

**VANCOUVER AND THE QUOTIDIAN:
EXPLORING EVERYDAY URBANITY
THROUGH FILM**

by

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ABSTRACT

In broadest terms, this project explores the potential of experimental documentary film for examining experiences of history in urban everyday life. The project consists of a written component, providing a theoretical discussion, and a film component, applying these theoretical insights to a documentary about the city of Vancouver. I am investigating two theoretical concepts: Lefebvre's *moments* and Barthes' *punctum*, connecting them, with the help of the theories of everyday life, to the issue of co-existence of past and present. These concepts are shown to share the characteristics of ephemerality and impossibility, disruption of conventional time, and challenge to the alienation of the everyday. I also address specific filmmaking methods that could translate the theoretical framework established earlier, to the medium of film. I take practical concepts, such as documentary mode of reception, relationship of image and sound, and formal juxtaposition, and explore them in relation to particular examples of film.

Keywords: Vancouver; History; Everyday Life; Lefebvre, Henri; Barthes, Roland; Documentary Film; Experimental Film.

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A BLUEPRINT FOR AN EXPERIMENTAL DOCUMENTARY

*The thing to do ... is to get out of Vancouver as fast as possible.
Go down one of the inlets to some fishing village
and buy a shack slap spang on the sea,
with only foreshore rights, for, say a hundred dollars.
Then live on it this winter for about sixty a month.
No phone. No rent. No consulate.
Be a squatter. Call on your pioneer ancestors.*

- Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*

REDISCOVERING VANCOUVER

Vancouver, a Western Canadian city with the population just exceeding half a million (and an additional million and a half in the adjacent metropolitan area), has a very peculiar sense of identity. While the city was incorporated in 1886 (making it young even by North American standards), the first century of its post-incorporation history appears to have at best a marginal role in the creation of its official discourse. Even less prominently featured is the history of Coast Salish First Nations, who lived on this land for thousands of years prior to the establishment of colonial settlements. Expo '86, a world fair that moved Vancouver into the era of globalization exactly a century after its incorporation, seems to be the new origin of history as reinvented by the city's imagemakers. Post-Expo Vancouver is Vancouver as it is currently marketed to the world, with its often self-ascribed superlatives, such as 'the greenest,'¹ 'the most liveable'² or, in the case of the entire province of British Columbia, simply 'the best place on Earth,'³ and

with an emphasis on the environment and recreational opportunities. The upcoming Winter Olympics in 2010 is the epitome of this phenomenon: its advertising materials are bathed in the environment-denoting palette of green and blue; aboriginal culture is reduced to caricatured mascots, while the city itself—an urban environment with its residents and its history—is absent.

The fixation on the future and negation of the past reminds us of Karl Scheffler's observation that some cities are destined "forever to become and never to be" (cited in Huyssen, 2003, p. 54). The disjuncture between marketing of Vancouver and lived experience in the city could be linked to the reliance on spectacle (especially that of the natural world) by the city planners and marketers; the impact of mega-events, such as Expo '86 and the 2010 Winter Games; and perhaps most importantly, to reducing the city to its real estate. With changing mechanisms of maximizing real estate profit, the city has reinvented itself multiple times, with the current vision given the tautological name of Vancouverism. A product of the globalization of Vancouver's real estate market, Vancouverism is "characterized by tall, but widely separated, slender towers interspersed with low-rise buildings, public spaces, small parks and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and facades to minimize the impact of a high density population" (Chamberlain, 2005, p. C8). The focus of the development is high-rise residential properties, often used for investment and real estate speculation rather than for living. At the peak of the real estate boom in 2007, the very high-end 'luxury estates' were priced at \$20 million and over.⁴

Another outcome of focusing on high density through the development of tall and disproportionately slender buildings is the increasingly bland, uniform architecture of the city. Prominent Vancouver architecture critic Trevor Boddy (2006) describes Vancouver's new architecture as exhibiting a "plannerly bias towards ersatz historic references for new buildings and streetscapes" (para. 10), with the city as "immersed in ... promotional oversell" (para. 11), leading to "a lowering of Vancouver's already-low architectural standards" (para. 15). Boddy proceeds with examples of particular buildings characterized by "lack of striving for architectural excellence by typology-obsessed planners" (Ibid.).

Another major concern with high density—the cornerstone of Vancouverism—is that it is detrimental to urban heritage (architectural and non-architectural).⁵ The history of Vancouver's built heritage and its cultural communities, embodied in the regions of the city that are now extinct (Hogan's Alley, once the centre of Vancouver's African Canadian community, and Japantown), or being or having been at varying degree of danger (Strathcona, Downtown Eastside), stands at odds with the city's aspirations for its place in global markets.

Looking beyond the veneer of architecture, much more prominent problems become apparent. The aforementioned Downtown Eastside is also known as Canada's poorest postal code, often appearing in contexts such as exposés or discussions of homelessness, runaway youth, sex trade and drug markets. The 2010 Winter Games opened yet another wound, sparking conflicts between the

proponents and opponents of the event, especially within BC's First Nations.⁶

Drug- and gang-related conflicts and deaths become increasingly prominent in reporting on Vancouver in non-Canadian media.⁷ In most cases, the discussion of these issues appears insular, removed from a wider context of the city and its history.

Thus, two discourses can be seen as most prominently addressing Vancouver's past and present: a jubilation of marketing of Vancouver as an ecologically minded tourist destination and real estate investment opportunity, and a substantially more critical assessment from a political economy and social justice perspective. The goal of my project—the paper and the experimental documentary—is to search for an alternate discourse. The written component of the project addresses the issues of theory, in particular the perspectives of historical materialism and the co-existence of past and present through theories of everyday life. The paper itself is separated into two major parts, the first an exploration of approaches to everyday life, and the second an application of those approaches to filmmaking techniques in general. The film component of the project transposes and applies this theoretical framework to Vancouver in visual images, texts and sounds of the city.

PAST AND PRESENT IN THEORIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Much can be said about the relationship of film theory to filmmaking practice. I view this paper as a grounded methodological exploration of the two, establishing a theory/practice connection for a particular project. In this section, I will be discussing the theoretical basis for my documentary project. Conceptualizing *Regarding Vancouver* (2010), I drew inspiration and guidance from everyday life studies, and a particular theoretical thread connecting the concepts of moments, as theorized by Henri Lefebvre, and *punctum*, as meditated upon by Roland Barthes. Most of the following section is devoted to establishing and analyzing this connection, and relating it to the studies of cities in general, and Vancouver in particular. However, before starting this discussion, I will address the issue of history as a mediator of past and present, and link it to the studies of everyday life.

I will open with what may seem like a truism: history now is not what it used to be. As suggested by Andreas Huyssen (2003), until fairly recently “the discourse of history was there to guarantee the relative stability of the past in its pastness” (p. 1). This boundary between past and present is no longer stable, as observable in the wide availability of numerous kinds of mediated past (historical fiction, speculative history, photographic, audio and video records, etc.). Huyssen is both apprehensive of and fascinated by this phenomenon: on the one hand, “our newly found obsessions with the past” may result in “self indulgence, melancholy fixations, and a problematic privileging of the traumatic dimension of life with no exit in sight” (p. 6). On the

other hand, this co-existence of past and present in historical discourses can enable us “to articulate our political, social, and cultural dissatisfactions with the present state of the world” (Ibid.). The stakes are clear: if used appropriately, the dissolved boundary between past and present can become a valuable political, analytical and cultural tool. If used inappropriately, however, it could turn into all-encompassing, and ultimately debilitating nostalgia.

Looking for constructive approaches to historiography, I was particularly intrigued by two unorthodox approaches put forth by Laura Marks and Jeffrey Skoller. Laura Marks (1999) investigates the material connection between past and present evoking metaphors of fetish and fossil. Although she discusses history in the context of the indexicality of documentary cinema, the use of these metaphors can be expanded to a wider context of mediated past. Marks defines a fetish as something having been in “contact with some original, powerful object”⁸ (p. 225). Fossils also “acquire their meaning by virtue of originary contact” (p. 227); when the term is used as a metaphor for cinema, it “refer[s] to the power of memory images to embody different pasts” (Ibid.). Film has “fetishlike/fossil-like quality,” it “bears the trace of another material object on its surface” (p. 228).

Indexicality in documentary film is “one of its defining qualities” (Marks, 1999, p. 228), bringing it to the fore as one of the ultimate criteria determining the value of the film. However, oftentimes traces “of the real on film [are] embalmed in layers of historical use and interpretation, which obscure and ultimately transform any original meaning it might have had” (Ibid.). Engaging with these traces, suggests

Marks, requires “a tactile, rather than purely mental, contact” (Ibid.). Fetishes and fossils are no longer metaphors, but rather objects that engage with the researcher’s visceral sensations and become a part of their everyday materiality.

A related perspective on the relationship of past to present—one of a co-existence, used to “contextualize our past in relation to the present,” and potentially “used to produce social, political, and cultural consensus from the point of view of those producing such histories” (p. xxi)—is the basis of Jeffrey Skoller’s 2005 study *Shadows, Specters, Shards*. Skoller begins the book with a discussion of Ernie Gehr’s *Signal—Germany on the Air* (1982–85), describing the effect of the film on his perception of history and time:

Using an opposite strategy from that of traditional films about historical events that overflow the screen with the signifiers of periodized catastrophe or emotional accounting of events that safely place the past elsewhere, this film ... through a refusal to re-create or re-present, evokes a past that only exists in the present. As I watch, I am aware of the real time of the film moving through the gate of the projector, which also places me in the present, heightening my awareness of the act of seeing and thinking. (p. xiv)

The coexistence of past and present manifests itself in a number of ways. *Shadows, specters and shards* from the title of the study refer to “the aspects of historical knowledge that are occluded, incomplete, and intuited” (Skoller, 2005, p. xv). In other words, treating history as a text requires subjective, constructive and creative effort on part of the researcher and the audience. Skoller contrasts the aforementioned method to traditional historiography, suggesting that his method “at once critiques the formal social science discipline of historiography and revitalizes it

by complicating the relationships between aesthetic and historiographic practices” (pp. xvi–xvii).

Notably, the “occluded, incomplete, and intuited” history contained in the present, as shown in the example of Ernie Gehr’s *Signal—Germany on the Air*, manifests itself in the quotidian rather than in the institutions conventionally associated with history (archives, museums, etc.). It is also the quotidian that will permit a more direct, tactile interaction with the traces of past, as suggested by Marks. Thus, explorations of historical materiality and the notion of past-in-the-present have led me to current scholarship of everyday life. Ben Highmore, one of the contemporary scholars of the quotidian, suggests that “the everyday offers itself up as a problem, a contradiction, a paradox: both ordinary and extraordinary, self-evident and opaque, known and unknown, obvious and enigmatic. ... In attempting to make the everyday vivid, phantasmagoric representation is replaced by practical, poetic and critical observations” (2002, p. 16). In his volume *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, Highmore utilizes, among other approaches, cultural and art movements, such as Mass-Observation and Surrealism, to “test the potential of different forms of representation to apprehend the experience of everyday life” (p. 22), and to render “what is most familiar unfamiliar” (p. 23).

In the diverse scholarship of everyday life, two concepts in particular—Lefebvre’s *moments* and Barthes’s *punctum*, struck me as having potential for re-learning the everyday and uncovering its presence in historical discourses. Rather than being two disparate concepts, they can be seen as a part of a larger paradigm of French studies of

the quotidian, including a number of other writers, such as de Certeau and Perec (Ross, 1995, Kelly, 2000, Sheringham, 2006). The link between the two concepts is similar to the progression I am hoping to achieve in this section of the paper: with moments, Lefebvre theorizes disalienating events directly; Barthes's *punctum*, as I see it, is a mediated, photographic moment, enabling me to transition from verbal theory to photographic, and later filmic modalities.

Lefebvre's moments can be defined as "instances of intense experience in everyday life that provide an immanent critique of the everyday" (Highmore, 2002, p. 115). Lefebvre's own definition of moments is more opaque: a moment is "a higher form of repetition, renewal and reappearance, and of the recognition of certain determinable relations with otherness (or the other) and with the self" (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 344). Lefebvre's theorizing of moments constitutes more of a conceptual sketch, than a full-fledged theory (the two primary sources of his work on moments are "The Inventory" [1959/2003], a chapter from his autobiography,⁹ and *Critique of Everyday Life Vol. 2* [1961/2002]).¹⁰ The incompleteness of this theory, bestowing enough fertile ground for interpretation, yet never reaching an authoritative, singular vision, is precisely the reason why it is so appealing to me—it provides the opportunity to start with Lefebvre's groundwork, add elements from other theorists, like Barthes, and formulate filmmaking methods that permit a different approach to recording, representing and manufacturing spatial and physical crystallizations of time past and present.

In “The Inventory” and *Critique of Everyday Life Vol. 2*, Lefebvre starts his theory of moments with, respectively, examples of moments of play (2003, p. 166), and moments of love (2002, p. 341). These examples are quite necessary, as abstracting the concept of moments poses a number of difficulties: first, the issue of terminology (Lefebvre makes a distinction between a moment and an instant [2002, p. 343], as well as a moment and a situation [p. 352]). Similarly, it is difficult to place the theory of moments within a philosophical tradition, or even within philosophy itself. (It “comprises a critique of existentialism and essentialism,” and “uses concepts and categories elaborated by philosophy, but outside any system and any attempt at systematization” [Lefebvre, 2002, p. 349]).

How do the examples of ‘moments of play’ and ‘moments of love’ help to theorize moments? For a child, suggests Lefebvre, “it is difficult to distinguish play from action, work or fighting”; a child “plays while working or works while playing”¹¹ (2003, p. 167). As an individual matures, she or he starts having “forms of play which are specifically nothing but play” (pp. 166–167). Moments of play can have their own “specific categories: the rule, the partner, the stake, the risk and the wager, luck, skill, strategy”; they have no fixed boundaries, as “anything can be played at and become a game” (but then that entity will also cease being anything else); thus “there is an absolute in the moment of the game” (p. 167).

The two examples of moments of love and moments of play, while not being particularly lucid, outline the basic characteristics of Lefebvre’s moments, fleshed out more elaborately in the remainder of each respective chapter. In *Critique*, Lefebvre

lists seven characteristics of a moment: intentionality, duration, repeatability, content, form, tendency towards an absolute, and disalienation. The penultimate characteristic may be the most controversial and most misunderstood, yet it is an essential precondition for the moment to be disalienating. Lefebvre acknowledges this, suggesting that “we cannot conceive of the absolute, let alone live it. Therefore a moment proposes itself as an impossible” (2002, p. 346). He follows up with the aforementioned examples of love and play: “What love worthy of the name does not want to be unique and total, an impossible love? ... By analogy, play makes players and the player makes his game into an absolute: the aim, the meaning of life” (p. 346). However, there is a catch: nothing exists in its purest manifestation, and a moment is “an impossible possibility, aimed at, desired and chosen as such” (p. 347). Thus, tending towards its absolute—be it play, love, or something else, a moment is bound not to reach it. For Lefebvre, the failure of a moment is its natural and expected terminus (p. 351). Due to the very “madness (not pathological, but often verging on delirium)” of seeking this absolute, Lefebvre describes a moment as “disalienating in relation to the triviality of everyday life” (p. 347). A moment is “an individual and freely celebrated festival, a tragic festival” pitted against “the emptiness of everyday life, emptiness and ennui” (p. 348).

While a moment is destined to fail, the inevitability of failure provides an opportunity (and an impetus) for another try, and leading to the cyclicity of life (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 352). The view of cyclicity of time and human activity (later developed into a theory of *rhythmanalysis*), germinating in the concept of moments,

argues Stuart Elden (2004), is at the heart of Lefebvre's view of history, conceptually bringing it closer to Nietzsche than to Lefebvre's other influences, such as Hegel or Heidegger, or, most notably, Marx, whom Lefebvre was closely associated with for the longest period of his early writing career.

Just as Lefebvre's work on everyday life marked a departure from his previous, more orthodox Marxist writings, Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* (1981) is a significant departure from his earlier work without completely eschewing it. He moves away from semiotic and structuralist analysis, instead examining the immanent, visceral effect of photographic image. While he specifies his position as that of 'the Spectator,' rather than the photographer ('the Operator') (p. 9), his work is primarily about the photographs themselves—it is their nature, the potential contained in them that evokes particular reactions in the spectator. These reactions are described by, respectively, *studium*, or "a kind of general interest ... application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment ... but without special acuity" (p. 26), and *punctum*, an "element that will break (or punctuate) the *studium* ... [a] sting, speck, cut, little hole ... [an] accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (pp. 26–27). The *punctum*, which I see as a mediated version of Lefebvre's moment, can be of two kinds: first, some kind of an attracting detail (p. 42). The second kind of *punctum* "is Time, the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme*¹² ('that-has-been'), its pure representation" (p. 96). Barthes illustrates this kind of *punctum* with examples of a photograph of a condemned assassin waiting for an execution ("the *punctum* is: *he is going to die*") (p.

96), and, most famously, the photograph of his mother as a young child. Barthes concludes that a photograph “becomes a bizarre *medium*, a new kind of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: ... on the one hand ‘it is not there,’ on the other ‘but it indeed has been’ (p. 115).

Camera Lucida has evoked a wide range of responses. Jacques Derrida (1988), for example, deconstructed the *studium/punctum* pairing, arguing that the relationship is complementary rather than mutually exclusive, ignoring what others, like McHoul and Wills (1986) have noted: *Camera Lucida* is a “Cartesian project”—not in the sense of ascertaining the material/spiritual duality, but due to being conceived through an attempt to “efface all learning, all ‘natural interpretations’” (p. 273) when investigating the ‘magic’ of the photograph. To Barthes, *studium* is of little interest—regardless of whether it can be said to be the complement or the opposite of the *punctum*. Others, like Knight (1997) and Olin (2002), approached the study with an almost sleuth-like fervor, arguing, for example, that the famous Winter Garden photograph of Barthes’s mother never existed. These claims are again beside the point: with the possible exception of the non-existent photograph of the mother, all the other photographs Barthes discusses are, undeniably, real. Shifting all of the focus from what is special about the reproduced photographs he discusses, to why one of them is not reproduced, aids little in understanding the former.

Perhaps the most enlightening early critique of *Camera Lucida* has been put forth by Victor Burgin (1986). In addition to clarifying Barthes’s use of some phenomenological terms that can be misconstrued by their lay definitions (e.g.

essence¹³), he addresses the apparent lack of a methodological rigour in theorizing the *punctum*:

Barthes was once asked at the end of the lecture, by someone obviously irritated by what they took be Barthes's wilful 'difficulty', if Freudian 'super-ego' wasn't *really* just what we all know as 'conscience'. Barthes replied: 'Yes, if you leave out the rest'. It was rather like being asked if 'lightning' isn't the same thing as 'Zeus's thunderbolt'—yes it is, if you're happy to ignore the difference between the 'world-view' of modern meteorology and that of classical mythology. On page 88 of *Camera Lucida* does Barthes reject systematic approaches to photography, or does he not? Yes, he does, if you leave out the rest. (p. 91)

What is 'the rest' that may be left out when reading *Camera Lucida* as, chiefly, an attempt to establish the uniqueness of *punctum*? Burgin points to Barthes's earlier essay "The Third Meaning," where Barthes coins the term 'obtuse meaning,' referring to "a supplement [to the denotative and connotative meanings] that ... intellection cannot succeed in absorbing, at once persistent and fleeting, smooth and elusive" (Barthes, 1977, p. 54).¹⁴ Furthermore, lying outside the realms of connotation and denotation, it is "the signifier without the signified ... outside (articulated) language while nevertheless within interlocution." (p. 61).

The *punctum*, like the obtuse meaning, contains a seeming paradox—it is to have a meaning without signifying at the same time. The meaning of the *punctum* can be of different sorts: starting with the 'this-has-been,' through pure affect of *punctum-as-a-detail*, to encapsulating the essence of something or someone, like Barthes's mother in the Winter Garden photograph. A much less-quoted pairing of concepts Barthes establishes in *Camera Lucida* is the opposition of 'the mask'—the mythological meaning 'worn' by the subject of a photograph (pp. 34–35), and 'the air,' "the luminous shadow which accompanies the body" (p. 110); 'the air' is what

“expresses the subject” (p. 109). In a way, the concept of ‘the air’ of a photograph is much more complementary to the *punctum* than the *studium* is. According to Barthes, all of the photographs of his mother assumed masks, except for the Winter Garden one, where “suddenly the mask vanished: there remained a soul, ageless but not timeless, since this air was the person I used to see, consubstantial with her face, each day of her long life” (pp. 109–110). The Winter Garden photograph becomes an encapsulation of the essence of Barthes’s mother; maybe it is a moment of mother-son relationship, a moment of love, or a moment of loss; it is definitely an instance of the ‘impossible possibility’ Lefebvre wrote of when defining a moment.

How do Barthes’s *punctum* and Lefebvre’s moments fit into the discourse of history and experiencing the past through materiality of the quotidian? Notably, both share the notions of impossibility and ephemerality. To recapitulate, moments strive towards some absolute—‘play,’ ‘love’—and burn out, self-destruct in the process. The impossibility of the photograph is due to the paradox described above, a “superimposition ... of reality and of the past” (Barthes, 1981, p. 76). This impossibility Barthes writes of seems to be akin to the tension towards an absolute in Lefebvre’s moments, described by Lefebvre as “impossible possibility” (2002, p. 347). Similarly, like the vortexes of time in moments, photographs fold time in a peculiar, non-linear manner. Barthes comments on a photograph of the road to Bethlehem by August Salzman: “three tenses dizzy my consciousness: my present, the time of Jesus, and that of the photographer” (p. 97). In the photograph “the past is as certain as the present, what we see on the paper is as certain as what we touch” (Barthes, 1981, p. 88).

However, a more important connecting thread is what Dana Polan (1981) refers to as ‘privatization of experience,’ or promoting “individualist ways to take personal pleasure in the face of an ostensible vast ideological repression” (p. 45). Lefebvre (2002) describes the moment as “a function of a history, the history of the individual” (p. 344). Lefebvre situates his analysis of history primarily in relation to the individual experiencing it, very much in contrast to then-prevalent trend of structuralist abstraction. Notably, Barthes was “the only structuralist Lefebvre seemed to have any time for” (Elden, 2004, p. 113). Lefebvre praised him for his ‘first-rate’ analysis of fashion, yet ultimately was disappointed that Barthes “is interested in how things work as signs, and does not relate signs to life itself” (Ibid.). Of course, this is exactly the path Barthes takes in his late writings. Burgin (1986) quotes Barthes as having said that “it is necessary to choose between being a terrorist and being an egoist” (p. 78), with all of his post-1975 work being determined by the latter choice. There is no intention of a backhanded insult in calling Barthes an egoist; in fact, it leads to “the ‘privatisation’ of Barthes’s discourse, his abandoning of the voice of the tutor” (Ibid.), or even to promoting “postromantic egoism as a revolutionary act” (Polan, 1981, p. 45).

To me, private experience is the most crucial connection of the moment and the *punctum*. Once again, I must stress that a moment’s tending ‘towards an absolute’ does not necessarily undermine privacy in the experience of a moment; even Barthes’s *punctum* is tending towards an absolute (it is arguable whether that absolute is love, death or pity). A moment can also be a private experience, as Lefebvre (2002) shows in an example of a ‘moment of poetry’:

An object, a being, a fugitive impression ... receives the privilege of unbearable, unbelievable, inexplicable burden of presence. A smile or a tear, a house or a tree become a whole world. They really are, for the moment that lasts, and which fixing themselves in words will recur and be repeated almost indefinitely in the future. In this way a smile or a cloud become eternal. (p. 169)

Reading Lefebvre closely, the greatest difference between the moment and *punctum* appears: a moment's intentionality (it is 'a moment of something,' rather than just 'a moment'). To the contrary, a *punctum*, if we are to believe in its origins in obtuse meaning, is a signifier without the signified, it is not a '*punctum* of something.' While the two concepts, as I have shown so far, share many characteristics, they should not be seen as synonymous, but rather complementary. In practical terms, this difference enables me to pose fairly different questions: Is there such a thing as a moment of the city, or a moment of urban experience (something that, as is required by Lefebvre's definition of a moment, embodies the city and nothing else)? Or, rather, do those urban life experiences constitute a set of *punctum*-like reactions that are "outside (articulated) language while nevertheless within interlocution" (Barthes, 1977 p. 61)? Where can 'the air', the "luminous shadow" of the city be discovered? In search for an answer to these questions, I turn to various photographic representations of the city.

Images of cities, and images of Vancouver in this particular case, are abundant. However, the most prevalent of these images—postcards, coffee table books, and travelogues—all demonstrate official facades of the city, put on for show, created though the process of framing, not unlike how a person poses for their photograph. In contrast to these urban representations intended to present and sell a particular

image of a city, street photography is a genre that breaks the masks of urban representation.

In *Unfinished Business*, a volume originating in and expanding on an exhibition of Vancouver street photography, the editors proclaim the need to challenge “standardized views of Vancouver” which “turn the geography into the primary spectacle of progress and development,” at least realizing that in this city there is “something ... besides the mountains and the sea” (Jeffries et al., 2005, p. 10). Bill Jeffries, the curator of the exhibition, suggests that Vancouver street photography of 1955–1985 (the period covered by the exhibition), is characterized by “what is/was, rather than what [the photographers] wanted the city to be”, thus, it is “somewhat skewed toward the bland streetscape” (Jeffries, 2005, p. 24). Fred Herzog, atypically for street photography in the 1950s shooting colour slide film, writes of the apparent irony of Vancouver’s downtown: “while we could well afford a peaceful, predictable, well-fed and boring destiny for all citizens, we offer instead a bare existence that upgrades life to grade B movie drama full of photo-ops” (Herzog, 2005, p. 160). To Herzog, street photography disallows “status, pretense, political correctness, and excess sincerity”, uncovering “unseen visual treasures—out there in plain view but yet invisible to most” (pp. 160–161). These treasures constitute the ‘privatized experience’ discussed earlier—they originate in something available to everyone, yet accessed only by the photographer, and then re-presented, once again, to everyone.

An apparent pattern emerges: in the case of Vancouver street photography, photographers question the officially constructed iconographies of the view and the

landscape (e.g. Roy Arden), or present a very palpable history to a city that is supposed not to have one (e.g. Fred Herzog). The “unseen visual treasures” are the details of cityscape puncturing the mask of the city, allowing us to un-learn the familiar landscape and then to rediscover it. From my point of view, street photography both allows the aforementioned processes of un-learning and re-discovery, and provides the visceral, immanent impact of Barthes’s *punctum*.

In this section I have moved from a rather broad subject—history, or more precisely history in the urban context, through Marks’s and Skoller’s unorthodox reinterpretations of historiography and past-in-the-present, to two concepts of the scholarship of the quotidian, moments and *punctum*. As I have argued above, these two concepts offer singular treatments of temporality and the value of individual experience, which become the two guiding elements in my view of urban history. I have concluded this section by applying these concepts and exposing their qualities in street photography, since my filmmaking techniques originate in my interest in still photography: I am most interested in the aesthetics of a still image; I almost always avoid camera movement or even any excessive movement within the frame. However, I would not want *Regarding Vancouver* to be construed as a slideshow¹⁵ of street photography, thus the following section provides the rationale for moving the theoretical concepts of moment and *punctum* and the practical problem of rediscovering the quotidian of Vancouver through film, rather than still photography.

MOVING INTO FILMIC MODALITY

In this section of the paper, I am looking for methods and approaches to transpose the concepts discussed in the text above, into filmic modality. Many of these methods are adapted from what can be called avant-garde, or experimental filmmaking. I am well aware that in 1986, Andreas Huyssen famously stated that “not only is the historical avant-garde a thing of the past, but it is also useless to try to revive it under any guise” (p. 15), as avant-garde techniques, such as shock or alienation effect, have been co-opted by mass culture. However, Huyssen then proceeds with a not so oft-cited suggestion to “retain the avant-garde’s attempt to address those human experiences which either have not yet been subsumed under capital, or which are stimulated but not fulfilled by it” (1986, p. 15). Subsequently, “aesthetic experience in particular must have its place in this transformation of everyday life, since it is uniquely apt to organize fantasy, emotions, and sensuality against that repressive desublimation which is so characteristic to capitalist culture since the 1960s” (Huyssen, 1986, p. 15). In other words, avant-garde techniques can be used to locate and create Lefebvrian moments, providing a critique of everyday life while experiencing it. The goal of this section is identifying such techniques and relating them to the concepts of *punctum* and moment.

Before proceeding, one major point must be addressed: Barthes (1981) explicitly states that he is theorizing photography in contrast to cinema (pp. 3, 55, 89, 116–117). An insight into Barthes’s relationship to film—or, to be more precise, cinema—

can be gained from his essay “Upon Leaving the Movie Theater” (1979). Barthes is thinking of cinema as an institution, rather than a medium: “when I say cinema, I can’t help think ‘theater’ more than ‘film’” (p. 1). His analysis is psychoanalytic, following the lines of apparatus theory (he explores the effects of the dark room, the cone of light projecting the image, the anonymity of the audience, etc.), and he uses the psychoanalytical analogy of a mirror to describe the spectator’s identification with the protagonist. Cinema exhibits “a dual relationship with platitudes:” a narcissistic one, created through identification, and a maternal one, created through the womb-like environment of the theatre (p. 3).

Addressing the question of Barthes’s inability/unwillingness to work in filmic medium, Polan (1981) suggests another reason for this apparent paradox: for Barthes, cinema is not only an enveloping plenitude; it is also inextricably conflated with ideology, creating “a pure bathing in a ‘festival of affects’” (p. 44). As stated previously, Polan posits that “Barthes’s later work moves increasingly to privatize experience” (p. 45), and his view of cinema as an enveloping, ideological flow of affect does not allow critical interruptions. Thus I am turning to forms of film that allow both the interruptions to their narrative/experiential flow, and provide opportunities for the filmmaker and the spectator to create privatized experiences.

Documentary film, from my point of view, is one of these forms. While many definitions of a documentary exist, the one I am particularly interested in was formulated by Dai Vaughan. Writing around the same time as Barthes was publishing his later works,¹⁶ Vaughan (1992) defines documentary as a “mode of

response to film material,” rather than a genre or production mode. A ‘documentary response,’ suggests Vaughan, is

a mode of response founded upon the acknowledgment that every photograph is a portrait signed by its sitter. Stated at its simplest, the documentary response is one in which the image is perceived as signifying what it appears to record; a documentary film is one which seeks, by whatever means, to elicit this response; and the documentary movement is the history of the strategies which have been adopted to this end. (p. 101)

Notably, Vaughan states that the prerogative to adopt a documentary response lies with the viewer; yet, being an editor, he constructs his argument from the editor’s perspective, providing many examples of different ways to cut some particular scene, and the decisions that would go into preferring, say, a medium shot of the interview subject over a reverse reaction shot. The editor’s perspective is rather unique, as, even though being a production role, it is closer to that of a *bricoleur*, someone who constructs new meanings from ‘found’ ones with materials at hand. Facing the apparent convergence of fiction and documentary film, Vaughan’s suggestion is to turn to what is oftentimes seen as experimental approaches—jump cuts, interlocking narration, emphasis on the constructed nature of film, suggesting that “the creativity of future documentary must consist largely in exploring them” (p. 110). At the heart of this experimentation is the attempt to present documentary film as a record, not dissimilar to Barthes’s temporal ‘this-has-been’ *punctum* in photography.

In the title of this paper, I am calling *Regarding Vancouver* an ‘experimental documentary.’ The ‘experimental’ part of this term may be even more problematic than the ‘documentary’ one. A recent issue of the *Millennium Film Journal*, a

semiannual publication of avant-garde cinema theory and practice, is dedicated to what its editors labelled as “experiments in documentary.” In the introductory editorial of the volume, Lucas Hilderbrand (2009) states that “as a term, ‘experimental documentary’ is both ugly and vague,” and that a more “elegant” term, ‘essay film,’ may become too limiting due to the implied use of celluloid and screening conventions in ‘film,’ and linguistic connotations in ‘essay’ (pp. 4–5). The introduction is followed by a questionnaire answered by twelve film- and videomakers, exhibiting a wide range of reactions to the term in question. For example, Su Friedrich (2009) considers cinema in general to be “ill-served by the term ‘experimental’” (p. 20), making self-proclaimed experimental documentary filmmakers voluntarily ostracize themselves from the other filmmakers, and render public perception of their work as second-rate. Similarly, Donigan Cumming (2009) fears that “categorization of documentary work as ‘experimental’ might lead to its dismissal as incomplete or inapplicable to the average person” (p. 14).

Possible alternatives to the use of ‘experimental documentary,’ in addition to ‘essay film,’ are ‘hybrid documentary’ (as formulated by Paul Ward [2005]), ‘experiential documentary’—“a cinematic experience that is also a life experience” (Cumming, 2009, p. 14), or a call for a broader definition of the term ‘documentary,’ needing no further qualifying descriptors (Renov, 2007). However, I choose to use this contested term, partially due to its baggage and widely acknowledged imperfection, and partially due to the reasons voiced by the proponents of this term among the respondents to the *Millennium Film Journal* questionnaire. Ernie Larsen and Sherry Millner (2009) urge

readers to “discover, uncover, or unmask experimental documentary as a valid, persistent, vital category of film practice/film history” (p. 34), emphasizing that, in film history, experimental film has a tradition of its own, and therefore ‘experimental documentary’ should be seen as “radical in-betweenness” of experimental film and documentary, rather than the poor relation of the latter. Jesse Lerner (2009) provides a similar argument, defining experimental documentary as “the place where the avant-garde’s interrogations of the real world meet the bravest and most inventive outposts of documentary” (p. 37). Finally, filmmakers who claim to hesitate to call themselves documentarians (Frédéric Moffet, Mark Street) proclaim their preference for the label of ‘experimental documentary’ as a challenge to the canon of documentary film through “fictional approaches” (Moffet, 2009, p. 40).

Arguably, films involving urban subjects have always occupied the space between documentary and experimental/avant-garde film. Paul Arthur (2005) suggests that the emergence of this genre was by no means accidental; rather, it was a direct outcome of modernity, where “cinema helped make the complex experience of modern cities more legible” (p. 46). Furthermore, he argues that utopian visions of cities in film (the so-called city symphonies, e.g. *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* [1929]), predated the now-prominent dystopian visions of the cities because urbanism was a necessary precondition for filmmaking, for reasons ranging from technological and economic (such as manufacture of equipment and mass-consumption of the final product) to thematic ones. Arthur concludes that early cinema and urbanity had a co-dependent relationship as both originating in, and subsequently epitomizing modernity.

At the time of their creation, in the third decade of the twentieth century, city symphonies may have been presenting what Barthes calls ‘the air’ of the cities and the essence of modernity; yet, for the contemporary viewer they may seem too formulaic. Nonetheless, urban subjects remain one of the central themes in experimental film. In the particular case of the United States, unlike mainstream Hollywood fare, experimental film “consistently represented the inner workings of urban society as a source of personal redemption and collective nourishment” (Arthur, 2005, p. 47). Arthur discusses a number of “separate, loosely defined, and not mutually exclusive configurations ... of organizing urban experience and society”; he labels them the emblem, tour, catalogue, microcosm, diary, and essay (pp. 50–57). These ‘configurations’ appear to be related to Lefebvre’s moments: they have their own, particular forms; they are tending towards something particular (even if, in Arthur’s case, it is not an absolute). They are classifiable and identifiable, and, not dissimilarly to moments, they invite new attempts to construct emblems, tours, catalogues, microcosms, diaries, essays, based on the lessons learned from previous ones.

My means of collecting material is random walks in Vancouver (a technique related to the Situationists’ *dérive*), stopping and shooting whenever something in the cityscape stops me; like Barthes’s *punctum*, I am looking for something that “animates me” (1981, p. 20). The first round of acquiring material is very intuitive, finding the locations I find interesting, and then coming back to them throughout the period of one year of shooting, letting a kind of temporal narrative emerge from these repeat visits.

Vaughan (1992) suggests that “to grant a film documentary sense is to respect in its images the density”, where “the elements are seen as always exceeding their contribution to any given meaning; and they remain always open to scrutiny either for their own sakes or for the potential in the generation of new meanings oblique, peripheral or even antagonistic to the text as understood” (p. 113). Editing provides the second opportunity to review the material as a Spectator, and to seek out new elements of personal, intuitive interest. This is the stage when, rather than being moved by pure affect interacting with images, I start looking for elements that would create this documentary mode of reception. In this stage, I am also incorporating other elements, such as narration and archival sound, exploring audiovisual combinations that could amount to more than, as Vaughan suggests above, just a sum of their parts.

While my visual approach, like Barthes’s meditation on photography, is more that of the Spectator rather than the Operator, the soundscape of the film is very much constructed, woven together from interviews conducted separately over a period of several months, and archival audio recordings of Vancouver from 1970s. Establishing the right kind of connection between the sonic and the visual language became one of the central conceptual decisions in the production of *Regarding Vancouver*.

In *Camera Lucida* Barthes addresses a number of issues stemming from the relationship of the word and the (photographic) image. One of the most interesting observations is that “it is the misfortune (but also perhaps the voluptuous pleasure) of language not to be able to authenticate itself. The *noeme* of language is perhaps this impotence, or, to put it positively: language is, by nature, fictional” (pp. 85–87).

Marianne Hirsch (1997), starting with similar assumptions, both agrees and disagrees with Barthes. Writing about Boudinet's "Polaroid," printed as a frontispiece of *Camera Lucida*, Hirsch suggests that in this "impenetrable façade of the domestic picture ... only words could pull back the curtain" (p. 2); while in the case of the Winter Garden photograph, "if Barthes can recognize his mother's essential being in the winter-garden picture of her, it is only possible through the description and narrative in which he articulates his response to her image" (p. 3).

While, for Barthes, a photograph ultimately points to death, Hirsch sees writing about the photograph—or, to be more precise, writing the photograph (as Hirsch urges "to make theory just as the photographer materially makes an image" [p. 15])—as moving it back into the realm of fluidity and life. Hirsch also warns against simplifying this relationship to equating "writing with life, photography with death" (p. 4). The relationship, she argues, is much more complex, as

in *Camera Lucida*, pictures and words come together to articulate 'prose pictures,' such as the absent image of the mother which exists only in prose, and 'visual narratives,' such as the numerous images reproduced in the book, many of which comment, however obliquely, on the family romance of the winter-garden photo. Text and image, intricately entangled in a narrative web, work in collaboration to tell a complicated story of loss and longing that Barthes's critical terminology can barely approximate. (p. 4)

One of the finest examples of a more complex relationship of narration and image, in my opinion, can be observed in Patrick Keiller's essay film *London* (1994). The tone is set by opening shots: a full-frame, static and somewhat too tight shot of the Tower Bridge, filling up the entire screen, followed by the white-on-black title card of the film, as the narrator announces: "It is a journey to the end of the world."

London's London is a city that has turned its back to the people that inhabit it; it is a transient, amorphous space. The contrast between the opening shot (one of the most familiar landmarks of London, often mistakenly referred to as the London Bridge) and the narrator's statement (a tribute to Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit*) could not be starker; in a way, the narration tears a Barthesian 'mask' off the shot that preceded it. The following sequence mitigates this contrast: while holding the shot of Tower Bridge, the narrator tells of Robinson, an "autodidact" "teaching in the school of Fine Art and Architecture of the University of Barking." Robinson is "on the verge of a breakthrough in his investigations," and narrator should see him "as soon as possible, before it is too late." On screen a boat approaches the bridge. We learn that the narrator is a "ship's photographer on a cruise ship," and, while the boat on screen may or may not be a cruise ship, the previously-contrasting narration and visuals almost converge. A date, January 11th 1992, appears on screen, situating the narrative in calendrical time. The narration continues:

Dirty, old Blighty. Undereducated, economically backward, bizarre. A catalogue of modern miseries, with its fake traditions; its Irish war; its militarism and secrecy; its silly old judges; its hatred of intellectuals; its ill health and bad food; its sexual repression; its hypocrisy and racism and its indolence. It's so exotic, so home-made.

During the narration, the boat continues approaching. While the narration seems to perfectly correspond to what the viewer is seeing, the image and the narration now move in different directions: the picture presents a 'mask' of the city, while the narration continuously punctures it.

The narration goes in and out of sync with the picture, thematically and tonally. The shots are simple, static; so are the cuts—no fades, with an occasional use of cut to black or intertitles. Visual simplicity permits a greater engagement with the complex narrated material, rich with literary references and frequently ironic; but, as Robert Yates (1994) notes, reducing the film to a literary essay would be unwise, as words and images “are involved in a sort of jazzy piece of social investigation which moves between theory and [visual] research” (p. 54). Keiller pairs up a shot of a MacDonald’s exterior with meditations on Baudelaire and romanticism; Kew is accompanied by “El Negro José”; ‘talking’ signposts appear, then stop talking after John Major’s electoral victory; Canary Wharf is proclaimed a “monument to Rimbaud.” Finally, anticipating a perceived imminent collapse of the city, Robinson extends his search for “vital, new artistic and literary activity” to the suburbs of Northwest London: they visit Tesco (a British supermarket chain), where they find “a café with friendly staff and pleasant, inexpensive food” but “no sign of anyone writing poetry,” while an IKEA seems “promising,” yet its “atmosphere ... [is] tainted by the ill-humour that often accompanies questions of interior design.” Iain Sinclair (1994) describes the picture and the narration as “independent, posthumously ‘married’ in the cutting room” (p. 12), yet, upon repeat viewings of the film the connection between the picture and the narration appears very organic, striking an unexpected and delicate balance between the political and the intimate, the pedestrian and the grandiose, the sarcastic and the poetic.

Visual and narrated materials, collected in the manner described above, are merely the components of a film; in order to reflect upon urban history and experience, they need to be, in Malin Wahlberg's (2008) words, "enacted" or "animated" (p. 150). The principle of juxtaposition, rather than seamless integration, is also one of the defining characteristics of Surrealism, where, according to Highmore (2002) paraphrasing André Breton,

what is at stake ... is the production of 'spark', generated by the juxtaposition of different materials, possible in a range of spheres: in poems and paintings, in everyday encounters in the street or in the 'everynight' encounters of the dream. The more difference there is between two (or more) ingredients, the greater the spark. (p. 51)

Keiller's juxtaposition of image and sound in *London*, in my view, oftentimes creates 'a spark.' Such a spark has clear characteristics of a *punctum*, striving to disrupt the routine and to unsettle the viewer, yet Highmore notes that (as critiqued by Walter Benjamin), rather than utilizing full revolutionary potential of such a 'spark,' Surrealism has been reduced to "a set of formal techniques" (p. 46), and, in a complete reversal of its original intent, co-opted by institutions such as advertising. Similarly, the Situationist International derided post-World War II Surrealism, calling it "mere bourgeois impotence, artistic nostalgia, and a refusal to envisage the liberating of our era's superior technological means" (Debord, 1958, p. 68).

Experimental/avant-garde filmmaking often utilizes superimposition as visual juxtaposition (double exposure, side-by-side projection, etc.). Guy Debord, writing on the 'construction of situations' (a concept related to Lefebvre's moments), suggested creating "live televisual projections of some aspects of one situation into another,

bringing about modifications and interferences” (Debord, 1957, p. 58). In my own work I tend to utilize juxtaposition in a number of ways. In the case of *Palimpsests* (2008), a short video work created during the research for *Regarding Vancouver*, the title refers to the over-writing process found not only in the creation of urban fabric, but also in filmmaking process. I use re-dubs of analogue video and rephotography from a CRT monitor in parallel with the depictions of construction-marred city; the obsolete video processes are juxtaposed with the built-in obsolescence of the mechanisms of capitalism. In *Pantages* (2008) I am superimposing elements of the interior of the dilapidated centenarian Vancouver’s Pantages theatre, creating non-existent, fantastical spaces. The spectator is never given an ‘objective’ view of the theatre—my aim is not to preserve the condemned theatre on film; rather, I want to reflect on the ephemerality of the last moments of the existence of the theatre, where a century of its existence conflates into an impossible temporality.

While experimental film utilizes the techniques of rephotography and double exposure to create visual juxtapositions, in conventional cinema juxtaposition is primarily created through the technique of montage. Jeffrey Skoller notes that, following Eisenstein’s suggestion that montage compares rather than presents facts, the “importance of montage lies in the ways it foregrounds the constructed nature of the meanings between things” (2005, p. xxxvi). Thus montage, used to re-present and record history, could configure new temporalities: “Godard’s famous adage ‘Not one image after another, rather, one image *plus* another’ might be restated as ‘Not one moment of time after another, rather, one moment of time *plus* another’”

(Skoller, 2005, p. 74). Similarly, montage in historical documentary can bring to the fore the artificial, human-made nature of history. Skoller characterizes Craig Baldwin's *Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America* (1991), a fictional narrative compiled of found footage, as a juxtaposition of "narrative over narrative," where "rather than presuming that there is a historical truth to be uncovered and redeemed, [it] is the revelation of machinelike workings of historical narrative construction" (p. 30).

In *Regarding Vancouver*, I am creating temporal juxtapositions superimposing the images from the present of Vancouver (albeit with a reference to some particular point in the past, e.g. the place where Hogan's Alley existed), with the audio of sound recordings from the 1970s and interviews of people reminiscing about their past in the city. The created text combines the indexical power of contemporary photography, historical sound recordings, and my artificially created situations or 'moments' of the city. As suggested above, my use of these techniques are not intended to align my work with any of the avant-garde movements, but rather, they are used as a means of studying the everyday.

It is my contention that experimental approaches, including asynchronous sound and image, visual and temporal juxtapositions, enhance the possibility of a documentary mode of response. In a wider context, these approaches permit rediscovery of urban history by making the familiar unfamiliar, and evoke the responses similar to Lefebvre's moments and Barthes's *punctum*, discussed in the first section of this paper.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE THEORY/PRACTICE FISSURE

The last section of this paper is not a traditional conclusion, as this paper serves as a lead-in to the film project. I would like to see this move from the written essay to the film as moving from literary modality into cinematic one while continuing the same discussion. A number of authors have urged us to reconsider the relationship between film theory and filmmaking practice: for example, Desmond Bell (2004) advocates for “a critical theory of practice” (p. 744), bringing “the rigour of critical theory to the core of creative process, ... illuminating ... work ... also testing the precepts of criticism and grounding film and media theoretical abstractions in ... creative engagements” (p. 748). Similarly, as cited earlier, in the introduction to her volume on family photographs (in my view highly applicable to film and video studies), Marianne Hirsch (1997) urges readers to revert to the etymological roots of theory, defining it “as an act of viewing, contemplation, consideration, insight” (p. 14), which will enable us to “practice [it], to make theory just as photographer materially makes an image” (p. 15). My attempt to find the theoretical basis for *Regarding Vancouver* is precisely this kind of theorizing, mixing the concepts of mid-twentieth century Continental European philosophy with the observations and visual explorations of Vancouver’s everyday life.

To recapitulate, my research for the experimental documentary started with an apparent need to reconsider the relationship of past and present in the city of Vancouver. Using the idea of co-presence of history and present in the quotidian, I

turned to the emerging field of everyday life studies, and followed a thread connecting two concepts—Lefebvre’s moments, “instances of intense experience in everyday life that provide an immanent critique of the everyday” (Highmore, 2002, p. 115), and Barthes’s (1981) *punctum*, a part of a photographic image that “pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)” (pp. 26–27). My goal in introducing these rather abstract concepts was not to translate them into film, but rather to draw on the conceptual issues they raise—the immanent critique of the everyday, an idiosyncratic treatment of time, privatization of experience, ephemerality—and to seek filmmaking traditions and methods that would best achieve these results. The second half of the paper transposed these elements to filmmaking, starting with Vaughan’s definition of the documentary mode of reception, followed by my choice to use the term ‘experimental documentary’ keeping in mind all of its implications, and particulars of processes such as the acquisition of footage, use of narration, and the construction of audio-visual text. Most importantly, this paper serves as—at most—a blueprint for the experimental documentary *Regarding Vancouver*; it is neither its written supplement, nor its substitute. Thus, assuming that more people will be watching the film than reading this paper, my hope is that the qualities of a moment and a *punctum* discussed here can be seen in *Regarding Vancouver* without having to be articulated verbally.

NOTES

¹ This refers to Vancouver's Greenest City Initiative, launched in February 2009, and prominently marketed in the Municipal Government's website (cited online from <http://vancouver.ca/greenestcity/index.htm>. Accessed September 3, 2009.)

² For example, in *The Economist* "liveability" rankings Vancouver topped the chart in 2009 (cited online from http://www.economist.com/markets/rankings/displaystory.cfm?story_id=13809770 Accessed September 3, 2009.)

³ "The Best Place on Earth" is the province's officially adopted advertising slogan (cited online from <http://www.bestplaceonearth.ca/>. Accessed September 3, 2009.)

⁴ For example, Sandra Thomas ([2009, Jan 28]. Shangri-La skyscraper opens doors to rich; Realtor Bob Rennie douses Oprah Winfrey Vancouver penthouse rumour. *Vancouver Courier*, 19) cites a \$18 million price tag for penthouse apartments at the Shangri-La building; the construction of Ritz-Carlton tower, with residences valued up to \$28 million, was cancelled after the real estate market crash in 2008 (Constantineau, B. [2009, Feb 25]. Putting off the Ritz: Development of Vancouver's proposed Ritz-Carlton condominium and hotel project is officially cancelled because of the global downturn. *The Vancouver Sun*, D1).

⁵ Examples can be seen in *Top Ten Endangered Heritage Sites*, compiled annually by Heritage Vancouver: <http://www.heritagevancouver.org/topten.htm>. Accessed September 9, 2009.

⁶ BC's First Nations officially support the 2010 Winter Games (cited online from <http://www.fourhostfirstnations.com>. Accessed September 3, 2009.); however, unofficial forms of protests range from moderate to nearly-militant (e.g. <http://www.no2010.com>. Accessed September 3, 2009.)

⁷ For example, BBC's "Gangland in Paradise" (cited online from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/crossing_continents/8233879.stm. Accessed September 3, 2009.)

⁸ Marks (1999) notes that her use of the term 'fetish' is not primarily psychoanalytic, it is more to do with "historical, intercultural displacements" (p. 225).

⁹ A chapter from Lefebvre's autobiography *La somme et le reste* (1959) (as of the time of writing, the autobiography has not been translated into English). The translated chapter is cited from *Henri Lefebvre: Key Writings* (2003); henceforth Lefebvre (2003).

¹⁰ Translated by John Moore and published in 2002; henceforth cited as Lefebvre (2002).

¹¹ Lefebvre (2003) extends the analogy to "the childhood of societies" and "the animal kingdom" (p. 167); I do not wish to use this extended analogy for a number of reasons, the most obvious one being potential accusations of anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism.

¹² Barthes defines *noeme* as "the very essence" of something (p. 76), thus it should probably be translated as a more familiar phenomenological term 'noema.'

¹³ According to Burgin (1986), 'the essence' in *Camera Lucida* refers to "the common factor, or factors, which unites all of our otherwise very different encounters with, in this case, photographs." (p. 79).

¹⁴ Barthes (1977) provides examples of obtuse meaning drawn from stills of Eisenstein's films. For example, in a still from *Ivan the Terrible Part I*, he senses a third, obtuse meaning in "a certain compactness in the courtiers' make-up, thick and insistent for one, smooth and distinguished for the other; the former's 'stupid' nose, the latter's finely traced eyebrows, his lank blondness [etc.]" (p. 53).

¹⁵ My intention here is by no means to deride the format of a slideshow; sometimes, like in the case of Roy Arden's *The World as Will and Representation* (2007, <http://www.royarden.com/worldas.html>), this format can achieve results far transcending the proverbial sum of its parts.

¹⁶ The essay was first published in 1992, but the editors add a note that "this paper was written in 1978/79" (Vaughan, 1992, p. 99).

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FILM COMPONENT: REGARDING VANCOUVER DVD

Regarding Vancouver DVD (2010, 23 min.) is the film component of the *Vancouver and the quotidian: Exploring everyday urbanity through film* project. The DVD complies with DVD video standards and can be played back on stand-alone DVD players or software players with standard DVD (MPEG-2) codec.