7   A Film-maker's Film Histories

Adjacency Historiography and the Art of the Anthology

Benoît Turquety

Abstract

An artist should probably not be a historian of their art. But when they are, they produce specific kinds of histories. In this chapter, I argue that their position entails a reluctance towards literary forms of history writing, towards explanations and comments. Film-makers aspiring to historical construction have rather relied on paratactic forms of discourse, mainly through non-literary practices such as film programming. This idea implies a reconsideration of such endeavours within a wider network of mostly modernist conceptions of collecting and curating as historiographical projects. Juxtaposition, montage, and blank spaces are then the tools of a historiography based on the fundamental principle of adjacency, and the anthology becomes the major form of the artist's history of their own art.

Keywords: film history, historiography, poetry, anthologies, modernism

As any other science, history seems to require a scholar that is safely exterior to the object of study, in a supposedly "objective" position. But, of course, in the case of history that is not possible: no historical object can be considered completely separate from its historian, as ramifications extend from object to subject through the very historiographical work—as Michel de Certeau, among others, argued in *The Writing of History*. Yet there are differences in degrees of relations, in levels of implication.

These problems relating to the historian's position regarding the objects of their attention are probably more important in the fields that are not clearly structured, and where time distances remain relatively small. Film history, for instance, has developed for quite a while without an established academic structure. Early film historians were technicians of the trade—W. K. L. Dickson, Eugène Trutat, Charles Francis Jenkins, Henry V. Hopwood,

among many others. Most of them were in fact directly involved: working with either T. A. Edison, É.-J. Marey, or for themselves, their histories aimed at justifying their own precedence or prominence. Around the 1930s, a new distance was established as historians came rather from film criticism—Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach, for instance. But it was always more complicated: Paul Rotha, Hans Richter, and Jean Mitry have been important film historians, but they were also film-makers. Mitry has moreover been involved in several institutions, from the Cinémathèque française to the IDHEC, the French national film school. Iris Barry and Henri Langlois have written critical and historical essays while being curators in major archives, as was still later the case with Eileen Bowser.

These multiple roles could have presented as some sort of obstacle, preventing them from claiming the authority of a proper historian's position—particularly those who were film-makers. In fact, these other job titles rather conferred on them a legitimacy that, in the absence of a proper academic field, was not easy to ascertain. Being involved in the film-making industry was about the only available criterion of expertise. Still, that authority came with potential partiality, all the more so when the supposed historians were young artists who had to fight for their recognition within a more or less hostile milieu—a situation essential to modernist legitimation tactics. History may then become a manifesto of sorts, while nonetheless subsumed under a claim for objectivity.

This tension makes for a complicated, perhaps impossible, epistemological stance within historiography. In this chapter, I will argue that such a strained position entails a reluctance towards literary forms of history writing, towards explanations and comments. Film-makers aspiring to forms of historical construction have rather relied on paratactic forms of discourse, mainly through non-literary practices such as film programming. This idea implies a reconsideration of such endeavours within a wider network of mostly modernist conceptions of collecting and curating as historiographical projects. Juxtaposition, montage, and blank spaces are then the tools of a historiography based on the fundamental principle of adjacency, and the anthology becomes the major form of the artist's history of their own art.

A Historical Exhibition

In 1976, the French National Museum of Modern Art together with the National Centre for Art and Culture Georges-Pompidou (CNAC) published a collective book titled *Une histoire du cinéma*. It was not an academic

collection, but an exhibition catalogue, with all the distinctive features of
the genre. It began with a series of articles by specialists and artists, and a
sort of *catalogue raisonné* of the exhibition: the filmographies of all the film-
makers involved. The rest—127 pages, more than half of the book—showed
illustrations from the presented works, mostly frame enlargements and
photographs of the film prints or of the shooting. These pages did not bear
any words—names and dates appearing only in the final list of captions.
In a way, a rather traditional exhibition catalogue.

The exhibition itself though was not traditional at all. It was in fact a
programme of 212 films, by ninety-five artists, from 1895 to 1975, from the
Lumière brothers to Marcel Hanoun. They were shown in 30 screenings,
each projected twice (one evening at 7:30, and the next day at 2:30 pm). The
same films were also screened in parallel at the Cinémathèque française
under the general title "Anthology Cinema Presents," which slightly changes
the perspective. In both institutions, the films were exhibited in strict
chronological order, the works being grouped by artist within each year. At
the Cinémathèque française, the programmes were inserted in the normal
schedule: they lasted between one and two hours, and could be seen inde-
pendently from one another. At the CNAC, the programmes lasted three to
four hours, and could only be accessed through a subscription for the entire
event. In a normal exhibition, of course, you wouldn't pay just part of the
price to see only the Picasso painting you're interested in. The CNAC had
thus adopted for the film presentations a model of spectatorship based on the
museum: the exhibition was to be apprehended as a whole. If the traditional
film programme is primarily the opportunity to see certain particular films,
the CNAC subscription system moved the general coherence and claims to
the fore. That event was not meant to be disseminated into the presentation
of singular works; it was to be understood first and foremost as *curated*.

Several people were involved, at various degrees, in the selection of the
works, among them Annette Michelson, Dominique Noguez, a French
historian of experimental cinema, and Claudine Eizykman and Guy Fihman,
film-makers and founders of the Paris Films Coop. But the exhibition was
finally curated and signed by one person: Peter Kubelka. In his contribution
to the catalogue, P. Adams Sitney emphasized this signature effect: "I will
start from the connecting point between film theory and film practice
in Kubelka's work to examine the history of independent cinema as he
has conceived it in this exhibition."[1] The exhibition thus seemed to be

---

1   Peter Kubelka, ed., *Une histoire du cinéma* (Paris: Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-
Pompidou/Musée national d'art moderne, 1976), 9.

entirely integrated within the Austrian film-maker's own body of work. Sitney, though, altered the project: the exhibition is not called "A History of Independent Cinema"; it's called "A History of Cinema"; and as Kubelka himself related several times, it should have been called "*The* History of Cinema"—"by that I meant that film history is not written by Hollywood, nor by Pathé, nor by Cinecittà, but by the works in our programme!"[2] Kubelka fought hard for that title against Pontus Hultén, then director of the Centre Georges-Pompidou, who had initiated the event—but he lost. A history of "independent cinema" or of cinema in general—or maybe of cinema as such—that makes quite a difference. In the context of such a programme-exhibition, the main difference lies in the status to be given to the absent names. *Une histoire du cinéma* shows no film by Alfred Hitchcock, Robert Flaherty, Jean Renoir, John Ford, Howard Hawks, Mizoguchi Kenji, Glauber Rocha, D. W. Griffith, Alice Guy-Blaché, Ernst Lubitsch, Yasujirō Ozu, Sembène Ousmane, Jean-Luc Godard, Ida Lupino, Pier Paolo Pasolini, etc. Their absence from a history of independent cinema could be read as an implicit definition of "independence" in the film production system or culture; their absence from a history of cinema makes for a quite different claim; and, of course, their absence from *the* history of cinema for yet another.

That 1976 "exhibition" has been a quite important event in the history of experimental cinema in Europe. It was shown again in April 1977 at the new Centre Georges-Pompidou of Beaubourg, which had been inaugurated only two months earlier. This innovative art centre, backed by the National Museum of Modern Art, was conceived as an extremely ambitious institution; it gave "independent cinema" a sudden visibility within the art scene, and the weight of the public institution participated in legitimating *film as art* on a new basis. But the exhibition had a history.

The connections between film and the museum or the exhibition are rich and complex, from its presence in international expositions as early as 1900, to its entry in museums and other sites dedicated to the presentation of "traditional" and more specifically modern arts. By 1925, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art "made and showed its own movies at the museum, as well as distributed and exhibited these [...] to interested institutions."[3] Films then were conceived as educational tools, not as proper works, but "in 1935

2   Stefan Grissemann, Alexander Horwarth, and Regina Schlagnitweit, eds., *Was ist Film: Peter Kubelkas Zyklisches Programm im Österreichischen Filmmuseum* (Vienna: Österreichischen Filmmuseum/SYNEMA-Gesellschaft für Film und Medien, 2010), 16.

3   Haidee Wasson, "Big, Fast Museums/Small, Slow Movies: Film, Scale and the Art Museum," in *Useful Cinema*, ed. Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 179.

the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) announced its intention to collect and exhibit not just modern paintings and sculptures but also films."[4] In Europe, major avant-garde exhibitions had already integrated the film medium. For example, *Film und Foto*, first presented in Stuttgart in 1929, combined film and photography as the two modernist arts. As Olivier Lugon noted, at the time "most of the important exhibitions tried to completely associate the two arts, by integrating a projection room to the visit." Still, according to Lugon, "these attempts were unsatisfactory, and film [requiring a static spectator] remained a foreign body in these big events based on the circulation of spectators."[5] Film and exhibition spectatorships seemed to obey different dynamics. Modes of integration were being developed and tried out until the emergence of video and expanded cinema in the 1960s and 1970s allowed for different solutions and perspectives.

Though connected with this history, *Une histoire du cinéma* was nevertheless a different endeavour. At a time when moving images were entering the gallery, Kubelka's 1976 "exhibition" remained strictly within the movie theatre, even if that theatre had to belong to an art institution. It used art codes and practices—the catalogue, the ticketing system—but reaffirmed within them the cinema *dispositif*. It was not exactly the first of its kind, and was perceived already at the time as a culminating moment in a series of similar events.[6] These typically used the vocabulary of the art *exhibition* or *exposition* to name what would otherwise have been called a programme or a festival, and moved the films from the commercial theatres or cinematheques to the art world: to name but a few, the *New American Cinema Group Exposition* in Torino in 1967; the *New Form in Film* exhibition curated by Annette Michelson and presented at the Guggenheim Museum in 1972, before a new version was shown in Montreux in 1974[7]; and, of course, the foundation of the Anthology Film Archives in 1970.

4   Haidee Wasson, "Studying Movies at the Museum: The Museum of Modern Art and Cinema's Changing Object," in *Inventing Film Studies*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 121. See also Haidee Wasson, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

5   Olivier Lugon, "La Photographie mise en espace: les expositions didactiques en Allemagne (1920–1930)," *Études photographiques* 5 (November 1998), https://journals.openedition.org/etudesphotographiques/168. See also Olivier Lugon, ed., *Exposition et médias: Photographie, cinéma, télévision* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 2012).

6   See, for instance, Louis Marcorelles, "Une histoire du cinéma," *Le Monde*, February 5, 1976, translated in François Bovier, ed., *Early Video Art and Experimental Film Networks: French-Speaking Switzerland in 1974: A Case for "Minor History"* (Lausanne: ECAL, 2017), 239–41.

7   On *New Form in Film*, see Bovier, *Early Video Art and Experimental Film Networks*, particularly Annette Michelson's interview (pp. 217–20) and the following documents.

Collecting and Programming as History Writing

The manifesto published for the opening of the New York-based Anthology Film Archives on December 1, 1970, read:

> The cinematheques of the world generally collect and show the multiple manifestations of film: as document, history, industry, mass communication. *Anthology Film Archives* is the first film museum exclusively devoted to the *film as an art.*[8]

Anthology Film Archives was the new museum for a new art. Again, it belonged in a way to a longer history of similar projects, but was an altogether different endeavour. When he proposed to create a film museum in the 1930s, Henri Langlois imagined a place where he would show objects, artefacts, machines, clothes or posters related to cinema but precisely *not film*. The Anthology Film Archives would be a museum of *nothing but film*. As any archive, its aim was to organize the preservation and access of films, but it didn't welcome anything that would be given to the institution. On the contrary, it claimed to be founded, as any museum, on a carefully selected collection, the *Essential Cinema*. Peter Kubelka was already part of that selection committee, together with James Broughton, Ken Kelman, Jonas Mekas, P. Adams Sitney and, for a while, Stan Brakhage.

Essential Cinema was not simply an exhibition; it was presented as a cycle of 110 programmes, screened on a regular—originally monthly—basis. The organizers had the student in mind, and in this perspective, the *Essential Cinema* series of programmes was conceived and presented as *a history of cinema*: "The cycle will also provide a unique opportunity for students of the medium to see a concentrated history of the art of film within a period of four or five weeks."[9]

Essential Cinema and *Une histoire du cinéma* also have important common points. They are both a programme and a collection, and both constitute as such the foundation of an institution, symbolically but also concretely. The *Essential Cinema* list *is* the collection of the Anthology Film Archives, and before being an event, *Une histoire du cinéma is* the film collection of the newly formed French Museum of Modern Art.

8   P. Adams Sitney, ed., *The Essential Cinema: Essays on the Films in the Collection of Anthology Film Archives* (New York: Anthology Film Archives and New York University Press, 1975), vi (emphasis in the original).

9   Ibid., vi.

Kubelka's task was first and foremost to establish that collection, that was to be prestigious and to correspond to the criteria and standards of "Modern Art"; once chosen, a print of each film was bought from the artist or their distributor, to enter the permanent museum collection. That is a specificity of a film museum: the reproducibility of the medium allows an institution with enough money to build a collection with all of the greatest masterpieces of history—which is, of course, impossible with painting.

In 1996, Peter Kubelka conceived yet another cyclical programme, this time for the institution he had co-founded in 1964 with Peter Konlechner: the Österreichisches Filmmuseum. Its title, *Was ist Film*, directly echoes (besides André Bazin) *Essential Cinema*, suggesting that the name of the New York institution should probably be heard as "Ontology Film Archives." The programme is based on the Filmmuseum collection, but it doesn't define that collection: it represents only a choice within a much wider corpus. The sixty-three screenings, featuring films by seventy-two artists—of which five are women: Maya Deren, Valie Export, Marie Menken, Leni Riefenstahl, Rosemarie Stenzel—are shown on a regular basis, and as their predecessors, they articulate a historical frame with pedagogical aims. The cycle is structured by an underlying chronological timeline, with a systematic contrapuntal line whose strong gestural presence shifts the spectator's position. For instance, the first programme features: a series of slides of Marey's chronophotographs; eight films by W. K. L. Dickson, from 1892 to 1897; thirty-two Lumière films from 1896 to 1897 (with none of the most well-known); and finally Marie Menken's 1964 *Go! Go! Go!*[10] The sixth programme presents Leni Riefenstahl's 1935 *Triumph des Willens*, preceded by Jack Smith's 1963 *Flaming Creatures*[11]—which strongly comments, perhaps destroys, the ideological content of Riefenstahl's propaganda monument. All the films were made by independent artists, except for one: *To the Shores of Iwo Jima*, a 1945 Kodachrome film signed by the US Government Office of War Information.[12] *Was ist Film* appears then not only as a selection of works, but also as the precise arrangement of screenings. Once chosen, the films of *Une histoire du cinéma* were presented in strict chronological order; the massive, three-hour screenings would then confront a maintained continuous timeline with the diversity of each moment's production. Here, a different historiography is at stake, where the key thread

10   Grissemann et al., *Was ist Film*, 28.
11   Ibid., 45.
12   Ibid., 50.

of a chronicle of film form from its beginnings is systematically critiqued by non-chronological juxtapositions.

In 2013, the Filmmuseum published a book about *Was ist Film*, analysing the works and the programmes. In the prefatory interview, Kubelka claims that the cycle "defines through examples—and not through attached discursive explanations—film as an autonomous art form."[13] Kubelka's reluctance to explain, comment, or introduce language in general is striking throughout the interview, and remains deeply at odds with the book project itself. The interviewer seems to find it hard to understand, as it appears to contradict the pedagogical dimension that is inscribed in the very act of programming. But Kubelka insists on history as experience. To him, spectatorship can be compared to mountain climbing: if you are brought to the top by car, you won't remember the mountain like you would if you experience the risk and fatigue of climbing. Discursive explanations are then like a helicopter, preventing the spectator from experiencing the historical process as such. The programme, taken as a whole, is a meaningful form of mediation, which doesn't need to—indeed, must not—be remediated through discourse. It constructs sense through the bare assembling of the works, and becomes a work in itself, made only of film, and duly signed—by the curator. Certainly, what that signature implies regarding the status of the curator and former co-founder and co-head of the Filmmuseum is to be connected with the contemporary rise of the curator in the art world on a more general level. In any case, Kubelka has created with *Was ist Film* a work through the sole assemblage of pieces of film; he can then quite logically claim: "The model for my programme is film montage."[14]

At this point in my argument, one possible move could seem quite obvious, and probably productive: it would involve referring to the modes of history writing explicitly or implicitly based on film montage. Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* would be here central, as he claims to use as a method "literary montage,"[15] to "carry over the principle of montage into history,"[16] or that he "needn't *say* anything. Merely show."[17] Connections could then be made with Aby Warburg's *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, or to André Malraux's *Musée imaginaire*. But as this sounds quite familiar, I propose to move in a slightly different direction.

---

13   Ibid., 9.
14   Ibid., 8.
15   Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 460.
16   Ibid., 461.
17   Ibid., 460, 836.

Editing as History Writing: The Art of the Anthology

The name "Anthology Film Archives" should be taken literally: it is an anthology. *Essential Cinema*, *New Form in Film*, *Une histoire du cinéma*, *Was ist Film* are film programmes or exhibitions; they are also anthologies. Anthologies have a long history, particularly in poetry—longer than montage or than cinema itself—and are themselves deeply historical objects. They played a particularly important role within the modernist context. At that moment, they belonged to a set of practices that gave a new status to the acts of collecting, assembling, and exhibiting as artistic gestures—and commercial tactics. This could allow for strategic uses of symbolic value. As Jeremy Braddock noted, "throughout the 1910s, modernist anthologies repeatedly presented themselves (and were received) according to the logic of the art exhibition, in an effort to obtain the cultural currency of events like the [1913] Armory Show or the first Society of Independent Artists exhibition [in 1917]."[18] The use of the "exhibition" vocabulary to qualify film programmes or festivals resonates with this context, and suggests that these later practices tried, consciously or not, to re-enact in the film world the tactics that had proven their efficiency for modernist poetry and art.

But modernist art exhibitions were not historical. Or, to say it more precisely, they were not concerned with the writing of history. They were meant as historical events, turning points in art as well as political history, and so deeply inscribed in their time that they could expose its complexity; but they presented only the young artists of the day. That was not always the case, though.

In his history of American poetry anthologies,[19] Alan Golding has described the tensions at work in every constitution of an anthology, as well as their dependency on the historical state of the medium's relation with culture, and of its concrete mode of existence within the cultural market. In the early American context, for instance, poetry existed mainly within periodicals of very short lifetime and very narrow geographical diffusion. Anthologies thus first aimed at the preservation of an ever-vanishing landscape. Then, the logic of evaluation, of canon formation, came forward, involving comparative reading and the interaction between editor and

18   Jeremy Braddock, *Collecting as Modernist Practice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 158.
19   Alan C. Golding, "A History of American Poetry Anthologies," in *Canons*, ed. Robert von Hallberg (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 279–307.

readers. Anthologists have to be constantly "weighing historical inclusive-ness against evaluation and exclusiveness."[20] But the evaluation process is itself historical. According to Golding, a break occurred with Charles A. Dana's *Household Book of Poetry* in 1858, as it introduced "an important new criterion of selection[:] the exercise of absolute rather than histori-cally relative critical judgment."[21] This was due to local circumstances: "Earlier British anthologists had exercised absolute judgment as their main selective principle; Americans had not."[22] Until then, American antholo-gists did not claim literary "quality" as their sole criterion; they pondered aesthetic judgement with questions of geographic representativeness. The confidence in a putative local canon is necessary to be able to claim that it be judged on equal terms with the most established production. But as soon as such a statement is made, positions must be attacked and defended. Interestingly, in the few years after the *Household Book of Poetry*, three other anthologies were produced in the United States, each edited by a poet: William Cullen Bryant's *Library of Poetry and Song* (1870), Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Parnassus* (1874), and John Greenleaf Whittier's *Songs of Three Centuries* (1875).[23] These poets belonged to the canon, which granted them the expertise to exercise absolute judgement, but which also entailed some partisanship in the selection. This situation sounds quite similar to that of Kubelka or to the selection committee of the Anthology Film Archives at the time, which also claimed absolute judgement while being judge and jury. The problem of the confidence in a local canon was also similar, once "local" is heard as not geographic in the strictest sense but as designating a slightly different kind of place: the underground. The Anthology Film Archives' manifesto reads: "That a film had an influence or that it was the first of its kind, have not been considerations of the film selection committee. In every case they have made their decisions on the aesthetic value of the individual work."[24] The strictest conception of absolute, transhistorical aesthetic evaluation has thus been the sole motto of the selection committee.

20   Ibid., 280.
21   Ibid., 291; see also Charles A. Dana, ed., *Household Book of Poetry* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1858).
22   Ibid., 291.
23   William Cullen Bryant, ed., *A Library of Poetry and Song; Being Choice Selections from the Best Poets* (New York: J. B. Ford & Co., 1870); Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed., *Parnassus* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1874); John Greenleaf Whittier, ed., *Songs of Three Centuries* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1875).
24   Sitney, *The Essential Cinema*, xi–xii.

The Interventionist Anthology and Modernist History

All these historical variations begin to show two basic models for the poetry anthology. One is oriented toward preservation and the description of a historical evolution or landscape. It is supposedly neutral and basically inclusive. Its most accomplished form is probably the teaching anthology, aimed at mediating an already established canon for a public of students. The other model is what Braddock calls the "interventionist" anthology, whose most radical incarnation is the modernist collection. It is decidedly presentist, if not strictly contemporary. It claims absolute judgement, and exclusiveness: its aim is to propose and impose a counter-canon, disrupting the dominant trends and criteria. It is curated and signed by one artist. The most prominent example is probably Ezra Pound's 1914 *Des Imagistes: An Anthology*.[25] A small volume of sixty-three pages containing only the works of eleven poets, sold in a very limited number of copies, it still was the foundational moment of American poetic modernism. After that, a great number of anthologies were published, and the poetry collection became one of the most important media for the spread of modernism. Pound himself edited several others which mostly contain only contemporary poems,[26] but to him, the anthology as such had to do with history: as Jeremy Braddock synthesized, "it is a medium preserving fragments of the ancient knowledge, and at the same time a salutary modern commercial form."[27] Later, he would co-edit with Marcella Spann an explicitly historical anthology: *Confucius to Cummings: An Anthology of Poetry*.[28] Confucius is nodal in Pound's interest for the anthology as form, and particularly as a form of relation with history. He translated many Confucian works, among them the "Classic Anthology" (*Shih-ching: The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius*).[29] In fact, the whole project of the *Cantos*, as the "tale of the tribe," could be understood as an anthology.

In parallel, Pound also produced essays and anthologies concerned with the (re)writing of literary history. The *ABC of Reading*, in 1934, features ninety

25   Ezra Pound, ed., *Des Imagistes: An Anthology* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1914).

26   Ezra Pound, ed., *Catholic Anthology 1914–1915* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1915); Ezra Pound, ed., *Profile: An Anthology Collected in MCMXXXI* (Milan: John Scheiwiller, 1932); Ezra Pound, ed., *Active Anthology* (London: Faber & Faber, 1933).

27   Braddock, *Collecting as Modernist Practice*, 237.

28   Ezra Pound and Marcella Spann, eds., *Confucius to Cummings: An Anthology of Poetry* (New York: New Directions, 1964).

29   Ezra Pound, trans., *Shih-ching: The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954).

pages of introductory essays on the art of poetry, followed by a hundred pages of "exhibits," from Dante and Chaucer to Whitman. The extracts are sometimes only juxtaposed to one another, but most of them are commented and interspersed with exercises for students, and tests explained for teachers. At the beginning of that "Exhibits" part, Pound wrote: "The ideal way to present the next section of this booklet would be to give the quotations WITHOUT any comment whatever. I am afraid that would be too revolutionary."[30] The *ABC* could be described as an interventionist mode of history writing and of pedagogy, but it remains within the domain of a recognizable past, and stops just before the modernist moment. It maintains a tension between the pedagogical and the interventionist models of anthologies, one being fundamentally historical while the other is not. But this opposition must be complicated, as some anthologies of the modernist era have involved history as part of the projected cultural intervention. This is particularly the case of the collections presenting the production of a marginal culture. Indeed, anthologies have been the main mode of presence of minor cultures within the dominant cultural space. For instance, George W. Cronyn edited in 1918 *The Path on the Rainbow*,[31] an anthology of Native American transcriptions of songs and chants presented as poetry,[32] and also as "genuine American Classics."[33] Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, published in 1925, was possibly "the most important and influential anthology of the modernist period, irrespective of race, nationality, or aesthetic," according to Braddock.[34] These were collectivist anthologies, like most modernist interventionist collections, but they relied more decisively on history.

The community aspect of these anthologies could seem at odds with their being signed works, assembled by one authority. This was an important tension. After the commercial failure of Ezra Pound's *Des Imagistes*, poet Amy Lowell produced three annual anthologies, *Some Imagist Poets*,[35] in which every participant was given equal space, and the liberty to choose

30   Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: Faber & Faber, 1951).

31   The spine of the book reads: *The Path on the Rainbow: The Book of Indian Poems*. George W. Cronyn, ed., *The Path on the Rainbow: An Anthology of Songs and Chants from the Indians of North America* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1918).

32   Mary Austin's introduction insisted on this point, commenting these transcriptions as poetic classics. Ibid., xv–xxxii.

33   Ibid., v.

34   Braddock, *Collecting as Modernist Practice*, 157, 209; also see Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York: Charles & Albert Boni, 1925).

35   Amy Lowell, ed., *Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915); Amy Lowell, ed., *Some Imagist Poets, 1916: An Annual Anthology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916); Amy Lowell, ed., *Some Imagist Poets, 1917: An Annual Anthology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917).

among their poems those that should be included. Poets were then presented in alphabetical order. The Anthology Film Archives selection committee was also supposed to be a democratic regime with the films being elected by unanimous vote. When the system was changed to a simple majority requirement, Stan Brakhage left. Kubelka recalls that moment and the committee work in general as a quite violent process: "That was incredibly painful: I remember Brakhage running away in the snow storm, furious, while Sitney lied crying on the kitchen floor. [...] The New York jury was such an exhausting experience that I took alone the responsibility for the selection for Pompidou."[36] In contrast with Lowell's later versions, Pound's original *Des Imagistes* obviously appeared as an *edited* anthology. There was no preface or manifesto, but the very arrangement of the poems was obviously meaningful: some had much more space than others; the order was not alphabetical or arbitrary; and a clear thematic and formal line lead from one poem to the next. The collection thus became an argument as to what Imagists were, but also as to what contemporary poetry should be—among other things, a rediscovery of Greek light, against the false sophistications of classicism. Editing was part of the anthology as a foundational gesture for the collective—even though, as Braddock recalled, Pound simultaneously "worked to obscure the signs of his own authority as editor."[37] And, of course, from our perspective, this conception of "editing" can clearly be connected with montage, in the exact sense that Kubelka invoked.

It took some time and a younger poet than Pound to formulate this explicitly. In a 1931 letter, Louis Zukofsky wrote to his friend and mentor: "Advertising & montage, Mr. E.,—Eisenstein has nothing on us."[38] Advertising and montage make for a good definition of the art of anthology editing. Zukofsky was also very interested in the anthology as form, and edited several ones. In 1948, *A Test of Poetry* was a radical version of Pound's *ABC of Reading*. It was constructed in three parts, each consisting of twenty-five sections, or should we say "programmes," of two to four poems, gathered around a central theme or "consideration"—translation, speech, definition, sight, measure, movement, etc. The first and last parts present the poems without any comment, nor any date or author's name. These can be found in a chronological chart at the end of the volume. The middle part includes names, dates, comments, and theoretical notes. Each poem is identified by

---

36 Grissemann et al., *Was ist Film*, 18. My translation.

37 Braddock, *Collecting as Modernist Practice*, 237.

38 Louis Zukofsky to Ezra Pound, December 14, 1931, in Barry Ahearn, ed., *Pound/Zukofsky: Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and Louis Zukofsky* (New York: New Directions, 1987), 121.

a number, followed by a blank space. As Zukofsky writes on the first page: "This space may be used by the reader who enjoys marking up his copy for evaluating the compared examples of similar object matter under each cardinal number in some such way as *great, good, fair, poor*."[39] Somewhat resembling the Kubelka *Was ist Film* programmes, the sections have a fundamental chronological organization—beginning with classical translations of Homer and Ovid and ending with a "negro chain gang song" collected in 1931 and a 1932 poem by Marianne Moore—with an almost systematic contrapuntal line of radically non-chronological ordering. William Carlos Williams' poem "The Red Wheelbarrow" from 1923 can thus be associated with an anonymous fifteenth-century song about a "gentil cok."[40]

Zukofsky's poetic career had begun in 1931 with another anthology, assembled as a guest editor of the famous *Poetry* journal of Chicago for a special issue, titled *"Objectivists" 1931*.[41] It was greatly influential afterwards—Parker Tyler's anthology *Modern Things* in 1934 shows almost exactly the same line-up[42]—but it was very violently received at the time. The problem was not so much that the choice of contemporary poets elected by the young, almost unknown editor, was focused on a new, so-called "objectivist" group, whatever that meant. The problem was that the editor had a historical claim. In the afterword "Program: 'Objectivists' 1931," Zukofsky insisted: "Implied stricture of names generally cherished as famous, but not mentioned in this editor's [recent essay] 'American Poetry 1920–1930' or included in the contributors to this issue, is prompted by the historical method of the Chinese sage who wrote, 'Then for nine reigns there was no literary production.'"[43] The editor of the journal, Harriett Monroe, answered the next month with an article titled "The Arrogance of Youth."[44] Wanting to call the 1976 Pompidou exhibition *The History of Cinema* also required some of that arrogance.

---

39   Louis Zukofsky, ed., *A Test of Poetry* (New York: The Objectivist Press, 1948), 3.
40   Ibid., 100–1, 164.
41   Zukofsky, Louis, ed., *"Objectivists" 1931*, special issue of *Poetry* 37, no. 5 (February 1931). One year later, Zukofsky edited *An "Objectivists" Anthology*, published by the Objectivist Press, a small publishing venture based in Le Beausset, France, which he had founded with George Oppen and Charles Reznikoff.
42   Parker Tyler, ed., *Modern Things* (New York: The Galleon Press, 1934). Before becoming one of the important film critics of his time, working particularly on experimental and underground cinema, Parker Tyler was a poet. He notably co-edited with Charles Henri Ford the poetry journal *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*, which saw nine issues within two years, 1929–1930. William Carlos Williams was mentioned as a contributing editor.
43   Zukofsky, *Poetry*, 269.
44   Harriett Monroe, "The Arrogance of Youth," *Poetry* 37, no. 6 (March 1931): 328–33.

Adjacency Historiography

Anthologies are precious historical objects. They materialize precise con-
texts, embody a set of aesthetic values but also networks and strategies,
enact symbolic weight and commercial tactics, interact with the cultural
market, and produce collective formations. But some anthologies, like
Peter Kubelka's, also present themselves as a form of history writing. In
this perspective, their main characteristic is probably erasure: deletion of
discursive explanation or comments, absence of more or less important
canonical works. These anthologies reveal, as Michel de Certeau had noted,
history writing as an unavoidably institutionalizing process.[45] They are
signed, their subjectivity at once exhibited and implicit, happening through
selection and arrangement—"montage," should we care to call it that. P.
Adams Sitney began his contribution to the *Une histoire du cinéma* catalogue
with a question:

> Can there be a History of Independent Cinema? Inasmuch as this cinema
> defines itself as independent or avant-garde, introducing a negative ele-
> ment in its epithet, it relates to another cinema—itself unnamed and
> undefined—whose obscurity contributes to make it shine. There is no
> shortage of histories about this other cinema: narratives relating to its
> technological changes, to its industrial growth or to national achieve-
> ments, adorned with the accomplishments of an almost monomorphic
> hero, whether he is called Griffith, Chaplin, Méliès, Eisenstein, Von
> Stroheim, Dreyer or Bresson. This is in no way scandalous, for their films
> could be used as models for the meticulous fictions by the likes of Sadoul,
> Mitry, Gregor and Patalas, Toeplitz, Wright. If we have to take seriously
> the refusal of linear narration that constitutes a quasi-essential feature
> of independent cinema, how are we to account for more than fifty years
> of success in this context?[46]

There is probably some degree of strangeness to this idea that the very
form of history should emulate the form of its object. But should we adopt
it even if only as a challenge to general historiography, then cinema and
poetry as fragmented, flickering media based on montage require other
forms of accounts of the past than traditional chronicles. In these forms, the

---

45 Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988),
64–68.
46 Sitney, "Tableau historique," in Kubelka, *Une histoire du cinéma*, 9. My translation.

connections essential to the construction of history are the spectator's task, and blank spaces are left for them to evaluate and relate. As Pound famously wrote in "Canto XIII," quoting Confucius, himself a renowned anthologist:

> "And even I can remember
> A day when the historians left blanks in their writings,
> I mean for things they didn't know,
> But that time seems to be passing."[47]

Commenting on the work of Charles Reznikoff, another objectivist poet, Charles Bernstein defined the specific kind of parataxis essential to his practice with the word "adjacency": "As a term of art, adjacency is distinguished from adjoining or abutting, as land that is adjacent to a common square, but nowhere touches. Reznikoff's is an art of adjacency, each frame carefully articulated and set beside the next."[48] Programming, composing a collection, curating a film exhibition, or editing an anthology are paratactic modes of discourse, but as forms of history writing they are more precisely based on adjacency. While the concept of montage can describe part of their specificity, they share moreover a refusal of adjoining and abutting. Each object, meticulously framed and situated, is organized with precision not only with regards to those before and after, but more largely within a wider common space.

As a historiographic practice, adjacency constructs a deeply different past. Instead of a line, even of a discontinuous one, it becomes a blanked-out map, where distances are maintained between events so that entire areas appear as empty, unknown, or erased. As I noted in this chapter's introduction, nearly all the historians I have here mentioned have also been artists. Probably, part of their historiographical procedures have been oriented by a transfer of their poetic or film techniques to their work as historians—though some of them have rather grounded their art in a conception of history. But these practices also result from tactics within the field, which have emerged with modern or modernist art. Here, linearity as a mode of history writing is not first opposed to tabular or rhizomatic modes, not criticized first for its oversimplification of complex processes. It is rather condemned for the illusory continuity and lack of space given to

---

47   Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1996), 60.
48   Charles Bernstein, "Reznikoff's Nearness," in *The Objectivist Nexus: Essays in Cultural Poetics*, ed. Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Peter Quartermain (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 218.

the possibility of future changes in the perceived past. Space should be left blank so that today's invisible, forgotten, neglected, or despised can have a place in tomorrow's history.

Linearity is also refused for tactical reasons: adjacency historiography developing no explicit justification, its only argument relies on (aesthetic) authority, and in return constructs that authority in the same movement as it constructs a community. Through their very existence as object or performance, anthologies affirm both at once: the community of those assembled, and the validity of the criteria for their gathering. These needn't be open for discussion, as it would only entail some fragility. These are guerrilla tactics: act as though you were powerful, and finally you will be.

References

Ahearn, Barry, ed. *Pound/Zukofsky: Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and Louis Zukofsky*. New York: New Directions, 1987.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.

Bernstein, Charles. "Reznikoff's Nearness." In *The Objectivist Nexus: Essays in Cultural Poetics*, edited by Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Peter Quartermain, 210–39. Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1999.

Bovier, François, ed. *Early Video Art and Experimental Film Networks: French-Speaking Switzerland in 1974: A Case for "Minor History."* Lausanne: ECAL, 2017.

Braddock, Jeremy. *Collecting as Modernist Practice*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

Bryant, William Cullen, ed. *A Library of Poetry and Song; Being Choice Selections from the Best Poets*. New York: J. B. Ford & Co., 1870.

Cronyn, George W., ed. *The Path on the Rainbow: An Anthology of Songs and Chants from the Indians of North America*. New York: Boni & Liveright, 1918.

Dana, Charles A., ed. *Household Book of Poetry*. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1858.

Certeau, Michel de. *The Writing of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo, ed. *Parnassus*. Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1874.

Golding, Alan C. "A History of American Poetry Anthologies." In *Canons*, edited by Robert von Hallberg, 279–307. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Grissemann, Stefan, Alexander Horwarth, and Regina Schlagnitweit, eds. *Was ist Film: Peter Kubelkas Zyklisches Programm im Österreichischen Filmmuseum*.

Vienna: Österreichischen Filmmuseum/SYNEMA-Gesellschaft für Film und Medien, 2010.

Kubelka, Peter, ed. *Une histoire du cinéma*. Paris: Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou/Musée national d'art moderne, 1976.

Locke, Alain, ed. *The New Negro: An Interpretation*. New York: Charles & Albert Boni, 1925.

Lowell, Amy, ed. *Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915.

Lowell, Amy, ed. *Some Imagist Poets, 1916: An Annual Anthology*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916.

Lowell, Amy, ed. *Some Imagist Poets, 1917: An Annual Anthology*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917.

Lugon, Olivier. "La Photographie mise en espace: les expositions didactiques en Allemagne (1920–1930)." *Études photographiques* 5 (November 1998). https://journals.openedition.org/etudesphotographiques/168.

Lugon, Olivier, ed. *Exposition et médias: Photographie, cinéma, télévision*. Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 2012.

Marcorelles, Louis. "Une histoire du cinéma." *Le Monde*, February 5, 1976.

Monroe, Harriett. "The Arrogance of Youth." *Poetry* 37, no. 6 (March 1931): 328–33.

Pound, Ezra. *ABC of Reading*. London: Faber & Faber, 1951.

Pound, Ezra. *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*. New York: New Directions, 1996.

Pound, Ezra, ed. *Active Anthology*. London: Faber & Faber, 1933.

Pound, Ezra, ed. *Des Imagistes: An Anthology*. New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1914.

Pound, Ezra, ed. *Catholic Anthology 1914–1915*. London: Elkin Mathews, 1915.

Pound, Ezra, ed. *Profile: An Anthology Collected in MCMXXXI*. Milan: John Scheiwiller, 1932.

Pound, Ezra, trans. *Shih-ching: The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954.

Pound, Ezra, and Marcella Spann, eds. *Confucius to Cummings: An Anthology of Poetry*. New York: New Directions, 1964.

Sitney, P. Adams, ed. *The Essential Cinema: Essays on the Films in the Collection of Anthology Film Archives*. New York: Anthology Film Archives & New York University Press, 1975.

Tyler, Parker, ed. *Modern Things*. New York: The Galleon Press, 1934.

Wasson, Haidee. "Big, Fast Museums/Small, Slow Movies: Film, Scale and the Art Museum." In *Useful Cinema*, edited by Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson, 178–204. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Wasson, Haidee. *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Wasson, Haidee. "Studying Movies at the Museum: The Museum of Modern Art and Cinema's Changing Object." In *Inventing Film Studies*, edited by Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, 121–48. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Whittier, John Greenleaf, ed. *Songs of Three Centuries.* Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1875.

Zukofsky, Louis, ed. *An "Objectivists" Anthology.* Le Beausset: The Objectivist Press, 1932.

Zukofsky, Louis, ed. *"Objectivists" 1931.* Special issue of *Poetry* 37, no. 5 (February 1931).

Zukofsky, Louis, ed. *A Test of Poetry.* New York: The Objectivist Press, 1948.

About the Author

Benoît Turquety is Associate Professor in the Film History and Aesthetics Department at the University of Lausanne, in Switzerland, and the director of two SNF research projects. His recent publications include *Inventing Cinema: Machines, Gestures and Media History* (2019), *Medium, Format, Configuration: The Displacements of Film* (2019), and *Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub: "Objectivists" in Cinema* (2020).