

**From Paintings to Pornography: (Re)Animating Archives in French Documentary**

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# **From Paintings to Pornography: (Re)Animating Archives in French Documentary**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2021

Focusing on contemporary French documentaries and essay films, this dissertation analyzes how citations, intermediality, and the re-use of pre-existing footage interrogate what archives are, and what they mean. Specifically, I look at this question through the lens of “animation,” which I define in two ways. First, by “technical animation,” I mean the motion of cinematic frames. Second, “metaphorical animation” refers to movement, but in the sense of feelings, affect, and a personal response to an image. The archives referenced in the title range from actual, tangible archives such as France’s national library, to a completely nonexistent archive, such as the use of trickery and fakery to imitate real archival spaces and footage. Chapter 1 considers Alain Resnais, specifically *Toute la mémoire du monde* (1956) (on the *Bibliothèque nationale*) and *Guernica* (1950) (where Resnais cuts segments of Pablo Picasso’s painting to create a new whole). Chapter 2 discusses Agnès Varda. In documentary *Varda par Agnès* (2019), her final film, Varda reframes and rewrites footage from a number of her previous films (as well as museum installations), her first-person voice and fluid camerawork creating nuance and contradiction. Chapter 3 uses queer theory to examine two documentaries. *Sagat* (Pascal Roche and Jérôme M. De Oliveira, 2011) considers French gay porn star François Sagat, where the “success” of his performance hinges upon an animated audience response – that is, to be sexually satisfied. I then turn to *Bambi* (Sébastien Lifshitz, 2013) on trans\* performer Marie-Pierre Pruvot, wherein her highly personalized voiceover is coupled with still photographs from her own archive. Chapter 4 deals with *La Rage du Démon* (Fabien Delage, 2016), a mockumentary that purports to

fill in the gaps about the lost films of Georges Méliès – and a supposedly “cursed” one in particular – these missing films are intangible and metaphorical, and ultimately non-existent. I finish this dissertation by considering the ramifications of technical and metaphorical animation in the many disparate documentary forms that are available globally on streaming platforms such as Netflix.

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## Preface

Much of this dissertation was written under the stresses of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and was thus a highly emotional yet rewarding project that has defined my time overseas in the United States. I owe my completion of this project to many, many people, and the listing of many of them here even feels slight in and of itself.

I begin of course with my dissertation director, David Pettersen, whose constant advice and patience with me has been truly extraordinary. I have lost count of the many times we have met over the last five years, and I am truly grateful for all his invaluable advice and support. Even when I have been frustrated with my own progress (and hesitancy to put my own voice front and center), he has guided me through with his continual encouragement. A particularly tough moment was the genesis of this project during my prospectus writing, when I would feel completely stuck at points. Unsurprisingly, David mentored me through this moment, never hesitating to believe in me or in my project. At the end of this project, I am privileged to call him not only my advisor, but also my friend.

My committee has also been a constant source of wisdom and encouragement. Todd Reeser has also been ever-present throughout my entire PhD, having taken three graduate seminars with him, as well as getting to know him in his capacity as Chair of the Department of French and Italian. I always appreciated his incredibly quick response time to my many emails to him, as well as his always very detailed feedback. And I am ever grateful to him introducing me to the work of Sébastien Lifshitz, to which my third chapter owes much. Similarly, Neepta Majumdar was very detailed in her comments in early drafts, giving reading and viewing suggestions that supported my claims in ways I had never initially considered. I still remember her planting the idea in my



head about animated documentary in Film History/Theory 2 in 2017. And of course, Mark Lynn Anderson, whose calm presence and harsh truths about Derrida guided the theoretical framework of this dissertation as a whole.

I would also like to thank the many faculty I worked with, not only in the Department of French and Italian, but also the Film and Media Studies program, the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies program, and Cultural Studies program. I am especially grateful to Brett Wells, John Walsh, Lorraine Denman, Giuseppina Mecchia, Chloé Hogg, Neil Doshi, Kalliane Ung, Julie Beaulieu, Nancy Glazener, Mark Best, Randall Halle, Charles Exley, and Adam Lowenstein.

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I would also like to thank my colleagues at my former institutions, Miami University and the University of Queensland, for their feedback and encouragement, Elisabeth Hodges (who recommended I work with David Pettersen in the first place), Amy Hubbell (who suggested that I

pursue graduate work in the United States), Joe Hardwick (whose work on French cinema and literature both challenged and inspired me), and Tom Stevenson (whose words of encouragement were almost too kind). They saw and cultivated the potential in me as a young scholar.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my late grandfather, Lionel James Duffy. He died before I was born, but was an avid Francophile, and even studied French at the same institution I did, the University of Queensland. I am constantly reminded of our similarities in our passion for all things French – which ultimately led me to complete this PhD in the first place. So, Papa, this is for you.

## 1.0 Introduction

In the Bercy neighborhood of Paris stand two great structures of storage and display: the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* and the *Cinémathèque*, each building divided by the river Seine. Each houses a vast array of knowledge; while the *Bibliothèque nationale* (BnF) comprises a massive archive of materials of all things French and from around France, the *Cinémathèque* – obviously, given its title – is much more focused on artifacts pertaining to French and global cinema, especially boasting an extensive collection of special effects pioneer at the turn of the twentieth century, Georges Méliès. Both institutions are close geographically, as well as being similar in their goals: to store and display that which enriches the culture of France and its citizens. If one looks at the respective webpages, too, of the BnF and Cinémathèque, one can see how their language choices reflect their overarching, ambitious goals. Consider the *Cinémathèque*'s statement under their “Collections” pages, with the statement: “By its originality, its singularity, and its scope, this collection constitutes an inexhaustible resource for the study of art and the film industry.”<sup>1</sup> This text is placed within a textbook, on top of a visual backdrop of zoomed-in film reels. The BnF's respective website also boasts of the many, many – and distinctly French – objects in storage there.

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<sup>1</sup> English translation my own. Original French reads: « Par son originalité, sa singularité et son ampleur, cette collection constitue une ressource inépuisable pour l'étude de l'art et de l'industrie cinématographique. »

La Cinémathèque française, “Les Collections,” accessed June 29, 2021,

<https://www.cinematheque.fr/collections.html>

I begin with such an anecdote, as, in May and June of 2019, I visited Paris for a month in order to conduct archival research at the Cinémathèque. I had just passed my prospectus and was faced with the beginning of my research proper, and the writing of this dissertation. Funded by the University of Pittsburgh's Arts and Sciences Summer Grant, I spent my time locating films that are not readily available outside of France in order to buttress and further deepen my argument and historicity of my dissertation. I also took advantage of the Georges Méliès collection, visiting the museum portion of the Cinémathèque in addition, and documenting the specific artifacts on display on those particular day(s). I also profited from a week in Lyon, exploring both the museum of the Lumière Brothers, as well as the *Musée Miniature et Cinéma*, which both housed impressive collections – including different types of cameras, as well as rare film props. The institution of the French archive – especially the film archive – was, very literally, the genesis of this dissertation, as the time exploring each archive helped clarify the structure of my dissertation archive, which was still in its infancy at that point of my doctoral studies. The physicality of these collections – and the space of the Bercy neighborhood in particular – acted as the spark that truly put this project into motion post-prospectus. When I returned to my hometown of Brisbane, Australia, later that summer, I had in my possession notebooks full of scribbled reactions to what I had seen, as well as thousands of photographs backed up on my Google Photos account.

What this dissertation proposes, then, is a way to understand the use of archive(s) such as the above examples in documentary cinema, a film form that – in essence – has intrinsic links to an archive. More specifically, I am proposing a rethinking of how archives operate in documentary cinema. I am reminded of Bill Nichols's canonical text in *Documentary Studies, Representing Reality*, wherein he articulates that documentary as a genre elicits an expectation of truth on the part of the viewer, meaning that "its sounds and images bear an indexical relation to the historical

world. As viewers we expect that what occurred in front of the camera has undergone little or no modification in order to be recorded on film and magnetic tape.”<sup>2</sup> Such a statement presupposes a link to a photographic archive – which ostensibly “guarantees” authenticity – ergo, becoming a documentary of sorts. To expand upon Nichols’s definition here, photographic frames are re-appropriated and re-used in a documentary; later on *Representing Reality*, Nichols would describe such a role of photography as having a certain “stickiness,” implied a tie between a past history, and how it is re-used in a newer and different sense that it was before.<sup>3</sup> In a word, by “documentary,” this dissertation is referring to non-fiction films that “document” some form of reality – that is, I am taking the word “documentary” in its very literal and etymological sense – something that was long believed to be constitutive of the cinematic medium itself.

What, then, do such “documents” entail? One such term that is used in Documentary Studies to denote the use of these documents is “the archive” or “archives” in the plural form: in his 1974 book *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, Erik Barnouw is one of the first to define and historicize the archive/archival footage within the realm of documentary, where he links the rise in archival films to television stations that opened their archives to the public.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, scholarly works such as Bhaskar Sarkar and Janet Walker’s edited collection *Documentary Testimonies: Global Archives of Suffering* couple documentary institutions (such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC) with documentary films (such

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<sup>2</sup> Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>4</sup> Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

as those that re-enact the trauma of genocide in Cambodia).<sup>5</sup> This selection of essays thus defines “documentary” liberally, including both archival spaces as well as documentary films. With such development of the marriage between documentary cinema and archives in mind, this dissertation proposes that while a physical institution such as the Cinémathèque is not always the genesis of a documentary’s link to archives, the physical source can sometimes be the link to this “stickiness” to an archive that Bill Nichols lays bare. To put it another way: from where do the original materials used in a documentary originate? If “everything in France” is stored in the *Bibliothèque nationale*, surely documentaries made in France have some link to this physical space? Of course, there are documentaries such as Alain Resnais’s *Toute la mémoire du monde/All the World’s Memory* (1956) that detail the processes that an archival institution such as the *Bibliothèque nationale* (as it was called then) undergo to store (what is told to us as) “everything” that is in France. Such a film uses the physical space on archive to reflect on how certain kinds of cinema operate *like* an archive. As detailed in chapter 1 of this dissertation, Resnais’s fluid camerawork in conjunction with the voiceover narration focuses specifically on the building itself of the *Bibliothèque nationale* – both the interior and exterior. Even in the mockumentary form – as I analyze in my final chapter – archival spaces are referenced to give the impression that actual archival footage has been utilized. One such (highly visible) examples in this dissertation is the prominent use of film reels in the frame of mockumentary *La Rage du Démon/Fury of the Demon*

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<sup>5</sup> Bhaskar Sarkar and Janet Walker, eds., *Documentary Testimony: Global Archives of Suffering, AFI Film Series* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009). For the two examples cited (the Holocaust museum and the Cambodian documentary) see, respectively, Noah Shenker, “Embodied Memory: The Institutional Mediation of Survivor Testimony in the United States Holocaust Museum,” 35–58, and Deirdre Boyle, “Trauma, Memory, Documentary: Re-enactment in Two Films by Rithy Panh (Cambodia) and Garin Nugroho (Indonesia),” 155–72.

(Fabien Delage, 2016) behind certain interviewees who are said to work as archivists at the Cinémathèque. Even a completely nonexistent archive – in a genre such as the mockumentary, which utilizes trickery and fakery to imitate an actual documentary genre – seems to have some sort of tangible to link to a “reality” of sorts. I will return to these chapter descriptions in further detail later on in this introduction, but I provide this preview as a way to demonstrate how archival spaces color various forms of the documentary in their different styles and forms (of which there are many).<sup>6</sup>

The lens through which I problematize and make sense of the many archival spaces linked to the documentary cinema at large is Jacques Derrida’s book *Mal d’archive : Une impression freudienne*, from 1995.<sup>7</sup> Derrida is oft cited in Archival Studies, a common reference and starting point in theorizing what archives are and what they mean.<sup>8</sup> Derrida’s presence in the academic literature is one reason why I begin with him here. Yet, somewhat ironically, this dissertation also benefits from the problems that arise in the text due to the vague language and conceptions with which he engages. Derrida foregrounds the concept of an archive/archives via psychoanalysis and

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<sup>6</sup> See again, Nichols, *Representing Reality*, for his six modes: poetic, expository, reflexive, observational, performative, and participatory.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Mal d’archive : Une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995). Published as a book in 1995, *Mal d’archive* originated from a 1994 lecture.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Paul Earlie, “Derrida’s Archive Fever: From Debt to Inheritance,” *Paragraph* 38, no. 3 (2015): 312–28; Aakash M. Suchak, “The Place of Consignation, or Memory and Writing in Derrida’s Archive,” *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* 41–2, no. 1 (2018): 55–69; Joanne Garde-Hansen, “MyMemories?: Personal Digital Archive Fever and Facebook,” in *Save As ... Digital Memories*, ed. Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins, and Anna Reading (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 135–50.

the death drive, utilizing forms of technology such as email as examples; my own paraphrase of Derrida is intentionally ambiguous here, as it highlights how Derrida's characterization of the archive/archives becomes so nebulous that the idea of an actual physical archive becomes very distant, and not the focus of Derrida's analysis. For example, much of Derrida's text deals with the archivization of Sigmund Freud, including the actual Freud himself. In a lengthy passage, Derrida explains Freud's influence on psychoanalysis at large, from him as person to his various influences:

[...] the impression *left* by Sigmund Freud, beginning with the impression *left* in him, inscribed in him, from his birth and his covenant, from his circumcision, through all the manifest and secret history of psychoanalysis, of the institution and of the works, by way of the public and private correspondence [...] I wish to speak of the *impression left* by Freud, by the event which carries his family name, the nearly unforgettable and incontestable, undeniable *impression* (even and above all for those who deny it) that Sigmund Freud will have *made* on anyone, after him, who speaks *of him* or speaks *to him* [...] <sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 30. Original emphasis.

Original quotation: « [...] l'impression *laissée* par Sigmund Freud, à partir de l'impression *laissé* en lui, inscrite en lui depuis sa naissance et son alliance, depuis sa circoncision, à travers toute l'histoire, manifeste ou secrète, de la psychanalyse, de l'institution et des œuvres, en passant par la correspondance publique ou privée [...] Je veux parler de l'*impression laissée* par Freud, par l'événement qui porte ce nom de famille, l'*impression* quasiment inoubliable et irrécusable, indéniable (même et surtout par ceux qui la dénie) que Sigmund Freud aura *faite* sur quiconque, après



Derrida keeps going, on and on, and eventually all of the impression of Freud himself dissipates; different “Freuds” emerge (in part owing to his never-ending influence on the field of psychoanalysis), obfuscating his image, and any originary link to an actual archival space. Derrida emphasizes the distinct futurity of Freud’s archive, mainly since his conceptualizations of psychoanalysis will undoubtedly change over time – notwithstanding the influence he did have when he was alive. We see, then, that while *Mal d’archive* may be a rather problematic text owing to its lack of discussion of actual, physical archives, it is this very problematic nature that opens the door for a very expansive, nebulous, and dynamic archive. So, not only does this dissertation refer to archives as spaces where materials are stored – but also less tangible entities. Derrida speaks about the idea of Freud being archived; similarly, the mockumentary form archives – or, at least, purports to archive – entities that are imaginary and/or invisible, such as films that are completely missing or nonexistent. Derrida’s deconstructive move is that there is no original to access or preserve in an archive, just endless traces of writing and re-inscription.<sup>10</sup>

Put simply, focusing on contemporary French documentary and essay films, my dissertation analyzes how citations, intermediality, and the re-use of pre-existing footage interrogates what archives are and what they mean. When a documentary uses and re-uses this footage, it is very much – and very literally – brought to life, often in a brand-new context. To consider this process of bringing an archive or archives to life, the French verb *animer* comes to mind as a good descriptor, as it can mean *donner la vie à quelque chose* (“to bring to life”), as well

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lui, parle de *lui* ou *lui* parle, et doit donc, l’acceptant ou non, le sachant ou non, se laisser ainsi marquer [...] ». Derrida, *Mal d’archive*, 53.

<sup>10</sup> For more on archives being “living” and in motion, see Stuart Hall, “Constituting an Archive,” *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (2001): 89–92.

as *mettre quelque chose en mouvement* (“to put in motion”). Also, the Latin *animo* (“I animate”) can be translated as “I breathe life into.” Documentaries breathe (new) life into archives, no matter how intangible, invisible, or imaginary these archives may be. With this in mind, I draw on an expansive notion of “animation” both technically and metaphorically. First, “technical animation” is inspired by that which is seen in Eadweard Muybridge’s *The Horse in Motion* (1878), a series of six cabinet cards, that, if spun, give the illusion of a horse moving: but these images can be sped up or slowed down, demonstrating an in-between-ness between stillness and motion. Stasis becomes movement, in other words, a most technical process of bringing to life an image. In a word, by “technical animation,” I mean the motion of cinematic frames, that is, what the technical basis of cinema is all about. “In its first years, cinema was often referred to as ‘animated pictures’”, Tom Gunning articulates. “To animate means to bring to life, to endow with soul.”<sup>11</sup> Here, Gunning is referring to hand-held devices (like the Muybridge device), seen as a “scientific marvel” and “a magic trick” at the birth of cinema in the late nineteenth-century.<sup>12</sup> Alan Cholodenko utilizes similar language when foregrounding the “two major definitions” of “animation,” that is “the endowing with life and the endowing with motion.”<sup>13</sup> While “technical

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<sup>11</sup> Tom Gunning, “Foreword: Hannah Frank’s Pause,” in Hannah Frank, *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), xiv.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. For the use of such hand-held devices in early cinema and how they are “animation,” see also Esther Leslie, “Loops and Joins: Muybridge and the Optics of Animation,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 11, no. 3 (2013): 28.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Cholodenko, “‘First Principles’ of Animation,” in *Animating Film Theory*, ed. Karen Beckman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 101. See also Cholodenko’s edited volume *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation* (Sydney: Power Publications in Association with the Australian Film Commission, 1991).

animation” is my term, it nevertheless builds upon the use of “animation” within these specific contexts of motion and stillness which began (and are highly visible) in early cinema.

Second, by “metaphorical animation,” I mean movement, but in the sense of feelings, affect, and a personal response to an image. I build upon Roland Barthes’s use of the term “animation” in *La Chambre claire/Camera Lucida* (1980), on photography “animating” spectators in divergent (and not always clear) ways. Barthes utilizes two broad terms to designate these disperse reactions: the *studium* and the *punctum*. The *studium* describes a general and educational relation with photographs, the *punctum* for Barthes has more of a strong, piercing reaction.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Barthes’s usage of the first person *me* in the original French implies, too, that personal responses to a particular image may differ from person to person; in Barthes’s words, “the photograph’s *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises, is poignant to me).”<sup>15</sup> A critical turn of phrase (for this dissertation) is when Barthes describes the personalized reaction to a photograph as an “animation” (and it is the same word in the original French):

In this glum desert, suddenly a specific photograph reaches me; it animates me, and I animate it. So that is how I must name the attraction which makes it exist: an *animation*.

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<sup>14</sup> Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire : Note sur la photographie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 48-49.

<sup>15</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 27. Original emphasis.

Original quotation: « Le *punctum* d’une photo, c’est ce hasard qui, en elle, *me point* (mais aussi me meurtrit, me poigne). »

Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, 49.

The photograph is in no way animated (I do not believe in “lifelike” photographs), but it animates me: this is what creates every adventure.<sup>16</sup>

Barthes characterization of “animation” and the *studium* are the starting point of this dissertation’s use of the term “metaphorical animation.” Yet while Barthes is specifically referring to photographic imagery, I expand upon it by including all types of visual media texts, such as painting and film; as we will see at various points during this dissertation, the “paintings” referenced in its title (“From Paintings to Pornography: (Re)Animating Archives in French Documentary”) play a similar role to the photographs that Barthes references in the above passages. My conceptualization of “metaphorical animation,” too, as a response to Sianne Ngai’s *Ugly Feelings*, in which she lists “animatedness” among other titular feelings, namely “tone,” “envy,” “irritation,” “anxiety,” “stuplimity,” “paranoia,” and “disgust.” In particular, Ngai considers animatedness through the lens of feeling and being moved, akin to the ventriloquism evident in puppetry and stop-motion, for example, involving “the general process of activating or giving life to inert matter.”<sup>17</sup> (One of Ngai’s primary reference points is slave narratives, and their emotional impact on a wide range of readers.) “Metaphorical animation” opens the door for an animation of archives, where the archives themselves are vague and nebulous – in motion – like the many intangible Freuds multiplying à la Derrida. For instance, the highly personalized

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<sup>16</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 20. Original emphasis.

Original quotation: « Dans ce désert morose, telle photo, tout d’un coup, m’arrive ; elle n’anime et je l’anime. C’est donc ainsi que je dois nommer l’attrait qui la fait exister : une *animation*. La photo elle-même n’est rien animée (je ne crois pas aux photos « vivantes ») mais elle m’anime : c’est ce que fait toute aventure. »

Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, 39.

<sup>17</sup> Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 92.

responses one may have to an image may differ drastically from person to person; what animates one person might not animate another. Contradictions thus come to the fore.

The term “animation” matters, as it – like with the living archive – is inherently about movement, and an assemblage of movement at that. Cinema’s very apparatus depends on animation, and documentary cinema in particular so often hinges upon the new life given to archival material. As we will see in the second chapter of this dissertation, Agnès Varda’s autobiographical documentaries comprise many photos from her personal archives, her distinct voice adding necessary context and nuance to these images – to the great benefit to the viewer.<sup>18</sup> In addition, I use the term “animation,” rather than simply “affective response” or “spectators’ reactions,” as these other terms do not consider the sort of technical animation that I cite earlier. In other words, technical and metaphorical animation allows images in documentary cinema to come together as a whole. Cinematic frames are re-assembled. Yet, such imagery does not exist in isolation; the documentary voice and other feelings are so often presented to add and/or subtract layers of meaning from this motion of cinematic frames; such process of archivization goes further than just the borrowing of material from other sources. This is why technical and metaphorical animation cannot be neatly separated.

The (re)animation of archives in French documentary by virtue of “technical” and “metaphorical” animation contributes to scholarly debates on “animated documentary” at large. The “animated documentary” is a distinct genre, and I do not wish for this dissertation to confuse that sub-genre; of what has been written on the animated documentary, the focus has been upon

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<sup>18</sup> For more on the documentary “voice,” see Bill Nichols, “The Voice of Documentary,” *Film Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1983): 17–30.

distinguishing it from photography, and indexical photographic realism. In other words, the focus is on (for example) hand-drawn images or computer-generated imagery (CGI). The relationship between animation and live-action photography brings to the fore questions pertaining to different levels of representation, since a hand-drawn or painted image of an originally photographed object or person is ostensibly a different version of that germinal entity. “Disney rabbits look like real rabbits, we recognise that Gromit is a dog and that Bart Simpson is a young boy – it also looks very different,” Annabelle Honess Roe elucidates in her book *Animated Documentary*, one of the primary scholarly works on the “animated documentary” sub-genre.<sup>19</sup> In her analysis of the cartooned imagery in *The Sinking of the Lusitania* (Windsor McCay, 1918), Cristina Formenti characterizes the animated documentary to a re-enactment or an historical fiction, as the images on display have a different materiality to their live-action counterparts.<sup>20</sup> The “paintings” referenced in this dissertation’s title would certainly fall under the umbrella of the types of “animation”/“animated documentary” that Roe and Formenti describe. Roe does refer to some use of painted imagery in her book, a case in point being the technique of painting onto Plexiglas in the documentary short *A Conversation with Haris* (Sheila M. Sofian, 2002); in the documentary, this painted animation accompanies oral testimony of a an eleven-year-old Bosnian immigrant to the United States.<sup>21</sup> However, the binary opposition of live action/animation gets quickly undone as I consider other artforms (including, but not limited to, the accompanying “pornography”). By “paintings,” I broadly mean an image that is “painted” (at the risk of sounding far too obvious).

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<sup>19</sup> Annabelle Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 38.

<sup>20</sup> Cristina Formenti, “The Sincerest Form of Docudrama: Re-framing the Animated Documentary,” *Studies in Documentary Film* 8, no. 2 (2014): 103–15.

<sup>21</sup> Roe, *Animated Documentary*, 115.

As one can see below in my chapter descriptions, my primary frame of reference for paintings is the work of Cubist painter Pablo Picasso, namely his masterwork *Guernica*, an oil on canvas.

And paintings are just one artform that can elicit a strong, emotional reaction from a viewer: *Guernica* is certainly a highly visible case in point, due to its use of disturbing imagery (including screaming faces) to depict the horror of war, and specifically the 1937 bombing of the Basque town. A veteran of the Spanish Civil War, for example, would ostensibly have a strong, *punctum*-like reaction to Picasso's painting. I am reminded once again of Barthes's description of the "animation" of photographs – but his wording could equally apply to other visual forms where an audience response is elicited. This is further compelling for the fact that film modes such as horror, pornography – and indeed documentary – ostensibly rely upon audience expectations in order to be classified as their respective genres. For pornography, it is to be sexually aroused and gratified,<sup>22</sup> for horror, it is to be scared.<sup>23</sup> And such genres can be in the painted, photographic, or any other type of artform. (I mention horror here, too, since the *Rage du Démon* example I cite above is very colored by found footage horror films.) If one thinks about "animation" as being both technical and metaphorical, the animation/live action binary opposition becomes less important. Many forms of the visual image across the spectrum of genres and styles can be both technically and metaphorically animated in documentary. This is also one of the reasons for which I have chosen to include the (re) in the title, rather than just saying "animating" in the subtitle "(Re)Animating

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<sup>22</sup> See especially Linda Williams's edited volume *Porn Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Noël Carroll's section "The General and the Universal Theories of Horrific Appeal" in *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990), 178–95. See also Rhona J. Berenstein, "Spectatorship as Drag: The Act of Viewing and Classic Horror Film," in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 231–69.

Archives in French Documentary.” My notion of “animation” allows for a continuous process of giving life to archives, a process which be by the hand of multiple agents; both those in the documentary (such as the interviewees) as well as the directly can be doing the animating.

Having defined these terms in my dissertation title, one does remain: the “French” in French documentary. The questions that I raise appear to be uniquely French in a sense, as their starting point is the vastness of the *Bibliothèque nationale* and the *Cinémathèque*, distinctly French institutions that encompass a nationwide collection – and a source of national pride. As explicated at the beginning of this introduction, both institutes outwardly describe themselves as such. A case in point is the highlighted turn of phrase in the following quote from the BnF’s website:

Through its contribution to the development of standards, the dissemination of data in the major international databases, its ability to the carry *the voice of France* in the global digital ecosystem, the BnF contributes to the construction of a global society of knowledge, and, more specifically, that of Europe in terms of culture and innovation.<sup>24</sup>

The distinct French-ness of the (re) animated archive is demonstrated – which is why I begin this introduction by considering institutions such as the BnF that are distinctly French in character, being tied to its national character and pride. In addition, each chapter of this dissertation considers highly visible figures in the French cultural ethos – including those of the French New Wave and

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<sup>24</sup> Emphasis added. English translation my own. Original French reads: « Par sa contribution à l’élaboration des normes, par la diffusion de ses données dans les grandes bases internationales, par sa capacité à porter la voix de la France dans l’écosystème numérique mondial, la BnF contribue à la construction de la société mondiale de la connaissance et plus particulièrement de l’Europe de la culture et de l’innovation. »

Bibliothèque nationale de France, “Les missions de la BnF,” accessed September 9, 2021, <https://www.bnf.fr/fr/les-missions-de-la-bnf>



the Left Bank, early French cinema icon Georges Méliès, and even going as far as a famous French porn star, François Sagat. This dissertation sits firmly in French Studies, not just Film Studies; more specifically, one could say that it is a French Film Studies dissertation. Archives – whether cinematic or otherwise – are often designed to support identity, such as personal identity (Freud’s personal archives), national identity (the BnF), institutional identity, historical identity, and so forth.

In my first chapter, I consider Alain Resnais, and primarily the aforementioned *Toute la mémoire du monde* (1956), wherein Resnais details the process of storage of many items (books, maps, and so on) at the *Bibliothèque nationale* (as it was called at the time of Resnais’s documentary), an almost utopic space where an ever-expanding source of knowledge is constantly being added to – seemingly beyond the confines of the walls of the library. Put simply, this first chapter mobilizes “archive” in the sense of place – as opposed to objects and media – in order to articulate my concept of “technical animation.” In framing the objects in the *Bibliothèque*’s massive collection, Resnais utilizes techniques such as zooms and jump cuts, creating highly visible editing choices; one notable instance is the way his camera speeds up and slows down on a bookcase, ostensibly mimicking the movement of Muybridge’s *Horse in Motion*. I conclude this chapter by examining the short documentary *Guernica* (Alain Resnais, 1950), where Resnais cuts together sections of Pablo Picasso’s painting (as well as other painted imagery): while still (as in a painting) the camera movement and editing makes these artworks “move” in a sense as well. These painting excerpts exist separately but in relation to each other, coming together to (re)form a new whole – thus, “technical animation.”

My second chapter continues parsing what this dissertation means by “technical animation,” considering fellow Left Bank documentarian, Agnès Varda. She died in March 2019,

one month after the release of her final film *Varda par Agnès* a few months prior – and also as I was finalizing my dissertation prospectus draft. Varda is immortalized and thus “archived” via recent DVD collections, which present themselves as (while not entirely complete) extensive collections of their films.<sup>25</sup> Varda’s archive is seemingly “never complete,” with multiple films leading up to *Varda par Agnès* being self-described as her “final film.” I focus on two of such films, the documentaries *Visages Villages/Faces Places* (2017), and *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse/The Gleaners and I* (2000). In the latter film, Varda films Étienne-Jules Marey’s zoetrope: still human figures are in different positions to imitate movement, but they are not in motion – yet these figures are actually moving when the zoetrope is in motion. Varda films these figures when they are stationary, and it is her own camerawork that is very rapid and flowing. This “technical animation” is not by the hands of Marey, but those of Varda – a collaboration across time. Such a collaboration is further peppered and obfuscated by the “metaphorical animation” on the part of Varda; that is, a deeply personal and/or affect with the artefact in question (not only the Marey exhibit, but also paintings on display in the Louvre in *Visages Villages*), her feelings often articulated via her voice, both on- and offscreen voiceover.

Moving into my third chapter, we see a much more metaphysical archive than in the previous two chapters – hence, “metaphorical animation” taking precedence over “technical animation” (yet without totally ignoring this latter form of animation). Specifically, this chapter is on questions of gender and sexuality, and queerness in particular. Very little has been written on

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<sup>25</sup> For a comprehensive rundown of Varda’s DVD collection, see Karen Boyle, “Tout(e) Varda: The DVD Collection as Authorworld,” *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 16, no. 1 (2018): 40–61. See also the special issue “Future Varda” in *Camera Obscura*, 36, no. 1 (2021), eds. Rebecca J. DeRoo and Homay King.

French queer documentaries, so this chapter adds to this small but growing subfield.<sup>26</sup> We see “metaphorical animation” in the body genre of pornography, used as a sub-genre within documentary. My main frame of reference is *Sagat* (Pascal Roche and Jérôme M. De Oliveira, 2011), on French gay porn star François Sagat, where the “success” of his performance hinges upon an animated audience response: that is, to be sexually satisfied, which can vary from spectator to spectator.<sup>27</sup> We also see “technical animation” in *Bambi* (Sébastien Lifshitz, 2013) – the focus of the second part of this chapter – a documentary that details the life of trans\* performer Marie-Pierre Pruvot and the complexities and nuances of being trans\*: in one sequence, a suite of similar-but-different photos from Pruvot’s personal archive are edited to resemble a series of jump cuts, an in-between-ness to demonstrate the precarious and unstable nature of representing queerness on film. Yet, akin to Varda’s spoken voice, Lifshitz allows Pruvot to speak to camera, continuously and constantly; Pruvot essentially rewrites her own archive via spoken testimony, making it clear that she no longer identifies with her past self. This combination of metaphorical and technical animation helps us understand the similarly many-sided qualities of representing what it means to be trans\* in film and visual media.

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<sup>26</sup> For some scholarly work on French queer documentaries, see, for example, Ros Murray, “Activism, Affect, Identification: Trans Documentary in France and Spain and Its Reception,” *Studies in European Cinema*, 11, no. 3 (2015): 170–80; Nick Rees-Roberts, “Hors Milieu: Queer and Beyond,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary French Cinema*, eds. Alistair Fox, Michel Marie, Raphaëlle Moine, and Hilary Radner (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 439–60.

<sup>27</sup> For the ways in pornography creates a bodily response, and hence a sort of “animation,” see Karl Schoonover, *Brutal Vision: The Neorealist Body in Postwar Italian Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 1–67.

My fourth and final chapter deals with the archivization of Georges Méliès. The example I use is *La Rage du Démon/Fury of the Demon* (Fabien Delage, 2016), a highly fictionalized horror mockumentary filling in the gaps about Méliès' lost films from the late nineteenth century, and a supposedly "cursed" one in particular – also called *La Rage du Démon*. This missing film is intangible and metaphorical, and ultimately non-existent, yet "existing" in a sense by virtue of the words of fictionalized interviewees. Variant speech acts (i.e. the interviewees, of whom some are fictionalized versions of actual people) (re)create an invisible demon and an archive that may exist only tangentially. So, rumor and testimony are animating conditions of and in the animated archive. Like with pornography, the body genre of horror also ostensibly necessitates some sort of response on the part of the viewer – that is, to be scared.<sup>28</sup> Specifically, in the case of films involving demonic possession, characters appear to be "animated," almost involuntarily, owing to how demons control those whom they are possessing. Through these metaphorically animated testimonies, Delage creates the illusion of an archive that may exist; for instance, he visually quotes excerpts from films by Méliès that do concern demons (such as *Les Quatre Cents Farces du diable/The Merry Frolics of Satan* from 1906), coupled with how Delage's interviewees verbally reference the fact that Méliès indeed has films in his archive that are missing and lost – an absence of information and a "what if" question that allows for the possibility for an imaginary archive that may or may not exist. Yet, it comes full circle with a "technical animation" emerging in Delage's frames, film reels being placed behind interviewees at the *Cinémathèque*, piled on top of each

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<sup>28</sup> Whether a bodily response is "needed" in horror is hotly debated topic, and this dissertation does not go into the specifics of the ontology of the horror genre. For an overview of such debates, see Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1991): 2–13.

other, positioned behind one of its archivists, as they speak to the screen. Thus, these chapters come full circle in a sense, beginning with the *Bibliothèque nationale*, and ending with the *Cinémathèque*. Not simply geographically close, they also bookend how one understands archives as both actual and metaphysical spaces.

I conclude this dissertation by speculating how archives are (re)animated in documentaries outside the realm of French Studies; as this dissertation demonstrates, the questions that I pose – while highly pertinent to the French tradition – are equally and broadly applicable to a range of documentary sub-genres and styles across the world. With the rise of streaming platforms such as Netflix, Hulu, and HBO Max, there have been a proliferation of documentaries (especially in the fields of historical conspiracies and true crime). Many (but not all) of these films are often focused on a United States context – and also rely on evidence that is often flimsy, veering into mockumentary-like territory akin to those French films cited in my final chapter. Thus, the broad questions raised by my research could be taken further from French Film Studies to Film Studies at large – or, at least, Film Studies in an Anglo/American *milieu*.

## 2.0 Animating All the World's Memory: Alain Resnais's Archive in Motion

As I argued in the introduction, an archive can be a vague and nebulous concept, going beyond the confines of a physical, tangible space and requiring animation to bring it to life. While my chapters beyond this one do indeed champion the cloudiness and living nature of such animated archives – especially with the mockumentaries and queerness created by vague speech acts – I begin, however, with an example of a physical archive, that is, the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*. I do so, since such institutions are often the starting point of the movement of archival materials. Documentary cinema is inherently linked to an archive of sorts, whether that be tangible or not. Yet even those that are ethereal – such as abstract conceptions of art – have some kind of palpable link to a physical space. (As we will see in chapter four, an imaginary, fabricated, and invisible demon does have its genesis in the *Cinémathèque* archive in Paris, and specifically the *œuvre* of Georges Méliès.) To put it another way, cinema's very apparatus depends on “animation,” and documentary cinema in particular so often hinges upon the new life given to archival material. The term “animation” matters, as it – like with the living archive – is inherently about movement, and an assemblage of movement at that. In a word, images (and other textual forms) held in a library space such as the BnF take on a new life when appropriated and re-appropriated in a documentary – hence, being in a status of flux.

The word that I use to designate this movement of living archives is “animation,” both technically and metaphorically. While “metaphorical animation” (movement, but in the sense of feelings, affect, and a personal response to an image) figures very prominently in the chapters that follow, here, the focus is primarily on “technical animation.” This first chapter mobilizes “archive” in the sense of place – as opposed to objects and media – in order to articulate my concept of

“technical animation.” In doing so, I consider two short documentaries by Alain Resnais, the first being *Toute la mémoire du monde/All the World’s Memory* (1956), wherein Resnais details the process of storage of many items (books, maps, and so on) at the *Bibliothèque nationale*, an almost utopic space where an ever-expanding source of knowledge is constantly being added to – seemingly beyond the confines of the walls of the library. The re-assembled (and thus re-animated) frames on display in the short comprise the hands of library employees and archivists reforming images (maps, paintings, and so on) by hand – undergoing processes such as microfilming (which involves creating a scaled-down reproduction of such documents in the form of reels). Yet, critically, I must point out that the *Bibliothèque nationale* to which Resnais refers is not the same one that I mention in my dissertation introduction. In 1994, the *Bibliothèque nationale* merged with the *Établissement Public de le Biblithèque de France (EPBF)* to become the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, at the François Mitterrand site.<sup>29</sup> Yet, despite this difference in location and terminology, both the *BN* and the *BnF* exhibit the same archival goals of storing all that is in France.

The second half of this chapter then examines Resnais’s short documentary *Guernica* (1950), where Resnais cuts together sections of Pablo Picasso’s painting (as well as other painted imagery): while still (as in a painting) the camera movement and editing make these artworks “move” in a sense as well. These painting excerpts exist separately but in relation to each other, coming together to (re)form a new whole. While the BnF employees are animators in *Toute la mémoire du monde*, the primary animator in *Guernica* is Resnais himself. My readings of *Toute la*

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<sup>29</sup> For further history on the *BN* to *BnF* transition, see William Vernon Jackson, “The French National Library: A Special Report,” *World Libraries* 9, no. 1 (1999): 3–30.

*mémoire du monde* and *Guernica* arrive at a moment when scholarship on Resnais starting to focus explicitly on his films in relation to animation. Thomas Jackson, for example, reads Resnais's painting films – not just *Guernica*, but also *Van Gogh* (1948) – and how Resnais is able to “imbue with life” the paintings in question.<sup>30</sup> I go one step further than Jackson – this act of imbuing with life is critical term, as it goes beyond the limited understanding of “animation” as simply being non-indexical images, such as paintings, cel animation, and computer-generated imagery. To imbue with life is what documentary cinema is all about – and, ergo, what *all* cinema is about. Frames are re-assembled – an expression I use here without risk of repeating myself. Thus, what I accomplish in this chapter goes beyond the scholarship on the Animated Documentary as being a cinematic form distinct from indexical, photographic imagery; in short, images that are not photographic in nature do not have the same metonymic link to reality as those that do.<sup>31</sup> They are antithetical to documentary's ostensible goal to “represent reality.” *Guernica* would fall under this umbrella term of “animated documentary”; it is a non-indexical, non-photographic retelling of an historical event, that is, the 1937 bombing during the Spanish Civil War. Yet *Toute la mémoire du monde* does not fit as neatly into that category of Animated Documentary – since its archive includes indexical as well as non-indexical imagery. That is the intervention of this chapter; my conception of “technical animation” does not exclude those images that appear, *prima facie*, to be

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Jackson, “Tracing a Lineage: Alain Resnais's Painting Films and the Animated Aesthetic,” *Film Criticism* 44, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.3998/fc.13761232.0044.110>. See also Karen Beckman, “Animating the *Cinefilms*: Alain Resnais and the Cinema of Discovery,” *Cinema Journal* 54, no. 4 (2015): 1–25.

<sup>31</sup> See again Cristina Formenti's work on animated re-enactment in “The Sincerest Form of Docudrama,” 103–15. See also Annabelle Honess Roe on resemblance and indexicality in *Animated Documentary*, 38. On photographic realism in documentary, see, for example, Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 27.



indexical. As we will see, for example, in my final chapter on mockumentary cinema, *all* imagery has the potential to be fabricated. “Technical animation,” the motion of cinematic frames, both indexical and non-indexical. To paraphrase and re-appropriate Lev Manovich, *all film is animation*, something which technical animation lays bare.<sup>32</sup>

## 2.1 All the World’s Motion: A Moving *Bibliothèque*

While scholarship on Alain Resnais in relation to animation remains small but growing, he is, on the contrary, no stranger to Documentary Studies, his contribution being immensely important to representations of the Holocaust in documentary short *Nuit et brouillard/Night and Fog* (1956), for instance. Resnais’s choice to include graphic, photographic footage of dead bodies is in distinct contrast with later Holocaust documentaries such as the nine-hour *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985) which do not show actual footage from the Holocaust, but rather rely on oral testimony of both victim and perpetrator.<sup>33</sup> I begin this section briefly with *Nuit et brouillard* – not only since it is Resnais’s most revered and discussed documentary – but also since it raises the

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<sup>32</sup> Lev Manovich makes the claim of all cinema being animation in light of the rise of the digital in “What is Digital Cinema?,” in *Visual Cultures Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 1998), 405–16. Specifically, he articulates that “*Born from animation, cinema pushed animation to its boundary, only to become one particular case of animation in the end*” (410, original emphasis).

<sup>33</sup> See Nelly Furman, “Viewing Memory Through *Night and Fog*, *The Sorrow and the Pity* and *Shoah*,” *Journal of European Studies* 35, no. 2 (2005): 169–85. See further Griselda Pollock and Maxim Silverman (eds.), *Concentrationary Cinema: Aesthetics as Political Resistance in Alain Resnais’s Night and Fog* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).

question of the place of the indexical photograph (as opposed to the spoken word) in representing history. Critically, Resnais would later shy away from such direct and explicit use of a photographic archive when representing a traumatic past in *Hiroshima mon amour/Hiroshima My Love* (1959), instead mixing documentary and fictional techniques (such as a nonlinear narrative) as a way to represent the unrepresentability of a traumatic event that cannot be whittled down via photographs in isolation.<sup>34</sup> Even when photographs are used – such as in the Hiroshima Museum near the beginning of the film – are filmed obliquely, at a distance, and hidden away.

*Toute la mémoire du monde* fluctuates between the concreteness of *Nuit et brouillard* and *Hiroshima mon amour*, utilizing a variety of media, from actual photographs, to intangible and non-indexical paintings. Yet, all three films clearly rely on a physical archival place for this spectrum of (in)tangibility: Auschwitz as a museum, the Hiroshima Museum, the BnF. Indeed, Emma Wilson characterizes both Auschwitz in *Nuit et brouillard* and the BnF in *Toute la mémoire du monde* as *lieux de mémoire*, the BnF itself being “a tangible image of the archiving of memory.”<sup>35</sup> Steven Ungar similarly draws strong and self-evident comparisons between *Nuit et brouillard* and *Toute la mémoire du monde* yet ultimately (rightly) concludes that the latter film “seems unjustly overlooked if not openly forgotten.”<sup>36</sup> The physical space is clearly paramount,

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<sup>34</sup> See Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 27.

<sup>35</sup> Emma Wilson, *Alain Resnais* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 35. Wilson’s use of the term *lieu de mémoire* stems from Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard [Quarto], 1997).

<sup>36</sup> Steven Ungar, *Critical Mass: Social Documentary in France from the Silent Era to the New Wave* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 197. See also Steven Ungar, “Scenes in a Library: Alain Resnais and *Toute la mémoire du monde*,” *SubStance* 41, no. 2 (2012): 58–78.

with Jacques Dumesnil, the narrator in *Toute la mémoire du monde*, constantly reminding us throughout his commentary. (As with most of Resnais's documentary shorts, voiceover narration is ever present.) One begins with the general statement from Dumesnil, that is: "Because he has a short memory, man amasses countless memory aids."<sup>37</sup> Even though Dumesnil's voice is so prominent, Resnais does use this opening sequence to create long gaps between Dumesnil sweeping statements, letting his camera speak for the vastness of the archival space; still bookshelves are darkly lit, while the camera moves past them in a parallel manner. Books are also sometimes out of focus initially, Resnais slowly zooming in on them – as if to say that one (as in, a viewer, a reader, for example) can only see with clarity this massive collection only on occasion; another technique that Resnais employs in a similar vein when his camera speeds past the many bookshelves on display in the BnF, the camera movement becomes so fast, that the image is blurred, and not able to be discerned in any manner by the viewer. This ostensibly tangible archive – in other words – is only sometimes tangibly represented on screen; the dark spaces, the lack of focus, the rapid camera movement – these all act in a way to obscure and obfuscate many components of a massive but constantly growing archive.

In this opening sequence of *Toute la mémoire du monde*, Dumesnil's voiceover is actually one of the primary agents that designates the physicality of the BnF's archival collection – rather than Resnais's cinematography in isolation. When Dumesnil's voice does return in this introductory sequence, he continues with a declaration of the human-created nature of the building of the BnF – with the English subtitles translating *l'homme* with the masculine and exclusionary

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<sup>37</sup> « Parce que leur mémoire est courte, les hommes accumulent d'innombrables pense-bêtes. » English translation taken from the DVD subtitles.

term *man*: “Faced with these bulging repositories, man fears being engulfed by this mass of words. To safeguard his freedom, he builds fortresses.”<sup>38</sup> In his monologue, Dumesnil will return later on to the very specific details of the tactile process that the archivists in the BnF undertake – such as the processes of microfilming – but I will simply say here that one’s (“man’s”) hands are paramount and constantly referred to in “containing” the BnF. In order to capture this almost amorphous mass of “words,” it seems, one must “build” with one’s own hands something that is actual. The metaphorical becomes the literal, in other words.

Once Dumesnil voice stops talking here, Resnais’s camerawork then mirrors what Dumesnil has just articulated about the BnF; moving away from the shadowy and not-always-in-focus interior, Resnais cuts to outside the BnF building, akin to an establishing shot. From a bird’s eye view, we see the dome-like roof in the middle of the frame. Resnais then “zooms” in on this dome by way of two jump cuts in rapid succession – only a few seconds in between – as a way of drawing attention to the director’s hand, a constant reminder of his presence by this very explicit editing. (Dumesnil’s narration is not present here.) With each jump cut, Resnais crops away the outside street, ultimately merely the *Bibliothèque*’s dome. This is one way in which Resnais is “animating” the physical space, splicing together a series of jump cuts – that is, cinematic frames are re-assembled very clearly before one’s eyes. Here, especially, my reading of Resnais’s technical animation goes further than what Paul Wells proposes as “animation in practice,” that is, a “film made by hand, frame-by-frame, providing an illusion of movement which has not been

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<sup>38</sup> « Devant ces soutes pleines à craquer, les hommes prennent peur, peut d’être submergé par cette multitude d’écrits, par cet amas de mots. Alors, pour garantir leur liberté, ils construisent des forteresses. »

directly recorded in the photographic sense.”<sup>39</sup> While Wells limits his conceptualization of “animation” in relation to photography (as in the animated documentary scholars I cite previously), I build upon what he states as animation being “made by hand.” In my next chapter, I go into more detail on the zoetrope – but here, I will simply say that the presence of one’s hand can speed up and slow down such a device. Laying bare the “frame-by-frame” quality of animated cinema demonstrates that *all* cinema is in fact created frame by frame. I am, thus, drawn to Jack Halberstam’s statement in relation to stop-motion animation – which I see as being broadly applicable to other forms of indexical and non-indexical visual media spliced together in documentary film:

As the name suggests, stop-motion depends not on continuous action but on the relation between stillness and motion, cuts and takes, action and passivity. Unlike classical cinema, in which the action attempts to appear seamless and suture consists of the erasure of all marks of editing and human presence, stop-motion animation is uncanny precisely because it depends on the manipulation of figures in front of the camera by those behind it.<sup>40</sup>

The jump cuts and zooms in the interior *Bibliothèque* space by Resnais, too, draw attention to a camera in motion – and, by extension, an archival space that, too, is in motion. While Resnais’s camera moves, the fact that the collection keeps being added to keeps the archival space in motion as well.

I do want to return to the aqueous and expansive nature of the *Bibliothèque* collection; while these jump cuts and zooms on the part of Resnais lay bare the technical animation of his

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<sup>39</sup> Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (London: Routledge, 1998), 10.

<sup>40</sup> Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 178.

directorial presence, the physical, tangible nature of the *Bibliothèque* is, too, in motion due to the constant imprisoning and adding to taking place. Once Resnais's camera cuts back into the interior of the *Bibliothèque*, Dumesnil's voiceover giving slightly more detail on how far-reaching the collection in the *Bibliothèque* space actually is. Panning from another set of bookshelves over to a view from on high over desks upon desks of many workers, we hear the words: "In Paris, words are imprisoned at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Everything printed in France is found here."<sup>41</sup> The *Bibliothèque nationale*, it seems, acts a singular institution that contains all this knowledge in France – notwithstanding the fact that other archives, such as the film-specific Cinémathèque, are in very close proximity in the Bercy neighborhood. What is more, if one visits the webpage for the BnF, they list as their core mission, that "[t]he mission of the BnF is to collect, catalog, conserve, enrich, and communicate the national documentary heritage. The BnF ensure access to collections, on site and remotely, for the greatest number of people, and develops national and international cooperation."<sup>42</sup> These extensive collections at the BnF, thus, are one of its most celebrated characteristics, also contribute to it being a continual source of national pride for France.

As we continue through Dumesnil's voiceover – which becomes more frequent with fewer pauses – the words become more specific as to the actual processes that the archivists undertake to preserve the texts at the *Bibliothèque nationale*, as well as the specific types of text that are

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<sup>41</sup> « À Paris, c'est à la Bibliothèque nationale que les mots sont emprisonnés. On y trouve tout ce qui s'imprime en France. »

<sup>42</sup> « La BnF a pour mission de collecter, cataloguer, conserver, enrichir et communiquer le patrimoine documentaire national. La BnF assure l'accès du plus grand nombre aux collections sur place, à distance et développe la coopération nationale et internationale. » English translation my own.

La Bibliothèque nationale de France, "Nos Missions," accessed December 31, 2020, <https://www.bnf.fr/fr>

processed by them. “In the engravings room, every picture is stored,” articulates the voiceover, “be it an engraving, a lithograph or a photograph. It’s a museum.”<sup>43</sup> While it seems that I am privileging Dumesnil’s voice here, it is vital to note that Resnais’s camera remains in motion; indeed, these spoken words are coupled with a slow overhead tracking shot of the workers in this room. As well as such camera movement, Resnais employs quick cutting, once again, in order to visually represent the different types of imagery stored at the *Bibliothèque* in its different room. In each one, someone different (who are presumably workers in the *Bibliothèque*) are looking up from a low angle at a door each with large, capitalized letters that spell the type of image stored in each one. Interestingly, Resnais alternates between male and female heads with each alternate door.<sup>44</sup> Resnais does not linger on them at all, quickly cutting frame by frame:

‘DEPARTMENT DES IMPRIMES’ (‘PRINTS’; man) [cut] ‘CABINET DES ESTAMPES’ (‘ENGRAVINGS’; woman) [cut] ‘MEDAILLES ET ANTIQUES’ (‘MEDALS AND ANTIQUES’; man) [cut] ‘LA SALLE DES PERIODIQUES’ (‘PERIODICALS’; woman) [cut] ‘CARTES ET PLANS’ (‘MAPS’; man) [cut] ‘MANUSCRITS’ (‘MANUSCRIPTS’; woman).

These clashes are punctuated with loud “clashes” from Maurice Jarre’s vibrant and erratic extradiegetic score – which, like Dumesnil’s narration, is a constant throughout *Toute la mémoire du monde*. Such highly visible use of Jarre’s music coupled with Resnais’s animating camera comes a few minutes later, when Resnais very technically and literally animates a bookshelf – speeding

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<sup>43</sup> « Au cabinet des estampes sont conservées toutes les images, qu’elles soient gravées, lithographiées ou même photographiées. C’est un musée. »

<sup>44</sup> For a similar male-female binary opposition, see the opening voiceover narration in *Hiroshima mon amour*.

alongside it to a speed so fast that the books on a it become an indistinguishable blur, before slowing down again to a complete stop. Filmed in an almost extreme close-up, numbers are imprinted in an ascending order on identical looking books; the books themselves are still, Resnais's camera does all the work. (Or, at least most of the work; the xylophone in Jarre's score speeds up too, going up a scale unto a higher note.) While this speeding up and slowing down is taking place, the narrator specifies that the collection at the *Bibliothèque nationale* is "forever a work in progress."<sup>45</sup> Still books become a blur of motion.

This sequence encapsulates what this dissertation defines as "technical animation," as "frames" (books in this case) move. A multitude of still books become a singular blur, mirroring the effect of cinematic motion. As Alan Cholodenko proposes, one of the definitions of "animation" is "the endowing with motion."<sup>46</sup> Technical animation being the motion of cinematic frames would clearly fall under Cholodenko very broad characterization here. An example would be a flipbook between flipped by hand to "animate" movement, whether done with hand-drawn images or photographs, or another medium. But here, in *Toute la mémoire du monde*, it is the book's exterior, but the principle of cinematic remains the same. Resnais's camera – like the hand of the flipbook – makes the books come to life and move. Returning to Muybridge's *Horse in Motion* cited in this chapter's introduction, stasis becomes movement, in other words, a most literal process of bringing to life an image. What Resnais plays with the in between space between stillness and movement – as well as the limits of cinematic speed itself. The bookshelf – a stationary item – moves. (Resnais does this, too, with objects such as statues in the *Bibliothèque*,

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<sup>45</sup> « toujours en chantier. »

<sup>46</sup> Cholodenko, "First Principles' of Animation," 101.



where his camera would rotate around these busts sitting idly the library.)<sup>47</sup> A series of still horses in succession becomes a singular moving horse for Muybridge, but the books themselves become an almost indistinguishable blur. And, as we have seen before, rapidly edited jump cuts are still but move simultaneously. The *Bibliothèque nationale*, as a stationary building that is still (by virtue of it being a building) is always moving – that is, in the sense of its collection always being added to. Resnais’s camerawork is not just fluid and in motion, but also an agent by which the still – that remains still, at points – moves. Thus, I finish this section with Esther Leslie’s analysis of Muybridge pointing to animation’s link to an “external force.” Animation “is movement impelled not internally, by the mover, but through some sort of external force: the hand spinning the wheel, the lantern slides manipulated by an operator, the frames rushed at the right speed through the projector.”<sup>48</sup> Resnais is one such “mover” of the *Bibliothèque nationale* and its stored objects – but is definitely not the only one.

## **2.2 To Animate, to Preserve: Bringing Frames to Life Inside the *Bibliothèque nationale***

The movement of frames – frames of the/an archive – are not just brought to life by Resnais’s camera, but also by the workers in the *Bibliothèque* space itself. To put it another way, the many workers in the library space store and preserve imagery in a style very much reminiscent of the process cinema itself is brought to life via “technical animation.” I would be remiss, too, not

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<sup>47</sup> An obvious point of reference would be Resnais’s documentary short (co-directed with Chris Marker) *Les Statues meurent aussi/Statues Also Die* (1953).

<sup>48</sup> Leslie, “Loops and Joins: Muybridge and the Optics of Animation,” 28.

to point out that Agnès Varda makes a very brief cameo as one such worker; briefly near the end of *Toute la mémoire du monde*, we see workers at a long table, busy at work, Resnais's camera moves past them, finally showing Varda at the end for a short second. Varda is one of many archivists here, and Resnais's camera does not linger on her at all – one among a sea of many. Think back to Dumesnil's voiceover narration near the film's opening, and his declaration that "every mark set down by man's hand is represented," when specifically talking about the hall in which manuscripts are stored.<sup>49</sup> To return as well to the official BnF webpage, it specifies that the institution has always been at the forefront of a multitude of methods of storage and preservation, including digital ones (that would ostensibly be more advanced than the ones described in the 1950s produced film). More specifically, the exact wording is:

Over the centuries, the BnF has developed techniques appropriate to its conservation mission – whether curative or preventative (condition monitoring and protection of collections, climate conditions in warehouses, restoration). For this, it has several specialized workshops according to the types of documents and preservation techniques, as well as a laboratory. It also has set up a system for preserving its digital data.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> « Tous les signes que la main de l'homme a tracés sont représentés »

<sup>50</sup> « Au fil des siècles, la BnF a développé les techniques appropriées à sa mission de conservation – qu'elle soit curative ou préventive (surveillance de l'état et protection des collections, conditions climatiques des magasins, restaurations). Elle dispose pour cela de plusieurs ateliers spécialisés selon les types de documents et les techniques de conservation ainsi que d'un laboratoire. Elle a également mis en place un système de préservation de ses données numériques. »

English translation my own.

It is these very curative procedures – such as microfilming, as we will soon see – that lend themselves to a certain “technical animation” on the part of the workers in the *Bibliothèque nationale* as an institution. The frames stored in the *Bibliothèque* are re-assembled akin to cinematic movement by virtue of these workers’ storage efforts.

Microfilming, in particular, is one of the methods that *Toute la mémoire du monde* highlights in relation to preservation of materials in the *Bibliothèque nationale*. In a word, to microfilm is to reduce the size of an image, which may be stored as film reels. So, the process that images undergo here is very close to the way cinematic frames are animated in film – and, indeed, these reels can be projected. A film enters an archive (here, a storage space), and re-emerges as a film – albeit a different one. As Dumesnil relates, the “treasures” there “must be preserved, so the air is monitored, the atmosphere adjusted. Machinery resembling Captain Nemo’s maintains a constant temperature most beneficial for paper, leather, and parchment.”<sup>51</sup> As Dumesnil says these words, Resnais’s camera follows behind the head of a man as he wanders through the aforesaid room, which consists of repeated geometric shapes, mostly circles and squares; moreover, this small space clearly presents itself as three-dimensional owing to the presence of a vanishing point. Resnais’s camera then shows – upside down – a clear screen over a map, the man’s hands placed over this image at the top of the screen. This disorienting “upside-down-ness” is further obfuscated by the fact that the plastic emits a shininess that obscures parts of this image underneath it – yet, on the other hand, we do see the archivist’s face (also upside-down) through the glaring reflection.

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<sup>51</sup> « Ces richesses, il nous faut les préserver. C’est pourquoi l’air est contrôlé, l’atmosphère corrigé. Des machineries pareilles à celles du capitaine Nemo maintient une température constante favorable au papier, au cuir, au parchemin. »

“Maps are separated with plastic shields,” the voiceover helpfully tells us.<sup>52</sup> Following this male archivist, Resnais then depicts a female one; yet his framing here is less than confusing than in the map room. From a bird’s eye view, over the shoulder of said archivist, there is a very large book – but with print so small that us as viewers cannot discern at all the words on the page. Over this woman’s head, too, there are lights that illuminate the page, as Dumesnil relates that, “newspapers, quick to disintegrate, are microfilmed.”<sup>53</sup> As a result, “these images will perpetuate [*Resnais cuts away*] the memory of perishable documents.”<sup>54</sup> The apparatus of film itself – or the screen itself – is in the process of microfilming brought to the very forefront. It is via the filmic mechanisms allowed by microfilming – the cutting up of reels, and so on – that the archive is given the chance to survive and be given a very lengthy shelf life. The cutting up of frames is the agent by which the extensive collection at the BnF can survive.

In drawing these comparisons between microfilming and technical animation, I am helped by Hannah Frank’s work on cel animation, whose book examines the role of animation frames – cels – in cinema. Now, Frank is coming at this question of “animation” in its traditional, non-indexical sense, but her book very helpfully goes into great detail of the processes of photographing animated cels one by one; hence, the title of her book, *Frame by Frame*.<sup>55</sup> Thus, through her historical work on process of cel animation, animation itself becomes a photographic medium. One such section deals specifically with the microfilming process, which bears striking similarities

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<sup>52</sup> « Un rempart de plastique isole les cartes et les plans. »

<sup>53</sup> « Quant aux journaux dont le papier de bois se détruit lui-même, on les microfilmira. »

<sup>54</sup> « ... ces images préserveront la mémoire des documents périssables. »

<sup>55</sup> Hannah Frank, *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

with cel animation, namely “through the labor-intensive process of photographing single-page documents one at a time.”<sup>56</sup> And, as well as being filmed one image/frame at a time, this method of microfilming acted as a way to preserve – but also destroy – such imagery, since that which is painted on the photographic is often washed away. Another form of simultaneous preservation and destruction arrives when “individual pages had to be ripped from their spines” when microfilming pages from a larger volume of works. The act of preservation, then, is also an act of destruction, the microfilming process producing an “ephemera.” Thus, for Frank, the film – the final product – is the last actual testament of the preservation at stake.

What seems to be implied in Frank’s overview here is that microfilming – via its similarities with the impulse of archivization inherent in cel animation – gives rise to a preservation that is both tangible and intangible. The tangible is the actual process of storage in a physical space; not even just a library or museum, but also the very act of storing the image in question under plastic. Yet, this re-contextualization – I appreciated Frank’s use of the verb to rip – creates, too, a metaphorical space between the old context and the new, even when the original space (the library, the book volume) is still close by. The act of “ripping,” still leaves a trace, in other words. Even when the voiceover narration in *Toute la mémoire du monde* presupposes a vague and nebulous place of storage – outside the physical and tangible confines of the *Bibliothèque nationale* – these statements are paradoxically coupled with images from inside the interior space of this very archival space. Returning to Varda’s very brief cameo at the end of the film, Dumesnil’s voiceover relates a book, whose process of storage and preservation has been

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 37. See Frank’s analysis of newspaper clippings and cel animation in *Tortoise Wins by a Hare* (Bob Clampett, 1943).

described in detail, now enters an intangible space that is labelled as an “imaginary boundary.”<sup>57</sup> Resnais shows workers at a long table, busy at work; the camera moves past them, finally showing Varda at the end (but it makes no notice of this, quickly cutting away). More specifically, Dumesnil describes that the book in question undergoes a serious act of transformation, ultimately becoming disconnected from its originary self:

It's no longer the same book. Before, it was part of a universal, abstract, indifferent memory, where all books were equal, and together basked in attention as tenderly distant as that shown by God to men. [*can now see Varda*] Here it's been picked out, preferred over others. Here is indispensable to its reader, torn from its galaxy, [*can no longer see Varda*] to feed these paper crunching pseudo-insects, irreparably different from true insects in that each is bound to its own distinct concern.<sup>58</sup>

Resnais cuts to a long shot, in the style of an establishing shot, of many, many workers at desks in the library, as the narrator lists many fields of academic study. This is followed by a bird's eye view of the library, the workers now far away like ants – hence the insect metaphor on the part of the narrator. The sheer vastness of the library space is showcased, once again. Dumesnil calls the *Bibliothèque nationale* a “fortress” – and Resnais's cinematography visually backs up that claim.

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<sup>57</sup> « une ligne idéale ».

<sup>58</sup> « Ce n'est plus le même livre. À l'instant il faisait partie d'une mémoire universelle, abstraite, indifférente, où tous les livres étaient égaux entre eux où ils bénéficiaient ensemble d'une attention aussi tendrement glacée que celle de Dieu pour les hommes. Et le voici choisi, préféré, indispensable à son lecteur, arraché à sa galaxie pour nourrir ses faux insectes croqueurs de papier irrémédiablement différents des insectes en ceci qu'ils sont attelés chacun à une besogne distincte. »

### 2.3 A Non-Indexical, Technical Animation: The Intangible Stored in the Tangible

While *Toute la mémoire du monde* very much exemplifies the vital role “technical animation” plays in (re)animating archives, a certain “metaphorical animation” bleeds through both the verbal declarations and camerawork on display throughout the film. While my next three chapters explicate more my conceptualization of “metaphorical animation” I will simply say here that it involves movement, in the sense of feelings, affect, and a personal response to an image. I build upon Roland Barthes’s use of the term “animation” in *La Chambre claire/Camera Lucida*, on photography “animating” spectators in divergent (and not always clear) ways. In brief, photography – and I extrapolate Barthes’s words to all types of visual media – can elicit a multitude of reactions from different spectators. Visual media can evoke a very personal relationship with a spectator, in other words.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the amorphous mass of words creates a gap – that is, a gap between what is in the institution, and what is not. In the following chapter, I consider Varda’s visual citationality of the Jean-Luc Godard within the Louvre as constituting a “metaphorical animation” that follows André Malraux’s conceptualization of the “museum without walls”; if one visits the Louvre, one is drawn to the masterpieces *not* there just as much as those that *are*.<sup>60</sup> (Since that chapter deals with an animated archive as being more metaphorical than actual, I engage with Malraux more there.) Yet, for the *Bibliothèque nationale*, there are walls – and I am referring to walls in their most literal sense. Walls house the words and imagery inside it, even though they also house those outside as well. A key turn of phrase in Dumesnil’s voiceover is the declaration:

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<sup>59</sup> Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, 39; Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 20.

<sup>60</sup> André Malraux, *Le Musée imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard, [1947] 1965), 13; André Malraux, “Museum Without Walls,” in *Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Frogmore: Paladin, 1974), 15.

“A silent citadel, the Bibliothèque Nationale harbors countless treasures. A hundred films wouldn’t do justice to all that merits attention. For who can say what is finest, rarest or most precious here?”<sup>61</sup> While the physical building of the *Bibliothèque nationale* is very extensive – a claim that one makes at risk of sounding redundant – it is the medium of film that falls short in capturing the largeness of this collection. If we extend Malraux’s claim here, while the Louvre may be inherently lacking in its display, the *Bibliothèque* is the opposite; its storage is so comprehensive that it creates a space of vagueness and expansiveness that cannot be whittled down to a singular form of representation. The institution is king, to put it another way.

What complicates this claim of Dumesnil here is that his words at times hint at spectatorly space, where meaning is added to and taken from certain texts by virtue of those who see and interpret them. So, in a word, by “spectatorly” I mean those who view and make interpretations of those artefacts on display in the *Bibliothèque nationale* – including those who view Resnais’s film as well. In addition, what these possibly fabricated spectators *may* think is complicated by the fact that Dumesnil’s narration simply speculates about potential interpretation; to put it another way, Dumesnil places imaginary spectators and visitors to the *Bibliothèque* in the place of those who may in fact be in the physical space. If we circle back to the sequence wherein Resnais visually details the process of microfilming, it is preceded by a suite of images detailing a variety of artefacts – each one accompanied by a phrase that often refers to the capacity of interpretation, as well as gaps in knowledge. “The *Codex Peresianus*, which nobody can decipher?” is a case in

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<sup>61</sup> « Citadelle silencieuse la Bibliothèque Nationale recèle d’innombrables trésors. Beaucoup mériterait qu’on s’y arrête mais cent films alors n’y suffiraient pas. Car qui peut dire ce qui est ici le plus précieux, le plus beau, le plus rare ? »



point.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, phrases such as “these Harry Dickson memoirs unobtainable today?”<sup>63</sup> and “these personal notebooks to be opened in 1974?”<sup>64</sup> imply that some of these visual and written texts contain knowledge that is unseen by many, with some of it remaining completely hidden and unknowable. Some of this imagery, too, is of books that are still, Resnais’s camera moving towards or rotating around them; other times, we just see the just an image itself, there being no extraneous matter. In this latter instance, it is just the painting, engraving, and so on. Resnais cuts from one artwork to the next, yet the cutting is rather slow, not as fast as it was cited previously in this chapter, allowing the viewer of *Toute la mémoire du monde* the time and opportunity to take in the contents of the image in question.

What is so critical in much of the imagery that Resnais chooses is that it is “non-indexical”; in short (and I alluded to this before), by “non-indexical” I mean imagery that does not evince the same level of resemblance that photographic imagery affords. In this vein, the way in which I employ the term “non-indexical” here is in agreement with what Annabelle Honess Roe in her book *Animated Documentary*, wherein she states “Disney rabbits look like real rabbits, we recognise that Gromit is a dog and that Bart Simpson is a young boy – it also looks very different.”<sup>65</sup> This is not always a productive distinction, even in the “Animated Documentary” form; at a base level, there is the potential for very convincing photographic trickery – a technique that I expound upon in my final chapter on the mockumentary form. Even though the presence of photographic evidence may be evidence of accuracy in documentary cinema, it may not be ideal,

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<sup>62</sup> « *Le Codex Peresianus* que personne ne sait plus déchiffrer ? »

<sup>63</sup> « Ces mémoires d’Harry Dickson aujourd’hui introuvables ? »

<sup>64</sup> « Ces carnets intimes qui ne seront ouverts qu’en 1974 ? »

<sup>65</sup> Roe, *Animated Documentary*, 38.

as elucidated by Paul Ward in his discussion of how to portray one's interior thought process on film; in short, non-indexical, non-photographic imagery may provide documentary filmmakers with a far greater palette than just photographic methods:

[...] it is the use of animation that is interesting, as it can perfectly trace the contours of such a shifting and rapidly condensed thought process in a way that is out of reach of live action. Animation is the perfect way in which to communicate that there is more to our collective experience of things that meets the eye.<sup>66</sup>

Ward's wording here ostensibly implies that "animation" in terms of "non-indexicality" gives rise to a certain vagueness and ambiguity, especially if the image in question is abstract and/or stylized. Think back to Dumesnil's earlier statement that amorphous words cannot be trapped in the actual institution, with only some being stored there. Not only do texts such as *Codex Peresianus* stimulate speculation and a lack of perceived knowledge, but the abstract and fantastical quality of some of the artworks that Resnais chooses to frame, too, are enigmatic in their subject matter.

Notably, Resnais chooses to frame a suite of Apocalyptic artworks – that is, mainly engravings inspired by the descriptions of monstrous beings in the Book of Revelation. Already there is an obfuscation present; meaning that the Biblical imagery lacks any sort of concrete, historical referent, instead rooted in mythology and fantasy. Dumesnil does not name these artworks specifically, the rhetorical gesture rather being such a question, "This Dürer?",<sup>67</sup> which calls back to the already-cited question "For who can say what is finest, rarest or most precious

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<sup>66</sup> Paul Ward, *Documentary: The Margins of Reality* (London: Wallflower, 2005), 91.

<sup>67</sup> « De Dürer ? »

here?”<sup>68</sup> Dumesnil does not name the artwork by name, but a cursory, online search shows that Resnais is visually quoting Albrecht Dürer’s 1511 woodcut *The Beast with the Seven Heads and the Beast with Lamb’s Horns*, which, in turn, visually depicts the following passage from the Book of Revelation: “And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.”<sup>69</sup> Yet, even when Resnais’s camera is showing this image and nothing else, the act of searching for the woodcut reveals that what we see on screen is only part of the entire woodcut – in the style of a zoom in, as it were. Resnais is cutting the artwork, something which I will return to later on in this chapter with *Guernica*; yet here, it is much more gentle, in a sense, owing to the lack of speed of the cutting, as well as this “cut” being “after the fact,” as it were. In the part of Dürer’s *Beast with Seven Heads* that we do see, the said heads are highly stylized – meaning that the lines are thick and black, creating imagery that is more two dimensional than three dimensional. Each of these monstrous heads have at least one horn on them (some with two); while some have the appearance of recognizable animals (such as a bird with a sharp beak), others are less discernible, one in particular having a singular, exaggerated eyeball that would ostensibly disorient any viewer of the woodcut. If one then looks at *Beast with Seven Heads* in its entirety, it is clear that Resnais has cut out the very vivid image of the bearded and crowned Christ-like figure hovering over the hideous creature here. In other words, Resnais’s stationary camera – before the fact – has cut out one the primary focal points of the woodcut, one

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<sup>68</sup> « Citadelle silencieuse la Bibliothèque Nationale recèle d’innombrables trésors. Beaucoup mériterait qu’on s’y arrête mais cent films alors n’y suffiraient pas. Car qui peut dire ce qui est ici le plus précieux, le plus beau, le plus rare ? »

<sup>69</sup> Revelation 13:1, English Standard Version.

that is almost essential to its overall mood and entire context. Christ's return is integral part of the Book of Revelation, not simply the appearance of monstrous forms such as the seven-headed one.

The other artworks are similarly fantastical and stylized, Resnais's camera pausing on each one before moving on to the next, with this short sequence in its entirety being: "St. Severus's commentary on Revelation? *[pause then cut]* This Mantegna? *[pause then cut]* This Dürer? *[pause then cut]* This Redon?"<sup>70</sup> The slowness depicts a beginning of "technical animation" as it were; these stationary images in succession that would give the illusion of movement, them being *almost* still. (And, the wording on the part of Dumesnil is brief, and not entirely explanatory.) Thus, I return to Esther Leslie's characterization of Muybridge's zoetrope and early cinema as an "animation" (and what this dissertation would definitely label as "technical animation"). "When the first films were shown on the first screens," Leslie explicates, "they began not with images of movement, but rather stasis. On the screen, before the audience, a still image was suddenly cranked into life and the coil of filmstrip rushed through the projector until its end."<sup>71</sup> Think, too, of Jack Halberstam, whose work on stop-motion cited earlier in this dissertation draws attention to the relationship between stillness and motion, where movement is created from the splicing together of one frame at a time. A key phrase in Halberstam's argument comes when he talks about motion being "implied." "Motion is *implied* by the relation of one shot to another rather than *recorded* by a camera traveling alongside moving objects," he articulates.<sup>72</sup> In this *Toute la mémoire du monde* sequence, different artworks brought together thematically – that is, apocalyptic imagery by

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<sup>70</sup> « L'Apocalypse de Saint-Sévère ? De Mantegna ? De Dürer ? De Redon ? »

<sup>71</sup> Esther Leslie, "Loops and Joins," 28.

<sup>72</sup> Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 178. Original emphasis.

different artists, but that share a common theme, with imagery that is similar but different. The monsters are different creatures, but they are apocalyptic, in other words.

As I finish my reading of *Toute la mémoire du monde*, I do want to emphasize that Halberstam is clearly talking about stop-motion – involving claymation and puppetry – which are clearly non-indexical methods of representation. They are “animation” as traditionally understood, and are not photographically real. There is a tension between live action and animation in scholarship on animated documentary, as Annabelle Honess Roe lucidly explicates in her book, in that animation and documentary “make an odd couple,” a “marriage of opposites.”<sup>73</sup> Scholars such as Christina Formenti even state that the “animated documentary” is more similar to a reenactment or “historical fiction” rather than a “documentary,” as the images on display have a different materiality to their live-action counterparts.<sup>74</sup> Yet, consider Paul Ward’s earlier statement about the “animated documentary” form allowing for the representation of concepts that are “out of reach of live action” – which, to him, is a positive and liberating thing. My other chapters do away with this distinction – almost altogether – but here, I want to draw attention to my intervention, as it cannot be ignored with respect to Resnais’s *Toute la mémoire du monde*, and to his corpus as a whole. *Guernica* is just one example of Resnais’s painting documentaries (as are *Van Gogh* and *Gauguin*), and *Les Statues meurent aussi* (co-directed with Chris Marker) comprises stop-motion and camera movement over actual statues in a variety of stylizations. In these documentaries in Resnais’s *œuvre*, the way in which archives are (re)animated overlap with continuing scholarship on the “animated documentary.” I gesture towards this non-indexicality too

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<sup>73</sup> Roe, *Animated Documentary*, 1.

<sup>74</sup> Formenti, “The Sincerest Form of Docudrama,” 103–15.

in my fourth chapter on *La Rage du Démon/Fury of the Demon* (Fabien Delage, 2016), invisible demons created afresh using paintings as their placeholder, non-indexicality being used as a way to represent something so intangible and so non-existent, that photography could not be used at all. In *Toute la mémoire du monde*, abstract concepts are the vastness of knowledge itself, and not reproductions at all, the same way Bart Simpson is a “reproduction” of an actual, real-life human boy, to recall Roe. Perhaps a more precise and accurate term would be “non-indexical documentary,” rather than “animated documentary.”

#### **2.4 From the *Bibliothèque nationale* to Hiroshima: An Archive of Animated Memory**

In a word, the physical place gives rise to a nebulous archive of memory – a memory that is represented by abstract means, and, by extension, non-indexical means. The entirety of the French tradition – clearly – cannot be stored in the BnF, notwithstanding the vastness of the collection. The “technical animation” at the BN/BnF institution gives rise to its ambiguity as an archival collection. This section thus acts as a coda to my section on *Toute la mémoire du monde*, since it is important to consider some more the role of location in Resnais’s *œuvre* as a whole; the idea of a physical space both storing knowledge – as well as falling short of storing that knowledge – does not exist in *Toute la mémoire du monde* alone, as it is a key component in Resnais’s documentary filmography at this moment in his career. Released in the same year as *Toute la mémoire du monde*, Resnais’s Holocaust documentary *Nuit et brouillard* was shot on location in Auschwitz and Lublin concentration camps in 1955 (thus, “after the fact”), along with archival materials (mainly photographs) of the many dead bodies at those camps; both the physical location and the actuality of the photographic evidence is clearly key to Resnais at this point in his career.

As Emma Wilson lucidly puts it, “Resnais’s colour images, shot on location at Auschwitz, offer a visual testimony to the remains of the camp in the present (1955), a phantom, forgotten city only visited by the camera.”<sup>75</sup> I singled out Wilson’s specific wording here, since the word “phantom” ostensibly implies a nebulous being or entity that cannot be whittled down via a singular institution; thus, in a very general sense, the concentration camp and the library perform the same function.

However, this same function (being an actual institution) represents a bird’s eye view of the matter, and does not take into account the role of trauma in relation to representing historical events such as the Holocaust; Resnais is clearly wrestling with how to adequately represent and do justice to past violence in *Nuit et brouillard*, juxtaposing “present-day” (that is, 1955) footage of an empty Auschwitz with stationary and highly graphic photographs of many corpses that died there.<sup>76</sup> The “unrepresentability” of a truly horrific past is a common thread in trauma theory, into which I enter very briefly in this coda to *Toute la mémoire du monde*. I greatly appreciate, for example, Linda Williams’s characterization of the Holocaust, in which “the truth of the past is traumatic, violent, and unrepresentable in images.”<sup>77</sup> Williams’s point of reference here is nine-

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<sup>75</sup> Wilson, *Alain Resnais*, 28.

<sup>76</sup> For more scholarly attention on the unrepresentability of the Holocaust in *Nuit et brouillard*, and the role of the actual Auschwitz space, see, for example, Max Silverman, “Horror and the Everyday in Post-Holocaust France: *Nuit et brouillard* and Concentrationary Art,” *French Cultural Studies* 17, no. 1 (2006): 5–18; Daniel Singleton, “Exhausting Documentary: The Affects of Adapting Histories Within and Between Three Holocaust Documentaries,” *South Atlantic Review* 79, nos. 1–2 (2014): 177–95.

<sup>77</sup> Linda Williams, “Mirrors without Memories: Truth: History, and the New Documentary,” *Film Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1993): 14.

hour documentary *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985), which acts as a counterpoint to *Nuit et brouillard*; rather than photographic, archival footage, there is none of that at all. Instead, the nine-hour running time consists of “present-day” interviews of both survivor and perpetrator. People themselves can be and are archives, in other words, representations stemming far beyond the concentration camp space – even if that space is connected even tangentially. In a word, there not only a vagueness – but an unrepresentability and a need for justice that a nebulous archive beyond walls may answer. In addition, think back to Paul Ward’s statement of the potential of the non-indexical image. Theory on Animated Documentary that I have cited earlier is all about the role of non-indexical, non-photographic realism in documentary – and its potential, and whether it can capture “reality.” My dissertation is not about that; yet, on the other hand, my thought process behind “technical animation” cannot ignore what has come before in studies on the so-called “animated documentary” form, as the way in which scholars such as Roe and Ward discuss different textual forms that oppose live action presupposes by what I mean as “technical animation” (movement of cinematic frames) and “metaphorical animation” (a personalized response to an image). In *Shoah*, the spoken word is in the style of what has been traditionally thought of as “animation.” And, moreover, it is an animating feature – pun intended – of living and moving archives that cannot be simplified.

Thus, I read the 1959 release of *Hiroshima mon amour* as a response to not only *Nuit et brouillard*, but also *Toute la mémoire du monde*. *Hiroshima* is not a documentary; instead, it is a feature-length film that is told in a nonlinear, fragmented style, detailing a deeply intimate relationship between a French and Japanese couple, who are simply named “Lui” and “Elle.” The film itself stemmed from Resnais’s original commission to direct a documentary about the 1945 Hiroshima bombing – which he refused to do, following his experience on *Nuit et brouillard*.



Rather, *Hiroshima* acts as retelling of history – yet one nevertheless filmed on location, namely the rebuilt Hiroshima site. Cathy Caruth hits the nail on the head (as it were), since she proposes that Resnais’s “refusal to make a documentary on Hiroshima [...] paradoxically implies that it is direct archival footage that cannot maintain the very specificity of the event.”<sup>78</sup> For Resnais, this “specificity” arises from “the fictional story, not *about* Hiroshima but taking place at its site.”<sup>79</sup> I totally agree with Caruth’s assessment of *Hiroshima*, since it presupposes my own reading of the film – and Resnais’s *oeuvre* as a whole – through the lens of “animation.” *Nuit et brouillard* was insufficient for Resnais – in that it did not do justice to unrepresentable violence – but not for the reason of there being a physical institution. The fluidity of animation that stems from the locale, in other words.

One such institution in *Hiroshima* is the onsite Hiroshima Museum, wherein there are many exhibits including photographic displays, as well as remains from the destruction of the bombing.<sup>80</sup> Near the beginning of the film, Resnais films the interior of this museum, focusing on said exhibits. The “technical animation” of the exhibits on display in this museum, his camera – like with *Toute*

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<sup>78</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 27.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Original emphasis. See also Rebecca M. Pauly, “From Shoah to Holocaust: Image and Ideology in Alain Resnais’s *Nuit et brouillard* and *Hiroshima mon amour*,” *French Cultural Studies* 3, no. 9 (1992): 257. For a general rundown of *Hiroshima mon amour*, see Ungar, *Critical Mass*, 183.

<sup>80</sup> For further context on these exhibits as shown in *Hiroshima mon amour*, as well as context on the Hiroshima Museum at large, see Diane Losche, “*Hiroshima mon amour*: Representation and Violence in New Museums of the Pacific,” in *South Pacific Museums: Experiments in Culture*, ed. Chris Healy and Andrea Witcomb (Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2006), 175–85. See esp. 177–78.

*la mémoire du monde* – moving fluidly around the stationary objects on display. *Hiroshima* is not a documentary, but this sequence is filmed in a documentary style; for instance, the voiceover overlaying the museum space is rather reminiscent of the expository voice of Dumesnil over the interior of the physical *Bibliothèque nationale* collection. Yet, in *Hiroshima*, the voiceover acts as a sort of dialogue between the French Elle and the Japanese Lui – a gendered binary opposition akin to the male-female shot/countershot prominent in *Toute la mémoire du monde*. The dual voices recycle oft-repeated phrases such as “You did not see Hiroshima,”<sup>81</sup> from Elle. However, there is also a documentary-like, expository character akin to Dumesnil’s explanations, when Elle’s voiceover explicates the types of visual text (and other visual testimony) housed at the Hiroshima museum. A case in point for Elle is certainly the photographs, often repeating the words, the following declaration being only one example: “I saw people walking around. People walk around, lost in thought, among the photographs, the reconstructions, for lack of anything else. The photographs, the photographs, the reconstructions for lack of anything else.”<sup>82</sup> The critical phraseology for Elle’s repetitive voiceover for my own reading of this sequence is when she describes “human flesh, suspended, as if still alive, its agony still fresh.”<sup>83</sup> These archival materials are still – some of them literally corpses, others more metaphysical – but they are stationary.

The “still alive” phrase is especially striking, since it presupposes and reflects Resnais’s fluid camerawork which is one of the primary animating agents of this opening museum sequence.

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<sup>81</sup> « Tu n’as rien vu Hiroshima. »

<sup>82</sup> « J’ai vu les gens se promener. Les gens se promènent, pensifs, à travers les photographies, les reconstitutions, faute d’autre chose, à travers les photographies, les photographies, les reconstitutions, faute d’autre chose, les explications, faute d’autre chose. »

<sup>83</sup> « Des peaux humaines flottantes, survivantes, encore dans la fraîcheur de leurs souffrances. »

More specifically, the cutting technique that is present throughout *Toute la mémoire du monde* (think of the bookshelves) is even more prominent and visible in Resnais's visual portrayal of the Hiroshima museum – both the interior and the exterior. Lui's bodiless voiceover poses the question, "what museum in Hiroshima?"<sup>84</sup> in response to Elle's statement that she saw Hiroshima four times at said museum. We see – as Lui and Elle say these things – an establishing shot of the geometric, rectangular museum exterior. Resnais's camera only remains on each shot for a few seconds, cutting to a completely different angle of the museum, each time of a different side. Such camerawork, too, emphasizes the three-dimensional space of Hiroshima, as evidenced by the different angles of the staircases at the museum's entrance; the camera is situated at the top of a steep staircase, one peering over a long flight of stairs (albeit somewhat in shadow) moving towards an obvious vanishing point. While Resnais's oft cutting is just that – quick and frequent – it is not so quick as to deprive the viewer a moment to "drink in" the very distinct geometric architecture of the Hiroshima museum space. It is not a singular long take; instead, Resnais is clearly and very visibly cutting together frames to add his own distinct and visual voice to Hiroshima. While it may seem like he is simply repeating and retaining this technique from *Toute la mémoire du monde*, his cutting is even more visible and self-evident in *Hiroshima*, given that he spends even more time and attention focusing on the outside of the Hiroshima museum than on the *Bibliothèque nationale*. In the latter, Resnais almost seems in a rush to get inside the *Bibliothèque* – while (quite ironically, given the quick cutting) he allows the viewer to take in and understand Hiroshima and its museum.

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<sup>84</sup> « Quel musée à Hiroshima ? »

Once we do get inside the Hiroshima museum, the exhibit become “technically animated” by virtue of Resnais’s camera. One technique he uses is what I – rather colloquially – label as the “spinning around,” wherein his camera slowly rotates around a series of artefacts. Such objects include an airplane hanging from the ceiling, a scorched bicycle, as well as a “bouquet of bottle caps”.<sup>85</sup> (In this last example, Elle’s voice describes what is on screen.) Each artefact is in the foreground of the frame, the center of attention. Another of these rotations is a model reconstruction of Hiroshima, which initially appears as a somewhat indexical establishing shot, until children join the frame, destroying the illusion. Resnais’s camerawork is also fluid in the sense that it moves – in a parallel fashion – past other exhibits such as piles of stones. Furthermore, Resnais zooms in onto photographs of dead bodies – and this act of zooming is rather swift and highly visible; visible, in the sense that Resnais zooms deeply into the image, rather than by small amount.<sup>86</sup> Resnais’s camera very literally and technically animates the still, lifeless bodies, that remain stationary – owing to them being still photographs. Sometimes, too, these exhibits in the Hiroshima museum are “technically animating” themselves, one example being the flashing lights of an installation. More specifically, it consists of a globe, its flashes in time with the erratic piano music, which is part of the extra-diegetic score; the camera lingers on this image for a number of seconds.

These examples that I cite in the above paragraph fit in with quite nicely with my conceptualization of “technical animation,” including the photographic evidence. Even though indexical photographic imagery may evince a certain stability according to its *prima facie* truth

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<sup>85</sup> « des capsules en bouquet ».

<sup>86</sup> See my reading of *Bambi* (Sébastien Lifshitz, 2013) in chapter 4.

claims (according to some scholars within Documentary Studies), Resnais's highly visible camerawork creates an uneasy, liminal space between stillness and movement – ultimately showing the inherent instability of *all* forms of visual media in representing a traumatic and unstable past. In other words, Resnais treats the photographs as any other archival material – there, as placeholder for an event that cannot be represented. They are “reconstructions,” just as Elle says. This goes back to the notion of “animated documentary as re-enactment” or a retelling of history, to recall Cristina Formenti – which I problematize by adding in the term “technical animation,” and, by extension, “technically animated documentary.” *Hiroshima* may be a step forward for Resnais, eschewing the seemingly reducible and limited documentary quality of *Nuit et brouillard*; yet, at the same time, it is the striking similarities between the display sequences (the whole of *Toute la mémoire du monde* and part of *Hiroshima*) that show the “animating” role of Resnais's camera.

## **2.5 *Guernica*: Animating a Painted Past**

This final section of this chapter both acts as a conclusion to my analyses of *Toute la mémoire du monde* and *Hiroshima mon amour*, but also leads into my readings of animated archives in the chapters that follow. To put it another way, *Guernica* (Alain Resnais and Robert Hessens, 1950) extends and complicates the sort of “technical animation” found in these other Resnais films; there is very clear editing and cutting on the part of Resnais, arguably even more visible and “animating” than in *Toute la mémoire du monde* and *Hiroshima*. Resnais is very explicitly splicing together excerpts from Pablo Picasso's titular painting from 1937. Yet, on the other hand, any physical and actual space that Picasso's painting finds itself is much more

metaphysical than the BnF or Hiroshima museum. Rather, *Guernica* (as in the painting) is taken out of a museum space, referring to a specific place and time in history, that is the bombing of the town Guernica on April 26, 1937. Picasso's painting is taken out of a museum archive to create an "animated documentary," and a "technically animated documentary" at that. *Hiroshima's* Elle may refer to the artefacts in the Hiroshima as "reconstructions," but here, in *Guernica*, the term "reconstruction" may be even more apt. If paintings – non-indexical imagery – are in essence reenactments, *Guernica* is, more than ever, a "reconstruction" of an historical time and place.

Resnais's *Guernica* is one of three "painting documentaries" (as I label them rather broadly), the other two being *Van Gogh* (1948) and *Gauguin* (1950).<sup>87</sup> All three films are in fact the first widely recognized films by Resnais, with *Van Gogh* winning the Venice Biennale in 1948, as well as an Academy Award in 1950 for Best Short Subject (Two-Reel).<sup>88</sup> Resnais's painting documentaries are by no means the only documentaries that utilized paintings and painters as their primary source of subject matter (that is, paintings being the documentaries, in some cases.) Another painting documentary of the time – that is certainly in conversation with Resnais's ones – is *Le Mystère Picasso/The Mystery of Picasso* (Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1956), wherein Picasso is filmed in "real-time" in the act of painting. The artworks come to life on screen before our eyes at a rather slow pace – in contrast with the stark and highly visible editing choices by Resnais.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> For a thorough run-down of Resnais's painted documentaries, see John Rhym, "Frame and Finitude: The Aporetic Aesthetics of Alain Resnais's Cinematic Modernism," PhD diss., (University of Pittsburgh, 2017).

<sup>88</sup> See Emma Wilson, *Alain Resnais*, 17.

<sup>89</sup> For more on the contrast between Resnais's and Clouzot's filming methods of paintings and the act of painting, see Douglas Smith, "Moving Pictures: The Art Documentaries of Alain Resnais and Henri-Georges Clouzot in Theoretical Context (Benjamin, Malraux and Bazin)," *Studies in European Cinema* 1, no. 3 (2004): 163–73. See further Bert

And such painting films – not just documentaries – continue to be released in the present moment, such as the acclaimed *Loving Vincent* (Dorota Kobiela and Hugh Welchman, 2017), self-described as “the world’s first fully painted feature film!”.<sup>90</sup> The painting film/documentary is almost like its own sub-genre. Yet like with *Toute la mémoire du monde* – and as demonstrated by my footnotes – not much scholarly attention has been given to Resnais’s painting documentaries, especially in comparison with *Nuit et brouillard* and *Hiroshima mon amour*. It is even more surprising that many volumes on the Animated Documentary form do not treat these documentaries as examples, as they certainly fit in with their conceptualizations of animation in documentary cinema comprising non-indexical imagery.

Critically, though, only part of Resnais’s *Guernica* includes Picasso’s painting, other archival material being – for example – newspaper clippings, as well as some of Picasso’s sculptures. The voiceover, too, consists of a reading by French-Spanish actress María Casarès of Paul Éluard’s poem “Victoire de Guernica,” also from 1937. Without utilizing the term “animation,” Steven Jacobs ostensibly prefigures the sort of “technical animation” I see in *Guernica*; in his words, more so than *Van Gogh* and *Gauguin*, in *Guernica* “images are disconnected from their original context and charged with completely new meanings.”<sup>91</sup> Somewhat surprisingly from the outset – and from the title of Resnais’s *Guernica* – Picasso’s actual painting from 1937 only has a small role to play in the 20-minute documentary; specifically,

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Cardullo, “A Bergsonian Film: ‘The Picasso Mystery’ by André Bazin,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35, no. 2 (2001): 1–9.

<sup>90</sup> *Loving Vincent*, Official Website, accessed February 22, 2021, <http://lovingvincent.com>

<sup>91</sup> Steven Jacobs, *Framing Pictures: Film and the Visual Arts. Edinburgh Studies in Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 30.

in a minute-long sequence (if that) Resnais cuts out sections of Picasso's *Guernica*, his camera very briefly moving between these parts of the painting. In other words, the movement acts as a zoom in on specific features of the painting. What is more, Resnais's editing itself is very quick – each painting segment not lasting more than two or three segments.

More specifically, this sequence takes place over roughly forty seconds. Resnais's camera commences with the God-like and eyeball-like lightbulb at the top of Picasso's painting; Resnais's shows this entity without any other extraneous material. I call this – which I have referred to previously in this chapter – as a “zoom cut,” as it performs the functions of both these filmic techniques. Yet, here, Resnais does not make many cuts between these shots, instead allowing his camera to move and track each of these seemingly isolated objects and figures. From the eye, one moves speedily down to the disembodied hand carrying a broken sword – which we can see is situated at base of the painting, by looking at Picasso's painting in its entirety. Cutting back again on the same eye, Resnais's camera then travels diagonally (to left) to the head of a dead soldier; yet even without Resnais's extra work, Picasso's original painting depicts this man as missing the lower half of his body missing, a disembodied leg on the other side of the canvas possibly being originally his. Resnais's zoom cut here simply making this dead soldier even more disembodied, owing to the fact that all we see is his head. Resnais cuts back once again to the eye, speeding down to the base of the Virgin and Child, who are situated just above this disembodied soldier. Then, somewhat slower than before, Resnais tracks these two figures, before landing on the virgin's head, where his camera remains totally still for a few seconds. Returning to the eye, Resnais uses the same quick camera tracking, moving to the right side of Picasso's painting, arriving quickly on the figure whose arms are stretched out up to the sky; Resnais's camera then carefully moves up to the tip of this victim's fingers, then zooming – and I mean an actual zoom



here, not zoom cutting – towards the open window above him. Like with the virgin’s head, we linger on this open window for a few seconds; if one were to watch only these few seconds of Resnais’s *Guernica*, it would resemble a still painting. However, when we do cut back to the very-familiar sight of the eye, Resnais differentiates his style of camera movement here, zooming out to show most – but not all – of Picasso’s *Guernica*. It is *Guernica* in its almost entirety; while the disembodied soldier is now visible, the victim with upwardly stretched arms is now completely cropped out. As a sort of last word, however, Resnais tracks back to the virgin and child, now just focusing on the virgin’s face. This is the final shot of Picasso’s *Guernica*.

We can see that Picasso’s painting is clearly in motion – “technical animation” if ever it was so explicit; but these are not simply cinematic frames, but Picasso’s frames. Via his camerawork, Resnais photographs Picasso’s non-photographic imagery in order to become his own cinematic frames – and, by extension, part of his (as in Resnais’s) actual archive.<sup>92</sup> Picasso’s *Guernica*, then, transcends any museum space of which it was a part. Resnais does not reference the museum where Picasso’s *Guernica* is on display; any museum is not the focus, unlike the other Resnais films that I consider in this chapter. Resnais does not reference one in his *Guernica*. While the objects in the *Bibliothèque nationale* exist in relation to each other in *Toute la mémoire du monde*, the archive that Resnais chooses to display in his *Guernica* relate solely to the other archival materials that Resnais himself has chosen. While the BnF is an actual, existing institution – of which Resnais’s film does make choices, to be sure – in *Guernica*, the archive is solely

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<sup>92</sup> See further the “Ken Burns Effect,” the technique of zooming and/or panning over still imagery such as a still photograph. See, for example, Craig Hight, “Automation Within Digital Videography: From the Ken Burns Effect to ‘Meaning-Making’ Engines,” *Studies in Documentary Film* 8, no. 3 (2014): 235–50.

Resnais-constructed. Resnais does indeed choose much material from Picasso's other works – see below – he couples it with photographs, poetry, and intertitles, for example. Unlike the objects in *Toute la mémoire du monde*, Picasso's painting becomes a painting without a home by virtue of Resnais's film.

## 2.6 *Guernica*: Animating a Poetic Past

Resnais's *Guernica* is a re-animated, re-constructed conglomeration of a disparate variety of archival material; not only the spoken word, but also the written word. In an almost meta sense, the opening intertitle of *Guernica* elaborates on the different types of source material presented and quoted throughout it. Against a black backdrop, the written text reads:

This was directed with the aid of paintings, drawings, and sculptures that PICASSO completed from 1902 to 1949. The painting titled 'GUERNICA,' painted during the Spanish Civil War, provided the argument for this documentary.<sup>93</sup>

This written text casts the net wide, and what follows is a suite of imagery that coincides with what these words say. It is in this opening segment, too, that the voiceover is by a male voice – Jacques Pruvost – rather than the female one which is present in the vast majority of the documentary's 20 minutes. Pruvost's voiceover consists of prose and commences with a black

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<sup>93</sup> « Ce film a été réalisé à l'aide des peintures, dessins et sculptures que PICASSO exécuta de 1902 à 1949. Le tableau intitulé 'GUERNICA', peint durant la guerre civile espagnole, a fourni l'argument de ce documentaire. » English translation my own. Due to the lack of subtitles on *Guernica*, English translations will either be my own, or of existing translation of previously published archival material.

screen following the opening credits and intertitle cited above; more specifically, Pruvost's voice starts while the opening credits still continue. The title "GUERNICA" appears in uppercase letters, and Pruvost's voiceover commences with the expository statement "Guernica: a small town and the traditional historical capital of the Basque country."<sup>94</sup> Resnais then cuts to what appears to be a zoomed in photograph, but the lines are not overly clear, and are rather fuzzy; one cannot discern straight away whether one is looking at a painting or a photograph of Guernica. Resnais's camera is totally still, letting us "soak in" the imagery. What we see specifically seem to be the damaged rooftops crumbling away – but the overall poor quality of the image makes it difficult to discern exactly. Yet, at the same time, an online search suggests that this is a pre-existing photograph; a similar looking one exists, without having been zoomed in on by Resnais.<sup>95</sup> This establishing shot is not like the *Bibliothèque nationale* in *Toute la mémoire du monde*, where the building is filmed from every angle. The physical space is not entirely clear, and not the focus – no pun intended.

Once we see this fuzzy "photograph," Resnais's camera lingers in on it for quite some time – a number of minutes – unlike the rapidity of the section of Picasso's *Guernica*. It is a long, uninterrupted take, while Pruvost's voiceover continues in a lengthy monologue providing concrete historical dates that help situate the viewer within the film's and the painting's context. I cite an excerpt below:

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<sup>94</sup> « Guernica. C'est une petite ville de Biscaye, capitale traditionnelle du Pays basque. »

English translation taken from Jean-Jacques Thomas's chapter "Topological Poetics: Eluard's 'La Victoire de Guernica'," in the edited collection *On Referring in Literature*, eds. Anna Whiteside and Michael Issacharoff (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 57.

<sup>95</sup> For a not so academic source (but one that I could locate), see "Bombardement de Guernica (26 avril 1937)" accessed March 29, 2021, available at <https://www.histoire-pour-tous.fr/dossiers/2641-guernica-26-avril-1937.html>

It was here that grew the oak of Guernica, sacred symbol of Basque traditions and Basque freedom. Guernica's importance is purely historical and sentimental. In the early afternoon of April 26<sup>th</sup> (market day) Guernica was bombed for three and a half hours by relays of German Air Squadrons under General Franco's orders.<sup>96</sup>

It is Pruvost's spoken word that is specific here, not the image chosen; and it is unclear from which archival source this unclear photograph originates. Moreover, minimalistic booms from piano score punctuating Pruvost's voice and Resnais's still camera throughout this entire sequence. In this vein (music plus a still image) there are certainly comparisons to be made with Resnais's technique in *Toute la mémoire du monde*. Along with the – albeit obfuscating – establishing shot, these words also have an expository function.

Following Pruvost's opening spoken statement, we switch to María Casarès's voiceover, much of which consists of a reading of Paul Éluard's "Victoire de Guernica," as already stated. Casarès's voice begins from the second stanza of "Victoire de Guernica" – a sort of *in media res*, as it were. After each stanza or so, Resnais's camera slowly cuts from a different artwork from Picasso's archive – though not from *Guernica* itself. As Casarès quotes from Éluard's original poem in its second stanza:

Faces fit for fire faces fit for cold.

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<sup>96</sup> Thomas, "Topological Poetics," 57.

Original French: « C'est là que s'élevait le chêne, symbole sacré des traditions et des libertés basques. Guernica n'a qu'une importance historique et sentimentale. Le 26 1937, jour de marché, dans les premières heures de l'après-midi, les avions allemands au service de Franco bombardèrent Guernica durant trois heures et demie par escadrilles se relevant tour à tour. »

For denial or for night for curses or for blows<sup>97</sup>

This female voice says these lines from Éluard's poem, while we see a black-and-white image of Picasso's *Family of Saltimbanques/Famille de saltimbanques* (1905), an oil on Canvas that Resnais's *Guernica* transposes from color to black and white. Picasso's original is vivid in color, with bright reds and blues accentuating these titular *saltimbanques* a term that designates circus performers. Resnais's filming of this painting in black and white – like the entire film – softens the image; what is more, the cropped image in the film only depicts four of the total six of the said *saltimbanques*, a zoom by the act of cutting. Resnais's completely-still camera stays on *Famille de saltimbanques* for several seconds, then cuts to a black-and-white *Arlequin* from 1923 (also originally in color); it is from the bust up, a cut-up painting, that is, the top half. This technique of still painting plus slow cut – very reminiscent to what is to come in *Toute la mémoire du monde* – keeps on going, all while Casarès's read-out Éluard poem continues as well. Casarès's voice moves on from the second to third stanza, not omitting or adding any phrases between the stanzas.

Faces fit for anything

You are watched by the gaping void

Your death will serve as warning<sup>98</sup>

Instead, Casarès's voice adds in "pauvres visages sacrifiés" ("poor, sacrificed faces"), in between the second and third lines. Resnais cuts again to a different painting, which bears a striking resemblance to Picasso's *La Soupe* (1902), but it is not entirely the same; the exact painting that

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<sup>97</sup> « Visages bons au feu visages bons au fond / Aux refus à la nuit aux injures aux coups ». Owing to the fact that English subtitles are not provided, English translation taken from Noelle Gillmor in Paul Éluard, Jean Cocteau and Jacques Prevert, "Picasso Poems," *Yale French Studies*, no. 21 (1958): 12.

<sup>98</sup> « Visages bons à tout / Voici le vide qui vous fixe / Votre mort va servir d'exemple ».

matches Resnais's visual quotation cannot be found online after an extensive search. This may seem like a foreshadowing of Resnais's technique of voiceover plus slow cutting between artworks in *Toute la mémoire du monde*. However, Resnais does not have a voiceover that is created solely for the film, but a cut-up and re-written version of Éluard's poetry. To put it another way, this sequence consists of a suite of paintings, punctuated by spoken words, a foreshadowing of a similar technique in *Toute la mémoire du monde*. Yet, in *Mémoire*, the painted footage is only a small part of the *Bibliothèque nationale*, here, in *Guernica*, it is everything.

In a word, the use of the voiceover in conjunction with the cut-up paintings exemplifies what “technical animation” means for this dissertation. Thus, the words themselves are cut up by Resnais, and re-framed into a new context – words, then, in the style of technical animation. While other chapters to come treat the use of words and voiceover as a form of “metaphorical animation” due to their links to viewership and viewers' relations to imagery – here, the words quoted and re-quoted by Resnais do not do that, at least primarily. Rather, the words by Éluard do not refer to the paintings quoted specifically – at least not showing the intimate and personal reaction to archival material that we will see in the chapter that follows on the autobiographical documentaries of fellow Left Bank filmmaker Agnès Varda. Her voiceover is deeply personal and refers to artefacts that inform her own unique life and filmography. As one will see in my next chapter on her *œuvre*, her final film *Varda par Agnès/Varda par Agnès* (2019) is a retrospective on her previous works, her spoken dialogue referring to specific films in her archive. As Varda explains before a live audience, “some of my films are known, others not. I'd like to tell you what led me

to do this work all these years.”<sup>99</sup> Compare that to more general phraseology in Éluard’s poem, such as the “[y]our death will serve as warning,” which can be applied generally to other artworks, not just *Guernica*. Placed alongside other Picasso works, this wording could be applied to other works pertaining to war, violence, and trauma. This slight obscurity is further exemplified when, in *Guernica*, Resnais cuts another painting (an unnamed one of mother and child), Casarès’s voiceover quoting the fourth stanza that simply states:

Death heart turned upside down<sup>100</sup>

This line – even more than the others – lacks a singular specificity; it refers to “death” in a general sense, not categorically to *Guernica* alone.

This general wording is somewhat paradoxical in light of the history that Éluard and Picasso share, since the poem already used in conjunction with the painting prior to Resnais’s documentary. At the Paris Expo in 1937 – so thirteen years before the release of Resnais’s film – Picasso’s painting and Éluard’s poem were presented next to each other; Elena Cueto Asín labels such situating as an “intra-medial connection.”<sup>101</sup> I agree with Asín’s terminology, since it would not only describe the physical placement of text and image on display at the Paris Expo, but also the complicated and nuanced entanglement of various forms of media on display. In Resnais’s film, “Victoire de Guernica” does not even accompany images of Picasso’s *Guernica*, as we have seen throughout this chapter section. Asín’s wording becomes even more pertinent as she

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<sup>99</sup> « Certains de mes films sont connus, voire très connus, d’autres pas. Je vais vous dire qu’est-ce qui m’a amenée à faire ce travail pendant tant d’années. » English translation taken from the DVD subtitles.

<sup>100</sup> « La mort cœur renversé ».

<sup>101</sup> Elena Cueto-Asín, “From the Epic to the Allegorical Sublime: A Multilingual Reading of Spanish Civil War Poetry,” *Hispania* 99, no. 3 (2016): 480.

continues in her historical analysis of the poetry-painting link, as she references how this act of text plus image allows *Guernica* as a painting become appropriated to audiences and nations that are much less tangible than Spain. Her exact phraseology reads as follows: “*Guernica* [the painting] is appropriated as a text that facilitates the transfer of the real threat of Fascism as it played out in Spain, to an imaginary one in which all nations are potentially vulnerable.”<sup>102</sup> I have already talked about the somewhat vague and wide-reaching words of Éluard’s vocabulary, but Asín goes so far as to claim that the figures in Picasso’s painting could be interpreted as allegorical for “any modern war, already finished or yet to start.”<sup>103</sup> The symbolic leads to a wide applicability, in other words.

What further thickens this both textual and visual technical animation by the hands of Resnais, Éluard, and Picasso is that Casarès’s voiceover during the segment in which Picasso’s *Guernica* actually appears are not from the original “Victoire de Guernica” poem. Instead, the words are from a re-writing that Éluard of the poem a year later, in 1938; these consist of – in the words of Catherine du Toit – “une réécriture” and “un commentaire” of the original poem, found in his volume *Cours Naturel*.<sup>104</sup> Critically, these after-the-fact editions on the part Éluard consist

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. In making this claim, Cueto-Asín is building off of Susanne Knaller, “A Theory of Allegory beyond Walter Benjamin and Paul de Mann, with some Remarks on Allegory and Memory,” *Germanic Review* 77, no. 2 (2002): 83–101.

<sup>104</sup> Catherine du Toit, “Alain Resnais et l’engagement documentaire. Une affaire de morale en trois temps,” in *Le sentiment de la langue : Évasion, exotisme et engagement* [online], ed. Musanji Nglasso-Mwatha and Tunda Kitenge-Ngoy (Pessac: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pub.36092>



of statements in prose; and, rather than the lofty and wide-reaching assertions of the 1937 “Victoire de Guernica,” the language in the 1938 *commentaires* evinces language that is more direct and specific. While not calling out exact parts of Picasso’s painting, it comes close. Think back to the above sequence where I cite the visual quotations of sections of Picasso’s *Guernica*. “Go and hold a beast who smells death,” Casarès’s voice declares. “Go and explain to a mother the death of her child! Go and inspire trust in the flames!”<sup>105</sup> this “beast” an ostensible reference to the horned bull in the top left-hand corner of Picasso’s original painting, whose nostrils are wide in fear, it seems. Casarès/Éluard then continue with a description of a night of war; while this could refer to any night of war – to think back to Asín’s characterization of allegory – it, at the same time, fits quite well with the way in which the bombing of Guernica came to pass. In Éluard’s words, “[t]here is only one night, it is the night of war, big sister to misery and the daughter of death, repugnant and frightening.”<sup>106</sup> Yet, at the same time, a phrase such as “the night of war” is both specific and general simultaneously, referring to the night(s) when Guernica was bombed, but also the other “nights” where other wars and attacks have taken place. The phrase “the night of war” casts in the net wide, in other words.

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For the original Paul Éluard manuscript, see *Cours naturel* (Paris: Édition du sagittaire, 1938). For some (but not much) further context on this Éluard commentary, see Michel Cieutat, “La ‘caméra-pinceau’ d’Alain Resnais: *Van Gogh*, *Guernica*, *Paul Gauguin*,” *Ligeia* 3, nos. 77–80 (2007): 247–48.

<sup>105</sup> « Allez-donc retenir une bête qui sent la mort. Allez donc expliquer à une mère la mort de son enfant ! Allez donc inspirer confiance dans les flammes ! ». English translation my own.

<sup>106</sup> « Il n’y a qu’une nuit, c’est celle de la guerre, grande sœur de la misère et fille de la mort répugnante, affolante ». English translation my own.

The “technical animation” of Éluard’s words – in poetry and in prose – works in conjunction with the “technical animation” of the painted and non-painted imagery to create a commentary on violence and war; other voices are quoted, tied together by the directorial “voice” on the part of Resnais. While both *Guernica* the painting and the film predate *Nuit et brouillard*, the same questions of representation “doing justice” are at the forefront of both Picasso’s and Resnais’s painting/filmmaking process. I am reminded of the famous anecdote of, at the 1937 World’s Fair in Paris; a Gestapo officer asked Picasso “Did you do that?”, to which Picasso angrily replied, “You did.”<sup>107</sup> There is a trio of traumatic events: the Holocaust, Hiroshima, and (now) *Guernica*. And, like the Holocaust, it was the result of Nazi violence. Moreover, *Guernica* the painting finds itself in between the indexical, photographic archive on display in *Nuit et brouillard* and the vague, re-enacted reconstructions in *Hiroshima, mon amour*. In Picasso’s painting – and I am referring to the painting in its totally, not Resnais’s chopped up version – the painted imagery is stylized, reflective of both Cubism and Surrealism. And, I would be remiss not to mention, too, that the Cubist style re-cuts and re-assembles objects in an abstract manner. A case in point is certainly the disjointed soldier at the painting’s base, whose limbs are disconnected from each other. Like the other figures in the painting, his Cubist eyes are on the same side of his head. It is not a verbally re-created past as in the vague and repetitive words of *Hiroshima*’s Elle. To recall Roe’s characterization of Bart Simpson; he simply appears as a boy and is recognizable as one. The objects/people on display in Picasso’s *Guernica* (the people, the ghosts, the bull) are recognizable, but not photographically reflective of reality. To put perhaps too simply, Cubist art

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<sup>107</sup> See “In praise of ... *Guernica*,” *The Guardian*, March 25, 2009,

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/mar/26/pablo-picasso-guernica-spain-war>

such as Picasso's *Guernica* are not indexical, despite appearing somewhat like an actual object. Think, too, of the zoomed in photograph that acts as an establishing shot of the town of Guernica; it is not entirely clear from the outset whether this image falls into the category of photographic realism due to the blurry nature of the zoom. This in-between-ness is alluded to by Emma Wilson, who articulates that *Guernica* (and she is referring to Resnais's) "is a source for the experimentation of *Nuit et brouillard*, *Hiroshima mon amour* and later films. It foreshadows them materially and formally."<sup>108</sup> While *Guernica* foreshadows them temporally, I would place *Guernica* in between *Nuit et brouillard* and *Hiroshima* stylistically.

## 2.7 Conclusion

In writing the conclusion to this first chapter, I am reminded once again of Steven Ungar's book on French documentary – one of the few on the subject – and how documentaries such as *Toute la mémoire du monde* have had much less academic attention than touchstones such as *Nuit et brouillard*. As part of the Left Bank, like Agnès Varda in the following chapter, Resnais's work, as a whole, leaves a lasting legacy on French cinema, and global cinema. In Sight and Sound's poll on the top documentaries of all time, Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* comes in at number four, being hailed as "the greatest, most crystalline film" on the Holocaust.<sup>109</sup> However, Resnais's *œuvre* look at holistically demonstrates that *Nuit et brouillard* does not encapsulate the nuances and

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<sup>108</sup> Wilson, *Alain Resnais*, 20.

<sup>109</sup> Sight and Sound, "Critics' 50 Greatest Documentaries of All Time (2014)," last modified April 25, 2019, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-sound-magazine/greatest-docs>

evolution of Resnais's style as a documentarian. *Hiroshima mon amour* experiments with narrative cinema in a non-narrative format to unsettle and challenge the role of the photographic evidence in *Nuit et brouillard*; and I would add that, retroactively, *Guernica* anticipates the representational issues at stake for portraying a violent past that is "unrepresentable," to re-use a term from Linda Williams cited earlier in this chapter.<sup>110</sup> Yet, all three films across Resnais's archive – *Nuit et brouillard*, *Hiroshima mon amour*, *Guernica* – share the theme of World War II violence. What is more, *Toute la mémoire du monde* adds to this theme of unrepresentability by showing that *any* archive is so large and comprehensible, that any physical institution cannot "do justice" to its amorphous size. This sample from Resnais's documentary archive shows us, too, that such an institution is nevertheless a critical link to any actual archive, and to understanding that archive. While any animated archive evinces much tangibility, what Resnais's documentary shorts emphasize is that a physical space like the *Bibliothèque nationale* or the Hiroshima museum is needed in order to understand the nebulousness in the first place. Put simply, there needs to be a painting in order to interpret that painting; otherwise, all interpretation may be conjecture and not rooted in "reality." Resnais, like other documentarians in the Left Bank, has been the subject of much scholarship in French Studies, especially those on the New Wave and French film history – we have seen that with *Nuit et brouillard*, and we will continue to see that in my following chapter on fellow Left Bank filmmaker Agnès Varda. Yet, in Documentary Studies at large, only certain films are privileged, while others like *Toute la mémoire du monde* have often been overlooked. Resnais's legacy as a French documentarian remains as relevant as ever since the 1950s, but there is still more work to be done on his *œuvre*, holistically.

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<sup>110</sup> Williams, "Mirrors without Memories," 14.

### 3.0 Agnès Varda as Archive: (Re)Animating a French Film Icon

To consider “animation” in both its “technical” and “metaphorical” senses, as these relate to documentary, one director who is greatly significant is Agnès Varda, one of the most influential French documentarians (and filmmakers) of the New Wave, and of all time. Deservedly, much has been written about Varda’s legacy.<sup>111</sup> With so much having been written on Varda, it is understandable to ask why another scholarly inquiry on her work is necessary. Yet, it is clear that many of her documentaries exemplify the traits of animation that this dissertation brings to the table – specifically the use and re-use of archival footage (such as in *Varda par Agnès/Varda by Agnès*, Agnès Varda, 2019), as well as the explicit demonstration of the technical motion of cinematic frames as a way to bring to light the constructed nature of all documentary cinema (*Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse/The Gleaners and I*, Agnès Varda, 2000, as well as *Visages Villages/Faces Places*, Agnès Varda and JR, 2017). One should always go back to well-known and well-established filmmakers like Varda, especially when her extensive and prolific archive lays bare very lucidly the questions of “animation” similar to lesser-known works to come in this dissertation – such as *Bambi* (Sébastien Lifshitz, 2013) and *La Rage du Démon/Fury of the Demon* (Fabien Delage, 2016). For instance, *Bambi* – detailed in chapter 3 of this dissertation – utilizes

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<sup>111</sup> For a general overview of her extensive work and legacy, see the special issue published following her death: Homa King and Rebecca J. DeRoo, “Special Issue: Future Varda,” *Camera Obscura* 36, no. 1 (2021). See also Rebecca J. DeRoo, *Agnès Varda Between Film, Photography, and Art* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018); Marie-Claire Barnet, ed., *Agnès Varda Unlimited: Image, Music, Media* (Cambridge, UK: Legenda, 2016); Kelley Conway, *Agnès Varda* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

still photography in a moving way, to imitate a series of jump cuts, as a way to demonstrate the unstable and liminal experience of being trans\*. In the same vein, Varda's camera movement over static and repeated murals in *Visages Villages* is there to exemplify the liminal space between stillness and motion when documenting similar but different artworks. Analogous techniques are evident in both films – one much more known than the other – even if the connections between them are not always obvious.

Yet one must equally point out that 2019 saw the release of Varda's last film, the aforementioned *Varda par Agnès*, a retrospective of her distinguished career. This two-part documentary was released in February 2019 at the Berlin International Film Festival – and Varda's death at age 90 came shortly after, in March. Varda's final suite of films – not only *Visages Villages*, but also *Les Plages d'Agnès/The Beaches of Agnès* (Agnès Varda, 2008) – have a significantly autobiographical element, and are just that, “last films.” *Visages Villages*, for example, deals in part with Varda's eye surgery, foreshadowing the end of her life. Without risking sounding too morbid, it took her death to “complete” her archive, as she kept on saying that each film would be her last, always conscious of her advancing age, but always looking at new potential projects. In *Varda par Agnès*, she is very open about her age. “I just passed 90 and I don't care,” she describes. “But 10 years ago, when I was about to turn 80, I panicked. The number 80 felt like the front of a train barreling toward me. I had to finish something by the time I was 80.”<sup>112</sup> 2020 also saw the release of the DVD collection *Agnès Varda l'intégrale*, an impression collection with

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<sup>112</sup> « Je viens de passer les 90 ans, et je m'en fiche. Mais il y a dix ans, quand j'ai pensé que j'allais avoir 80 ans, j'ai été prise de panique. Le chiffre 80 était comme à l'avant d'un train et fonçait sur moi. Il fallait que je fasse quelque chose. »

the notable inclusion of *Varda par Agnès* as the newest and latest addition to her “complete works.” As we will see with the discussion of the physicality of Varda’s continuously expanding archive, her status as a hugely important figure in French documentary history – and film history at large – is paramount, and her final film (which re-visits many of her known films, as well as lesser-known ones, and some art installations) is likely to generate much scholarly discussion for much time. Varda’s filmic archive may be at its “end” – but its expansiveness, in reality, allows for a much more fluid and open appreciation of her many works.

### 3.1 Varda’s Living Archive

In short, this chapter proposes that technical and metaphorical animation helps one fully appreciate the expansiveness and messiness of Varda’s impressive archive – my corpus comprising primarily specific sequences from three of her “last documentaries”: *Varda par Agnès*, *Visages Villages*, and *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse*. My reason for choosing these films in particular is that they illustrate the finality and legacy of Varda’s later documentaries, and how it has progressed – meaning that the ostensible “finality” of her archive keeps being added to. In particular, the release of her 2020 “complete works” on DVD, following a similar 2012 volume entitled *Tout(e) Varda*, presupposes a largeness in scope – which is undeniable, given her impressive filmography – and one that nevertheless can be fluid and in flux. Thus, a text on Varda’s *œuvre* that does similar work to this dissertation is Karen Boyle’s work on this 2012 collection – obviously completed before *Visages Villages* and *Varda par Agnès*, but following previously-considered “final film” *Les*

*Plages d'Agnès*.<sup>113</sup> As Boyle points out, this box-set collection comprises 24 discs of 19 feature films, 16 short films, the 2011 five-part television series *Agnès de ci de là Varda/Agnès Varda: From Here to There*, and numerous extras, including “fragments of unfinished early work.”<sup>114</sup> Boyle’s article includes two color photographs (at different angles) as a way to show its size.<sup>115</sup> Yet what is so striking in Boyle’s analysis is how she highlights the presence of some extras (like the unfinished films) and the absence of other potential ones (like audio commentaries and making-of featurettes that Boyle rightly states are commonplace in many other DVD collections of the sort).<sup>116</sup> So, the massive box-set is not “complete” in that sense. Yet Varda’s archive is also distinctly unstable, given that Varda presents herself as “unreliable” in both her later feature films and her DVD extras, her self-contradictory voice front and center:

Varda’s ageing – a visible and thematic concern across much of her later work (including DVD extras) – is central to both the sense of completeness and instability that this collection fosters. It is “complete” in the sense that it comes towards the end of a long and eclectic career, but “unstable” in the sense that the meaning of that career – and the work it has spawned – is very much under (re)negotiation, not least because of the instability of

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<sup>113</sup> Karen Boyle, “Tout(e) Varda: The DVD Collection as Authorworld,” *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 16, no. 1 (2018): 40-61.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.



memory, a formal as much as a thematic concern in this collection. Varda, as we will see, is both a playfully unreliable curator and an unreliable narrator.<sup>117</sup>

It is clear, then, that such DVDs of Varda's works are inherently physical objects, but there is a much more intangible reality attached to them. For Boyle, *Tout(e) Varda* is both a "collection" of Varda's works, but also an "extension" of them at the same time.<sup>118</sup>

In this way, what I call Varda's *living archive* is distinctly Derridean in its nature, meaning that much of it reflects Jacques Derrida's argument in *Mal d'Archive*, where different "Freuds" that emerge and build on each other following his death in 1939.<sup>119</sup> In Derrida's words, this process consists of a sort of "Freudian impression", including those that are bodily ["his circumcision"] to those that are less tangible, such as the words that are spoken about him. Derrida, too, emphasizes the distinct *futurity* of Freud's archive, given how his conceptualizations of psychoanalysis will undoubtedly change over time – notwithstanding the influence he did have when he was alive. Despite the physicality of certain archival aspects to Freud (such as the Freud Museum to which Derrida makes mention later on),<sup>120</sup> a certain expansiveness is nevertheless there:

This means that, *in the past*, psychoanalysis would not have been what it was (any more than so many other things) if E-mail, for example, had existed. And *in the future* it will no longer be what Freud and so many psychoanalysts have anticipated, from the moment E-

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid. For more on the use of voice (in the "essay film") see Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15–17.

<sup>118</sup> Boyle, "Tout(e) Varda," 42.

<sup>119</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>120</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 20–21; *Mal d'Archive*, 39–41.

mail, for example, became possible. [...] We have yet to finish discovering and processing this immense corpus, in part unpublished, in part secret, and perhaps in part radically and irreversibly destroyed – for example by Freud himself. Who knows? [...]<sup>121</sup>

The term “(re)negotiation” that Boyle mobilizes is ostensibly highly relevant in light of Derrida’s statement here, given that Varda is constantly being re-written – by herself and by others – and this will continue as more retrospectives of her career and influence are written and published in the coming years. Varda is a playfully self-contradictory figure in French cinematic history, and her vast archive is not even reducible to her many films in isolation. Derrida’s similarly playful rhetorical question [“Qui sait?”] could very well be applied to Varda’s archive, too, since we do not know when its “completeness” will arrive – if it ever does.

Such an archive thus becomes animated, in both its technical and metaphorical senses. Let us recall my discussion of Eadweard Muybridge’s *The Horse in Motion* (1878) in my previous chapter: stasis becomes movement, in other words, a most technical process of bringing to life an image.<sup>122</sup> A more dynamic and expansive “animation” than this literality of motion – just like the

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<sup>121</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 17. Original emphasis.

« Cela signifie que *dans le passé* la psychanalyse (pas plus que tant d’autres choses) n’aurait pas été ce qu’elle fut si le *E mail*, par exemple, avait existé. Et *dans l’avenir* elle ne sera plus ce que Freud et tant de psychanalystes ont anticipé, dès lors que le *E mail*, par exemple, est devenu possible. [...] On n’a pas encore fini, loin de là, d’en découvrir et d’en traiter le corpus immense, pour une part inédit, pour une autre part secret, et peut-être, pour une autre part encore, radicalement et irréversiblement détruit – par exemple par Freud lui-même. Qui sait ? »

Derrida, *Mal d’Archive*, 34–35.

<sup>122</sup> See also Tom Gunning, “New Thresholds of Vision: Instantaneous Photography and the Early Cinema of Lumière,” in *Impossible Presence: Surface and Screen in the Photogenic Era*, ed. Terry Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 88–89.

more dynamic and expansive “archive” – reflects the complexities, messiness, and nuances in representing “reality” in documentary cinema: and Varda’s own aforementioned self-contradictoriness is certainly a case in point. Roland Barthes’s work on photography “animating” spectators in divergent ways is, then, highly fruitful – especially with the two terms that he proposes in relation to photographic imagery: the *studium* and the *punctum*. While the *studium* describes a general and educational relation with photographs, the *punctum* for Barthes has more of a strong, piercing [“me point”] reaction.<sup>123</sup> In addition, Barthes’s usage of the first person [“me”] implies, too, that personal responses to a particular image may differ from person to person. The passage that very much sums up such “animation” is where this word is explicitly mobilized in his text – the specific paragraph I quote in my dissertation introduction. In this passage, Barthes is not describing what I see as “technical animation” (the phrase “[t]he photograph is in no way animated” makes this clear). We see re-constructed and re-assembled still photographs that, put together, resemble and lay bare the movement of still frames that eventually becomes cinematic movement: so, “animation.” As we will see shortly, Varda’s fluid camerawork in filming Étienne-Jules Marey’s zoetrope in *Gleaners* re-constructs animation as a (re)animation. Animation becomes animated, quite literally. Yet the multiplicity of perspectives at the heart of “metaphorical animation” is equally applicable here, as such photographic imagery evinces a certain complexity of spectatorship – meaning that Varda’s re-contextualization and giving new life to this imagery is open to much (re)interpretation by her and by others. As we will see in *Visages Villages*, and especially *Varda par Agnès*, a singular film – and indeed an image – may have a multitude of significations.

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<sup>123</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, 48–49.

### 3.2 Technical Motion in *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse*

Much has been written about *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse/The Gleaners and I*, Agnès Varda, 2000), as it is one of Varda's most celebrated and lauded films.<sup>124</sup> In addition to its clear influence on academic film scholarship, *Gleaners* won various accolades: while on the festival circuit, it won Best Documentary at the Chicago International Film Festival (2000) and the Boston Society of Film Critics Awards (2001), as well as Best Film at the Prague One World Film Festival (2001), among others. In 2014, it was voted by critics as the eighth best documentary of all time in a poll conducted by *Sight and Sound*,<sup>125</sup> and was also listed by the BBC as one of "The 21<sup>st</sup> Century's 100 Greatest Films" in 2016.<sup>126</sup> This vast archive of *Gleaners* both in- and outside academia begs the question – why more? Like the expansive archive of Varda's own films, the archive *on* Varda still requires attention: the fact that so much has been written about *Gleaners* demonstrates the many different readings and interpretations that it elicits among scholars –

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<sup>124</sup> See, for example, Virginia Bonner, "The Gleaners and 'Us': The Radical Modesty of Agnès Varda's *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse*," in *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video (New and Expanded Edition)*, ed. Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), 494–506; Romain Chareyron, "Haptic Vision and the Experience of Difference in Agnès Varda's *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* (2000)," *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies* 7, no. 1 (2013): 83–96; Phil Powrie, "Heterotopic Spaces and Nomadic Gazes in Varda: From *Cléo de 5 à 7* to *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse*," *L'Esprit créateur* 51, no. 1 (2011): 68–82.

<sup>125</sup> Sight and Sound, "Critics' 50 Greatest Documentaries of All Time (2014)," last modified April 25, 2019, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-sound-magazine/greatest-docs>

<sup>126</sup> BBC, "The 21<sup>st</sup> Century's 100 Greatest Films," August 23, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20160819-the-21st-century-s-100-greatest-films>

especially now, given that Varda herself revisited *Gleaners* in its “sequel” *Deux ans après/The Gleaners and I: Two Years Later* in 2002, and then in *Varda par Agnès*. “We have yet to finish discovering” *Gleaners* and its full significance, to appropriate Derrida’s words.

As its title suggests, *Gleaners* itself deals with the act of “gleaning,” meaning the act of collecting. Throughout the film, Varda interviews and traces various gleaners throughout the French countryside, such as collectors of trash can contents as a way to avoid waste. Of course, the *glaneuse* in the film’s title refers to Varda herself as a collector: as a documentary filmmaker, she is gleaning images and words from her interview subjects. For Varda, painting plays an important role in this process. The film commences with a live action still of oil painting *Des glaneuses/The Gleaners* (Jean-François Millet, 1857), one of Varda’s primary points of inspiration in this documentary. This image is a clear stimulus for Varda, her as director *gleaning an image of gleaning*. And this technique is not unique to *Gleaners*: as we will see later on with *Visages Villages*, Varda’s archive in her later documentaries often comprises photographs of painted imagery to demonstrate her personal connection to such archival material – and how she responds to it, changing it, appropriating it, commenting on it.

Much scholarship on *Gleaners* rightly deals with this very process of gleaning, so what this dissertation adds to this large corpus of scholarly discussion is small, but not insignificant. Specifically, I look at one particular sequence that sums up what I mean by “technical animation” – namely, a visit to a museum dedicated to Étienne-Jules Marey, whose work on chronophotography made him a highly influential pioneer of cinematic movement at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chronophotography involves repetition of images of a singular figure or person at different stages of movement as a way to study locomotion: when spun or superimposed, movement occurs, and these “stationary” images are brought to life. Yet I would also say that there

is also movement when these images are still and not moving, since lining them up in succession *suggests* movement that is about to take place, as the figures are in different positions – making it look like one is about to jump, for example. What is more, Varda films Marey’s chronophotography with such fluid (and sometimes erratic) camerawork, that she is such a visible animator of Marey’s visual archive, her visual presence so clear on screen: in a word, Varda is filming technical motion via even more technical motion.

Why to *animate*, and not simply to *glean*? The response I give here is that this sequence in *Gleaners* lays bare the movement of still frames, which, ultimately, is what cinema is all about.<sup>127</sup> Frames are still and become in motion. This process is a lot more than just the borrowing of material from other sources – in other words, such gleaning is merely the starting point to comment on (both with the visual composition of shots plus the voiceover) the role of cinematic movement in documenting one’s life and influence. Thus, my reading privileges not just the visual, but the spoken, word, and the specific words that Varda chooses in her commentary. We begin with a rapid tracking shot of the French countryside, with Agnès’ voiceover [“We’re off to see the owner who cares for his gleaners”]<sup>128</sup> who is later revealed to be Jérôme Noël-Bouton, Marey’s great-grandson, and proprietor of Bourgogne vineyard and museum, *Domaine de la folie*. Varda’s voice (still off screen) specifies that Noël-Bouton “shows us an old photo of his vines, which used to be Marey’s.”<sup>129</sup> Varda cuts to an image of a black-and-white photograph that shows members of the Noël-Bouton/Marey family. I do want to emphasize that what we see on screen is just the photo,

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<sup>127</sup> See Cholodenko (2014) again.

<sup>128</sup> « et on va visiter un propriétaire de vignoble, le seul à s’inquiéter du sort des glaneurs. » English translation taken from the DVD subtitles.

<sup>129</sup> « qui a montré une photographie de vignes où nous sommes, dans s’occupait Étienne-Jules Marey. »

nothing else – I say this here, as this is not always the case for Varda, her physical presence (like her hands) are often there in frame as a way to exemplify her self-reflexivity as a director in many of her films.

In addition, the interior of the museum space at *Domaine de la folie* is very much privileged by Varda's camera, which she cuts to after the imagery of Noël-Bouton – this is filmed with deep focus, emphasizing that it is a three-dimensional space with photographs on the wall, and bottles of wine in the foreground. Varda's voiceover is consistent with what we see on screen [“There is a mini-museum in the cellar.”]<sup>130</sup> Then, there is a close-up of a magazine detailing Marey's life and influence, the focus being on the photo chosen, with some surrounding text, including the capitalized headline, *LE SAVANT QUI MET LE MOUVEMENT EN LUMIERE* [“THE LEARNED ONE WHO SHEDS LIGHT ON MOVEMENT”].<sup>131</sup> Varda's voiceover continues [“An engineer and erudite physiologist”]<sup>132</sup> as she turns the page, her hand filmed in close-up. In contrast with the stationary image on the book page, Varda's hand turning the page is the agent that does the moving, while her camera remains stationary. As Varda's off-screen voice continues, she interjects this with repeated stills from *Je vous aime* (Georges Demeny, 1891), which depict Demeny (who was Marey's assistant) that are lined up next to each other. “Marey invented chronophotography. He was a visionary,”<sup>133</sup> Varda's camera very rapidly zooms past stills from that film in a diagonal fashion. There are different facial expressions in each one, but similar enough that one would have

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<sup>130</sup> « Un mini-musée lui est consacré dans la cave. »

<sup>131</sup> My translation.

<sup>132</sup> « Ingénieur, physiologiste et savant [...] » We can also see that it is a pamphlet from: *Du 13 janvier au 19 mars 2000, une exposition à la Fondation EDF.*

<sup>133</sup> « [...] inventeur de la chronophotographie à pellicule mobile, Marey est un visionnaire. »

pause to see the differences in their totality.<sup>134</sup> Cutting back to the museum interior, she continues: “He [Marey] analyzed movement [*cut to models of birds*] before Muybridge and the Lumières. He is the ancestor of all movie makers [*cut to still photograph of Marey’s face, immobile camera*] and we’re proud to be part of his family.”<sup>135</sup> Varda’s words are very much conscious of cinematic movement, going hand in hand with how her own camera moves. Yet, this is somewhat ironic: while she so emphasizes the role of movement with Marey, the main agent who is moving so far here is *Varda herself*. Moreover, Varda is not interacting with these exhibits in person (or so we see) but mediated by her own camera, coupled with her hands turning the page. She is not actually touching these artefacts, in other words.

Even when Varda’s camera does remain still, however, her presence is nevertheless always there, another technique to do so being cutting to black at seemingly random moments. Cutting back to the interview from Noël-Bouton from before, here Varda later adds in this cutting to black, seemingly without rhyme or reason:

Marey was my father’s grandfather, which makes him my great-grandfather [*Varda cuts to black briefly for about one second*] and to be more specific, my grandfather was Marey’s son-in-law, since his wife, my grandmother, was Marey’s daughter. [*Cut to black*] She married a man named Bouton, and this estate, which used to be in the Bouton family, was

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<sup>134</sup> Varda would return to a similar technique later in this sequence when slowly panning down on *Marche de l’homme* and *Images successives d’un marcheur*,

<sup>135</sup> « Il a décomposé le mouvement. [*cut*] Avant Muybridge, [*cut*] avant les frères Lumière, il est l’ancêtre absolu des cinéastes. On est fier de faire partie de sa famille. »



bought by Marey [*cut to black*] and returned to the Bouton family when his daughter married a Bouton.<sup>136</sup>

During this short interview with Noël-Bouton – obviously edited down – Varda’s camera lingers on his face, but there is often a short clacking sound in and out, too, a sonic signifier of Varda’s authorial voice – and another layer to her archive presented on screen as part of *Gleaners*. It is an addition from Varda after the fact, a drawing attention to the manipulation of the camera on the part of her as director and interviewer. These visual interjections constantly remind us as viewers that Varda is always there – there is no way to just focus on what is on screen, an awareness of the “strings” that hold cinema together. *Cinema is animation*, and this sequence not only exemplifies that via Marey’s actual, technical animation, but also how Varda adds to it. Thus, Varda’s voice (and here I mean not just her spoken word, but her voice via her camera movement) is imitative of certain styles of technical animation such as stop-motion. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Jack Halberstam proposes that stop-motion animation is antithetical to “classical cinema” owing to it not “erasing” the markers of human manipulation: the jerkiness – and I add that this especially includes older and less refined stop-motion – draws attention to the human hands of the animator, and so “depends on the manipulation of figures in front of the camera by those behind it.”<sup>137</sup> Now, Halberstam is specifically coming to this question of reflexive animation from the standpoint of *queerness*, yet I find it clear, nevertheless, that his language is equally applicable outside of that

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<sup>136</sup> « Marey était le grand-père de mon père, donc mon arrière-grand-père. [*cut*] Pour être précis, mon grand-père était le gendre de Marey, ce qui signifie que sa femme, ma grand-mère, était la fille de Marey. [*cut*] La fille de Marey, ma grand-mère, a épousé un Bouton, et que cette propriétaire qui avait appartenu à la famille de Bouton, a été rachetée par Marey [*cut*] et elle est revenue dans la famille des Bouton parce que la fille de Marey a épousé un Bouton. »

<sup>137</sup> Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 178.

context. It is not simply stop-motion where the animators' hands via rough motion is brought to the fore: hand-drawn animation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, for one, is not entirely smooth, and has a jerky and rustic look about it – it is artisanal, handcrafted. (And this is especially the case for modern viewers used to slick computer-generated effects towards those earlier films.) Varda does use stop-motion, but her camerawork reflects somewhat the *style* of stop-motion animation.

Varda continues to interject both visually and aurally in *Gleaners*. After Noël-Bouton gives Varda a brief tour of the property, we see a sepia photograph – which is all that we see on screen. Varda's voiceover tells us: "that's Demeny, Marey's assistant, holding the rifle and the film reel,"<sup>138</sup> then cutting closer to the face of the boy next to Georges Demeny. (This jump cut resembles somewhat a zoom effect.) "I wonder who the boy with the bowler hat is,"<sup>139</sup> Varda adds, metaphorical animation creeping in here, that is, saying what this photo means for *her*, and how the absence of certain information (who the boy is) creates meaning and significance for her. However, at the end of this sequence, Varda also "steps back" in a sense, crystallizing her work on Marey by allowing Marey's films to breathe without her constant intervention – meaning that we just see the "completed films" without Varda's "help," even if for a moment.

To put it another way, all we see on screen are the films themselves. There is a dog moving from left to right, and then going back and repeating that same movement. We see the same with a donkey, a cat, a rabbit, a goat, and then another dog: in the latter, jerky movement is most visible, and not smooth at all. All these images are repeated, moving without referencing the zoetrope – that is, not being shown the intervention of a human hand. It appears to be cinema in its "purest,"

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<sup>138</sup> « C'est Demeny, assistant de Marey, qui tient le fusil et porte la bobine à film. »

<sup>139</sup> « Moi, je me demande qui est le petit garçon qui porte le melon. »

no strings attached, form.<sup>140</sup> While Varda has spent most of this sequence *animating Marey's animation*, her presence is less visible here, and so gives the illusion that Marey's short films are animating themselves (even though, obviously, someone off screen would be doing the animation).

However, on the whole, Varda reveals her trace on the film archive, creating, then, another archive for herself. Hannah Frank's aptly titled *Frame by Frame* rightly proposes that even those forms of animation that appear smooth and seamless fall apart when cinematic frames are viewed individually. "The knowledge that Mickey Mouse is nothing more than ink and paint cannot overcome the perception that he is alive," she elucidates. "By viewing the film frame by frame, however, one can spot the traces of the hundreds of hands that touched Mickey before he made his way to the screen."<sup>141</sup> For Frank, examples include oily fingerprints, strands of hair, or accidental brushstrokes – none of which is intended for viewers to see or discover. It is a closer look, a process of dismantling, that reveals the inherent materiality of the animation process: the process of animation is something physical, in other words.<sup>142</sup> Yet I would argue (and we will see this even more clearly in *Visages Villages*) that the physicality of the artefact in animation is only the beginning, and that metaphorical and messy words go hand in with "technical animation": and we see this vividly when Varda's voiceover openly comments on the young boy with Demeny, using her distinctive voice to speculate on who he is.

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<sup>140</sup> For the relation between animation and "pure cinema" see Dudley Andrew, *What Cinema Is! Bazin's Quest and its Charge* (West Sussex, John Wiley and Sons, 2010), 30, 61.

<sup>141</sup> Hannah Frank, *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 2. See also 94, where Mickey appears as a "black blob" when slowed down beyond the "normal rate of projection."

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

There are different levels of representation and mediation – both Marey’s movement, which is filmed via Varda’s camera, which also, itself, is in movement. What complicates matters here is that Varda’s camera in *Gleaners* is actually more in motion than Marey’s. Even when Marey’s figures are in essence “stationary” each one is standing in a different position as a way to imitate and suggest movement when still and placed together.<sup>143</sup> Also, they can be in actual movement when Marey (or another animator) chooses to move/spin them. This sequence in *Gleaners* is therefore so crucial to my conceptualization of animation in this dissertation, as it comprises both technical and metaphorical animation, where both (very clearly) cannot be separated from each other. First, there is the technical motion of cinematic frames, that is, Marey’s frames by Varda’s camera. In addition, there is the spoken word à la Barthes [“the photograph animates me”]. Photographs animate someone through a *punctum*. To communicate to others how one is moved requires speech, music, direct address, and so on, in order to come across on screen. Varda’s camera in conjunction with her words develop and bring to the fore her deep personal connection to Marey’s imagery. This latter, deep personal connection is one of the reasons Varda is so privileged in this dissertation, as her later documentary works are all about her deep personal relations to her own archive, and the archives of others. Cinematic motion in *Gleaners* is linked to her personalized archive: Varda uses Marey to make connections with her own life and journey throughout the film. She is on the road, traveling, learning, and Marey’s cinematic movement is just one stop on the way. They are both *animators* and are both becoming *animated*, too.

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<sup>143</sup> André Malraux, use of the phrase “la suggestion du mouvement” in André Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard, [1947] 1965), 87; André Malraux, “Museum Without Walls,” in *Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Frogmore: Paladin, 1974), 125.

### 3.3 Metaphorical Animation and the Museum Space in *Visages Villages*

Similar to *Gleaners*, *Visages Villages* from 2017 has received attention from scholars and industry professionals – yet its more recent release date has not yet given way to the sheer magnitude of scholarly works on *Gleaners*.<sup>144</sup> Nevertheless, it did garner for Varda and JR the *L'Œil d'or, le prix du documentaire/The Golden Eye, the Documentary Prize* at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival, as well as Varda's first and only Academy Award Nomination, for Best Documentary Feature. In content, *Visages Villages* not only consists of a look back on parts of Varda's career, but also traces the creation of a *new archive*. And I call it a “new archive,” primarily, since its focus is not the re-formulation of footage from Varda's older work – but rather a looking forward, where archives are created by one's own eyes. More specifically, Varda and artist JR (who have never worked together before) travel together through rural France, creating portraits and murals of people they meet. There are other destinations too, like their visit to the Louvre. Much of what one sees on screen is the creation of these images, and the work that goes into making and displaying them (such as being hung up or photographed). Similar to *Gleaners*, interviews with those who Varda meets are placed front and center. Kelley Conway description of *Visages Villages* sums it up best by stating that it combines Varda's “long-time commitment to the

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<sup>144</sup> See Kelley Conway, “*Visages Villages*: Documenting Creative Collaboration,” *Studies in French Cinema* 19, no. 1 (2019): 22–39; Véronique Flambart-Weisbart, “De *Sans toit ni loi* à *Visages Villages* d'Agnès Varda : Pavés dans la mer,” *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 23, no. 3 (2019): 281–89; Delphine Bénézet, “‘Varda en vadrouille/Agnès on the Road Again,’ an Extended Review of *Visages Villages* by Agnès Varda and JR,” *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 22, no. 4 (2018), 406–17.

contemplation of art (her own or that of others)” with “the thrill of on-the-spot art-making.”<sup>145</sup> This *present-ness* and *futurity* of Varda’s archive partakes of the forward and backward looking simultaneity that Derrida argued characterizes all archives is ostensibly very Derridean in nature: it has a past, but it is forward- and backward-looking simultaneously.

In a word, then, the way in the various archives on display in *Visages Villages* become animated is highly metaphorical, as multiple voices (Varda, JR, interview subjects, and so on) are constantly in conversation with each other – a series of *punctum*-like contradictions that complement each other, creating a nuanced, messy, and dynamic portrait of these voices. A definite case in point of such animation is when Varda and JR visit the Louvre, a physical museum space that elicits much reaction on the part of them, both filming and reacting to the many images on – and not on – display here. The sequence begins with Varda’s offscreen voiceover stating that she and JR are “rising to a challenge”<sup>146</sup> a wordplay that is coupled with a close-up of an elevator interior: we see the written text “Peintures italiennes et espagnoles” [“Italian and Spanish Paintings”] with a small thumbnail image of the *Mona Lisa*, a visual signifier of the Louvre space. And the frame itself is in movement, as the camera is shaking around, both Varda and JR being in the elevator. As Varda’s voiceover continues, what becomes clear is the purpose of their visit, that is, to both pay tribute and make fun of Jean-Luc Godard, and specifically his film *Bande à Part/Band of Outsiders* (1964). The reason for this mockery is seemingly self-evident in light of Godard’s broken promise to Varda, having said that he would meet her and be part of *Visages Villages*, a promise on which he reneged. We then cut from the elevator to a long shot with deep

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<sup>145</sup> Conway, “*Visages Villages*: Documenting Creative Collaboration,” 38.

<sup>146</sup> « Pour relever un défi. » English translation taken from the DVD subtitles.

focus of one of the “Peintures italiennes et espagnoles” rooms in the Louvre, Varda pushing her own wheelchair (with JR behind her), literally among the physical walls of this space. This depth of field emphasizes the vastness of this collection in this one room alone. Varda’s voiceover continues, even though Varda is now onscreen – and this offscreen voice specifies that Godard “had three of his characters run at top speed down the Louvre’s Grand Gallery to break a record for crossing the museum.”<sup>147</sup> Varda (and JR) are not only animating the Louvre museum space, but also Godard himself.

Specifically, by referring to *Bande à Part* merely verbally, and by not showing clips from it, Varda and JR essentially recreate a scene that, in fact, demonstrates their *own* personal connection to the artefacts at hand. What is more, the offscreen voiceovers of Varda and JR are the primary agent on display, the primary animator: the words than onscreen Varda and JR are saying to each other are overwritten and by their offscreen counterparts, and ultimately inaudible. What we do hear is JR’s voiceover response to Varda [“I saw that film. *Bande à Part*, in black and white. You’re lucky to know Godard.”],<sup>148</sup> both of them leaving the frame and reappearing, as Varda exclaims, “I no longer run, but I had you.”<sup>149</sup> Varda and JR exit the frame, but then reappear, their voices now diegetic and with the frame. JR now wheels Varda closer and closer from the background to the foreground – another way Varda’s own direction accentuates the depth of this room. Here, too, there is an extradiegetic playful piano score, Varda waving her arms about, her

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<sup>147</sup> « Il avait fait courir trois de ses personnages à vitesse ultra rapide dans la grande galerie du Louvre pour battre un record de traversée du musée. »

For another re-creation of this scene in *Bande à part*, see *The Dreamers* (Bernado Bertolucci, 2003).

<sup>148</sup> « J’ai vu ce film. C’est *Bande à Part*, en blanc et noir. T’as de la chance de connaître Godard. »

<sup>149</sup> « Moi, je ne cours plus, mais tu étais là. »

bodily gestures in time with this music, almost in the style of an orchestral conductor. While this is back-and-forth movement is happening, Varda's onscreen voice names all the artists whose artworks she can see: "How beautiful!"<sup>150</sup> Bellini ... Del Sarto ... How beautiful! ... Lorenzo Costa *[the camera zooming up to the painting]* ... "Ghirlandaio ..." Then briefly, there is a medium shot of her, but the camera is no longer stationary, rather following her movement in the wheelchair, in the style of a tracking shot, as she continues her naming process. "Botticelli ... *[we also hear untranslatable sounds like 'aie' and 'oyah' from her here]* ... Raphael ... oh oh, there ... Arcimboldo *[points up at painting, while the mobile camera is behind her back]* ..." With these incomprehensible statements, Varda appears to be overcome with passion as to the many art items on display – yet in a parodic way, to send up Godard. Then, with her (Varda's) own camera, she frames some of these paintings as if they were one and the same: to put it another way, we just see the paintings in question on screen – nothing else – as if we are sharing Varda's field of vision.

Certainly, Varda is adding her own unmistakable voice to the Louvre, a tangible and expansive space that is highlighted by a clear depth of field plus the naming of very recognizable artists. Even though a number of these verbal declarations lack specificity, it is clear that this vagueness allows Varda's perception of the Louvre to expand into a more intangible and dynamic space à la Derrida. It is as much about what is *not* there, as what *is*. Varda obviously shows only a small segment of only one part of the Louvre museum, her inexpressible utterances and the names of specific artists presupposing the presence of some artworks, while, at the same time, implying that there is a far greater collection in- and outside this particular space – whether on display, in storage, or in one's imagination. In addition, not only is there a physicality to this room, but the

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<sup>150</sup> « Oh, c'est beau ! »



shakiness of the elevator ride and the close-up of the sign “Peintures italiennes et espagnoles,” too, emphasize how Varda and JR are actually, physically traveling to an area that is only part of a larger archive of artworks. At the risk of sounding too trite and obvious, there are many “Peintures françaises” and in museums across Paris and France.

Varda’s act of naming is highly reflective of André Malraux’s conceptualization of the “museum without walls” where a visitor to the Louvre (or other museum spaces) realizes that only a selection of certain artworks are displayed: thus, in one’s imagination, one creates a large and ever-expanding space of *all the other* world’s artworks. One passage in Malraux’s text is particularly evocative of Varda’s behavior, especially given that Malraux himself also participates in the act of naming specific artists:

Indeed an art gallery is one of the places which show man at his noblest. But our knowledge covers a wider field than our museums. The visitor to the Louvre knows that he will not find the great English artists significantly represented there; nor Goya, nor Michelangelo (as painter), nor Piero della Francesca, nor Grünewald – and that he will see but little of Vermeer.<sup>151</sup>

Yet, I would have to add that, given that *Visages Villages* is a film, it is more accurate to say that these are *photographs* of paintings, and not the paintings themselves, unlike what Malraux is describing. Varda and JR are in-person visitors, but what viewers of *Visages Villages* see is

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<sup>151</sup> André Malraux, “Museum Without Walls,” 15.

Original quotation: « Après tout, le musée est un des lieux qui donnent la plus haute idée de l’homme. Mais nos connaissances sont plus étendues que nos musées ; le visiteur du Louvre sait qu’il n’y trouve significativement ni Goya, ni les Grands Anglais, ni la peinture de Michel-Ange, ni Piero della Francesca, ni Grünewald ; à peine Vermeer. » André Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire*, 13.

ultimately a photographic record of these artworks filmed via Varda's camera. Along with Varda's spoken utterances and gesticulations, this photographic record adds another layer of *re-animation* of the Louvre's massive archive – yet one that is not and never complete à la Malraux, exemplified by Varda's verbal and visual curation. As explicated in my previous chapter on documentary representations of Pablo Picasso, there are distinct differences between photography and other visual media such as painting, owing to the latter's lack of indexical realism.<sup>152</sup> Hannah Frank – who is clear to distinguish photographs from cel animation – nevertheless emphasizes the role of the former has had in the history of the latter. “For most of the twentieth century,” she states, “to animate was to photograph – and to photograph *a lot*.”<sup>153</sup> What she is referring to here is the repetitious photographing of individual cels, which cannot be ignored when looking at the technical and actual process of animation (and keep in mind that Frank is using the term *animation* in a traditional, cel animation sense).

One must not forget, too, that visual media, whether indexical or not, elicit meaning on the part of the spectator: and Varda herself would ostensibly be classified as a spectator within her own film, being featured so prominently within the frame, and the fact that she has seen Godard's *Bande à Part*, and then subsequently looking at the paintings in the Louvre. While Barthes makes very clear that his terms of the *studium* and the *punctum* pertain to photography, I push against this by proposing that his terminology has a much wider reach: one can, of course, have a deeply personal, *punctum*-like relation to a non-photographic image. The following passage in *La Chambre claire* is a case in point, which describes a very similar process to what Varda

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<sup>152</sup> See for example Annabelle Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>153</sup> Frank, *Frame by Frame*, 44. Emphasis supplied.

experiences in the Louvre, namely the concept of the “thinking eye,” and the intimate extensions on the part of the spectator connection perhaps to distant memories:

There is a photograph by Kertész (1921) which shows a blind gypsy violinist being led by a boy; now what I see, by means of this ‘thinking eye’ which makes me add something to the photograph, is the dirt road; its texture gives me the certainty of being in Central Europe; I perceive the referent (here the photograph really transcends itself: is this not the sole proof of its art? To annihilate itself as *medium*, to be no longer a sign, but the thing itself?), I recognize, with my whole body, the straggling villages I passed through long through on my long-ago travels in Hungary and Rumania.<sup>154</sup>

As we have seen in the above sequence, Varda herself adds to the photographs of the paintings – again like in *Gleaners* – providing her own distinct voice and commentary, in both a very personal and tongue-in-cheek manner. We will return to the role of addition and re-writing in my final section when looking at *Varda par Agnès* – where her film acts as both a development and retrospective of her extensive archive. But what I will say at this stage, however, is that *Visages*

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<sup>154</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 45.

Original quotation: « Il y a une photographie de Kertész (1921) qui représente un violoneux tzigane, aveugle, conduit par un gosse ; or ce que je vois, par cet ‘œil qui pense’ et me fait ajouter quelque chose à la photo, c’est la chaussée terreuse me donne la certitude d’être en Europe centrale ; je perçois le référent (ici, la photographie se dépasse vraiment elle-même : n’est-ce pas la seule preuve de son art ? S’annuler comme *medium*, n’être plus un signe, mais la chose même ?), je reconnais, de tout mon corps, les bourgades que j’ai traversées lors d’anciens voyages en Hongrie et en Roumanie. »

Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire : Note sur la photographie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 77.

*Villages* animates both paintings, photographs, and other media, not distinguishing or discriminating in any sort of metaphorical sense.

It is for this reason that I end this section on *Visages Villages* by jumping to much earlier the film, where Varda and JR are verbally “animating” each other by explaining the impact the other one had on their respective careers – thus setting up the rationale for finally making a film together. Each one brings to life the other’s archive(s). We start with JR’s own recollection of Varda’s films: filmed from his point of view, out the window and the on road, an extreme close-up of his hand forms into a circle around a truck to imitate a camera lens. JR’s voiceover simply exclaims: “I remember images from your films.”<sup>155</sup> We then briefly cut to Cléo looking directly at the screen for a few seconds, taking off her sunglasses – a very famous shot from a highly famous and oft-studied film from Varda’s archive, *Cléo de 5 à 7/Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962).<sup>156</sup> “Cléo’s face,” JR tells us.<sup>157</sup> As JR’s voiceover continues, we cut to a suite of murals from documentary *Murs* (Agnès Varda, 1981), an obvious influence on *Visages Villages*, not only in its alliterative title, but also in subject matter [“These giant murals made such an impression on me.”]<sup>158</sup> I would be remiss not to make the Derridean connection here with the word “impression” – and especially

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<sup>155</sup> « Moi, je n’ai pas oublié les images de tes films ... »

<sup>156</sup> See, for example, Jim Morrissey, “Paris and Voyages of Self-Discovery in *Cléo de 5 à 7* and *Le fabuleux destin d’Amélie Poulain*,” *Studies in French Cinema* 8, no. 2 (2008): 99–100; Steven Ungar, *Cléo de 5 à 7* (London: BFI, 2008); Valeri Orpen, *Cléo de 5 à 7* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007); Jill Forbes, “Gender and Space in *Cléo de 5 à 7*,” *Studies in French Cinema* 2, no. 2 (2002): 83–89.

<sup>157</sup> « Le visage de Cléo »

<sup>158</sup> « Toutes ces grandes fresques qui m’ont beaucoup marquée. »

in the sense that JR is describing a rather general impression (rather like Freud's influence on psychoanalysis as a whole), as opposed to an actual, physical impression that one can always see.

As Varda's voiceover takes over, her first-person perspective is filmed in a very similar style to that of JR – this time, from a train window. In her words: "I loved seeing out the train window the eyes you painted on cisterns," as we see these cisterns.<sup>159</sup> Varda's point of view continues in a different location as we then look down from high upon JR's 2014 installation at the Panthéon in Paris, an interactive exhibition comprised of a mosaic of 4000 portraits. Like with the Louvre, there is a very clear depth of field – and even more so this time due to the distance of Varda's point of view shot from a high vantage point. What is more, Varda's camera is stationary, the "movement" stemming from the background noises of people talking (yet the exact words are inaudible). The image itself is so still that it is an illusion of an almost-still photograph. While the many voices below are difficult to distinguish, Varda's own voiceover is clear, and is specific in its wording ["You wowed me at the Pantheon with thousands of faces."]<sup>160</sup> The shot that follows this one gives even more context to JR's influence on Varda – how she breathes life into it. From another first-person point of view shot, we see Varda's hands turning the pages of a book of JR's works. Her hands are doing the moving, while the camera itself is stationary. There is also the very audible crackling of the pages in the sound mixing, as she turns them, emphasizing the physicality of the artefact. They are images that in and of themselves are stationary but are brought to life by the reader (not only Varda, but other potential readers of this volume). "You photographed old

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<sup>159</sup> « J'ai adoré voir, depuis le train, les yeux que tu as collés sur des containers. »

<sup>160</sup> « Tu m'as épatée au Panthéon avec des milliers de visages. »

women in Cuba and old men,” Varda exclaims. “And that wrinkled couple you pasted on the crackled city. It’s funny we didn’t cross paths sooner.”<sup>161</sup>

The choice to show first-person point of view shots on the part of JR and Varda – one after the other, as a binary opposition – is so striking, as it very much exhibits a multi-perspectival archive. Both Varda and JR are animating each other’s works, justifying the rationale for this film, almost giving the illusion that we as viewers are privy to their intimate thoughts – at least for a little while. While the Louvre, as a museum space, is an area to display a limited number of items, other parts of *Visages Villages* similarly pick and choose items from a highly expansive archive (and the introduction to this chapter alone exemplifies the sheer vastness of Varda’s *œuvre*). One’s own spoken word is critical here – especially in light of the Barthes quotation from a few pages prior [“which makes me add something to the photograph”]. However, in addition, the artefact, the source of the archive, is not far away. Varda’s and JR’s powerful words do not exist in a vacuum: and so, the image is still needed.

### 3.4 Photographing the Non-Indexical Image in *Visages Villages*

Thus far, I have been clear on how the *punctum*-like, multi-faceted *animation* initially proposed by Barthes is equally applicable to visual media forms more generally, not just still photographs. In *Visages Villages*, murals play a similar role, as they form of the basis of much of the documentary – and are what sets in motion the many nuanced and personal discussions of the

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<sup>161</sup> « Tu as photographié des vieilles à Cuba et des vieux. Et ce couple ridé posé sur la ville toute craquée. Ce qui est drôle c’est qu’on ne se soit pas croisés depuis le temps. »

interview subjects. Somewhat ironically, my reading of *Visages Villages* up to this point has not been about these murals. The reason behind that, in a word, is that I wanted to start my reading with a physical space (the Louvre), then the primary authors, and now on to the even more dynamic and nebulous facets of the documentary: even though Varda's filmic structure does not follow this order. Yet, like before, the presence of visual artefacts is critical – but with so many voices (interview subjects animating each other at many points), sometimes this multitude of perspectives can become muddled. For instance, the image of the repeated mural – akin to the repetitiveness of the similar-but-different immobile face in *Gleaners* – is both thickened and obfuscated by the camera lenses through which they are filmed. A definite case in point is the act of taking selfies with the murals, where the indexical (photograph) and non-indexical (mural) collide, and become part of the same two-dimensional, cinematic space.

It may seem like too obvious a point to make, but we never see a physical mural in person in *Visages Villages*, just like we never a physical painting in the Louvre: these are all seen through the eyes of others and are *photographs* of paintings and murals. In addition, the repeated nature of the mural/photo demonstrates the in-between-ness of “technical animation.” (And on an even more rudimentary level, I refer back to Hannah Frank who links the inherent photographic qualities of cel animation, including the role of photochemical and photomechanical technology in a film's distribution and exhibition.)<sup>162</sup> As we will soon see, the closest *Visages Villages* gets to cel

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<sup>162</sup> Frank, *Frame by Frame*, 45. Frank is citing specifically Tess Takahashi, “Meticulously, Recklessly Worked Upon: Direct Animation, the Auratic and the Index,” in *The Sharpest Point: Animation at the End of Cinema*, ed. Chris Gehman and Steve Reinke (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2005), 170. See also Tom Gunning, “Animating the Instant: The Secret Symmetry between Animation and Photography,” in *Animating Film Theory*, ed. Karen Beckman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 37–38.

animation are the opening and closing credit: yet the principle still stands, that cinematic images should not always be divided up according to different media. Whether they are paintings or reproductions of paintings, they perform the same function. While I draw upon Malraux's conceptualization of the museum without walls when talking about the museum space as something more intangible, metaphorical, and messy than just a physical location such as the Louvre, I also build off of his idea that the rise of photography brought about a replication of other works: even though I take issue with the notion of "lesser masters" of which he outlines below:

An earlier generation thrived on Michelangelo; now we are given photographs of lesser masters, likewise of folk paintings and arts hitherto ignored: in fact everything that comes into line with what we call a style is being photographed.

For while photography is bringing a profusion of masterpieces to the artists, these latter have been revising their notion of what it is that makes the masterpiece.<sup>163</sup> My dissertation does not rank or label certain works as superior to others (Varda's documentaries are on equal footing with the lesser-known mockumentaries or television specials of the next two chapters). Nevertheless, I do agree with Malraux that the rise of photographic medium has indeed allowed for more works to come to light – which is the main takeaway here.

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<sup>163</sup> Malraux, *Voices of Silence*, 17.

Original quotation: « on gravait Michel-Ange, on photographie les petits maîtres, la peinture naïve et les arts inconnus.

On photographie tout ce qui peut s'ordonner selon un style ...

Car dans le même temps que la photographie apportait sa profusion de chefs-d'œuvre aux artistes, l'attitude de ceux-ci changeait à l'égard de la notion même de chef d'œuvre. »

Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire*, 88.



In addition, Frank rightly posits that cel animation has hidden yet intrinsic links to photography, where “camera technicians took picture after picture after picture,” something that was “tedious,” “mechanical,” “monotonous,” “enervating,” “exacting,” and “exhausting.”<sup>164</sup> To buttress her claim, Frank cites Disney animated film *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* (Clyde Geronimi, Hamilton Luske, and Wolfgang Reitherman, 1961), where animators simply copied images of the same dog as a shortcut – that is, the use of a Xerox machine to create a “walk cycle” in the style of Muybridge and Marey. In a word, the process consists of the repetition of the same drawing over and over again – not as a way to create movement primarily, but to create a large group of similar looking dogs.<sup>165</sup> Frank’s explicit use of Muybridge and Marey’s names is very much why I cite her passage in particular – but it is not the only reason. Her historical work here also lays bare a previously unseen action: as viewers of *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*, we would only see the finished process, the completed film, and are unaware that many of the dogs have simply been Xeroxed as still images. On the contrary, Varda’s *Gleaners* reveals the context of stillness and movement – like the “man behind the curtain” in *The Wizard of Oz* – before showing the process in its totality: that is, the dog, the donkey, the cat, and so-on walking from right to left on screen.

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<sup>164</sup> Frank, *Frame by Frame*, 44. Frank is taking her information from Gordon S. Mitchell, “Making Mickey Mouse Act for the Talkies,” *Modern Mechanics and Inventions*, March 1931, 68; Carl Fallberg, “Animated Film Techniques—Part VIII,” *American Cinematographer* 40, no. 3 (1959): 198; John Canemaker, *The Animated Raggedy Ann & Andy: An Intimate Look at the Art of Animation: Its History, Techniques, and Artists* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977), 275.

<sup>165</sup> Frank, *Frame by Frame*, 140.

While the murals in *Visages Villages* repeat stationary images/photographs of similar or similar-but-different interview subjects, the opening and closing credits are distinct in that they evince the same completeness as Frank's *Dalmatian* example: meaning that they do not show the relationship between stillness and motion, only the finished product of animated motion. More specifically, Varda and JR bookend *Visages Villages* with cartoon imagery that represents themselves. There is no spoken dialogue, yet the written text that is juxtaposed against these illustrations is a very active agent, the animated Varda and JR interacting with them very explicitly at times. The two figures constantly walk across the screen – from both right to left and left to right – both of them quite stylized: and by this I mean that they are simplified versions of Varda and JR, but nevertheless highly recognizable as them. The cartoon Varda and JR do interact with each other, as well. We see clouds part to show the title “Un film de Agnès Varda et JR” – and both of them meet in the middle of the screen, and stare at each other for a second. Another agent at work is the van in which they travel across France: following Varda and JR meeting, we see a small vehicle on the left-hand side of the screen, in the vast expanse of the landscape shot, in the style of an establishing shot. This van is colored in with a dark blue and black tint, in contrast with the mountainous landscape, which is not colored in at all – merely being rough, sketched lines, thus having a distinctly unfinished look. The van then moves across the screen, and the title of the film *Visages Villages*, in red and letter by letter, appears behind it.

Throughout these opening credits, the imagery is always moving – but not all of it. For instance, while the simplified landscape is motionless, the more vivid and less simplified van is in motion. This motion becomes even more apparent with the scrolling up of a large number of names of those involved in the making of *Visages Villages*. The speed of the scrolling over these names (in a rather small font) is quick enough that one would have to pause to discern all these names.

As we do scroll up, however, tiny, brightly colored images of Varda and JR re-enter the screen space, walking right across this written text, superimposed over it. This Varda and JR are distinctly smaller than the versions of them we saw before: JR walks from left to right, and Varda from right to left, exiting the frame almost as if they were actors on stage. Once they have gone off-screen/off-stage, the van makes an appearance once again, but now it is significantly larger than what we saw before – it is unmistakably the same van as before (blue and gray), just bigger. The many, many names continue scrolling, and Varda reappears on the left. JR follows her, walking quite quickly – almost running – in order to catch up. As he overtakes her, the act of lifting his legs high is very exaggerated, in a way that it becomes almost comical. Finally, the three cartoon figures (Varda, JR, and the van) come together, with Varda and JR perched on top of the van, holding up the words “MERCİ A EUX” [“THANK YOU TO THEM”].<sup>166</sup> As we complete the credits, however, the composition of this two-dimensional space becomes even more complicated than what has been shown on screen thus far. Even though these cartoon figures are distinctly two-dimensional, they are sometimes quite large – and not in proportion with each other. In one shot, JR towers over the names of the “Co-producteurs” [“Co-producers”], while a very small Varda is walking just over the top of an “e” and “n”. There is still much entering and exiting on- and off-stage, Varda and JR sometimes blocking certain words or parts of words. Thus, we as viewers have to sometimes wait to discern these names in their totality. These *animated* Vardas and JRs are, very literally, *animating* the text before our eyes – holding up the thank you message is a definite case in point, too.

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<sup>166</sup> Translation my own.

Critically, the final shot of these opening credits is inherently linked to a photographic image. A sketchy, cartoon landscape establishing shot – similar to the one that opens these credits – (re)appears. Yet, here, we fade into an indexical photograph of this establishing shot, a slow fade that accentuates the many details of the photographic image, such as the different color shades of the grass and the clouds. And this is when we realize that what we have seen has been a re-creation of *what is about the come* – that is, a non-indexical preview of what we are going to see when the photographic and properly-proportioned versions of Varda and JR arrive on screen. We cut to a medium shot of JR walking left to right, and Varda right to left – both of them live action, but their action of walking towards each other has been previously (re-)created in cartoon format. Cutting back to the landscape shot, Varda and JR now occupy that space, symmetrically on either side of the frame. And they are in proper proportion to each other according to live-action cinematic space. I am reminded of Annabelle Honess Roe’s *Animated Documentary* (cited in my previous chapter), whose conceptualization of “resemblance” very lucidly puts non-indexical media in distinct contrast with those that evince photographic realism. As she articulates, “Disney rabbits look like real rabbits, we recognise that Gromit is a dog and that Bart Simpson is a young boy – it also looks very different.”<sup>167</sup> Through her opening credits, Varda uses this dichotomy of resemblance/non-resemblance to ostensibly foreground the role of photographic reproduction across different forms of media throughout her documentary. People are photographed, murals are photographed, photographs themselves are photographed again.

In contrast with them in the opening credits, cartoon Varda and JR in the closing credits – while as identical as before – are much more static in their lack of movement. The only thing that

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<sup>167</sup> Roe, *Animated Documentary*, 38.

moves are the credits scrolling up the page. Live-action Varda and JR are sitting on a bench in front of a lake, in the style of an establishing shot, the camera stationary. The same fading technique is used once again, both Varda and JR dissolving into cartoon versions of themselves. But here, the cartoon Varda and JR are equally proportioned to each other in size and are colored in, contrary to the sketchy outline of the tree that is next to them. Their completely still figures are situated on the left, while the credits in a small font scroll up slowly on the right. Unlike the speediness of the opening credits, one can actually discern the names without pausing: as opposed to the more haptic and aqueous feel of the opening, this ending is much more placid, in both feel and style. The metamorphosis from photographic to cartooned and back to photographic imagery is not just a re-creation of what happened before – which it clearly is – but also a very melancholy reflection of the mood both these people are feeling at the end of documentary: there is no longer an excitement about what is to come, but a sadness and disappointment.

One must go back slightly earlier in the sequence to grasp the full extent of this feeling of almost mourning, when Varda and JR are discussing Jean-Luc Godard not showing up for his meeting with them in filming *Visages Villages*. Varda is clearly upset by the matter. While JR and Varda are sitting on this bench pre-credits, their conversation is filmed in close-up, going back and forth in a suite of shot/counter-shots. As one speaks, the other is slightly in frame (i.e. when the camera is on Varda's face, JR's head is blurrily in the foreground). We can see from these close-ups that Varda is on the verge of tears. As a way of something to do, JR removes his sunglasses, and we see this action from a first-person point-of-view shot to represent our eyes being sutured to Varda's: and the perspective we see is rather blurry, a seeming callback to Varda's eye surgery referenced earlier in the documentary as a sign of her advancing age and declining health. The camera is static, the movement in frame being JR's action of removing his glasses: as he does this,

Varda's voiceover exclaims, "That's sweet."<sup>168</sup> Cutting back to Varda's face, she continues speaking: "I never realized your eyes were so light. I don't see you very well, but I see you. Shall we look at the lake?"<sup>169</sup> This verbal suggestion marks the end of the dialogue in the film, and we are back at the image of them staring pensively out at the lake. Thus, the style of these animated credits very much reflects the mood of the film here – Varda senses she is at the end of her life, but a life enriched by JR's contribution to it.

As we have seen in both these sections on *Visages Villages*, Varda is highly conscious of her relationship(s) between different visual media, and how they come together, differ from each other, enrich each other, to create a whole entity that is messy but deep, nuanced, and dynamic. In my introduction to this dissertation, I posit that thinking about the new life given to an archive as *animation* presupposes that it is an assemblage of movement, rather than merely a collection of dry, sterile "stuff." While it is important to look at the actual, physical collection of Varda's materials – like her DVD collections, to be sure – this is too dry and limited and does not account for the dynamic and playful nature of her works. Varda is anything but a sterile filmmaker, and her works are always open to much interpretation and appreciation – signaled by the many scholarly work on her I cite at the beginning of this chapter. With *Visages Villages*, so much is going on – even in a single frame – that one reading or placing the film in isolation do not do justice to her work. Vardas (emphasis on the plural) exist outside her *œuvre*, and the technical animation on display on the opening and closing credits are a demonstration of that. There is some basis of an intangible "reality" – cartoon Varda and JR are clearly mere representations of

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<sup>168</sup> « C'est gentil. »

<sup>169</sup> « Je savais pas que tes yeux étaient aussi clairs. Moi, je te vois pas très bien. Mais je te vois. On regarde le lac ? »

themselves – but their fluid and non-indexical proportions allow for a cinematic movement outside the spatial limitations that their live-action counterparts do not have, due to their lack of photographic indexicality.<sup>170</sup> I see a building off of the technical animation in *Gleaners*, too, whose imagery of Marey exemplifies the repeated, broken-down process of *animation*, before showing us the suite of animals walking in their totality. In *Visages Villages*, the opening and closing credits demonstrate an *animated* sequence in its totality – but the viewer can easily imagine of what that broken-down process consists, given Varda’s fascination with showing the steps behind making a film. So much of Varda’s archive is muddled and messy throughout *Visages Villages*, and the opening and closing credits are certainly a testament to that.

### 3.5 The Final Word (?) Animated Re-Writing in *Varda par Agnès*

As a coda to this chapter, I consider Varda’s last film, aptly titled *Varda par Agnès/Varda by Agnès* from 2019, released at the Berlin Film Festival one month before her death. *Visages Villages* would act as a very fitting coda to Varda’s archive and life, its subject matter very personal – especially given her choice to film herself as an animated, cartoon figure that becomes still as an act of finality. But, with Varda, there is always production – in light her prolific career – and, two years later, there is once again another retrospective of her career. *Varda par Agnès* acts as a simultaneous looking backwards and looking forwards: backwards, from the perspective of being a broad looking back at a selection of her films and other works (such as installations), as well as

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<sup>170</sup> For more on the limitations of photographic imagery in documentary cinema, see Paul Ward, *Documentary: The Margins of Reality* (London: Wallflower, 2005), 91.

being a forward-looking perspective of her continuing influence. Unlike *Gleaners* and *Visages Villages*, *Varda par Agnès* is not an on-the-road journey. Rather, it is presented in the style of a TED talk – which, in reality, is a compilation of various public talks and interviews. The many spoken words of her first-person testimonies here are also interspliced with carefully selected clips from her *œuvre*. While Varda is not specifically moving across France – but, very much so, her archive remains in movement, sweeping from the early days of her career to her last films.

Due to its recent release (at the time of writing this dissertation), there has been to date no scholarly work on *Varda par Agnès*. But I do say “to date” very intentionally, since Varda’s archive and influence, as summed up in this film, presuppose a much-needed look at it for years to come – akin to her most celebrated and most written films, like *Gleaners* and *Cléo*. Much will be written on *Varda par Agnès*. Yet, of the journalistic reception *Varda par Agnès* has received, it is full of praise, remarking that it is a fitting coda to Varda’s career. “It may look like a glorified TED talk,” David Ehrlich writes at the Berlin premiere, “but Agnès Varda’s final film is the perfect way for the legendary auteur to have the last word.”<sup>171</sup> Ehrlich concedes that his review may read as a “eulogy for a living artist,” also referring to how *Les Plages d’Agnès* could have well been her last film eleven years prior – something which Varda herself had said at the time.<sup>172</sup> Stephen Dalton would similarly state in Berlin that this was likely to be her last film, mobilizing the very curious

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<sup>171</sup> David Ehrlich, “‘Varda par Agnes’ Review: Agnes Varda’s Lovely Final Film Gives Her the Last Word on Her Career,” *Indie Wire*, February 13, 2019, <https://www.indiewire.com/2019/02/var-da-by-agnes-review-berlinale-2019-1202043743/>

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.



and pertinent expression that Varda “is a living artwork, her own greatest creation.”<sup>173</sup> Following Varda’s death, David Fear would sum up nicely the different roles it has to play as a testament to Varda’s career, and to Varda herself:

But this final work, culled from a number of lectures and public appearances she made in the last few years of her life, does more than let viewers enjoy the pleasure of her company a little bit longer. It’s also a self-portrait, a film history lesson, a remembrance of things past, a perfect coda to her career, a moving scrapbook and a masterclass that now doubles as a *memento mori*.<sup>174</sup>

I wanted to emphasize Fear’s language here, as it exemplifies the very fluctuating and expansive nature of *being animated* that is at the core of Varda’s archive and archives: indeed, it is “a moving scrapbook.” One could say, then, that this addition of this final film consists of a completed Varda archive: but, as this dissertation proposes, *Varda is an archive herself*, and her influence is never complete.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Stephen Dalton, “‘Varda par Agnès’ (‘Varda par Agnès’): Film Review | Berlin 2019,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, February 13, 2019, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/var-da-by-agnes-review-1186219>

<sup>174</sup> David Fear, “‘Varda par Agnès’: A French-Cinema Icon Says Au Revoir,” *Rolling Stone*, November 26, 2019, <https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-reviews/var-da-by-agnes-movie-review-914452/>

<sup>175</sup> For further reception of *Varda par Agnès*, see, for example, Peter Bradshaw, “Varda by Agnès Review – Two Hours of Magic With the Veteran Director,” *The Guardian*, February 13, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/feb/13/var-da-by-agnes-review-french-director-auteur>; A.O. Scott, “Varda by Agnès’ Review: A Final Visit With an Irreplaceable Filmmaker,” *The New York Times*, November 21, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/21/movies/var-da-by-agnes-review.html>; Matt Zoller Seitz, “Varda par Agnès,” *RogerEbert.com*, November 22, 2019, <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/var-da-by-agn%C3%A8s-movie-review-2019>; Robert Abele, “Review: ‘Varda by Agnès,’ a Moviemaking Masterclass in Agnès Varda’s Final Film,” *Los*

Furthermore, *Varda par Agnès* is also “new” in a sense. Varda does not merely reference famous works like *Gleaners* of which many people would be familiar: at the same time, it brings to light lesser known museum installations and exhibits that one would have to be there at a specific time and space to see and appreciate. While such visual forms have obviously existed before, it is Varda’s spoken words that bring them to life – almost as if they never existed in the first place, even though they clearly have. This is not to say that the physical space is not integral to the animation of Varda’s archive in *Varda par Agnès*. As with the DVD collection, the physicality and materiality of the artefact is never far behind her oral testimony. The opening of the film is one particular case in point, given that it takes place in the impressive hall space in the *Opéra de Paris*, with a large audience in attendance. We begin with a shot on stage looking out at the audience, with Varda’s famous director’s chair \*“(AGNES V.” imprinted on it) placed just in front of the stationary camera. Varda has not yet arrived: one can hear loud but indistinct chatter and dialogue in the sound mixing, with the footage of people arriving and getting seated very visibly sped up. We then jump cut to Varda in her seat, facing the audience, her back is turned to us. The crowd is now silent and seated still, in anticipation of her about to speak.

The physical space of the *Opéra* is a starting point for her to verbally reflect on her film career. “Thank you for inviting me,” she commences. “Seeing this marvellous opera house turned into a movie theatre [cut] intimidates me. There might be children of paradise up there.”<sup>176</sup> This

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*Angeles Times*, December 5, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/movies/story/2019-12-05/var-da-by-agnes-review>.

<sup>176</sup> « Merci de m’accueillir. Ce théâtre tellement beau transformé en cinéma [cut] ça m’impressionne un peu. Là-haut, il y a peut-être même [cut] des ‘Enfants du paradis’ »

English translation taken from the DVD subtitles.

“cut” is a cut to Varda facing the camera, in medium shot. As she continues her opening monologue, the camera cuts back and forth between her face and the audience, but these are not regular or rapid – Varda lets herself breathe here. This cutting back and forth is the camerawork style typical throughout *Varda par Agnès*: since the film mostly consists of Varda speaking to an audience or directly to camera, there is less of the experimental camerawork and cinematography in other Varda films. Varda’s voice also outlines the rationale behind her talk, and ultimately her entire filmography [“Some of my films are known, others not. I’d like to tell you what led me to do this work all these years.”]<sup>177</sup> As she continues, Varda provides further insight into her rationale for talking to an audience about her many films, and why she continues to make and discuss films well into her old age. In short, it is to impart her passion to others, so they can have a deeply personal relationship to filmmaking, just like her. The camera lingering on Varda’s face, she states, simply:

Three words are important to me: inspiration, creation and sharing. Inspiration is why you make a film. The motivations, ideas, circumstances and happenstance that ignite your desire to make a film. Creation is how you make the film. With what means, what structure? Alone or not alone? In color or not? Creation is work. The third word is sharing. You don’t make films to watch them alone. *[cut]* You make films to show them. You are the very proof of this sharing. *[cut]* These three words guided me. We need to know why we do this work.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> « Certains de mes films sont connus, voire très connus, d’autres pas. Je vais vous dire qu’est-ce qui m’a amenée à faire ce travail pendant tant d’années. »

<sup>178</sup> « 3 mots sont importants pour moi : inspiration, création, partage. L’inspiration, c’est pourquoi on fait les films. Quel motif, quelle idée, quelle circonstance ou hasard fait qu’un désir se mette en place et qu’on décide de faire un

Now, I would say that the above statement contains elements of *metaphorical animation*, as it describes the sort of spectatorly *animation* and *re-animation* that I mobilize from Barthes's *La Chambre claire*. Think specifically of that which "makes me add something to the photograph" earlier in this chapter,<sup>179</sup> since these attendees at the *Opéra* would ostensibly be great fans of Varda, and would contribute to her archive – and her as archive – by disseminating the great knowledge of her to other spectators after having listened to her talk(s). The repeated use of the French "on" as a general, first-person plural also designates a space in which Varda herself does not solely inhabit. In other words, after the first-person singular "pour moi," she moves to a more general and more plural space where others are welcome to add their ideas that will enhance, and maybe contradict, hers: which is welcome, and perhaps ideal.

Varda will eventually come to *Gleaners* and *Visages Villages* in the final parts of *Varda par Agnès*. Surprisingly, *Gleaners* itself is only dealt with quite briefly. Rather, it is more that *Gleaners*' overall influence is felt throughout *Varda par Agnès* via the concept of "gleaning" itself. Varda's *œuvre* has been all about gleaning, a common place being her installation work – something that Varda herself articulates:

Ever since *The Gleaners*, whose theme was suggested by the gleaners themselves. And I've learned that recycling brings joy. We feel things aren't lost. By taking these unusable

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film ? La création, c'est comment on fait le film, avec quels moyens, quelles structures, en couleur ou pas. La création est un travail. Et le partage : on fait pas des films pour les regarder seul [cut] mais pour les montrer. Vous êtes l'exemple même du partage. [cut] Ces 3 mots m'ont menée. Il faut savoir pourquoi on fait ce métier. »

<sup>179</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 45.

canisters and that unusable film and recycling them artistically so to speak, we give them new life. It's not wasted. It comes back. We feel things aren't lost.<sup>180</sup>

I am obviously drawn to the expression “we give them new life,” again with the first-person plural to designate a process that involves many people, and not just her. With such terminology evoked by Varda, I will repeat the question I posed regarding *Gleaners*: why to *animate*, and not simply to *glean*? Again, the response I give is that Varda's use of cinematic frames lays bare the liminal state between stillness and motion in cinema – in other words, she lays bare the apparatus of cinema itself in her “gleaning” of such imagery. This is why I singled out the Marey sequence in *Gleaners*. Moreover, her revisiting of some of her installations in *Varda par Agnès* adds even more texture to this technical animation of archives. This rather long segment in *Varda par Agnès* feels very much like a call-back to the Marey segment in *Gleaners*, even though Varda does not say so explicitly. (Actually, a number of these works have previously appeared in her 2011 mini-series *Agnès de ci de la Varda/Agnès Varda: From Here to There*.)

One such example is *Bord de Mer/Seaside* (2009), a high-definition digital projection, consisting of a still photographic image of the sea plus a “three-dimensional” projection moving waves below it. Real, actual sand is used as well, and rather loud sounds of the sea dominate the installation as a whole. While Varda's stationary camera lingers on this installation without a cut, her voiceover helpfully explains what is going on [“A giant photo. The seaform on the wave is still. Then the still image becomes a moving image. The wave breaking on the sand. And then

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<sup>180</sup> « Depuis ‘Les Glaneurs’ où ce thème était proposé par les glaneurs eux-mêmes, je me suis intéressée à ça, et je me suis rendu compte que le fait de recycler fait plaisir. Ces boîtes, inutilisables maintenant, de même que ces pellicules, en les recyclant ‘artistiquement’, on leur donne une autre vie. C'est pas foutu, quoi ! »

sand. A bit of tangible reality.”]<sup>181</sup> I would add, too, that *Bord de Mer* is clearly peaceful, calm, repetitive, and viewers of it could potentially be in front of there for hours. On a loop, the movement of the image barely changes – or does not seem to change unless one is noticing. This blurring of the lines between stillness and motion is even more porous in the installation *Alice et les vaches blanches/Alice and the White Cows* (2014). Yet, unlike *Bord de Mer*, this installation is clearly two-dimensional in the sense that there is no illusion of three-dimensional projection. The “moving” cows are in color, while the ones that are completely stationary are in black and white (the titular Alice standing in front of them). More specifically, there is initially just the black-and-white photograph in the middle of the still cows, with thick black strips on either side of it – and then the moving cows in color appear on either side. But even the “moving” cows do not move too much, as Varda’s voiceover explicates:

Another triptych. The photo of Alice hangs on the wall. [*moving cows appear*] Next to it we project a double video. [*voice change*] I was fascinated by how still the cows were. Filming them for a moment, we captured a fleeting instant between stillness and movement. One flicks her ear, then starts to move. A desire for movement linked to immobility.<sup>182</sup>

This “voice change” signaled by my notes here signifies that one can suddenly hear an echo from the microphone, and laughter from the audience, an aural signifier that indicates that Varda’s

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<sup>181</sup> « Une photographie géante. Au de la vague, l’écume est figée. Ensuite, l’image fixe devient mouvement. C’est la fin de vague qui arrive jusqu’au sable. Et puis il y a du sable, un peu de réalité concrète. »

<sup>182</sup> « Autre triptyque : la photographie d’Alice est accrochée au mur. Et sur les côtés, on projette une double vidéo. [*voice change*] C’est ça qui m’a fascinée, les vaches ne bougent pas beaucoup. On peut rester un moment à les filmer et avoir ce moment fragile entre l’immobilité et le début du mouvement. Il y en a une qui bouge une oreille. Donc c’est le désir du mouvement lié à l’immobilité. »

voiceover is coming from the stage setting – which it had not been doing before. We are never shown the stage here, but we are reminded of it. As with *Bord de Mer*, the stationary camera lingers on the installation, letting the installation itself do the work.

The third and final installation I have selected is the personal video *Le tombeau de Zgougou/Tomb of Zgougou* (2006), which commemorates her late cat. How it plays with the blurry lines separating stillness and movement is different, though. Rather than show moving images that are sometimes so slow that they almost appear still, *Zgougou* has different but similar looking images appear very deliberately, bit by bit, on screen. Like before, Varda's voiceover matches what we see we see on screen, explicitly making use of the word "animation." In particular, "the animation is done the old way to music by Steve Reich. We filmed the finished installation with shells and flowers. Then we filmed image by image, removing one element at a time. Here the sequence plays backwards."<sup>183</sup> It is as Varda describes. Ornaments for the cat's grave – fabricated, modelled objects with simple geometric shapes – appear one by one, coupled with an energetic, clarinet, extra-diegetic score. All this takes place, while the camera remains still. The slight pauses between each object's sudden appearance on screen also elicits a certain jerkiness and hesitancy between frames – even more visible than the repeated jerky dog in her quotation of Marey's imagery in *Gleaners*. In all three installations, Varda is *animating her own cinematic movement* – or, more specifically, her own archive of cinematic movement. Yet one must not forget that one of the other animating agents is the "metaphorical animation." Varda's words are as present as

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<sup>183</sup> « Sur une musique de Steve Reich, l'animation a été à l'ancienne. On a filmé l'installation terminée, avec coquillages et fleurs. Puis on a filmé image par image, en enlevant à chaque fois un élément. Ici, nous voyons la séquence projetée à l'envers. »

they have ever been. Each time the apparatus of cinematic motion is shown, Varda's voiceover is always there, to shed light upon what is happening. Arguably even more so than in *Gleaners*, Varda's verbal and visual descriptions of installations are very up front about the relationship between stillness and movement.

Unsurprisingly, the privileging of Varda's first-person voice continues in her re-visiting of *Visages Villages* – which is given more screen time than *Gleaners*, and acts as a conclusion to *Varda par Agnès* as a whole. Varda speaks to camera in a long take, in an outside setting. There is no physical audience, and her act of speaking to camera feels more intimate than when she was on stage earlier on in the film. Specifically, in a medium shot and sitting at table in front of a leafy backdrop, her voice to camera sums up the point of the film, now looking back on it two years later. “Real people are at the heart of my work,” she relates. “I have that in common with JR, the urban photographer who has approached thousands of real people. We wanted to make a film of our encounters with people. This time, in the French countryside.”<sup>184</sup> There are then some clips from *Visages Villages* (none of the ones cited above, though). These are fairly brief excerpts, and we often return to Varda in her garden. These verbal interludes are filmed in rather long takes, and her voice fluctuates between being a voiceover and talking directly to camera. Yet, it is still the same monologue throughout.

The very end of this revisiting of *Visages Villages* also equals as the end of *Varda par Agnès* at large and is an obvious callback to the cartoon imagery in the end credits of the former

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<sup>184</sup> « Les gens sont au cœur de mon travail et c'est ce qui m'a rapprochée de JR, cet artiste photographe urbain, qui depuis une dizaine d'années a approché des milliers de gens. On a voulu faire ensemble un film de rencontres dans les campagnes françaises. »



film. This time, Varda and JR are seated on the beach, while the extra-diegetic music consists of a sad piano tune, almost in the style of a funeral march. In addition, sand blows past the screen – the sound of it is very prominent in the sound mixing, getting gradually louder. The focus of the camera on the sand is so crisp, one can almost see the individual grains blowing past. Meanwhile, Varda and JR, in silhouette, sit in the background, while Varda’s voiceover states: “The sea has the last word. And the wind, and the sand. *[cut to image of just sand, Varda and JR no longer in the frame]* At one point, JR and I imagined ending the film this way.”<sup>185</sup> We then cut to a closer silhouette of Varda and JR, now in the foreground, the rapidly moving sand almost engulfing them [“Disappearing in a sandstorm. I think this is how I’ll end this chat.”]<sup>186</sup> Cutting to Varda and JR slightly further back in the frame, Varda’s voice continues, simply saying that she is: “Disappearing in the blur. Leaving you.”<sup>187</sup> The silhouettes of Varda and JR ultimately fade away with a dissolve, but the sand remains on screen. Akin to the cartoon Varda and JR, the figures here do not evince the indexical level of detail of photographic imagery. It remains a stylized representation of sorts, a singular block color, a shadow. And that is how Varda ends her final film, not going back to a theater or garden space, but by dissolving with JR by her side. Nothing else other than *Visages Villages* is found at the end of *Varda par Agnès*. An alternative *Visages Villages* seemingly has the final word on Varda’s archive.

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<sup>185</sup> « La mer a toujours raison, et le vent, et le sable. À un moment, on avait imaginé, JR et moi, qu’on finirait le film comme ça. »

<sup>186</sup> « [...] qu’on disparaîtrait dans une tempête de sable et de vent. Je crois que c’est comme cela que je vais finir cette causerie. »

<sup>187</sup> « Je disparaissais dans le flou. Je vous quitte. »

### 3.6 Conclusion

This chapter may read as a eulogy for Varda, but it is much more than that. Her 2019 death came at the time of me starting this dissertation, so my process was very much informed by the events that followed by it. I had not even watched *Varda par Agnès* when outlining this chapter in my prospectus, as it had only just been released. This personal anecdote is at the end of this chapter in order to demonstrate the fluidity of Varda's *re-animated archives*. Varda herself is an assemblage of movement, both technically and metaphorically. This is why this chapter feels very anticipatory, despite there seeming to be much completeness on the surface. Even after her death, so much of her future archive has yet to be written. My early footnote on *Gleaners* alone demonstrates the sheer scope of academic scholarship that there can be on even just one of her films. *Varda par Agnès* lends itself to much scholarly work, so that is a very conspicuous absence that the final section of this dissertation intentionally presupposes. I animate *Gleaners* in that way, too: to show that *Varda par Agnès* (and, to a lesser extent, *Visages Villages*) have the potential to contribute so much to Varda's living archive. What further thickens such expansive visibility is her increased and continued presence in mainstream, English-language contexts. It may seem absurd to think that her first and only Oscar nomination arrived with *Visages Villages*, but this goes to show that, for some, her genius and influence is only become known – or, perhaps, no longer being ignored. For instance, in 2017, she received an Honorary Academic Award at the Governors Awards, presented by American actresses Jessica Chastain and Angelina Jolie.<sup>188</sup> Varda

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<sup>188</sup> Pat Mullen, "Agnès Varda Receives Honorary Oscar," *POV Magazine*, November 12, 2017, <http://povmagazine.com/blog/view/agnes-vara-receives-honorary-oscar>

is an icon, as the title of this chapter designates, a staple of French cinema as a whole, not just documentary. As scholarship on French documentary continues to evolve and take shape, an evolving Varda (an archive herself) is always there – and remains to be essential.

#### 4.0 Queering the Animated Archive: The Pornographic and the Trans\*

This chapter proposes that confession – via the spoken word and living photographic imagery in conjunction – is the vehicle by which the animated archive can be queer. In considering “technical” and “metaphorical” animation the context of queerness, I also add Michel Foucault’s proposal in *Histoire de la sexualité/History of Sexuality* – that subjects are fixed in discourse – into the mix. The homosexual is invented, as a *personnage*, a character in a play that has been written with a part for him.<sup>189</sup> In short, to queer is to mismatch, with there being variant subjects, which are sometimes at odds with one another. Thus, the way I use the word “queer” in this chapter stems from Annamarie Jagose’s hyper-canonical statement: “Resisting that model of stability – which claims heterosexuality as its origin, when it is more properly its effect – queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire.”<sup>190</sup> Being trans\* fits in nicely under the above definition, as current scholarship similarly adopts a very broad definition, ostensibly incorporating any and sort of “gender-variant practices and identities.”<sup>191</sup> This trans\*-ness thus comprises not only a male-to-female (MTF) or female-to-male (FTM) sex transformation (think of “transsexual”), but also trans\*-ness in performance, such as drag (or “cross-dressing” more crudely). Thus, my use of the star \* follows current practice in queer studies, encompassing an ever-expanding and virtually unlimited potential for nonnormative genders and sexualities,

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<sup>189</sup> Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, tome I (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 59.

<sup>190</sup> Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>191</sup> Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 9.

including mismatches yet to be invented.<sup>192</sup> The question of defining “pornographic” becomes more precarious, however, since it is a term that can be used to describe content that is not necessarily sexual in nature. Yet I propose that there is something inherently queer in much of what is pornographic, especially when dealing with sexually explicit material, as there is an Othering – and outward look – that elicits a similar fissure between what *is* and what is *represented*.

More specifically, this chapter considers *Sagat* (Pascal Roche and Jérôme De Oliveira, 2011), a television documentary for Canal Plus on gay porn icon François Sagat, which consists of oral testimony by Sagat himself – as well as his fans – juxtaposed against clips from several films in which he has starred and/or directed. In *Sagat*, he immediately confesses to the camera the fabricated quality of his performances, and that he is nothing like his on-screen persona – a “metaphorical animation.” Vitaly, in some sequences, images from these pornographic films appear on Sagat’s skin, while he poses nude for the camera, indicating a merging of past and present via “technical animation.” I then move to a comparable example in *Bambi* (Sébastien Lifshitz, 2013), winner of the Teddy Award for Best Documentary Film at the 2013 Berlin International Film Festival. Lifshitz’s film treats carefully selected aspects of the life and career of French-Algerian trans\* (MTF) woman Marie-Pierre Pruvot: a showgirl and dancer, “Bambi” was Pruvot’s stage name. *Bambi* mostly comprises first-person oral testimony of Pruvot herself, which is often juxtaposed against still photographs documenting all stages of her pre-transition

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<sup>192</sup> See in particular Jack Halberstam, *Trans\*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018). Halberstam is himself trans\*: as such, he is referred to as Judith in earlier works. For the sake of consistency, I refer to him as Jack throughout my paper, including my Bibliography. See also Eliza Steinbock, *Shimmering Images: Trans Cinema, Embodiment and the Aesthetics of Change* (Durham: Duke University press, 2019).

childhood: baby, toddler, and adolescent. The stationary camera almost exclusively focuses on Pruvot's face – often in medium shot or close-up – while she speaks, a stationary-ness that is in distinct contrast with the mobility of the still photographs that depict Pruvot's past life: Lifshitz sometimes zooms into them, and the photographs themselves only appear on screen briefly, a rapidity not at all present in the oral testimony segments. Pruvot gives a new – and perhaps more faithful and nuanced – life to her own archive via spoken testimony, making it clear that she no longer identifies with her past self: as such, the stationary past and the fluid present converge, as both the still photographs and oral testimony parts of the film are simultaneously mobile and immobile. Both *Sagat* and *Bambi*, then, complement each other for the fact that “technical” and “metaphorical” animation are ever-present throughout the entirety of the documentaries' runtime – and each one concerns the life of a singular queer life (François/Marie-Pierre).

This style of technical/metaphorical animation acting together, where the spoken word overwrites and/or reinvigorates a previously captured image, hence plays a critical role when looking at different representational forms in queer history, such as the case study, the clinic, pictures, and oral history, especially if we consider Foucault, and how those (Others) in positions of power construct nonnormative subjects. *Sagat* and *Bambi* are not “strange but true” documentations of queer lives, such as with the after-death rewriting like that Jack Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place* describes in relation to *The Brandon Teena Story* (Susan Muska and Gréta Ólafsdóttir, 1998), where second-hand, sensationalized accounts of his life created a “new Brandon.”<sup>193</sup> By allowing *Sagat* and Pruvot to openly express their entanglement of past and present, where one is not ever separate from the other, the queer pornographic and the queer trans\*

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<sup>193</sup> Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York and London: New York University, 2005), 23.

move rather towards a sort of sympathetic witnessing. In short, such a reconceptualization of “animation,” where a single picture may have a multitude of significations, helps us understand the similarly many-sided – and often self-contradictory qualities of representing the queer experience in film and visual media. Such technical/metaphorical animation then, lays bare the inherent contradictions at stake in representing queerness in documentary cinema.

#### 4.1 Animated Pornography

Before I move to specific sequences *Sagat*, I do want to emphasize the role the “pornographic” has played in literature on documentary and animation separately, since *Sagat*’s use of technical and metaphorical animation both challenges and complements what has already been written on these two subjects. To return to Bill Nichols’s once again, his *Representing Reality* contains a specific chapter on the porn-documentary relationship, proposing that pornography as a genre has much to share with ethnography, meaning its desire to capture real, unsimulated sexual acts on tape, notwithstanding the often overly exaggerated and fantastical characteristics of such images.<sup>194</sup> What is important in both documentary and pornography is the need for indexical proof:

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<sup>194</sup> Bill Nichols, Christian Hansen, and Catherine Needham, “Pornography, Ethnography, and the Discourses of Power,” in *Representing Reality* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 201–28. Written in 1991, this text would not obviously take into account or predict the full scope of pornography’s potential in digital media, and via Internet platforms in particular, like with Rebecca Saunders, “Computer-generated Pornography and Convergence: Animation and Algorithms as New Digital Desire,” *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 25, no. 2 (2019): 241–59; GVGK Tang, “Sex in the Archives: The Politics of Processing and Preserving Pornography in the Digital Age,” *The American Archivist* 80, no. 2 (2017): 439–52.

“Ethnography and pornography rely heavily on those qualities of fiction (un)like any other that documentary provides: in ethnography, this involves the indexical representation of patterns of culture; in pornography, the indexical proof of sexual engagement.”<sup>195</sup> However, both ethnographic and pornographic films often utilize much embellishment – similar to the style of reenactments used in documentaries – such as in Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* (1922) and *Moana* (1926), where the goal was to provide evidence of an Other, to render comprehensible the “incomprehensible.”<sup>196</sup> In reading this chapter, too, I was especially drawn to the evocation of the pornography/ethnography dichotomy through a Foucauldian lens – and the role of confession in particular; the “cinematic representation of sexual activity” is inherently a type of confession, since its on-screen projection disseminates an originally private act so that it becomes vividly public, to an ever-increasing audience base. Notably, in this passage, there is a repeated use of a first-person plural with expressions such as “we watch and listen, we experience and learn.”<sup>197</sup> Akin to ethnographic documentaries, an outsider (us, the viewer) looks upon a subject, an Other, with an intention of learning from it.

For instance, in *Sagat*, François speaks directly to the camera, divulging his innermost thought process – which in turn helps create the sort of discourse-created sex and gender subjects that Foucault describes. In particular, I would like to highlight Foucault’s detail of Christian confession: “Not only will you confess to acts contravening the law, but you will seek to transform your desire, your every desire, into discourse.”<sup>198</sup> With this quotation by Foucault in mind, I do

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>198</sup> Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 21.



want to emphasize the potential Nichols leaves open for looking at queerness more fully in the porn documentary, especially their statement that pornography “extends our sense of what an unbridled sexuality might look and sound like in a manner quite similar to ethnography’s rendering of other cultures. In relation to heterosexual pornography, the liberated Other clearly does not represent women, who remain as much Other as one could imagine, but sexuality itself.”<sup>199</sup> In *Sagat*, François’s oral testimony to camera is spliced, sometimes very abruptly, with extended clips from Sagat’s extended *œuvre* – where he has been both actor and director. Graphic sex is sometimes seen uncut, and there are often extreme close-ups of François Sagat masturbating, but these are almost undermined by the spoken testimony of not just Sagat, but many of the other interviewees, almost obsessively stating how porn is not real. His spoken word – his “metaphorical animation” – is ever-present in the documentary.

There is here, then, a very personalized reaction to the pornographic object, which is key to its status as a body genre. While this chapter in *Representing Reality* does not engage with the full potential of a seemingly inherent queerness of the pornographic documentary, Linda Williams does bring queerness to table in her analysis of three distinct “body genres”: pornography, horror, and musicals.<sup>200</sup> Williams’s main argument pertains to her idea of “success,” meaning that each genre has specific goals of which “the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen.”<sup>201</sup> One must laugh, one must cry, one must orgasm, and so-on. In relation to porn, Williams’s focal

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Original quotation: « Un impératif est posé : non pas seulement confesser les actes contraires à la loi, mais chercher à faire de son désir, de tout son désir, discours. » Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, tome I, 30.

<sup>199</sup> Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 208.

<sup>200</sup> Linda Williams, “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess,” *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1991): 2–13.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

point is bisexuality, citing videos where “women do it with women, men do it with men and then all do it with one another, in the process breaking down a fundamental taboo against male-to-male sex.”<sup>202</sup> What is so striking in this section of Williams’ approach here its emphasis on confession via the spoken word, a seeming call-back to Foucault – in particular, the role of discourse in opening up potential for not only queer representation, but also queer spectatorship – even within the films themselves, who look upon the sexual acts on display, ostensibly accompanying us, the viewer, perhaps striving to reach the same orgasm. It is this form of fluid, not-merely-heterosexual identification that “permits in the construction of feminine viewing pleasures once thought not to exist at all.”<sup>203</sup> Critically, Williams would say that a key component of this “new bisexual pornography” is how the female subjects in the films would “verbally articulate” their “visual pleasures” while looking on upon male-male sex acts.<sup>204</sup> The spoken word, not just the sexually explicit imagery, becomes paramount in forming queer subjecthood in pornographic film.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Williams, “Film Bodies,” 8. On page 12, Williams lists such post-1986 hard core videos, with titles such as *Bisexual Fantasies*; *Bi-Mistake*; *Karen’s Bi-Line*; *Bi-Dacious*; *Bi-Night*; *Bi and Beyond*; *The Ultimate Fantasy*; *Bi and Beyond II*; *Bi and Beyond III: Hermaphrodites*.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Importantly, Williams would return to questions of the public/private divide in the introduction to her edited volume *Porn Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), her introduction utilizing her own term “on/scenity,” meaning “the gesture by which a culture brings on to its public area the very organs, acts bodies, and pleasures that have heretofore been designated ob/scene and kept literally ‘off-stage’” (3). Published in 2004, this collection of essays is much more in tune with the rise of the Internet and digital, which she states as a primary factor in the proliferation of a much greater variety of sexually explicit materials.

It is such metaphorical animation in body genres that begs the question: how does the argument proposed in *Representing Reality* on pornographic ethnography – as well as on the role of the public confession – factors into animation in documentary acting as a bringing-to-life process? I think specifically of the opening to Elizabeth Freeman’s *Time Binds*, wherein she recounts the constant rewinding of the gay pornographic videotape *K.I.P.* (Nguyen Tan Hoang, 2002): viewers’ desire to climax more than once wore the tape down, ultimately making it near-impossible to rent or view, as it “now skipped and repeated, and entire frames were blurred or erased.”<sup>206</sup> In the context of displaying porn in a public place, too, David Squires details the role of obscenity in what has been treated as serious historical artifacts in settings of storage and display.<sup>207</sup> Squires’s primary case study in the chapter is the 1965 American edition and translation of Pauline Réage’s erotic novel *Histoire d’O/Story of O* (1954), which circumvented very strict censorship laws by being labelled with the very vague, “limited to adults,” without signaling any overtly explicit sexual content.<sup>208</sup> Squires traces this sort of censorial practice back to discovery and recovery of articles from antiquity, such as relics from Pompeii of nude bodies: this occurred with M. L. Barré’s nineteenth-century catalog of the Museo Borbonico, where the most sexually explicit artifacts were miniaturized.<sup>209</sup> I am drawn to this Pompeii example in particular, due to its most visible links to a brining-to-life process – consisting of a resurrection in its most literal sense.

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>207</sup> David Squires, “Pornography in the Library,” in *Porn Archives*, ed. Tim Dean, Steven Ruszczycky, and David Squires (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 78–99. See further Walter Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture* (New York: Viking, 1987).

<sup>208</sup> For an in-depth discussion of *Story of O*, see pages 78–80.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 83.

Here, representations of dead bodies are re-animated via a process of de-sexualization. Yet, at the same time, this re-animation ostensibly creates a sort of second death, something to which Squires alludes (and, to be clear, he does not use the word “animation” in the sense I that I use it). “When combined in the form of a public sex museum,” he states, “the process of detaching the sex objects from their primary milieu among cultural detritus and placing the objects on display in a legitimate institution ‘involves a sort of death’.”<sup>210</sup> Squires specifies that this “death” may take place when materials originally intended for sexual pleasure move into the realm of more clinical, academic study, such as the study of cadavers.<sup>211</sup> However, I still maintain that the act of placing sexually explicit materials in a more lifeless, academic setting nevertheless inevitably allows for a sexual re-animation, meaning that pornographic materials end up reverting back to their original intentionality – that is, to animate and gratify sexual desire. I see this especially in Squires’s discussion of sexual material being stolen, where a library’s subscription to *Playboy*, for example, would result in librarians having to “retrieve copies from men’s bathrooms, clean fresh semen from the pages, and struggle to keep the periodical shelves in order.”<sup>212</sup> Here, there is a deeply personal connection to images – quite literally on display, owing to the aftermark of the semen stain.

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid. 84. See further Geoff Nicholson, *Sex Collectors: The Secret World of Erotic Consumers, Connoisseurs, Curators, Creators, Dealers, Bibliographers, and Accumulators of ‘Erotica’* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 33.

<sup>211</sup> Squires, “Pornography in the Library,” 86.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 93–94. See further Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the ‘Frenzy of the Visible’* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 90.

I find it fruitful, then, to bring Roland Barthes into the conversation here, since his distinguishing the *studium* from the *punctum* creates a dichotomy whereby it is the latter that has the strong, piercing [*me point*] reaction.<sup>213</sup> On the contrary, the language that Barthes utilizes to describe the *studium* evinces a more distant, clinical, and pedagogical quality: it consists of an *education*. As he lays bare:

The *studium* is a kind of education (knowledge and civility, ‘politeness’) which allows me to discover the *Operator*, to experience the intentions which establish and animate his practices, but experience them ‘in reverse,’ according to my will as a *Spectator*. It is rather as if I had to read the Photographer’s myths in the Photograph, fraternizing with them, but not quite believing them.<sup>214</sup>

Barthes’s quotation here ostensibly highlights the type of dilution that may occur with treating a photographic image as a specimen – without “believing it.” Just as the miniaturization of the Pompeii artifacts or the watered-down language with *Story of O*, such de-sexualization of the pornographic image has it revert to something more insipid and drier. Paradoxically, the new

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<sup>213</sup> Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire : Note sur la photographie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 49.

<sup>214</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 28.

Original quotation: « Le *studium* est une sorte d’éducation (savoir et politesse) qui me permet de retrouver l’*Operator*, de vivre les visées qui fondent et animent ses pratiques, mais de les vivre en quelque sorte à l’envers, selon mon vouloir de *Spectator*. C’est un peu comme si j’avais à lire dans la Photographie les mythes du Photographe, fraternisant avec eux, sans y croire tout à fait. » Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, 49.

life given to pornographic imagery may in fact sometimes erase – or at least diminish – the overtly sexual and violent nature of the original object.

#### 4.2 To Animate the Queer Pornographic Self: A French Porn Star

It is now that I turn specifically to television documentary *Sagat* (Pascal Roche and Jérôme M. De Oliveira, 2011), which treats not only a porn icon, but a gay icon, François Sagat.<sup>215</sup> A French documentary that deals with the subject of pornography is, in reality, quite difficult to locate. *Sagat* is available on Amazon Prime, along with *Pornocratie/Pornocracy* (Ovidie, 2018). Moreover, when undertaking archival work at the *Cinémathèque* in Paris in May-June 2019, one of the few porn documentaries I could find was *Les Pornocrates* (Jean-François Davy, 1976), a making-of, behind-the-scenes look at the porn industry in France at that time. In *Les Pornocrates*, sex scenes are not entirely hidden away, but, even then, the “unreal” nature of the pornographic image is laid bare and revealed to be simply a fabrication. To put it another way, even though nudity is explicitly shown on screen, that explicit-ness is undercut by the spoken dialogue of the interviewees, who are mostly porn actors themselves. Much of *Les Pornocrates* acts as a behind the scenes, making-of documentary of various adult films, yet some of the chosen clips intentionally blur out the actors’ genitals – while other segments do not. In addition, when many of these porn stars are interviewed, they are naked, often just after they have performed their scenes for whatever films they are making. In other words, these act as films within a film, that is, the

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<sup>215</sup> For more about François Sagat’s celebrity status, see, for example, Greg Bailey, *Alright Darling? The Contemporary Drag Scene* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2018).

porn films – which have been partially censored by Davy – and Davy’s own documentary film, where the originary visual texts have been quoted and appropriated. But even so, Davy does not focus on the actors’ nudeness, their bodies sometimes in shadow, or partially turned away from camera. That is not to say that images of graphic sex are not entirely eliminated – for instance, we see in great detail a woman masturbating on a grassy plain – but there is certainly a process of bringing-to-life via de-sexualization happening – also owing to the tone of the oral testimony, that is often very jokey and dismissive. “Porno is synonymous with bad films,” one of them states nonchalantly, while another describes a film in which they star as “not at all a real scene,” the originary entity bleeding into its aftermath.<sup>216</sup> At points, then, this intrusion of the spoken word means that one’s sexuality is more treated as an afterthought, and not overly important.

Even more so than *Les Pornocrates*, *Sagat* is very explicit in laying bare the contradictory nature of pornography in both queer and documentary spaces – even delving into trans\* questions, as Sagat’s relationship with drag and cross-dressing denotes a fluidity and that paradoxically has always been at the core of queer theory. *Sagat* is full of contradictions, too. On one hand, Roche and De Oliveira decide to include clips of unsimulated sexual activity in the documentary fulfills this almost fetishistic desire evident in ethnographic films. Yet at other points in the documentary, it does not escape a sort of hiding away and obscuring, such as when Sagat poses nude for Roche and De Oliveira’s camera, that is, not as part of the porn film quotations. Paradoxically, while Sagat’s anatomy, especially his penis – a piece of flesh – is in full view here, blurry images from his pornographic films – in the form of rectangles imitating a screen – are displayed on his body:

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<sup>216</sup> English translations my own.

« Porno est synonyme de mauvais film » ; « pas du tout une scène réelle ».

rapid cutting also makes it difficult to discern what is going on at times. It is almost Butlerian in its bodies-as-matter approach: to cite her *Gender Trouble*, the “effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body.”<sup>217</sup> And I really want to emphasize the word “effect” here, since it indicates an impression of something, that is, a copy. Yet perhaps this is a copy that does not entirely come alive unless it is linked to its original. In isolation, obfuscated-but-not-fully-obfuscated imagery of sexual organs and acts would not adopt much significance. Yet, since they are – in a very material way – tied to Sagat’s body and experiences, we can perhaps understand their importance to Sagat personally more fully.

In short, the link these obscure images of sexuality have to François’s body is how his performance in the porn world has little to do with his interior thought process, something of which he is entirely open about in all of his oral testimony: in fact, the last words of the documentary are him telling us, the viewers, that he would quit porn all together. To put it another way, Sagat’s oral testimony is so overtly critical of life as a porn star, as well as displaying a high level of vulnerability about his own insecurities. One such moment arrives following a scene of Sagat in a hotel room: evoking the end shot of *Les 400 coups/The 400 Blows* (François Truffaut, 1959), Sagat looks directly at the camera, breaking the fourth wall, the image suddenly become a freeze frame for several seconds. We then cut to one of a scene of blurry pornography imagery plastered on Sagat’s body, coupled with his voiceover narration, articulating, that *hypermasculinité* was something that he desired to fulfil, yet realizing that it was just an ideal, and that it did not give him either satisfaction or happiness. A key sentence arrives in the declaration: “I realized I couldn’t reach satisfaction. It’s an illusion. It’s not what’s essential. Wanting to embody this image probably

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<sup>217</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge), 140.



motivated and ordered my life [*cutting back from Sagat's naked body to the interview in the same hotel room*] but when I reached the height of success, I realized I hadn't reached happiness."<sup>218</sup> This specific sequence, more than ever, consists of a Foucauldian confession, but where these spoken words create a schism between the Sagat performing for his pornographic films, but now, a second Sagat, and one who is totally at odds with this primary one: who may not even exist. Sagat, in conjunction with directors Roche and De Oliveira, is essentially reinventing himself via discourse – but a discourse that is being supplemented by the visual. There is the “technical” (the film screens on François's body) plus the “metaphorical” (François's words that override the filmic imagery). The “fantasy” of porn is immediately unraveled from the outset, not even pretending that it is “real.” Even at the very opening of the documentary, we briefly see two Sagat faces superimposed over each other: one, completely stationary, looks down, while the other, which moves, is looking straight at the camera, breaking the fourth wall.

I characterize this duality of the pornographic image as a sort of *trans-ness*, falling under the umbrella of the very broad term *trans\** as highlighted in the introduction to this chapter. Sagat is not an FTM or MTF *trans-sexual*, as with Marie-Pierre Pruvot in *Bambi*; rather, the trans stems from the overall transformation Sagat undergoes from the “femininity” which he hides from his acting in porn films, to his hypermasculine persona and body seen on screen – which is described verbally not only by him, but also by his sister Caroline, who is one of the primary interview

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<sup>218</sup> English translation taken from the DVD subtitles.

« Et je me suis rendu compte que cette satisfaction n'arrive pas. Que c'est un leurre. Que ce n'est pas l'essentiel. Que ça donnait peut-être une motivation et un rythme dans de ma vie de vouloir acquérir cette image-là, mais quand arrivant au point de succès, finalement je me rends compte que le bonheur n'est pas là, quoi. »

subjects in the documentary. Her words call back to their shared childhood, where she speculates that perhaps the bullying her brother experienced as a child for being “feminine” brought about this stark change in adulthood. “He used to be a young boy and adolescent, puny, sensitive, and effeminate,” she states while the camera remains stationary on her face, “People are often narrow-minded. This body shell, this staged sexuality, it’s a good revenge for all that nastiness.”<sup>219</sup> Moreover, this trans\*-ness is further reinforced for the fact that Roche and De Oliveira choose to include extensive interview footage from American drag queen Chi Chi La Rue (Larry David Paciotti), someone who bridges the gap between queer and porn representation, owing to his/her participation in pornographic films. Against a pink backdrop and filmed in the same stationary way as with Caroline, LaRue expresses her admiration for Sagat as a performer – at another point in the documentary we see both of them dancing together in a nightclub – but is, at the same time, very open about the fabricated nature of porn: “Porn is not real, porn is fantasy. Porn is a moment. It’s a moment, and the moment can be gone. Very fast [*snaps fingers*].” What is further compelling in LaRue’s testimony is how she – very much in line with Butler’s theories of gender performativity – imitates Sagat’s voice and bodily in gestures in a way to demonstrate this highly performative side of the porn industry. It is an impression of him, in other words. As she articulates, “there are many, many men, boys, men, that work in the porn industry, that are very, like, camp, very out there, very outrageous, and the thing that François is very [*voice deepens*] intense, and very sexy [*voice deepens even more, Chi Chi La Rue making hand gesture*], and very suave [*voice trails off*] but inside there is a big ahhh! [*high pitched voice*], fly out of the mouth.” Here, there are

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<sup>219</sup> « C’était un petit garçon et adolescent chétif, sensible, un peu efféminé. Les esprits sont parfois un peu étriqués [...] cette sexualité mise-en-scène, tout ça c’est un beau pied de nez à tous ces quolibets. »

[at least] two levels of performance and identity on display: LaRue, a gay cisgender man not only performing in drag his Chi Chi La Rue alter ego, but also temporarily as a version of Sagat too – and all this to demonstrate the constructed-ness of porn performance as a whole.

Even though Roche and De Oliveira rely so much on “metaphorical animation” via the spoken word in this way throughout their documentary, the role of technically animating photographic imagery in shaping and reshaping identity is nevertheless at the forefront. The moment in *Sagat* that most evokes Barthes’s conceptualization of photography is near the beginning of the film, when Sagat is in a bookstore in San Francisco, signing photographs and model penises, among other things. In one such instance, the camera initially lingers on him, signing a photograph of himself (it is very material, given that both the physical photo and pen are focused on in the frame), then panning up to the fan’s excited face. Sagat repeats this action for another fan, who, after the signing, immediately strokes Sagat’s penis in the photo. Sagat immediately interjects in proclaiming: “Yeah, but it’s photoshopped.”<sup>220</sup> Sagat then turns to camera, clarifying: “My dick [...] is not long, but quite large. It’s my dick, but it’s exaggerated.”<sup>221</sup> Right away, the schism between “reality” and its representation is confirmed via discourse: but the two are nevertheless not entirely separate, as it is his penis, not someone else’s. Furthermore, since the photographic penis *appears* real and indexical, Sagat spoken word is the thing that “confirms” its true status – notwithstanding the fact that Sagat could be himself exaggerating somewhat in this verbal statement. What is important here is that these admirers are re-animating the photographs

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<sup>220</sup> This statement is in English in the film.

<sup>221</sup> « Ma bite [...] est pas longue, mais assez large. C’est ma bite, mais optimisée. »

for their own personal gratification: not only since they are excited meeting a star figure, but perhaps as a masturbatory fantasy later on.

To recall Barthes, indeed he proclaims; “In this glum desert, suddenly a specific photograph reaches me; it animates me, and I animate it”, characterizing this process as an “adventure.”<sup>222</sup> These fans in the San Francisco bookstore are certainly “animating” this originary image, even though the fabricated qualities of the image are brought to their attention. In addition, Sagat himself is also one of the animators, given that he verbally corrects the previously unknown inaccuracies of the photograph. Such animation is not as overtly material as the semen-stained copies of *Playboy* magazine described by David Squires, or Elizabeth Freeman’s characterization of the damaged video tape: nevertheless, this intimate relationship between art object and recipient is still there, however fleeting it may be. In brief, the spoken word acts as one of the agents of animation, as it is the way in which different facets of the image in question – previously unseen – are laid bare. And it is this animation (both technically and metaphorically) that reveals the queer split between image and discourse. It is a failed animation, textually speaking.

Such intimacy on the part of Sagat is further compelling for the fact that in there is a brief sequence which displays Sagat’s abilities in art and drawing, since they have acted [in his childhood] and continues to act as an outlet for his private interiority: which may not have indeed changed from childhood to adulthood.<sup>223</sup> More specifically, here, the camera in close-up follows

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<sup>222</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 20.

Original quotation: « Dans ce désert morose, telle photo, tout d’un coup, m’arrive; elle m’anime et je l’aime. » Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, 39.

<sup>223</sup> This role of the non-photographic artwork in relation to being trans\*/queer is similar in the American trans\* documentary, *Real Boy* (Shaleece Haas, 2017).

Sagat's hand while he draws, with a pencil, an image of a cat: and this is juxtaposed against close-ups of Sagat's face looking down on the page. Furthermore, the oral testimony provided by Sagat specifically pertains to his childhood ("Drawing has been a part of me since childhood") and in particular how it was a way to cope with his loneliness ("to make up for my loneliness; I was alone in the playground").<sup>224</sup> But, as we can see, that same loneliness has followed him into adulthood, which has been such a theme throughout the entire documentary. As such, it is his *material body* that is adopting a trans\* character. And it is vital that it is through the nonphotographic artwork (drawing) that some of this interiority is projected onto our screens. We, as voyeurs, are given a glimpse of this internal Sagat – who is ostensibly a total mismatch with his represented self. As we have seen with our previous examples, artworks are often the vehicle through which subjecthood is formed and reformed, animated and reanimated. By virtue of his act of creating a nonphotographic image, multiple Sagats are on display – Sagats that are openly and explicitly contradictory.

### 4.3 Queer Porn and Cinematic Movement

As a coda to reading of *Sagat*, I do want to re-emphasize the overall paucity of French documentaries about pornography that are readily available. Yet, at the same time, there is a long history of ethno-porno relations – as evidenced in Nichols's chapter cited previously. In addition, clips of porn films do play a significant role in Jean-Luc Godard's hugely influential eight-part

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<sup>224</sup> « Le dessin, c'était quelque chose qui m'accompagnait toute mon enfance » ; « [...] pour compenser cette espace de solitude, parce que voilà j'étais tout seul dans la cour de récréation. »

video essay *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998). A pioneer of the French New Wave, one of Godard's techniques is to marry together two seemingly unrelated images as a sort of shot reverse short to create the illusion of being connected: images of a female naked body are juxtaposed against a still from *An Unseen Enemy* (D.W. Griffith, 1915), so it looks like actresses Lillian and Dorothy Gish are "recoiling in horror."<sup>225</sup> In this example, not only is pornography cited by a well-known French filmmaker, but it is also presented in a way that it is seen as something distasteful, horrific – maybe even abject. Here, the pornographic image is not hidden away entirely, but obscured in a way that hides it from the more palatable film forms.

And this does not even solely apply to sexual content for Godard. Briefly, in *Une Histoire seule/A Single (Hi)story* (1989), we see part of the famous shot from *Un Chien Andalou/An Andulasian Dog* (Luis Buñuel, 1929): here, and in the original, the violence is anticipated prior to a jump cut, the eye-ball slicing of that particular not indeed seen – and Godard does not include the actual close-up shot of the animal's eye being sliced, which Buñuel includes in his original film as a sort of follow up and aftermath, connecting to seemingly unrelated shots to create a new whole, a before and after violent act. In Godard's quotation of Buñuel, in other words, violence is not seen at all – especially if audience members familiar with the original work are familiar with it. In addition, whenever there is pornographic imagery – or, at least, those that depict nudity – Godard often employs techniques such as superimposition and rapid cutting to obscure parts of these "obscene" images. A visible motif in *Histoire du cinéma* is bare female breasts, images of

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<sup>225</sup> Michael Witt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Cinema Historian* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 117. See also Alberto Brodesco, "Corpo nudo, deforme, violato. Un montaggio nelle *Histoire(s) du cinéma* di Jean-Luc Godard," *Scienza & Politica* 25, no. 47 (2012): 199–209.

them sometimes coupled with pre-existing and well-known orchestral music: in the very first segment, *Toutes les Histoires/All the (Hi)stories* (1988), naked female bodies are covered over by bodies that are clothed, while excerpts from Igor Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* dip in and out – a ballet and musical composition that was certainly considered repugnant in its day.<sup>226</sup> However, only parts of Stravinsky's work are heard, and these excerpts are sometimes very abruptly cut off, almost as if to say that, similar to images of naked bodies, that only some is “allowed” to be shown on screen. An even more interesting example arrives in the aforementioned *Une Histoire seule*, where Eadweard Muybridge's *Horse in Motion* (1878) is superimposed over a clip of a (presumably) pornographic film, of two nude figures: a man and a woman. For Godard, the birth of cinematic motion and the pornographic are seemingly intrinsically linked, where one is not entirely separate without the other. Cinematic movement in this way – technical animation – both enlivens this image, but, at the same time, partially conceals it. The pornographic is there, but not there, at the same time. In this history of cinema, it appears that one cannot ignore the role of pornography, or of the obscene. While the words of those subjects such as François Sagat are always there and ever-present – a metaphorical animation – one must not forget the role of the technical movement of the cinematic image, whether it is blurring, concealing, and so on.

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<sup>226</sup> See, for example, Maureen A. Carr, *After the Rite: Stravinsky's Path to Neoclassicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

#### 4.4 To Animate the Trans\* Documentary: Lifshitz's *Bambi*

Akin to how the projection of the intimately private pornographic image in documentaries such as *Les Pornocrates* and *Sagat*, the use of “confession” in the trans\* documentary similarly elicits a working against the rewriting by an Other to create (re)constructed versions of identity. This outward voyeurism may nonetheless still be present – the brief but explicit sex scenes peppered throughout *Sagat* are a testament to this. Yet, at the same time, the first-person oral testimony reinvigorates and (re)animates previously filmed footage – and often contradicts what has been previously shown said and shown on screen. Winner of the Teddy Award for Best Documentary Film at the 2013 Berlin International Film Festival, Sébastien Lifshitz's *Bambi* deals with carefully selected aspects of the life and career of French-Algerian trans\* woman Marie-Pierre Pruvot: a showgirl and dancer, “Bambi” was Pruvot's stage name. *Bambi* is mostly comprised of first-person oral testimony of Pruvot herself, which is often juxtaposed with still photographs documenting all stages of her pre-transition childhood: baby, toddler and adolescent. The stationary camera almost exclusively focuses on Pruvot's face – often in medium shot or close-up – while she speaks, a stationary-ness that is in distinct contrast with the mobility of the still photographs that depict Pruvot's past life: Lifshitz sometimes zooms into them, and the photographs themselves only appear on screen briefly, a rapidity not at all present in the oral testimony segments. Pruvot gives new and more nuanced life to her own archive via spoken testimony, making it clear that she no longer identifies with her past self; as such, the stationary



past and the fluid present converge, as both the still photographs and oral testimony parts of the film are simultaneously mobile and immobile.<sup>227</sup>

Since Pruvot was a showgirl and dancer, there is a level of performance – whether on stage or as part of a film – that may be at odds with what Pruvot says on screen to camera. But Pruvot is not merely trans\*/queer owing to her performance/testimony divide, but also on a more rudimentary “sex” level: a male-to-female (MTF), Pruvot was one of the first people in France to undergo gender confirmation surgery.<sup>228</sup> On the face of it, this MTF transition would evince a certain linearity, as much of the photographic archive of Pruvot’s pre-surgery childhood is displayed in the first part of the documentary. Yet much of the other footage selected by Lifshitz is of Pruvot’s stage performances, where the camera is more fluid in its movement, reflecting the more aqueous nature of her on-stage persona, a shifting that does not conform to a direct MTF transition in isolation. - One clear example of this malleability is the pre-title sequence, where one sees footage of a young adult Pruvot – who is nevertheless clearly “female” and post-transition – dancing, sometimes clothed, while nude and/or topless at other points. Here, the camerawork is very flowing, coupled with rather quick cutting; while Pruvot’s bare breasts are clearly visible, the camera does not linger on them at all, focusing rather on the ambulatory quality of her dancing. In other words, Pruvot’s body and Lifshitz’s camera are both mobile. We then cut to a much older Pruvot, who is pensively looking over the ocean and at her hometown in Algeria, her back turned away from Lifshitz’s now immobile camera. Here, Pruvot’s discourse and perspective is front and

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<sup>227</sup> Part of my reading of *Bambi* has been published in Jonathan Devine, “Documenting the Trans\* and Animating the Still in Sébastien Lifshitz’s *Bambi*,” *French Screen Studies* 21, no. 4 (2021): 333–49.

<sup>228</sup> See her biography in Marie-Pierre Pruvot, *Marie Parce Que C’est Joli* (Paris: Bonobo).

centre, fluctuating between off-screen voice-over and on-screen words being spoken directly to camera. As she looks at a space that is presented as being associated with her past self, we hear: “This is where I was born and raised. It’s where I made the crucial decisions in my life, the decisions that enable me to live. I had come to the conclusion that life was impossible, and that I had to find myself.”<sup>229</sup> It is Pruvot’s original home, then, that allowed her to revisit her past – not totally rejecting it but using it to explain how she not only has changed – but is also changing.

My reading of *Bambi* considers Pruvot’s status as a trans\*/queer subject through the lens of animation in both its technical and metaphorical senses, which can make sense of the fluidity on display in trans\* representation. In *Bambi*, there is the technical animation of photographs of Pruvot by Lifshitz’s own hand – owing to his constant camera movement, for instance. Yet additionally, Pruvot’s oral testimony demonstrates a metaphorical consideration of animation – including animation as feeling. Being trans\* is intrinsically about movement and a bringing-to-life process, as exemplified by Lifshitz’s zooming into Pruvot’s childhood photos to exhibit an unstable past, despite an ostensibly linear MTF transition on the surface. Moreover, Pruvot’s spoken words act in ways that show that her experiences cannot be whittled down to visual imagery in isolation. To put it another way, the movement of still images (“technical animation”) plus the documentary voice (“metaphorical animation”) allow Pruvot to openly express her entanglement of past and present – where one is not ever separate from the other. *Bambi* shows that Prosser’s dismissal of still photography from the ‘transsexual’ experience is not always valid, which is why

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<sup>229</sup> English translations are taken from the DVD subtitles. Original quotation: « c’est là que j’ai pris les décisions capitales de ma vie, ces décisions qui m’ont permis de vivre. Parce que j’avais jugé que la vie n’était pas possible et qu’il fallait que je me réalise. »

I am bringing an expanded sense of animation to bear on how Lifshitz uses still photographs. Still photographs – when used in particular ways in cinema – can in fact express the mutability and movement of being trans\*.

*Bambi* arrives at a watershed moment in French queer cinema. Since the 1970s, with the release of *Et il voulut être une femme/And He Wanted to Be a Woman* (Michel Ricaud, 1978), there has been a proliferation of trans\* documentaries, not only in France, but also internationally.<sup>230</sup> However, despite this propagation of this subgenre, scholarship on trans\* representation in documentary cinema is rather sparse, so this article aims to add to this small, but emerging, subfield. Sébastien Lifshitz himself is an important figure as a French director: *Bambi* very much crystalizes the work that his *œuvre* achieves as a whole, in that many of his films – and not just documentaries – are in dialogue with how still, live action photography can both work for and against representing queerness and trans\*ness. Lifshitz has directed several queer and trans\* documentaries, something which is quite rare in the French tradition, and these films have won numerous impressive accolades. These comprise, along with *Bambi*, *La Traversée/The Crossing* (2001), *Les Invisibles/The Invisible Ones* (2012, winner of the César Award for Best Documentary Film), *Les Vies de Thérèse/The Lives of Thérèse* (2016, winner of the Queer Palm at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival), *Adolescentes/Adolescents* (2019) and *Petite Fille/Little Girl* (2020).

Todd Reeser remains one of the few scholars whose work directly treats Lifshitz's films, with his article on the fictional narrative *Wild Side* (2004) privileging the role still photography

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<sup>230</sup> See not only *Les Travestis pleurent aussi*, but also *L'Ordre des mots/Binding Word* (Cynthia and Mélissa Arra, 2007), *Fille ou garçon, mon sexe n'est pas mon genre/Boy or Girl, My Sex is Not My Gender* (Valérie Mitteaux, 2011) and *Trans, c'est mon genre/Trans, It's My Gender* (Eric Guéret, 2016). See further Nick Rees-Roberts, *French Queer Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 67–88.

plays in (re)writing and (re)forming queer/trans\* identity – which, by extension, I read as an act of breathing new life into. One key sequence for Reeser is when Stéphanie, a trans\* sex worker, actively rips up her childhood photos, rejecting her past, wanting to ‘move forward sexually’, past and present converging.<sup>231</sup> I cite this sequence – and agree with Reeser on its significance – since Stéphanie’s bodily actions radically create a new identity: in other words, her bodily gestures towards photographic imagery show explicitly that her past self is dead, perhaps never existing at all. Thus, I do want to emphasize that Lifshitz does not reject the role of photography entirely – meaning that its presence is there to show a past self, even if that past self is completely at odds with that subject’s present-ness.

Moreover, this use of the photographic medium is not something that is only applicable to *Wild Side* or *Bambi*: Lifshitz has also published several volumes of still photographs, such as *The Invisible Ones: Vintage Portraits of Love and Pride* (2014), which contains photographs of gay couples and overlaps with Lifshitz’s similarly titled documentary.<sup>232</sup> Still photography obviously plays a highly important role in how he seeks to document queer subjecthood, even if it may fall short in isolation: the medium of photography is utilized by Lifshitz to bring to light these “invisible ones,” but the release of the accompanying documentary enables such people to add to singular images, by virtue of the spoken word. Indeed, Romain Chareyron emphasizes the importance of oral testimony and photographs in conjunction in both *Les Invisibles* and *Bambi*, highlighting “the confessions of people facing the camera with documents taken from the personal

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<sup>231</sup> Todd Reeser, “Transsexuality and the Disruption of Time in Sébastien Lifshitz’s *Wild Side*,” *Studies in French Cinema* 7, no. 2 (2007): 165.

<sup>232</sup> Sébastien Lifshitz, *The Invisible Ones: Vintage Portraits of Love and Pride* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications).

archives of the speakers, whether in the form of photographs or home videos.”<sup>233</sup> This is not to say that the presence of spoken words would necessarily be a catch-all method to represent reality faithfully and in its totality. Rather, such testimony can help interview subjects express to camera that their experiences are too subtle and nuanced to whittle down via still photography in isolation. One seems to expose part of one’s interior status, in other words. Thus, I read Lifshitz’s work – and his documentaries in particular – as evincing a transitory nature, often referring to a liminal space between stillness and movement. A similar in-between-ness is signaled by one of the only scholars to have published on Lifshitz – Joe Hardwick – who labels narrative film *Les Corps ouverts/Open Bodies* (1998) as “loiterly,” meaning on the ‘cusp’, something that is marginal, momentary, temporary.<sup>234</sup> Hardwick uses the example of the character of Rémi, someone who is not only “on the cusp of adolescence and adulthood,” but is bi, fluctuating between relations with men and women – relations that are not always sexual in nature.<sup>235</sup> And in *Bambi*, Pruvot fluctuates between being trans\* as an MTF, and as a more fluid performer.

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<sup>233</sup> English translation my own. Original quotation: « les confessions des personnes face caméra avec des documents tirés des archives personnelles des intervenants, que cela soit sous la forme de photographies ou de films amateur ». Romain Chareyron, “Sébastien Lifshitz : cinéaste des identités,” *Modern & Contemporary France* 27, no. 2 (2019): 188.

<sup>234</sup> Joe Hardwick, “Bodies That Loiter: Genre, Generation and Subjectivity in *Les Corps ouverts*,” *Australian Journal of French Studies* 41, no. 3 (2004): 75–87.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

#### 4.5 Pruvot, (Im)Mobility and a Sense of Place

The opening sequence of *Bambi* epitomizes the need for Pruvot to provide her own queer/trans\* voice: as she looks out at her hometown, her voice on and off screen is the signifier that enhances what we, the viewer, see. Here, further clues come to light concerning the importance of returning home – at least mentally, but also physically – in discussing, in past tense, how her family life informed her transition: and how, as a child, she experienced feelings that she could not adequately communicate via her own voice, contrary to her experience as an adult. In particular, we cut to Pruvot’s present-day face – in medium shot and the camera completely still – while she continues to talk, now directly to us, the viewers: “I had come to the conclusion that life was impossible, and that I had to find myself at a time when I felt trapped. Imprisoned. It was vital to break out of the shell.”<sup>236</sup> While Pruvot is articulating these words, Lifshitz’s camera is immobile, not cutting until Pruvot begins her next sentence: appropriately, when Pruvot is giving the specifics of her family life, we see a black-and-white photograph of Pruvot’s rather large extended family, accompanied by the statement: “I lived with my elder sister, mother and grandmother, and all my cousins.”<sup>237</sup> Lifshitz cutting to a different photo, Pruvot continues: “I had very little to do with that life [*next photo*] because its reality was completely unbearable for me [*next photo*] I couldn’t breathe freely there.”<sup>238</sup> All these black-and-white photos with multiple family members clearly emphasize their rather large numbers. Such imagery displays tangible,

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<sup>236</sup> « Alors que je me sentais enfermée, emprisonnée. Il fallait que la coquille craque absolument. »

<sup>237</sup> « Je vivais avec ma grande sœur, ma mère, ma grand-mère, mes cousins, mes cousines. »

<sup>238</sup> « Et je ne participais que très peu à cette vie-là [*next photo*] parce que cette réalité-là m’était insupportable [*next photo*] Je n’y respirais pas à mon aise. »

visual evidence of Pruvot's past as a child – yet it is her voice-over that is the vehicle through which Pruvot's trans\*ness is expounded upon, and ultimately clarified in a much more nuanced manner (her sense of feeling trapped is certainly a case in point, a feeling she could not adequately explain as a child). That is not to say that Lifshitz has no role to play in re-forming and re-shaping Pruvot's trans\*ness as an adult. On the contrary, it is clear that Lifshitz's directorial presence is much more visible when displaying these childhood photos – moving to a different one after a few words of oral testimony. Lifshitz's editing here creates a sort of rhythm, choosing not to linger too much on each photograph presented – instead, the lingering is on the close-up of present-day Pruvot when we do see her on screen. And moreover, Pruvot's voice animates, metaphorically, the already mobile photos that Lifshitz edits together. Pruvot's status as a trans\* subject is unlike that of MTF Kim Harlow, who is one of Prosser's main points of reference in *Second Skins*. Prosser's text includes a suite of photographs by Bettina Rheims: Harlow “won't reveal herself as boy” – yet it is this lack of interior visibility that makes her “so real, so passing.”<sup>239</sup> In these images, Harlow is semi-nude, her breasts almost always covered. She is wearing a bra in one, while the photo placed next to it is of her completely topless, but with her elbows placed over her chest, which is also obscured by the shadowy lighting of the photograph. This is almost to say that, even though Harlow is not revealing herself as “a boy,” she is not – at least fully – revealing herself as “a girl” either; this can be summed up by the third photo included on this page, where her appearance is more ambiguous, hair tied back and wearing a suit. And without the context of the

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<sup>239</sup> Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 228.

other two photos, her ‘femaleness’ is almost completely obfuscated. Even via the ‘stationary’ medium of photography, Harlow’s fluid nature is still self-evident.

Pruvot has an advantage in that her spoken words are rich and nuanced, explicating that she not only disassociates with her old self – but also that her previous self could not adequately articulate the nuances and intricacies of being queer and trans\*. To put it another way, it was via bodily actions that Pruvot as a ‘male’ child could express herself, something that Pruvot as female adult can come to grips with via the spoken word. When Lifshitz cuts back to Pruvot’s immobile face again, she describes in great detail the seemingly “feminine” clothes she would wear (which belonged to her sister): an early clue to her trans\*ness. She thus recounts: “I remember that I used to wear my sister’s old dresses, which had been let out, sometimes quite ridiculously [. . .] Because I was slightly obese. I was born obese.”<sup>240</sup> As an adult Pruvot verbally outlines her desire for and appreciation of this dress, Lifshitz mostly lingers on her face, but not without a quick interjection with a childhood photo, this time an extreme close-up of her face as a baby. Accordingly, I read this dichotomy of still photo and moving confession as a sex-gender binary opposition, since it is the role of clothing that is associated with the more fluid nature of gender expression that is not held back by the more rigid confines of static imagery. I am reminded once again of Judith Butler’s theories of gender performativity and the importance of drag and parody in particular in exemplifying the inherent constructed-ness of sex and gender identity. Specifically, she posits that: As much as drag creates a unified picture of ‘woman’ (what its critics often oppose), it also reveals

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<sup>240</sup> « Je me souviens que je portais des vieilles robes de ma sœur, des robes qui avaient été élargies, des fois, de manière ridicule [. . .] Parce que j’étais un peu obèse. Je suis née obèse. »



the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence.<sup>241</sup>

To apply Butler's reasoning here to *Bambi*, we see that Pruvot is fully aware of the now clearly fabricated nature of the pre-/mis-conceptions not only on her family's part, but on her own part as well. While she does not do anything as radical as actively rip up these childhood photos, the discursively created additions to them – coupled with their brevity on screen – show their shortcomings without dismissing them entirely. Nor must one forget that Butler uses a documentary, *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston, 1990), to support her claims in her later work *Bodies that Matter*. Livingston's film deals with the 1980s "ball culture" in New York, referring to a kaleidoscope of queer and trans\* voices from the African American and Latin American communities. Butler is quick to point out that there is an extra level of (re)presentation in this film – as it consists not only of the layer of drag performance, but also a drag performance that is filmed through the eyes of a film camera.<sup>242</sup> What is so striking in Butler's reasoning is her reliance on notions of "realness" and "passing" in *Paris is Burning*, even though she concedes that the documentary form consists merely of a representation of events. It is not the "realness" itself that is on display, but "the effect of realness," meaning "the ability to compel belief, to produce the naturalized effect," something that is reiterated through the stylized repetition of cultural norms.<sup>243</sup> In *Bambi*, thus, it does not just consist of the levels of drag and performance that Lifshitz displays on screen. Pruvot's voice not only refers to drag that we do not see on screen, but also constitutes

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<sup>241</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 137.

<sup>242</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 386.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

a sort of “verbal drag,” meaning that it creates a further layer of representation by virtue of the spoken word, complicating the idea that she was just a ‘male’ child. Pruvot’s testimony then refers to how she, as a child, sees herself in the mirror for the first time, her emerging queerness and trans\*ness opening the door for child Pruvot to desire herself, albeit only briefly:

When I looked at myself in the mirrored closet that was passed down to me a few years later [. . .] Staring at my reflection, I thought I looked so pretty. I gave myself a kiss, a quick kiss, on the mirror, with lots of love. Narcissism, even then.<sup>244</sup>

The subject of Pruvot’s words to camera then moves from clothing and self-desire to her own words developing as a child: thus, her past discourse informs her present discourse, the latter rewriting and overwriting the former. While Lifshitz shows a photo of Pruvot’s mother holding her as a baby/toddler, Pruvot’s voice-over continues:

I remember my mother taking me out onto the front steps, sitting me down on her lap, and saying “Tell me your name. [*cut back to present-day Pruvot*] What is your name?” It wouldn’t come out until she kept on so much I cried. “I won’t stop until you say you love me and you prove you love me. Tell me your name.” I was yelling, “Mom, please, no!” But I had to give in, I’d lost another battle. I said, “My name is Jean-Pierre”. And I cried. My sister, who was watching, said, “Mom, why is Jean-Pierre crying?”<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> « Je suis allée me regarder dans l’armoire à glace qui m’est échue quelques années plus tard. Et [*voice trails off*] je me suis regardée, et je me suis trouvée très jolie. Je me suis donné un baiser, furtif, sur la glace, avec beaucoup d’amour et de narcissisme, déjà. »

<sup>245</sup> « Je me souviens que ma mère m’a menée sur le devant de la maison, elle m’a prise sur ses genoux, et elle m’a dit : ‘Dis-moi ton prénom.’ [*cut back to present-day Pruvot*] ‘Comment tu t’appelles ? Ça voulait pas sortir, jusqu’à ce qu’elle me fasse pleurer.’ ‘Je te lâcherai pas si tu me dis pas que tu m’aimes.’ J’ai crié : ‘Maman, je t’en supplie !’ Il

As an adult, Pruvot's testimony clarifies in a more nuanced manner ideas that were originally muddled as a child, stating outright, "I loathed that name. I didn't want to be that name."<sup>246</sup> Retroactively, and using the past tense in present-day testimony, adult Pruvot is able to clarify and shed more light on child Pruvot. While Pruvot as a child was ostensibly able to produce language ("My name is Jean-Pierre"), it is the present Pruvot who more lucidly gives life and more meaning to her confused childhood thoughts that she was not able to adequately express with her own voice.

Thus far, I have focused primarily on "metaphorical animation" in *Bambi*, but "technical animation" is certainly on display throughout Lifshitz's film: we see that in the above sequences when Lifshitz rapidly punctuates Pruvot's voice-over with carefully chosen photographs following certain sentences of dialogue. The visual comes to life before our eyes – and, moreover, we see the visible markers of the director's hand, a visibly re-assembled photographic archive. Pruvot's voice is one very important factor in representing her queerness and trans\*ness – but it is not the only factor. The technical animation on the part of Lifshitz – in distinct contrast with the directors' misrepresentation in *The Brandon Teena Story* – enables Pruvot to display her visibility and invisibility simultaneously, exemplifying the inherent contradictory nature of being trans\*: in a word, one may choose to be visible or remain hidden, depending on one's context. This is particularly evident in the final sequence of *Bambi*, which details her post-transition career, not only on stage, but as a teacher. As present-day Pruvot tells us, the latter profession actually enabled her to hide her trans\* status, but, at the same time, the words chosen by Pruvot are more about obscuring her career in the Carrousel (trans nightclub), not just her status as an MTF. Lifshitz

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a fallu céder et j'ai perdu une bataille de plus. J'ai dit : 'Je m'appelle Jean-Pierre.' J'ai pleuré. Et ma sœur, qui guettait : 'Qu'est-ce qu'il a à pleurer ?' »

<sup>246</sup> « J'avais la haine de ce prénom. Je voulais pas être ce prénom. »

commences this sequence with a long shot of a school corridor in shadow, Pruvot walking towards the still camera, her voice-over relating: “High school diploma in hand, I registered at the Sorbonne, passed my teaching certificate, and joined the public school system.”<sup>247</sup> As we cut to an outdoor shot, Pruvot’s bodiless voice specifies that she was posted in “a suburb of Cherbourg, a small town called Querqueville. And I lived in Oteille, an urban renewal project.”<sup>248</sup> As we can see from Pruvot’s life, she utilizes a rural locale to become invisible – becoming, in her words, “Madame Tout-le-monde,” a “Jane Doe.” In this rural and educational setting, Pruvot is able to “pass” in a sense – but one should equally and crucially point out that not all trans\* folk can or are willing to do so, particularly those who are nonbinary, not conforming at all to an FTM or MTF transition in any sense.<sup>249</sup>

One technique that Lifshitz employs here is the quotation of similar-looking photographs (from this period of Pruvot’s career), organized to resemble a series of jump cuts. This suite of images depicts Pruvot as a teacher, exemplifying a loiterly inbetween-ness liminally separating stillness and movement: the covering-up in *Bambi* stems from Pruvot’s self-censorship, a secret now revealed to viewers of Lifshitz’s film. In particular, this series of similar-but-different photographs in *Bambi* occurs when Pruvot’s voice-over specifies the steps she had to take to become this “Madame Tout-le-monde.” The first still photograph, in color, shows Pruvot sitting on her classroom desk and in front of her blackboard, her spoken words indicating: “So I grew my

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<sup>247</sup> « Dès que j’ai mon bac en poche, je m’inscris à la Sorbonne. Je passe le CAPES pratique. Et me voilà salariée de l’Éducation nationale. »

<sup>248</sup> « dans la banlieue de Cherbourg, dans un petit patelin, à Querqueville. Et j’habite en haut, dans une ZUP. »

<sup>249</sup> See *I Am They – A Non Binary Love Story* (Fox Fisher, 2018).

hair a little longer and wore headbands.”<sup>250</sup> Each time Lifshitz cuts to a new photo, it is of the same blackboard, but Pruvot’s position in front of it changes, whether on left, right or center. Furthermore, the photo changes each time Pruvot says a new phrase or sentence. More specifically:

I didn’t want anything to give me away [next photo] I didn’t want anyone tripping me up [next photo] I wanted to be a teacher and I was scared to death [next photo] that something would get in my way. Terrified.<sup>251</sup>

However, the now very familiar sight of present-day Pruvot’s face is not far away, as we cut back to her while she continues her monologue:

But one thing that gave me great protection was that nobody, absolutely nobody, would have ever thought I might leave Le Carrousel to go into teaching. It defied the imagination and gave me wonderful protection.<sup>252</sup>

Thus, living – and animated – photographic imagery and the spoken word work together in conjunction to give Pruvot the final word, and it is this older version of her that is the one who has the authority and clarity to retroactively elucidate and lay bare her hidden personal history as a trans\* subject. This way of mobilizing Pruvot’s archive is certainly evocative of a technical animation of different-but-related photographs. Furthermore, Lifshitz’s animation mirrors somewhat that which is seen in Eadweard Muybridge’s *The Horse in Motion* (1878). Indeed,

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<sup>250</sup> « Alors j’ai laissé davantage pousser mes cheveux et j’ai mis des bandeaux. »

<sup>251</sup> « Je ne veux pas que quelque chose me trahisse [next photo] Je veux pas avoir de bâtons dans les roues [next photo] Je veux aller enseigner et je suis morte [next photo] de peur que quelque chose vienne me contrarier. Très peur. »

<sup>252</sup> « Mais il y avait aussi quelque chose qui me protégeait. C’est que personne, mais alors personne, n’aurait imaginé qu’on pouvait sortir du Carrousel et entrer dans l’Éducation nationale. C’était inimaginable, pour les gens. C’était pour moi une protection formidable. »

Esther Leslie's analysis of Muybridge helpfully points out how animation "is movement impelled not internally, by the mover, but through some sort of external force: the hand spinning the wheel, the lantern slides manipulated by an operator, the frames rushed at the right speed through the projector."<sup>253</sup> Stasis becomes movement, in other words, a most literal process of bringing to life an image. Earlier in my section on metaphorical animation, too, I cite Halberstam's idea of stop-motion laying bare notions of control and entrapment in queer narratives – an idea which is equally applicable to the technical animation of cinematic frames. Lifshitz's use of Pruvot's photographs is similar in style to Halberstam's conception of stop-motion, in that it explicitly reveals the marks of the director:

As the name suggests, stop-motion depends not on continuous action but on the relation between stillness and motion, cuts and takes, action and passivity. Unlike classical cinema, in which the action attempts to appear seamless and suture consists of the erasure of all marks of editing and human presence, stop-motion animation is uncanny precisely because it depends on the manipulation of figures in front of the camera by those behind it.<sup>254</sup>

Lifshitz's visible hand in *Bambi* allows Pruvot to be simultaneously visible and invisible, a sort of paradoxical movement between these two statuses. To put it another way, Lifshitz's re-contextualization of these photographs lucidly demonstrates that Pruvot's trans\*ness cannot be whittled down to one singular experience: she can be seen as an FTM, a performer, a teacher and so on, where these cannot be entirely separated from each other.

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<sup>253</sup> Esther Leslie, "Loops and Joins: Muybridge and the Optics of Animation," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 11, no. 3 (2013): 28.

<sup>254</sup> Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 178.

Pruvot's "loiterly-ness" in this sequence in particular bears striking resemblance to the life of trans\* activist and scholar Jamison Green, an FTM who is one of the primary interview subjects in the American documentary *Trans* (Chris Arnold, 2012), as well as a contributor to the *Transgender Studies Reader*, the first scholarly compendium of its kind.<sup>255</sup> In the film, Green speaks at length about his childhood – an account replete with childhood photographs at different stages – while his present-day face tells us, directly to the camera, how much he has changed. In his written work, Green juxtaposes his visibility as a motivational speaker against the almost total invisibility he experiences "on the street," listing several well-known cities such as London, Paris and Rome, where, at least from his point of view, he does not appear as "transsexual": he is "just another man, invisible, no one special."<sup>256</sup> These Greens are different from the one(s) who participate in public lectures: they have not 'come out', appearing *prima facie* as cisgender. Green seems to be in favor of the latter option, which enables one to be a "successful" "transsexual."<sup>257</sup> This vocabulary of "success" is compelling in light of Halberstam's valorization of failure, which he labels as something "queers do and have always done exceptionally well."<sup>258</sup> While falling under the umbrella of queerness, a trans\* person could appear as (hetero)normative if they so desired.

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<sup>255</sup> Jamison Green, "Look! No, Don't! The Visibility Dilemma for Transsexual Men," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 499–508.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 501.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 3.

## 4.6 Conclusion

If we think back to Annamarie Jagose's definition of queerness – that is, to mismatch sex, gender, and desire – signaled in the introduction to this chapter, it is tempting to label both *Sagat* and *Bambi* as exemplifying such a fissure between what the originary image (pornographic film clip, childhood photo). While such a reading of both documentaries has merit, I go slightly further by proposing that these alternate and often contradictory representations in fact lay bare the inherent lack in queer representation to be reduced to normative forms of representation – such as still photography. To put it another way, with respect to the pornographic and the trans\*, one could equally propose that the queer approach in both documentaries proposes a different way of looking at and understanding lived queer/trans\* experience. There are simultaneous contradictions on display, different – but no less “true” – versions of “reality.”

To recall Bill Nichols's *Representing Reality*, too, earlier on his book he foregrounds the expectation on the part of viewers that photographic evidence displayed “has undergone little or no modification in order to be recorded on film and magnetic tape.”<sup>259</sup> However, as I have demonstrated in this chapter, untampered photographic evidence, even of unsimulated sex for instance, is nevertheless very precarious, given the new life naturally provided to archival footage when placed within a new context. Indeed, Dudley Andrew articulates that when photographs appear in documentaries, their now mobile existence – out of their original context – becomes more complicated. “While the photographic document stands fixed,” he elucidates, “the filmed documentary presents its objects quivering in their own time, and suspended within a field of

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<sup>259</sup> Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 27.



multiple determinations; as the film unrolls, an object's integrity or identity can come into question."<sup>260</sup> However, for Andrew, it is important to note as well that animation is more "pure" than live action, not "held back" by the latter's link to space and time.<sup>261</sup> And to be clear: Andrew's conceptualization of "animation" is non-photographic imagery, such as hand-drawn, stop-motion, or computer-generated imagery. Similarly, in *Documentary: The Margins of Reality*, Paul Ward does not discount entirely the role of live action and still photography in the documentary form – almost reminiscent of Lifshitz's decision to always keep it there in *Bambi* – but does highlight the greater potentiality provided by nonphotographic representation for portraying one's interior thought process – likewise too nuanced and abstract, seemingly "out of reach of live action."<sup>262</sup> Live action still has merit, but it is not the only – or indeed best – form of documentary representation.

To apply this notion of "purity" to queer/trans\* portrayals in documentary cinema, we see that, time again, representational methods such as still photography may have merit, but often falls short in its capacity to be attuned to the contradictions and nuances of queer lives. A gap thus needs to be filled – and animation as feeling, feeling that is articulated via the spoken word. Words themselves may not suffice, but one can use them to simply say that one is feeling things that are unrepresentable: they are there as a vehicle to provide an avenue for interview subjects such as Pruvot to openly express her feelings to camera. Often, queer/trans\* lives silenced and rewritten by others, returning to Halberstam's rightful reading of *The Brandon Teena Story*, which I too see

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<sup>260</sup> Dudley Andrew, *What Cinema Is! Bazin's Quest and its Charge* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2010), 42.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 30. See also Lev Manovich, "What is Digital Cinema?," in *Visual Cultures Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 1998), 410. Emphasis supplied.

<sup>262</sup> Paul Ward, *Documentary: The Margins of Reality* (London: Wallflower, 2005), 91.

as more of a haphazard assortment of archival footage and interviews, as opposed to the more intimate testimonies filmed in a more unedited and uninterrupted manner in *Sagat* and *Bambi*. Since it Sagat and Pruvot who are rewriting themselves, the new life given to the archival footage utilized veers into much more positive territory. We never saw or learned what “moved” Teena – and, by extension, we were never moved ourselves as viewers. Both *Sagat* and *Bambi*, then, are radical in their portrayal of queerness, even if their style of documentary representation (interview plus photo) may at times appear as rather normative. As such, one should look forward to even more radical in the future, as the sub-genres of the pornographic and trans\* documentaries continue to take shape.

## 5.0 A Living Archive in *La Rage du Démon*: Animating the French Horror Mockumentary

As we have seen with the last chapter, one of the takeaways was Judith Butler's idea of drag and parody laying bare the fabricated quality of all sex and gender representation: even the seemingly distinct biological male and female "sex" distinction is at the mercy of one's own spoken discourse, whereby words are what constructs one's identity. Neither François Sagat's nor Marie-Pierre Pruvot's identities are stable, but it is this very contradictory nature that helps us to come closer to understanding the greater contradictions and unrepresentability of certain forms of experience. It is with this shared and expansive notion of the truth in mind that I turn to a subgenre of documentary, the mockumentary: where pre-existing, found footage is given a new life, being placed into a new context, often completely at odds with its original intentionality. An extreme example in the French tradition is certainly the satirical *Opération Lune/Dark Side of the Moon* (William Karel, 2002), linking Stanley Kubrick's production of the *2001: A Space Odyssey* as "evidence" of the 1969 moon landing being faked: not only clips of Kubrick's film forms part of Karel's false archive, but also sound bites from President Richard Nixon (for example) to give the illusion that this mission was staged – that this was what "really" happened.<sup>263</sup> And moreover, the rise of more convincing digital technology has paved the way for mockumentaries such as *Death of a President* (Gabriel Range, 2006), a potential not-yet-passed or never-passed future: an assassination of President George W. Bush. In these two examples, the directors' presence is so clear and self-evident, that it draws attention to how archival footage can be so easily manipulated

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<sup>263</sup> See further Henry M. Taylor, "More Than a Hoax: William Karel's Critical Mockumentary *Dark Side of the Moon*," *Post Script – Essays in Film and the Humanities* 26, no. 3 (2007): 88–101.

and re-written in such a convincing way – it looks real, even though knowledge of current events and history tells us otherwise.

In the horror mockumentary – often called the “found footage film” in popular terminology – this reworking of pre-existing footage to create a false archive, however, becomes more complicated, as their goal is often to frighten audiences, tricking spectators into believing that what is shown on screen actually happened: while Karel’s obvious satire on the moon landing could be potentially misinterpreted by conspiracy theorists, found footage mockumentaries are much more overt and subtle about wanting to be thought of as real. One of the most influential examples is 1999’s *The Blair Witch Project*, directed by Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, which details the expedition of three students (Heather, Mike, and Josh) in the Maryland woods to find the titular monster. The characters in the film and the actors are essentially the same people – their names are the same: and yet this porosity of fiction and fact is further obfuscated given the life outside the diegesis of the film itself. Numerous texts published and released around its release contributed to spectators being tricked into thinking the mockumentary was in fact genuine. As Craig Hight details, contributing texts to this trickery included (among others), an initial website launched in June 1998 with the actors’ fake biographies as well as “historical” events detailing the titular witch’s existence; a revamped website in time for April Fool’s Day 1999; the Internet Movie Database listing the actors as “dead”; a television mockumentary special entitled *Curse of the Blair Witch* two days before the film’s theatrical release; and “missing” posters for the actors, who, to reiterate, had the same names as their characters.<sup>264</sup> In the words of co-director Daniel Myrick,

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<sup>264</sup> Craig Hight, *Television Mockumentary: Reflexivity, Satire and a Call to Play* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), 59–60.

“We tried to create a fake legend, complete with multiple points of view, sceptics and unexplained mysteries. Nothing about the legend could be provable, and everything had to seem like it could have a logical explanation (which the reader would be led away from as quickly as possible.)”<sup>265</sup> Yet Hight is also quick to point out that Heather, Mike, and Josh were, themselves, “deliberately ignorant” of what exactly was going on – of what the producers had planned for them: as such, there was much improvisation.<sup>266</sup> This confusion on the part of the actors thus added another layer of obfuscation and confusion – which was clearly evident in not only the DVD making-of documentary, but also in its audio commentaries.<sup>267</sup>

### **5.1 Fabien Delage and the French Horror Mockumentary**

This chapter specifically considers French horror mockumentary director Fabien Delage. Delage’s early work comprised directing and starring in television series, called *Dead Crossroads* (2012-present), in which Delage tries to locate and inhabit the most haunted houses in France. This genre of the ghost-hunting “documentary” has undergone much proliferation in English-speaking contexts, and somewhat in France – and has also been the subject of much ridicule, given the seeming flimsiness of the evidence on display, coupled with the highly unconvincing acting in the re-enactments. In short, such paranormal films and programs often veer into parody, often being

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 57.

associated more with reality television than the documentary genre.<sup>268</sup> A case in point we see is in the satirical Australian television series *The Chaser's War on Everything* (2006-2009) whose segment "What You Missed on Cable" targets the television series *Dead Famous*, comparing the exaggerated and unrealistic bodily movement – meaning to represent ghostly possession by Frank Sinatra – to the puppetry in *Thunderbirds* (1965-1966).<sup>269</sup> Delage's *Dead Crossroads* certainly shares similarities – in both style and delivery – to these anglophone films and television shows, which is further compelling for the fact that one of his feature-length found footage mockumentaries *Cold Ground* (2017) shares very much in common with *Blair Witch*, both aesthetically and in terms of plot. More specifically, in *Cold Ground*, two journalists, Melissa (played by Gala Besson) and David (Fabrice Pierre) venture to the French-Swiss border to investigate a similarly vague and invisible monster, whose presence is – too – primarily signaled by shaky cam and off-camera screams. Like Heather in *Blair Witch*, Melissa acts as a "final girl" and the sole survivor: yet the ending is much more explicitly violent than that of *Blair Witch*, as Melissa's final act is to amputate her boyfriend's foot, since he has been infected by the invisible monster. In addition, like other films directed by Delage, *Cold Ground* is not only transnational in a geographic sense (France-Switzerland), but also in terms of language: David only speaks French,

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<sup>268</sup> For French examples, see *Exorcismes/Exorcisms* (Grégoire Lamarche, 2020), *TCI: Transcommunication instrumentale/TCI: Instrumental Transcommunication* (Amélie Amilhau, 2019), *Le monde des esprits/The World of Spirits* (Collective, 2013), *Aux Frontières de la Mort/On the Boundaries of Death* (Denise Gilliland, 2002). For English-language examples, see the series *Ghost Adventures* (Zak Bagans, 2008-present), *Dead Famous: Ghostly Encounters* (Bibi Lynch, 2004-2006), as well as the feature-length films *Mad House: A Paranormal Documentary* (JP Doyal, 2019) and *Demon House* (Zak Bagans, 2018).

<sup>269</sup> *The Chaser's War on Everything*, season 2, episode 23 (2007).

while one other investigator they meet up with, Günter (Philip Schurer), is American and can only speak English. Melissa speaks both fluently, which becomes necessary in that she the vehicle through which most of the plot and scares are transmitted to these two other characters. A similar style of *Blair Witch*-like found footage would return in mockumentary collective, *3:15 am* (2018) in which Delage starred – as well as directed – certain segments.

The primary focal point of this chapter, though, is mockumentary *La Rage du Démon/Fury of the Demon* (2016), which similarly has interview subjects from French and English-speaking contexts: thus, we see that the brand of French horror that Delage exhibits does not exist in isolation and has much in common with that firmly established in Anglophone cinema. Moreover, Delage's film details the viewing of a supposedly lost and cursed 1897 short film – also called *La Rage du Démon* – attributed to French illusionist and special effects pioneer Georges Méliès, a figure instrumental in the birth of cinema: famous examples of his *œuvre* include *Le Voyage dans la Lune/A Trip to the Moon* (1902) and *Voyage à travers l'impossible/The Impossible Voyage* (1904). On both its nineteenth-century release and its screening at the Musée Grévin in 2012 – the latter being the primary focal point of Delage's mockumentary – viewers are said to have been insane and possessed by the cursed film, an actual and literal demonic object. I do want to point out, too, that Musée Grévin is a well-known and oft-visited tourist destination in Montmartre, a very international space with a wide variety of wax figures from all walks of life: when I visited there in June 2019 as part of my research trip, the display included Queen Elizabeth II, Michael Jackson, and Jean Reno, among many others. It comprises somewhat lifelike-but-not-too-much representations of life-size bodies of very famous people: in brief, while definitely recognizable, they are stylized and are not always evincing indexical photographic realism. In addition, it is clear that the Musée Grévin is very much emulating the style of wax museums in the United States and

elsewhere, such as the Hollywood Wax Museum on Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles. Indeed, Delage's *Démon* commences with voice-over narration from well-known French voice actor and dubbing artist Benoît Allemane, overlaying on-the-street of people walking in the street in Paris, signified by images of Notre Dame, among others. As Allemane's bodiless voice tells us, "on 9 July 2012, in the 9<sup>th</sup> district of Paris, the iconic Grévin Wax Museum held a private screening of an extremely rare film organized by American collector Edgar Aaron Wallace."<sup>270</sup> We then cut to shots of the real museum itself from the outside, then moving to its interior, and the theater space inside specifically, while Allemane details that "many celebrity guests attended this premiere even though Wallace had not revealed the name of the film. Yet, he argued he had found a legendary and precious silent piece, coveted by many."<sup>271</sup> When the narrator says "coveted by many," the camera then moves to wax figure of Georges Méliès (then fade to black), a still figure obviously, the movement stemming from Delage's own camera not from the art object (i.e. the wax figure) itself. Since I visited these spaces myself in 2019, I can attest that Delage is showing the actual museum itself – and it is a real place accurately portrayed on screen: it is actual – as in, not fake – footage.

As Delage's film continues, we see that his *Démon* very much privileges the first-person testimony of a selection of those viewers of the Méliès *Démon*. This style of the talking-head interview is primarily there to provide of multi-sided testimony for how the exact screening played

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<sup>270</sup> « Le 9 janvier 2012, dans le neuvième arrondissement de Paris, le célèbre Musée Grévin accueille la projection privée d'un film rare organisée par le collectionneur américain Edgar Allan Wallace. » English translation taken from the DVD subtitles. For the sake of consistency, spelling has from changed from British to American.

<sup>271</sup> « De nombreux invités prestigieux sont présents pour découvrir ce film inédit dont Wallace n'a pas dit le titre. Il assure toutefois qu'il a trouvé une œuvre muette légendaire extrêmement prestigieuse et convoitée. »



out. The first such speaker is “Sylvain Doreville” described via the written intertitles (which are all in English) as “Journalist, Old Newspapers Specialist,” who articulates that “Edgar Wallace, an American rare film collector, held a private screening at the Grévin Museum. He invited hundreds of cinema celebrities, critics, specialists, cinema historians.”<sup>272</sup> This “Edgar Wallace” – sometimes referred to as “Edgar Allan Wallace,” a possible reference to Edgar Allan Poe” – likely refers to the English writer, who died in 1932, a clue to Delage’s *Démon* being a mockumentary. Moreover, while Doreville is talking about Wallace, we see photographs of Wallace inserted into them – similar to how Forrest Gump is placed alongside many historical figures in Robert Zemeckis’s 1994 film – in images with Quentin Tarantino, Steven Spielberg, and Leonardo DiCaprio. The trickery here is very subtle, since the photographic manipulation is not very obvious, due to the fact that is done in highly convincing manner. It would be the fact that Wallace is long dead that would be the clue to the fabrication of archival footage. In addition, these are still photographs, and do not call attention to the trickery like the sometimes out of sync lip movements of Lyndon B. Johnson in *Forrest Gump*, showing a clear demonstration of over-dubbing. In Delage’s *Démon*, it is the outside knowledge that highlights the fabrication.

What else is striking in these oral testimonies is how vague they are – with some stating that such ambiguity stems from the fact that the viewers themselves were not told anything about what they were getting themselves into. “At the time,” Doreville explains, “nobody knew what it was about. We’d heard it was a very rare 19<sup>th</sup>-century film no-one had ever seen in the 21<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> « Edgar Wallace, qui est un collectionneur américain de films rares, privatise une de salles du Musée Grévin pour une projection. Il va y inviter des personnalités du septième art : des critiques, des spécialistes, des historiens du cinéma. »

century.”<sup>273</sup> Furthermore, “Pierre Levasseur” described as a “Collections Manager” at the *Cinémathèque* in Paris (one of the most comprehensive film archives in the world) corroborates and adds to Doreville’s claim, specifying that “Wallace refused to reveal the title. To lure the guests into attending, he said it was an extremely rare piece of work absent from the museum collection.”<sup>274</sup> Similarly, Jean-Jacques Bernard, who was an actual, genuine journalist and not just an actor, and who died in 2015, expresses the excitement of adding a newly unearthed film to an archive: “as far as I know, no film library owns a copy of this work.”<sup>275</sup> Yet it is “Christophe Lemaire: Journalist, Brazil, Rock & Folk, Filmo TV” who is more specific about the lack of clarity in his description of the email invitation he received. “The odd part,” he states, “was that it just read ‘film’ [*cut to screenshot of seemingly fabricated, but genuine-looking email*] no extra information, we knew nothing about it.” [*zooming into email slowly, animating it*] It just read ‘screening,’ the time and place. No one seemed to be in charge of P.R. and no phone number.”<sup>276</sup> We see on screen this email, which is presumably doctored but also has the appearance of a genuine email. While what Lemaire says and the written words in the email match (“Edgar A. Wallace is

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<sup>273</sup> « Personne ne sait de quoi il s’agit. On sait à peu près qu’il s’agit d’un film très rare du dix-neuvième siècle que personne n’a encore visionné. »

<sup>274</sup> « Wallace n’a jamais révélé le titre du film. Il a simplement appâté ses invités en évoquant une œuvre très rare qui apparemment ne faisait partie de la collection. »

<sup>275</sup> « [...] dont on a connaissance aucune cinémathèque possède la moindre trace, la moindre copie. »

<sup>276</sup> « Et ce qui est bizarre est qu’il avait marqué un film ... et on sait rien sur le truc et il est marqué ‘projection’, le jour et ... et même pas d’attaché de presse, même pas appelé. »

pleased to invite you to the screening of a rare 115-year-old film”),<sup>277</sup> the email is Thursday December 28, 2011: but a cursory look online reveals that, in 2011, December 28 fell on a Wednesday. Again, the fakery is subtle, and one needs to undertake further outside research to discern what exactly is real.

In other words, what it actually consists of is the oral testimony, which is seemingly made up – and possibly well-rehearsed so that it sounds honest and natural. And what they describe is becoming possessed, doing things out of their control by virtue of watching the film – they become “moved” in other words. In the words of actor Vincent Thépaut (“Former Employee in the Grévin Museum”) who shares the same name as his seeming “character” in the film: “I was outside with the ushers when I started hearing some noise coming from the inside [...] I opened the door, but someone slammed it in my face. People were rushing out of the film screaming.”<sup>278</sup> Additionally, “Bénédicte Royer” who is labelled just as “Film Theorist, Spectator of the 2012 Screening” is clearly very emotional and disturbing during her testimony, on the verge of tears (which is accentuated by the overbearing and repetitive sinister orchestral score present through all these testimonies). Royer relates that it was “utter chaos. I never thought I could act that way. It was really traumatic,” later stating that “the whole crowd suddenly turned into a horde of zombies.”<sup>279</sup> Thépaut, too, tells us that: “I was hypnotized by the film. It was madness all around. I felt as if

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<sup>277</sup> « Edgar A. Wallace a le plaisir de vous inviter à la projection d'un film rare vieux de 115 ans. » English translation my own.

<sup>278</sup> « J'étais dehors avec les ouvreurs et c'est quand j'ai commencé à entendre le bruit dans la salle [...] J'ai poussé la porte et toute de suite on m'a claqué, on m'a claqué la gueule, ces gens qui sortent en hurlant. »

<sup>279</sup> « C'était le chaos. Jamais je ne me suis crue capable de me comporter comme ça. C'est vraiment une expérience traumatisante [...] c'est transformé en espace de horde de zombies. »

images were pervading me.”<sup>280</sup> Christophe Lemaire, looking as if he is struggling to remember what happened, says that “a devil appeared on the screen.”<sup>281</sup> Thus far in Delage’s *Démon*, then, we have not seen any demons, and even those descriptions of them are very vague and nebulous: rather, we have heard seemingly fabricated, second-hand testimony that details the *after-effects* of the demonic activity at hand.

Following these brief testimonies, Allemane’s voiceover narration returns, and we also see again imagery from the interior of the Musée Grévin – and specifically flickering lights on the roof of the Grévin theatre. In other words, it consists of an impressive light display, different colors changing rapidly. “When the police arrived on the scene, chaos was raging inside,” relates Allemane.<sup>282</sup> Delage then cuts to close-ups of stationary wax figures, mouths gaping open in an exaggerated fashion which gives the impression that these people are screaming – and these wax statues are not of famous people, such as an unidentified bearded man, with Delage’s camera pans across, revealing one, frilly Elizabethan ruff, head tilted back. Furthermore, as Allemane says that “much of the audience was wounded, and most were in shock”<sup>283</sup> Delage cuts to one – possibly also Elizabethan, but it is unclear – his mouth open the widest and most exaggerated of them all, laying upside down, looking like he is on the brink of death. “Nobody knew what happened,” finishes the voiceover.<sup>284</sup> Thus, statues come to life by means of Delage’s direction, coupled with

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<sup>280</sup> « Je me suis senti ... près paralysé par ce film. Malgré toute la panique [...] Je me sentais complètement comme si ces images s’imprègnent sur moi. »

<sup>281</sup> « je vois sur l’écran un diable. »

<sup>282</sup> « Lorsque la police arrive sur les lieux, ils constatent que le chaos est incompréhensible dans la salle. »

<sup>283</sup> « De nombreux spectateurs sont blessés, la plupart sont en état de choc. »

<sup>284</sup> « Personne ne comprend ce qui s’est passé. »

Allemane's spoken words. More specifically, there is here a wax "re-enactment," that is, non-indexical footage from the past being used as placeholders to re-tell a completely different event that did not take place. Moreover, the fictional interviewees are very vague on the details of the 2012 screening, as they say that they have little memory of the events at hand. What is more, this sequence consists of a re-enactment of an event that did not really happen at all – notwithstanding the fact that the Musée Grévin is an established real space, and that these wax figures are presumably part of the museum's collection. To reiterate, such wax statues in the Musée Grévin are mere representations of existing people (for the most part, seemingly): and while some are highly recognizable and life-size, they are nevertheless chiefly stylized. There is also a liminal space between stillness and movement like in Sébastien Lifshitz's *Bambi* in my previous chapter when a suite of still photographs of Marie-Pierre Pruvot are placed next to each other akin to a series of jump cuts. But, even there, Pruvot's obscuring via clothing and the rural location of her school, there is an original queer and trans\* – "true" – Pruvot hiding behind this camouflage. Delage's *Démon* is even further far removed than that representing Pruvot, owing to the evidence comprising non-indexical wax statues, some having very little to do with actors playing the fictionalized viewers. In brief, it is a re-enactment *of a re-enactment*.

## 5.2 Horror Mock-Doc-umentary Spectatorship

As we can see from Delage placing spoken testimonies front and center, horror and mock-/docu-mentary hinges so much upon on spectatorship, both in- and outside the frame – such as those who viewed Méliès' *Démon* and those who viewed Delage's retold *Démon*. Yet, in doing so, the territory between fact and fiction even more slippery in light of an example even earlier

than *Blair Witch*, *Cannibal Holocaust* (Ruggero Deodato, 1980). Deodato's film traces a lost documentary crew in the Amazon rainforest: and its depiction of graphic violence – including several actual, on-screen animal deaths – has elicited much controversy since its release.<sup>285</sup> Deodato was initially thought to have actually killed cast members: while this was proven to be untrue, the real on-screen deaths of animals remained an actuality.<sup>286</sup> As a result, *Cannibal Holocaust* “has become enshrouded in myth in almost every respect.”<sup>287</sup> However, the extreme violence in *Cannibal Holocaust* places it – equally – alongside another horror documentary sub-genre, what Mikita Brottman labels as the “new mondo” film, such as the real and actual violence in films such as *Faces of Death* (Conan LeCilaire, 1978) and *Des Morts/Of the Dead* (Jean-Pol Ferbus, Dominique Garny and Thierry Zéno, 1981), which include war footage and police camera recordings.<sup>288</sup> Brottman specifies that while special effects in mainstream horror films can represent death in a highly graphic and lifelike fashion, they “can never reveal the violation of the physical body” of an actual recorded death.<sup>289</sup> In his aptly titled chapter “Horror Documentary,” Bruce Kavin adopts a similar approach, linking horror directly to the audience perception and

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<sup>285</sup> See, for example, Ed Morgan, “Commentary: *Cannibal Holocaust*: Digesting and Re-Digesting Law and Film,” *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal* 16, no. 555 (2007): 555–70.

<sup>286</sup> See Caetlin Benson-Allott, *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 175.

<sup>287</sup> Julian Petley, “*Cannibal Holocaust* and the Pornography of Death,” in *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to ‘Reality’ TV and Beyond*, ed. Geoff King (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2005), 175.

<sup>288</sup> Mikita Brottman, “Mondo Horror: Carnivalizing the Taboo,” in *The Horror Film*, ed. Stephen Prince (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 167.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

expectations, since we have a “grateful awareness” of artificiality in horror fiction.<sup>290</sup> Kawin distinguishes this from the real-life violence not only in *Cannibal Holocaust*, but also *Black Sun 731* (T. F. Mou, 1988), which details the Japanese Army’s biological weapon experimentation in the Second World War: “real horror,” as he calls it, severs spectators’ suspension of disbelief, “yanking us out of the illusion,” as we are repelled and challenged on moral grounds.<sup>291</sup>

Accordingly, I find Brottman’s piece particularly compelling for the fact that it ostensibly describes an almost fetishistic desire to capture reality on tape, even if that reality is – paradoxically – totally abhorrent, or, on the contrary, completely unbelievable. In my previous chapter, I mobilize Nichols’s co-authored chapter in *Representing Reality* on how, with sexual pornography, the goal is to capture raw, unsimulated sexual activity on tape: as such, this form of pornographic imagery and representation adopts an ethnographic character, where an outside Other looks upon such a seemingly “realistic” image. In the horror mock-/docu-mentary, “pornography as violence” comes into full display: one seems to desire violation and horror, even though it is simultaneously repugnant to us. In making this claim, I look at the animation as “feeling” concept extrapolated from Sianne Ngai’s *Ugly Feelings*, that is, the “animatedness” of “being moved” such as the act of reading stirring slave narratives with “an afflicted spirit.”<sup>292</sup> This dissertation, then, extends such a conception of animation from slaves to queerness – and now to horror. Both *Blair Witch* and *Cannibal Holocaust* have intrinsic links to the spectator, new life stemming from how potential

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<sup>290</sup> Bruce F. Kawin, *Horror and the Horror Film* (London: Anthem Press, 2012), 205.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid. Julian Hanich evokes similar rhetoric in *Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thrillers: The Aesthetic Paradox of Pleasurable Fear* (London: Routledge, 2010), 93, articulating that harmed animals in films by Andrei Tarkovsky, Jean Renoir, and Robert Bresson is primarily a moral, as opposed to just a stylistic, dilemma.

<sup>292</sup> Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 95–96.

viewers are meant to become scared by them – they are “moved.” In a word, my conception of horror within the mockumentary context stems from its reliance on the spectator, its success dependent on whether one is scared or shocked as a result of being tricked into thinking what one sees on screen as really happening. If this “metaphorical animation” by the spectator does not occur, the horror mockumentary may veer towards other genres, such as the mockumentary comedy.

Yet, in this chapter, I do not want to completely do away with the possibilities of “technical animation” to emerge. Both stillness and motion converge – something that we visibly see in *Démon* and *Cold Ground*, owing to mobile quality of the paintings and engravings used as evidence (brought to life by the zooms of the camera), as well as the style of shaky-cam used (in a similar style to *Blair Witch*) as a means to bring the invisible and imaginary monster to life. The text that comes the closest to what I want to propose here is Spyros Papapetros’s *On the Animation of the Inorganic: Art, Architecture, and the Extension of Life*, wherein he posits a very broad concept of *animation*, in terms of both space and time.<sup>293</sup> The relation between stillness and movement especially arises in Papapetros’s book when examining the “living” quality of stationary architecture: in particular, Papapetros cites nineteenth-century art historian Alois Riegl, whose characterization of wavy lines in early Christian architecture and Egyptian linear patterns evokes (for Papapetros) a paradoxical movement of still imagery. “This tangle of lines,” Papapetros articulates, “is a continuous fabric, simultaneously animate and inorganic. It is a crystal

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<sup>293</sup> Spyros Papapetros, *On the Animation of the Inorganic: Art, Architecture, and the Extension of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). See Alois Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, trans. Evelyn Kain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1893] 1992).



with a soul.”<sup>294</sup> Even though the images themselves are stationary, the eye can trace their potential movement, due to the fluid and aqueous quality of these linear images.

Yet, in considering such uses of technical and metaphorical animation here, one should not discount the conceptualization of “animation” as non-indexical imagery, as stop motion animation are often a vital component of looking at horror film in general. And one cannot ignore animation as special effects, given Georges Méliès’ legacy as a pioneer of illusions and special effects.<sup>295</sup> The rise of more convincing digital technologies further thickens this way of recreating invisible monsters via non-photographic animation: writing in 1984, Barry Keith Grant describes how special effects were rapidly improving and thus providing an avenue for horror films to create very realistic looking creatures.<sup>296</sup> Nevertheless, despite their perceptual realism, such creatures were still presented – and viewed at – as fabrications. Spectators were certainly blown away in 1993 by the lifelike dinosaurs in Steven Spielberg’s *Jurassic Park*, but whether he filmed *actual* dinosaurs was obviously not at stake. Prince proposes that, while a character such as the Terminator does not have any link to any reality “outside of fiction,” the animated, digitally (re)created dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* are in fact based on “creatures that once existed”: yet, at the same time, they are “referentially fictional,” due to a lack of any temporal proximity, as (obviously) no dinosaurs could

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>295</sup> See Sean Cubitt, “Phalke, Méliès, and Special Effects Today,” *Wide Angle* 21, no. 1 (1999): 115–30.

<sup>296</sup> Barry Keith Grant, “Introduction,” in *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1984), xii.

be filmed as a point of reference.<sup>297</sup> Prince does, however, note that the animators studied – and but also made extrapolations from – the movement of real-life animals such as elephants, rhinos, komodo dragons, and ostriches, to bring dinosaur behavior to life in a believable way.<sup>298</sup> While Prince’s text is obviously of its time – advances in CGI have come a lot further since the mid-1990s – I do agree with it to some extent, mainly due to the paradox it presents: that even highly-convincing animation – here in the form of computer-generated imagery bringing something to life – can be considered “fictional,” even it does have appear to have some basis in “reality.”

### 5.3 Mockumentary: Animated Found Footage

While *Cold Ground* fits neatly under the umbrella *mockumentary* term, Delage’s *Démon* is more open and looser than the former, sharing similarities with *mockumentary*, but also the more traditional, *documentary*, especially in how it is ostensibly faithful in how it acts in a biography of Georges Méliès’ life: a number of his films are quoted, and his great-great-granddaughter Pauline Méliès (actually her) is one of the interviewees. Accordingly, this chapter utilizes the term *mockumentary* in a rather broad and flexible sense, but with limitations. Anything and everything could fall under the umbrella, and I do want to be clear that simply the use of non-photographic archival footage or reliance on re-enactments do not simply constitute this sub-genre – and the

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<sup>297</sup> Stephen Prince, “True Lies: Perceptual Realism, Digital Images, and Film Theory,” in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 277. Emphasis supplied.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 279.

constraints on the definition that I employ stem from its relation to other genres, often horror or comedy. In short, some sort of deliberate trickery or fakery must be at hand. I share the same sort of concerns as Craig Hight, who eventually – but somewhat reluctantly – settles on a broad, catch-all term that prefers looking at mockumentaries on a case-by-case basis before determining their actual genre. “In simple terms,” he articulates, “it [mockumentary] could be defined as the corpus of fictional texts which engage in a sustained appropriation of documentary aesthetics, but more texts than mockumentary can fall into such a definition.”<sup>299</sup> The broad strokes of Hight’s wording here certainly apply to my own conceptualization, but I would like to put more emphasis on the archive, and the use and re-use of found footage.

By “found footage” – what I consider a subset of “archival footage” – I refer to the raw, pre-existing audio- and/or visual material that is transposed from its original setting into a new one. In mockumentaries, this often means its original meaning being added to or taken away from, such as an engraving being erroneously labeled as a photograph, or a serious political speech being overdubbed by dialogue from someone completely different for comedic purposes. I make this claim in light of numerous academic texts have been written recently about the genre of the mockumentary, and its limits with other, more factual forms of representation.<sup>300</sup> One such text –

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<sup>299</sup> Craig Hight, *Television Mockumentary: Reflexivity, Satire and a Call to Play*, 15. Hight is drawing from an earlier of his (co-authored with Jane Roscoe) on an earlier version of the term (“mock-documentary”) in *Faking It: Mock-Documentary and the Subversion of Factuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

<sup>300</sup> See, for example, Cynthia J. Miller, *Too Bold for the Box Office: The Mockumentary From Big Screen to Small* (Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, 2012); Michael V. Tueth, *Reeling with Laughter: American Film Comedies: From Anarchy to Mockumentary* (Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, 2012); Gary D. Rhodes, “Mockumentaries and the Production of Realistic Horror,” *Post Script – Essays in Film and Humanities* 21, no. 3 (2002): 46–60.

albeit dealing with primarily comedy, not horror – is Richard Wallace’s *Mockumentary Comedy: Performing Authenticity*, which specifically engages with questions of archival footage, and its (re)appropriation in mockumentary contexts.<sup>301</sup> What I especially appreciate about Wallace’s text is his focus on mimicry, specifically borrowing certain terms from Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner’s *F is for Phony*, that is, “copy,” “mock,” “mimic,” and “gimmick.”<sup>302</sup> One of the key scenarios that Wallace cites is the re-editing of footage of political figures for the purpose of satire, a case in point being Charles A. Ridley’s remix of excerpts from *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935), making it look like Adolf Hitler and the Nazi troops were dancing to the tune of the Lambeth Walk.<sup>303</sup> Wallace even extends this sort of re-configuring to the current trend of Internet memes: while not mockumentaries, they even a “fundamentally mockumentary character.”<sup>304</sup> In particular, Wallace cites Ryan M. Milner’s claim that memes are “aggregate texts,” meaning that audio- and/or visual material is “created, circulated, and transformed by countless cultural participants across vast networks and collectives,” in turn creating a “vast cultural tapestry”<sup>305</sup> Animation as a bringing-to-life process is very apparent here – that is, in its

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<sup>301</sup> Richard Wallace, *Mockumentary Comedy: Performing Authenticity* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 5. Original passage in Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner, *F is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truths Undoing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>303</sup> Wallace, *Mockumentary Comedy*, 149.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid. Original passage in Ryan M. Milner, *The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 1–2.

most literal sense: old footage, in one context, finds an almost completely new and different life in another.

But I do want to add that mockumentaries may have a complete absence of found footage, being a case of found footage itself, as we see with *Cold Ground*, where, the same as *Blair Witch*, the entire film itself is the *found footage*. It is not just an “aggregate text,” a sort of compilation film. One of the things, then, that this chapter seeks to challenge is the term *found footage* being mostly associated with horror cinema today. I do so in part by finishing with linking to comedy: there is genre-bending at hand, according to how the mockumentary is at the mercy of how the text is “moved” and “animated” by the spectator. As I have alluded to previously in my introduction to this chapter, the horror-documentary relationship has the capacity to become comedic. Certainly, a prominent example of this would be paranormal, ghost-hunting television documentaries such as *Dead Crossroads* and *Ghost Adventures*, which are not presented as mockumentaries, but become so over-the-top – and unintentionally funny – that they shift into that territory of being in the same category as them, thus evincing a “mockumentary character.” In other words, they become laughable and not just horror in a vacuum. In this way, my chapter does similar to work to Peter Turner, who rightly reminds us that the term “found footage” was originally employed within the context of experimental film, such as *A Movie* (Bruce Conner, 1958).<sup>306</sup> In particular, Turner cites the definition mobilized by Alexandra Heather-Nicholas, being that found footage films are simply those that “employ material shot by someone else for another

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<sup>306</sup> Peter Turner, *Found Footage Horror Films: A Cognitive Approach* (New York and London: Routledge, 2019), 4.

reason.”<sup>307</sup> From the vantage point of horror, then, we see a complete fabrication masquerading as a slice of genuine archival material, often due to techniques such as grainy image and shaky cam, as well as an opening intertitle saying that it has been recovered and that it is true and should be believed. *Cold Ground* is – for all intents and purposes – a fictional, narrative film, but it is its documentary appearance that enables it to be classified as a “mockumentary.” Returning to Wallace, along with “documentary character,” “documentary-like aesthetic” is another term that he mobilizes throughout his work, indicating the different levels of fakery and ties with a “reality.”<sup>308</sup> The tie to the archive appears to more abstract, more akin to the actors sharing the same names as their characters, as in *Blair Witch*. But, at the same time, I propose that found footage within horror in other contexts cannot be separated from its context outside this genre: Delage’s *Démon* could equally be labeled as *found footage horror*, as the lost and cursed film is certainly *found footage* too, and in its most literal sense. The 1897 Méliès film was supposedly lost, and then discovered, and then ultimately lost again.

#### 5.4 An Animated Mockumentary Archive

Critically, in Delage’s *Démon* – and perhaps somewhat ironically – the importance of preserving and expanding on the archive with new, undiscovered films is at the forefront. One particular instance is more talking-head footage from *Cinémathèque* “Collections Manager” Pierre

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid. Original quotation found in Alexandra Heather-Nicholas, *Found Footage Horror Films: Fear and the Appearance of Reality* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2014), 14.

<sup>308</sup> See especially Wallace, *Mockumentary Comedy*, 13–14.

Levasseur, who describes how missing films are archived in an actual, physical space. Speaking in front of shelves of many film reels, Levasseur states that the fascination by those at the *Cinémathèque* had about finding a lost film: “we were really excited to see this long-lost film. Quite often, films go missing without a trace, before even having been catalogued.”<sup>309</sup> As Levasseur is talking, Delage utilizes a jump cut to zoom out, allowing us to see even more film reels on the shelves – a substantial and impressive collection. Cutting back to Jean-Jacques Bernard, he builds on what Levasseur says, highlighting how unfortunate it is for films to become lost, using the word “physique” in the original French (“Losing a copy of a film is really sad, it’s a terrible thing for any cinema enthusiast. It breaks my heart to know that such a film exists and yet you can’t see it because it’s lost”).<sup>310</sup> Returning to Levasseur’s testimony, then, his words add to the mystery and uncertainty pertaining to Méliès’ *Démon*. “Many films have disappeared over the years for various reasons,” he articulates. “In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a controversial film came out, it was talked about in the press, it left a written trace. But in the 19<sup>th</sup> century ... *[voice trails off with gesture signifying that nothing else can be done]*.”<sup>311</sup> I highlight the references to the physical space of archival collection – both in terms of Bernard’s spoken words and the visual representation of actual film reels – and this archival space of the *Cinémathèque* is one that is in a

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<sup>309</sup> « On se réjouissait de voir réapparaître une œuvre qu’on pensait définitivement perdue. Parfois des films disparaissent sans laisser des traces, sans même avoir été inventoriés. »

<sup>310</sup> « C’est évidemment très triste, la disparition d’une copie. Aucun cinéphile au monde, euh ... n’ont envie de vivre ça, la disparition physique d’une copie. C’est un déchirement de savoir que ce film existe qu’on n’a pas vu et qu’on a perdu. »

<sup>311</sup> « Il existe de nombreux films qui ont disparu pour diverses raisons. Au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, lorsqu’un film fait polémique, il laisse des traces dans la presse, on peut là sans souvenir. Mais au 19<sup>e</sup> siècle ... »

state of constant expansion, as films and other materials related to film are discovered and released. In this way, then, I see parallels with Alain Resnais's *Toute la mémoire du monde* from chapter one. To reiterate, Dumesnil emphasizes the sheer vastness of the *Bibliothèque nationale*'s collection, claiming that all that has been printed in France can be found there. Likewise, according to the Delage's *Démon*, it would be virtually necessary for an institution such as the *Cinémathèque* to acquire a film such as Méliès' *Démon* if it were to resurface – at the very least for the sake of completeness.

With the found footage mockumentary, however, we see the use of an expansive and nebulous archive – even more so than at the *Cinémathèque* or *Bibliothèque nationale* – not just limited to the re-use of pre-existing audio- and/or visual material in a physical space. A case in point is certainly the addition of websites that give a greater life to the films at hand, their *prima facie* earnestness adding to the believability of the supposed claims presented: in other words, the Internet acts as a platform that adds to the archive, and to the trickery. The official website for *La Rage du Démon*, for example, claims outright that Delage's film is a *documentaire* – rather than the French term *faux-documentaire*, their rough equivalent for *mockumentary* – also making it clear that their interview subjects comprise “des journalistes, cinéastes, historiens, experts et psychologues.”<sup>312</sup> And such official websites extend to online publications labelling it, seemingly unironically, as a documentary rich with historical evidence,<sup>313</sup> while others are more outright and

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<sup>312</sup> “*La Rage du Démon*,” Official Website, accessed February 6, 2020,

<http://laragedudemon.com/film/4591258407>

<sup>313</sup> See, for example, Rebekah McKendry, “Can Viewing This Film Really Make You Go Insane?” *13<sup>th</sup> Floor*, July 22, 2016, <http://www.the13thfloor.tv/2016/07/22/can-viewing-this-film-really-make-you-go-insane/>



explicit about it being a mockumentary, albeit one with some historical truth buried there.<sup>314</sup> Furthermore, even the absurd and comedic tone adopted by William Karel in *Opération Lune* is commenting on those who seemingly unironically believe in and propagate such conspiracy theories. One would be remiss not to mention Jay Weidner, conspiracy theorist whose appearance in documentary *Room 237* (Rodney Ascher, 2012) unironically and seemingly genuinely puts forward the fake moon landing claim: and Weidner's own online presence provides (for example) essays with accompanying still shots from *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980) as proof.<sup>315</sup> In a word, such mockumentaries do not exist in isolation, their archive being contributed to by outside sources – that is, an ever-expanding archive. Of course, films have afterlives – and this claim is not limited to the mockumentary subgenre – but the way that horror (and comedy) valorize success in order to be classified as their respective genres, the new life added to or taken away from is such an integral part of their ontological status.

Such an aqueous and fluid archive is also applicable to the use of actors playing versions of themselves in mockumentaries, a common trope, as in *Blair Witch* and Delage's *Démon*, where in the latter, interviewees include (along with the “historiens” and very general “experts”) well-known French horror director Alexandre Aja and Pauline Méliès, Georges' great-great-granddaughter. Even if there is not any tangible *found footage* depicting such figures in their actual state, their fictionalized versions still have a tie to reality. In making this claim, I refer back to

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<sup>314</sup> See, for example, “*La Rage du Démon*,” *AlloCiné*, March 29, 2017, [http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm\\_gen\\_cfilm=241576.html](http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm_gen_cfilm=241576.html)

<sup>315</sup> Jay Weidner, “Secrets of the Shining: Or How Faking the Moon Landings Nearly Cost Stanley Kubrick His Marriage and His Life,” July 20, 2009, [https://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/luna/luna\\_apollomissions10.htm](https://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/luna/luna_apollomissions10.htm)

Richard Wallace's work, mainly since I see in it how even more impalpable things like personality traits have a link to an archive – they may (Wallace's argument going a bit further) become a type of found footage in and of themselves. Wallace devotes part of his book talking about seemingly accurate yet caricatured versions of the Beatles in *A Hard Day's Night* (Richard Lester, 1964): while not a documentary it “has the appearance” of one.<sup>316</sup> Some actual footage of the Beatles is included, but it is mostly re-enacted versions of well-known and well-established scenarios that have been previously captured on tape : and it is filmed with a documentary aesthetic. Yet this distinction between the actual and the reinvented is made visible owing to (for example) the band members being dressed in completely different clothes all of a sudden.<sup>317</sup> Lester's film contains re-enacted sequences depicting repeated and very familiar scenarios for the Beatles, “comic renderings” of running from fans, answering fan-mail, and speaking press conferences.<sup>318</sup> In the latter, Wallace rightly emphasizes the different layers of performance on display, since it was common knowledge for the Beatles to make up completely ridiculous answers to the questions they were asked.<sup>319</sup> As such, even in the re-enacted sequences, it is nevertheless difficult to separate entirely the fictionalized Beatles from the real ones.<sup>320</sup> Thus, Wallace posits that *A Hard Day's Night* utilizes the “mockumentary form” as a way to represent the Beatles' “individual and

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<sup>316</sup> Wallace, *Mockumentary Comedy*, 40.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 42–43.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 58.

collective public personas.”<sup>321</sup> Despite its mockumentary character, it nevertheless acts as an “historical document” on Beatlemania as a whole.<sup>322</sup>

It is this proliferation of different – fictionalized-but-not-quite – versions of the people that ostensibly gestures towards Derrida’s characterization in *Mal d’archive* of the many Freuds that proliferate, owing in part to his many contributions to psychoanalysis. Certainly, we have seen examples of divergent identities in the previous chapter, and now in the found footage mockumentaries: in *Blair Witch*, for example, Heather, Mike, and Josh are both themselves and not – simultaneously and paradoxically – that is, contracting and contributing one another. There is the physical film print, the DVD, but also the commentary track, and the websites, and the more nebulous versions of the characters/actors themselves. Further in Delage’s *Démon*, Alexandra Aja is a renowned French horror director, and would believably be invited to such a screening if it took place. And if such a film was to be discovered in reality, it would be expected that the director of the *Cinémathèque* would be contacted. The tangible person and the divergent/imaginary one cannot be neatly separated, in other words.

This more nebulous and an expansive archive becomes further understandable in light of what André Malraux proposes in relation to *le musée imaginaire*, a museum space larger than just physical objects, comprising a relation between objects on a much larger scale. Here, I return to the highly pertinent statement cited in my chapter on Agnès Varda, where Malraux references visiting the Louvre in Paris – quickly becoming larger and more expansive than what is on display at any particular time. “Inevitably,” he articulates, “in a place where the work of art has no longer

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 45.

any other function than that of being a work of art, and at a time when the artistic exploration of the world is in active progress, the assemblage of so many masterpieces – from which, nevertheless, so many are missing – conjures up in the mind’s eye *all* the world’s masterpieces.”<sup>323</sup> What is so striking in Malraux’s language is that the presence of certain art objects presupposes an absence of (all) others, since they exist in relation to each other – which, in turn, implies an ever-expanding and infinite collection of materials that can never be fully categorized. Similar to Derrida, it seems, one cannot whittle down entities to only singular means and by only one particular way of thinking. While being an extensive archive – as we can see with the film reels in Delage’s *Démon* – there is also a small museum that is part of it. The official website of the *Cinémathèque*, for example, points to the 2008 acquiring of many Méliès objects, an addition to an already impressive collection: “The permanent collections of the *Cinémathèque française*, unique in the world, have recently been enriched with more than 700 new pieces of Georges Méliès’ work. An opportunity to pay tribute to this brilliant visionary filmmaker.”<sup>324</sup> Other sections

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<sup>323</sup> André Malraux, “Museum Without Walls,” in *Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Frogmore: Paladin, 1974), 15. Emphasis supplied.

Original quotation: « Là où l’œuvre d’art n’a plus d’autre fonction que d’être œuvre d’art, à une époque où l’exploration artistique du monde se poursuit, la réunion de tant de chefs-d’œuvre, d’où tant de chefs-d’œuvre sont absents, convoque dans l’esprit *tous* les chefs-d’œuvre. » André Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard, [1947] 1965), 13.

<sup>324</sup> La Cinémathèque française, “Georges Méliès du 16 avril au 2 août 2008,” accessed March 21, 2020,

<https://www.cineematheque.fr/cycle/georges-melies-257.html>

Translation my own. Original French:

of the website (under their general and official “Collection” page) state that they have in their possession: original costumes from *Le Voyage dans la Lune/A Trip to the Moon* (1902), Méliès’ drawings, as well as other “magical objects.”<sup>325</sup> This is clearly a rotating display, as I saw when I visited the museum on June 14, 2019, where none of such Méliès-related items were on display that day: instead, the focus appeared to be on certain directors such as Alfred Hitchcock (there was Mrs. Bates’s skull from 1960’s *Psycho*), as well as a display on German Expressionism and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920) in particular. So even though these films would tangentially relate to Méliès’ horror *oeuvre* – the links are just that, tangential. Only a portion of film history is on display, Méliès only forming part of it: and yet this smallness in the museum does not shortchange the breadth of its larger archive. Thus, with the *Cinémathèque*, the museum and the archive co-exist in the same space, in the same building, but also as part of larger and more nebulous network.

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« Les collections permanentes de La Cinémathèque française, uniques au monde, se sont récemment enrichies de plus de 700 nouvelles pièces de l’œuvre de Georges Méliès. L’occasion de rendre hommage à ce génial cinéaste-visionnaire. »

<sup>325</sup> « Objets de magie »

La Cinémathèque française, “Les Collections,” accessed March 21, 2020,

<https://www.cinematheque.fr/collections.html>

## 5.5 Invisible Monsters: Animating a Non-Existent Archive

What further obfuscates such a nebulous, (re)animated archive is how the use of footage and imagery without a photographic referent demonstrates an almost complete rewriting of something that may not even have existed – albeit with only very flimsy links to a pre-existing event or person. Like the Louvre as referenced by Malraux, there is non-indexical archive that is expansive. However, while, in the Louvre – and the *Cinémathèque* – artworks exist in relation to other artworks, Delage's *Démon* exists in relation to a non-indexical archive that ostensibly represents entities that are invisible, or do not exist at all. Think back to the wax figures in the Musée Grévin: these are mere representations of people – not entirely accurate, but recognizable at any rate – and are utilized in a way by Delage to representation the after-effects of demonic possession – without actually showing the actual people's supposed possession by demonic forces. New life is given to the stylized wax, in other words. Now, while these figures have some basis in a sort of tangible reality (they are often representations of actual historical figures) but they are, too, at the mercy of the creative impulse of those who construct them.<sup>326</sup> Yet I want to take this notion of non-photographic indexicality even further by emphasizing that demons are, by their nature, invisible monsters: thus, a non-photographic, creative archive may be the only way to represent such intangible forces – especially in illustrating the act of demonic possession. One only sees the after-effects of such a monster, one of the most famous examples certainly being the

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<sup>326</sup> Wax figures in museums have also been the subject of much ridicule in the media owing to how inaccurate they can actually be. See, for example, Eliza Thompson, "32 of the Worst Wax Figures Ever Made," last modified December 23, 2019,

<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/celebs/g19664055/bad-celebrity-wax-figures/>

vomiting and voice-over dubbing in William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973). Demons are, by their nature, interior: as Morris Dickstein says, demons like that which possessed Regan are "inside us."<sup>327</sup> Thus, in Delage's *Démon*, there is not only an invisible film, but also an invisible monster.

Along with the wax statues, Delage also relies on painted, engraved and sculpted representations of demons at certain points during the film, the first prominent example arriving in the opening credits. Following the Allemane's voiceover introduction and snippets from the first oral testimonies, we cut to the opening credits of the film: various images of demons are coupled with a disturbing and unsettling music to create a general sense of unease. One such example is a photograph of clay diorama *Le Sabbat, ou le rendez-vous des sorciers/The Sabbath or the Gathering of Witches* (François Benjamin Lamiche and Adolphe Block, 1875). Here we see a horned devilled creature – wand in hand – surrounded by various witches and other skeletal figures, all with sunken, lifeless eyes. Another is a painting of what seems to be Georges Méliès himself, with a red-skinned winged devil hovering behind him: an extensive search online seems to confirm that this artwork is only created for film, as there exists on no other database as far as I can see. Yet none of these depictions are on screen for all that long – and, in addition, the camera is often out of focus, blurry and zooming into the image, drawing attention to the presence of the/an author (presumably Delage), and, thus, "technical animation." One hears the sounds of the camera constantly being put into focus: hence, there is an incessant instability between stillness and movement in flux and on display for the viewer to see. Curiously, this technique of having artistic interpretations of demonic behavior is very similarly utilized in the 2018 paranormal documentary,

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<sup>327</sup> Morris Dickstein, "The Aesthetics of Fright," in *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1984), 75.

Zak Bagans' *Demon House*. In this film, the opening titles – which follow a short verbal introduction from Bagans about an encounter he had in a dream with the Satanic goat-creature Baphomet – consist of a montage of paintings: in these, we see a variety of horned creatures torturing humans, their methods including strangulation, decapitation, and being boiled in a pot. In both instances, then, these non-indexical portrayals are there to seemingly to stand in for entities that are invisible – and may not exist at all.<sup>328</sup>

Yet Delage's use of a non-indexical archive to technically re-animate an invisible and non-existent creature does not end there: understandably, Delage and the interviewees make strong links between the demonic forces on display and Méliès status as a special effects pioneer with ties to other artists of his time. "Phillipe Rouyer: Film Critic, Journalist at Positif," one of the supposed viewers of the 2012 screening, details how he saw a severed head as part of the traumatic experience of viewing Méliès' *Démon*. More specifically, Rouyer emphasizes how Méliès use of special effects was ahead of its time – and so obviously and almost anachronistically so in *Démon*, in that: "For a while I did think Méliès actually made that film for something really caught my eye. At that time filmmakers didn't use the depth of field, yet it is mastered in this work."<sup>329</sup> And Rouyer's wording, too, names a specific artwork as his point of reference: Gustav Moreau's *L'Apparition/The Apparition* from 1876, which depicts the Biblical account of the beheading of

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<sup>328</sup> And this is not the only time that Baphomet has made appearances in horror mock-/documentaries. See *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, 2007) where an image of Baphomet is used as a source of knowledge in a book order to gain further insight into an unknowable, invisible demonic force. See also the mockumentary *Incident at Loch Ness* (Werner Herzog and Zak Penn, 2004), which is all about (fake) photographically capturing the monster.

<sup>329</sup> « Pendant un temps, j'ai vraiment pensé que c'était un film de Méliès parce que [...] il y a quelque chose qui moi me frappait qu'on n'a pas dans le cinéma cette l'époque-là. C'est un travail sur la profondeur de champs »



John the Baptist.<sup>330</sup> “Well not all the time,” Rouyer relates, “but I noticed, floating in the background behind the devil, a severed head, and I knew it [*cut painting, voiceover continues off-screen*] it is John the Baptist’s head [*zooms into painting, and specifically*] from Gustave Moreau’s *The Apparition*, 1876.”<sup>331</sup> A cursory online search confirms that this is an actual painting, and that what we see on screen is that painting. However, it appears that comparison with the original reveals that in this version of Moreau’s *L’Apparition* – on display via Delage’s screen – has a redder tint so as to seemingly bring out the color of the blood. In addition, Delage zooms into John the Baptist’s severed head, also evoking a sense of motion towards an otherwise stationary image.

What we see here is how Rouyer – possibly at Delage’s urging – is metaphorically animating and referencing an artistic representation of a Biblical tale, hardly a set-in-stone, historical event, which only may have a tangential link to the life of Méliès himself. And like with Baphomet, it is religious imagery and symbolism that is the first point of call. Rouyer does in fact call attention to how the motif of the decapitated head could be a link to Méliès, his oral testimony citing known examples from Méliès’ *œuvre*, such as *L’homme à la tête en caoutchouc/The India Rubber Head* (1901) and *Un homme de têtes/The Four Troublesome Heads* (1898). Concerning the latter, Delage specifically quotes a short extract from the film, showing copies of the same disembodied head multiplying on screen. As part of his words to screen, Rouyer points out that Méliès was a pupil of Moreau, speculating that this connection could be proof that *Démon* was in fact a Méliès film, which was a point of contention for him (“Because of that [the severed head] I thought

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<sup>330</sup> Matthew 14: 1–12; Mark 6: 14–27; Luke 9:9.

<sup>331</sup> « Et ça, c’était ma stupéfaction. C’est-à-dire que, pas pour tout le film, mais à certains moments du film, apparaît dans la profondeur, derrière le diable, une tête coupée, qui en fait, moi je l’ai connu, coupée en lévitation, c’était la tête de Jean-Baptiste dans le tableau de Gustave Moreau, *L’Apparition*, 1876. »

it might be Méliès but then I realized it was just a copy. Just someone imitating him.”<sup>332</sup>) Nevertheless, what appears the most important part of Rouyer’s testimony is that Méliès was a pioneer of special effects, a magician of sorts – something that may in fact add to the ambiguity of whether his *Démon* was all just one illusion and did not exist at all. And Rouyer is not the only one to draw attention to Méliès’ influence on cinema in this way. Bénédicte Royer – who, as we have seen, initially gave the impression of being very visibly shaken after viewing Méliès’ *Démon* – is at this point in her testimony almost in awe of Méliès, stating that: “He was a master of special effects, drawings and illusions.”<sup>333</sup> Moreover, great-great-granddaughter Pauline Méliès articulates that he “created the first special effects,”<sup>334</sup> as we see a clip from an unnamed – but presumably Méliès – film, where there is a chair appearing and disappearing, in a similar style to the four disembodied heads. Thus, painted representations act as a gateway to consider whether the demon does or does not exist – an inherently historical question.

What also becomes clear, then, in thinking about Méliès’ *Démon* in such a way is how the use of the non-photographic archive to represent the intangible is often used in the horror documentary/mockumentary, often with imagery evoking religious – often Christian – symbolism. To return to Zak Bagans’ *Demon House*, not only is Satanic and pagan Baphomet evoked, but also a strange, unnamed painting of a demonic-appearing Jesus on cross as a way to buttress claims of interviewee Shyamber Martin, who claims that her cousin, Erika, has holes in her wrists similar to Jesus Christ. As Martin tells us her story, Bagans cuts to an intertitle that reads: “Stigmata: Body

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<sup>332</sup> « Ça, ça me fait dire que ça pouvait du Méliès, simplement après on voit bien que c’est une sorte d’imitateur. »

<sup>333</sup> « C’était un inventeur qui a innové dans les trucages, dans les dessins, dans l’illusion. »

<sup>334</sup> « C’est lui qui a inventé les premiers effets spéciaux. »

marks, sores, or sensations of pain in locations corresponding to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ, such as the hands, wrists, and feet.” We then see the aforementioned a painting of “Jesus” on a cross, while Martin’s voice-over tells us: “It was scary, because, like I said, I never seen that. Something was wrong with her. She wasn’t Erika.” Importantly, Bagans does not show us Erika’s hands: the evidence consists of second-hand oral testimony and an artist’s interpretation of a religious figure – who may not indeed be that figure in question. And, as I have eluded to earlier, this technique of utilizing paintings in horror mock-/doc-umentaries is nothing new. Going as far back as *Häxan* (Benjamin Christensen, 1922), considered as one of the first horror documentaries, is very loose in its chronicle of witchcraft in the fifteenth century, its “evidence” including photographs of paintings and woodcuts, as well as dramatized re-enactments. Notably, the director himself plays the Devil, who has significant – and very memorable – screen time.<sup>335</sup> The first segment, in particular, consists of images of artworks that depict Satanic and demonic activity, preceded and followed by intertitles that describe and elaborate on them. One such intertitle declares: “From the work by French doctors Bourneville and Teinturier, I have taken the following pictures of the witches’ Sabbath.” However, what follows is a stylized engraving of a group of humans’ encounters with witches, a highly stylized illustration that is not “photographically real” in any sense at all. Such imagery consists of an artists’ interpretation of something – and something that is fantastic in nature, which may lack a clear or specific historical referent.

As such, I characterize such use of non-indexical images in the horror mockumentary as a form of re-enactment, following Cristina Formenti’s work on documentaries that use animated –

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<sup>335</sup> See further Richard Baxstrom and Todd Meyers, *Realizing the Witch: Science, Cinema, and the Mastery of the Invisible* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 1.

as in, opposed to live-action – footage. In particular, Formenti emphasizes the different materiality, classifying the “animated documentary” as the “sincerest form of docudrama.”<sup>336</sup> One of Formenti’s primary case studies is *The Sinking of the Lusitania* (Windsor McCay, 1918), whose use of animation is “a fabricated recreation of an actual event.”<sup>337</sup> In other words, it seems that even though an originary history may remain intact in a documentary – which is clearly not a mockumentary like Delage’s *Démon* or *Cold Ground* – it is by virtue of the non-photographic animation that this new representation becomes essentially a re-enactment.<sup>338</sup> It is curious, then, that similar types of artistic representations appear in mockumentaries almost trying to capture the invisible nature of the demonic creature via a different medium – even when it is clear that this film is entirely fabricated. The demon is a monster that cannot be seen by the naked eye, in other words: but it could be represented via artistic interpretation, as we only see its after-effects. I take Formenti’s claim one step further, since its truth claim appears more far removed than in *The Sinking of the Lusitania*. While McCay’s documentary is clearly based on a concrete historical event from 1915, Delage’s archive is more representative of things that are not only very abstract, but also invisible to the naked eye. In a photographic/cinematic context, non-indexical traces are rarely received as evidence, because anyone can draw or paint a demon from imagination.

Of what has been written about the use of non-photographic footage in the live action documentary, a common thread seems to be its ability to portray concepts, ideas and the like that

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<sup>336</sup> Cristina Formenti, “The Sincerest Form of Docudrama: Re-framing the Animated Documentary,” *Studies in Documentary Film*, 8, no. 2 (2014): 103.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>338</sup> See further Annabelle Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary* (Basingstroke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), who adopts a very similar argument.

live action cannot adequately achieve: it is there, as Annabelle Honess Roe posits, to “explain, clarify and illustrate.”<sup>339</sup> A key example would be scientific documentaries concerning abstract concepts (such as mathematics) or things that are microscopic – here, as Oliver Gaycken elucidates, the goal of animation in documentary is to “recreate” such objects in order that they may be “measured and understood both temporally and spatially.”<sup>340</sup> Similarly – and in the same volume, *Animating Film Theory* – Mihaela Mihailova and John MacKay consider how animation in the *œuvre* of Dziga Vertov acts as an expository and pedagogical tool to show viewers things that are “hidden” from their gaze (not using the word “invisible”).<sup>341</sup> One such example for Mihailova and MacKay is the newsreels in *Kino-Pravda* (number 23 from 1925) which utilize diagrams as a way to illustrate the concept of radio installations.<sup>342</sup> Akin to Gaycken as well, Mihailova and MacKay call attention to animation’s utility to explain science more lucidly, they themselves specifically citing Donald Crafton (on animation “scientifically concretizing abstract thought”).<sup>343</sup> In addition, they quote Vertov himself, extrapolating from and speculating on a

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<sup>339</sup> Annabelle Honess Roe, “Interjections and Connections: The Critical Potential of Animated Segments in Live Action Documentary,” *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 12, no. 2 (2017): 274.

<sup>340</sup> Oliver Gaycken, “‘A Living, Developing Egg is Present before You’: Animation, Scientific Visualization, Modeling,” in *Animating Film Theory*, ed. Karen Beckman (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 72. See, in particular, Gaycken’s discussion of Ludwig Münch’s work on animated geometry, 71–73.

<sup>341</sup> Mihaela Mihailova and John MacKay, “Frame Shot: Vertov’s Ideologies of Animation,” in *Animating Film Theory*, ed. Karen Beckman (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 154.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid. Other examples for Vertov include stop-motion bread in *Stride, Soviet* (1926) and illustrations of how a camera works in *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929).

<sup>343</sup> Ibid., 155. Original quotation in Donald Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1983] 1993), 235.

statement he made about “cinema” in general, proposing that it may have links to how he used animation in films like *Kino-Pravda*. More specifically, “[c]inema is, as well, *the art of inventing movements* of things in space in response to the demands of science; it embodies the inventor’s dream – be he scholar, artist, engineer, or carpenter; it is the realization by *kinochestvo* of that which cannot be realized in real life.”<sup>344</sup> In a word, then, the invisible becomes visible to further clarify and add to it – but a process that may in fact shortchange what the original entity actually was. Mathematical concepts remain the same, but an animated diagram is in fact a different version, simplified and re-assembled to make it more digestible for spectators.

Thus, while the work that Roe, Gaycken, Mihailova, MacKay (and others) achieve is certainly in line with demons’ status as an invisible monster – there is a definite lack of any scientific knowledge in Delage’s *Démon* and other similar mock-/doc-umentaries like it. In other words, this dissertation moves from scientific imagination to a total imagination. Yet the question of spectatorship that Mihailova and MacKay remains a compelling one, given that a genre like the horror mockumentary relies so much on spectatorship for its “success.” With an aqueous archive like the websites trying to trick viewers into thinking Méliès’ *Démon* was real and that an actual screening took place in 2012, a whole film and viewing experience has emerged from something completely invisible – or, at least, “hidden” to borrow from Mihailova and MacKay. This *hidden archive*, then, is one that is ostensibly reliant on the spectator. In a body genre such as horror, we see the audience moved, in a literal sense – akin to pornography, in my last chapter – but also an

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 155. For original quotation, translated into English, see: Dziga Vertov, “We: Variant of a Manifesto,” trans. Kevin O’Brien, in *Kino Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 140.

archive that is dependent on the “metaphorical animation” on the part of the spectator too. When Malraux does signal how museum spaces exist within the realm of imagination, Méliès’ own 1897 film is an archival object itself that, too, exists within the imagination of its supposed viewers, as well as those who are drawn in on the websites – and truly believe that the film actually exists. And in addition, the non-indexical archive Delage does use to buttress his claims on screen refer to monsters that are, by their, nature, invisible – and only “seen” by the traces they leave behind. Thus, I finish this section by briefly quoting Spyros Papapetros, who does in fact refer to demonic activity in relation to his broad conception of “animation” – albeit momentarily. More specifically, Papapetros – whose primary point of reference for demonic activity is in artworks such as Giotto di Bondone’s 14<sup>th</sup>-century New Testament mosaic *Navicella* – calls attention to the living and breathing quality of demonic agents:

While represented as anthropomorphic projections, demons gradually extract agency from the human subject and redirect it toward the objects of her surroundings. “Demonism” is the malevolent anthropomorphic mask imposed upon animistic mentality. External agency is now internalized within the mobile artifact, which brandishes its ‘demonic’ independence by floating aimlessly across the visual plane.<sup>345</sup>

In stationary, non-photographic imagery, then, there is a relation between human and demon, the latter ostensibly taking over the former. A non-photographic monster has a relation to its spectators, in other words, even if those spectators are inside the frame.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Papapetros, *The Animation of the Inorganic*, 59. Here, Papapetros is building off of Angus Fletcher, “The Demonic Agent,” in *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), 25–69.

<sup>346</sup> For the role of the voice/voices, see further Mikhail Yampolsky, “Voice Devoured: Artaud and Borges on Dubbing,” trans. Larry P. Joseph, *October* 64 (1993), 57–77.

## 5.6 A (Not) Evil Archive: Méliès and Animated Genre-Bending

There is no doubt that Méliès' *Démon* is a nebulous artefact, spoken about by a variety of interviewees with awe, the contradictions and vagueness on display via this “metaphorical animation” via the spoken word contributing to a larger-than-life archive – more expansive than what the original film may be itself. By extension, then, while multiple versions of Méliès emerge à la Derrida, there is assuredly one that is close to an historical reality, in that it discusses Méliès' status as a highly influential innovator in early cinema – something of which is established within film history. As such, terms like “mock-documentary” or “(mock-)documentary” may be more nuanced in their way to describe Delage's *Démon*, as it very much espouses a hybrid form of fakery with nuggets of truth – a horror film, doubling back onto a biography of Méliès himself. A striking example of this takes place about ten minutes into Delage's *Démon*, following the *dRashomon*-like multi-sided testimony of the spectators of the 2012 screening, when we cut to the talking head of “Dave Alexander: Editor-in-Chief of Rue Morgue Magazine” (and an Internet search shows that this is both a real person and online magazine).<sup>347</sup> Alexander states – not with fear like other interviewees, but with a sort of reverence – that Méliès was a pioneer not only in terms of special effects and illusions, but also in terms of his influence on different cinematic genres:

Nobody would argue that Georges Méliès is a technical wizard when it comes to film.

However, it's also important to think of him in terms of genre [*cut to suite of film clips*]

He was the first person to do fantasy films, to do comedy films, and of course horror. If

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<sup>347</sup> Rue Morgue, accessed April 15, 2020, <https://rue-morgue.com/about/>



you look at what he was doing in 1898 for example, *Cave of the Demons*. [cut back to talking head] I mean this is a horror short that was made well before German Expressionism. This is 15 years before *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.

Appropriately, when Alexander does mention *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920), Delage cuts to the famous clip of somnambulist Cesare creeping up to Jane, a woman sleeping in her bed. Alexander continues that *Caligari* is what “everyone likes to assume is the first real force of horror in cinema,” but pointing out what he sees as Méliès’ strong influence, his spoken words highlighting that Méliès made films such as *Le Monstre/The Monster* (1903) and *Les Quatre Cents Farces du diable/The Merry Frolics of Satan* (1906): while clips of these respective shorts are shown on screen, Alexander points out that “these were horror shorts well before that was even conceived as a thing in cinema. So, he [Méliès] was putting a specific genre stamp on cinema before anybody else was doing this.” I do want to point out, too, that the extra-diegetic orchestral score is not as ominous here as well. It is a bit more uplifting, piano music, a sonic indicator that not all content in Delage’s *Démon* is just sinister – there is also an element of awe and reverence here too. Méliès *œuvre* is not just there to be feared, but to be admired, as well.

But this is not to say that the ties to horror in Delage’s *Démon* are completely severed. Following a 10-minute interlude detailing a supposed 1939 resurface in Virginia, which is dealt with rather briefly, we move back to Allemane’s voiceover narration, the extra-diegetic score morphing back into its more sinister nature, owing notably to the incessant strumming of the strings. Allemane links some of Méliès’ more mystic films to his greater archive, articulating that “Méliès made numerous dark and strange somewhat ‘occult’ films, like *The Haunted Castle*, *Faust and Marguerite*, *The Hallucinated Alchemist*, and *The Bewitched Inn*. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century audience

who loved a good scare adored them.”<sup>348</sup> Pauline Méliès’ talking head then follows, ostensibly corroborating Allemane’s declaration – her spoken words accentuating the immense quantity of Méliès’ *œuvre*, where the names of films she cites overlaps with those listed by Allemane’s voiceover (“Méliès made a lot of films inspired by the occult, like *The Devils Laboratory*, *The Haunted Castle* and *The Bewitched Inn*. All were shot before this mysterious film of 1897. Well, Georges Méliès made 520 films, 200 were recovered so most of them are lost.”)<sup>349</sup> What one observes, then, from this duality of the Allemane-Pauline Méliès testimony is that the presence of many known Georges Méliès films presupposes an existence of an even more expansive archive and collection where Méliès is more absent than present. And what is more, this nebulous space of loss is what Delage mobilizes in order to propose that such a cursed and invisible film *may* exist – owing in part to the fact that other similar films about demons and the occult have been found. Thus, one can see that it is through genre – that is, Méliès as an early horror filmmaker – that such conclusions can be drawn, too.

One would also be remiss not to point out once again the inherent physicality of the DVD itself: a material object that can be destroyed, damaged, but also of which there are many copies

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<sup>348</sup> « Méliès a réalisé de nombreux films parfois qualifiés des ‘mesoterics’ à l’imagi-obscur et étranges, parmi eux *Le Manoir du diable*, *Fauste et Marguerite*, *L’Hallucination de l’alchimiste* ou encore, *L’Auberge ensorcelée*. La projection font sensation auprès du public de l’époque qui aime se faire peur. »

<sup>349</sup> « C’est vrai que Méliès a fait beaucoup de films ‘mesorterics’ qui est notamment *Le Cabinet de Méphistophélès* ou *Le Château hanté* ou *L’Auberge ensorcelée*. Et ces films ont été réalisés avant ce fameux mystérieux film de 1897. En fait, Georges Méliès a fait 520 films, et aujourd’hui on a trouvé qu’à-peu-près 200. Donc, il y a une grosse partie des films, on ne sait pas où ils sont passés. » For *Le Château hanté*, a different title is used in the French for Pauline Méliès than with Allemane’s voiceover narration, but it looks like they are referring to the same film [*Le Manoir du diable*].

available, and, as a result, a large viewership. In other words, the material artifact of the DVD is a much more complete film archive than what has come before it – but, at the same time, it is never totally complete – archive of many of Méliès’ films. It is relative – that is, relative in the sense of existing in relation to one another. (And recall how Agnès Varda was memorialized via an extensive DVD collection.) I am also reminded of Derrida and the Freudian impression – there is still something inherently physical and material from the first “impression” that Derrida describes in relation to Freud:

The first impression is *scriptural* or *typographic*: that of an inscription (*Niederschrift*, says Freud throughout his works) which leaves a mark at the surface or in the thickness of a substrate. And in any case, directly or indirectly, this concept – or rather this *figure* of the substrate – marks the properly *fundamental* assignation of our problem, the problem of the fundamental. Can one imagine an archive without foundation, without substrate, without substance, without subjectile?<sup>350</sup>

Rightly so it seems, Derrida affirms the necessity of an archive with a “foundation” – utilizing a metaphor of skin to get his point across: while Méliès’ material body is not the subject

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<sup>350</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 26–27. Original emphasis.

Original quotation: « La première impression serait *scripturale* ou *typographique* : celle d’une inscription (*Niederschrift* dit Freud d’un bout à l’autre de son œuvre) qui laisse une marque à la surface ou dans l’épaisseur d’un support. Et de toutes les façons, directement ou indirectement, ce concept – ou plutôt cette *figure* du support – marque l’assignation proprement *fondamentale* de notre problème, le problème du fondamental. Peut-on penser une archive sans fondement, sans support, sans substance, sans subjectile ? », Derrida, *Mal d’Archive*, 47.

of display, the DVD itself is still a tactile object.<sup>351</sup> And if we think back to the non-photographic wax statues at the beginning of Delage's *Démon*, they are also clearly tactile objects as well – albeit not tactile for spectators of the film who can only see them through a screen. I cite this particular passage from *Archive Fever*, too, since it emphasizes how a physical archive is the starting point of something more nebulous and less fixed. The fact that many Méliès films are missing makes it possible that a lost film about demons *could* exist – since there being another film about demons directed by Méliès is not out of the question. Think too of Malraux's *musée imaginaire*, since he discusses the role of memory in relation to physical spaces such as the Louvre, pointing out that visual memory is not a reliable tool to compare artworks to one another – especially prior to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century and the rise of color reproductions of many famous artworks (“Visual memory is far from being infallible”).<sup>352</sup> In addition, this unreliability of human perception in this way is further muddled by temporal distance, as one may go many weeks without visiting a museum. Yet, at the same time, Malraux proposes that it is this same great number of color reproductions that may buttress such instability of thought processes:

We, however, have far more great works available to refresh our memories than those which even the greatest of museums could bring together. For a “Museum without Walls” is coming into being, and (now that the plastic arts have invented their own printing-press)

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<sup>351</sup> For more on “skin” see Laura Marks, *The Skin of Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>352</sup> Malraux, “Museum Without Walls,” 16.

Original quotation: « La mémoire optique n'est pas infaillible », Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire*, 15.

it will carry indefinitely farther that revelation of the world of art, limited perforce, which the “real” museums offer us within their walls.<sup>353</sup>

I would add to the “walls” that Malraux evokes the physicality of the film reels themselves: recall Pierre Levasseur sitting in front of the many film reels at the *Cinémathèque*, talking almost fetishistically about a desire to create a more complete collection than their already very extensive one.

Yet this fluid archive in Delage’s *Démon* not only consists of something that is in flux and ever-changing – but also something that is in the process of being rewritten, a rewriting of film history via the medium of mockumentary, a *counterfactual* history, as it were. Delage’s *Démon* bears striking parallels with Georges Perec’s short story *Le voyage d’hiver/The Winter Journey*, wherein literature professor Vincent Degraël discovers in the French countryside outside Le Havre a hitherto unknown volume by Hugo Vernier, also called *Le voyage d’hiver*: thus, a similar name-bending and name-sharing, as in *La Rage du Démon*.<sup>354</sup> Similar to some of the interviewees in Delage’s *Démon*, Degraël researches the veracity and historicity of the work he is reading, buttressing it with visits to the *BnF*, as well as to the British Museum, ultimately discovering to be full of contradictions: examples include “quotations” from poet Stéphane

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<sup>353</sup> Malraux, “Museum Without Walls,” 16.

Original quotation: « nous disposons de plus d’œuvres significatives, pour suppléer aux défaillances de notre mémoire, que n’en pourrait contenir le plus grand musée. Car un Musée Imaginaire s’est ouvert, qui va pousser à l’extrême l’incomplète confrontation imposée par les vrais musées : répondant à l’appel de ceux-ci, les arts plastiques ont inventé leur imprimerie. » Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire*, 16.

<sup>354</sup> Georges Perec, “The Winter Journey,” in *Georges Perec and the Oulipo*, trans. John Sturrock (London: Atlas Press, 2013), 11–18; Georges Perec, *Le Voyage d’hiver* (Paris: Seuil, [1979] 1993).

Mallarmé seemingly two years before they had been originally published, in addition to plagiarism of Paul-Marie Verlaine. Degraël would continue undertaking research – where, frustratingly, the version he originally consulted would be destroyed, and any other copies of would not be able to be found. The notion of a sort of absent text is summed up in the last line of Perec’s short story, explicating that Degraël’s search would end up with a very long work, also entitled *The Winter Journey*: yet, at 392 pages, all but the first eight would be completely blank.

One of the most curious passages in Perec’s *Winter Journey* is on Degraël’s initial read-through of Vernier’s *Winter Journey*, whereupon there is general feeling of anxiety, which is difficult to define:

Hardly had he begun reading it before Vincent Degraël felt a sense of unease that he found it impossible to define exactly, but which only grew more pronounced as he turned the pages of the volume with an increasingly shaky hand; it was as if the phrases he had in front of him had become suddenly familiar, were starting irresistibly to remind him of something, as if on to each one he read there had been imposed, or rather superimposed, the at once precise yet blurred memory of a phrase almost identical to it that he had perhaps already read somewhere else [...]<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 14.

Original French reads: « À peine eut-il commencé à la lire que Vincent Degraël épouvra une sensation de malaise qu’il lui fut impossible de définir précisément mais qui ne fit que s’accroître au fur et à mesure qu’il tournait les pages du volume d’une main de plus en plus tremblante : c’était comme les phrases qu’il avait devant les yeux lui devenaient soudain familières, se mettaient irrésistiblement à lui rappeler *quelque chose*, comme si à la lecture de chacune venait s’imposer, ou plutôt se superposer, le souvenir à la fois précis et flou d’une phrase qui aurait été presque identique et qu’il aurait déjà lue ailleurs [...] »

And it is this “unease” that leads to the almost obsessive curiosity on the part of Degraël to find out more about this elusive composition: think back to Bénédicte Royer, too, who appears initially as traumatized, but ends up as in awe of Méliès and his legacy. This “sense” ostensibly exists in the space of the imaginary, since – in a Malrucian and Derridean manner – the re-writing and re-enlarging of an archive extends beyond physical boundaries into a more nebulous space where contradictions are frequent and likely (“the at once precise yet blurred memory of a phrase” for instance). Likewise, in the horror genre, similar to pornography, there is a basis in the imaginary too: a bringing-to-life in the mind of the spectator. In the horror mockumentary specifically, its success depends upon whether one is scared, because one has believed. To recall Linda Williams’ “Film Bodies” from Chapter 3, in such body genres, “the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen.”<sup>356</sup> What is invisible and perhaps never-have-existed is resurrected: demons as monsters, the demonic film, and now film history itself. New life is given to the archive – an animation, both technical and metaphorical.

## 5.7 Conclusion

What is at stake for mockumentary is that they are often liminally in between an existing history and a non-existent one, never sutured to wholly one side or the other. To recall Richard Wallace’s lucid reading of *A Hard Day’s Night*, one can identify that even when totally invented

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Original emphasis.

Perec, *Le Voyage d’hiver*, 10–11.

<sup>356</sup> Linda Williams, “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess,” *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1991): 4.

(as in not existing) footage is presented on-screen, this *imaginariness* nevertheless remains an “historical document,” owing to how it portrays in a general sense the overall sense of “Beatlemania.”<sup>357</sup> The genre of the mockumentary – certainly including horror, not just comedy – becomes a vessel for a re-written history, re-animated and re-birthed from an originary history that many not even be “real” in any tangible sense. And to return to Craig Hight’s broad definition of *mockumentary* (i.e. a “sustained appropriation of documentary aesthetics”<sup>358</sup>), it may be fruitful in fact to go back to the term “mock-documentary” utilized in his earlier volume *Faking It: Mock-Documentary and the Subversion of Factuality*.<sup>359</sup> There seems to more leeway with the earlier term: the word *documentary* remains intact, ostensibly leaving the door open for more “traditional” documentary characteristics (such as talking heads and pre-existing archival footage) to remain. Flitting between Méliès as an historical figure and a more elusive “fictional” Méliès is what Delage’s *Démon* achieves so deftly – and cannot seemingly exist without the other in this film, just as both Méliès’ and Delage’s *Démons* are intertwined. Without Delage’s *Démon*, Méliès’ *Démon* would not be able to come to light.

In addition, when one considers the relationship *La Rage du Démon* has with a re-written history and archive, it also has an important role to play in the future status of the French horror mockumentary. This influence is at least self-described, owing to the intertitle at the end of his most recent film, *3:15 am* (Anthology, 2018) which reads “A French Found Footage Anthology.” Moreover, prior to its release, it was advertised as “the very first French found footage

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<sup>357</sup> Wallace, *Mockumentary Comedy*, 45.

<sup>358</sup> Hight, *Television Mockumentary: Reflexivity, Satire and a Call to Play*, 15.

<sup>359</sup> Hight and Roscoe, *Faking It*.



anthology.”<sup>360</sup> Playing with the form, *3:15 am* contains six different “found footages” (as they are described via intertitle) spliced together in a *Pulp Fiction*-esque, nonlinear fashion. Segments include an unnamed woman – self-recording and talking directly to camera – being chased around by masked and nude figures in the woods, as well as Delage playing the role of “Chris” – investigating the existence of Bigfoot in Oregon. This latter segment especially is very similar in style and content to *Cold Ground*, moving the hiking in the wilderness trope from the French-Swiss border to the United States.

Delage’s filmography itself, then, plays a role in creating and in the process of writing a history of French horror in the documentary context: which is also by virtue of similar horror *mock-/doc-umentary* films similar in style to his *Démon*. In fact, two years following the release of Delage’s *Démon*, we see the release of *Antrum: The Deadliest Film Ever Made* (David Amito and Michael Laicini, 2018), an English-language film of a very similar style. Yet, the melodramatic and the absurd become even more front and center here than in *La Rage du Démon*. According to interviewees, *Antrum* is simply “a film that kills you,” submitted by the Devil himself, based on a legendary screening in 1988 in Budapest. Yet even prior to the release of Delage’s *Démon*, an analogous Australian documentary based on an actual 2010 performance of a “cursed symphony” entitled *The Curse of the Gothic Symphony* (Randall Wood, 2011). Here, planned performances of this *Gothic Symphony* (composed by Havergal Brian) were constantly delayed and cancelled, which contributed to it being labelled as cursed – and even “demonic”: the documentary details

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<sup>360</sup> Nicola Odeku, “French Anthology Horror Film *3:15 am* is Coming in 2015,” last modified November 14, 2014, <https://www.wickedhorror.com/horror-news/315-am-french-anthology-horror/>

Obviously, *3:15* would be released a few years later than this initial prediction.

how this curse was “broken” since a performance in Australia did take place (not without many setbacks). I cite these two examples in particular, not only due to their evident similarities with Delage’s *Démon*, but also how they demonstrate the link to an (in)tangible history: even though the *Gothic Symphony* exists, the legends surrounding it add to its status as a cursed and “evil” artefact. And as more Méliès films hopefully get discovered – or, at least, more information about his lost films come to light – a re-written and re-animated archive becomes the placeholder to which one can attest to Méliès’ legacy as a pioneer of early cinema.

## 6.0 Afterword

As we have seen, there is an abundance of documentary forms and styles in the French tradition, including, but not limited to, the genres and sub-genres detailed in the four previous chapters. What is more, some of the documentaries I cite are available on English language platforms: both *Sagat* and *La Rage du Démon*, for instance, are available to stream on Amazon Prime (with English subtitles). Such examples of a *soi-disant* “low art” – at least compared to my earlier chapters on New Wave/Left Bank filmmakers – ostensibly demonstrates a broad appeal with documentaries and its subgenres across international borders, and thus a great popularity. The fact that one does not have to pay more than the monthly flat rate subscription to access *Sagat* and *La Rage du Démon* would make them highly accessible for audiences from a variety of backgrounds, and those who simply want “something to watch.”

I emphasize this global accessibility via streaming platforms, since that is often the first point of reference when I mention to friends and colleagues that my doctoral research is on documentary cinema. Anecdotally, one of the first things they say is something along the lines of: “I watched a documentary on Netflix on [insert subject matter],” sometimes expressing surprise for the fact that I have not watched their very specific and obscure documentary that had sometimes only just been released. In the 2010s, the number of documentaries on streaming platforms has exploded: a cursory online search also reveals that not just Amazon Prime, but also Netflix, HBO Max, Hulu, and Disney Plus have a plethora of documentaries available to stream on a variety of subject matters. For example, *Variety*’s article from June 2021 entitled “The Best Documentaries to Stream Right Now” provides short, concise descriptions of such documentaries, including Netflix original *My Octopus Teacher* (Craig Foster, 2020) on “a man’s growing relationship with

an octopus [... that] depicts the full lengths that curiosity and acceptance can take a person,” or *The New York Times Presents: Framing Britney Spears* (Samantha Stark, 2021) on the controversies surrounding her father’s conservatorship.<sup>361</sup> At the time of writing this conclusion – September 2021 – the latter example of Brittney Spears is especially pertinent, the documentary itself tying in with the popular and relevant topics of the day in the media. The distinctions among documentary, journalism, and entertainment are becoming less clear now than they arguably were in previous decades.

Such popularity of documentaries does occasionally border on the absurd, in terms of both content and their reception. On platforms such as the forum-based Reddit, subcultures have emerged that – ironically and/or unironically – poke fun at the plethora of documentary styles that available to viewers. Memes about one’s fascination with murder/true crime documentaries is certainly a case in point. For instance, one meme shows two different images next to each other of Homer Simpson lying in bed. The one on the left-hand side depicts Homer peeking out from under the covers with a wide-open, frightened eyes with the caption, “me watching fictional horror movies.” Yet the one on the right-hand side shows Homer sleeping soundly the same bed with the caption, “me after watching true crime documentaries.”<sup>362</sup> Another fascinating example of this true-crime murder documentary obsession online is one meme that – seemingly unknowingly – hits the nail on the head as to the style of documentaries, and their sometimes very flimsy way of presenting evidence, even though the documentary itself presents itself as a true and complete

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<sup>361</sup> Haley Bosselman, Ethan Shanfeld, and Antonio Ferme, “The Best Documentaries to Stream Right Now,” *Variety*, June 25, 2021, <https://variety.com/lists/best-documentaries-streaming-netflix-showtime-amazon/netflix-5/>

<sup>362</sup> FR1sk3r, “Me After *Confessions with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes*,” *Reddit*, October 31, 2019, [https://www.reddit.com/r/memes/comments/dpm2ht/me\\_after\\_confessions\\_with\\_a\\_killer\\_the\\_ted\\_bundy/](https://www.reddit.com/r/memes/comments/dpm2ht/me_after_confessions_with_a_killer_the_ted_bundy/)

version of the facts at hand. In the said meme, entitled “true crime documentary starter pack,” presents a series of images and statements that are said to be often found in such films; these written descriptions include those such as “slightly monotone narrator” and “it’s always the husband who did it.” This “starter pack” even goes as far to include the words, “camera zooms in on same old photo regularly.”<sup>363</sup> The sort of “technical animation” I cite in this dissertation can be a very sophisticated technique on the part of the filmmaker, such as Lifshitz’s zooming in on a still image in *Bambi* to represent the nuances and unrepresentability of queerness. Yet even a very similar style of animating an image can obviously be used in a much less refined manner than documentarians such as Lifshitz; think back, too, to the paranormal “documentaries” that I mention in my chapter on horror mockumentaries, and how their sensationalized accounts and style are very overbearing, thus evincing an overly simplistic view of the world. Such streamed documentaries have, then, seemingly become a form of popular entertainment.

What both complicates and potentially enriches this increasing popularity of documentaries is the sub-genre of “docutainment” – and, specifically, its relation to one’s (i.e. the viewer’s) emotions. I say this in light of Paulina Czarnek-Wnuk’s analysis of “hybrid forms of entertainment,” which does include the term “docutainment” among others.<sup>364</sup> Specifically, Czarnek-Wnuk lays bare the emotional qualities of constructing a certain “reality”:

Issues associated with documenting reality and presenting it in the media are also entertainment-profiled. That is increasingly done under the influence of *docutainment* in

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<sup>363</sup> Reddit Moments, “True Crime Documentary Starter Pack,” *Know Your Meme*, accessed September 20, 2021, <https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/2083814-starter-packs>

<sup>364</sup> Paulina Czarnek-Wnuk, “Hybrid Forms of Entertainment in the Media,” *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis* 5, no. 43 (2017): 67–78.

productions based on historical material, which is, however, used for ludic purposes (also in programmes of the documentary soap opera type) or *socialtainment* present in programmes depicting social issues in an “attractive” emotional way (e.g. in reportage shows).<sup>365</sup>

This emotional side to documentary – and non-fiction genres in general – that Czarnek-Wnuk foregrounds in the entirety of her article is close to how this dissertation mobilizes “metaphorical animation,” and the personalized links to one’s own viewing of the documentaries in question. Much of this dissertation (as in almost three quarters of it) was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the early stages of this upheaval of our collective lives – March/April, 2020 – saw the release of true crime documentary series *Tiger King* (Eric Goode and Rebecca Chaiklin, 2020). There was a collective animation on the part of Netflix’s massive viewership, this documentary-like entertainment acting as a global catharsis during a very difficult and bizarre time. The outlandish antics of Joe Exotic and Carol Baskin drew people away from the incessant news cycles, and their inherent negativity. *Tiger King*’s very high viewership also gave rise to many memes – not dissimilar to the ones about to one’s enjoyment of true-crime documentaries at large. Out of the many that deal with *Tiger King* specifically, one meme that stands out reads (below a photograph of Joe Exotic): “If in 10 years the coronavirus documentary doesn’t include an episode about people watching #TigerKing then it’s all has been for nothing [sic].”<sup>366</sup> The documentary form, then, becomes the vehicle by which the writer of this meme comes to the term

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>366</sup> Brynley Louise, “‘Tiger King’ memes: These nail our post coronavirus world,” *Film Daily*, June 20, 2020, <https://filmdaily.co/obsessions/tiger-king-memes-coronavirus/>

with documentary of *Tiger King* itself; it is very meta, put simply. Yet, in addition, the commentator's concern is also about archive and ephemerality, namely how there needs to be a documentary archiving the fleeting fascination with *Tiger King*. Documentary styles and forms are constantly changing in the digital age, and this meme presupposes a desire to capture a specific and distinctly present moment. Such ephemerality is ostensibly in contrast to the fixed structures of the actual physical archives I have discussed throughout my dissertation.

I have cited memes several times now in this conclusion, and this is no accident: think back to Richard Wallace's conception of the "aggregate text" which I cite in my previous chapter on the mockumentary. Like the still frames of the film reel, memes utilize still imagery – including stills from documentaries like *Tiger King* – to sum up humorous situations in a succinct way, and to a broad audience. A still photograph of Joe Exotic in conjunction with a short and catchy caption in the written text form ostensibly creates an eye-catching media form that immediately "takes one back" to the highly memorable moment of March/April, 2020. Thus, the meme image as a whole is a case of technical and metaphorical animation working together: more specifically, a still frame from *Tiger King* is used to "move" viewers of the whole meme, eliciting a collective emotional reaction. Recall the use of still frame plus voiceover in *Bambi* to create a liminal space between stillness and movement – I would argue that the *Tiger King* employs similar techniques. I cited Richard Wallace's *Mockumentary Comedy* in my previous chapter, wherein he proposes that memes are "aggregate texts" akin to mockumentaries/documentaries. With the meme, like the mockumentary/documentary, archive(s) are (re)animated.

I mention the COVID-19 pandemic, too, in this afterward as it is a nice coda to the discussion I had previously about how the mockumentary sub-genre (re)animated archives that almost entirely imaginary and non-existent. Conspiracy theories and mockumentaries often go

hand in hand, and pandemic has brought to the fore many debates and contradicting theories, stemming from the mistrust in world governments and news organizations, for instance. The theory that COVID-19 originated in a lab, or that various vaccinations secretly contain 5G are among such theories perpetuated online and in other media platforms.<sup>367</sup> Apart from in relation to the mockumentary, I have conspicuously avoided overtly discussing the nature of “truth” throughout this dissertation due to its inherent slipperiness. What is “true” and what is not is so subjective and based on one’s interpretation, that I find it being the focus of scholarship on documentary unproductive – and I am not the only scholar to do so.<sup>368</sup> Truth claims are slippery – and documentarians such as Agnès Varda (as I have explained) are deliberately and playfully self-contradictory. That being said, the COVID-19 pandemic has the general public critically engaging with the nature of representing reality; not to say that this awareness did not already exist (far from it), but it certainly heightened it. There is an affective link to truth representation that COVID-19 exacerbates. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic elicited a heightened emotional response that crossed borders via online means, including the collective viewings of documentaries – ironic for the fact that borders to many countries were shut down, an extreme case being my home country of Australia. Documentary cinema – and other media forms like it – are means through which

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<sup>367</sup> On the pandemic and the role of disinformation, see Brian H. Spitzberg’s very helpful breakdown on the various conspiracy theories in “Comprehending Covidiocy Communication: Dismisinformation, Conspiracy, and Fake News,” in *Communicating Science in Times of Crisis: COVID-19 Pandemic*, ed. H. Dan O’Hair and Mary John O’Hair (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2021), 15–53.

<sup>368</sup> I reference Paul Ward’s *Documentary: The Margins of Reality* in the body of this dissertation, and he is one of many scholars who, too, finds the true/untrue dichotomy unproductive. His chapter on animated documentary (chapter 5) is especially clear on this issue.



those affected by the pandemic were able to connect and digest the bizarre turn of events during 2020 and beyond. Actual borders were shut, but metaphorical ones were open (it would be rather strange to utilize the term “technical borders” here).

It is this globality that brings me, once again, to what field to which this dissertation belongs. As I said in my introduction, while this is a Film Studies dissertation, my choice of films sits firmly in French Studies. What is more, French nationalism was very much at the fore of many of my choice films; the clearest example is the use of hyperbolic vocabulary in relation to the *Bibliothèque nationale (de France)*, but also throughout the dissertation, from Méliès to Sagat, and so on – all the figures I cite have contributed to the French image in one way or another, whether in high (Méliès) or low (Sagat) art. Yet each of these distinctly French figures have made their presence outside of France – a fact that I have made oblique references to outside this dissertation. Varda was awarded an Honorary Oscar in Hollywood, Sagat had a very popular signing in San Francisco, and Méliès has had heightened attention due to Martin Scorsese’s 2011 film *Hugo*. This French-ness in- and outside of France then begs the question: what about similar archival spaces around the world? The BnF and the *Cinémathèque* are highly centralized, a Parisian base for knowledge that covers the entire hexagon. Consider the equivalent film archive in Australia – the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA). The official website of the NFSA espouses similar language to that of the *Cinémathèque* and the BnF, yet without the overt hyperbolic language [“everything in France is found here”]. Rather, the wording of its mission statement reflects how its large collection has the potential to evolve: “The NFSA’s mission is to collect, preserve and share Australia’s vibrant and diverse audiovisual culture as embodied by our evolving collection – reflecting who we were, who we are, and who we want to

be.”<sup>369</sup> What is more, there is a curious link to the chapter four’s capturing the paranormal, since the NFSA is said to be one the most haunted buildings in Australia. Legends have emerged due to the building’s original purpose as the Australian Institute of Anatomy, housing many human body parts. Jil Hogan’s article in the *Canberra Times* simply states that “the building frequently makes ‘most haunted’ lists, plus there’s the endless spooky tales from former workers, including the contractor who claims to have been pinned against the wall by something he couldn’t see.”<sup>370</sup> As I have proposed previously, the paranormal documentary evinces an almost fetishistic desire to capture the supernatural (ghost, demon) on tape; in the context of the NFSA, Hogan details how paranormal investigator Dan McMath from Ghost Hunters of South Coast and Territories spent time there, and managed to digitally record some “weird clicking sounds.”<sup>371</sup> Rather than showing any visual evidence of any actual ghosts at the NFSA, Hogan chooses to include one still photograph of the equipment used by ghost hunters like McMath, namely a tripod on which balances what looks like a very basic video camera – which in turn is hooked up to a small television screen. Behind this equipment, we see various (albeit slightly blurry) film posters of Australian films, such as musical *Starstruck* (Gillian Armstrong, 1982). Akin to *La Rage du Démon*, there is an animated archivization that takes place – of something that is vague, invisible, intangible, and most certainly non-existent. As we have seen throughout this dissertation, documentary films animate archives not just in terms of personal identities, but also national

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<sup>369</sup> National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, “About,” accessed October 7, 2021, <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/about>.

<sup>370</sup> Jil Hogan, “Ghost Hunters Stay the Night at the National Film and Sound Archives,” *The Canberra Times*, October 28, 2015, <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6059303/ghost-hunters-stay-the-night-at-the-national-film-and-sound-archives/>

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

identities. While the Australian film and sound archive is less centralized than its French counterpart, both put forward a strong sense of national pride, as evidenced by their respective mission statements. Yet both also play with the vagueness associated through metaphorical animation, an obscurity that is linked to such national identity, whether it be a French filmmaker (Méliès) or a uniquely Australian ghost.

Yet this is not to diminish the role of personal identities in the (re)animation of archives. The fictionalized interviewees appear to have a highly individualized reaction to Méliès' *Démon*, for example. It is for this reason that I conclude this afterword with this comparison between two archives that have a personalized connection to me – a metaphorical animation, as it were. French Studies and Australian Studies converge via the animated archives – and this is just one such example of such convergence among the Humanities at large across the globe. The links to both France and Australia animate me as scholar whose work traverses borders – I am an Australian writing a dissertation in the United States on the subject of French film. The questions of technical and metaphorical animation are not unique to French Studies, clearly. They may be a starting point – but the documentaries and documentarians I have selected as case studies do not exist in a vacuum. A continuation of this project would, then, expand upon the claims made here in different geographical *milieu* – especially given the continued explosion of different documentary forms across media. The archives, in all their forms, remain animated.

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