For the one-eight, my friends.

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Introduction

From the Exposition Universelle of 1889 to the aftermath of the Great War, Paris witnessed the promise and horror of a mechanized future, enduring a fundamental upheaval in the nature of urban experience. Developments in engineering which drove the construction of the Eiffel tower and the first airplanes also brought the machine gun and mustard gas, and production advancements which brought new standards of material well-being expanded consumer culture, promulgated financial speculation, and strengthened means of economic exploitation. Commodification and industrialization permeated deep into the lifeworld by the turn of the century, altering the dynamics of life and thought. While global time became standardized, individual experience was marked by shock, stimulus, and discontinuity. Traditional spatial hierarchies were leveled as well. Spiritually, the Church ceded power in the face of secularization and physically, limits on human elevation were surpassed through aviation, architecture, and film technology.

Guillaume Apollinaire's "Zone", often held as the quintessential modernist poem, and René Clair's lesser studied 1924 film *Paris qui dort* exemplify this transformation in life and thought in early twentieth century Paris. Both works examine the fragmented rhythm of modern life through non-linear, personal temporalities. Images of the old and new world are juxtaposed as Clair and Apollinaire study the dynamics of urbanization in Paris, most notably the formidable presence of the Eiffel tower. This project studies the treatment of urban dynamics in Clair's film and Apollinaire's poem through a discussion of the writings of Walter Benjamin, focusing on how Benjamin's formulations of experience, time in hell, bourgeois life, and utopian dreams can be found in and understood through these two works, ultimately leading to an understanding of the tension between liberation and domination which defines modern development. Benjamin's

essays combine an affinity for the surrealist work of the early twentieth century with a literary exploration of modern Paris, arguing for the triumph of the poet over the philosopher in successfully grasping the nature of contemporary experience. His study of experience and alienation offers a lens through which to explore Paris from the nineteenth century to the aftermath of the First World War. In *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century*, the opening series of essays in *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin tracks the city throughout these decades, studying the bourgeois triumph of Louis Philippe's reign and the subsequent *dépaysement* of Haussmann's class driven urbanism. He catalogues the political struggles of the late nineteenth century in the emergence of new forms of spatial division, such as the anti-barricade boulevards, the linking of military barracks to proletariat neighborhoods, and the more intimate effects on private bourgeois home life. Benjamin refers to the monuments of nineteenth century Paris, which include not just iconic structures but the more encompassing architectural identity and spatial arrangement, as "ruins of the bourgeoisie", and claims it was the Surrealists who first recognized them as such (*The Arcades Project* 13). In his essay "Surrealism", he hails the Surrealists for introducing work that is

> the deeply grounded composition of an individual who, from inner compulsion, portrays less a historical evolution than a constantly renewed, primal upsurge of esoteric poetry written in such a way it would be one of those scholarly confessions that can be counted in every century. (Benjamin, 212)

Surrealism demonstrated a concern for the marvelous and a search for freedom. André Breton's materialist approach, outlined in his 1924 *Manifeste du surrealisme*, combines Hegelian

philosophy, Marxist theory and Freudian psychoanalysis to respond to contemporary trauma through avant garde poetic form, rejecting the nineteenth century novel in favor of juxtaposition, automatism, and a return to qualities often lost after childhood. The aim was to achieve liberation by combating rationality, taking cues from the imaginative and spontaneous impulses stamped out in youth and commonly shunned in the mentally ill. Breton ends the manifesto with a call to look beyond the world as it is, proclaiming "l'existence est ailleurs" (64). The surrealist fascination with dreams and repressed energies found particular resonance with Benjamin, who saw the "wish images of the dreaming collective [as] the utopian longing for a better future whose advent could be promoted, once its content had been articulated" (Cohen 205).

For both Breton and Benjamin, Guillaume Apollinaire showed the revolutionary promise of these new poetic forms, achieving what Benjamin referred to as the "creative overcoming of religious illumination" ("Surrealism", 209). Apollinaire's "Zone", published in the 1913 collections *Alcools*, is a rewarding example of the technique so exalted by Benjamin and Breton. Born in Rome to a Polish mother and an unknown father, Apollinaire would become a central figure of the Paris art scene, championing cubism as a journalist and art critic, coining the term *surréalisme*, and producing a range of fiction, poetry, and plays before his death in 1918 (Pichois 319-327). "Zone" opens *Alcools*. The poem explores Paris at the turn of the twentieth century, at a time when the Eiffel tower and the airplane were still novel but before Europe experienced the industrial slaughter of the First World War. Apollinaire looks to the eternal, finding new, modern images to challenge and reimagine the religious symbols of Antiquity. Verses oscillate between wonder and anguish, depicting a fragmented subject and a disparate collection of memories. "Zone" shows the utopian promise of Benjamin's collective dream as well the alienating effects and personal, nonlinear temporalities which define modern experience.

Such images of utopia and alienation in twentieth century Paris are also found in *Paris qui dort*, René Clair's first directorial effort. Clair, whose given name was René Chomette, was born in 1898 to a bourgeois home in the rue de Halles (Billard 13). In 1917, at the age of 18, he enlisted in the Red Cross, serving as an ambulance driver on the front (Billard 31).[1] His introduction to film came while working as journalist after the war, when a friend informed him that a director was looking for an actor to play a minor role. In his short time as an actor, he adopted the surname Clair and worked under Louis Feuillade, acting in lead roles and freelancing as a film critic, where he expressed his artistic disagreements with Feuillade's style and quickly became "one of France's first serious film critics" (Dale 9-10). A few years later, Clair was introduced to Henri Diamant-Berger, who Clair described as "the classic shoe string producer." Diamant-Berger promised to finance the aspiring director's first film, which was released in 1924 under the title *Paris qui dort* (the distributor's title was *Le Rayon diabolique*) (Dale 11-2).

The film is a silent comedy. It begins with a watchman on the Eiffel tower, Albert, awaking to find that all of Paris has been paralyzed. Cars are static, pedestrians are paused mid-stride. Albert then finds the only other people not affected by this trance, a group who has just flown in from Marseille. Eventually they learn that a mad scientist named Dr. Crase has developed a ray which can stop time across the globe and due to their elevation, Albert and the

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[1] Speaking on his situation following the war, Clair remarked, "with nothing to do and no place to go, at age nineteen, having been through a completely egotistic childhood and then having been confronted with the truth of the war as opposed to the patriotic propaganda we had been fed by the newspapers, I was terribly lonely, and terribly disillusioned. I considered becoming a leftist, which at the time I thought meant joining a militant peace party. But as soon as I got out of the hospital, I headed for Paris to meet a girl I was very much in love with, and I soon fell back to my old ways" (Dale 5).

group from Marseille were out of its reach. Clair shows these characters as they run around the frozen city, offering a reflection on urban life and the spatiotemporal dynamics of modernization. Like Apollinaire, Clair examines novel symbols of the city and uses nonlinearity and advanced artistic technique to render a fragmented portrait of modernity. Both works are self-reflexive as well. *Paris qui dort* is as much about cinema, the creation and editing of images, as it is about a mad scientist. Similarly, "Zone" places the poet at the center of modernity, with an explicit concern for the act of writing alongside new attempts at spiritual transcendence.

The aim of this project is to examine these works in parallel, using Benjamin's formulation of experience and his analysis of Surrealism and nineteenth century Paris as a framework through which to view Clair and Apollinaire's depiction of the optimism and desolation of modernity. Two Benjamin essays, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" and "Surrealism", and selected excerpts from *The Arcades Project* are discussed in close readings of "Zone" and *Paris qui dort*. A comparative analysis of these texts reveals relationships between poetic and cinematic form as they pertain to urban experience while offering literary perspectives from before and after the First World War. This analysis is divided into three chapters. Chapter one discusses both texts in relation to Benjamin's formulation of experience as elaborated in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" and centers on the conflict in each work between centralized standard time and private time. Chapter two considers Benjamin's definition of hell as it relates to the modern in connection to relationship between commodity culture and industrialization in Clair and Apollinaire. This chapter focuses on both works' presentation of technology as it pertains to the realization of collective hopes for peace and material well-being. Chapter three studies spatial hierarchies, revealing the primacy of Christianity in Apollinaire's modern

definition of transcendence and arguing for the movement of capital as being central to Clair's portrait of turn of the century Paris.

This is not the first study of *Paris qui dort* to include Walter Benjamin's writing and "Zone". Annette Michelson's 1979 essay *Dr. Crase and Mr. Clair* examines Clair's self-reflexive cinematic technique and begins a section on the film's use of the Eiffel tower by quoting the first five lines of "Zone". The essay incorporates the surrealist responses to the First World War, bourgeois humanism, and the Catholic church and references "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" when discussing photographic representation of Parisian streets. Mentions of Benjamin and Apollinaire are brief, however, and the piece does not incorporate Benjamin's formulation of modern experience, nor does it include his interpretation of Surrealism's revolutionary technique. Michelson's work also invites exploration of more melancholic responses to the industrialization of Paris, as her analysis treats what is referred to as both Clair and Apollinaire's "celebration of modernity" (44). By discussing Benjamin's writing with Clair and Apollinaire, this project reveals not just the utopian promise of a modern Paris but its unfree underside as well. This analysis also considers urban dynamics under capitalism, but centers on the dialectic poles of collective hope, where the reality of domination contains a liberating potential, should the collective dreams be realized.

Chapter 1 – Private Time

Introduction

Time became standardized at the turn of the twentieth century. Myriad local times dissolved as railroad and telegram infrastructure expanded. 1884 saw the Prime Meridian Conference in which the world was divided into 24 times zones, the duration of one day was solidified, and Greenwich became the zero meridian. France adopted Greenwich time six years later and in 1912 Paris hosted the International Conference on Time. The conference aimed to accurately determine, maintain, and transmit time signals across the world. The first global time signal was transmitted from the Eiffel tower on July 1, 1913 (Kern 14-5). Furthermore,

> the introduction of World Standard Time created greater uniformity of shared public time and in so doing triggered theorizing about a multiplicity of private times that may vary from moment to moment in the individual, from one individual to another according to personality, and among different groups as a function of social organization. (Kern 33)

The proliferation of standardized time emanating from a centralized authority was occasionally met with anarchic resistance but more broadly saw literary investigations which affirmed and analyzed the contrasting category of private time. Uniform global time and its responses mark a fundamental development in the nature of individual experience. Individuals in turn of the century Paris saw a new relationship between themselves and the world, the French state, and their fellow city dwellers.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how both "Zone" and *Paris qui dort* contrast centralized time with private time, where private time, by Kern's definition, differs between

individuals and is reversible, discontinuous and fragmented. This analysis will be supplemented

by Walter Benjamin's formulation of experience as developed in his 1940 essay "On Some

Motifs in Baudelaire." The essay examines the nature of urban experience in nineteenth and

twentieth century Paris. Benjamin defines two forms of experience, contrasting lived, poetic

experience [*Erfahrung*] with isolated shock experience [*Erlebnis*].[2] *Erfahrung* denotes the

merging of the collective and individual past, whereas *Erlebnis* negatively refers to an

experience of isolated moments. For Benjamin, modernity is characterized by the loss of

tradition and aura in *Erfahrung* amongst the "blinding experience of large-scale industrialism"

which proliferates *Erlebnis* ("On Some Motifs", 314-5). To give an example, *Erfahrung* would

be the experience of a mechanic who has worked on cars for several decades. Saying he has

experience refers to the fluid collection of memories, wisdom, and stories amassed over his life.

Erlebnis, conversely, would be the experience of witnessing a car crash: sudden, fixed, and

distinct.[3]

  I will use Benjamin's distinction of experience to show how through the collision of

private and centralized time, Clair and Apollinaire confront the proliferation of *Erlebnis* and the

erosion of *Erfahrung*. Kern's temporal distinction provides a particular historical context through

which to analyze these works, with Benjamin's formulation offering a phenomenological

framework to study how "Zone" and *Paris qui dort* document the dynamics of late modern urban

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[2] Beatrice Hanssen offers informative commentary on Benjamin's formulation of experience in the second footnote in her essay on Benjamin and language. Hanssen, Beatrice. "Language and mimesis in Walter Benjamin's work." The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin, edited by David S. Ferris, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 70-1

[3] This example comes from a lecture Fredric Jameson gave on Benjamin, which I attended in August of 2017.

life. This will be conducted through a close reading of two strophes from "Zone", focusing on Apollinaire's alternating rhythm, temporal imagery, and self-reflexive poetic writing. Clair's rendering of experience will be analyzed through the montage of the closing sequence and the film's continual metacinematic commentary.

This study originates from Benjamin's assertion in "On Some Motifs" that the poet is capable of what the philosopher can no longer do, namely, to understand the nature of modern experience (314). "Zone" and *Paris qui dort* confront shock experience as their characters walk through the city and both works exhibit a self-reflexivity that underscores the act of artistic production. Clair and Apollinaire reckon with the disintegration of lived, poetic experience, but while the pre-war "Zone" offers an attempt at recovery, Clair's work from a decade later is consumed by mechanization and the receding of *Erfahrung*.

I.   An Atrophy of Experience in "Zone"

Apollinaire presents experience as it relates to poetic production in the first substantial strophe of "Zone", showing what Benjamin refers to as the "increasing atrophy of experience" which characterizes modernity (316). While some poets and philosophers held the possibility of an individual taking hold of his experience to be a matter of chance, Benjamin states that inner concerns are not necessarily private. Private concerns exist as such "only after the likelihood decreases that one's external concerns will be assimilated to one's experience" (315). He cites newspapers as an example. For Benjamin, newspapers' intent is to

> isolate events from the realm in which they could affect the experience of the reader. The
>
> principles of journalistic information (newness, brevity, clarity and, above all, lack of

connection between the individual news items) contribute as much to this as the layout of

the pages and the style of writing…Another reason for the isolation of information from

experience is that the former does not enter 'tradition'. (315-6)

Historic forms of communication, specifically storytelling, where the storyteller does not recount

the event but passes on the event as lived experience as it exists in the life of the storyteller, give

way to the new form of communication: information by sensation.

    Apollinaire opens "Zone" with this tension between old and new forms of

communication:

    Et toi que les fenêtres observent la honte te retient

    D'entrer dans une église et de t'y confesser ce matin

    Tu lis les prospectus les catalogues les affiches qui chantent tout haut

    Voilà la poésie ce matin et pour la prose il y a les journaux

    Il y a les livraisons à 25 centimes pleines d'aventures policières

    Portraits des grands hommes et mille titres divers (7)

The church windows watch the speaker, but he cannot confess his sins. His inner concerns retain

their private character. Avoiding religion, advertisements and paperbacks serve as empty

substitutes for poetry. One thousand tales are put before him, but they all communicate with the

disconnected information by sensation which prevents assimilation into the speaker's lived

experience. His experience is characterized by the individualized moments of *Erlebnis* and he

recognizes a loss of agency as religion and poetry recede from the landscape.

The alternation between assonance and consonance depicts the fragmented rhythm of city life. Assonance is present with the *i* sound in *église*, *t'y, tu lis*, *affiches*, *poésie,* the repeated *il y a*, and the final phrase *mille titres divers* (7). The fluid rhythm this creates complements the lack of punctuation, which is most notable during the unseparated listing of *prospectus*, *catalogues*, and *affiches*. Consonance occurs through the *p* sounds in *Pape Pie X*, *les prospectus*, *poésie ce matin et pour la prose*, and *pleines d'aventures policières / Portraits des grand hommes*, with *Pape Pie X* incorporating both sounds of the assonance and consonance (7). The thousand different titles, examples of isolated experience, are ironically afforded a smooth communion through alliteration. Apollinaire produces urban rhythm in verse, highlighting the effects of industrialization while acknowledging the relationship between poetry and religion as they relate to the withering presence of *Erfahrung*.

Religion, poetic production, and experience are further examined in the latter half of the poem through a contrast of non-linear and standardized time:

Tu es dans le jardin d'une auberge aux environs de Prague

Tu te sens tout heureux une rose est sur la table

Et tu observes au lieu d'écrire ton conte en prose

La cétoine qui dort dans le coeur de la rose

Épouvanté tu te vois dessiné dans les agates de Saint-Vit

Tu étais triste à mourir le jour où tu t'y vis

Tu ressembles au Lazare affolé par le jour

Les aiguilles de l'horloge du quartier juif vont à rebours

Et tu recules aussi dans ta vie lentement

En montant au Hradchin et le soir en écoutant

Dans les tavernes chanter des chansons tchèques (9-10)

The speaker's fragmented state is reflected in his appearance in the fluid, fractured agate designs of the Saint-Vit train station, which is the milieu home to the origins of standardized time. The continued use of *tu* by the speaker to refer to himself adds to the fragmented subject. Using the second person blurs not just the identity of the speaker but the timeline as well. Verbs are in the present tense in the first and last five lines of the strophe, "*tu es dans le jardin... tu te sens… tu observes*", but the sixth line switches to the imperfect with "*tu étais triste à mourir*" (9). The speaker has gone from the streets of Paris to Prague to Saint Vit and then back to Prague in eleven lines. His descriptions could be memories or a real-time account of the present, and he could be speaking to his past self, his present self, or to another subject. Apollinaire presents what Benjamin describes as the "accumulated and frequently unconscious data that flow together in memory [*Gedächtnis*], which form the structure of *Erfahrung*" (314). Memories in "Zone" interrupt the present, showing a non-linear temporality at odds with any standardized timekeeping. The regulated movement of the clock hand and the guaranteed progressive drive implicit in a mechanized urbanity defined by isolated moments are countered by the speaker's fragmented, fluid portrait of experience.

Fragmentation appears in the rhythm of the strophe as well. The consonants in "*Épouvanté tu te vois dessiné dans les agates de Saint-Vit/ Tu étais triste à mourir le jour où tu t'y vis*", with heavy uses of *t* and *d* sounds, break up the phrasing to create a choppy cadence. Assonance in the following two lines, "*Tu ressembles au Lazare affolé par le jour/ Les aiguilles de l'horloge du quartier juif vont à rebours*", speeds up the rhythm with the smooth grouping of

jour, *l'horloge*, and *rebours* before slowing again in the next line "*Et tu recules aussi dans ta vie lentement*" (10). Consonance returns in the phrase *ta vie lentement*, where the pace of the poem matches the pace of the speaker's life. The staggered rhythm of the strophe gives way to the gliding alliteration *chanter des chansons tchèques* in the final line, after which the speaker appears in Marseille, Koblenz, Rome and Amsterdam (10).

The strophe counters the notion of a standardized day, affirming the reality of private time and showing an attempt to look beyond regulated contemporary experience. The speaker is distraught by the day (*Tu resembles au Lazare affolé par le jour*) and the clock running backwards (*l'horloge du quartier juif vont à rebours*) shows a mechanized timepiece repurposed to match the speaker's individual, non-linear temporality. Its motion opposes standardized time and its presence in the Jewish quarter alongside the reference to Lazarus demonstrates the ancient religious dimension which grounds Apollinaire's poetic production of experience.

Religious underpinnings are central to what Anca Mitroi identifies in Apollinaire's unique formulation of modernity, which for her is a paradoxical relationship with Catholicism, challenging the reading of "Zone" as a strict break with the Church in favor of the purely new. Apollinaire

> thought [France's] religious past was quickly receding and thus would fast become invisible to modern eyes. Without some attempt to capture and expose it in written form, this religious past—the residual aspirations of which were for Apollinaire the very motor of modernity—would be incomprehensible to future readers. (Mitroi 216)

Even in the most modern and seemingly secular places and objects, such as a train station or synchronized clock, ancient religious sentiments can appear (Mitroi 210-1).

Mitroi's reading of Apollinaire as trying to capture a receding past recalls Benjamin's focus on the poet as attempting to recover the aura and tradition of *Erfahrung* in the age of industrialization. In this strophe, the figure of the poet remains central as the speaker documents the nature of contemporary experience. His status as poet is referenced in the contrast of writing, observation, and listening (*tu observes au lieu d'écrire ton conte en prose… écoutant/ Dans les tavernes chanter des chansons tchèques*). He moves from a blissful memory at a bar (*dans le jardin d'une auberge aux environs de Prague/ Tu te sens tout heureux)* to being horrified by his reflection (*Épouvanté tu te vois dessiné dans les agates*) and crazed by the day (*affolé par le jour*) (9-10). The speaker renders his private time, his memories which interrupt the day, and his fragmented identity through self-reflexive poetic verse.

II.   Clair's Ray as Camera and Ubiquitous Shock

Paris qui dort can also be read as a document of private time, but with a larger emphasis on the mechanized standardization which attacks *Erfahrung*. Clair's montage confronts the isolation of *Erlebnis* without the theological recovery put forth in Apollinaire's work. Just as "Zone" positions the poet as central to understanding modern experience, *Paris qui dort* emphasizes the filmmaker in its study of contemporary urban life. The film presents a tension between centralized and private time and through a metacinematic use of the ray, Clair plays with what Benjamin describes as a formal principle of film, perception conditioned by shock [*chockförmige Wahrnehmung*] ("On Some Motifs" 328). The film interrogates the temporality of modern Paris with a continual focus on shock experience and cinema's relation to such

experience. Out of reach from the ray's emission, Albert, the group from Marseille, and Dr.

Crase and his niece are afforded their own private time, discontinuous from the rest of the city.

The ray creates a collision between this private time and the centralized time experienced by the

rest of Paris. Presenting the ray as camera shows the resonant shock that exists in isolated

moments. The ray's capacities are introduced in Albert's opening walk through the city. The full

consequences of the invention, as well as its cinematic character, are revealed in the final

sequence. Like "Zone", the rhythm of contemporary urbanity is embedded in the work. Clair's

combination of plot, montage, and fast and slow motion comment on film's capacity to produce

the shock experience of Paris.

Figure 1. Dr. Crase's niece re-activates the ray.

Albert and the niece confront standardized time upon their arrest in the latter half of the

film. After re-activating the ray behind Dr. Crase's back, the couple rushes back into the streets

to pickpocket a frozen pedestrian. Dr. Crase turns the ray off just as Albert pulls bank notes from

the man's wallet and a police officer is promptly called to intervene. Talking to the police chief

after being taken into custody, Albert tries to explain his situation. A title card reads, "le monde entier a dormi quatre jours."[4] The chief and the arresting officer exchange a few words and then the chief says, "vous dites tous la même chose," after which the couple are escorted to the next room over, revealing the rest of the group sitting in what appears to be a psychiatric ward. "Nous disons tous la vérité," the burglar protests, but the guards have no patience for them. The group attempts to affirm their experience of private time but they are treated as mad by the Parisian authorities.

Clair's presentation of control via the ray recalls Benjamin's account in "On Some Motifs" of the commonality between all inventions brought forth from the match: "a single abrupt movement of the hand triggers a process of many steps." He continues:

> With regard to countless movements of switching, inserting, pressing, and the like, the "snapping" by the photographer had the greatest consequences. Henceforth a touch of the finger sufficed to fix an event for an unlimited period of time. The camera gave this movement a posthumous shock, as it were. Haptic experiences of this kind were joined by optic ones, such as are supplied by the advertising pages of a newspaper or the traffic of a big city… Thus, technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training. There came a day when a new and urgent need for stimuli was met by film. In a film, perception conditioned by shock [*chockformige Wahrnehmung*] was established as a formal principle. (328)

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[4] All title card quotes from the film refer to the version available through the Criterion Collection. *Paris qui dort*. Dir. René Clair. 1925. DVD. Criterion Collection, 2002

Viewing the ray as one of Benjamin's abrupt movement inventions, the film can be read as exploring the shock of modern Paris and, through metacinematic commentary, interrogates the shock experience of film. The ray, like the camera, can fix an event, such as cars passing by the Arc de Triomphe or a burglar running from the police, and Albert, or the viewer, is left with a posthumous shock. This shock is seen in the opening sequence of the film when Albert comes across the suicidal man on the bank of the Seine. In an American release of the film edited in the 1950s, the man's note reads, "It's the terrible pace of modern life that has driven me to this. I cannot stand the rush and roar of this city."[5] Not only does the note comment on urban shock, the ray/camera fixes the event such that Albert can observe the afterimage of shock.

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[5] Tom Conley notes that "*Paris qui dort* has appeared in at least two versions. One is a thirty-five minute 'digest' accompanied by piano music on a soundtrack, which Clair made in 1971 from material he recovered from earlier work that is now appended to the Criterion Collection edition of *Sous les toits de Paris*. Another, close in form to an original feature of over an hour's length, is composed of 1,480 meters of film and presumably is the matter of most sixteen-millimeter prints and videocassettes…The resorted copy in the Criterion Collection tends to be a summary or even an interpretation of the longer version." Conley, Tom. "Icarian Cinema." Cartographic Cinema, U. of Minnesota P., 2007, p. 32.

Figure 2. Albert comes across a man, paralyzed by the ray, about to jump into the Seine.

The final montage of Parisian traffic joins the haptic and optic experiences of urbanity. Immediately after the group walks out of custody, there is a cut back to Dr. Crase and a visitor fighting in front of the ray. A smoke cloud covers the frame and Paris is sent into a whirlwind. An overhead shot of the place de l'opera shows cars, buses, and pedestrians moving at twice their normal speed. Another overhead shot of a different street shows more cars sped up, followed by a lower angle shot of the place de l'opera. Presenting cars which jolt to life and crowds that move in fast motion engages in the principle of *chockformige Wahrnehumg* and the inclusion of lever pulling in the montage emphasizes the role of the filmmaker in creating such shock experience. The low angle frame of the place de l'opera is followed by a cut to the top half of the Eiffel tower against an empty sky. Motionless, the tower contrasts the rest of city, positioning itself as a source of centralized authority similar to that commanded by the ray. Like the freeze frame of cars in front of the Arc de Triomphe, Clair embeds stillness within

movement. The tower is not shown with a still frame but the juxtaposition of mobility remains. Paul Saint-Amour offers further commentary on Clair's use of still images within sequences of rapid movement, noting that

> although the mimetic content of the image is static, as a visual field it pulses and
> coruscates with motion. Standard kinetic shots create the impression of velocity through
> the use of a series of stills. Clair's freeze-frames appear to invert this instrumentality,
> demonstrating that what we experience as the phenomenon of cinematic stillness is really
> the epiphenomenon of a nonstop cinematic velocity. (Saint-Amour 228)

Saint-Amour is specifically referring to the grainy and shaky quality of the still images in Clair's montage, such as the cars in front of the Arc de Triomphe. Small scratches are visible, and the frame itself has a slight vibration even though the subjects in the frame do not move forward.[6] In the posthumous shock observed in a fixed event, urban stimuli remain. Clair documents contemporary experience not just by depicting a non-linear time passage but by showing the shocks present within isolated moments. Thus, the film comments both on the shock experience of the Parisian cityscape and on methods of cinematic engagement with shock.

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[6] Saint-Amour discusses the technical elements of the shots showing the city reanimating or suddenly stopping. He suggests that "these shots were probably achieved by filming a screen on which first-order footage was being projected and halted through the stilling of the projector (or possibly through the insertion of multiple duplicates of a frame). The resulting second-order footage, then, asks the film's viewers to tarry with the imperfections of a particular stilled frame of a particular print of the shot. To these imperfections are added the flaws in the print of the second-order footage, which cause the image to flicker and sizzle." Saint-Amour, Paul K. p. 228.

Paris qui dort, like "Zone", reproduces urban experience in Paris. But there is no potential of recovery in the film. Clair pays what Benjamin describes as the "price for which the sensation of modernity could be had: disintegration of the aura in immediate shock experience [*Chockerlebnis*]" (343).

Chapter 2 – Time in Hell

Introduction

There is brief passage in the *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin's study of nineteenth century

capitalist Paris, in which he defines the 'modern' as

> the time of hell. The punishments of hell are always the newest thing going in this
>
> domain. What is at issue is not that "the same thing happens over and over," and even
>
> less would it be a question here of eternal return. It is rather that precisely in that which is
>
> newest the face of the world never alters, that this newest remains, in every respect, the
>
> same. -This constitutes the eternity of hell. To determine the totality of traits by which the
>
> 'modern' is defined would be to represent hell. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 544)

Hell exists in the modern, and its apotheosis is found in a commodified Paris. Max Pensky

elaborates this definition of hell, noting that in Benjamin's analysis "the promise of eternal

newness and unlimited progress encoded in the imperatives of technological change and the

cycles of consumption now appear as their opposite, as primal history, the mythic compulsion

toward endless repetition" (187). The enticement of brand-new objects covers the capitalist

compulsion to repeat. This includes fashionable clothing, popular novels, and new gadgets, all of

which trigger consumption and subsequent discarding that masks the details behind how those

objects are produced through strict class relations. This eternal promise of the new is what

defines the modern as hell.

Benjamin describes this world as a phantasmagoria. Michael Jennings notes that,

"originally an eighteenth-century illusionistic optical device by which shadows of moving

figures were projected onto a wall or screen, phantasmagoria, as Benjamin sees it, stands squarely in a tradition beginning with Karl Marx" (Jennings 13). Marx suggests in *Capital* that under a capitalist system, commodities are adorned with new capacities akin to religious fetish, that is to say a human made object is held to possess supernatural powers (478-80). The fetish object created in the phantasmagoria can hold power over subjects. This process can "suppress the human rational capacity and appeal instead to the emotions, much as religious fetish appeals to and organizes an irrational belief structure" (Jennings 13). Georg Lukács's later development of the commodity fetish would prove critical to Benjamin's understanding of the phantasmagoria (Jennings 13). For Lukács, the series of networks in which fetishized commodities flow reconfigures relations between subjects and objects, morphing social relations such that they become reified, or "thinglike". This creates a seemingly real second world, where rational processes and quantification render individuals alienated from themselves and society (Lukács 100-3). This is a world where subjects (e.g. humans) become objects and objects become subjects. Benjamin's analysis of the French capital, its architecture, fashions, and discarded relics, reveals a utopia of material well-being to be a hell of unfulfillment where the consumption of a distracted collective hides the violent class suppression which makes the commodity world possible (Jeffries 87).

In this chapter, I will discuss Benjamin's formulation of time in hell in relation to "Zone" and *Paris qui dort*. Benjamin's analysis of gambling in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" as it relates to the empty experience of wage labor will be discussed in a close reading of the poker game in *Paris qui dort* and the phantasmagoria will be used as a framework to study Clair's treatment of objects. This reading of the phantasmagoria will be extended to "Zone" to study Apollinaire's presentation of mechanized repetition and subject-object inversion in modern Paris.

Finally, I will compare both works through their relation to Benjamin's wish images, relying on Susan Buck-Morss's interpretation of the utopian imagination as it appears in *The Arcades Project.* Wish images express a collective desire for life without want or violence. They strive for a break from the compulsion of the commodity world, but, as long as they remain unrealized, this desire is embedded in the latest technologies, and technology as such is incapable of actualizing this desire (Pensky 192). Wish images link ancient aims of fulfillment with the perpetual novelty of the present, and this link will be examined as it appears in "Zone" and *Paris qui dort*.

Discussing Benjamin's description of hell in relation to both texts shows a utopian promise in modernity which characterizes Clair and Apollinaire's work, as well as key points of difference in their presentations of technology's relation to such utopian promise. Just as "Zone" suggests the potential of redeemed experience in contrast to the centrality of shock in *Paris qui dort*, Apollinaire's poem offers a break from hell less dependent on faith in technological advancement seen in Clair's film.

I.   Gambling and Compulsion atop the Eiffel Tower

Benjamin continues his commentary on mechanized shock experience in "On Some Motifs" with a turn to gambling. He ascribes "futility, emptiness, an inability to complete something-qualities inherent in the activity of a wage slave in a factory"- as being present in gambling (Benjamin 330). This idea is taken directly from *Capital*, which describes the de-skilling of labor that results from assembly line specialization (Marx 469). Working conditions make use of the worker but the worker does not make use of the working conditions. In an industrialized setting,

the worker adjusts his own movements to accommodate the automated machine.[7] Gambling resembles factory work because in both, experience counts for nothing.[8] There is no accumulated wisdom or tradition, as exists in handicraft. According to Benjamin, the "process of continually starting all over again is the regulative idea of gambling, as it is of work for wages" (331). The gambler's mindset is such that any assimilation into *Erfahrung* is impossible. Attention rests on the next card to be drawn, the next spin of the wheel (Benjamin 331). The gambler is focused on disconnected, repetitive action.

This experience that counts for nothing, the empty activity which characterizes Benjamin's hell, is seen midway through *Paris qui dort* when the group ascends the Eiffel tower. This occurs after their romp through the city, where the group dines at an upscale restaurant, stealing paralyzed customer's food and money, and then pillages shops, the Louvre, and the Banque de France. On a tower platform, three men, including the police officer and the burglar, play poker. Banknotes fill the center frame and the men smoke cigars. The burglar in the center points to something in the distance and the two others turn to look. Before the policeman on the right turns back, the burglar grabs some of his banknotes, staring him down with contempt. After a few shots of the other characters, who are resting on the tower, Clair cuts back to the poker table. We see the burglar collecting his winnings while the two other men argue. The policeman holds up a

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[7] "It is firstly clear that a worker who performs the same simple operation for the whole of his life converts his body into the automatic, one-sided implement of that operation." Marx. p. 458

[8] "Yet, gambling can be said to resemble factory labor insofar as here, too, experience counts for nothing. Each action on the part of the gambler is independent from the one preceding it: the result of the previous game has no bearing on the game that follows it. Each spin of the roulette wheel is an action unto itself, and thus, one is constantly starting over again from scratch. Therefore, there can be no *accumulation of knowledge or experience*."
Wolin, Richard. Walter Benjamin, an aesthetic of redemption. Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1994. p. 233

trinket, proposing a replacement for the money, but the burglar shakes his head as he stacks the

bills. The two losers run to Albert's room, after which the winner takes out extra playing cards

from his shirt sleeve.

Figure 3. The burglar distracts and then steals bank notes from the police officer in a game of poker.

Card games as presented in this scene of the film seem to portray the automation of

mechanized work and the defining impatience of the gambler. However, this dynamic is altered

by the halting of time, which shows the absurdity of their actions. Industrialized wage labor was

an explicit theme throughout Clair's career, most notably in his 1931 film *À Nous la liberté*,

which features a comedic rendering of dull and exploitative assembly line work. Speaking about

the film, Clair remarked that "if work were intelligently organized, if machines worked for man

instead of against him, this film would have no reason to exist" (Kanin). The repetitive and

disconnected time that defines the gambler's experience, as well as the automated worker, is

halted in *Paris qui dort*, revealing the impatience and futility of the gamblers' actions and, by

consequence, the emptiness of wage labor. The physical scramble for money shows a comic

depiction of greed that can be read through Benjamin's Marxist parallel of gambling and wage

slavery.[9] Stopping time interrupts the gambler's impatient focus on the next immediate action.

The greed which persists despite the abundance of money highlights the unfulfillment of the

gambler's action and the shots following the poker game probe Benjamin's empty world of

incompletion.

Running into Albert's room, the two losing gamblers grab banknotes from a bedside

table. Two title cards then ask, "mais à quoi sert la richesse...quand on s'ennuie?" Between these

title cards, there is a close shot of a hand holding a one-thousand-franc bill. The hand begins

folding the note and the image dissolves into a medium shot of the pilot standing behind a series

of immobile gears. He occupies the right third and the gears the left third. After folding the

banknote several times, the pilot makes a few tears, revealing that he is constructing a paper

airplane. He throws it from the tower, briefly observes its flight path, and shrugs. The

background of this shot is white, with the blurred cityscape barely visible. Clair's use of shallow

focus is noteworthy because up until this point, shots located on the Eiffel Tower either feature

the city in deep focus or use the steel of the tower to form an abstract background. The blurred

white has neither of these visuals. Shots that have the abstracted steel background comment on

industry, but this instance is unique due to the presence of gears, symbols of mechanization

whose circular design mimics the rotation of a clock and whose immobility calls attention to the

state of the city.

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[9] Michelson describes *Paris qui dort* as a comic reading of Marx's *Economical and Philosophical Manuscripts*, in which money is equated with alienation. Michelson, Annette, "Dr. Crase and Mr. Clair", *Essays in Honor of Jay Leyda*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979. pp. 50-1
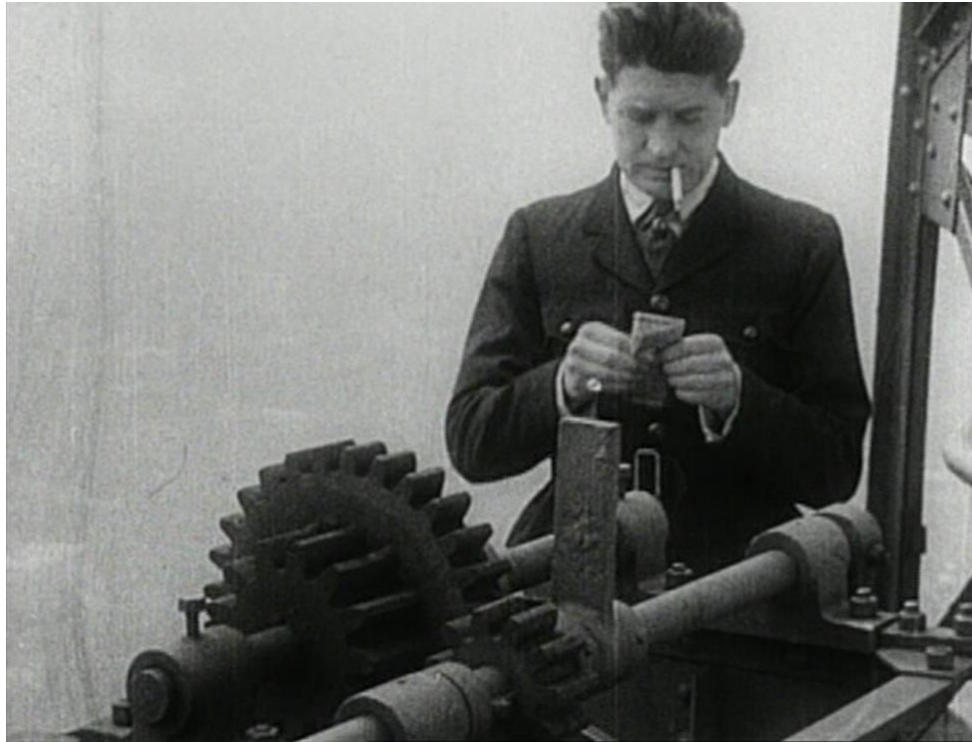
Figure 4. The pilot folds a bank notes into a paper airplane.

Elaborating on the relationship between time and gambling, Benjamin notes how

in folk symbolism, distance in space can take the place of distance in time; that is why the

shooting star, which plunges into infinite space, has become the symbol of a fulfilled

wish. The ivory ball that rolls into the next compartment, the next card that lies on top,

are the very antithesis of a falling star. (331)

Atop the tower, where the characters find the money they have amassed to be worthless, there is

no fulfilled wish, both in their repetitive greed and in the empty experience offered in

mechanized modernity. As the men scramble for more banknotes and later succumb to boredom,

the camera's increasingly shallow focus compresses the background, shortening the distance in

space and consequently relating the idea of a lost chance of fulfillment. In Clair's time-stopped

Paris, we are not witnessing eternity, but rather a paused mechanized city. Through this pause, we can observe what Benjamin called the "antithesis of time", time in hell (331).

Beyond the empty experience shown from the card game and banknote airplane, this sequence also confronts Benjamin's phantasmagoria. In studying the modern as an experience of time in hell he looked not only at methods of production but also objects of consumption (Pesnky 184). Stuart Jeffries describes Benjamin's focus on how

> the endless substitutability of commodities (both things and humans), and our immersion, under capitalism, in a fantasy world of material well-being, ensure we lose sight of the class struggle that underpins this phantasmagoria…that seeming heaven is exposed by Benjamin as a kind of unwitting damnation - a ring of hell in which the consumerist faithful endlessly buy and sell, eternally deluded in believing that this activity will bring fulfillment. (87)

Benjamin's study of nineteenth century Paris centers on the dialectic in the commodity. He looks at the slightly out-moded, the just forgotten objects that exist in the shadow of capitalism's progressive, victorious history. Pulled from the linear narrative of capitalist progress, these objects reveal the "frustrated utopian fantasies of a particular generation" and the "fate in which collective hopes are consistently, necessarily, and brutally suppressed and denied" (Pensky 187). This is the dialectic of the commodity, the story of capitalist triumph that is then negated to show a hell of unfulfillment. In *Paris qui dort*, the repetitive continuum is interrupted, opening the door for Benjamin's critique.

Figure 5. The two losing poker players run to grab more bank notes from Albert's room.

The spoils of the group's raid of Parisian shops, banks, and museums are on display in

Albert's room just after the poker game when the two losing players run to find more banknotes.

Three of the four walls are shown in a wide shot as the men enter from the left. The walls are

adorned with hats, coats and, most strikingly, the *Mona Lisa*. Luxurious pillows and fabrics

cover the bed and floor and there is a small table with fine china. Each item has been placed with

haste. The *Mona Lisa* is askew, treated more like a poster than a coveted work of art. Clair keeps

all of these items and the men in focus. Every corner of the room is littered with a visual

representation of bourgeois culture and, amidst the clutter, the men become just another addition

to the room. The material objects lose their significance as symbols of high culture once urban

constructions of time are eliminated. These items are already forgotten. Paris's most fashionable

shoes are left on the floor, new hats are left on a hook. This scene seems to show objects as

described by Pensky, where, "stripped of their gleam, and reconfigured, [these] cultural goods

revert to their true status: as fossils unearthed from an ongoing history of compulsion, violence, and disappointment" (188). After a brief lull of boredom, all five men turn their attention to the woman and follow her around the tower vying for her attention. The competition ends in a slapstick brawl. The compulsion, violence, and disappointment previously hidden in cultural goods is laid bare atop the tower when capitalist progress is interrupted.

II.   Mechanized Repetition and Communion with Nature

"Zone" shows the compulsion, disappointment, and masked violence of industrialized Paris explored in *Paris qui dort*, but offers a connection to pastoral antiquity not seen in Clair's work. Apollinaire depicts the subject-object inversion of Benjamin's phantasmagoria, acknowledging unrealized desires for well-being in modernity as well as a liberating potential to achieve such desire. Urban streets in the poem contain a dialectic of hell and utopia.

After walking past a church and describing the "*mille titres divers*", the speaker describes an industrial street which contrasts text and poetic verse, emphasizes repetition in modern life, and blurs the distinction between subject and object:

> *J'ai vu ce matin une jolie rue dont j'ai oublié le nom*
>
> *Neuve et propre du soleil elle était le clairon*
>
> *Les directeurs les ouvriers et les belles sténodactylographes*
>
> *Du lundi matin au samedi soir quatre fois par jour y passent*
>
> *Le matin par trois fois la sirène y gémit*
>
> *Une cloche rageuse y aboie vers midi*
>
> *Les inscriptions des enseignes et des murailles*

Les plaques les avis à la façon des perroquets criaillent (7)

Apollinaire's description of the road as a place where "*Les directeurs les ouvriers et les belles sténodactylographes / Du lundi matin au samedi soir quatre fois par jour y passent*" evokes the cyclic movement of the workers, going to the office, to and from lunch, and then back home, Monday through Saturday. This concept is compounded by the automated bell and repetitive siren (*Le matin par trois fois la sirène y gémit*). As Scott Saul notes, in the industrialized world, people are defined by their jobs and the routine of their work and consequently, Apollinaire lists the titles of manager, laborer, and stenographer (*Les directeurs les ouvriers et les belles sténodactylographes*). Like the prose of the newspaper in the previous strophe (*Voilà la poésie ce matin et pour la prose il y a les journaux*), this is a world defined by mass production (7). This aesthetic extends to people as well. Thus,

> Apollinaire describes the *sténodactylographes* as beautiful, but only with great irony, for even their occupational name is clumsy, mechanical in its implication. And as stenographers, they simply parrot the words of their bosses: the texts they produce are valuable for their *un*originality. (Saul 162)

Like the newspapers, the billboards and advertisements painted onto buildings offer an empty substitute for poetry. The ads repeat the same unoriginal slogans over and over. The stenographers, whose job consists of transcribing dictated phrases, mimic their bosses to produce similarly unpoetic text. The workers adjust their behavior to match automated machinery, as seen

in *Paris qui dort*. Their lives are defined by Benjamin's notion of experience which counts for nothing (Wolin 233).

The symbols of industrialization are not just embodiments of automated repetition, however. They also show a subject-object inversion first established in the poem's opening lines, where the Eiffel tower is presented as a shepherd and the surrounding bridges as its bleating flock (*Bergère ô tour Eiffel le troupeau des ponts bêle ce matin*) (7). The street siren does not simply sound three times each morning, it moans (*gémit*), bringing the object to life with the double entendre of siren/mermaid. Signs and billboards squawk like parrots, and the repetitive behavior of the stenographers matches the behavior of the signs, subjectifying the unoriginal text and objectifying the workers.

Subject-object inversion appears again in the longest strophe of the poem where "*Icare Énoch Élie Apollonius de Thyane/ Flottent autour du premier aéroplane*" (8). Figures of Ancient Greece and Christianity, some real, some mythological but all subjects with fantastic qualities, are equated with the quintessential object of mechanized development. Furthermore, listing all four names without punctuation or conjunctions mimics the language of the earlier strophe describing "*les prospectus les catalogues les affiches*" (7). The airplane not only presents a challenge to antiquity by modernity, the object challenges the men's status as subjects. Apollinaire also places the speaker in this struggle between subject and object. While describing the unoriginal prose and repetitive work of the stenographers, the speaker distinguishes himself from the mechanized routine. He "refuses merely to catalogue sensations, and with a memory-jerk he returns nostalgically to a moment of unquestioned faith" (Saul 163), as seen in the following stanza where he recounts a memory from early childhood (*Voilà la jeune rue et tu n'es encore qu'un petit enfant/ Ta mère ne t'habille que de bleu et de blanc*). Later, however, the

speaker is literally objectified as he observes his life in a painting at a museum (*Les étincelles de ton rire dorent le fond de ta vie/ C'est un tableau pendu dans un sombre musée/ Et quelquefois tu vas la regarder de près*) (9). Apollinaire does not present himself as untouched by the present condition but simultaneously recognizes a potential for liberation. This liberation is found in the underside of the phantasmagoria. Benjamin's reading of the commodity world is dialectic, and the inverted hell also contains a utopian face. Pensky underscores that in

> their concentration, and reversal, of the dialectical poles of subjectivity and objectivity, commodities express both the hellish and the utopian sides of human consciousness: the transmutation of humans into objects can also be figured as the dream of a reunion with an alienated nature; the transmutation of objects into subjects recalls the religious vision of a nature endowed once again with the ability to signify. (184)

Commodities are hellish in that they represent empty experience and unfulfilled time, and their meaning only comes into being through exchange value. This is the character of the objects in Albert's bedroom and the paperbacks for sale on Apollinaire's street. Conversely, Apollinaire's rendering of the Eiffel tower as shepherd shows a pre-historic communion of man and nature. Just as the objects in *Paris qui dort* are ripped from the progressive narrative of capitalism, the subjectified objects of "Zone" point "back toward a paradisiacal pre-history and forward toward a revolutionary interruption of the continuum that perpetuates them" (Pensky 184).

Apollinaire's Paris shows the utopian imagination in its presentation of dialectical commodities as such. In her study and reconstruction of *The Arcades Project*, Susan Buck-Morss describes this imagination as cutting "across the continuum of technology's historical

development as the possibility of revolutionary rupture" (116). The cutting across comes from

the interaction between mythic nature and mythic consciousness, both of which are present in

Apollinaire's fraught zone between modernity and antiquity where the newest technology battles

and integrates with ancient spiritual aims. For nature, "the new is mythic because its potential is

not yet realized; in consciousness, the old is mythic, because its desires never were fulfilled"

(Buck-Morss 116). One such example is when "*Icare Énoch Élie Apollonius de Thyane/ Flottent

autour du premier aéroplane*" (8). The unrealized potential of the new airplane confronts the

unfulfilled desires of Greek mythology and Christian theology. In conflict, mythic nature and

mythic consciousness act to liberate myth from one another. This intersection is where

Benjamin's "wish images" emerge,[10] which are themselves a revolutionary break from the recent

past. Wish images are attached to the newest technological forms and by consequence they show

a symbolic representation of the human meaning of technological change. This, for Benjamin,

gives wish images their radical political character (Buck-Morss 116-17).

     Technology's connection to wish images and its role in the utopian imagination is seen in

Paris qui dort too, specifically in Clair's self-reflexive presentation of filmmaking. Benjamin

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[10] Benjamin's first discussion of wish images comes in the opening pages of *The Arcades Project*, in section 1 of "Exposé of 1935": "Corresponding to the form of the new means of production, which in the beginning is still ruled by the old (Marx) are images in the collective consciousness in which the old and the new interpenetrate. These images are wish images; in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production. At the same time, what emerges in these wish images is the resolute effort to distance oneself from all that is antiquated – which includes, however, the recent past. These tendencies deflect the imagination (which is given impetus by the new) back upon the primal past. In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor, the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history – that is, to elements of a classless society. And the experiences of such a society – as stored in the unconscious of the collective – engender, through interpenetration with what is new, the utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions" Benjamin, Walter. The Arcades Project. pp. 4-5

states that wish images pertain to a classless society because the "fairy-tale quality of the wish for happiness that they express pre-supposes an end to material scarcity and exploitative labor that form the structural core of societies based on class domination" (Buck-Morss 117) Clair's film bears this fairy-tale wish for happiness, not simply in the character's unfulfilling search for material well-being but more broadly in its continual emphasis on the power of the filmmaker. Watching Albert descend the tower in the opening sequence and later seeing all of Paris stop, come back to life, and double its speed, one gets the sense that perhaps anything could be possible through film. *Paris qui dort* is ultimately a film about film and Clair basks in the well-spring of potential he seems to have found in cinematic technology. This is why Annette Michelson begins her analysis of the film with a diary entry from Soviet filmmaker and contemporary of Clair Dziga Vertov. He enviously documents how *Paris qui dort* accomplishes a revolutionary aesthetic and technical achievement that he had been denied the chance to make two years prior (Michelson 32).

Technological development does not achieve the liberation inspired by Benjamin's wish images, though. For a sleeping public, which Benjamin refers to as the unconscious collective who are unaware of the phantasmagoric character of the world, collective wishes are not necessarily realized. This is where the utopian longing embedded in the commodity turns to its hellish face. Desire for a world of material well-being free from violence is not fulfilled and unrealized hopes of the collective are embedded in novel commodities and the latest technology. The promise of the new perpetuates the dream world of the phantasmagoria. The collective is not aware they are dreaming and thus the wish symbol "turns into fetish, and technology, the means for realizing human dreams, is mistaken for their actualization". Wish images become a

phantasmagoria. Should the collective awaken, wish images can inspire the material needs of the people who first dreamt them (Buck-Morss 117-20).

Viewing technology as the actualization of collective desire offers a defining point of comparison between "Zone" and *Paris qui dort*. Both works show the tracings of the phantasmagoria, expressing utopian longing within a hell of unfulfimment, and they each highlight the power of the poet-filmmaker to understand and look beyond this world. Clair's film acknowledges the character of the public (Paris is said to sleep, after all) but this is not Benjamin's unconscious collective. Human dreams are realized through technology, as seen in the ray. Apollinaire's confrontation of new and old myth shows less faith in the isolated power of industrial development. "Zone" provides a portrait of the utopian imagination that recognizes new technology as bearing the warped mythic desires of antiquity.

Chapter 3 – Bourgeois Control and Technical Domination

Introduction

In "Haussmann, or the barricades", a section from *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century*, Benjamin outlines the mechanisms and consequences of bourgeois control over spatial hierarchies in Paris. He refers to Haussmann's architecture as "ruins of the bourgeoisie", citing the boulevards and homogenous facades as brick and motor manifestations of bourgeois power (*The Arcades Project*, 13). Benjamin claims that the "temples of the bourgeoisie's spiritual and secular power were to find their apotheosis within the framework of these long streets" (24). As Margaret Cohen notes, the bulldozing of proletarian neighborhoods carried out under Haussmann and Napoleon III is "specifically a way to secure bourgeois hegemony, for it responds to the threat to order posed by a large working class population in central Paris, and, moreover, facilitates the flow of troops and munitions around the city, should workers ever repeat their insurrection" (216). In rebuilding the city, bourgeois domination is literally set in stone. Benjamin asserts that the bourgeoisie's "battle against the social rights of the proletariat dates back to the great Revolution, and converges with the philanthropic movement that gives it cover and that was in its heyday under Napoleon III," and in doing so he critiques the notion that the Revolution earnestly fought for universal equality, rather than political and economic control of the capital by a specific class (24). Benjamin's analysis of the urban project reveals that

> Haussmann's reconstruction/ destruction was an all the more eloquent demystification of the liberal phantasmagoria of equality because it provided the opportunity for financiers, Haussmann among them, to make enormous fortunes from dispossessing the working

classes of their homes, and then selling this newly purchased real estate at a premium to

the government building its boulevards. (Cohen 216-7)

Like Napoleonic imperialist policies, Haussmann's work favors investment capital. Benjamin

opens the piece on Haussmann by citing the wave of financial speculation which followed the

reconstruction of Paris. Haussmannization extended the phantasmagoria of the arcades into the

streets, and Benjamin connects the phantasmagoria of space seen in commodified passage ways

to the phantasmagoria of time seen in gambling. In gambling, time in converted into a drug, and

this phenomenon is extended to the stock trader who speculates with capital linked to

Haussmann's urban project. The impatient anticipation of the card player is brought to the streets

as financiers buy up working class homes and sell the property at a premium to the government

for new boulevard construction (Cohen 216-17). Bourgeois control is characterized by the flow

of capital and domination of spatial hierarchies. These are the defining qualities of nineteenth

century architecture in the French capital.

The opening sequence of *Paris qui dort*, in which Albert walks through the paralyzed city

as he comes to terms with the new state of affairs, presents a montage of nineteenth century

architecture. This sequence can be read through Benjamin's articulation of bourgeois ruins.

Viewing the city at stasis emphasizes the products of Haussmann as monuments, making clear

the class domination underlying the reconstructed city. Halting time, and consequentially

interrupting the global economic rhythm, highlights the pervasive movement of capital that

defines Paris.

Paul Saint-Amour identities the velocity of capital as central to modern experience in his

essay on *Paris qui dort*, which focuses on the film's presentation of speed. He argues that "*Paris*

qui dort symptomatizes in advance the information age's tendency to replace the narrative of production with the fetish category of 'flow'—to see capital as flowing from capital, and the commodity as spontaneously generated in shops, museums, and restaurants" (Saint-Amour 17). His work only provides brief commentary on the relation between space, capital and commodification, however. In this section I will extend this study of capital flow, pairing Benjamin's historical analysis of bourgeois domination made manifest through Haussmannization with a close reading of Albert's initial walk through Paris.

Benjamin claims that the surrealists were the first to recognized the ruins of the bourgeoisie as such (*The Arcades Project* 13). In his essay "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" he praises the Surrealists for achieving a radical concept of freedom and contrasts this freedom by citing their war against the bourgeois novel, the Catholic church, and rationality. The Surrealists approached the communist answer, and for Benjamin this means "mistrust in all reconciliation: between classes, between nations, between individuals. And unlimited trust only in I. G. Farben and the peaceful perfection of the air force." (217) His sarcastic praise of German industry comments on the proliferation of technical domination and inadvertently foreshadows the industrial killing of the Holocaust, where I. G. Farben helped manufacture the chemicals used in the gas chamber (Jeffries 71). The air force and chemical conglomerates represent industrialized, rational processes that suppress freedom, a freedom that the surrealists had come close to achieving.

"Zone" confronts this technical domination. Whereas Clair's film can be read through an examination of the bourgeois establishment of spatial hierarchies in the streets of Paris, Apollinaire interrogates driving forces behind modern efforts at elevation. "Zone" comments on industrial attempts of the airplane and Eifel tower to achieve supreme elevation by linking desire

for technical domination with ancient spiritual aims at transcendence. The result is a proto-surrealist reevaluation of space. Apollinaire connects the religious with the secular, the urban with the pastoral to reconfigure the spatial hierarchies of modernity.

"Zone" and *Paris qui dort* treat modern spatiality in Paris and Benjamin's analysis of bourgeois and industrial oppression in "Haussmann" and "Surrealism" provides a thematic link between the poem and film, elaborating how fantastical renderings of Paris reveal underlying forces of domination. Where Clair looks to the streets, Apollinaire looks to the sky. In Clair's film, we see the consequences of reconfigured urban space, while in "Zone" Apollinaire reimagines urban space to create an alternate portrait of elevation that disavows the alleged secularism of modernity.

I.   Elevation in "Zone"

"Zone" unmasks the spiritual character embedded within aims at technical dominance. Apollinaire complicates the modern drive towards physical elevation, building taller towers and flying faster planes, with a poetic and theological articulation of elevation. Traditional hierarchies are disrupted: if the two previous centuries were characterized in part by a movement away from divine right as basis for European government to a more secularized sovereignty and a decline of the Christian metaphysical framework (Kern 178), "Zone" simultaneously engages with and counters this development. Apollinaire's juxtaposition of religious and technological imagery presents a challenge of the modern against the religious order of antiquity without a clear victor.

The introductory description of the tower as shepherd (*Bergère ô tour Eiffel le troupeau des ponts bêle ce matin*) contrasts the technocratic impulse of the tower's engineers (]7).

Bertrand Lemoine describes Monsieur Eiffel's vision of the achievement, noting that for the architect "l'esthétique de la Tour… est à la fois purement rationnelle, abstraite, référencée aux lois de la science, et morale, 'symbole de force et de difficultés vaincues'" (Lemoine 282). Apollinaire's tower is anything but rational. A pastoral rendering of the tower opposes abstraction and the laws of science, grounding the tower in the material world through irrational imagery. The image of the shepherd watching over his flock is an allegory for the tower looking down across Paris and the combination of urban and pastoral recognizes the elevation of the tower while diverging from its engineer's aesthetic, where the conquest of architectural challenges drives an abstracted iron invention as high as man can build. In "Zone", rationality has not conquered antiquity. Ancient images and aspirations still mark the Paris landscape. For Apollinaire, the tower is not isolated to modernity. The shepherd's desire to see over all his flock, to achieve a supreme elevation over his domain, finds a contemporary manifestation in Monsieur Eiffel's project.

Apollinaire presents the ancient transcendental aims of Christianity as achieving this supreme elevation in a modern context. The first two lines of the fifth strophe treat Christianity's place in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century: "*Seul en Europe tu n'es pas antique ô Christianisme/ L'Européen le plus moderne c'est vous Pape Pie X*" (7). The speaker affirms the religious elements still lingering in modernity while referencing the pope's attempt to combat modernism.[11] Naming the pope as "modern" highlights the paradoxical nature of Apollinaire's vision of modernity. Following the French revolution, the nation modeled itself after ancient

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[11] Mitroi notes that Apollinaire's reference to Pius X comes in the wake of the Dreyfus affair. The church and state officially split in France and the pope subsequently issued a condemnation of modernity. Mitroi, Anca. "Apollinaire's 'Zone', Catholicism, and the Paradox of French Modernity." *Religion and the Arts*, vol. 13, no. 2, Jan. 2009, pp. 205–21

Rome and Greece to eradicate the dominance of Christianity. This new paganism used to establish modernity was ancient by the twentieth century, making Apollinaire's turn to the spiritual and transcendental focus of Christianity paradoxically modern (Mitroi 211-12). Just as the pastoral tower counters the rationalism of engineering, the affirmation of a Christian presence in late modern Paris complicates claims to secularism as a means for establishing spatial hierarchies. "Zone" offers an alternative paradigm to the traditional narrative of technological progress.

The poem's proto-surrealist montage of ancient religion and modern technology bears the style so lauded by Benjamin in his essay "Surrealism", notably the "profane illumination". He refers to the

> bitter, passionate revolt against Catholicism in which Rimbaud, Lautréamont and Apollinaire brought Surrealism into the world. But the true, creative overcoming of religious illumination certainly does not lie in narcotics. It resides in a profane illumination, a materialistic, anthropological inspiration, to which hashish, opium, or whatever else can give an introductory lesson. (Benjamin, "Surrealism", 209)

The juxtaposition of religious imagery in "Zone" dispels the church's aura through fragmentation and technological rivalry. But this is not a strict disavowal of Catholic theology, nor is it a pure embrace of technocratic progress. As Benjamin notes later in "Surrealism", Apollinaire's technique was employed "with Machiavellian calculation to blow Catholicism (which he inwardly embraced) to smithereens" (211). The poet's paradoxical modernity revokes the Church's monopoly while clinging to its transcendental aims.

Richard Wolin elaborates the character of the profane illumination, saying that

like religious illumination, profane illumination captures the powers of spiritual

intoxication in order to produce a 'revelation,' a vision or insight which transcends the

prosaic state of empirical reality; yet it produces this vision in an immanent manner,

while remaining within the bounds of possible experience, and without recourse to

otherworldly dogmas. (132)

The quotidian scenery of Paris is transformed into a well-spring of spontaneity and elevation

through a montage of surreal imagery. Religious illumination is rooted in looking to other worlds

but the profane illumination is grounded in the material world. Apollinaire reconstructs religious

illumination to reveal the desire for spiritual elevation still present in modernity.

Elevation is referenced in the poem's longest strophe, where Christ defeats pilots in an

aviation contest (*C'est le Christ qui monte au ciel mieux que les aviateurs/ Il détient le record du

monde pour la hauteur*) (8). The juxtaposition of technological and religious imagery

complicates the narrative of rational triumph and further elaborates Apollinaire's paradoxical

modernity. Aviation's drive to fly ever higher is aligned with the transcendental spiritualism of

Christianity. The contrast brings divinity to the secular. The inverse effect is equally present,

however. In the following two lines, "*Pupille Christ de l'œil/ Vingtième pupille des siècles il sait

y faire*", the Christ figure is humbled but retains a central positioning in the speaker's view (8).

The speaker's use of the colloquial "il sait y faire" drains the sacred aura surrounding Christ.

This is continued in the last multi-line strophe:

Tu marches vers Auteuil tu veux aller chez toi à pied

Dormir parmi tes fétiches d'Océanie et de Guinée

Ils sont des Christ d'une autre forme et d'une autre croyance

Ce sont les Christ inférieurs des obscures espérances (11)

The Christ symbol is fragmented and malleable. It is brought down from heaven. The speaker's fetish objects are figures from various world religions (*autre croyance*) but they do not contain the same transcendental potential of the Christian figure. Desire is expressed (*obscures espérances*), but these hopes are dashed, too gloomy to achieve elevation. Like the post-revolution kitsch appropriation of Antiquity that prompted Apollinaire's return to the Church, religious figures of other faiths are poor substitutes for Christ. The transcendental aims of "Zone", the aims the poem defines as a driving contemporary force in France, are distinctly Christian.

Christianity's potential is also seen in the references to Greek and Old Testament figures, where the speaker contrasts the two domains of Western Antiquity alongside a continued juxtaposition of the ancient and the technological:

Les anges voltigent autour du joli voltigeur

Icare Énoch Élie Apollonius de Thyane

Flottent autour du premier aéroplane

Ils s'écartent parfois pour laisser passer ceux qui portent la Sainte-Eucharistie

Ces prêtres qui montent éternellement en élevant l'hostie (11)

Enoch and Elijah both enjoyed the ultimate transcendental elevation by entering heaven without suffering mortal death (Heb. 11:5, 2 Kings 2:11). Icarus, by contrast, died in his escape from Crete after flying too high. Apollonius of Tyana was a Greek figure and contemporary of Jesus whose status as possessing supernatural powers to perform miracles, heal the sick, and raise the dead was used to challenge the validity of Christ and his followers (Ehrman 208-9). The Greek figures pull down towards Earth while the Christian figures transcend. The acrobats (*voltigeurs*) challenge angels and the first airplane challenges the prophets but the primacy of Christian spiritual aims is affirmed as the priests lift the host. Modern technological achievement is marvelous but in "Zone", transcendence is not a linear march towards the rational. Apollinaire's push for supreme elevation links a priest with sacrament to one of the twentieth century's foremost innovations, complicating the portrait of modernity and underscoring the relevance of Christian spirit in the poem's reconfiguration of modern spatial hierarchies.

II.   Bourgeois Triumph in *Paris qui dort*

Like "Zone", *Paris qui dort* renders Paris in a fantastic light. In doing so, the film can be studied through driving forces which underlie urban development, namely the flow of capital in relation to bourgeois control of space. A Benjaminian reading of Dr. Crase's ray reveals the city's architecture to be a monument to bourgeois suppression of proletarian revolutionary potential. The interruption of economic activity confronts a history of class domination and, like the wish-images embedded in the commodity, the Parisian landscape can be viewed as bearing stifled hopes that are only visible as such in the watchman's walk through the sleeping city.

After descending the tower, Albert explores the city streets and Clair shifts his focus from the novelty of the tower to the stillness of Parisian architecture. Moving between iconic

locations, Albert comes to terms with his newfound isolation. He sees the Pont Alexandre III, the

Place de la Concorde, and looks from the Louvre to the Champs Elysées. He walks past La

Madeleine and the Palais Garnier with no one in sight. The camera alternates between shots of

the street in deep focus, which show wide boulevards and symmetric street lights receding into

the horizon, and medium shots of Albert alone in the street. When walking in front of the

Fontaine de la Concorde and later by the Madeleine, Albert's figure occupies a small portion of

the lower corner. The montage emphasizes his isolation and the framing scales him down. Both

effects render the buildings and boulevards as well preserved monuments, even relics, primed for
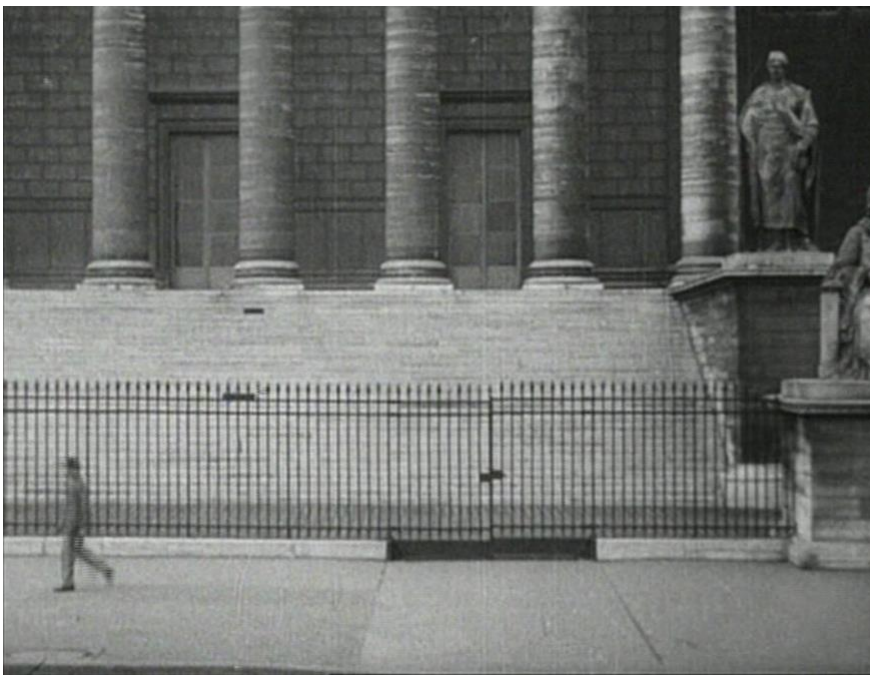
examination.

Figure 6. Albert walks past La Madeleine.

Figure 7. Place de la Concorde, shown motionless in a still frame.

The boulevards Albert explores were intentionally designed to prevent civil unrest in the wake of series of citizen revolts. Streets were made too wide to barricade and proletariat neighborhoods were connected to military barracks. Furthermore, as Margaret Cohen observes, "with his grand boulevards that celebrate the spectacle of modern life, Haussmann extends into the street the celebration of the commodity fetish found in the arcades and World Exhibitions" (216). The nineteenth century monuments shown in this sequence are extensions of the phantasmagoria. Boulevards are the product of Haussmann, the Fontaine de la Concorde and Obelisk emerged during the reign of Louis-Philippe, and the Pont Alexandre III debuted at the Exposition Universelle of 1900, an event in part designed to showcase the achievements of the nineteenth century.

Benjamin asserts that while "Balzac was the first to speak of the ruins of the bourgeoisie... it was surrealism which first allowed its gaze to roam freely over it" (*The Arcades*

Project, 13). Clair is not a surrealist, but his small science fiction offers a similar gaze. Benjamin continues his study by noting how "with the destabilization of the market economy, we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled" (13). If time is money, stopping time destabilizes the economy. The ray interrupts the bustle of the city and bourgeois progress of the past century. Through Clair's montage, we can roam the boulevards and reflect on the yet to be crumbled ruins that define the spatial hierarchy of Paris streets, where a select class exerts political and economic control over working citizens.

As Albert walks alone down an anonymous road, the film suddenly cuts to a brief montage of the city in movement. Paris jots to life as Albert recalls the city he knew. Cars rush around the Arc de Triomphe, a boat cruises on the Seine, horses and people walk the sidewalks along the Champs Élysées. Two shots place the camera on the hood of a car, highlighting the rapid urban movement before cutting back to Albert, slowly plodding along an empty road. In this sequence, as Paris is said to sleep, Albert walks through a dream world decorated with elements of the nineteenth century. From this period, Benjamin writes,

> derive the arcades and the exhibition halls and panoramas. They are residues of a dream world. The realization of dream elements, in the course of waking up, is the paradigm of dialectical thinking. Thus, dialectical thinking is the organ of historical awakening. Every epoch, in fact, not only dreams the one to follow but, in dreaming, precipitates its awakening. (13)

Dream elements comprise the world of the phantasmagoria, where collective hopes of a better life free from violence have yet to be realized. Haussmann's architecture is an extension of the

dream elements of the arcades because it embodies stifled collective hopes. The collective is said to sleep due to the fact that they remain unware of the utopian potential that lies on the other side of the phantasmagoric world. Benjamin defines Haussmannization as dialectic because in bulldozing proletarian neighborhoods, the class aims of the bourgeoisie are made explicit. This can politicize and mobilize the working class, as seen in the appearance of the Paris Commune following the reconstruction of Paris. Attempts to prevent the erection of barricades result an even larger barricade. As Benjamin notes, "the Commune puts an end to the phantasmagoria that dominates the earliest aspirations of the proletariat. It dispels the illusion that the task of the proletarian revolution is to complete the work of '89 in close collaboration with the bourgeoisie" (24). The economic order is interrupted. Dialectical thinking awakens the sleeping collective by revealing a history of violence, suppression, and domination. In *Paris qui dort* we can see the dream elements of modern Paris as such and witness the potential for awakening which, as described by Annette Michelson, is emblematic of Dr. Crase's blend of magic, science, and omnipotence that matches the filmmaker. His "tacit message to us is, 'Sleepers, awake!'" (Michelson 46).

Michelson refers to the film as Clair's "celebration of modernity" but this characterization is limited (44). The treatment of the ray-as-camera extends only so far, and in the opening sequence their correlation is inverted. If the shock of rolling footage calls upon the spectators to awaken and become cognizant of their status as viewers of film, the ray makes such a call by freezing the public, putting the city to sleep. Only at a standstill can we see Haussmann's Paris for what it is. The final turn of the ray, which brings the city out of its sleep and sees the bourgeois marriage of Albert and Dr. Crase's niece, depicts a return to the normal order, to the un-awakened dream state. Benjamin recognizes the potential for historical

awakening through dialectics but also understands Haussmannization as a furthering of the phantasmagoria of space in its connection to bourgeois financial speculation. *Paris qui dort* shows an encounter by which to study bourgeois ruins as such but its conclusion asserts that nothing, not even the fantastically powerful camera, can stop the flow of capital.

Conclusion

This study argues for a reading of "Zone" and *Paris qui dort* as depicting the hellish underside of modernity, citing their presentation of the phantasmagoria of time and space, an emphasis on shock experience, and a focus on driving forces of domination in late modernity. Clair and Apollinaire reckon with the marvels of technological achievement, balancing the potential for liberation with a recognition of un-freedom in technical and bourgeois domination. The pre-war "Zone", while acknowledging a disparate alienation which may expand in the looming future, offers a chance of recovery of the experience lost in industrial development. Clair's film has no such potential. The power of the ray is a fantastical but small example of the technical omnipotence which proliferates shock experience.

Chapter One studies the erosion of *Erfahrung* and the proliferation of *Erlebnis* in both works, with "Zone" suggesting a potential for poetic recovery despite the trauma of urban development in contrast to the ubiquity of shock in Clair's post-war Paris. In their presentations of experience, each shows the contemporary conflict between personal and standardized time which resulted following the emergence of centralized global time systems. Just as "Zone" captures an ancient religious dimension of French life that was rapidly receding from the foreground at the turn of the twentieth century, *Paris qui dort* is a document of urban life at a time when both film and the Eiffel tower were novel technological marvels. Benjamin's "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" illuminates the character of this epoch. Urban experience is defined by alienation, fragmentation, and isolation. Apollinaire and Clair succeed in doing what Benjamin claims philosophers could only attempt, that is to apprehend the nature of modern experience. But this apprehension comes at a price, namely, the loss of aura.

Chapter Two discusses time in hell, using Benjamin's development of the phantasmagoria to link Clair and Apollinaire's use of repetition and subject-object inversion. This discussion furthers Michelson's analysis of *Paris qui dort* as a comic reading of Marx's critique of alienation, extending the application of such analysis beyond Clair's presentation of money to the parallel of wage labor and gambling. Benjamin's formulation of time in hell grounds this connection between gambling and industrial work. Clair's film also demonstrates a faith in industrial progress. This faith is contrasted in "Zone" by the interplay of ancient and modern. Apollinaire's poem contains a dialectical movement of hell and utopia while showing the warped mythic desires embedded in the latest technology.

Driving forces of domination in the spatial hierarchies of late modernity are evaluated in the third chapter. "Zone" has a continued focus on elevation and Apollinaire complicates the rationality of technical progress by asserting the primacy of Christianity in contemporary attempts at transcendence. The poem challenges the supremacy of the pope, Monsieur Eiffel, and world-class pilots, reconfiguring spatial hierarchies through what Benjamin calls the "profane illumination" which brings the illuminations of religion to the material world.

Whereas Apollinaire interrogates the forces of elevation, *Paris qui dort* focuses on the forces of street expansion. Clair's film, most notably in the opening sequence, examines nineteenth century architecture. The opening montage of the city at rest depicts Benjamin's "ruins of the bourgeoisie" and the sequence prompts reflection on the legacy of Haussmann, Napoleon III, and Louis-Phillipe. This legacy is one of bourgeois triumph. Clair presents the camera as a magic and nearly omnipotent technology but its power is secondary to the unstoppable flow of capital.

This project does not consider the closing lines of "Zone", the famous "Adieu Adieu /
Soleil cou coupé" (Apollinaire 11). While *Paris qui dort* still occupies a relatively niche position
of interest amongst French scholars and the wider public, "Zone" is well examined, with several
writers offering informative readings of the final phrases. The aim of this study is to integrate
lesser recognized elements of Apollinaire's poem. Scott Saul's reading of the end as confronting
the myth of Enlightenment progress, which culminates in the French revolution, and the use of
broken syntax that frees the reader while opening the possibility of fragmented indeterminacy is
a suitable companion to this study's treatment of bourgeois triumph and surrealist liberation
(173-4).

Eleanor E. ter Horst connects the beheading of the closing line with Apollinaire's mixing
of the old and new, the urban and pastoral.

> The rising sun is figured as a head with the neck cut off, so that the traditional symbol of
> new beginnings and new hope is transformed into the scene of a bloody execution; but by
> creating this new metaphor, even while (perhaps) bidding it farewell, the poet evokes a
> connection to tradition even as he declares his independence from it. The poet kills his
> poetic alter ego, God and/or the sun, but at the same time holds them in the present
> through the use of apostrophe, which calls them into existence at the same time it figures
> their demise. (166)

ter Horst's description of Apollinaire's non-hierarchical coexistence of figures that blend the
literary with the historical and mythological to collapse time and space is just one example of

previous scholarship which addresses the poem's closing lines in a dialogue relevant to this study's consideration of modern spatiotemporality.

There still remains ample relevance of Benjamin's writing to these works. His essays on Naples, Marseilles and Central Park further develop his ideas on urban space and offer a framework of comparison for Clair and Apollinaire's cityscapes. Benjamin's more widely studied "The Author as Producer" is a fruitful starting point for a discussion of *Paris qui dort* and "Zone" as they relate to self-conscious artistic production, a connection between bourgeois producer and proletarian positioning, and more broadly the function of abstract forces and how they affect human lives. Analysis in this study of Haussmann's urbanism and the driving forces of modernity could be expanded by incorporating "The Author as Producer" and Benjamin's pieces on cities. His praise of Brecht for interrupting situations to discover how human relations arise and his recognition of humor as a tool for critique have ample relevance to both Clair's film and "Zone". This study did not consider at length both works' use of light-hearted gags to interrupt more serious scenes.

Benjamin's seminal text "On the Concept of History" provides a vast potential for literary and philosophical criticism. Detailed considerations of messianic time, the historical continuum, and interruption as it relates to a philosophy of history are beyond the scope of this study but remain promising reference points for future work. Still broader is the relevance of other Frankfurt School affiliates and their writings on modernism and twentieth century culture.

Clair and Apollinaire's treatment of rapidly developing technology and the larger forces that affect individuals maintains its relevance today. Benjamin's phantasmagoria extended from the arcades to the streets and has only penetrated deeper into the lifeworld since. Information by sensation is now standard. Urban effects on the human sensorium described by Benjamin and

manipulated in "Zone" and *Paris qui dort*, cars rushing and lights blinking and fragmented self-reflection, are now characteristic of quotidian experience. Seldom does an hour pass without the flashing of an LED and a hurried rush to read electronic text and images. Global cities, Paris included, are more firmly secured monuments to the unstoppable movement of capital. Haussmann's demolition of working-class neighborhoods to erect what would become ruins of the bourgeoisie is even more pronounced today in the French capital, as seen in the city's reputation for being itself a museum. The abstract rationality into which Apollinaire injected a not-yet forgotten spiritualism defines the organization of early twenty-first century life. If an iron tower as shepherd remains absurd today, a pastoral or theological algorithm seems unimaginable. Dr. Crase's ray which showcases the awesome power of film to bend time and reconfigure experience at will is now available to the world. Personalized digital information is defined by the production and consumption of visual images. Snapchat stories, for example, present the user with a series of short video fragments from friends and celebrities all over the world with interspersed corporate advertising. The primary user activity consists of self-portraiture and filming what is immediately in front of the phone. Time is warped, the self is atomized, and messages are relayed in a series of instant flashes that disappear upon consumption.

This is a not a call for anti-modernism but rather a testament to the power Clair and Apollinaire's work contains and to the immense sensitivity with which they experienced the character of their epoch. A Benjaminian reading of their turn of the century creations shows the continued relevance of their engagement with the hellish and utopian potentials of technological development, praising the novel as such while acknowledging the stifled hopes contained within the new.

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