesthetic is similarly distancing and emotionally affective, both distorted and heavily mediated while also being aesthetically attractive. At times some shots resemble classical paintings in their compositions, dramatically framing figures against painted backdrops, rendered in soft focus and lighting. These aesthetics invite the audience into this artificial world, encouraging us through an emotional appeal to look “back” to these images from the “past” and this mode of being in the world with fondness, when this style and melodramatic narrative were supposedly more accepted (at least from our privileged position in the present). And yet, in the overt artificiality of the style, especially in the excessive obscuring of the content of the sounds and images, *Careful* sets up a dialectical position of critical distance to that past, as far as it is shown to be always mediated, products of construction and pure fantasy, and therefore absurdly incongruous with the present (real) world; however, the nostalgic dimension to this encourages us to yearn all the more for this impossibly lost past. In this way, *Careful* employs nostalgic artifice, allowing nostalgia as a push/pull dialectic and past-directed emotion to inhere within the very form and aesthetics of the film.

The film’s characters are also nostalgic, longing for the simplicity of the past while recognizing the impossibility of recovering that past; this sentiment is directly articulated by Klara in her exclamation that “One can’t live in the past!” – of course, though, the film admits through its nostalgic logic that this recognition does not stop our desire to do so. The film repeatedly dramatizes the consequences of past emotions dwelling uncritically in the present, especially through the incestuous love felt by Klara and

Johann. *Careful* presents its characters as longing for childhood, a time when their unconditional love and their desires for their parents were innocent and pure; however, carried forward into the present of their adult lives without any recognition of their proper (distanced) place in the past, these feelings, as a form of nostalgia, become excessive and distorted, out of place, and wrong.³⁰ The film repeatedly positions Klara, Johann, and Grigorss as nostalgics allowed to indulge themselves in the past (or, rather, the “past”) by taking on the role of small children, who must be told not to talk to strangers (as Johann and Grigorss leave for Butler School), and who desire nothing more than to shack up with their parent in the mountains to tell each other stories (in Klara’s case). These desires for and from childhood are presented as perverted and hyperbolic when uncritically transplanted into these characters’ adult lives – for instance, Zenaida’s rubbing goose grease on Grigorss’s chest just like when he was “a little boy” takes on a disturbingly sensual, even sexual connotation when applied to an adult man.

Beard explains this emotional interplay between childhood and adulthood in Maddin’s films within a postmodernist framework. He writes that “Encasing powerful feelings in such impossible forms” effectively conjures the emotional intensity of childhood (“Maddin and Melodrama” 87). He goes on to point out that the impossibility contained within the melodramatic form renders these childhood experiences out of reach and even “grotesque” when transplanted into our adult lives (87). However, I believe it is also useful to consider Maddin’s presentation of childhood desires in nostalgic and melodramatic terms. In this sense, the characters of *Careful* stage a nostalgic logic where a nostalgic or emotional bond with the past is shown to be incomplete, wrong, or even dangerous without being set at enough of a distance; *Careful* thereby reinforces the necessity of considering nostalgia’s other half – its inbuilt recognition that its longing is for a time not only impossibly incompatible with the present, but a

³⁰ Too great a proximity to emotion in general in this film is shown to be perverse and unhealthy when those emotions are allowed to exist without some qualifying sense of distance – Johann, for instance, whose emotions are rendered too close, too external, lying too close to the surface, comes across as cloying – even unsettling – in his eagerness to please.

time that is also false, an element of melodramatic fantasy when removed (irrevocably) from its original context. In this film, then, the emotions that come bubbling up from the past in the form of aesthetics and characters' desires are rendered excessive and dangerous without being qualified by a necessary sense of distance – a recognition that this longing belongs to fantasy, not reality.

This nostalgic collapse of time and proxemics is mirrored in other aspects of *Careful's* form, particularly in its soundtrack and script, which oscillate from being emotionally and physically too close to positions of extreme distance. The film often places sounds uncomfortably, even unpleasantly close-by, such as when Klara calls out to Johann toward the beginning of the film – she is framed in long shot, her body almost entirely obscured by haze and clutter in the *mise-en-scène* (and thus her frame is set at an extreme visual distance), yet her voice emerges as if right next to the camera, creating a confusion between any coherent sense of proximity or distance. An analogous confusion and oscillation in *emotional proxemics* also occur in the script, which often presents intensely emotional (and often clichéd) phrases delivered in a Brechtian manner. At times the script veers toward real affect and even at times poetry (e.g. Herr Trotta's monologue on Tolzbad's mountains: "...Look at the ripples, wrinkles in the rock. The fearful passage of the wind is etched in the very stone, like a scream that never ends..."), though this is always undermined with a return to ironic distance, whether it be through Brechtian acting or bizarre turns of phrase. For instance, during the heartfelt confrontation between Gigorss and Zenaida over her maternal rejection of Franz, the conversation shifts incongruously with Zenaida's distressed exclamation that she has a hairball in her throat.

Ultimately, these narrative dialectics between emotional (and physical) proximity and distance merely reinforce the same dialectics at play in the film's aesthetic mood and logic, which stage similarly contradictory and oscillating phenomenological positions between emotional proximity (a longing for the past) and critical distance (where that past is recognized to be fantasy, pure melodrama). Both narrative and aesthetics reinforce the sense that past desires which inhere within the present are in

some way displaced or even perverse – *Careful* demonstrates that without a sense of nostalgic distance there are potentially catastrophic consequences to nostalgic emotion. The implications of such a dialectical position root the nostalgic in the present moment, one both attached to and set at a remove from the fantasy-past. The following section will explore how this melodramatic dynamic between past and present splinters time into its overlapping constituent parts and centres the nostalgic on an emotional (melodramatic) attitude toward time that is not objective but “lived.”

CAREFUL'S MELODRAMATIC TIME

We've seen how nostalgic artifice operates throughout the film's form and narrative in two ways – by creating a self-reflexive mood of nostalgia for a past that is recognized as fantasy, and by invoking a logic that renders sickly and incongruous a longing for the past that is not tempered with a recognition of the present. This brand of nostalgia takes place inside the framework of melodrama, allowing emotion to melodramatically inhere in the formal properties of the film (as with melodramatic hysteria and visual excess), and structuring the excessive attachment to the past within a simultaneous recognition of its own artifice, as is the case with many melodramas, which ask us to feel even as we recognize the contrivances and artifice which enable those feelings. The implications of this specifically melodramatic brand of nostalgia in *Careful* is that time becomes warped by the emotion invoked – borders between past and present collapse and the ideal of homogenous, objective time is undermined, or splintered into its heterogeneous parts, rendered cyclical and coloured by emotion, rooting us in a phenomenological subjective experience of time, where the past is both “never now” (an inaccessible fantasy) and an indomitable part of the present moment. This is a melodramatic approach to time given that melodrama too exists in a present emotionally joined to the past and often involves temporal disruptions and disarrangements to draw out the maximum emotional potential. In this way, nostalgic time overlaps with melodramatic time, as both involve a confusion of past and present bound together by emotion (often one based in desire).

The temporal disruption inherent to melodrama has been treated by many scholars of melodrama theory. Katherine Biers in her recent analysis of theatrical melodrama, makes the point that an on-stage clock has the potential to “evok[e] the alternative forms of temporal experience found in memory or dream” (321), and thereby stands to undermine the sense of an externally validated, hegemonic, or “productive” time, instead emphasizing the importance of lived, emotional time that cannot be represented objectively (321). Biers implies that this melodramatic temporal disruption can be caused by opposing different forms of time through the temporally disjunctive presence of this stage clock, which serves to “reduc[e] the transcendent, symbolic melodramatic picture to a time-bound performance” (323). Jane M. Gaines has also recently considered melodrama’s relation to and disruption of historical time (or the sense that time is linear and asymmetrical – that the now divides the past from the future). She argues that melodrama is concerned with “the innocent ‘past now’” which is impossible to access without the melodramatic trope of the coincidence and “chance time” which effectively reverses temporality itself (“Tears” 332). She argues that this chance time also rejects the hegemony of historical time, given that through this desire to turn back the clock and manufacture a happy ending melodrama thereby might “buck the givens of historical time” (338). Elsewhere Gaines argues that melodrama serves to respond to anxieties and uncertainties over “The constant replacement of one time with another” (“Melodrama” 98) in the context of women’s filmmaking. She posits that while the genre generally reinforces the sense that the boundaries between past, present, and future cannot be dismantled completely, “it also devises ways around them” (101). She specifically focuses on the coincidence as an event that folds together times that should have remained apart, collapsing the “presence” of the now with the “absence” of the before now, effectively “doubling” the now – “In other words, the coincidence ‘defeats time’ by overriding *historical time*...” (108). Gaines goes on to point out that the coincidence in melodrama thereby undermines the idea of causality, where one

event begets another (109). In Gaines's conception, the coincidence reveals time to be heterogeneous – "that no 'now' is ever left completely alone" (110).

The narrative melodramatic staple of the coincidence does emerge in *Careful* in the case of the (in)opportune death of Count Knotkers's mother, as it allows Zenaida to finally express her love for the Count and thus force the tragic climax of the film. This coincidence reconciles Zenaida's past and future, collapsing a lifetime of loneliness with a future long-desired but never acknowledged. However, there are also several other examples of the collapsing/doubled now in the film, particularly as represented by the spectral figures of Zenaida's husband and Franz, both figures who hover between life and death, present and past, and so disrupt any sense that time is an uncomplicated, linear, and homogenous construct. Franz, while (theoretically) still alive, is entombed in the attic, sitting corpselike among the cobwebs, effectively paralyzed³¹ – he also embodies a conjunction of times between an impossible past and dead future (he "never could walk, never could speak"), effectively becoming an embodiment of the "never now," trapped eternally between times. He is also on occasion rendered a ghostly and transparent figure superimposed onto the attic setting alongside his dead father. Franz's father (Zenaida's husband) is the film's most liminal figure, haunting between past and present; he is a dreaming ghost, asking upon "waking" in the world of the living if he is indeed awake.³²

This spectral aesthetic becomes aligned with nostalgia as a conjoining of a fantasy-past and present at the end of *Careful* when Grigorss, dying, hallucinates a return home to his mother and father, also rendered in spectral visual language. This scene bonds past and present through affect (specifically Grigorss's longing for his childhood) and once again sets up dialectical positions between affective proximity to the scene and emotional distance, given the heavy green filter covering the image and the immateriality of the scene. William Beard has also weighed in on the importance of scene, positioning it

³¹ Franz is repeatedly presented as a voyeur, surveying the events of the film from a distance. His paralysis and inaction also might be read as a commentary on the viewing audience.

³² Further implications of the spectral figure will be drawn out in the following chapter.

as nostalgic, as it results from a “longing for some originary wholeness and belonging” (*ItP* 113). He also draws attention to the impossibility and fantasy that undergirds this nostalgia: “But of course the family is not reconstituted, and the fantasy-reconstitution that Grigorss hallucinates has essential differences from actuality...” (113), going on to say that “Once again it is the prospect of loss that underlies this fantasy of fulfilment” (113). Here then nostalgia overlaps and splits the “now,” revealing it to be layered within a heterogenous blend of “other” times joined through affective bonds; this serves to disturb to the common sense of notion of time as proceeding linearly and homogenously.

This division and play with time, where the now is fractured into convergences between past (or the “never-now”) doesn’t just occur in *Careful* in the case of the melodramatic coincidence and nostalgic-spectral aesthetics, but also as a result of reused footage and the repeated sonic motif of the echo. The “now” becomes doubled in each case, so that the past is allowed to carry forward into the present – the main example of the former occurs when the footage of Klara’s fantasy-version of her father’s death is reused for his real death (through it is contextualized through additional footage, and presented with a blue instead of purple filter) – this collapses past (specifically connoted here with the notion of fantasy) and present. In addition, throughout the film echoing voices create a doubling effect, portraying an eruption from the past as a distant and yet altogether “too close” form in the present. At times the echoing voices, like Klara’s in the mines as she calls after her father that he forgot his gloves, fail to fade away, instead simply repeating so that the sound loops impossibly, refusing to diminish over time. This effectively multiplies the now and disrupts the bounds between past and present, reinforcing the idea that each is layered within the other. The echo here serves a dialectical function, bringing past together with present in an at times absurd (distancing), at times emotionally affecting ways, such as with Grigorss’s echoing gunshots when he is trying to kill Klara’s father by setting off an avalanche at the climax of the film, or when the hyperbolically amplified echo of Grigorss’s tear falling causes a second avalanche and his death at the end of the film. These echoes depict the past, a fantasy space associated

with emotion, as intruding on the present, with catastrophic consequences if not set at a great enough distance.

This operation of the echo as external carrier of emotion takes place in a specifically melodramatic framework, resonating with such work as Ira Bhaskar's on Indian film melodrama. She argues that sound in these films operates melodramatically, so that emotion comes to exist externally from characters through the operation of the voice. Bhaskar claims that the Indian film song allows a sense of resonance between human being and nature through the operation of the voice (264) so that "the cosmos itself seems to reverberate with human emotion" (264). "What I am suggesting here," writes Bhaskar, "is that the stylized amplification and exteriorizing of emotion via the song, combined with visual expressionist idioms, particularly the use of dramatic chiaroscuro lighting, created a cinematic grammar for a realization of interiority and the articulation of desire" (264). In these terms, *Careful's* use of the echo occurs as a specifically melodramatic emotion because it locates its nostalgia externally – within the aesthetics, setting, and formal structure of the film.

Careful's melodramatic and nostalgic time does not simply fracture the present or double the now, it also has the potential to render time circular. This is generally accepted to be a feature of melodramatic narrative – Tania Modleski in her seminal 1984 article on time and desire examines how emotional loss establishes a "hysterical" (330) relationship to time bound by "repetition and return" (336), as opposed to Hollywood narratives which typically encourage progressive movement (330). Christine Gledhill has also remarked on this trope's continued relevance in contemporary melodrama, writing, "However, coincidence, circularity, chance, repetition, and deus-ex-machina interventions enact the malevolence of circumstances (too late) or the fortuitous happenstance of good luck (in the nick of time) precisely because of their incredibility. They materialize unfathomable and uncontrollable forces working through and around individual lives" (xxii). This circularity is achieved in *Careful* primarily through the operation of desire, which is shown to be generationally transmittable – Johann's

infatuation with his mother is revealed to be a function of his father's desire living on in the house, unsatisfied; in this way, the film depicts the past infringing on the present through the bond of emotion. Again, this takes place in a melodramatic framework where the film allows emotion to inhere externally, in the setting itself. Nostalgia as an emotional bond between past and present becomes uncontrollable through the mechanism of melodramatic excess, which functions as a sort of contagion present in the environment. Johann, without the requisite sense of distance to keep him rooted in the present, succumbs to desires from and for the past, in a sort of cautionary tale on becoming lost in an uncritical form of nostalgia, and trapping oneself in a temporally circular and paralyzing loop of desire.

CONCLUSIONS

Nostalgia's alignment with melodramatic time in *Careful* asserts a sense of subjective, lived time. The kind of temporal splitting, overlapping, doubling, and cycling that occurs throughout the film does not correspond with an objective reality of time – rather, it represents a subjective temporal experience, one determined by lived reality and emotion. This occurs throughout *Careful*, as the film distorts its relationship to time through the subjective lens of its characters and the strength of their emotions (sorrow, longing) as well as the film's own expressed desires for the past. Nostalgic and melodramatic time, then, assert that the present is affectively bound to the past, and so complicate the notion of the "now" as a discrete and homogeneous point in time. Both melodrama and nostalgia derive the depth and meaning of their affect from the sense that the past is immaterial, absent, or otherwise lost to time, and the past is thereby shown to be forever inaccessible, rendered in the language of fantasy. In this way, this dialectical position of desiring the impossible, of longing for loss, effectively roots the nostalgic in the present moment, from which that loss and longing is lived, or otherwise felt affectively and viscerally. In this sense, not only does melodramatic nostalgia rupture time, it also carves out a space for a subjective experience of time, where, to a temporally bound nostalgic subject, the experience of passing time becomes an experience of loss.

Gaines points out that this notion of loss can become bound up in ideologies of indexicality and historicity, especially when considered in a digital postmodern context which “yearn[s] for a reality intact, ‘before the fall,’ prefatory to distortion and disconnection, or the worst ‘loss’ – complete eradication” (“Object Lessons” 77). She also notes that loss is bound to the idea of time as irreversible (76), and that it can become associated with a “privileging an original reality and associating it with the authentic and ‘the true’” (76). Gaines positions this ideology of loss within a melodramatic logic, concerned as it is with “that which is no longer” (77). However, while it is important to recognize that the notion of loss is an ideological, historically bound construct, it remains the case that the idea of loss has the power to structure our response to time as temporal beings trapped in the unidirectional stream or “arrow” of time. A nostalgic perspective on passing time allows us to mourn, even yearn, for that which is no longer, while recognizing that this loss also represents what we never had, relegating “the authentic and the true” to a realm of pure fantasy. In this sense, the ability to consider time in emotional terms does not preclude a simultaneous, dialectical emotional and critical recognition of the distance that separates us from other times, just as it makes the now we live in heterogeneously complex. In explaining how the past and present conjoin and break apart through the mechanism of emotion, this chapter explored nostalgia’s links to melodrama. In the following chapter, this further nostalgic breakdown of the now into its constituent parts will be examined using the framework of spectral theory through an analysis of Guy Maddin’s *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin’s Diary* (2002).

Chapter Three: Spectrality and Nostalgia in Guy Maddin's *Dracula*

In addition to being melodramatic, nostalgia is also ghostly – to be nostalgic involves in some way wavering between the past and present. In metaphorical terms, the nostalgic experience also represents a liminal haunting between two irreconcilable positions, of desire for and disavowal of a past loss that is impossible to recover. This alignment between spectrality and nostalgia allows the former to seep into nostalgia studies largely unrecognized, floating through the field in an appositely liminal fashion; nostalgia scholars repeatedly conjure the ghostly as they write of nostalgia's ability to revivify the past, of its tension between "vanishing and returning," and its overall impressions of haziness and indistinction.³³ But the basis and implications of this connection between the nostalgic and the spectral deserve further elaboration – in this context, what paradigms and tools does spectrality theory afford nostalgia studies? This chapter will suggest that nostalgia, when conceived as a spectral logic, language, and aesthetic, presents a temporal outlook that dismantles our modern conception of time as objective, linear, and shared, into its constituent, heterogeneous parts. To do so, this chapter follows the work of Bliss Cua Lim on the supernatural, fantastic, and spectral and their roles in de-homogenizing time. Accordingly, this chapter treats nostalgia specifically in terms of its formal logic, which creates a push/pull dynamic between past and present, and between emotional proximity and critical distance. It is from within this logic that spectrality and nostalgia become joined in the aesthetic of spectral-nostalgic artifice, which, as we will see, serves as an alternative aesthetic approach to the dialectics of nostalgia.

Recall from Chapters One and Two that nostalgic artifice, even as a particularly critical form of nostalgia – that is, one that recognizes the falsity and fantasy of its *noema* (its object of thought) – allows some form of the past (however artificial or fantastical) to inhere in and shape the present. Unlike popular conceptions of time, memory, or history which allow the past to persist in the present as

³³ See, for example, Crowell (99), Niemeyer ("Introduction" 13), Guesdon and Le Guern (78), and Potts (220).

an objective imprint, trace, or index, however, nostalgic artifice renders the past pure artifice and fantasy. At the same time, nostalgia renders this fantasy affectively and phenomenologically powerful (something to long for), and as a result of these contrary positions of critical recognition and emotional embrace of this fantasy, nostalgia's *noema* becomes simultaneously absent and present – spectral – in the lived moment. This spectral dimension is always an underlying aspect of nostalgia, though as a formal logic and aesthetic, it emerges when nostalgic artifice joins the supernatural in modes of filmmaking like Lindsey Green-Simms's occult melodrama. Here supernatural-nostalgic ghosts become figures of longing rather than fear, like *Careful's* ghostly father figure discussed in the previous chapter.

Guy Maddin's *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary* (2002) serves as this chapter's case study for spectral-nostalgic artifice, as its formal nostalgia coalesces around spectral figures from other times (including eras of silent film and folklore) which linger on discontinuously in the present. The film links these other times with the generic, the supernatural, and the fantastic, so that it is not necessarily the true past which haunts the present, but rather "another time." This other time is one of fantasy, not necessarily anterior to the now, but absent and therefore rendered immiscible³⁴ to our own, belonging instead to the realms of fantasy, dream, or dance. In this way, *Dracula* demonstrates that we cannot bring the past (to which we are nostalgically attracted and attached) unproblematically into our present, just as we cannot smoothly integrate silent film codes or the ghostly and vampiric into our present without "splitting" homogeneous time. The film allows these "other times" to remain unmoored and discontinuous from one another, disrupting any sense of teleology or progress that might allow disparate times to be linked through the logic of history. Instead, what is seemingly "past" (e.g. the lost logic of superstition or naïveté) becomes aligned with fantasy – that which is entirely inaccessible, in other words: the fantasy-past becomes forever lost.

³⁴ As in heterogeneous, remaining separate and in layers. The immiscibility of temporalities suggests the possibility of different times occupying atypical non-linear relationships, where different pasts, presents, and futures might sit adjacently or in layers atop one another as opposed to a flattening across a single, homogenous timeline.

As with nostalgic artifice proper, then, spectral-nostalgic artifice also presents an affective-critical dialectic, where the past-as-fantasy exists in the present as locus of irretrievable desire, as affectively and phenomenologically powerful, tangible, and visceral, even as it broadcasts its own falsity and discontinuity within the present. However, by conceiving of nostalgia in a spectral context, this chapter provides an alternate route toward a nostalgic aesthetic that is similarly based in the push/pull dialectic of longing for falsity and loss. This approach differs slightly from the logic of nostalgic artifice of prior chapters. While on the one hand, we may conceive of spectral-nostalgic as simply transplanting nostalgic artifice into a spectral context, this also results in a different aesthetic priority, toward a hazy and indistinct image, often associated with low-budget aesthetics, rather than a hyper-adorned and hyper-saturated mise-en-scène. However, on the other hand, this changed formal priority allows the spectral aesthetics themselves to articulate the logic of nostalgia-as-haunting in their own right – as an aesthetic of longing for and denial of a past-fantasy that works as an independent route to nostalgic artifice, though one that is similarly rooted in a dialectical relationship between past and present. It will be this latter mode of spectral-nostalgic artifice that is of chief concern throughout this chapter – that which is nostalgic as far as it is spectral, where the notion of artificiality inheres in fantastical nature of the spectre rather than necessarily in simply an artificial mise-en-scène. However, the formal logic and phenomenological effect of both basic nostalgic artifice and spectral nostalgia remain the same, given that both create a dialectic between affective proximity and critical distance, where the fantasy-past sets up an oscillating spectatorial position between an embrace and recognition of falsity. In this sense, *Dracula*, as an example of spectral filmmaking, demonstrates nostalgic artifice not only because it is melodramatic and artificial, but more importantly because it articulates through its spectral logic that familiar nostalgic dialectic between past and present, where fantasy-bound “other times” are set at an emotional proximity to and critical distance from the fulcrum point of the now.

SPECTRALITY AND HETEROGENEOUS TIME

Several key theories articulate the links between spectrality and heterogeneous time and, as a result, help explain how spectral-nostalgic artifice has the power to unsettle temporalities and critique conceptions of homogeneous time. The first is Tom Gunning's work on vision and new media, the ghostly, and Spirit Photography. Using a Derridean framework, he examines the history of the spectre as an optical phenomenon, pointing out that spectral transparency as a visual trope is a construction originating in the thirteenth century (103) that functions as iconography expressing a spectral logic: that of a so-called "ontological waver" (104), between the physically present and the unreal (100). He goes on to say that this phantasmatic spectral iconography "oscillate[s] between visibility and invisibility, presence and absence, materiality and immateriality" (99), as phantoms that exist at "the limit (or contradiction) of visibility" (98). Gunning frames the ghostly in terms of the two fundamental fantasies: the phantasmatic body and the untimeliness of the ghostly, "a return of the past not in the form of memory or history but in a contradictory experience of presence, contained, as Derrida has shown us, in the term *haunting*" (117). He draws repeated attention to the power of the spectral and its links to imagination and fantasy, claiming that phantasms are "the vehicle of our dreams or desires, our phantasies, and even our delusions" (122). For Gunning, then, spectres are linked to unsettled temporalities, as well as to fantasy and desire; it is this conception of the spectral that serves as the foundation of spectral-nostalgic artifice.

This connection between spectrality, fantasy, and temporality is further explored by Bliss Cua Lim in her 2009 book *Translating Time*, where she lays out a critique of homogeneous time using the philosophy of Henri Bergson. She argues that the supernatural (and as a subset of this, the spectral) serves as a critique of objective historical time, which empty and homogenous, simultaneous across space (78), a "Socially constituted time [that] is abstract and anonymous..." (71), one that is in conflict with one's "inner time" (70); in other words, homogenous time serves as an ideological construct that

often goes unchallenged in our modern daily lives. Lim writes that this construction of an objective, shared time “obscures the ceaselessly changing plurality of our existence in time...” (11), invoking Bergson’s durational time as a representation of our subjective, lived temporal experience, where the past exists alongside the present. She demonstrates that the supernatural disrupts this hegemonic ideal of homogeneous linear time by revealing the existence of what Lim calls “immiscible times” – that is, “multiple times that never quite dissolve into the code of modern time consciousness, discrete temporalities incapable of attaining homogeneity with or full incorporation into a uniform chronological present” (12). By invoking the fantastic,³⁵ the supernatural, and the phantasmatic, Lim shows how temporal multiplicity may be asserted over the assumption that modern society has overcome its enchantment³⁶ with the supernatural (251) and the marvelous, which, she writes, lies “at the heart of the modern” (100). This is because the supernatural – often the spectral – disrupts the ideology of progress and the teleology of modern and premodern time, by bringing spectres from premodern thinking (superstitions, figures of folk legend)³⁷ into the present. Lim explains that “The supernatural is often rationalized as a figure for history or disparaged as an anachronistic vestige of primitive, superstitious thought. But from an alternate perspective it discloses the limits of historical time, the frisson of secular historiography’s encounter with temporalities emphatically at odds with and not fully

³⁵ Tzvetan Todorov’s literary genre of the fantastic serves as a reference point for Lim throughout her book. She argues that the fantastic can often serve as a means of critiquing homogeneous time by revealing that it is merely a translation, a result of its tension and immiscibility between the natural and supernatural times. She writes, “the fantastic has a *propensity* toward temporal critique, a tendency to reveal that homogeneous time is not ‘reality’ but rather a translation, because the persistence of supernaturalism tends to insinuate the limits of disenchantment” (26, original emphasis). This is because “The fantastic narrative translates the plural times of worlds that affirm the existence of the supernatural into the secularism of modern homogeneous time” (32).

³⁶ Lim’s notion of enchantment is inspired by Max Weber’s association between modernity and disenchantment: “Disenchantment refers to the ways in which enchantment—the felt mysteriousness and fundamental unknowability of the world—has given way to calculative knowledge” (Lim 22).

³⁷ Lim takes as one of her central examples of the primitive supernatural (something that can “demonstrate the permeability of disparate worlds” (127)) the Phillipine folk superstition-born figure of the aswang, a figure which also coincidentally (or perhaps not so coincidentally) has featured in Maddin’s 2015 film in collaboration with Evan Johnson: *The Forbidden Room*.

miscible to itself" (2). Bringing the supernatural in contact with the modern world thereby serves a disruptive function, dislodging common sense notions of reality and temporality.

Lim also expands on the link between nostalgia and spectrality, as she views both as sharing the allegorical³⁸ ability to revivify the past from a position of distance. She writes, "the point to redeeming the value of something at a distance, just as it has declined, is that there is no way to apprehend it objectively, without distortion. In these films [*Rouge* and *Haplos*³⁹], nostalgia is not mere distortion but a position, an allegorical one, from which to read and revalue the ruins around which ghosts have gathered" (160). This fundamental distance/presence binary that defines nostalgia thereby expressly links it to spectrality as both involve interplay between the fantastical and affective nature of the past and the distance created from within the position of the present.

One kind of filmmaking that plays at exactly this overlap and collision between the supernatural and the natural is Lindsey Green-Simms's occult melodrama. In her study on West African video-film, she outlines these films as concerned with occult themes and narratives within a melodramatic framework, where instead of projecting repressed emotions into excessive mise-en-scènes, "In the occult melodrama genre of Nollywood and Ghallywood, unrepresentable desires and fears are channeled through the supernatural and, more specifically, the diabolical" (28). She specifies that this type of film is influenced by Pentecostalism, where occult melodrama texts "present a world in which supernatural forces operate side by side with the daily lived realities of postcolonial precariousness" (31). In Green-Simms's occult melodrama, the supernatural becomes aligned with the politics of melodramatic excess, as that which subverts, that which cannot be contained within a hegemonic system. In the following section, we will see how in Maddin's *Dracula*, these supernatural elements

³⁸ Lim explains this connection between nostalgia and allegory as follows: "The selfsame distance that allows nostalgia to appropriate the affective value of an object for another time is that very distance that enables allegorical objects to be seized, rescued, and invested with new meanings, thereby reclaiming concerns so estranged or remote as to have almost vanished from memory" (160).

³⁹ Both New Cinema ghost films: *Haplos* (Butch Perez 1982) and *Rouge* (Stanley Kwan 1987).

condense around the idea of spectral nostalgia – where the supernatural, as an expression of desire and excess, haunts between the past and present according to Gunning’s “ontological waver.”

DRACULA’S SPECTRAL-NOSTALGIC ARTIFICE

Dracula: Pages from a Virgin’s Diary is a dance film that restages the Royal Winnipeg Ballet’s adaptation of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. It features the familiar characters from Stoker’s lore, including Dr. Van Helsing, Renfield, Lucy, Mina, Jonathan Harker, and of course, Dracula himself. The film tells the story of Dracula’s seductions of Lucy and Mina through the mode of silent narrative filmmaking, the soundscape featuring only a classical music soundtrack and disjunctive sound effects. In the first half of the film, Lucy is killed by Dracula after (in)advertently inviting him into her home, upon which she awakens from her grave undead and is then subsequently killed again, this time through the combined efforts of her fervid suitors and Dr. Van Helsing. At the end of the film Dracula is impaled on a wooden stake after he abducts Lucy’s best friend Mina and is confronted by Harker and Van Helsing in a mountain cave.

This film serves as an intersection point between the spectral-supernatural, melodrama, and nostalgia. Despite the generic markers and moniker, the film is not a true horror film – it has no horror affect or atmosphere, and the gruesome is rendered in the sanitized language of dance, as in the case with Lucy’s and Dracula’s dramatic death scenes. Instead, the film’s supernatural elements, primarily Dracula and the vampyrs⁴⁰ of the film sit discontinuously alongside a melodramatic storyline and ballet performance, as a varied form of Green-Simms’s occult melodrama where supernatural and fantasy realms overlap with the modern world. *Dracula’s* depiction of the modern world is primarily present through its self-reflexive political allegory that draws attention to the film’s modern consciousness and ironic attitude toward past beliefs. Each of *Dracula’s* disparate aspects split the film’s present moment

⁴⁰ This chapter will refer to *Dracula’s* vampiric figures as vampyrs according to the spelling in the film’s intertitles. This spelling emphasizes vampires’ roots in folklore and a “primitive” past, possibly referring back to the seminal 1819 short story “The Vampyre” by John William Polidori.

into heterogeneous parts – into worlds of the past and worlds of dream, and so enable and fuel the spectral dimensions of the film as a wavering between “nowness” and “another time.” In so doing, the film emphasizes that, as with nostalgia, discontinuities and impossibilities arise from bringing spectres from the past into the present. It is in positing these affective/critical (dis)connections, the film portrays a specifically spectral approach to nostalgia’s temporal dialectics.

Dracula serves as an example of spectral-nostalgic artifice because it sets up those nostalgic phenomenological positions of distance and proximity toward immiscible temporalities, so that the nostalgic longing for those lost times coincides with the recognition that these lost times are false, belonging within the context of the spectral and the fantastic. Here the film goes further than *Careful* in aligning the past with that which is inaccessible, as in *Dracula* the past belongs to another world entirely – one of the supernatural, which might only touch the world of the everyday in contradictory and discontinuous ways. Just as with the artificial aesthetics of nostalgic artifice, spectral nostalgia creates an aura of pastness that locates an immiscible time elsewhere, belonging to supernatural time as a form of fantasy world. In *Dracula*, nostalgic aesthetics primarily communicate this idea of spectrally “other” times by relying on a hazy and indistinct overall mood (of reduced visibility), a low-budget aesthetic that relies on silent film era codes, disjunctive sound, and cinematographic temporal manipulation that locates the diegesis in a heterogeneous present, nostalgically and spectrally bound to an immiscible past that gives shape to and jarringly haunts the present.

This film is in some ways quite typical of Maddin’s filmmaking, concerned as it is with themes of the past and relying heavily on the language of silent film to tell its stories. However, in some ways this film is quite different – like *Careful*, it does not contain overt autobiographical elements as do other films by Maddin, and so does not relate its nostalgia to a truthful, indexical past. William Beard in his discussion of Maddin’s *Dracula* describes the film as a departure from Maddin’s previously irony-fueled projects. Instead, Beard argues that unlike earlier Maddin films, this film no longer feels inadequate at

portraying innocence in the modern era, given that it “lovingly build[s] a Maddinian edifice on top of a lyrically formalized contemporary ballet – and on a photogenic period subject which comes ready furnished with a stock of, as it were, quoted poetic images of its characters and situations” (*ItP* 187). And though the film still depicts codes and beliefs from the past, as with much of Maddin’s oeuvre, Beard claims that this film, unlike other Maddin films, sets up a clear contrast between past perspectives and modern attitudes (187), with ultimately “no sympathy for the older system” (186). While I believe this point is valid, it also does not preclude the film’s disavowal of the past in other ways. I argue that it does so mainly by pointing out its irreconcilability with the present. Indeed, *Dracula* is still filmed and executed with visual affect and nostalgic artifice, with its beautiful-artificial sets and staging, being in some ways more visually appealing than any other of Maddin’s films as a result of its haunting and rhythmic ballet sequences, existing in their own temporality beyond that of the narrative itself, but this is also presented as an abstract and almost-hermetic realm of dance and dream that sits awkwardly next to the other temporalities of the film. So while *Dracula* clearly derides and distances itself from some aspects from the past, just as clearly it also embraces their affective power and appeal. In this way, the film operates as nostalgic artifice just the same as earlier films like *Careful* with its much heavier doses of mockery and irony.

In attempting to read *Dracula*’s supernatural elements as expressions of nostalgia (i.e. as spectral-nostalgic artifice), this chapter finds much in common with Stefan W. Schmidt’s study on Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Nostalghia*. In this article, Schmidt makes the point that the film conflates nostalgia⁴¹ and spectrality, writing: “What Tarkovsky’s movie *Nostalghia* shows is how the spatio-temporality of the present is ‘haunted’ by the superimposed appearance of the past. Nostalgia is a movement of seeping

⁴¹ Nostalgia in Schmidt’s conception is framed primarily by Edward Casey’s and Jeff Malpas’s works. Schmidt argues that his specific brand of nostalgia is involuntary (28) and embodied (32), involves imagination (31), and is ultimately temporal in nature (28). In these respects, his nostalgia largely matches nostalgic artifice except for its involuntary and potentially uncritical, obsessive nature; Schmidt writes that nostalgia reinvokes the past and thereby it “turns into fixation, thereby becoming the only reality,” where “new experiences are devalued” (36).

returns...” (27). Schmidt discusses the film’s “seamless transition between past and present, the entwinement of memory and imagination” (35) and its past which “haunts” its present through the imagination (36). In the rest of this chapter, I would like to push Schmidt’s nostalgic-spectral logic further into the realm of aesthetics, by expanding on how spectral nostalgia becomes linked to an interplay between presence and absence. However, as we will see, spectral-nostalgic artifice does not simply smoothly integrate past and present, but instead allows a radical splitting and discontinuity between the two to emphasize that any attempt to revivify the past is a product of fantasy.

Dracula’s nostalgic artifice is primarily spectral – it is not hyper-coloured or visually linked to Christine Sprengler’s Fifties populuxe aesthetics in the same way basic nostalgic artifice is (though the film’s final moments do feature a brilliantly pastel painted backdrop). Instead, the film’s sense of artificiality and its emotional, nostalgic appeal is rooted in its loss of visual mastery (its generally “blurry,” ghostly feel), as well as in its visual modes of dance and outdated (silent) film. At the same time, though, the film also does employ nostalgic artifice in its mise-en-scène – for example, Maddin’s visually arresting and wholly obvious potato-flake snow remains in full effect throughout this film, visually and emotionally pleasing in its self-evident artifice. However, more generally, the spectral tone of the film (in its visuals, sound, and spectral figures) render the past viscerally and emotionally present, particularly through the supernatural-spectral figure of Dracula, who serves as an embodiment of desire arising from the primitive folkloric past. In this way the film sets up a position of emotional embrace toward its spectral aesthetics while also forcing a recognition of their artificiality and place in the realm of fantasy – in other words, spectrality in *Dracula* is affecting even as it is also antiquated and false, discontinuous with modern time, absent as it is also present. The film thereby allows the past’s place in the present (i.e. the spectral) to serve as the locus of irretrievable and inaccessible desire – or, nostalgia toward a charming and affectively powerful realm temporally discontinuous from our own, located instead in the realm of fantasy. The appeal of a specifically spectral artifice, then, sets up a nostalgic

longing for another time – one associated simultaneously with the past and with fantasy. The following section will explore how temporalities become disrupted as a result of this conflation, so that the film presents the supernatural as a product of the primitive and superstitious past, and the ballet that visually structures the film articulates the antiquated and artificial logic of silent “gestural” filmmaking; through these associations, we will see how the film untethers the concept of the past to the teleology of modern homogeneous time – instead it becomes a property of “another time” even as it comments on and exists within a present, modern perspective.

Defining a film’s spectral mood is an imprecise art (and not merely because of any imprecision born from spectral indistinctness), but in broad terms, the film’s spectral (indistinct, liminal) tone arises partly as a result of the hypnotic rhythm of its ballet sequences, its creeping fog motif,⁴² and overall visual haze – each help to create a “space between,” where past, present, and fantasy blend into an aesthetically haunting nostalgic realm that feels just out of reach.⁴³ I will argue that it is particularly this visual haze that helps articulate spectral nostalgia, by relying on Laura Marks’s work on “Loving a Disappearing Image” to make a case for the film’s spectatorial positions of emotional identification with “dispersed” (spectral) visuals. In a manner similar to the proximal emotional position in nostalgic artifice, Marks details how it is that spectators might identify⁴⁴ with an image of decaying film itself rather than a depicted human figure, so that audiences may relate to simply “an image dispersed across the surface of the screen” (94) and with it, the “loss of unified selfhood” (98). *Careful* evokes exactly this sense of dispersed loss through its “poor image” aesthetics, resulting in a (fetishistic) appeal from

⁴² A motif which Maddin later reworks and expands upon to visually and narratively structure his appropriately titled 2017 film *The Green Fog*.

⁴³ One might relate this to a space of the séance, where the past is called forth and resurrected in the present; this séance-esque recalling of the dead remains an important theme throughout Maddin’s work, even serving as the title for his 2016 interactive and improvisatory installation and online video project, *Seances*.

⁴⁴ Marks places this identification specifically within an erotic context and chooses several examples of archival images from aged pornographic and semi-pornographic films like *The Color of Love* (Peggy Ahwesh 1994). However, she also considers identification in a more general sense, as “a bodily relationship with the screen” (95).

denied visibility, alongside a corresponding sense of distance, thereby asserting the notion that these images are lost, belonging to another (past) time, one undeniably separate from our own.

Marks's titular disappearing image defines the mood of much of spectral cinema and the possibility of complex viewer relations to that image, given that it encourages contradictory phenomenological positions of (haptic) proximity and distance through its portrayal of loss. On the one hand, Marks describes the grainy, indistinct, blurry, or illegible photograph as one that "invites a haptic look, or a look that uses the eye like an organ of touch" (104) as the basis for our identification with images of loss, while also connecting this decaying or dying image to the immaterial and spectral, in its resisting a "concretizing" of loss, instead "express[ing] the loss through the dissolution of objects" (109). *Careful* is littered with uses of grainy film stock, distortion through chiaroscuro, over-exposure, and out-of-focus shots, as well as other aspects of low-budgetry that befit the film's ode to silent-era cinema, including cardboard set construction (reminiscent of that in *Careful*) and chintzy vampire bats dangling unthreateningly on strings. The spectral aura or mood treated indirectly by Marks thereby specifies the same positions of proximity and distance to the lost (nostalgic) object as in spectral-nostalgic artifice. In these terms, Marks's "disappearing image" might be read as spectral, and her "love" might be read as nostalgic. Though Marks's primary focus is on a poor image quality, we will see how a similar effect of visual (and auditory) loss can occur more generally through a film's appeal to spectral logic in a broader sense.

Lindsey Green-Simms positions this low budget aesthetic as a crucial aspect of visual uncertainty in her characterization of the occult melodrama. She also argues that this uncertainty is what roots spectral cinema's affective potential, in that the films' "shock, disgust, or joy" all come from a sense of uncertainty. She terms this "spectral affect" (32), defining it as "the way in which occult forces make themselves known and felt, like all noncognitive affects, through relays of attachment or ashes of intensity [...] spectral affect transmits feeling specifically by recourse to the occult or supernatural" (33).

Green-Simms goes on to discuss how hallucinogenic aesthetics aid this spectral affect. She chiefly locates the aesthetics of spectral affect in anxiety and uncertainty as a result of “the incompleteness of visual information” (51) as a result of techniques like luminous screen saturation (45) and shaky doubled images (38) (in Green-Simms’s words, “as a visible inscription of the video-film’s ghostly affect” (38)). These spectral aesthetics, including those invoked by *Dracula*, can thereby be both affectively charging and simultaneously distancing, according to Green-Simms, with their capacity for “visible invisibility” (47). In this sense, the poor, disappearing image is spectral and affective – when this affectivity becomes past-directed, as with *Dracula* and its many allusions to the cinematic past, we see this affectivity expressed as a form of nostalgia, pulled between the allure of the past and the overt nature of the artifice and its dis-belonging in the present.

Shaunak Sen also expands on this link between poor images and spectrality in the context of contemporary Hindi horror cinema, writing, “Ghosts, it would appear, cannot ever be High-Definition” (2). He argues that spectrality has become associated with digital imagery, as a realm of unending replication and the seeming destruction of the indexical and the embodied photographic image (3-4),⁴⁵ yielding what Sen describes as “a conflation between the virtual and the ghostly.” (16) Indeed, *Dracula*, in addition to its photographically spectral dimension, does include a digital component to its overall spectral mood through its colourization – its blazing blood-red droplets that seem to float on the surface of the film images, creating a digital-analog hybrid realm similar to the one Sen describes between the past and present (17). *Dracula* mobilizes both an analog and digital approach to spectrality, rooting its affective and identificatory power (its proximal position) as well as its distancing effect in spectrality – that which hovers awkwardly between past and present. Here again spectrality becomes tied to

⁴⁵ Of course, many contemporary scholars contest this loss of indexicality and perceived lack of embodiment in digital imagery, including Yuk Hui (*On the Existence of Digital Objects* (2016)) and Laura Marks – most notably in her piece on “How Electrons Remember.”

nostalgia, invoking spectral-nostalgic artifice, by expressly invoking contrary nostalgic positions of proximity and distance between past and present.

In addition to conjuring a spectral mood, *Dracula* also creates literal and figurative portrayals of spectral figures to entrench a spectral logic and aesthetic so that notions of presence and absence throughout the film oscillate and collapse. This occurs especially as a result of soft-focus (Vaseline) cinematographic filters which create blurring at the edges of the film frame, effectively creating ghosts at the margins of the images and stretching and fading the borders of the human figures in the frame. The film also uses superimpositions, perhaps most evident in the film's opening moments, as Lucy's transparent and slumbering face dances spectrally overtop her dream of ocean waves. Both of these analog techniques that literally create ghosts in the image come from the filmmaking past, as now-antiquated filmmaking tools from the early days of cinema. Additionally, by means of a more general appeal to spectrality – as an interplay between presence and absence, recalling Gunning's ontological waver – the film also renders its supernatural vampyr figures similarly spectral, as figures suspended between death and life, past and present. Dracula in particular is a figure that is both seen and unseen by those around him, despite his corporeal form never adopting the transparency typical of ghostly figures; his spectral presence is evident, however, in scenes such as his visit to Lucy in her bedchamber, when he swoops past Dr. Helsing seemingly unnoticed. Dracula is able to disappear at will, and accordingly, his appearances are often visually marked by the spectral dissolve. Lucy similarly becomes a spectral figure despite maintaining a solid form – upon rising from her grave she appears vaguely ghost-like, a backlit figure in shadow in the Bloofer Lady sequence and dressed in flowing white garments in her final scenes as an undead-corporeal spectre. In this way Dracula and Lucy both come to resemble the ghostly father character in *Careful* as spectral embodiments of liminality and figures of longing, nostalgically linked to the past, yet monstrously, wrongly, lingering on and inhering in the present, both as undead figures and as ghosts of the silent film age rather than of modern times. The film's spectral

figures and mood do not disguise their antiquated roots and techniques, but instead derive their power from their sense of anachronism, their ghostly remnants floating within a modern film – one with digital images and a modern-day perspective.

Lastly, though the film is largely silent, its sparing uses of sound and its audio-visual contrast also serve to evoke a sense of spectral presence, protracting the present into a duration over time, one that carries shapes and ghosts from the past that seem to not comfortably “fit” the present. This is chiefly because of the characteristically Maddin-esque sound effects that place their extra-diegetic source too close to the surface of the sound, which is as hyperbolic and artificial as it is affective; these sounds seem to come from “elsewhere” as they do from “elsewhen,” and so thereby help to fracture the construct of the now into a multiplicity over time. For instance, as Van Helsing decapitates undead Lucy with a shovel, the squelching that accompanies this action draws attention to the Foley process occurring within the past (rather than serving to heighten verisimilitude, as is the case with traditional uses of sound effects). It is then the sound’s artifice that drives this attention to the cinematic illusion where the film’s audio-visual constitutive parts become joined and broken down once more,⁴⁶ as well as analogously to the falsity of nostalgia’s operation to bring the past into the present. This discontinuity between sound (from the past) and image (from the present) serves to link the “now” to an unspecified “then,” as two times allowed to occur simultaneously – the present as a self-contained construct then becomes revealed as disjunctively heterogeneous.

In a similar vein, Tom Whittaker makes the point that sound can have a “spectral presence” (324) – the power to bring the past into the present especially when aided by a still and contemplative *mise-en-scène* that draws attention to the “thickness” of the present moment (324, 326). As such, he argues that sound can have intrinsic links to memory – “sound compellingly articulates the films’ concern with the very instability of memory, exposing its manifold gaps and discontinuities, its absences

⁴⁶ As in Mary Ann Doane’s seminal “The Voice in the Cinema.”

and vagaries” (323). In the films he chooses as examples, he demonstrates how sound spectrally disrupts temporality, “revealing a time that is ‘out of joint’ with its past, present and future” (324). He writes how haunted sounds have the power to revivify the immediate past (324) even as they are themselves ghostly in their own ephemerality and transmissibility across space (327). Whittaker’s conjoining of temporality, sound, and memory also links back to *Careful*’s use of disjunctive sound and its echo motif, which, as with *Dracula*’s use of sound effects, similarly disrupt the ideal of a smooth continuous present through the logic of spectral-nostalgic artifice, where the past becomes revived within the present in an artificial and disjunctive way.

The film’s overall concern with spectrality in both its sound and imagery roots the film’s affective potential as both past-directed and tied to the supernatural, evoking Green-Simms’s spectral affect in a specifically nostalgic context. However, it also aligns the spectral-nostalgic with the artificial – that which is shown to sit uneasily beside the present. The spectral dimensions to the film are tied to outmoded ways of being – primitive superstition and silent film codes – becoming affectively powerful, sometimes charming, and even desirable as a result of their inaccessibility and seeming distance from the modern present moment. In this sense, the aspects of the past that exist in the present (i.e. the spectral) become the loci of desire for what is inaccessible (i.e. nostalgia). Dracula himself, as the central figure of the film, is linked to the past as a result of: the outdated silent film techniques that surround and define him; the spectral logic of his body; the narrative roots of his character in Bram Stoker’s original novel; and the film’s alignment of him and nostalgic, female desire. Upon discovering where Dracula has bitten Lucy on the neck, Van Helsing exclaims: “Miss Lucy has long ago invited this vampyr!” Here the diegesis aligns Dracula explicitly with past desires, though only implies a connection to nostalgia, unlike with *Careful*, which directly engages with nostalgic discourse.⁴⁷ Instead, the nostalgia of

⁴⁷ Nostalgia does arise in *Dracula* explicitly when one of Lucy’s suitors laments after her death that the “false” undead Lucy must be destroyed so that the “real” Lucy (a nostalgia-bound Lucy of his memories) may live forever, so as to preserve an immutable image of her from the past.

Dracula is largely present formally – as a spectral logic to the film that allows the past to inhere artificially and disjointedly in the present.

SPECTRAL NOSTALGIA AS TEMPORAL CRITIQUE

The previous section aimed to theorize and articulate a form of nostalgic artifice through spectral aesthetics, implying that this spectral dimension to nostalgia involves a temporal fracture, so that the present reveals itself to be heterogeneous – that is, it contains spectral fantasies from the past that are shown to be false when they are transplanted into the present. This concluding section will delve deeper into this temporal dimension to spectral nostalgia by returning to the work of Bliss Cua Lim. In her Bergsonian critique of homogeneous time, Lim enlists the supernatural and the fantastic as having the power to create worlds belonging to another time – she remarks that the power to represent another immiscible world is present in a film’s visual diegesis – its *mise-en-scène* (27-28, 122, 235). She invokes the figure and logic of the spectre as an embodiment of this idea, given that it is tied to affect (149) – and specifically nostalgia (150) – and exists somewhere outside of the modern capital world (136). Of spectral filmmaking she writes, “By repeating (via haunting) events thought to have been finished or laid to rest, the ghost film has the generic potential to unsettle the linear time of conventional narrative” (161). She argues that this unsettling occurs because the ghostly can invoke two non-contemporaneous times simultaneously, where “calendrically noncoincident, dislocated times and spaces” (169) may become heterogeneously joined, providing access to the past through the “lens” of the present (168), but only in a fractured and disjointed way – the distance between past and present is never in danger of collapsing completely, because the figure of the spectre still belongs to the realm of the supernatural, another world entirely.

It is exactly this dichotomy between separate, even discontinuous times that fractures *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin’s Diary*, torn as it is between the narrative richness of Stoker’s lore, the loving-mocking portrayal of primitive supernatural beliefs, the abstract and at times subjective world of dance

and dream, the Maddinian world of silent film homage, and the allegorical and distanced cynicism and critique from the film's modern day perspective. William Beard sums up this contradictory amalgam as Maddin in *Dracula* "still having fun with silent film apparatus, and with the spectacle of blood and impalement in a period setting, still creating frissons with the juxtaposition of archaic and avant-garde (and now with the addition of avant-garde editing techniques)," concluding that this film is "still able to stoke the engine with the heterogeneities of old and new" (*ItP* 188). The discontinuous worlds of *Dracula* when laid next to each other, just as with Lim's immiscible times, prove contradictory and heterogeneous – existing in the past and present, reality and fantasy.

The immiscibility of these worlds emerges in both the narrative and visuals, to articulate a form of Lim's fantastic, haunted spaces and Green-Simms's occult melodrama. This immiscibility is perhaps clearest in the more dated cinematic techniques sitting alongside more modern ones – Beard provides an overview of some of these antiquated influences, describing the soundtrack as harkening back to the part-talkie era (containing sound effects but no dialogue) (173), the primitive lighting techniques inspired by German Expressionism and 1930s horror (173), and the editing language as resembling Eisensteinian montage (179-80). I would briefly add to this the film's use of irises, colour tinting and black and white cinematography, intertitles, and fast motion. However, at times the film also relies on cinematic techniques that feel undeniably more modern – for instance, during the fight sequence that closes the film, Van Helsing and Dracula are framed in a 360-degree tracking shot that resembles a modern-day action sequence and seems to clash disruptively with the antiquated style present in the rest of the film.⁴⁸ Beard also argues that this clash more generally between past and present throughout

⁴⁸ Beard suggests that the film actually establishes a tonal and aesthetic uniformity despite this mishmash of modern and antiquated styles, writing: "The myriad little panning and tracking shots, the camera that shakes in moments of excitement, the general agitation of *movement* in the cinematic realm are additions from a later era, but they seem to meld seamlessly into the archaic realm of silent cinema: the film's reformulated mixture of old and new once again attaining an aesthetically unified zone" (174). However, I think this unity breaks down at moments like the 360-degree tracking action shot, which feels out of place in its undeniably modern character.

the film becomes allegorical and political in the case of the film's (and the ballet's) political correctness (187) in contrast to the original novel, which of course may be criticized for its Orientalist and xenophobic portrayals of Dracula as a racial other; in distinction, this film brings these past beliefs into collision with present ones. In contrast to the original novel, Beard argues that the film collides the opposing systems of "atavistic irrationality versus modern technology," where in this film values clash "between past and present, between a period sensibility/aesthetics and the contemporary sensibility/aesthetics, between Dracula (an atavistic force, an expression of an earlier culture and narrative medium) and the movie (electricity, filmmaking technology that is in this film newly emphasized)" (188). We can see an example of this collision between past and present beliefs, for instance, in Van Helsing's declaration as Lucy's suitor is preparing to give her a blood transfusion, that the best thing for a woman in trouble is a brave man's blood. Here the film uses the code and logic of antiquated melodrama to ironically comment on seemingly past, primitive beliefs, rendering them out of place and ludicrous in the context of film's modern consciousness and attention to the patriarchal order as a limiting force in both men's and women's lives.⁴⁹ However, importantly, the film inscribes some sense of fondness into this moment as a result of the fantastic-melodramatic dimension to these words – while the film portrays Van Helsing as antiquated to a vile degree, on the other hand Lucy's suitor and his cloying desires to help his beloved become almost charmingly naïve; he is a simple pawn of melodramatic codes and the patriarchal order represented by Van Helsing – as a character from the past (or, rather, from the fantasy-past), Lucy's suitor is a product of his time and his genre, and his beliefs and actions are sympathetically scripted to fit into the systems of which he is a part. In this sense, this moment of temporal splitting between then and now, reflects on another world that the film nostalgically relates to with both fondness and critical distance. Here the film employs a spectral

⁴⁹ This patriarchal influence is clearest in the montage sequence where Dr. Van Helsing, the figure most clearly representing patriarchal order in the film, inspects and violates Lucy's body, opening her legs and prying open her shirt to her obvious discomfort.

nostalgic logic to bring past (or, rather, fantasy-past) into conflict with the film's present, haunted as it is by the generic codes and beliefs from the past even as it makes clear its modern critical stance and perspective.

On top of portraying the worlds and perspectives of both the cinematic and supernatural-fantasy past and the present, the film also depicts other worlds associated with the past in order to further fracture the present moment into multiplicity and render the past discontinuous in the present. The first half of the film at times depicts Lucy's subjective inner life, allowing her sensual and haptic relation with the outside world to dictate the temporal character of the film itself. As a result, Lucy's emotions and desires protract time itself, often motivating the uses of slow motion throughout the film – for instance, as Lucy is overcome by desire (as an influence of Dracula's presence) she dances in slow motion on her bedposts overcome with ecstasy, and thereby slowing narrative progression and time itself. To similar effect, when Lucy bites Dracula in a moment of passion, time itself stutters to a halt, so that the moment is suspended and protracted cinematically through the device of the freeze frame. Here, the portrayal of subjective, lived time contrasts with objective or even narrative time, which is linear and dynamic, as opposed to lateral, emotional, or contemplative. This portrayal of Lucy's subjective time also obeys a nostalgic logic as far as depicting emotionally resonant, moments of passion, while being simultaneously distancing, set at an impossible remove from the subjective experience of another and coming up against the dominant assumed logic of story time.

This concern with subjective time resonates with the film's portrayal of a world of dance which also possesses an internal temporality. Though the film uses its ballet performance to tell its story, the two dimensions (narrative and dance) often come into conflict, where lateral (i.e. narratively non-progressive) dance time conflicts with linear (i.e. forward-directed) narrative time. This conflict becomes clear for instance in the case of the graveyard battle with Lucy upon her return from the dead – throughout the struggle, Lucy's suitors and Van Helsing alternately help Lucy dance and try to stab her,

alternately serving and frustrating narrative direction and linear time. Dance throughout this film oscillates between forwarding the story and serving an antithetical purpose to narrative progression, instead dwelling in an abstract, subjective world where dance becomes an expression of internal states and emotions. This world of dance then aligns with a subjective internal world even as it also aligns with the past of silent-era filmmaking and its reliance on gestural communication as opposed to verbal storytelling. In this way, dance both possesses the emotional content of the film and becomes tied to the past and to “another” time haunting within the film’s present; dance world and dance time then rely on spectral and nostalgic logics to render this dance-as-haunting emotionally appealing even as it exists at a demonstrably great remove, within another world and another time set at a heterogeneous distance from the narrative.

The supernatural aspects of the film constitute their own irreconcilable fantasy realm throughout this film, one that is located in a separate and unique temporality rooted in a primitive folkloric past. The film self-consciously engages with vampire lore and the superstitions that surround it, beliefs that come from a seemingly primitive past we have supposedly long overcome – however, the film aligns this past world with one of fantasy, invoking hyperbolic, artificial language to portray the world of the vampyr, something belonging to an irrevocably prior time implied to have never existed, one that is linked to the present through mechanisms of fantasy rather than history. This is because this prior time is not clearly anterior to the present – it belongs to a hyperbolic generic realm, not as an aspect of the historical past. So when Van Helsing tries to ward Dracula off from Lucy, he doesn’t just give her a clove or garland of garlic, but instead has her lie on a comically overwrought bed and blanket of garlic that obscures her body completely under the weight of preternatural belief. Through the film’s alignment with the supernatural and the antiquated with the artificial and the fantastical, Dracula and the supernatural-spectral figures of his kind are shown to belong to another time, one of the past and one of fantasy. Here, then, the spectral-nostalgic dimension of *Dracula* demonstrates that the past

cannot smoothly integrate into the world of the present – it always involves temporal disruption and splitting.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this film, the disparate times and worlds of *Dracula* repeatedly come up against one another and fail to coincide, serving to work through the dialectics of nostalgia through a formal spectral logic. As we've seen, the film's play with time is, as a result, spectral – though, in a related way its temporality is also melodramatic, involving a characteristically melodramatic circularity within the visuals and narrative. Several moments in the film repeat themselves cyclically, dwelling trapped in states of emotion – several shots replay, like Lucy covering her bite mark, and in terms of the narrative at large, Dracula's attacks of Lucy and then Mina serve as a veritable repetition and cycle of victimhood. Similarly, one can read the portrayals of subjectivity and the resulting temporal distortions as possessing a melodramatic dimension as far as emotion functions to distort time itself. In this sense, this film, and *Careful* as well, demonstrate that nostalgic disruption of temporalities involves both melodramatic and spectral dimensions, which each serve to invoke a nostalgic logic that brings a fantasy past immiscibly in contact with the present.

This chapter aims to expand on the spectral dimension of nostalgic artifice. As such, this discussion involves focusing on a nostalgic logic that articulates a spectral interplay between temporalities. By using Bliss Cua Lim's argument on the fantastic and the supernatural as disruptions of heterogeneous time, this chapter argues that nostalgia's alignment with fantasy has the potential to critique the ideology of modern objective time, one that seemingly exists as a result of teleological progress, as a measurable and shareable external standard of time. However, by examining the spectral dimension of nostalgia, time is revealed to be comprised of a multiplicity: a simultaneous complex of outdated primitive or melodramatic notions we still find appealing, nostalgically and spectrally brought into the present as artifice, as aspects of supernatural fantasy. In this way, nostalgic artifice as a formal

logic employs melodrama and spectrality to demonstrate the artifice and fantasy involved in allowing the past to inhere in the present by critiquing homogeneous, objective times. Instead, *Dracula* and *Careful*, through their temporal disruptions, each provide a radical potential to their nostalgias – one that allows both affective engagements with the past alongside an oscillating, dialectical recognition of its falsity and displacement in the present.

Coda: A Nostalgia of the Present

Over the course of this project I argue that nostalgia and its accompanying aesthetics can function as a form of media memory. Media that takes up a nostalgically artificial mode thereby has the affective power to communicate a lived experience of memory through an abstract aesthetic that invokes a dialectic and relies on the language and logic of melodrama and spectrality. The three preceding chapters aimed to probe the limits of what nostalgic artifice is and how it functions by situating it within nostalgia literature and applying it to two films by Guy Maddin. However, there remain several important implications to tease out before closing this discussion of nostalgic artifice. In my view, the most critical consequence of this configuration of nostalgia – a nostalgia that juxtaposes past and present, rendering the latter complex and haunted by the fantasies of alternate temporalities – is that the nostalgic must locate herself in the living present. The resulting “nostalgia of the present” thereby presents a new outlook on nostalgia’s wider critical function, potentially repositioning its relationship to mourning, the commodity, progress, and the archive, through its respective melodramatic, spectral, dialectic, and phenomenological dimensions.

In this study’s introduction and second chapter I suggested the possibility that nostalgic artifice might serve as an alternative formulation of mourning. Nostalgia’s connection to mourning is perhaps self-evident – each rely on an affective relationship with the past and lament the loss involved in passing time. Freud writes that a person in mourning resists letting go of attachments to the lost object, so that in response, a “turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis” (244). Freud goes even further in his characterization of melancholia, which to him functions as a pathologized and unconscious mourning that responds to “loss of a more ideal kind” (245). These descriptions of mourning inadvertently conjure nostalgia, as a similar longing for loss, as does Derrida’s formulation of mourning as an interminable process (*Specters* 97), “a work working at its own unproductivity” (“Force” 174). If we conceive of nostalgia as a form of mourning,

though, the lost object is the fantasy object. In this sense, nostalgia-as-mourning may emphasize the mediation that separates a mourner/nostalgic from her past loss; the nostalgic becomes bound to the present and so offers the possibility of overcoming the looping cycle of grief that keeps a mourner tied to the past. Nostalgic artifice as a form of mourning is forced to look sideways, at adjacent or overlapping temporalities connected to the present through fantasy, instead of only backward into a disconnected (lost) past. In melodramatic terms, nostalgia's temporal doubling, cycling, and affectivity, privileges the heterogeneity of the present over the loss of the past.

In a related way, nostalgia's emphasis on the centrality and ephemerality of the present moment also has an important consequence for nostalgia studies' relationship with the commodity and advertising. This is because by conjoining spectrality and nostalgia, the resulting emphasis on the ghostly and the immaterial provides an inverted perspective on the popular association between nostalgia and commodification, an assumption whereby through an appeal to nostalgia, the past may become easily reified and packaged as a product for mass consumption.⁵⁰ In contrast to the assumption that nostalgia may only serve the commercial-capital interests of commodification, spectral nostalgia disrupts commonsense notions of presence, reasserting the very opposite aesthetic of reification – of dispersal and liminality, the multisensory, and the synaesthetic (i.e. by evoking a spectral mood through jointly visual, auditory, and at times haptic means). Adopting a spectral approach to nostalgia studies may thereby open new avenues of research into the operations of nostalgia that might be opposed to or disruptive of an advertising agenda.

There are also critical implications for conceiving of nostalgic artifice as a dialectic. Most importantly, as a result of its continual oscillations, a sort of phenomenological stalemate arises, where neither perspective predominates over the other. As a result, both the nostalgic object (*noema*) and the lived experience of the nostalgic might be paralyzed between positions of distance and proximity to the

⁵⁰ For more on this, see Christine Sprengler's *Screening Nostalgia* (49).

present moment, and thereby nostalgia's *noema* is rendered constantly liminal, neither fully in the present nor completely outside of it. Nostalgic artifice, then, as a lived experience, never comes to rest, continually "haunting" between two contradictory spectatorial subject positions, as well as, metaphorically, between reality and fantasy or imagination, or, in different terms, experience and representation, which all coalesce in the temporality of the present. One may be tempted to view this result as inherently unproductive, given the tendency in nostalgia literature to work toward definitive statements on nostalgia's productivity and usefulness, especially in terms of its ability to allow us to look ahead or only back in time. Instead, though, I prefer to focus on nostalgia's potential as a tool rather than attempting to categorize nostalgia as essentially productive or unproductive (and perhaps even anti-progressive). It remains my hope instead that this project sheds light on nostalgia's critical potential, which might work in service of revolutionary or reactive forces depending on how it is deployed and experienced.

In this sense, nostalgic artifice might be considered both productive and unproductive, and to undergird this point, let us return to Rebecca Comay's characterization of the dialectic as resistance. She writes that "resistance signals both impediment and impetus" ("Resistance" 238), and that "At times, irritatingly, it can seem to be both at once—simultaneously the opening and the greatest obstacle to transformation" (244). Comay concludes with the idea that dialectical resistance as an inertial force offers the opportunity for constant reinvention (263). The result of conceiving nostalgia as obeying similar principles is that through contradiction it leaves itself open to change; resolutions are not fixed and dialogue between temporalities is left open. Conceiving of nostalgia as a dialectic allows a nostalgic space for reflection in the present to become dynamic instead of being confined to stasis, where, for instance, the past might entirely be left behind in service of future goals (or vice versa). Instead, by allowing contradiction to reign, nostalgic artifice opens itself to plurality and mutability within nostalgia, memory, time, and lived experience more generally. Instead of asserting that a nostalgic space is safe,

secure, comfortable, and insular, dialectical nostalgia allows the nostalgic experience to be an unstable one, predominated by tension rather than reassurance. This invites the nostalgic to reflect on, interrogate, and be critical of the relationship between temporalities. Here nostalgia does not simply flatten past and present or rely on sentiment over obligations to the present – it invites us to question, to reflect, and to probe deeper into the nature of nostalgia and our relationships with time; in so doing, nostalgia works as neither inherently a positive or destructive force.

Considering nostalgia to be dialectical rescues it from obsolescence, allowing it to operate as part of the world instead of as a static conclusion about the past. Here nostalgia does not become productive in the sense that it results in the production of something or paves a certain way forward into the future, but instead it offers the chance of an open dialogue between past and present, fantasy and reality. Because the dialectics of nostalgic artifice in turn mirror the wider dialectics of nostalgia itself, as a longing for fulfilment that is premised on the unfulfillable, nostalgia and its accompanying aesthetics both demonstrate the power to do look forward as well as back. In positing a nostalgic future nested within the present, this discussion invokes Svetlana Boym's description of modern nostalgia and its relationship with the absolute:

Modern nostalgia is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an 'enchanted world' with clear borders and values. It could be a secular expression of a spiritual longing, a nostalgia for an absolute, for a home that is both physical and spiritual, for the edenic unity of time and space before entry into history. The nostalgic is looking for a spiritual addressee. Encountering silence, he [sic] looks for memorable signs, desperately misreading them. (Boym 12)

Instead of following Boym in viewing this quest for the absolute as a hopelessly mistaken belief, as false and potentially damaging to our present lives, perhaps we might view this longing for the impossible as opening the possibility of a nostalgic future instead of closing off a nostalgic past. By this I mean that the

homecoming and fulfillment that is lost and longed for in nostalgia might be recognized as a fantasy in the present but may also be projected through similarly fantastic connection into the future, as an ethical imperative to work toward a future that is just as “Edenic” as the past.

Lastly, I would like to consider the implications of conceiving of nostalgia in phenomenological terms. As with conceiving of nostalgia as melodramatic, spectral, and dialectical, the ultimate consequence of a phenomenological nostalgia is that the nostalgic becomes rooted in the present – the site of experience. Ultimately, this project on nostalgia attempts to restore an ethical dimension to nostalgia, and, by extension, to memory – to assert that we need not be responsible to an abstract and inaccessible past, but instead only to be held accountable to the present and the consequences (i.e. ghosts) that inhere and shape it therein. As we have seen, this is a dilemma faced by indexical theories of memory, which posit some objective relation between now and an inaccessible past, and thereby locate meaning in the accuracy of the representation, when in fact this meaning is validated by a fantasy; the remedy, as I see it, is to relocate meaning in the present. One might object that this invalidates the representational function of memory entirely, and so might be used in service of alternative or revisionist histories; however, as I’ve suggested, the potentially dangerous consequences of this might be avoided by considering the present to be heterogeneous, layered with ghosts from the past. In this sense, being responsible to the present involves negotiating those traces that remain from the past – the people, beings, spaces, and objects that each demonstrate their own connections to a time that is lost. In short, in studying nostalgia, we find that memory should only be responsible to the past in and through the present.⁵¹

Accordingly, we may choose to define nostalgia and memory more generally against our common definitions for history – memory being a present experience, mutable and a “living” part of the

⁵¹ It is worth noting that this ethical imperative to shift memory’s relationship from the past to the present is recognized in memory studies at large – for instance, see the 2012 neuroscientific anthology by Paul Renn, *The Silent Past and the Invisible Present*.

self, in distinction from a socially sanctified narrative or framework we use to help make sense of the past. This formulation recalls Pierre Nora's famous distinction between memory and history, where he writes that the two are "in fundamental opposition," so that "memory is life," constantly evolving and "open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting" (8); in contrast, he claims that history is an incomplete reconstruction (8). In his terms, "Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past" (8).

However, Nora adds an additional division, between the way we conceive of memory now from how we did so in the past, so that memory today, he argues in the late 1980s, begins to resemble history in its reliance on the archive and the trace in the wake of the loss of the absolute, ingrained, and involuntary nature of what he perceives to be the original form of memory (8, 12-14). As a result, the past has moved from something we perceived to be undifferentiated or continuous with the present to an estranged representation – in Nora's words, "Given to us as radically other, the past has become a world apart" (16, 17). In these terms, nostalgic artifice obeys Nora's conception of memory's modern function, as one that emphasizes discontinuity and our distance from the past; yet it also simultaneously rejects the reification and "materialization of memory" (14) that would seem to go along with it. In privileging a kind of memory like Nora's memory of old, one that is, as Katharina Niemeyer characterizes it, "vivid, subjective, emotional and 'fuzzy'" ("Introduction" 3), nostalgic artifice renders its *noema* difficult to retain our hold on – it is rendered utterly fantastical and out of reach. This emphasis on the importance of the "fuzzy," emotional, and subjective nature of memory is increasingly important in today's global and commodified world, both in the terms of the personal and the collective, given that personal memories are, in José van Dijck's words, the "building blocks of collective history" (1). However, in combination with recognizing this subjective aspect alongside the mediation inherent within our memories and the histories they build, we stand to see our constructions of the past not as

concrete but malleable, form fitting to the needs of the present moment. Again, in these terms, memory becomes an altogether present phenomenon.

One of the overarching goals of this project was to rework the myth of a stable past by emphasizing the mediation that determines its function and form in the present. Nostalgic artifice as a form of memory, then, promises an open past, one that might be made sensible through varied and competing historical narratives. It rejects what Paul Grainge has described as “[t]he desire for memory as stable, reassuring, and constant,” instead assuring “its instability and unreliability, and its disposition towards fantasy and forgetting” (“Introduction” 5). And in deconstructing the past, nostalgic artifice also complicates the present, demonstrating it to be shaped, or “haunted” by an irrecoverable past through affective yet fantastical forms. This present is one as much oriented toward the past as toward the future, as multiplicity and as heterogeneity. In other words, by conjoining memory with imagination – that which joins past and future with the present, respectively – temporal distinctions at large become unstable. Additionally, the role nostalgic artifice plays in this process as audio-visual media (an added layer of representation on top of memory proper) further restates the importance of the unstable, the fleeting, and the dynamic in our relationships with the past. This is especially the case with time-based (digital) media which seem in some way to be inherently nostalgic – constantly in a state of loss and the after-image. While I may not have the space to plumb this connection between temporal media and nostalgia here, perhaps this might serve as a productive area for future research.

It remains my hope that this project stands to open avenues for the discovery of new nostalgias and their complex places within our lives. There are myriad directions where nostalgia and nostalgic artifice might go from here. For instance, what might it mean to consider more embodied or indexical configurations of nostalgia? What are the consequences to spatializing nostalgia – imbricating it with the space or the trace, for example in the case of a “living” place with memories, as in Bliss Cua Lim’s heterogeneous spaces – those that are “neither static nor solid but vibrat[e] with both permanence and

becoming” (39)? Similarly, we might consider renewing investigations into our changed and changing relationships to nostalgia in the age of new media and an environment of an ever-flowing stream of content, broadening Katharina Niemeyer’s claim about the essentially nostalgic character of television to other media which analogously reproduce a constant state of loss (130). It may also be useful to consider where nostalgic artifice and other forms of nostalgia may go from here – in the case of the former in particular, how might this aesthetic evolve as it becomes less effective at triggering that affective nostalgic dialectic? The paths paved in this study might also further overlap with other theoretical paradigms and fields of study – for instance, affect theory, gender and sexuality studies, psychoanalysis, disabilities studies and connections to the multi-sensory or synaesthetic – in order to explore how different nostalgias come up against different emotional, gendered, psychological, and sensory relationships with media. One particularly fertile ground might be the overlap and contrast between trauma and nostalgia theory, especially given their respective emphases on fantasy, affective and potentially paralyzing attachments to the past, and their connections to spaces. For instance, John McCullough has made a case for the place of fantasy in the working through of trauma through memorial spaces (284), and Janet Walker has argued for trauma’s inherent connection to spaces and “the power of place” (“Testimonies” 49). Similarly, the overlap between nostalgia and utopia might be a productive avenue for exploring the place of future-oriented nostalgias.

We continue to need scholarly work that surveys and collocates the incredibly wide-ranging discourse that makes up nostalgia studies, especially by continuing to create interdisciplinary connections and putting diverse theories and perspectives in better dialogue. The connections between nostalgia theory and memory theory are in constant need of expansion and reworking, especially given our increasingly archival culture, which, beyond Nora’s concerns in the late ‘80s, is becoming increasingly reliant on the notion of an accessible, external, and storable form of memory. In the wake

of new scientific research suggesting the possibility of successful “memory transplants,”⁵² memory is increasingly poised between something experienced, non-believed, and non-indexical, and something concrete and verifiable. We must remain constantly aware of the vital space between these two poles, where memory actually exists – as something unstable and dialectical – especially given the common conflation between memory experience and memory object. This is because even as the experience of memory potentially becomes more external, even shareable between individuals, that experience may also reject an indexical link to the memory object and instead emphasize the mediation inherent within that object’s connection to the past. Without care and attention to these nuances, we might threaten to obliterate memorial meaning altogether; as Rebecca Comay writes, echoing Nora, “The issue is all the more pressing at a time when the very proliferation of memorials, the manic drive to museify, threatens to spell the very erasure of memory” (“Perverse History” 54). This erasure is important to challenge, because for our culture to become complacent in this view is to threaten to obliterate the complexities, nuances, and contradictions that comprise the reality of human memories and our relationships with the past. It remains my hope that this project allows us to reemphasize this complexity, so that through the kaleidoscopic complex of nostalgia and nostalgic artifice we might view the times in which we live with both fondness and discernment, with eyes pointed ever forward and back, and minds open to the possibilities within time and the fantasy of loss.

⁵² For example, see Bédécarrats et al. and their 2018 study on *aplysia* (a type of sea slug) which suggests that it is possible to transfer long-term associational stimulus responses between individuals through RNA transplants.

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