THE TIMEKEEPERS OF ETERNITY:

CINEMATIC BALLARD AND BALLARDIAN CINEMA

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Abstract

My project concerns a methodology to create Ballardian cinematic landscapes through the appropriation of the film *The Langoliers* (1995) as a case study. I look in detail at the landscapes of evocative fictions by author J. G. Ballard, looking into how their intrinsic cinematic qualities have influenced and have been influenced by cinema. By means of exploratory research and practice, I examine the literary mechanisms inherent in the creation of written and visual Ballardian worlds and reflect critically on the methodologies followed either by the film adaptations (*Empire of the Sun, Crash, Atrocity Exhibition, High-Rise*) or J. G. Ballard himself.

My point of view is one of a practitioner/filmmaker, looking for a personal methodology to understand, dissect and reconstruct Ballard's—and eventually my—inner landscapes successfully for cinema. I follow the path of found footage film appropriation and I rework *The Langoliers*, a science fiction monster time-travel B-movie, exploring the ways it engages with genre concepts of time, space, and identity. Because of the central villain's addiction to ripping paper, the footage allows me to assign a paper materiality that emerges from within the story, in turn reflecting the disturbed encephalograph of the protagonist. I am able to create a new cinematic landscape by printing each frame on A4 paper, and with the use of tears, creases and juxtapositions I re-photograph the film; the villain struggling to escape his obsession with torn paper.

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Introduction

The Ballardian cinematic

In an interview for *Re/Search* in 1982, and prior to the filming of *Crash* (1996) by David Cronenberg, author J.G. Ballard told the interviewers: "I'm glad, really, that *Crash* has not been filmed, because I can see myself beginning to believe the movie version—my own imagination deformed by the damned thing, squeezed into somebody else's mould."[1] When later the film came out, Ballard, in a conversation with Iain Sinclair declared it a masterpiece: "No question about it. I think it's his best film ever, actually."[2] This is the curious case of adapting Ballard's novels for cinema and Ballard's continuous interaction and infatuation with the never-ending cinematic rewrites of his works. My practice-based research focuses on tracing the elements of the Ballardian cinematic through the tools of the Bakhtinian chronotope. My appropriation film *The Timekeepers of Eternity* responds to Ballard's necessity for transcribing his world into cinema.

J.G. Ballard was a novelist, essayist, and short story writer. He was born in Shanghai in 1930. When he was twelve, he was interned with his family during the Japanese occupation until the end of the war. His fascinating life took him back to the UK to study medicine and English, enlist in the RAF, and work as a

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[1] Vivian Vale and Andrea Juno, *Re/Search 8/9 J.G.Ballard* (San Francisco: V/Search Publications,U.S., 1998), 12.

[2] Iain Sinclair, *Crash: David Cronenberg's Post-Mortem on J.G. Ballard's 'Trajectory of Fate'* (British Film Institute, 1999), 11.

copywriter in London agencies. His first short story was published in 1956, and he continued to make a living as a writer until he died in 2009. Ballard attempted to break away from the conventions of the science fiction genre, rejecting outer space fiction for inner space and drawing on the internal landscape of tomorrow as a transmuted image of the past. [3] A common theme for Ballard was the effect of the modern setting on our psyches—airport architecture, the motion sculpture of the highways, the culture of the shopping mall, pornography, and technology—all of which signified to him an unavoidable dystopian future. His responses were perversities that took various mental forms, distorting elements of the present to achieve a powerful insight into the personal—and eventually the collective—unconscious. Early in his career, Ballard divided his work into two halves. In the first half, he offered descriptions of imaginary landscapes that were heavily affected by the surrealists and their paintings. As he was imagining a future world, or the aftermath of some external natural disaster, Ballard was creating worlds characterised by the decay of a dystopian future. He interpreted space as a mirror reflecting the alienation of his character's psyche and as a source that affects the unconscious. The direct links between character, space and time created an atmosphere coined Ballardian, referring to its "dystopian modernity, of bleak man-made landscapes born from the psychological effects of technological, social or environmental developments." [4] In the second half, beginning with *The Atrocity Exhibition*, he focused on the built landscape of technology. He found a treasure trove of stimuli in cinema and television, information that he assembled as collages to offer critiques of the near future.

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[3] J. G. Ballard, "Which Way to Inner Space?" in *A User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews*, New Ed edition (London: Flamingo, 1997), 200.

[4] Collins Dictionaries and Mark Forsyth, *Collins English Dictionary*, 12th edition (Glasgow: Collins, 2014), s.v. "Ballardian."

The built non-places that he constructed fail to offer psychological stability to his protagonists, creating the theme of displacement that characterises almost all of his work. Later in his life, he lost interest in the technological landscape and wrote novels and autobiographies set in strictly geographical places. He was once more inspired by reality and used the genre of investigative crime to examine how social tensions in gated communities may condition us into violent actions and behaviours.

Ballard had a vivid interest in cinema. From his first stories in 1950, his work was saturated with cinema, in the form of pop culture references, narrative mechanisms, and appreciation of the film medium. Given his focus and the rich visual elements of his stories, it is not entirely surprising that his work has attracted the attention of filmmakers for decades. So far, four of his novels have been adapted into feature films and several into TV and radio plays. Since the recent adaptation of *High-Rise* (2015) by Ben Wheatley, more of his short stories and novels have been optioned to become even grander cinematic endeavours with a greater budget. My research addresses the gap between filmmakers' struggles in adapting Ballard and the path to a completed Ballardian film. Ballard witnessed part of his work on screen and established a dialogue between his writing and the adapted films. There is no shortage of scholarship on Ballard and he has most definitely found his place within twentieth-century literature. The discourse around cinematic Ballard has been vivid, but scattered in articles, film reviews and pop influences. As Peter Bradshaw observes, Ballard's influence on cinema is "elusive, indirect, glimpseable at the margins".[6] The film version of

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[6] Peter Bradshaw, "How JG Ballard Cast His Shadow Right across the Arts", *The Guardian*, 20 April 2009, sec. Books, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/apr/20/jg-ballard-film-music-architecture-tv.
A version of this multi-authored feature was published under the title 'The poet of modern

High-Rise sparked a special issue of *Critical Quarterly*[7] which has been one of the few instances in which connections between Ballard and cinema have been systematically explored.

In this thesis, I shall focus on two areas of interest: the multiple ways in which cinema has influenced Ballard's work and the ripples Ballard has had on cinematic creation. In one of the few attempts to fully address the relationship between Ballard's work and cinema in her essay 'Death at work: The cinematic imagination of J. G. Ballard'[8], Corin Depper illustrates how Ballard's cinematic imagination continues to raise complex questions about form, time, narrative and movement in, and across, written and visual texts. In 'Ballard/Atrocity/Conner/Exhibition/Assemblage'[9] Roger Luckhurst finds traces of J.G. Ballard in the filmography of avant-garde filmmaker Bruce Conner as they have both engaged with the same events and the subsequent newsreels footage recordings, addressing their cultural footprint in a mass media environment. The influence of cinema also informs Chris Beckett's analysis[10] of two very different draft texts for *Concrete Island*: an undated typescript substantially revised by hand and a first draft screenplay. For Ballard cinema was not just an inspiration but also a medium that allowed him to test and reframe his literary narratives, engaging them as cinematic experiences. He created worlds that are often regarded as cinematic but are seemingly unadaptable. It is within this framework

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fears' in the G2 section of the Guardian, 21 April 2009.

[7] 'Special Issue: Ben Wheatley, J.G. Ballard, and High-Rise', *Critical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1 April 2016): 1–1, https://doi.org/10.1111/criq.12221.

[8] Corin Depper "Death at work: the cinematic imagination of J.G. Ballard" in *J.G. Ballard: Contemporary Critical Perspectives,* ed. Jeannette Baxter (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2009), 50.

[9] Roger Luckhurst, "Ballard/Atrocity/Conner/Exhibition/Assemblage," in Jeannette Baxter and Rowland Wymer eds., J.G. *Ballard: Visions and Revisions* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 37.

[10] Chris Beckett, *J. G. Ballard's 'Elaborately Signalled Landscape': The Drafting of Concrete Island.* eBLJ:1-21. http://www.bl.uk/eblj/2015articles/pdf/ebljarticle52015.pdf

that I use my practice to examine the ways a film can sustain the experience of Ballardian literature and I define the tools we can use to construct these Ballardian worlds and interrogate the ways filmmakers can follow these paths to explore their own aesthetics.

Adapting the Ballardian

Ballard's interest in cinema is evident from the film reviews he wrote at the early stages of his career, to his unsuccessful attempt to work as a screenwriter for *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth,*[11] for which he was mistakenly credited for the story as J. B. Ballard. His fascination with cinema was often expressed in his plots and methodology. As Depper states, cinema became a key element in his attempts to explore what amounted to the pathology of narrative.[12] In his short story 'The 60 Minute Zoom'[13], we can begin to trace the intricate ways he weaved cinema into his works. The story follows a man who monitors his wife's infidelity from a hotel balcony, recording her adultery through the constant zoom of the camera as the events lead to her death. At the climax of the crime, we realise the husband was not recording but replaying the footage of the murder he committed. The story interchanges the roles of filmmaker and spectator as the reader becomes an accomplice of the crime. Ballard subverts cinematic time, using the playback as the twist in his narrative. The process of blurring the lines between the roles of writer, filmmaker, protagonist, and spectator resides at the core of the Ballardian cinematic and is evident in Ballard's process towards his

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[11] *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, dir. Val Guest (Hammer Films, 1970).

[12] Depper in *J.G. Ballard: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. Jeannette Baxter, 50.

[13] J. G. Ballard, *The Venus Hunters* (London: Granada, 1992).

novel *Crash* (1973). Ballard's obsession with celebrities and car crashes had already begun in *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1969), and it was followed by the short film *Crash! (*1971*,* dir. Harley Cokeliss), which featured not only Ballard himself as an actor but also a voice-over written especially for the film by him. Although the film was not successful, it is of great importance for Ballard as a methodology for exploring themes that would later become part of the novel *Crash*.

The Ballardian cinematic is not constrained in the plot or themes of his fiction but extends to a methodology of world creation. The genre of science fiction allowed Ballard to reframe established plots and themes. His main effort to discover inner space was framed in contrast to the popular science fiction of his time which focused on outer space. Ballard narrowed down his plot to one man, coming to terms with the alterations in his environment, initially fighting and eventually embracing his evolving disastrous surrounding. His heroes are driven by a dream of a perfect world and eventually, the story ends with them being conditioned into the new reality they at first found so hard to accept. The balance between self and environment creates evocative visuals that replicate cinematic qualities. Focusing on Ballardian film adaptations allows me to offer additional insight into how filmmakers interpret and rephrase his fiction. In a review of the film adaptation of *Crash*, Iain Sinclair categorises Cronenberg's film "more as a rewrite than an adaptation"[14], since an attempt to be true to the novel would be a failure. Ballard's cinematic writing engages the tools of cinema for his benefit to create a non-continuous sense of space and time.

Ballard was very welcoming of all three film adaptations of his novels, Steven Spielberg's *Empire of the Sun* (1987), David Cronenberg's *Crash* (1996), and

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[14] Sinclair, *Crash*, 16.

Jonathan Weiss's *The Atrocity Exhibition* (completed in 2000 but never released theatrically). The most recent adaptation, of *High-Rise* by Ben Wheatley, was completed after Ballard's death. Although each of the adaptations has its own merits, I argue that the Ballardian cinematic can be discovered following a different cinematic path. As foreshadowed by his heroes, the Ballardian cinematic universe is determined by failures and my practice-based research aims to test an alternative mechanism of creating the Ballardian. Ballard offers filmmakers a map. My practice is organically entwined with the visual stimuli that the Ballardian evokes, using it as an influence and a thought process.

Finding the Langoliers

The purpose of my practice is to follow a PaR methodology aimed at analysing the cinematic characteristics of the Ballardian. I chose to recreate the Ballardian landscape without using Ballardian source material. In an interview accompanying the French publication of *Crash*, Ballard describes his method as one of finding reality within our everyday fiction: "It seems to me that the function of the writer is no longer the addition of fiction in the world, but rather to seek its abstraction, to direct an enquiry aimed at recovering elements of reality from this debauch of fiction."[15] Ballard observes the world surrounding him, especially the media culture and built environment, and through this attempts to unearth the science fiction scenarios of his novels. For my practice, I decided, like Ballard, to discover a fiction within a reality, to follow the path of

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[15] Interview with Robert Louit, *Magazine Litteraire,* no. 87 (April 1974); translation by Peter Nicholls included in Ballard, 'Some Words about Crash!', *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction*, no.9 (November 1975), pp 44-54.

found footage appropriation and thus avoid the need to adapt plot, motifs and narrative content from one medium to another. I chose *The Langoliers* as a primary source, a film that engages broadly with time, space, and identity but also allows me to assign it materiality that organically emerges from within the story it concerns. By reworking *The Langoliers* I created a new filmic landscape, a new reality.

The Langoliers is a novel by Stephen King adapted for a two-part television series in 1995 by Tom Holland, with the blessings of the author.[16] The film achieved notoriety and a cult audience due to a running time of three hours and unrefined special effects. The plot follows ten passengers who wake up in an aeroplane to find that everyone else has gone missing. When they manage to land the plane in a nearby airport, they realise there is nobody else left in the world—everyone has vanished but them. The modern-day group of Robinson Crusoes struggles to find their way back to an inhabited reality. The story is a distinctive take on time-travel, assuming that time is not linear; thus, it is not possible to travel back or forth in time. Instead, reality only remains as an echo for a few minutes in the past until the langoliers, strange creatures of destruction, arrive and eat up the remnants of the past. The main villain of the film (one of the ten passengers) is Mr Greg Toomey, a character obsessed with time and with getting to his urgent business appointment in Boston. As he slowly reveals his madness by attacking the other characters (including Dinah, a blind girl with special powers), he shares the story of the langoliers, a tale he was told as a child, one that made him painfully aware of the importance of time and that clearly still haunts him. His childhood memory provided the identity of the monsters responsible for keeping

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[16] Steven King not only helped with the screenplay but also had a minor acting part in the series.

time. He has a character tic of obsessively tearing pieces of paper into strips, compulsive behaviour that seems to soothe his madness. This detail is secondary to the plot but is crucial to what makes the film memorable. Furthermore, it instigated my approach towards my film appropriation. Whether my retelling of *The Langoliers* creates a 'copy' or a new 'original' of the original story, the methodology followed to personally engage with and inhabit the Ballardian space and time offers salient ground for this research. *The Langoliers* is the first science fiction film I remember watching on television at a young age. What is important is that a film of limited artistic merit has become part of my understanding of science fiction and is embedded in my own childhood memory. My respect for the original film led me to discover its assets—more in my memory than the film—and reconstruct it for an audience. This is one of those instances in which I, as a filmmaker, was infused in the process of selecting and manipulating material.

Apart from my personal link to the original film, which is equally important, the material is strongly rooted in science fiction. The story and the way it has been filmed carry a simplicity that allows appropriation to assign new meaning. The story focuses on the inner journey of one main character and the links between the environment and inner trauma. As Ballard admits, "my fiction is all about one person, all about one man coming to terms with various forms of isolation"[17], and my method aims to examine this narrative condition. In my appropriation of *The Langoliers*, I created a medium that does not belong to the film itself (film strips, magnetic tape, or digital pixels) but belongs to the main character and his mental space. Mr Toomey, the evil businessman, finds solace by ripping pieces of paper

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[17] James Goddard and David Pringle, eds., *J.G.Ballard: The First Twenty Years* (Hayes: Bran's Head Books Ltd, 1976), 25.

and I attempted to make the torn pages the space for the film to project. After a rough first re-edit of *The Langoliers*, to substantially reduce its running time from the original three hours, I then proceeded sequentially through the remaining scenes in my cut, and printed out every second frame in black and white. I then animated the paper on which the frames were printed out, creating tears and creases, mirroring directly the main character's obsession with manipulating paper. Each new frame became a paper collage that I photographed to create sequences of recomposed paper stills. The choices to print only every second frame, meaning I was working at 12 frames per second, and to print in monochrome, were partly linked to cost, but also contributed to further distortion of the original film. My method echoes the use of photocopied paper in the short film *Copy Shop* by Virgil Widrich where paper has been photocopied and then re-photographed, an endless duplication of the main character, in and out of the film. In the film's press kit the filmmaker explains:

> The technical realisation of "Copy Shop" involved the transfer of every single frame from the digital video tape into the computer once the shooting had been finished, from where the frames were printed out on a black and white laser printer and then filmed again with a 35mm animation camera. Thus, video becomes paper, paper becomes film and the story of "Copy Shop" is brought to life again "copy by copy".[18]

The plot of *Copy Shop* revolves around a copy shop clerk who accidentally duplicates himself over the course of the day. The photocopying method works as a statement enhancing the multiplications of the hero onto the medium. My process was also reactive to the main character, allowing the compositional paper

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[18] Virgil Widrich, 'Copy Shop Press Kit', 2001, Accessed 12 September 2021. https://www.widrichfilm.com/projekte/copy_shop

space to become a narrative space. The erratic paper tearing of the protagonist transforms into paper collage compositions where the story develops. The plot of the film was re-edited once again to create Mr Toomey's slow descent into madness as all the other plot obstacles became elements of his inner space, now externalised in the form of the hand-animated film, which I titled *The Timekeepers of Eternity*. *The Langoliers* was reassembled in conversation with the four major cinematic Ballardian adaptations that preceded it, informed by the methodology the filmmakers chose to visualise his novels. Although the sources for these adaptations are Ballard's texts, the cinematic ways they engage with these issues offered me valuable viewpoints to understand the toolbox needed to address issues of plot, character and their links to rhythm and aesthetics.

Appropriation encompasses practices ranging from paper collages to the reuse of film footage, from the analogue physical copying and pasting of images to the sampling of digital information, intentionally focusing on the material aspect of the process. The use of appropriation liberates me as a filmmaker. It frees me from producing material anew or straight from his writings—which would inherently be influenced by Ballard—but instead focuses on the 'Ballardian' process, allowing the links to emerge. In this sense, my methodology of appropriation contrasts with that of adaptation. It does so, in particular by playing with creative possibilities that emerge from the practical restriction of using found footage. Further to the methodological links that Ballard has to collage and found footage films, I welcome the filmmaking process that creates a space for me to embrace the Ballardian identity for myself, a lonely and obsessive sense of purpose. Filmmaking is often an effort of a team; even in auteur-driven films, the crew needs to understand and participate to bring the story to life. Found footage appropriations are an exception to traditional modes of filmmaking, as they exclude crews and actors. Without turning the camera on

themselves, found footage filmmakers reinterpret visuals, storylines and sounds that do not belong to them. Unlike the psycho-dramas developed by P. Adams Sitney, in his critical-historical studies of avant-garde cinema[19], I do not turn the camera to myself in a conventional way, but I allow Mr Toomey to mirror my presence. Beginning with Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart*, the first example of appropriating found footage, films such as Peter Tscherkassky's *Outer Space* and Martin Arnold's *Passage à l' acte* explore the boundaries of found footage film manipulation and the result is often revealing of a new truth, the essence of the source material itself. The process of isolation allowed me to discover creative opportunities that further enhanced my creative journey. The theoretical research moved in parallel to the film, and both are in constant dialogue. My practice inevitably looks for guidance in previous found footage appropriation, looking for the risks taken in terms of narration, spatial and temporal location, form, and style, and seeing the reasons that instigated filmmakers to engage with found footage and the aims of their practice.

Cinematic chronotope

To avoid the pitfall of replicating Ballardian symbols and allow my research to look with clarity into Ballard's cinematic qualities, I need to engage a tool that will analyse his work and the consequent film adaptations in terms of elements and mechanisms that I can use and test through my practice and vice versa. In

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[19] P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000*, 3rd edition (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 14.

one of his early film reviews[20], Ballard highlighted the elements needed for impactful science fiction cinema. He claims the most important qualities that need to be addressed within the genre are the science fiction pillars of time, space, and identity. To uncover the spatio-temporal ingredients of Ballard's fictions, and examine their intersections between space and time, and between identity and landscape, I engage Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope as: "A unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and nature of the temporal and spatial categories represented."[21]. The chronotope (from the Ancient Greek words χρόνος (time) and τόπος (space)) serves as a means of measuring how fictional time and space are articulated in relation to historical time and space. Bakhtin's term refers to the chronotope as the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed"[22]. Although Ballard can be seen through the literary prism of the chronotope, the cinematic nature of the chronotope as a concept should also not be ignored. I propose an interpretation of Ballardian landscapes through the prism of the cinematic chronotope, attempting to pinpoint the varieties of time and space as they exist in Ballard's work and to explore how they shape the identities of his characters.

Bakhtin avoided references to early cinema; however, his lexicon in defining the chronotope echoes the audio-visual qualities of film and the cinema experience. Bakhtin describes the novel chronotope as the place where "time thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible" and where "space becomes charged and

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[20] J. G. Ballard, "Hobbits in Space?" in *A User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews*, (London: Flamingo, 1997), 16.

[21] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Michael Holquist (University of Texas Press, 1981), 425.

[22] Ibid., 84.

responsive to the movements of time, plot and history"[23]. His words often seem more appropriate for film than for literature. It makes sense, therefore that, although Bakhtin did not write on film, the concept of the chronotope has been applied to issues in film scholarship. For example, Vivian Sobchack applied the concept to film noir, interpreting the chronotopic dialogue between the film text and the post-war context, which inspired several studies focusing on genre to identify new cinematic chronotopes. In the course of a genre's changing face, chronotopes become important sites in a narrative, not only fleshing out its plot, but also allowing its knots of meaning to be tied and untied[24]. According to Sobchack the cinematic chronotope is implicitly a triadic representational system, one where specific forms of space and time inevitably couple with a manner of representing subjectivity. Thus, not only can (must) any element of a text be read as an expression of a particular logic of space and time, but the chronotope specific to the text will also control the intra-textual presentation of subjectivity and influence the text's apprehension as well: "as Bakhtin notes, space and time play a central role in the process of concrete artistic cognition"[25], understood as both production and reception.

The chronotope seems in many ways more appropriate to the film medium since the cinematic chronotope is quite literally displayed on a physical screen, in physical time, in contrast to the literary chronotope.[26] Robert Stam's two monographs on cinematic adaptations of literature, *Subversive Pleasures* (1989)

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 150.

[25] Vivian Sobchack, 'Lounge Time: Postwar Crises and the Chronotope of Film Noir', in *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1998), 150.

[26] "Film is an artistic medium specifically intended to hold up time and to create impressions using time and space." Peter King, 'Memory and Exile: Time and Place in Tarkovsky's Mirror', *Housing, Theory and Society*, vol. 25, 2008, 72.

and *Literature Through Film* (2005), mention the cinematic chronotope briefly, pointing out its usefulness as a conceptual category but not assigning it a central role in film theory. Robert Stam more precisely explains the chronotope's appeal in film studies:

> Whereas literature plays itself out within a virtual, lexical space, the cinematic chronotope is quite literal, played out concretely across a screen with specific dimensions and unfolding in literal time (usually 24 frames per second), quite apart from the fictive time-space specific films might construct.[27]

Stam uses the cinematic chronotope not only to examine the relationship between a literary source and a film but also to examine relationships between films as subsequent adaptations of a source text are produced. In the same vein, the chronotope may facilitate a comparative analysis of films within a specific subgenre. The cinematic chronotope's links to genre make it a useful theoretical construct for this study. Cinema offers an expanded way of interpreting and applying chronotopes, because they acknowledge cinematic discourses, such as casting, performance, costume, setting, and sound, which are not as readily available to written texts. In cinema, such discursive strategies illuminate a text; in Ballard, such strategies may help illuminate his landscapes. This is partly due to the nature of the chronotope, as Bakhtin emphasises that different chronotopes—or combinations thereof—can be used to analyse different works of art. Each analysis is in itself an attempt to define a chronotope.

My practice-based research becomes a trail between cinematic works, including

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[27] Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film, Reprint edition* (Baltimore; Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 205.

Ballard's novels, Ballardian film adaptations, *The Langoliers,* and my own film *The Timekeepers of Eternity*. The interdisciplinary nature of the cinematic chronotope allows me to treat these works equally, breaking them down into a series of responses to time, space, and identity. Not only does the cinematic chronotope allow me to locate those elements that make Ballard cinematic, but it also offers me methods of engaging with time and space that can be further applied in my appropriation of *The Langoliers*. Through my practice, I react to the newly constructed chronotope, allowing myself to be aware of the use of time and space, and respond to the creative questions that arise through a personal but informed process.

Chapter breakdown

In the following chapters, which form a path for a film influenced by, but not based on, Ballard, I concentrate on three key questions. Initially, I focus on the reasons Ballard is important to accessing inner science fiction. I further define the toolbox that the cinematic chronotope offers us to uncover the particularities of his work. I consequently engage with *The Timekeepers of Eternity* as a found footage film, unlocking the ways it engages with Ballard's creative landscapes.

In Chapter One, I break down the Ballardian landscapes into chronotopical particulars of space, time, and identity. Using examples from Ballard's written work, I assemble an initial Ballardian chronotope that includes the cinematic characteristics of his work and that I can use as a guide for my practice. I treat his novels as cinema in flux, and allow my practice to emerge as a cinematic process. My practice aims to explore a range of techniques for reassembling space, time, and identity into a Ballardian cinematic chronotope. As I further focus on the

appropriation of *The Langoliers,* I recognise the elements of the Ballardian that offer tools for visualising inner space science fiction and introduce to my canvas and the possibilities it contains, the potential of exploring the questions raised. My process offers me insight into Ballard's work allowing my practice to organically interact with my analysis of the Ballardian cinematic chronotope.

In Chapter Two, I begin by analysing the cinematic issues raised by Ballard himself through his screenplay adaptation of *Concrete Island* (hero's subjectivity, timekeeping, the filmmaker as a hero, landscape interpretations, uses of flashbacks, narrator and film endings). His approaches to adapting his own literature prepare the ground for the four film adaptations in question: *Crash*, *High-Rise*, *Atrocity Exhibition* and *Empire of the Sun*. These works are analysed with a focus on the choices made and tools used by filmmakers to visualise the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. In *Empire of the Sun*, Steven Spielberg transforms Ballard's childhood story into a Hollywood epic. More important than the story narrated is the landscape perceived through the child-hero. I examine the film through the subjectivity of the child-hero and allow the findings to permeate my practice. In *Crash*, David Cronenberg emphasises the repetitiveness and similarities of highways and airports everywhere in the world—and the similarities of injured bodies. I locate the importance of timekeeping for both protagonists and filmmakers and how it is transformed into haunting visuals. Timekeeping becomes essential for my hero in *The Timekeepers of Eternity,* and I further analyse how I interpret subjectivity through the use of repetition of visuals, themes and plot elements. *The Atrocity Exhibition* directed by Jonathan Weiss, introduces my practice to the concept of filmmaker as the Ballardian hero. The film is an accumulation of juxtaposed imagery, just like the novel, and it echoes the shock effect and experimental nature of the original material. Avoiding restriction by physical space and time, it brings the experimental form

of the novel to the forefront, but in doing so fails to engage with a wider audience. This was Weiss's only film, and his letters to Ballard reveal the filmmaker slowly and unknowingly becoming a Ballardian hero. *High-Rise* is the most recent of these adaptations, in common with the others, it is based on a novel that was deemed unfilmable. In it, the built environment becomes a film set, a costume piece. Ben Wheatley and Amy Jump chose to set it in an alternate past, reflecting our reality. I use these findings to structure my practice around the materiality of the paper I use in my appropriation film. In order to respond to the remaining two areas defined by Ballard in his screenplay of *Concrete Island,* I construct an interim film experiment under the title *Re-High-Rise*. This small found footage film allows me to elaborate on the use of flashbacks and the relationship between hero and narrator in the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. To understand my path into appropriation and the possibilities it offered me in creating a Ballardian film, I then looked into found footage filmmaking.

In Chapter Three, I initially establish the particularities of found footage films within avant-garde cinema, understanding where *The Timekeepers of Eternity* belongs and how I can use this identification to my advantage. I look into William C. Wees's categorisation of found footage films to establish the identity of my practice. I consequently break down the collage techniques used in my film and the ways they allow me to access the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. I use the characteristics of the art of *kintsugi* (Japanese art of repairing ceramics using gold) to categorise the elements of collage I encounter in my practice and the ways I utilise them to appropriate the footage of *The Langoliers*. Since my practice moves between traditional analogue film collages and contemporary digital collages, I further compare the two. I focus on specific found footage appropriations to discover ways to embody the Ballardian as a practitioner myself. Through analysis of the works of Cornell, Tscherkassky, and Arnold, I

access various tools available in found footage filmmaking, and apply them to my film. My practice with *The Timekeepers of Eternity* aims to explore the limits of the Ballardian and provoke the spectator, often to the point of acknowledging the film as a more original science fiction text than the 'original'—if a comparison needs to be drawn. Chapter Three culminates by analysing the alternative ending sequences I constructed for *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, concluding with the areas introduced by the screenplay of *Concrete Island*. I refer back to the film ending of *Crash* to justify the techniques used and how I chose to experiment with the expectations associated with the genre.

Ballardian Cinematic Chronotopes

Ballardian time, space, and identity

The focus of this chapter is to establish the use of time and space within the work of J.G. Ballard and clarify the characteristics of the Ballardian cinematic chronotopes through the creative choices for the found footage film *The Timekeepers of Eternity*. I will initially detail the importance of time, space, and identity in Ballard's work and examine how the interchanges between them allows the creation of certain qualities characteristic to his stories. I further explain the importance of the converging identity of the main character, Mr Toomey, and myself which is displayed in the organising centres of the film where "the knots of narrative are tied and untied"[28]. In Chapter Two I address the Ballardian chronotope by analysing the Ballardian film adaptations to consequently expand in Chapter Three on the ways my appropriation responds to found footage mechanisms.

As described in my introduction, the chronotope's ability to conceptualise human nature in relation to the temporal and spatial world creates the ideal mechanism to divide the Ballardian landscapes into their constituent elements, and ultimately reassemble them through my practice with *The Timekeepers of Eternity*. Naturally it is impossible to completely separate space and time within a

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[28] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 250.

narrative chronotope but we can determine when one takes priority and emphasis. The interaction between the two elements leads to the creation of a plot. This is a crucial turning point that leads to describing the Ballardian chronotope as cinematic. As R. Barton Palmer explains, Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope gives priority to time, not space, a narrative structure, a form of cinematic modernism.[29] Bakhtin's theory suggests that the novel takes its space for granted and forms its narrative within the complexity of time values. The consequent use of chronotope as a tool to approach film studies has shown that film creates time by moving in different spaces.[31] The time of the screening is given and within that the plot exists. The novel usually creates space by moving at different times. Ballard favours space as the main element and the temporal qualities follow—or are infused within space itself. Ballard's novels use a linear passage of subjective time that renders the architectural space reflective of the subconscious and adaptive to the perversions of the plot. The transformation of space becomes the main concern of the plot, and as Ballard takes time for granted, the narrative is formed in arrangements of space.

For example, the plot of his novel *Concrete Island*, which I analyse further in Chapter Two, progresses in tandem with the evolution of the surrounding built environment. First, the main character and then the novel itself abandon any sense of keeping time, and the narrative is defined by going from point to point in an evolving space. The traffic island does not have a given space but is constantly changing, creating new ground:

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[29] R. Barton Palmer, "'Lounge Time' Reconsidered: Spatial Discontinuity and Temporal Contingency in *Out of the Past*," in *Film Noir Reader 4*, ed. Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight, 2004), 57–58.

[31] Susanne K. Langer "A Note on the Film" in *Feeling and Form,* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 415.

> The island seemed larger and more contoured, a labyrinth of dips and hollows. The vegetation was wild and lush, as if the island was moving back in time to an earlier and more violent period.[32]

The protagonist gradually abandons keeping up with real time and slowly creates a map of the area to guide him instead:

> More and more, the island was becoming an exact model of his head. His movement across this forgotten terrain was a journey not merely through the island's past but through his own.[33]

The impending descent into primitivism is not an evolution in time but an evolution of a landscape infused with subjectivity and memory. Ballard, like a filmmaker, seems to conceive his works of fiction from the beginning in visual terms, as human actions are directly influenced by the surrounding setting. Through shifts of focus and angle Ballard controls the reader's perspective on the relationship between character and environment.

Ballard's interest in the connections between space and self was evident early on in his career. In a series of essays Ballard offered precise prose focused on what he called inner space[34]. In combination with the pillars of time, space and identity, Ballard gradually defined inner space and analysed his fiction under the paradox of an externalised psyche. In an interview he stated:

> This calculated submission of the impulses and fantasies of our inner lives to the rigours of time and space [. . .] produces a heightened or alternate

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[32] Ballard, J. G. *Concrete Island*. Picador USA, 2001, 46.

[33] Ibid, 31.

[34] J. G. Ballard, 'Which Way to Inner Space?' in *A User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews*, (London: Flamingo, 1997), 200.

reality beyond and above those familiar to either our sight or our senses [. . .] To move through these landscapes is a journey of return to one's innermost being.[35]

For Ballard, time and space work together to externalise issues of identity, whether cultural or personal, creating the unique idea of inner landscapes. These landscapes, although manifested through literary text, express several qualities that belong to cinema as well, if not more. The cinematic dynamics of his work are the focus subject of this thesis, while the practical filmmaking element is the *ekphrasis* (Greek: ἔκφρασις) of the Ballardian, testing the tools and processes required to assemble these cinematic landscapes.

To emphasise the importance of the spatio-temporal connections of my film in addressing the issues of identity as defined within the Ballardian cinematic chronotope, I choose to focus on a non-Ballardian primary source for my found footage film. Choosing to avoid Ballardian symbols allows my practice clarity in avoiding the replication of Ballardian visuals. My practice focuses on re-editing *The Langoliers* into the collage film titled *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, which allows me to reinterpret the plot and construct it according to the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. The original film informs every step of the creation, as the source creates a springboard for the appropriation film to emerge.

Not only in terms of production values but also in terms of shot sizes and sequence construction, the filmmakers of *The Langoliers* clearly chose to keep the miniseries simplistic. The director uses standard medium shots, with occasional wide establishing shots and close-ups of specific plot elements as needed. With simple film language and an overwhelming quantity of reaction shots, there is

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[35] J. G. Ballard, 'The Coming of the Unconscious.' in Ibid, 84.

enough material for the re-edit to reimagine sequences and characters by displacing the reaction shots. In many ways, this reflects the simplistic, almost flat language used by Ballard in his novels, which are more pulp than poetic—to their benefit. Following the formula of the Ballardian plot, the re-edited film centres on a male protagonist who is trying to understand and come to terms with the changes in his surrounding (whether built or natural) environment, devising an escape but ultimately understanding that it is he who has changed and that he needs to defend his place in this new world. In *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, Mr Toomey (the villain in the original *The Langoliers*) is struggling to understand the time-travelling environment in which he finds himself, while remaining obsessed with arriving in Boston for his important business meeting. Ultimately, the environment reveals its horrible truth: time is haunting Mr Toomey, and he has to come to terms with the reality of the monsters known as langoliers, and his childhood trauma. Both the film's interior and exterior drama are linked to Mr Toomey's absolute obeisance to the law of his draconian father with regards to timekeeping and delays. Even the name of the langoliers, the monsters that punish lazy, time-wasting children, is linked—according to John Sears—to the German words lang, "long, of time or a journey", and langweilig, "boring".[36] The simplicity of the plot and its involvement with issues of time travel is crucial to the choice of *The Langoliers* as appropriation material. Thematically, the characters need to be engaged with issues of time and space, as I am equally engaged with the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. I share the answers (and further questions) that emerge through my practice with the film's heroes through alterations in their narrative.

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[36] John Sears, *Stephen King's Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 135.

In *The Langoliers,* there are reoccurring scenes of Mr Toomey battling a mental breakdown. His defence mechanism is tearing pieces of paper and pages of magazines and books into long strips—the process puts Mr Toomey into a meditative state. As Sears points out, this offers a clue to the process of destruction with which the novella is in part concerned.[37] The protagonist's action offers a mechanism for me to manipulate the film medium—I have printed every second frame (reducing the frame rate to 12 frames per second), creating collages that are in turn re-photographed to create the frames of the appropriation. The analogue paper collage allows the direct exploitation of the element of compositional space that forms a kind of *ekphrasis* of Ballard's text collages. In the late 1950s, Ballard created a series of four graphically experimental collages, later titled "Project for a New Novel".[38] Ballard used scientific and technical material cut from academic publications. The layout directly referenced magazines with headlines, body text and double-page spreads as sentence fragments are pasted onto backing sheets with glue. Paper becomes part of my plot as *The Timekeepers of Eternity* begins to exist in the world outside the film itself. Lastly, I manage to create an atmosphere of paranoia, as if the narrative is happening in Mr Toomey's head and the story is his perception of the world, making the plot Ballardian in development and conclusion but also creating a surrealist landscape of ideas and characters, a pathogeny of the mind projected through the film.

My thesis is inevitably a study on the methodology of practice-led research and as such, discovering the Ballardian chronotope is more a quest for a process than a

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[37] Ibid., 134.

[38] Four Text Collages [Project for a New Novel], [c 1958]. *The Papers of James Graham Ballard.* British Library Manuscript Collections. GB 58 ADD MS 88938/3/3

final product. Instead of looking at Ballard's oeuvre through specific literary examples and attempting to cast a cinematic eye on them, I apply Ballard's technique of discovering the landscape, revealing mechanisms that will lead to a Ballardian film practice. Ballardian text operates as a guide for *The Timekeepers of Eternity* to trial the Ballardian cinematic chronotope.

Ballardian chronotopic values

As I observed at the beginning of this chapter, while time and space are always connected in the chronotope, dependent on the text, the analysis may emphasise one or the other. Science fiction often has a reputation as a 'space' genre, but it is at least as much concerned with time: "One can argue that time travel is actually its principal fascination, and that the genre first emerged in response to a growing interest in the future more than a growing interest in outer space."[40]—or for Ballard, a growing interest in inner space.[41] This is the exact point at which Ballard and Bakhtin converge. Chronotopes, as Bakhtin reminds us, are not just abstract configurations of time and space; they are also shapes of humanity: "The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic"[42]. What we are is what we are in time, and while Bakhtin insisted on historic identity, Ballard focused on personal identity. For Bakhtin, the image of man is what Ballard refers to as identity. Ballard uses the many different aspects of space in his chronotope to map an understanding of the self—often

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[40] Gary Westfahl, George Edgar Slusser, and David Leiby, *Worlds Enough and Time: Explorations of Time in Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Greenwood Press, 2002), 2.

[41] Which also involves subjective temporality as revealed in his short stories, e.g. *Manhole 69*.

[42] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 84.

personal and sometimes communal. Ballard confronts the built or natural environment as a way to represent an altered present using structures or events that violently dominate the protagonists—most famously in his urban disaster trilogy[43], in which he focuses on the effect of the modern setting on our psyches, allowing his heroes to emerge with new identities. Instead of spaces having the effect of history on them, he transcends this by creating a feeling of spaces having the effect of the future upon them. Ballard invests either a disaster or a technological evolution upon our current natural or built environment and allows the subjectivity of his protagonist—and the reader—to inhabit this future. I strategically echo this condition in *The Timekeepers of Eternity,* where the characters interact with the environmental rupture around them. As the passengers land, they instantly feel disengaged from their surroundings, which feel different. Their experience of food and drink, sounds, and smells allows them to re-engage anew with the airport and slowly distinguish the threat from a sound that is closely approaching them. Although this alienation originates from *The Langoliers* novella, my appropriation film furthers this element by equating the sound of the approaching langoliers and the threat of the monsters with that of ripping paper that texturally floods the filmic space.

My process led me to examine the Ballardian chronotope through the relationship between protagonists and space. For his heroes, Ballard isolates the built or natural environment and brings it to the foreground as the only living space, suggesting normality. In *High-Rise,* the dystopian life in the apartment block is favoured by the previous normality of life in the outside world. The inhabitants never mention anything about the explosive situation in their

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[43] As Brigg categorises and groups: *Crash* (1973), *Concrete Island* (1974) and *High-Rise* (1975). Peter Brigg, *J.G. Ballard* (Mercer Island, Wash: Borgo Press, 2007), 67.

building because they want to preserve it; they appreciate their newfound identities, which they perceive as their real identities:

> Despite the growing chaos around them, the residents showed less interest in the external world. Bales of unsorted mail lay about in the ground-floor lobbies. As for the debris scattered around the high-rise, the broken bottles and cans, these were barely noticeable from the ground [. . .] Besides, as part of that unconscious conspiracy to shut out the external world, no visitors came to the high-rise.[44]

In *Concrete Island*, the architect Maitland, after spending most of his efforts trying to escape his castaway situation on a small traffic island, realises that he could have escaped from the beginning and he was only restricted by his choices, not the island:

> He lay calmly in the doorway of his pavilion, realising that he was truly alone on the island. He would stay there until he could escape by his own efforts [. . .] Already, he felt no real need to leave the island, and this alone confirmed that he had established his dominion over it. [45]

This new knowledge allows Maitland to choose the island, the perfect backdrop for his new self. The path to navigate the Ballardian cinematic chronotope is one of conflict that leads to acceptance, where the constant alienating backdrop—in my practice the tearing paper—is the only certainty. *The Timekeepers of Eternity* extends the environment by infusing the materiality of the medium into the narrative. The heroes make their way through paper tears and creases that are part of their new reality, one that is eventually revealed to be linked to the inner

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[44] J. G. Ballard, *High-Rise*, (Harper Perennial, 2006), 90.
[45] J. G. Ballard, *Concrete Island* (Picador USA, 2001), 80.

space of Mr Toomey.

Ballard offers equally important guidance to the notion of time. His dystopias investigate the everyday, not always social, but by turns subjective understanding of living space and time. Ballard's plots work as accelerators of time over spaces that we find mirrored in our realities. In *High-Rise,* the breakdown of the tower block is in sync with the demise of ethics, allowing violence to emerge. At points, Ballard admits the violence the location itself inflicts on the characters, while one of the characters, the filmmaker Richard Wilder, is trying to conquer the tower by climbing to the top in order to kill the architect Anthony Royal. Time is condensed, and we assume we are following moments in an endless week as the characters do not alter in age, only in nature. The scenes play out in specific moments, significant to the plot, and while there is a distinction between nights and days, the length of time that elapses between those moments is never clearly defined. The opening lines of each chapter reveal how Ballard develops this idea of time within the story. From the famous opening sentence: "Later as he sat on his balcony eating the dog, Dr Robert Laing reflected on the unusual events that had taken place within this huge apartment building during the previous three months"[46], Ballard establishes a timeframe for the narration to take place. Almost all of the following chapters begin with a time locator: "During these days after the drowning of the dog", "Soon after dawn the next morning, Robert Laing sat on his balcony on the 25th floor", "By four o'clock that afternoon the last of the residents had returned to the high-rise." For the last chapters, Ballard switches time to space: "As if nervous of disturbing the interior of the apartment building", "By contrast, Anthony Royal, high on the open roof three floors above", only to

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[46] Ballard, *High-Rise*, 8.

return for his final chapter with: "Dinner was about to be served." This attention to time creates a false feeling of safety as the novel evolves through a constantly changing environment. The public spaces of the high-rise become terrains for battle while the personal space of the apartments transforms into externalisations of the residents' perversities. The centre of attention gradually shifts to a metaphysical level, namely the characters' inner journey and their negotiations of personal (albeit still socially constructed) space. The environment transforms from the communal to the personal and this allows the reforming of their new identities.

My aim for *The Timekeepers of Eternity* is to also initiate the plot in a specific space and time but, as the film develops, to let it become clear that it was built on false perception, as time and space overlap. The empty Bangor airport of *The Timekeepers of Eternity* resembles any other airport. Mr Toomey's insistence on getting to Boston is not related to the specifics of Boston as a place but to the urgent appointment he has there. He is trying to apply meaning to the empty spaces of the airport in which he finds himself. Mr Toomey is trying to play out his own story, creating the environment accordingly, externalising not only the symbols of his inner space but also creating tools for surviving it. The Ballardian cinematic chronotope furthers the notion by using relations of power found in memories and trauma that allow the environment to be shaped accordingly. Dinah, the only child amongst the remaining passengers, carries a unique link to Mr Toomey. At first, she can experience his memories and slowly is able to see through his eyes—Dinah is herself blind. For the climax of the film, Dinah projects the Boston meeting onto the runway at the Bangor airport. The topos is acquiring an identity, offering a false but believable answer to Toomey's expectations. Mr Toomey draws parallels with young Jim Ballard in *Empire of the Sun.* Jim colours the concentration camp with an idea of America, which he has

formed through magazines and film projections. The war becomes an illustrated trauma and young Jim's understanding of the world is skewed, like Mr Toomey's, to protect him and enable him to survive.[48] This concept is well observed in dystopian science fiction, where the apocalypse dominates the setting. As Elana Gomel states, "The baroque ruinous landscapes of apocalyptic movies from *Matrix* to *Terminator* are their most reliable attractions that compensate for the puerility of the plot and for the predictability of the characters."[49] The landscape of *The Timekeepers of Eternity* is not that of an empty airport; rather, through the paper animation, it becomes one of the subconscious of Mr Toomey. In Chapter Three, I will further elaborate on the elements of found footage filmmaking that allow me to expand the vocabulary of the appropriated film. It is important at this point to address the Ballardian cinematic chronotope in terms of film shots portraying the subjective perception that can be found in Ballard's novels.

Ballard is interested in the particulars, in the materiality and the experience of the landscape, dissecting it in close-ups that only give an idea of the whole. This is enhanced by his typical use of one protagonist through whose eyes and experiences the landscape is revealed. Most notably in *Crash*, the narrator James Ballard explores the cars and the highways via their details, textures, and smells. In the process of discovering the symphorophilia of the plot, the close-ups become charged with more details than we are aware of in our everyday use of cars and highways. First, the protagonist finds similarities between his injuries and the car details: "In my left knee, the scars above my fractured patella exactly

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[48] "Derived in part from the transfer of surrealism from the painter's canvas to the printed page and in part from putting to use his personal experience of being an outside and objective viewer of the Western societies in which he has spent his adult life"
Brigg, *J.G. Ballard*, 110
[49] Elana Gomel, *Postmodern Science Fiction and Temporal Imagination* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 25.

replicated the protruding switches of the windshield wipers and parking lights."[50]

He gradually discovers the sexual nature of these observations: "Her body formed an awkward geometry with the windshield pillars and the angle of the steering column, almost as if she were consciously mimicking the postures of the crippled young woman, Gabrielle."[51] None of these up-close descriptions (the equivalent of close-up shots in cinema) is by itself perverse or distorted (the opposite of the cinema of Cronenberg and his adaptation of *Crash,* where perversion lies in the close-ups and their organic details) but when they are assembled into a sequence of gazes, they construct the surrealist painting intended by the author.[52] I explore this collision of shots further through my practice. Ballard perceives landscape as the formalisation of space and time, and connects external landscapes to the interior states of mind. As the landscape changes in accordance with new environmental conditions, human subjectivities also mutate. His characters are alienated bodies reacting to a new situation.[53] My collages force shots to contrast as they play in synchronous time and not one after the other, as happens with traditional editing. Collages allow for split screens, superimpositions, and images within images, and since they are in movement, motion can find unexpected continuities or contrast within the frame. Subjectivities overlap and create

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[50] Ballard, J. G. *Crash: The Collector's Edition*. Edited by Chris Beckett. London: Fourth Estate, 2017, 36.

[51] Ibid., 95.

[52] Ballard is constructing surrealist landscapes from details, a collage of all the influences and objects, and it is up to the reader's psyche to reassemble it as a whole, visual or not. Once he gained a good sum of money for the film rights of *Empire of the Sun* he wanted to invest in those landscapes he adored and thus commissioned a copy of *The Violation* by the Belgian surrealist Paul Delvaux. "The original was destroyed during the Blitz in 1940, and I commissioned an artist I know, Brigid Marlin, to make a copy from a photograph. I never stop looking at this painting and its mysterious and beautiful women. Sometimes I think I have gone to live inside it and each morning I emerge refreshed. It's a male dream." - 'Writer' Rooms', *Saturday Guardian*, 10 March 2007, interviewer unattributed.

[53] "The protagonists find themselves in situations where their subjectivity is altered by changes in the built environment."
Rob Kitchin and James Kneale, *Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction* (A&C Black, 2005), 95.

continuous spaces within memory, present, and future, allowing the film to externalise Mr Toomey's conflict. In Chapter Three, I will further detail the tools I use to apply the collision of spaces and times within the frame.

Fragments of the Ballardian self

I have addressed the elements of space, time and the ways the heroes navigate them in the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. The last element of the chronotope that seems crucial in interpreting the Ballardian cinematic is that of identity, for spectator and filmmaker alike. In 1973, in his coda to the 1934 monograph on chronotopes, Bakhtin argues that the representational elements of the text emerge "out of the actual chronotopes of our world".[54] As explained by Martin Flanagan in his work on the relation between Bakhtin and the movies, it would thus seem possible to theorise a chronotope of reception, or at least a way in which "real and represented time/space configurations are linked via the operations of chronotopes".[55] Jean-Louis Baudry explains it further from a cinematic angle as the process and structure where the viewer's eye melds with the camera eye such that "the world will not only be constituted by this eye but for it".[56]

Filmmakers have developed a range of techniques (slow-motion, freeze-frame, and time-lapse photography) that self-consciously acknowledge the artificiality of

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[54] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 253.

[55] M. Flanagan, *Bakhtin and the Movies: New Ways of Understanding Hollywood Film* (Springer, 2009), 57.

[56] Jean-Louis Baudry and Alan Williams, 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus', *Film Quarterly 28*, no. 2 (1974), 43.

filmic time and space.[57] In conjunction with his main visual influences of surrealism and collage—both in terms of technique and aesthetics[58]—Ballard manipulated time and landscape to define identity, not only for his characters but also for himself. Writers and filmmakers alike invest part of themselves, their experiences and dreams, in order to access information on human nature. Especially in experimental filmmaking making use of collage techniques, the process of their making—the physicality of the body and the time required—becomes central not only in the style of the films but also in the narratives explored. In defining the Ballardian chronotope and implementing it in my practice, the process will and should have a strong impact on my work, in order to allow me to explore and express my presence in the constructed filmic landscape. The usual approach to research involves moving from the known to the unknown, using deduction to analyse and guide. What is of interest is that most practice-led research offers the possibility of new knowledge that can be formulated as moving from the unknown to the known,[59] designing a creative space and process that induces the researcher towards knowledge. This process is often followed and addressed extensively by collage artists and found footage filmmakers. For my research, I establish a methodology in which I will allow myself to discover the Ballardian cinematic, allowing the practice to guide me through the unknown to knowledge. Collage making becomes crucial in this process. In the final chapter, I will examine in detail the works of three prominent found footage filmmakers: Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart* (1936), Peter

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Jeanette Baxter describes and analyses the relationship extensively in her book.
Jeannette Baxter, *J.G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination: Spectacular Authorship*, 1st edition (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2009).

[59] Graeme Sullivan, 'Making Space': in *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*, ed. Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 41–65, 48.

Tscherkassky's *Outer Space* (1999) and Martin Arnold's *Passage à l'acte* (1993). In terms of practice-led research, it is also important to look at the pace and process of paper collage making for film. Although my experience in making *The Timekeepers of Eternity* offered me daily engagement with collage making, I want to use as an example artist Stacey Steers' experience of the subject, which I find to be identical to mine.

For more than 15 years, Stacey Steers has been making animations, consisting of thousands of collages she laboriously hand-makes by cutting up and reassembling scans of old photographs and 18th and 19th-century book illustrations. As she observes:

> My process is somewhat unusual. I come up with the kernel of an idea, then I'll just start working. I work differently from most other hand-animators, who usually move drawings around under the camera. I actually cut and paste each frame.[61]

It is through this process of cutting, layering, and pasting that the content of Steers' work evolves. As she was creating imagery for her film *Phantom Canyon* (2006), adding bat wings to a male figure or constructing a female figure who transforms into a fish, Steers realised that these images were beginning to resonate with her earlier memories.

> Something about the process of layering the imagery seems to me quite similar to the way our minds store and layer memories. Things occur to me while I'm using my hands that for some reason, I don't seem to have as

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[61] Quoted in Barbara Morris, 'Artist Profile: Stacey Steers', *Art Ltd*, (February 2014), 59.

much access to when I'm not working. I've just learned to trust that.[62]

The film became a way to revisit issues and emotions around her past. The painstakingly slow process of collage making does not leave any choice in the dedication it needs, and the result is revealing of the artist. Ballard similarly discovers personal fragments of himself in his work, but equally requires a personal investment from his readers, a subconscious interpretation. As a filmmaker addressing the Ballardian chronotope, I cannot start with the plot, character, or structure. One of the reasons Ballard works within science fiction is the safety provided by genre characteristics. My practice is rooted in collage making, a process that eventually not only commands the shape of the film but also offers to the plot and characters a starting point that is linked to my self.

An important element of the experiment of *The Timekeepers of Eternity* is that I, as a filmmaker (editor, animator and sound designer), acquire the identity of Ballard. In his book on the film adaptation of *Crash*, Iain Sinclair writes: "Ballard's compacted novels of the 60s and early 70s read as much like storyboards for unmakeable films, as auditions for future books."[63] As a filmmaker, I want to approach those unmakeable films and try to make one materialise, not through adaptation but by the process of collage making. I approach the given material of the found film and reveal what is missing to make it part of the Ballardian universe. This cannot happen without applying my own perception of the world and projecting my identity within the film. This is an important element of analysis for the next chapter, in which I will be approaching the adaptations of Ballard's work by different film directors. Part of my practice inevitably focuses

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Sinclair, *Crash,* 9.

on the particular elements of my craft that influence, and are influenced by, the creative methodology of my research. My practice does not directly address issues of authorship, since the adapted material is from a different science fiction author. Stephen King's particular film adaptation is only used as archive material to be re-read and re-constructed. In contrast, the focus is character development and world creation, attempting to make a coherent character story in developing time and space. The question raised by using material that is not directly linked to Ballard's work is whether a dystopian landscape and narrative can be devised despite the lack of Ballard's obsessions (cars, motorways, and pop references). My edit inevitably makes the Ballardian links that exist in the original *Langoliers* more central. The abandoned airport, the presence of the pilot, the Robinson Crusoe plot device, and the childhood trauma become important for the film. I argue that what defines the Ballardian chronotope is not the specific symbols but the attitude towards reality, aiming to find a different vision for our present. On the other hand, the adventurous element of the animation centres around a recognisable plot, grounding it in an engaging sci-fi element, just as Ballard engaged with the genre. The technique evolves in parallel with the drama. Neither the technique nor the plot can fully exist before the others. I created the film in a linear, one-directional way (starting from the beginning), and the technique and the plot emerged organically, feeding off each other and informing the theoretical element of the Ballardian cinematic chronotope.

As it is necessary to understand the approaches used in adapting the Ballardian text for cinema thus far, in the next chapter, I will examine the concept of the Ballardian chronotope in the four main film adaptations of his work (*Empire of the Sun*, *Crash*, *Atrocity Exhibition*, *High-Rise*), focusing on the authorship of filmic space and time and the tools used by the filmmakers. These examinations inform my found footage film *The Timekeepers of Eternity,* and vice versa: the practical

mechanisms of accessing the Ballardian through my work informed the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Exploring the Ballardian Chronotope in Four Adaptations

Ever since the sixties the film rights for most of Ballard's novels, and some of his short stories, have been optioned, and yet only a handful of his novels have been interpreted for cinema, as filmmakers have struggled with his writing and its resistance to adaptation. As I attempt to codify his vibrant cinematic qualities, I will look at the film adaptations of his work in terms of the Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope as analysed in the previous chapter. The differences and similarities of the cinematic Ballardian chronotopes will offer new insight into his work and, more importantly, a path to bringing his visions to cinema—or television, if applicable. While my study is not an analysis of methodologies of adaptations, I will engage with theorists Linda Hutcheon and Robert Stam—who paved the road for Bakhtinian theories in film adaptation—in order to examine those specifics of Ballard's landscapes that make them inherently cinematic. Using the adapted films as my primary source will help establish the strengths of the on-screen chronotopes. As Hutcheon notes, "Visually-oriented filmmakers [. . .] can move from [a] single-track language to a multi-track medium and thereby not only make meaning possible on many levels but appeal to other physical senses as well."[64] I will base my analysis on the sensory impact of the films and how they allow us to physically and mentally approach the Ballardian. I will first detail Ballard's attempts at cinema, to understand his unique viewpoint of the

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[64] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Routledge, 2012), 70.

medium. This analysis will offer me pointers for his sense of what the Ballardian cinematic chronotope should address. Using those pointers, I will look at the film adaptations of *Empire of the Sun*, *Crash*, *High-Rise,* and *Atrocity Exhibition,* examining how the filmmakers reacted to the Ballardian guidelines and the ways I can approach those choices through my practice.

Ballard's cinema

In 1972 Ballard was commissioned by Hazel Adair of Cadence Productions to produce a first draft screenplay of his yet-to-be-published novel *Concrete Island*. In light of Ballard's interest in cinema, and the influence of cinematic narrative on his fiction, Ballard's *Concrete Island* screenplay[65] is a unique and exceptionally compelling document in its own right. For this research, it is fruitful to pinpoint the solutions that Ballard found in rewriting his work for a different medium, not only in terms of cinema adaptation but mostly in terms of creating a cinematic chronotope—how he allowed the mechanisms of cinema to create the Ballardian anew. This does not mean that Ballard's cinematic choices are indisputably the correct ones, but they will direct my practice and research in terms of areas that need to be considered. In this subsection, I will detail the factors that Ballard considered in translating his work for cinema. In the following subsections, the Ballardian film adaptations will be examined in their responses to these areas, assisting me in my response to the questions raised through my practice.

Ballard began writing the screenplay for *Concrete Island* without having finalised

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[65] J.G. Ballard, "Concrete Island: First Draft Screenplay", 1972. *The Papers of James Graham Ballard*. British Library Manuscript Collections. GB 58 ADD MS 88938/3/9/2.

the novel. The plot revolves around Robert Maitland, a wealthy architect who, after a car accident, gets stranded in a no man's land created by several intersecting motorways. Injured and hidden from passing motorists, Maitland withdraws into himself and the island. The *Concrete Island* screenplay has several differences from the novel, and they are indicative of the areas Ballard found to be crucial in creating a Ballardian cinematic chronotope.

1. Opening of the film as a dream

The first issue recognised by Ballard is the opening of the film and the entrance to the story. The screenplay does not open dramatically with Maitland's crash but instead begins in Maitland's architecture firm at a building on Marylebone Road. The film's opening establishes the clean lines and detached modernity of the world that Maitland is about to leave behind, with the use of everyday dialogue and mundane details through the exchanges of Maitland and his colleagues in the architecture office. In spatial terms, this is useful to establish the dramatic change of environment, enhancing the distance between reality (the professional world) and dream (the concrete island). The final moments of his journey, and the transition to the island, are scripted in great visual detail, with Ballard describing a rapid sequence of camera angles, attempting to establish a cinematic pace. With his choice of introduction, Ballard hides the chronotope within our reality. The film moves from normality into an adventure grounded further in our world, making the cinematic dream ours and not solely the protagonist's, as it is in the novel. The transition from reality to dream is shared with the audience.

2. Balance between protagonist and narrator

This duality of space is further enhanced after the accident when Maitland begins his monologue which accompanies the viewer for the first half of the film. The accident is the rupture from reality that instigates Maitland's split into a

protagonist and a narrator. "Now why do you drive so fast?"[66] are the first words he speaks out loud after the accident, becoming the narrator from the novel. This split is a reflection of the change of environment, a realisation the protagonist has a few moments later, exclaiming, "You are a man in a dream . . . Get a grip on yourself Maitland . . . come on boy."[67] Ballard quickly establishes that the time and space Maitland now inhabits are different from the opening and resemble a dream. As the plot progresses, his monologue is inhabited by other characters from his life. Maitland often imitates the voice of his wife or his girlfriend, and the audience understands the film is occupying his inner space with the fluidity of a dream.

3. Continuity of space through time / Flashbacks

In contrast to the novel, Ballard chooses to add three flashback scenes that take the location of the narrative beyond the confines of the island, although, like the island itself, they are all viewed through Maitland's feverish imagination. Interestingly enough, the flashbacks work as a reverse timeline, with Maitland getting younger and younger as he delves further into his subconscious. The first flashback takes place in Helen Fairfax's office at her paediatric clinic, where Maitland embraces her, and they kiss and begin their secret affair. The second flashback is further back in time, at a dinner party beside a lake that has an island in the middle. Maitland asks Catherine (his wife) if she would like to go to the island, but Catherine urges Maitland to take Helen instead. In the third flashback, we see Maitland, six years old, sitting on a hotel bed in the wake of his parents' divorce. Within the flashbacks, the only audible voice is Maitland's, so

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[66] J.G. Ballard, "Concrete Island: First Draft Screenplay", 4.
The novel at the same point read "Why had he driven so fast?"
[67] Ibid., 6.

although the space of the scenes is outside of the island, the consistency of his voice on the soundtrack has the effect of creating one continuous inner space. At several moments, this inner space is externalised in the landscape, as the surrounding road signs come to indicate names from the flashbacks.[68]

4. Timekeeping

Ballard applies his protagonist's level of awareness of the passage of time to the screenplay of *Concrete Island.* Maitland keeps track of time through his bodily needs and the days are tallied through his food search. When he meets Proctor and Jane, they take his watch, literally stripping him of time. The only timeline left is his transformation into the king of the island. The flashbacks stop after his newfound friends appear, which indicates a complete merging of past and present into a new Ballardian landscape. Notably, in the screenplay, Ballard offers more backstory for these characters than in his novel, where he tends to emphasise the hallucinatory present and pares away backstory wherever possible to leave only fleeting images in his protagonist's mind. Ballard creates the cinematic chronotope through the juxtaposition of real space and time in the opening and with the use of flashbacks to signify the slow merging of reality with Maitland's inner landscape, revealing the island as the externalised inner space.

5. Ending of the film

Ultimately, Maitland makes the choice to abandon the struggle and decides to leave the island whenever he feels ready. The surrounding landscape and his body have merged into one and he has become the island; he can now carry the

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[68] Ibid., 40.
Quotes read "The fever has still not left him. He looks across at the distant route indicators, suddenly jolted when he appears to see the names "CATHERINE", "HELEN FAIRFAX", "GILLIBRAND", and "ROBERT MAITLAND" in the place of the usual route destinations."

island within him. The surprising ending offered by the screenplay contradicts the source novel. After burying Proctor, Maitland leaves the island with apparent ease and immediately hails a taxi. Then, from the taxi, he spots Jane in the distance and stops to collect her. Before getting in, she warns Maitland that she is "going a long way".[69] As Chris Beckett notes, at this point the screenplay transforms the introspective narrative—the novel ends at a carefully prepared point of spatial and temporal stasis of belonging, an identity of bliss—into an improbable story of Hollywood romantic escapism.[70] Ballard allows the plot to adjust to the Hollywood agenda and to complete the expectations of the spectators and the protagonist. Maitland finally belongs in the film he envisaged, a Hollywood film where the couple drives off into the sunset, in a landscape he now fully controls.

6. Subjective time

It is important to acknowledge Ballard's limiting of space in the novel to the concrete island in creating the castaway feeling of the story. The reader is deprived of any prior everyday scenes of the character as the story begins in his car and then after the accident evolves completely within the confines of the island without any flashbacks, memories or references to his past self. The screenplay, on the other hand, offers not only narratively but also visually a spatial way out of the island through memories and backstories. Ballard manages to create a space that is signified by landmarks, making a small traffic island feel like a world ready to be explored and conquered. This is closely linked to the development of the story in time. In the early scenes, Ballard introduces

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[69] J.G. Ballard, 'Concrete Island: First Draft Screenplay', 102.

[70] Chris Beckett, *J. G. Ballard's 'Elaborately Signalled Landscape': The Drafting of Concrete Island.* eBLJ:1-21. http://www.bl.uk/eblj/2015articles/pdf/ebljarticle52015.pdf

subjective time, not only as it is felt and guided by the protagonist, but also as it is perceived by the audience. Two different time frames are introduced: the outside time for which he is longing, and the experience of time directly linked to the space of the island which sometimes stretches and sometimes collides. *Concrete Island* has similarities to the chronotope of chance, where Bakhtin analyses the importance of specific events that render time unique: "Should something happen a minute earlier or a minute later, that is, should there be no chance simultaneity or chance disjunctions in time, there would be no plot at all."[71] Bakhtin further describes that narratives intersect with the chronotope of random contingency,[72] where internal time takes precedence over historical time, creating a shift from time to space. The surrounding environment gets infected with the apocalyptic ideology of a time out of joint. In keeping with this, Ballard creates a sensory passage of time to conclude his screenplay, letting the dystopia of the island reflect our realities.

7. Filmmaker as the Ballardian hero

The screenplay was ultimately used as an interim draft of the final novel. Although the film was never made, Ballard went back to his manuscript and adjusted the text following the cinematic discoveries of his screenplay. The screenplay for *Concrete Island* was Ballard's last attempt at the medium, subsequently preferring to option the rights for his stories and observe from afar the filmmakers' efforts to create his cinematic chronotope. We can locate his reasons in Peter Brooker's suggestions that "an adaptation may remove itself from its source text, edit or amplify a part of it, or transpose the whole, in a spirit of

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[71] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 92.
[72] Ibid., 100–101.

deference, homage, critique, opportunism, or indifference."[73] Ballard did not believe that adaptations should offer strict fidelity to their source material, and, as I will analyse in the following chapter, he always encouraged filmmakers to insert themselves into the material.

I have looked at Ballard's limited contributions to cinematic adaptations as he ventured into film through scriptwriting, establishing a creative thread between cinema and his landscapes. Having located the core areas where the Ballardian cinematic chronotope can be found, I will look at the four main Ballardian adaptations for cinema.

Hero's subjectivity in Spielberg's *Empire of the Sun*

The subjectivity of the protagonist is one of the key aspects of my investigation of the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. As I initially engaged with *The Langoliers* I struggled with the focus of the material. Like the novel the film is an ensemble piece, with the different characters balanced equally in terms of subplots and backstories. Mr Toomey was the natural choice of a protagonist for me, as he ignores the science fiction concept of time traveling and carries the only key to unlocking the secrets of the landscapes surrounding the characters. He names and provides the backstory of the langoliers, originating in the past, in contrast to the character of Bob Jenkins, the Hercule Poirot figure, who connects the dots and has all the answers and who we as an audience expect to guide us. Jenkins works as a counterpart to Mr Toomey, creating a dynamic between audience

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[73] Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 118.

expectations and the film's reality; the scenarios he offers in interpreting the chronotope are logical and belong within the science fiction genre, but they are unimportant and trivial once Mr Toomey's drama is revealed. In accordance with the need for a Ballardian hero's subjectivity and emotional relation to the plot, as described in Chapter One, I aimed to focus the plot of *The Timekeepers of Eternity* around Mr Toomey and his traumatic relationship to the changing environment. The question was raised of how I could create the driving force of the main character and transpose his subjectivity onto found footage that was not intended for that purpose. *Empire of the Sun* offered me guidance.

Empire of the Sun was the first Ballard novel to be adapted to film. The film was directed by Steven Spielberg, aiming for a change of style in his career. Ballard was a strong choice. Ballard himself was publicly very happy with the way Spielberg handled the book's inner and outer realities. As he phrased it:

> The film appears to be an immense epic, but at the centre is this very private drama [. . .] one is not sure if the events taking place are real or hallucinations in the mind of the distempered child. The exterior and interior landscapes of war begin to invade each other.[74]

Empire of the Sun is clearly a film about landscapes, inner and outer, cinematic and private, and although it does not fall into the genre of science fiction, its themes attracted Spielberg, a director known for popular science fiction, who managed to develop his unique Ballardian chronotope. The film shows war through the eyes of a fictional young Jim Ballard, who grows up in his wealthy family home in Shanghai, through his transfer to a prison camp in Lunghua under the control of the Japanese army. Ballard was clear from the beginning of

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[74] Quoted in Nigel Morris, *A Companion to Steven Spielberg* (John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 235.

his novel that the war, as he describes it, is not only an external reality, but something that is playing like a film inside Jim's head.[75] In that sense, Spielberg's heightened style adapts comfortably to the heightened reality of the Ballardian.

Empire of the Sun is clear in its subjective gaze, not only because Jim dominates the visuals and the soundtrack, but also through its use of shots showing his perspective. Spielberg recognises that spectator and director forge a bond between them, that the screen projects shared dreams and beliefs, and offers a coherent demonstration of the cinematic apparatus.[76] Spielberg discovers visual equivalents to Ballard's surreal effects. The film is carefully orchestrated through repeated contrasts of imagery. The chronotope of the film evolves from the family house in Amherst Avenue to the Lunghua camp (from the boring familiar to the exciting unfamiliar) but what is consistent is Jim's immense energy and fascination with environment. As time is infused into space in the cinematic chronotope, Tom Stoppard's script constructs a sequence of events that represent ideal days from the memory of childhood. Events are condensed into a few continuous days. The way one event leads to another is with an unnatural fluidity, as if this is Ballard's selection and dramatisation of what would happen in a given day at Lunghua, rather than a faithful account. As Pedro Groppo explains, on a structural level this suggests that much of what happens is informed by Jim's imagination.[77] The character of Jim becomes the metaphorical creator of the filmic world. In the first part, Jim observes the world he inhabits and in the second part, the film is orchestrated around his experience of time and

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[75] J. G. Ballard, *Empire of the Sun* (Simon and Schuster, 2013), 5.

[76] For more refer to Nigel Morris' analysis of Spielberg's use of cinematic techniques.
Nigel Morris, *The Cinema of Steven Spielberg: Empire of* Light (Wallflower Press, 2007).

[77] Pedro Groppo, 'Dream's Ransom: Steven Spielberg's Empire of the Sun', (September 14, 2007). http://www.ballardian.com/dreams-ransom-steven-spielbergs-empire-of-the-sun

space. All the secondary characters are fascinated by Jim's constant motion and engagement with activities, as if he sees ahead of everyone else. "The film appears to be an immense fresco," said Ballard, "but at the centre is this very intense private drama unfolding within the character of the child."[78] He credited Spielberg for at times dissolving the distinction between the exterior and interior landscape and making one wonder if events like the air attack on the base "are real or hallucinations in the mind of the distempered child".[79] The balance between genre and private drama is important in all of Ballard's fiction and at the core of inner space.

Ballard welcomes science fiction scenarios but manages to keep the mental collapse of his protagonists at the core of them. *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, is seemingly preoccupied with time travel, but the science fiction element is only the catalyst for the unresolved mental crisis of Mr Toomey. My appropriation focused on bringing the character and his disturbed encephalogram to the foreground. Like Spielberg, I made use of select tools to create this necessary condition. From the first re-edit, my aim was to use every shot of Mr Toomey from the original material. During animating, I centred the sequences graphically and rhythmically around Mr Toomey's reaction shots. This strategy offers him a greater proportion of on-screen time and structures the events of the film explicitly around his emotions. I could only accomplish this through the repetition of shots for different moments in the film. In scenes where Mr Toomey was absent, I made him present—an all-knowing protagonist, albeit unable to react to the story of his downfall. I slowly realised that this effect did not have to

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[78] Julian Petley, 'The Man with the Movie Camera: The Cinema of J.G. Ballard', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, no. 651 (April 1988), 98.

[79] Ibid., 98.

be restricted to scenes structured around characters and their discussions in dialogue. I scattered fragments of Toomey's face into the landscape or the faces of the other characters, as seen in Figure 1. The resulting texture invokes a projection of his mind through the landscape of the film. Although I managed to create a protagonist, I was still preoccupied with the ways in which this subjectivity could be shared with the audience, allowing them to participate emotionally rather than simply observing.

Spielberg similarly invites the audience to share the subjectivity of his protagonist. *Empire of the Sun* navigates Jim's efforts to distinguish the real from the fantastic, with the reality created by the film constantly approaching the texture of a dream. This is enhanced by Spielberg's concept of cinema. As a filmmaker, he focuses on fantasies and especially the innocent gaze of children (e.g. *E.T.*). Spielbergian science fiction landscapes are explored through naivety,

Fig. 1 - All seeing hero

allowing the audience a momentary return to innocence. In *Empire of the Sun*, as Jim slowly succumbs to malnutrition and fatigue, he enters a second phase of dreaming (the first phase is his removal from his immediate surroundings as a result of his wealth and nationality) where reality is transformed into a film. The audience is constantly encouraged to align with Jim visually and aurally as Jim fills the screen and the soundtrack with his presence and with his singing. This is enhanced by the absence of major film stars among the actors, which is clearly a conscious choice by Spielberg, so that the childhood dream of the film is not forced to compete for attention with a star system external to it. The child's perspective makes apparently clear cut issues of right and wrong seem more complex, rather than less, as the boy is guided by instinct more than by ideology or nationality. In *Empire of the Sun*, rather than solidify Jim's sense of whose side he should support, the war seems to exaggerate his unpredictable moral relativity.[80] Jim's encounters with the landscape become the entryway for everyone else who populates his story. This becomes cinematically evident with the use of wide shots containing hundreds of extras, and the evolution of Jim's presence within the frame. Jim slowly engages with his surroundings and begins to command them.

The importance of the gaze of the child is also evident in the adaptation of *High-Rise*, which I will analyse further in the following sections. In that novel, the children of the high-rise are more of a structural statistic. As noted:

> The presence of the fifty or so dogs in the high-rise had long been a source of irritation. Almost all of them were owned by residents on the top ten

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[80] Sinyard, Neil, "'*A Very Cruel Death of Innocence*' Notes Toward an Appreciation of Spielberg's Film of Empire of the Sun" in *A Companion to Steven Spielberg*, ed. Nigel Morris (John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 227-40. 233.

floors—just as, conversely, most of the fifty children lived in the lower ten.[81]

For the adaptation's director Ben Wheatley, the children are the heart of the film; they command its point of view—a ripple from Spielberg's understanding of *Empire of the Sun*. Scenes often include a cutaway to a child peeking from behind a corner, or towering in the assassination scene as viewed through the distortion of a kaleidoscope. The film concludes with a child having constructed a radio and successfully hearing a voice outside the building. The film establishes the significance of deviance, not only within personal morality but also because it is enacted in front of children's eyes, giving it innocence and greater responsibility. The childish hold over the narrative, although only exploited fully by Ballard in *Empire of the Sun*, is one that is important for the Ballardian cinematic chronotope as it engages the audience emotionally, and allows the plot to traverse into personal memory.

This element strongly resonates with my appropriation, which originates from the purity of a childhood memory, and holds at its narrative centre the childhood trauma of Mr Toomey. The emotional purity of the child provides the audience with an anchor for the rest of the film. In *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, the return of childhood happens in different stages, evolving from scattered flashbacks to a sequential experience of the past, memory merging with Mr Toomey's present, his father participating in and commenting on his choices in the present time, reducing his son to a child once again. The childhood aspect, the possibility of a repetition of trauma, is what scares Mr Toomey most when confronting Dinah, the blind girl with supernatural abilities. She is able to see what he sees, not because she is blind, but primarily because she is still a child. In my

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[81] Ballard, *High-Rise*, 26.

appropriation, this effect is further enhanced narratively. Dinah operates as a bridge between the audience and Mr Toomey. I allow Dinah to have access to Mr Toomey's memories and bring them to the foreground. Graphically there are many instances when Dinah is superimposed on Mr Toomey, highlighting the similarities of their figures and characteristics. "You are the head langolier" Mr Toomey exclaims to Dinah, not accusing her but finally recognising her as part of his imagination, someone who can free him from his pain with a return to a younger self.

Timekeeping in Cronenberg's *Crash*

When defining adventure time in the chronotope of the Greek novel, Bakhtin makes the distinguishes between the perception of time and the time of the world.[82] The heroes inhabit a world where actions happen separately from normal expectations of time, just as the night following the day, or years going by. Timekeeping is something I closely explore in *The Timekeepers of Eternity.* Not only are the characters preoccupied with this idea of sensing time, but it also seems that my protagonist Craig Toomey is more focused on imposing order on the timeline of his memories. As his childhood memories invade his reality, he is trying to find a balance between past and present, between memory and his surroundings, in an effort for closure if not normalcy. The langoliers, the monsters that destroy the past, are in a way his saviours, freeing him from his past and the memory of his father. In order to further explore the sensations associated with keeping time and discover different mechanisms that I can use to

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[82] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 89.

evoke the Ballardian cinematic chronotope, I look into the film adaptation of *Crash*. The film tells the story of a group of people who take sexual pleasure from car crashes, a notable form of paraphilia. What this cult of sex and car crashes gives to its devotees is a reconnection between flesh and technology. As this is an auteur-driven film, Cronenberg assimilates his signature into Ballard's text at different stages of the film. Cronenberg forces an aesthetic that works as a vocabulary for the film's pace and performances, as he manages to replicate the novel's combination of claustrophobic space and time and clinical detachment. Taking as a starting point the minimalism of the book's narrative events, he creates a film free from emotional strategy or structure. As the shots are extremely beautiful and calmly composed, the content of sexual coupling and displays of wounds, scars, bruises, braces, canes, and limps function as a provocation. Cronenberg offers his personal interpretation of space and time just as Ballard infused his novel with his fantasies and dreams.[83]

The film is about replicating and repeating moments, as is the quest of the characters. Cronenberg gives significance to moments as they are reproduced, so the car crash evolves from a momentary accident to a re-experienced present. Within this formula, *Crash* aims to represent the unease that motivates the sexual behaviour of its characters. To accomplish this, Cronenberg expands the duration in time of the car crash and uses it as a sensory guide for the mise-en-scène of the film. The film keeps the moment of impact un-cinematic, away from

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[83] "The story is told by a first person narrator. A large part takes place inside his own imagination [. . .] And I thought, well, these are my ideas, the products of my imagination. I wanted to force the reader to face what I was laying out, and the best way to do that, I thought, was to be honest, not hide behind a mask [. . .] but to throw the mask away and say, look, this is me, these are my fantasies, my dreams. I hoped that would give the book a little more authority."
Ballard quoted in Scott Wilson, *The Politics of Insects: David Cronenberg's Cinema of Confrontation* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2011). 231

the spectator. After the collision, there is a complete standstill as the sound is cut, and the rhythm of the editing slows down. The film imitates its characters' subjective experience of time slowing down after impact. The moment of shock is sustained throughout the film as the characters behave and speak as if in a trance. Both the film and the novel create a central impression of time passing in an intense, obsessively repetitive one-note atmosphere without context or variation. The novel almost repeats passages like mantras, listing car parts and bodily organs as they violently collide and penetrate each other, creating the tunnel vision of the main character, aptly named James Ballard. The film inevitably materialises the people, objects and spaces, since they need to be visually portrayed, but Cronenberg fixes them in an abstract stasis exposing their emptiness. The reality of sex and violence is confronted with cinematic silence as the actors underplay their actions. Cronenberg's intention to emphasise the aesthetic dimension is clear from the opening scenes of the film.

> The movie begins with three sex scenes in a row which replicates the tone of the book which is absolutely unrelenting and confrontational. [...] In *Crash*, very often the sex scenes are absolutely the plot and the character development. You can't take them out.[84]

The monotony in the use of time and space is a gradually evolving choice for Cronenberg. He does not hesitate to make significant changes between his screenplay and the finished film, as superfluous plot details, such as Helen's flying lessons, disappear, and he focuses on a smaller group of key figures. Elements from Ballard's *Crash* are condensed. Dialogue that is too literal, such as James's outburst at Vaughan the first time he chases Catherine in the Lincoln, is

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[84] David Cronenberg, *Cronenberg on Cronenberg* (Faber & Faber, 1997), 199.

also cut from the finished film. The published screenplay runs to a brief 62 pages, a high proportion of which is descriptive rather than dialogue, but the finished film cuts at least a third of the script.

Repetition is also found in *Empire of the Sun*, as the narrative is based on cyclical experiences. The film establishes the family space from within which Jim gazes to the outside dream of reality. The events of the 'outside' are one step ahead, and Jim's chronotope is struggling to keep up until he is violently separated from his parents. As Jim returns to his home, in the hope that his parents will be there, he encounters the same spaces, only now not inhabited by anyone. He has to learn to inhabit the screen on his own, eventually trying to figure out a way to be taken as a prisoner. He tries to surrender again and again, but the environment ignores him; he is insignificant. Once Jim embraces the subjective triviality of the events surrounding him, he is moved to the camp, where he thrives. Through repetitions in time and often space, Jim manages to acquire an identity that answers his predicament. Jim becomes the Ballardian hero, who, from trying to understand the chronotope surrounding him, eventually embraces it and takes control of the screen, including the historic time of the events. Although a horrific idea, Ballard said that the Lunghua camp was probably the best time in his life. He had no parental control and had to depend on his wits and personality to survive.[85] When Jim is forced away from the camp, he is ripped apart from a world in which he has dominance. When given the choice, he returns back to Lunghua, to encounter loneliness again, pursue a repetition of space, and feel longing for a different time. The empty camp is a reiteration of the empty family home of the beginning, and Spielberg encourages the emotional connection between the two

[85] Kathi Jackson, *Steven Spielberg: A Biography* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 46.

as he creates sequences where Jim rides his bike, exploring the space as he did in the first part of the film on Amherst Avenue. Moments like this are where the Ballardian dystopia lies. More than a coming of age tale, Jim understands himself by creating the topos surrounding him. His realisation is not a dystopia of human/animal behaviour or technology, which are usually linked to Ballard's stories, but one of realisation of identity. The links between surrounding space and time become the catalyst for Jim's understanding of his new self.

To further explore the repetition through the story setting used in *Empire of the Sun,* I look at *Crash's* creation of mirroring symbols in different aspects of the film. Vaughan likes to re-stage legendary accidents, such as those that killed James Dean, Grace Kelly, and Jayne Mansfield. The re-enactment of James Dean's Porsche collision in front of an audience layers the film. Death is conceptual and Cronenberg has the character of Seagrave playing dead in the Dean crash reconstruction and then really dying in a pre-emptive reconstruction of the Mansfield crash. The road's saturation with death overtime impacts the characters' search for identity.[86] The actual aspect of time is forgotten through the film as the only encounters that matter are the ones within the motorway, staging an endless parade of real—or not—accidents. We are left to wonder about the reality of the accident only for a second as the characters are aroused and initiate another sexual encounter. The crash takes on a new identity: "The intimate time and space of a single human being had been fossilised forever in this web of chromium knives and frosted glass."[87] Scattered through the film are different photographic documents of car crashes that function as scars in time,

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[86] There is a beautiful moment before the James Dean crash, when the two cars back up before racing forward to meet each other, performing a video rewind in real-time.
[87] J. G. Ballard, *Crash: The Collector's Edition*, ed. Chris Beckett, (London: Fourth Estate, 2017), 73.

and are paired with the scars on Vaughan's face as he tries to freeze and replicate specific moments. In another scene, Helen is transfixed, as a safety video is rewound over and over. When the tape jumps, she mimics its movement suddenly standing and stumbling forward drunkenly, almost crashing into a table, having lost her sense of time and space. After his initial violent collision with Helen which led to her husband's death, James tries to replicate the moment of exhilaration when they have sex in the parking lot of the hospital. Ultimately, this becomes the main goal of all the characters, the reproduction of moments in time that reveal sexual satisfaction. As the whole film engages in this repetitive search for a collision that feels revealing and true, Cronenberg emphasises the visible effects of the psychic state of such pursuit: boredom, the emptiness of expression and the trance-like movement of the characters, which is echoed in the film's careful mise-en-scène, creating an alternative chronotope of the road.

Repetition becomes essential to my reading of *The Langoliers*, treating time and space not as continuous but as layers of memory, the present, and dreams. The repetition of the memory of the abusive father evolves through my layering of printed paper as the nightmare slowly occupies the space surrounding Craig Toomey, the protagonist of *The Timekeepers of Eternity*. The repetition overcomes the limitations of the screen, as my repetitive ripping of paper becomes my mantra, mirroring Mr Toomey's method for dealing with his collapse. The truth of memory as a motivator and creator of cinematic space demands a rhythm that stretches over the narrative arc, reflecting postmodern theories of space creation. This is reminiscent of Henri Lefebvre's definition of the 'moment' and its significance in accessing the temporality of social spaces, and in our case filmic space:

> The 'moment' thus conceived of has its memory and specific time.

Repetition is an important aspect of this 'temporality'. The repetition of moments forces us to refine the concept of repetition. It frees itself from psychology or metaphysics. The re-presentation of a form, rediscovered and reinvented on each occasion, exceeds previous conceptions of repetition.[88]

For Lefebvre, the concept of time within space is no longer time as it is distinct from our actual lived time. But with filmic space, time is inherent in the frame, until the next cut, when it is altered again. The measure of time becomes filmic time, with all the jump cuts or repetitions that are required, aiming not for a representation of psychology but of subjective time for the viewer, the representation of the experience of time. This is not limited to events, but equally applies to the representation of landscape. As Frederic Jameson states, "Why should the landscape be any less dramatic than the event?" [89], and for *Empire of the Sun* and *Crash,* the drama resonates in the landscape through careful timekeeping.

As I am trying to replicate memories within the creation of the landscape in *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, repetition is a crucial tool to make the protagonists aware of the urgency of the chronotope. In my practice, this applies on different levels. There is a repetition of shots due to the nature of the animation, as the paper tears create multiple images of the same elements in the shot. Instead of cutting away to reaction shots, I can make my protagonist ever-present as the shots develop on top of each other. Repetition further allows different locations to merge into a new topos. The spaces that collide force different times to also collide—usually the past and present of Mr Toomey. The alignment of his

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[88] Henri Lefebvre, *Key Writings* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 174.
[89] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke University Press, 1991), 364.

childhood with his present results in his—and our—questioning of the reality of time. In the narrative, the passengers of the plane are trapped a few minutes before the present, only a rip outside of reality and through the paper medium they are also trapped in the mind of Mr Toomey. The repetition is also dictated by the physical patterns of Mr Toomey and his constant paper tearing when in distress. His repetitive movement creates a repetitive sound that offers a familiar environment within the film's progressing plot, a shelter for him and for the audience. The most important repetition that influences the structure of the film's time is the echo of Mr Toomey's father in the medium, as he appears momentarily through the rips of the paper, reminding us of the underlying stakes. In traditional filmmaking, flashbacks are transitions into a different time and space, creating a memory ripple in the real time of the film. As I described in the first subchapter, in Ballard's screenplay version of *Concrete Island*, flashbacks

Fig. 2 - Memory of his father

are used to impact the present. In *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, the memory of the father invades the film, creating the desired chronotope, a fusion of past and present. I have applied this collision to create the first mental breakdown of Mr Toomey (Figure 2). In the original film of *The Langoliers,* Mr Toomey panics because he sees the other passengers as monsters—the filmmakers created that effect with dramatic lighting and cellophane wrapped faces. For my appropriation of *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, Mr Toomey's fear originates from the past and not from the passengers surrounding him; they are reduced to mere witnesses. The scene is remade, linking Mr Toomey's fear to the memory of his father, the only true monster of my film. I decided that this moment had the strength to become more revealing of the weakness of Mr Toomey and express the special power Dinah (the blind girl) has over him, of being able to see through his eyes. His terror is not internal anymore but is externalised through Dinah's ability to see what he sees, as their gazes become one (Figure 3). His reactions are used in my appropriation to dramatise his fear of sharing his experiences offering new depth to the character. In Figure 4 Toomey's face tears apart, and the memory invades his present, shredding the materiality of the film. By repeating the memory of the father in moments like this, I anchor the film's dramatic space by establishing timekeeping through the rhythm of the paper rips. The paper texture establishes the necessary element of visual continuity to create one continuous inner space. It goes without saying that I also apply repetition in the process of making the film, as I tear and photograph frame after frame. The possibilities that arise when elements of the film plot interact with the filmmaker's creative process are the subject of the next subchapter. The collision between the reality of the filmmaker and the film's chronotope is not given, and through the analysis of *The Atrocity Exhibition* in the next chapter, I clarify the necessity for it.
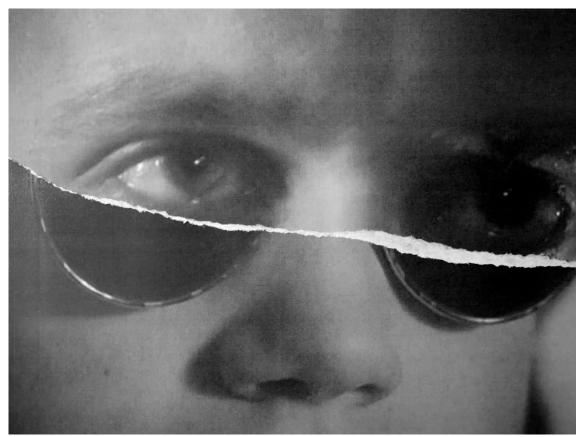
Fig. 3 – Establishing the link between two characters

Fig. 4 – Shock of memory

The filmmaker as hero in Weiss's *The Atrocity Exhibition*

Ballard has the charisma to engage with a wide range of filmmakers and his work has inspired both Hollywood studio films and smaller personal projects. The sole feature-length avant-garde film adapted from his work is *The Atrocity Exhibition* by Jonathan Weiss, which offers an understanding of the possibility of the cinematic chronotope expanding outside the constraints of the film plot and influencing the identity of the filmmaker. The dual plane where the Ballardian chronotope can exist is important to my approach and significant to understanding the potential of this research. *The Timekeepers of Eternity* consists of over 50,000 printed pages that were all manually composed into collages that were each re-photographed. The dedication needed for the laborious process of animating and the commitment to keep myself engaged pushed me into inhabiting the world of the film for a long time. *The Atrocity Exhibition* and the struggle of Jonathan Weiss offered me a compass to navigate through my lonely but rewarding filmmaking process.

Filmed over a couple of years in the late nineties, *The Atrocity Exhibition* is a faithful transcription of Ballard's text. The film, like the novel, is a non-narrative work. As described in Chapter One, *The Atrocity Exhibition* resembles a film treatment waiting to be developed and produced but Weiss rejects the possibility of a narrative film by staying true to the form of the original material, to the extent that the film medium allows him. Weiss treats the novel itself as a script, not as a film treatment. The visual language of Weiss's *Atrocity Exhibition* is an attempt to duplicate the texture and rhythm of Ballard's prose. Weiss speaks of

aspiring to the "epigrammatic quality" of the original short, tight sequences.[90] Ballard was delighted with the work and openly praised the adaptation publicly and privately to the filmmaker: "I almost felt as if I was reading the book as I watched the film, so close were the two",[91] Ballard wrote, in a letter of congratulation to Weiss. Ballard categorises the film as "a new kind of cinema [. . .] what I would rather call the poetic and imaginative cinema". For Ballard, who witnessed a high budget adaptation in *Empire of the Sun* and a mid-budget auteur film in *Crash*, Weiss's film is a worthy addition to his trilogy of cinema, filling the art-film gap. Weiss embarks on a journey of matching the visual suggestions of the novel on the screen, and naturally the author is delighted to see such a truthful adaptation. Weiss himself is unclear as to whether he has made a film, an installation, or an event. In an interview, he states, "It is meant to be watched multiple times (DVD is perfect for this.) Perhaps it is not even a film, really, but then I don't know what else to call it."[92] The film is proud of its lack of narrative, mixing dramatic and documentary footage. Weiss gives his film a collage texture comparable to the book, and he never hesitates to use the archive material demanded by the text.

Of all the case studies, Weiss's film is seemingly the most relevant to *The Timekeepers of Eternity*. As an avant-garde film, it shares with my work a fascination with the texture of the medium and the resistance to narrative storytelling. But it is the similarity of our practices that is more revealing in the search for the Ballardian cinematic chronotope and the *topos* that it formulates

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[90] Jonathan Weiss. "Commentary Track". *The Atrocity Exhibition* DVD, Reel 23, 2006.

[91] Correspondence with Casarotto Ramsay & Associates Ltd, 1993-2008. *The Papers of James Graham Ballard*. British Library Manuscript Collections. GB 58 ADD MS 88938/2/3/2.

[92] This goes against Ballard's reaction on *Empire of the Sun,* where everything is just a movie. Jonathan Weiss, 'The Atrocity Exhibition: A Director's Statement', *Vertigo*, August 2007, https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/volume-3-issue-7-autumn-2007/the-atrocity-exhibition-a-directors-statement/

within. My practice has spanned three years with periods of intense animating. Because of the volume of the printed pages needed to complete the film, the material soon took over my personal living and working space, impacting my relationships. The protagonist's passion for ripping paper soon became mine, and I soon found myself obsessing about the pressure of time needed for the animation. Mr Toomey's core drive became mine—my meeting in Boston was the task of completing the film. As I follow Weiss's story, I am struck by the idea that he and Anna Juvander (married at the time of shooting) were living analogues of Travers and Novotny, engaged in an exercise to better understand something incomprehensible through the effort of recreating it. This is possibly why Ballard adored the adaptation. In response to his agent's doubts, the film is "pretty incomprehensible" and "we should tread carefully and slowly with Mr Weiss."[93] Ballard does not deny the lack of commercial potential of the film, but tries to protect the filmmaker: "I hope we don't have to be too hard on him, since in many ways I admire his film, even though it's almost totally incomprehensible."[94] In Weiss, Ballard found a version of Travis, his obsessive character who exploded with a monomania for conspiracies and symbolisms. The film was shot over 12 months allowing Weiss to edit and make decisions intertwined with filming, not executing a preordained production plan but allowing the project to encompass his everyday life.[95] On the one hand this offered ample room for creative reflection on what was being recorded, but on the other, it transposed the film from within the cinematic frame into Weiss' life. Because Weiss was producing the film himself, he struggled to finance the later stages, and the monomaniac

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[93] Correspondence with Casarotto Ramsay & Associates Ltd, 1993-2008. *The Papers of James Graham Ballard*. British Library Manuscript Collections. GB 58 ADD MS 88938/2/3/2

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ballard jokingly notes this similarity to Weiss and Travis in their discussion during the commentary. Jonathan Weiss. "Commentary Track". *The Atrocity Exhibition* DVD, Reel 23, 2006.

task affected him for a long time after the film was completed. In multiple interviews and responses to reviews of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Weiss comes across as bitter and questions the reasons his film was not a success, characteristic of the loneliness of the Ballardian hero within the hostile landscape he inhabits. The film manages to construct the Ballardian chronotope outside the film medium. I would suggest that the limitations of the film in space and time, especially because of its truthfulness to the material, led the filmmaker to become Travis, and for Ballard to become the film's most enthusiastic viewer. Not only does Ballard witness his character coming to cinematic life, but even more, he witnesses Travis in real life. The film, like the novel, becomes a fragmented diary of the mental collapse of the filmmaker, which Ballard potentially saw and admired. The film resonates more strongly when experienced with the audio commentary of the director, which works as a perfect narration for the film, and gives it the narrative structure that it is missing. Ironically, the film begins with a brief stills-illustrated prologue, suggested to Weiss by Ballard himself, which prefaces the coming puzzle by introducing it as an examination of the work of Dr Travers, and is one of the few departures from the original novel. Ballard, in some way foresaw the usefulness of grounding the plot and distancing the audience to a reality outside of the film.

The knowledge of this possibility allowed me to expand the path of my practice. The intended film output of my research was originally a live-action film adaptation of Ballard's short story 'Cage of Sand'. In this story, Ballard assembles reoccurring images from his early works—dead astronauts, futile love for the built environment, and the relentless force of nature—as the protagonist attempts to preserve his identity in an ever-changing world, ending up embracing the inner as an outer violence. I quickly realised that the density of symbols in the original did not allow me to assimilate a more creative stance towards the

Ballardian. I felt it was necessary to change direction towards a non-Ballardian source and purposefully attempt to become the Ballardian hero, constantly in conflict with the printed paper and the task of animating. *The Langoliers* is an example of a simple canvas, constituted of medium and wide static shots with only a handful of camera movements at key points. The pace of the film is also very slow with an abundance of establishing and reaction shots for each scene. Through printing I attempted to break the film down into stills and reassemble it by creating collages compositions that, when in movement would, create associations for the characters and the story. Furthermore, in the centre of my practice I placed the balance between my identity as a filmmaker and Mr Toomey as the deranged businessman. Through my practice of animation, I embraced the havoc the printed paper brought to my workspace and to my personal life as I fluctuated between the identity of filmmaker and hero. The choice of a painstakingly slow animation became a necessity for me to unlock the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. After I completed *The Timekeepers of Eternity* I realised that my process resulted in a seamless transition to the original Ballardian symbols I was aiming for.

The Atrocity Exhibition becomes a perfect monument within the Ballardian sphere and a true warning for filmmakers who wish to approach the Ballardian oeuvre. The film exemplifies the command of space and time filmmakers should possess in order not to lose their own identities. Weiss words it perfectly when he says, "There is no roadmap to navigate creatively within the Ballardian chronotope."[96] Being a Ballardian adapter means exploiting the source material; it necessitates a creative change. William Verrone defines avant-garde adaptations

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[96] Ibid.

as exploitative: "They take advantage of, abuse, and recreate in order to present and represent the original material in ways that startle, confound, and satisfy spectators in startling ways."[97] Through these case studies, it gradually becomes evident that approaching Ballardian landscapes necessitates a concern with mechanisms more than content, and in my case, paper collage. The process of making the film, and especially the freedom and loneliness of making a collage film, is overwhelming, and impacts significantly on the story of the film. As the container of the story changes, so does the thematic core of the film. Although I aimed to create a cinematic Ballardian chronotope, my source material was not linked directly to Ballard. This distinction allowed me to focus on the construction of the collage film without getting lost in the symbols Ballard uses. Instead of being haunted by the Kennedy assassination, an event of cultural importance that affected the collective unconscious, I was instead preoccupied with the details of Mr Toomey's dreams and the animating process offered me direct access to our overlapping unconsciousness. The Ballardian chronotope emerges from the personal and the specific which inevitably contain cultural references that are important to Ballard and the science fiction genre.

To trace the importance of this effect I look back to Ballard's relationship with *Empire of the Sun*. Spielberg shot most of the film near Shepperton, using Ballard's neighbours as extras, bringing Shanghai next to his home—the house of a neighbour served as his childhood home. Whether this was a purposeful decision by the director or made for production reasons, Ballard allowed the film to replace his memories and embraced his new self:

I was deeply moved by the film but, like every novelist, couldn't help feeling

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[97] William Verrone, *Adaptation and the Avant-Garde: Alternative Perspectives on Adaptation Theory and Practice*, (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2011), 29.

that my memories had been hijacked by someone else's. [. . .] Spielberg's film seems more truthful as the years pass. Christian Bale and John Malkovich join hands by the footlights with my real parents and my younger self, with the Japanese soldiers and American pilots, as a boy runs forever across a peaceful lawn towards the coming war. But perhaps, in the end, it's all only a movie.[98]

The cinematic Ballardian chronotope is not limited to the time and space of the film but endlessly reinterprets our reality and our conception of time, space, and ultimately our identity, expanding from author to audience. Ballard's fascination with film, television, and cultural icons point to our shared narrative codes, our expectations of how a story should be told, which is in one way liberating for filmmakers today. A conglomerate of ideas and emotions can be communicated through one reference, shifting from an iconic use to a symbolic use, which Ballard was aiming for in his fiction. Frank Gormlie points out that an image of Marilyn Monroe no longer merely represents a specific person; it is full of meanings. Her life history, her roles in films, her tragedy and public life, her value as a symbol for women can all, potentially, be invoked.[99] Agglomerations of meaning can be manipulated through such a sign, given new contexts and thus new meanings.

From a counter viewpoint, Roger Luckhurst in his essay "Ballard/Atrocity/ Conner/Exhibition/Assemblage"[100] traces this territory in the assemblage films of Bruce Conner, who, influenced by the same events as Ballard, reacts with his

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[98] J.G. Ballard, "Look back at Empire" *The Guardian* 4 March 2006, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/mar/04/fiction.film

[99] Frank Gormlie, "Ballard's Nightmares/Spielberg's Dreams: Empire of the Sun" in *The Films of Steven Spielberg: Critical Essays* ed. Charles L. P. Silet, (Scarecrow Press, 2002), 137.

[100] Luckhurst in *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions* eds. Baxter and Wymer, 37.

work. Luckhurst does not limit the adaptation of *The Atrocity Exhibition* adaptation to one film, but regards almost all of Conner's filmography as an episodical reaction to those symbols. Ballard was aware of the power of the material he was using in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, and he approached it scientifically and aesthetically, but unemotionally, decontextualising and juxtaposing events, seeing it as a kind of Dadaist art installation. This is why we can locate the films of *The Atrocity Exhibition* in the archive of 1960s assemblage art. From a filmmaker's point of view, this is undoubtedly correct, and the films of Bruce Conner have a remarkable thematic similarity to the chapters in the novel. Furthering this notion of fragmented creation and spectatorship, Ballard can be experienced through a computer screen, mixing online pornography with newsreels and film scenes. The spectator/filmmaker can assemble all the elements in one viewing experience that begins and ends at will. With the inherent power over media that the internet has introduced, we can assume the most successfully personalised *Atrocity Exhibition* adaptation would be a YouTube algorithm suggesting an endless playlist of videos to watch, not based on preference but on juxtapositions. The next level of authorship could be a series of tags and videos where Ballard's perversions and influences have been programmed into artificial intelligence. The chronotope can be customised for each viewer to access themselves.

Although I am certain Ballard would find this idea fascinating, for this research, as a filmmaker, I aimed for a methodology that situates the found footage filmmaker as someone striving towards an original work that is engaged with the medium while at the same time creating a unique and concise Ballardian cinematic chronotope and not merely programming the conditions for Ballardian elements to emerge. The process of discovering the Ballardian cinematic chronotope through *The Langoliers* has offered me opportunities to explore this

inclusion of myself within the film, not only through the animating technique that requires my personal investment but via the different levels of *topos* that the film creates wherein I discover myself alongside an experience for the audience. For *The Timekeepers of Eternity,* the animation technique used replicated the self, creating multiple identities in different layers, mirroring the protagonist and his obsession inside and outside of the medium, assigning him not only subjectivity but also authorship over the material. Mr Toomey tears paper, and the filmmaker is doing the same to interpret the story. At moments in the film these actions become synchronous, implying that Craig Toomey could be the film's storyteller. Mr Toomey's authorship coincides with my authorship over the material and the film becomes a collision of our two selves to form a new identity, a merging of myself and Mr Toomey. The potential of the avant-garde medium to unlock these events is the emphasis of the third chapter and is the main reason why this research needs to subsequently focus on the practice of appropriation and the possibilities it unlocks.

Interpreting landscape in Wheatley's *High-Rise*

High-Rise is the most recent adaptation of J.G. Ballard's work. This novel famously focuses on the built environment. Although directly linked to its timeframe, space—as usually happens in cinema—dominates and defines the narrative. Although I would expect *High-Rise* to be more interested in landscape in comparison to the rest of the adaptations, the film sacrifices spatial considerations to approach the dense plot elements. For filmmakers, it is a challenge to convey Ballardian space not only because of the technical difficulties in rendering inner space, but also because all of the author's fiction is set in the

near future—the Ballardian "next five minutes". As Ballard said of the novel, "their behaviour only makes sense if you assume they want this apparent descent into barbarism [. . .] the environment makes possible the whole set of unfolding logics."[101] To define the interpretation of landscape in *High-Rise,* I look into the specific qualities of different spaces within the building and how they offer insights into human behaviour. I will complement the creation of space in *High-Rise* with details from the three previously analysed adaptations.

The adaptation of *High-Rise,* while faithful to the book is not slavishly so. The novel relies on a shifting narrative point of view that cycles between three men whose lives are tied to the fate of the tower block. In the film, the motivation for actions is transposed from the space, the building, to the relationships of the residents, which alter the causality of events and create a different interpretation of the landscape. Screenwriter Amy Jump's choices are useful in distancing the film from its source. At the Inner Space discussion at the British Library, Chris Hall stated that in Ballardian space, characters become the building they inhabit. Ballard himself said numerous times that "architecture is the stage set"[102]. The ingenuity of Jump's script is that it makes many issues more practical. *High-Rise* features various characterisations of a de-civilising process, including increasing cruelty, aggressiveness and impulsiveness**.** The film conducts these processes in music montages that work as condensers of time and space, allowing the characters—each time the relevant montage concludes—to be in a progressed state of identity. In Ballard's 1975 novel, the building is more than a backdrop or plot device; it acts as the central protagonist in a narrative of social

[101] Vale, *Re/Search J.G.Ballard,* 162.

[102] J.G. Ballard, "A handful of dust" *The Guardian (*Mar 20, 2006)
https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/mar/20/architecture.communities

disintegration. It both permits and facilitates the "darkest desires of its residents, making manifest their subconscious impulses" [103] and physically removing them from the rules of the society they once inhabited. In his theory of defensive space, developed in the 1970s, Oscar Newman distinguishes between different spaces within apartment blocks:

> In a high-rise, double-loaded corridor apartment tower, the only defensible space is the interior of the apartment itself; everything else is a 'no-man's-land', neither public nor private. The lobby, stairs, elevator and corridors are open and accessible to everyone. But unlike the well-peopled and continually surveyed public streets, these interior areas are sparsely used and impossible to survey; they become a nether world of fear and crime.[104]

The importance of non-places in *High-Rise* is directly linked to the believability of Ballard's escalation of violence in creating the ominous effect of the novel. In comparison, the film features significantly less action in the non-places within the tower. The elevators, staircases, and hallways are not spaces where scenes happen but are only occasionally used as backgrounds in the music montages. Instead, many of the important events have moved out of the transitional space into the apartments of the residents. Although the non-places are still present, they are not emphasised, which grounds the relationship of the characters to the high-rise in personal and not spatial motivations. For example, the film excludes the garden at the top of the building from public use, rendering it private and accessible only via Royal's penthouse. This is not the result of the territorial war

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[103] Jonathan S. Taylor, "The Subjectivity of the Near Future: Geographical Imaginings in the Work of J. G. Ballard" in *Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction,* eds Rob Kitchin and James Kneale (A&C Black, 2005), 90.

[104] Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design* (New York, NY : MacMillan Publishing Co., 1973), 27.

of the residents, but the original design of the tower. The vision modernist architects had of inverted life, of public gardens on rooftops, is not explored by the film, which retreats from Ballard's critique of modernist egalitarian ideals and therefore also decreases the importance of the critical aspect of inner space in the story. The original sculpture garden was a children's playground, echoing the playground at the top of Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation, and a visual reminder of the moral complexity of the tower's architect, Anthony Royal. The film is more interested in the physical transformations of the characters and the ways in which they link to the structure of the tower.

On the other hand, *Crash* is striking in its creation of space, mixing the road, and more specifically the car, with the landscape of the human body. The road is a place of encounters where anything becomes possible. Bakhtin points out that unlike the novel of travel, the road functions as a native place, "one that passes through familiar territory, and not through some exotic alien world"[105]. The film builds on the spectator's familiarity with the road and the car, reflecting on the dystopia enclosed within. Bakhtin is once again an important guide to this process, as he further notes regarding the importance of encounters taking place on the road:

> People who are normally kept separate by social and spatial distance can accidentally meet; any contrast may crop up, the most various fates may collide and interweave with one another. [. . .] Time, as it were, fuses together with space and flows in it (forming the road).[106]

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[105] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 245.
[106] Ibid., 243.

Fig. 5 - Landscape and faces

Although the road goes through a familiar landscape (for Ballard the M25 surrounding London, for Cronenberg the highways of Toronto), as a space, it has been irrevocably changed by the mental state of the main characters. The film fuses two spaces into one, creating a feeling of unease, as the familiarity of the road is projected simultaneously with the sexuality of the car.

My practice helped me explore the simultaneous projection of the body and landscape directly in my collages. I chose to distort the scale of the landscape by overlapping different sizes of shots (Figure 5). The collision between Toomey's body and face with the terror of the landscape creates a new *topos* that incorporates the difference of scale in shot sizes (Figure 6). The resulting shot is neither a closeup nor a wide shot but fluctuates between the two. In the case of *The Timekeepers of Eternity,* the fragmentations of face and landscape aim to reflect the pieces of Mr Toomey, creating a landscape for the plot to take place in.

Fig. 6 - Difference of scale in shot sizes

As the timeframe of the narrative is already distorted from the original, I aimed to distort the space even further, creating a double stage for the plot, in the abandoned world and at the same time in the mind of Mr Toomey. The airport with Mr Toomey becomes the unknown land that needs to become known, which enhances the dislocation of the secondary characters as they need to navigate Toomey's trauma. Toomey constantly ignores the outer world element of their being lost in time. He is clearly preoccupied with a different landscape, that of his father and the paper tearing that allows him to override external reality. Toomey is hoping for salvation by condemnation, an escape to Boston, where he will confess his financial wrongdoing. As Dinah brings the vision of the impending meeting into their present, Toomey realises the terror of the landscape, and the langoliers eventually materialise around him. As the animation progressed, I realised I was creating a separate plane on which the story was materialising, and

Fig. 7 - **Hands mirroring movement**

I could use this as means to affect it. The paper creases slowly replace the airport as the stage where the plot takes place, directly influencing the characters and the progression of the story. Paper becomes the new landscape where the film is projected in fragments. As the story unfolds, Mr Toomey is preoccupied with this element of the creation of space, which becomes more obvious in the last section of the film where the materiality becomes more evident and my hand appears within the frame replicating his hand movements (Figure 7). The tears on the film become synchronous to the paper tearing of Mr Toomey. This effect is not only to be seen in terms of the subjectivity of the filmmaker and the protagonist, as described in the previous segment. The film manages to place Mr Toomey outside of itself, as he seems to be manipulating the structure of the film. My hands become his hands, and our identities collide. This path of world creation invites the audience to constantly question the nature of the narrator of the film.

Returning to *High-Rise*, Dr Laing also seems to be in a constant state of redecorating his apartment. When he first moved in, he had no impact on his space apart from placing a small photograph on the wall. Once his identity opens itself to its more violent facets, he reclaims his space by repainting it, and slowly, as he is covered in paint himself, he attains an armour of transformation, with tribal-like marks on his torn suit. Through his physical and emotional transformation, Laing embodies the building. Although the character never escapes or has any power outside of the medium of the film, the filmmakers are clearly attempting to project through the hero the identity of the surrounding space. The production designer intentionally added the structural elements of the tower to the personal space of the individual apartments. The distinct design of the columns that supposedly structure the skeleton of the high-rise is visible in all spaces, public and private. What is equally important is the vertical connections of spaces within the cinematic conception. Apart from the visual connection of the balconies, Wheatley shifts the focus from the staircases to the lifts, and in doing so renders the degradation of the architectural floor less immediately apparent. The characters no longer have a vertical connection but they remain in places of no identity. The connection of spaces in the film rejects the vertical, with its stress on class and purpose, and instead weaves an intricate connection of relationships, documenting their evolution as they dissolve into madness. This reflects on the lack of quest motivations—to ascend or descend— in the three main characters, who seem to be able to go wherever they want within the building, albeit while facing the consequences of those choices. Areas are not prohibited to anyone after the tribal war breaks out. Wheatley chooses to internalise space and limit the effect that designed space has on the community.

Following the space/character relations of *High-Rise*, I considered the ways my practice can address the idea of an externalised inner landscape and the

connections to the protagonist I could devise. Instead of vertical or horizontal links in space I discovered I could look inwards towards the layers of paper, and allow the material to manifest the uniqueness of the landscape. The narrative creates different expectations of 'up in the sky' and 'down on the ground'. The mystery of whether there is a world left for their plane to land on is answered by the peculiarity of their situation: everyone is missing, and ultimately the langoliers are chasing them. Once they manage to get up in the air again, the world has changed; in fact, it has disappeared completely, leaving only blank pages. The blankness of the pages is important for the landscape of my film because it retains the materiality and signifies the absence of content; the plane now floats into an endless world of white paper. When I first started the film, I did not have a definite plan for the conclusion of the landscape, investing my hopes in the process of animating to reveal an ending. The question of what the world resembles after the langoliers attack was looming over the film structure. Through the analysis of the film adaptations, I realised that the answer could be given organically through the use of material, aiming at reiterating the subjectivity of the protagonist. With the death of Mr Toomey, the world ceases to exist; the paper can no longer contain or reveal anything, offering a solution to the origin and conflict of the landscape of the film.

Narrator and flashbacks in *Re-High-Rise*

(Please watch the clip entitled "Re-High-Rise" before continuing.)

While producing *The Timekeepers of Eternity,* I chose to do an interim experiment to test the use of a narrator and flashbacks in creating the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. I felt that these issues, although addressed in the

adaptations by their filmmakers, needed a practical element to help me decide how they could be further answered in my film. Influenced by Ballard's advice to David Cronenberg and Jonathan Weiss to include a narrator in their films, and by the stylistic strength of the montage sequences of Ben Wheatley, I attempted in my practice to reflect on the issue of the protagonist as narrator. My aim was to eliminate plot-driven dialogues and characterisations. For that reason, I assembled a ten-minute found footage film of *High-Rise*, using only segments of the montage scenes and removing any dialogue. The presence of the narrator was reinstated, allowing the storytelling to become personal and intimate. Further to the use of narration, the flashbacks or condensed sequences became the only language of the film, exploding their dreamlike qualities.

High-Rise focuses on what Luckhurst calls a limited interpretation of inner space, namely one that is only an "externalisation of the unconscious"[107]. The externalisation is defined through the mechanism the film uses to manipulate the time element of the chronotope, making use of repetitions, memory gaps and the chronos of the meetings. The passage of time in the high-rise instantly begins with a continuous mixture of party time and dreams, as Wheatley and Jump use a quick editing style with flash-forward and flashback bursts that often open intriguing disjunctions. The film is not interested in continuity of time or emotion but organises itself around dialogue scenes that are used to motivate the music montages, which trace the true timeline of decay. Kevin Flanagan points out that "the descent to bare survival is visualised in the film thanks to montage, which cuts between parties, binges, and battered bodies"[108]. This consists of brief

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[107] Roger Luckhurst, *The Angle Between Two Walls: Fiction of J.G. Ballard* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 51.

[108] Kevin M. Flanagan, 'Wheatley's Progress: High-Rise (2015) and the Burden of Ballard', *Adaptation 9, no. 3* (1 December 2016): 434–38, 437.

shots no longer than six seconds each, which are parts of short sequences, and often switch between the points of view of different characters. The juxtaposition, as Flanagan argues, between certain civilised and uncivilised images represents the narrow distinction between normality and abnormality that Ballard investigates in the novel.[109] The fast cutting challenges the genre not only in terms of structure but also in terms of spectatorship. The editing, usually combined with slow motion, makes the audience aware of the medium and the space of the frame. The film aims to portray an evolving communal dream but since the visual space of the montages feels separate from the rest of the film, the construct is revealed. The montage sequences are very significant to the film and the creation of its Ballardian cinematic chronotope. The way Wheatley constructs the film—both in style and form—plays a large role in how the spectator reacts to it. The film's rigidity is obvious when it asks the Ballardian characters to converse and offer exposition. Although as an audience we are accustomed to following dialogue and plot—which results in the jarring fell of the montage sequences—I propose that the success of the film is actually these sequences where the dream space and the space of the high-rise are combined into an endless party, where everyone drinks, dances and dissolves into deviant behaviour.

A typical spatial effect of the road chronotope is the 'snowballing' effect, with actions gaining momentum as the protagonists drive across a space that acquires meaning. If we read the film as a road chronotope, we can see the potential of momentary encounters, as people separated by social and spatial distance can accidentally meet. According to Bakhtin, "any contrast may crop up, the most

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https://doi.org/10.1093/adaptation/apw032.
[109] Ibid.

various fates may collide and interweave with one another"[110]—the theme of both the novel and the film. The chronotope is constructed as a retelling of a story through memory, and as memory depends more on the person that reflects, it is more revealing of identity. Wheatley has created a film whose form evolves in parallel with its content. The film's first half is played out as an exaggerated simulacrum of 'real' life, while the film's second half is confused and dreamlike for the audience, because that is what it would be like for the characters. This is changed in the retelling, as the two halves are unified by a more experimental film form that only focuses on the stages of deviant behaviour and its links to the built environment.

Further to the particular pace of the visuals, the use of narration coheres the footage together, offering the spectators much-needed subjectivity as the events unfold. Luckily, Tom Hiddleston, who plays Dr Laing in the film, also recorded the full audiobook of the source text, revealing to me the Ballardian words in the voice of their protagonist. Having the voice of the main character narrate his story creates a duality that is already explored in the *High-Rise* film and can be enhanced by expanding it through the whole film. Narration is used at the beginning and end of the story to solidify Laing's separation from his sense of self. When Ballard's text becomes the narration, the film creates a chronotope that is inhabited by the plot as well as by the inner and outer landscape of the characters. In my retelling of *High-Rise*, the initial separation of Laing and the narrator (something also explored by Weiss with the narrator of *The Atrocity Exhibition,* but not by Cronenberg) is overcome as we listen to the story of the space of the high-rise, with the main character gradually embodying the building

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[110] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*. 243.

and ultimately becoming its voice.

My interim experiment is useful in terms of examining the potential of Wheatley's material, but it is repeatedly restrained by the narration of J.G. Ballard, which does not allow it to become a separate new film. The resulting edit resembles the film of *The Atrocity Exhibition,* raising the same issues of fidelity already examined. The intimacy, creativity, and subjectivity of avant-garde filmmaking can offer us ways into understanding vision and narrativity. Using footage from *High-Rise,* no matter what editing mechanisms I employed, kept me emotionally uninvolved. Furthermore, the rigidity of the written text did not allow me any leeway to interpret, understand, or create the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. Jonas Mekas, the godfather of the American avant-garde of the 1960s, wrote on the importance of improvisation:

> Improvisation is the highest form of condensation; it points to the very essence of a thought, an emotion, a movement. [. . .] Improvisation is, I repeat, the highest form of concentration, of awareness, of intuitive knowledge, when the imagination begins to dismiss the pre-arranged, the contrived mental structures, and goes directly to the depths of the matter. This is the true meaning of improvisation, and it is not a method at all, it is, rather, a state of being necessary for any inspired creation.[111]

Re-High-Rise confirmed that creating a collage film required both my personal connection to the material and, most importantly, a methodology directly linked to the Ballardian. A much-needed improvisation of the material is needed to unlock the self in the process. In the next chapter I will analyse in detail *The*

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[111] Jonas Mekas, "Notes on the New American Cinema," in *Experimental Cinema: The Film Reader,* eds. Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (London: Routledge, 2002), 53–70.

Timekeepers of Eternity, my appropriation of the original *Langoliers*, which stands as an entirely new text independent of any of its previous sources, while also identifying its methodological fidelity to the Ballardian chronotope.

The differences and similarities between the case studies allowed me, along with my practice, to examine and test specific aspects of the Ballardian cinematic chronotope as I located them in his screenplay of *Concrete Island*. *Empire of the Sun* was revealing in the use of subjective time and space while *Crash* allowed me to look in depth at the process of keeping time. Through the analysis of *High-Rise* I introduced the interpretation of landscape and the links to the hero's emotional journey. *The Atrocity Exhibition* allowed me to clarify the necessity of overlapping identities between filmmaker and hero, and showed how to locate the cinematic Ballardian chronotope in the balance between the two selves. Although the case studies do not align with a unifying Ballardian cinematic chronotope, each of them offers great insight into the mechanisms used by their filmmakers to approach and visualise Ballardian landscapes.

In the next chapter, I focus on my practice, assembling and expanding on the tools I can use in my appropriation film to further establish the Ballardian cinematic chronotope as a filmmaking process.

Found Footage Methodology and the Ballardian Chronotope

Where does film become articulate?

Further to the Ballardian adaptations analysed in the previous chapter, this chapter will look into avant-garde films and methodologies that share common ground with my practice approach. In my effort to reframe the Ballardian chronotope through *The Timekeepers of Eternity,* I echo the question of Jonas Mekas to Peter Kubelka: "Where does film become articulate?"[112] The filmmaker, along with the hero, and ultimately the spectator, are responsible for generating the story of interweaving times and spaces. For Eisenstein, the answer was in montage, with its tension of collision, the juxtaposition of images. Instead Kubelka finds this characteristic between individual film frames, not between shots. As he says, "Cinema is not movement, cinema is a projection of stills."[113] My approach to appropriation is flooded by a torrent of stills—printed, torn and re-photographed.

In my process of understanding and creating a path for my practice, I have been breaking down *The Langoliers* into its smallest constituent parts: its individual frames. As they are altered and reordered, I recreate the filmic reality according to the characteristics of the Ballardian chronotope. The process echoes Barthes's

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[112] Adams P. Sitney, *Film Culture Reader* (Cooper Square Press, 2000), 286.
[113] Ibid.

well-known claim that it is the aim of all structuralist activity "to reconstruct an 'object' in such a way as to manifest thereby the rules of its functioning."[114] Replacing the individual frames with printed collages undermines their original function of imitating reality, but retains the inherent characteristics of film movement continuity. Avant-garde films have been battling the manifestation of film function since the beginning of cinema, attempting to challenge the limits of control over the medium—they tend to rework familiar genre territories, subverting expectations. The Ballardian cinematic chronotope echoes this sentiment; the genre matters, but it is the multiplicity of new ways that can undermine its characteristics and tropes that offers a more revealing way to comprehend reality, in unconventional yet meaningful ways. András Bálint Kovács defines avant-garde film as a "personalised, non-commercial, non-narrative, and reductive use of the medium that, in most cases, is related to other art forms, such as painting, music, or poetry."[115] While cinema has always encompassed other art forms, the avant-garde tends to accentuate and stress the limits of those encounters. Kovács also suggests that:

> As a cinematic practice, avant-garde filmmaking is always aimed at private, self-expressive use of the cinema. [. . .] It rejects cinema as a commercial institution but affirms it as a personal form of artistic expression whereby all kinds of artistic trends and movements can find their way to the cinema.[116]

Although this might be true for many avant-garde filmmakers, I aim to explore

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[114] Roland Barthes, *Critical Essays* (Northwestern University Press, 1972), 213.

[115] András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950–1980* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007): 28.

[116] Ibid.

how investing myself can offer access to the Ballardian chronotope. My process does not reject the science fiction genre but embraces it.

Concomitant with experimenting with the medium is my commitment to creating a film that keeps a narrative core that could appeal to a genre audience. With the rise of technology, innovative film techniques no longer alienate larger film audiences, who are now used to a multiplicity of aesthetics enhanced by avant-garde mechanisms. An important question is whether an audience can ultimately access and engage with the film that I create. I argue that since the advent of the internet, a large number of avant-garde technique films are being produced for consumption online, especially in the area of found footage. Through remixes, fan edits, and alternative cuts, audiences have become more used to those experimental visions that have invaded pop culture and can be experienced on a phone or computer screen. In music videos and commercials, on YouTube and even in big-budget found footage films[117] successful at the box office, appropriations and collage films have developed an aesthetic standard that familiarises a global audience with the spectatorship skills required to watch them. This recalibration of audience expectations allows me to explore the Ballardian in ways that would—in former times—have limited my efforts to galleries or experimental festivals. Avant-garde films are linked to perception and subjectivity; thus, the way filmmakers decide to construct their film, in terms of style and form, inform the ways spectators will react to the film.

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[117] For example, found footage use in films *District 9* (2009), and *Chronicle* (2012).

Found footage filmmaking

The Timekeepers of Eternity aims to explore ways filmmakers can engage with their subjects to address cinematic inner space. For me, *The Langoliers* has always been an artefact of my youth and an introduction to a film genre that engaged me. The childish belief that there is a hidden gem within the material generates my appropriation film. My film does not satirise or point out the weaknesses of the original; on the contrary, the Ballardian chronotope guides me in revealing the truly engaging elements and, as an archaeologist, I uncover and present them to understand their truth. To unlock the potential of my project I engaged with the tools of found footage methodology.

The practice of re-editing footage from an existing film to create a new text began in 1963 when Joseph Cornell created *Rose Hobart.* Cornell's practice was to condense Rose Hobart's 1931 feature film *East of Borneo*, departing from the original narrative into a meditative dream piece focused on the female main character. His act of appropriating and transforming images from a product of the film industry created a different way of approaching film narratives. Cornell first removed the standard plot of the love triangle but retained all shots containing movements of the actress Rose Hobart, including close-ups of her eyes, her hands and motion through doorways. He mixed those with shots of natural phenomena taken from other film sources from his film collection—a stone falling into water, bananas hanging from a tree, a lunar eclipse—and created sequences to match to the reactions of the protagonist. The soundtrack was replaced with a loop of slowed-down Brazilian music. Most importantly, he projected the results through a filter, giving the black and white film a violet tint that emphasised the film stock's blemishes and drew attention to its materiality.

Today, the process of found footage film creation retains similar principles and for the experiment of *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, I employed a similar method of choosing and arranging shots to discover the Ballardian within B-movie material. I removed everything but the main narrative of Mr Toomey, the time-obsessed businessman, troubled by the echoes of his father's abuse. This not only strengthened the subjective view of the protagonist but also helped me anchor the film around him. The singular reproduction of the character became important. In the process of animating, all frames that included Mr Toomey were reused, often out of sequence or original context. Salvaging all imprints of Mr Toomey almost became the purpose of the film—his struggle for identity. Although I had no prior obsession with the character or the actor, his printed face created an emotional centre for the film. The obsession with the main character is evidently the theme of *Rose Hobart*, which creates a space inhabited only by its protagonist, tinted by colour and embraced by Brazilian music. Time slows down and becomes reflective, as the audience is not asked to follow a B-movie plot, but instead to linger over the actress's movements. The process of reworking found footage anchors itself around the rediscovery of the protagonist and the world surrounding them. *The Timekeepers of Eternity*—originally in colour—is now reassembled through black and white ink, a material characteristic of the process rather than a more arbitrary choice imposed in post-production. The omission of the colour of the original allows the elements of each collage to blend together, naturally creating balanced compositions, particularly because the individual elements are in movement. The stark contrast of the black and white prints directly references the aesthetics of B-movies, grounding the film in the science fiction genre. Slowly, the black and white version of Mr Toomey replaces all my memories of the colour version, establishing a new film world.

The Bakhtinian chronotope—as championed by Robert Stam—is a great tool for investigating these transformative elements of found footage films. By establishing altered space and time qualities, audiences are led to imagine a different film. As analysed in Chapter One, we can also look for the ripples of the chronotope towards the filmmaker and how the two become intertwined. P. Adams Sitney observes of *Rose Hobart*:

> Only a collector of films could have made this kind of montage. When one owns a print of a film and shows it repeatedly, accidents happen in the projection and rewinding: passages are damaged, and strange ellipses occur in their repair.[118]

The greatest influence on the process of making a found footage film is the source material and the power it has to define the creative process. Through my practice, I found that those opportunities become apparent with time: the more you look at the original material, the more they lose their original meaning. The paper effect I apply on *The Timekeepers of Eternity* could be computer generated. The digital process would require a detailed pre-production process where most creative decisions would have to be taken, which would produce a detailed storyboard to be followed. The transitions and collisions would become a procedural process of animating the choices made earlier in the process. Having the printed pages in a workshop allows for all the accidents that are crucial to the film and its unfolding narrative. This is similar to how Bruce Conner details his process in his avant-garde films:

> I snip out small parts of films and collect them on a larger reel. Sometimes when I tail-end one bit of the film onto another, I'll find a relationship that I

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[118] P. Adams Sitney, *The Cinema of Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 120.

would have never thought about consciously—because it does not create a logical continuity, or it does not fit my concept of how to edit a film.[119]

I decided from the beginning of my research that the animation would be made in sequential order, from beginning to end. I felt the need to allow myself to become more proficient in the animating technique and embed my evolution within the film's texture. The gradual change of quality in technique became part of the film and directly reflected the approaching langoliers of the plot. Although I had an edited version from which I printed frames, I was forced to re-edit the film while creating the animation, as the materiality of the process formulated a new creative space, outside of the film. Each shot duration transformed into a stack of paper (the longer the shot the higher the stack), and I edited physically by rearranging these stacks on a table in a workshop. Time was represented by the frame numbers on the printed pages, and I reassembled the film from memory, my fleeting perception of the story. William Charles Wees recognises the strength of methodology for found footage filmmakers, pointing out that "In addition to their innate interest as gestures of personal expression, the visual effects added by the filmmaker assert the individual filmmaker's power to reclaim the terrain of public images for personal use."[120] Although Wees uses his analysis to criticise the conventions of the film industry, my aim through *The Timekeepers of Eternity* was to reclaim personal expression within the Ballardian cinematic chronotope, investing myself within the film.

It is important at this stage to consider Wees's found footage film categories and how *The Timekeepers of Eternity* addresses their characteristics to discover the

[119] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (McGraw-Hill Companies Inc, 2009), 377.
[120] William Charles Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (Anthology Film Archives, 1993), 33.

Ballardian chronotope. In his seminal work, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films*, Wees discovers three distinct categories for the found footage film: Compilation, Appropriation and Collage. Wees defines compilation film primarily as a documentary form, the aim of such films being to represent reality in their aesthetics and context. Appropriation films, on the other hand, extract imagery from sources and repurpose it to discover new emotions and aesthetics. Collage films draw significance towards the image rather than its context, alerting the audience to the materiality of the film. Although the categorising was crucial in the attempt to define the genre of found footage films at the time, when applied to different film examples, the borders between categories get narrower. Each work, including my practice, carries the force of the individual filmmaker more so than that of a genre or classification. *The Timekeepers of Eternity* does not fall clearly into any of these categories but touches on characteristics of all of them. At the scale of the frame, the film is clearly a collage film but for the overall plot structure, the film is an appropriation. The different ways and areas that time and space can be developed within my practice create different chronotopes and relationships between the original material, the process, the characters and myself. Found footage films always encounter the source material as something new and vibrant, waiting in hibernation to be exposed. As Jay Leyda points out:

> Artists who have worked with these materials have surprised us so often with what we thought was familiar and worn that we may be sure that, as long as artists continue to work in this form, there is no end to its newness.[121]

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[121] Jay Leyda, *Films Beget Films* (Hill and Wang, 1964), 13-14.

Regardless of the extent to which the original images are manipulated, found footage films—according to Wess[122]—invite us to recognise [themselves] as found footage, as recycled images. That materiality and self-referentiality encourage "a more analytical reading [. . .] than the footage originally received."[123] This echoes directly the Ballardian chronotope as exemplified in previous chapters, and particularly the analysis of *The Atrocity Exhibition.* To further define my motives and the relevance of my methodology in creating the Ballardian chronotope, I will focus on two works of two prominent filmmakers: Peter Tscherkassky's *Outer Space* (1999) and Martin Arnold's *Passage à l' acte* (1993). Those films, with their similarities and differences to *The Timekeepers of Eternity* in re-using film material, converse with space and time by offering my research distinct insights into the cinematic practice.

Tscherkassky, Arnold, Toomey

At the forefront of avant-garde film practice, Tscherkassky employs celluloid as a singular material with which to investigate theories of subjectivity, memory and perception, as well as the aesthetic limits of the filmic image. Tscherkassky restricts himself to the film medium, and with his use of multiple exposures and ground-breaking editing, including faults that appear on celluloid, creates an immersive experience, marked by a collapse between the world of the frame, and the mechanics of filming and projection.[124] Tscherkassky sculpts with time and space, rhythms, and arrhythmia in a way that feels like an entirely new film

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[122] Wees, *Recycled Images*, 33.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Rhys Graham, 'Outer Space: The Manufactured Film of Peter Tscherkassky' *Senses of Cinema* (blog), accessed 16 February 2022, https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2001/cteq/outer/.

space, a new language altogether. Tscherkassky is concerned with deforming the shape film uses to reveal it. The fragmented approach and the instinctive choices of frames used, along with his focus on sexuality and body movement, make his films a strong reference for the Ballardian filmmaker. Relevant to my practice is the way he condenses original imagery from feature films and displaces them into new narratives,[125] focusing on the plot of one film only and aiming to alter it as a singular experience for the audience, manipulating not only the time and space of the film, but also the time and space of the frame.

Outer Space engages within the genre of the horror film, reworking the narrative conventions of the genre to refer to a universal power of cinema, implicating the analogue film medium and the banalities of the specific genre. Tscherkassky pushes analogue film to the limits of its appropriation, not only as a craft, but also as a critical commentary. In his film, a young woman enters a suburban house at night. As the door closes behind her, both the physical space and the surface of the film begin to collapse around her. Both spaces rupture and the female protagonist screams across the screen as the film strip violently springs out of its sprockets and the optical sound invades her world. The original material is from Sidney J. Furie's 1981 film *The Entity,* but Tscherkassky subverts the shots to distil the essence of the genre. Typical to a horror film, the female protagonist is running away from a monster, but in Tscherkassky's film, this is no longer the titular entity, but the film itself, manipulated by Tscherkassky to suggest the spectators' violent gaze. Tscherkassky described his idea for *Outer Space* as "to make a film in which the filmic material would permeate the

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[125] In this I share Guy Maddin's fascination on Tscherkassky's work. Guy Maddin, "You Give Me Fever", *The Village Voice,* 11 June 2002, https://www.villagevoice.com/2002/06/11/you-give-me-fever/.

marginal plot."[126] By making the filmstrip visible, we clearly identify it as the force of violence inflicted on the protagonist's body, or to be more specific, to the effects on the image of her body. Tscherkassky achieves this through a meticulous method of optical printing, by copying, enlarging, and repositioning single frames or parts of them onto unexposed film strip. Martin Zeilinger describes Tscherkassky's process:

> Overall, the incredibly precise manner of looking and listening that precedes Tscherkassky's darkroom labour—memorisation and retention of the appropriated images' time-space, i.e., the location and duration of filmic moments on tiny analogue film frames—is perhaps best described as a real-life approximation of the kind of invisible force that holds Barbara Hershey's image captive in *The Entity*.[127]

The Timekeepers of Eternity follows Tscherkassky's paradigm in giving the medium a destructive power. In his analysis of appropriations, Zeilinger perceptively sees that Tscherkassky's ability to choose and amplify the frightening qualities of his version not only results in an equation between terror and the viewer but also between the monster and the filmmaker. He emerges as the author, the godlike figure that playfully and cruelly manipulates the frame and the violence upon his victim. The power to repeat certain scenes allows the director to force the repetition of trauma, representing the impossibility of escaping suffering. The superimposition of narrative cycles during which the protagonist finds temporary shelter resembles mirror fragments, a shattered impression that she might be in control until another violent movement of the

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[126] Peter Tscherkassky, "Epilogue, Prologue. Autobiographical Notes Along the Lines of a Filmography," in *Peter Tscherkassky*, eds. Alexander Horwath and Michael Loebenstein (Vienna: Austrian Filmmuseum, 2005), 150.

[127] Martin Zeilinger, *Art and Politics of Appropriation* (University of Toronto, 2009), 167.

film strip makes her scream once again.

Tscherkassky's use of sound has a visceral effect—repetition as a transgressive method of composition. As with the film printing, Tscherkassky constructs the soundscape himself to describe the intensity and violence that the medium holds over the character. The sounds from the story are in constant battle with the noise of the medium. His soundtrack is generated by the violence of the film strip. The soundtrack works as binding material between paper and plot for *The Timekeepers of Eternity*. The paper tears create rhythmical loops that echo the story structure and serve as the first hint of the oncoming threat of the Langoliers—a horrible sound Dinah hears first. To reflect on the destruction of paper, the sound is recorded into tapes that are slowly destroyed through loops, slowly deteriorating and organically slowing down.[128] This analogue technique of producing sound allows the same level of experimentation and accident as the animation technique, but allows the soundtrack to act in the service of the plot. In many ways, the artistry of Tscherkassky also reveals the limitations of the analogue film strip. His appropriation is not particular to the plot of *The Entity*, as he could have found several films to serve his purpose, which is to ultimately make the medium the villain. Doris Peternel identifies it better when she suggests that "the materiality of the film is affirmed as a space for aggression."[129] As the time and space of the film strip are inhabited by the terrified protagonist, Tscherkassky creates a chronotope unique to his films and techniques, where

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[128] The method echoes *The Disintegration Loops* by avant-garde composer William Basinski, released in 2002 and 2003. While attempting to transfer his earlier recordings to digital format he realised the tapes were deteriorating each time they passed the tape head.

[129] Doris Peternel, "Peter Tscherkassky, A Modern Love," in *Peter Tscherkassky: Cinemascope Trilogy*, ed. Nicole Brenez, distributed with the VHS version of Peter Tscherkassky's *Cinemascope Trilogy & Miniaturen* (Re:Voir, 2004), 33.

time and space belong to the film material and its projection.[130] Although I am looking for mechanisms to discover the Ballardian chronotope through cinema, my process is only restricted by its paper materiality because of the plot of the specific story, and the obsessive nature of the protagonist. Other narratives, Ballardian or not, would need a different process of transformation to retain or create the Ballardian characteristics on screen.

Martin Arnold, on the other hand, engages further with Kubelka's description of the space between still images. His process is one of slowing down time and repeating moments, making the audience aware of the fundamentals of film and the gap between one frame and the next. In *Passage à l' acte* Arnold illustrates a Hollywood standard from the early sixties, a nuclear family, husband, wife, son, and daughter, having breakfast. The scene originates from *To Kill a Mockingbird* and is transformed into a surrealist nightmare. Arnold explains that in his films:

> The projector is broken [. . .] Sometimes it seems to stand still; the next moment it seems to flip the film outside down [sic]. With regard to the characters, a similar phenomenon occurs: they clearly project a neurotic impression. [. . .] So, they seem to be hysterical, compulsive, and manic.[131]

The brief sequence in its original state has a classic, deceptive harmony. Arnold deconstructs the scene by destroying its continuity of movements, time, and space, turning it into a prison for its characters. Everything seems to be trapped in brief loops of hammering rhythm. The son jumps off the table, only to find himself trapped next to the door. He is then compelled to return to the table as

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[130] "What lies in the center is no longer the produced, rather it is the analogous quality of the film image." Peter Tscherkassky, 1992. 'The Analogies of the Avant-Garde' in *Found Footage Film* Cecilia Hausheer and Christoph Settele (VIPER, 1992), 27-36, 30.

[131] Arnold, qtd. in Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Ex-Cinema: From a Theory of Experimental Film and Video* (University of California Press, 2012), 61.

the father keeps repeating 'Sit down'. Even at the end, when we reach the conclusion of the scene and the two children rush to leave their restraints, the film is caught at the door, escape impossible. Arnold, like Tscherkassky, becomes an evil puppeteer, repeating shots of Gregory Peck screaming parts of words again and again while his son twitches back and forth with frustration. Arnold uses the optical printer to recreate the effect of the stammering projector as "an apparatus that works against the camera".[132] He applies the same effect on the soundtrack, enhancing the links between frames and making their connection even more distressing. His practice is not focused on one genre, but uses a narrative to examine the symptoms of studio filmmaking. In Akira Mizuta Lippit's words, both the film's content and form "represents a prolonged struggle within the memory apparatus, which appears to be both reworking and resisting the eruptions of a crashing repression"[133] bringing to the surface the unconscious mind of cinema. This presents two different and simultaneous processes for appropriations. On one side, the basic element of the film, the frame, can—through repetitions and time manipulation—reveal the construct, and on the other, the need for a plot is struggling with that revelation.

Ballard becomes relevant when the exposed mind does not belong to the film medium or the filmmaker or the protagonist uniquely, but when all three minds collide into one, when the medium signifies the collapse of the protagonist, which we only access by unravelling the mind of the filmmaker. At this point, through my practice, I am furthering Wees's definition that a true found footage film should emphasise the fact that all of its imagery is taken from other sources

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[132] Scott MacDonald and Martin Arnold, 'Sp. Sp. Spaces of Inscription: An Interview With Martin Arnold.', *Film Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1994), 2-11.

[133] Lippit, *Ex-Cinema: From a Theory of Experimental Film and Video*, 65.

as its principal point of interest.[134] Bakhtin also alludes to this inextricable tie between practice and everyday life: "We might even speak of a special creative chronotope inside which this exchange between work and life occurs, and which constitutes the unique life of the work".[135] The real world, including the filmmakers and the audience, exists tangentially to the works themselves—that is, separate from the world that is being presented in the text, but still in a specific relationship to it. While I am required by my practice to construct a paper animation, I am also creating an almost meditative practice environment that allows me as an author to become the protagonist, and vice versa, with Mr Toomey authoring the film's narrative.

Found footage film becomes intrinsic to the plot development, the "disturbed encephalogram of the unresolved mental crisis"[136] shared between protagonist and filmmaker. This is especially revealing concerning the Ballardian chronotope, in determining to whom the space and time we are referring to belongs. This is the point where Bakhtin reveals key concepts with his chronotope in understanding Ballard's views. In his texts, Ballard not only tries to make the reader aware of the writer's presence, but he also allows the medium to become self-aware. Thus, we have different times and spaces colliding into one single narrative, revealing this interaction. Expanding on my experiment of *Re-High-Rise*, I attempted to enhance the presence of the text while reducing even more elements of the original film. I acquired the audiobook of *The Langoliers*—voiced by Willem Dafoe—and attempted to lay segments of the audio over my edit of

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[134] "The repetition of shots and the extreme graininess of the film increasingly draw attention to the body of the film itself, to the film's own image-ness," a function that he sees as "the effect of all found footage films, [which] invite us to recognize them as found footage, as recycled images, and due to that self referentiality, they encourage a more analytical reading." in Wees, *Recycled Images*, 11.

[135] Emphasis in original. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 254.

[136] Ballard, *High-Rise*, 9.

the film. Because Stephen King was involved in the screenplay of *The Langoliers,* most of the spoken dialogue matches the book, which allowed me to replace the voices of the actors with the voice of Willem Dafoe. I tried to replace all the voices, with the exception of Mr Toomey's (original actor Bronson Pinchot), in order to further enhance his character's alienation from the environment. The result created a second narrator, subsidiary to the paper-handling technique. The written word has a different pace and intensity to it, which feels alienating, pushing the film into an even more experimental territory and distancing it from the genre.

(Please watch the narration experiment now.)

As I explained in the previous chapter, according to the Ballardian chronotope, it is important to subvert science fiction expectations, allowing the inner space to

Fig. 8 - Hands mirroring movement

emerge from within the plot. To respond to Kubelka, *The Timekeepers of Eternity* became articulate not through plot, but instead as defined by an author, a narrator battling the protagonist. Instead of the film being the experiential outcome of my identification with the protagonist, it felt like a construct where even the narrator became one of the film's characters. Instead of becoming more engaging, the film kept the audience at a distance. Instead of adding a new layer of authorship to the material, I aimed to be more revealing of the elements that were already part of the canvas, focusing on the visual and not the auditory aspect. For this reason, I chose to enhance my presence as the creator and identify with the main character by expanding the container in specific shots to allow my hands to be part of the film. This replication of hands tearing paper, mine and Mr Toomey's, expands the film's chronotope to include my reality (Figure 8). In this spirit, in the following subchapter, I bring attention to the new ways the material invited me to juxtapose spatial and temporal qualities to reconstruct a narrative and exploit the science fiction genre possibilities.

The art of joinery

The collage technique offers unique opportunities in addition to film montage and it is of value to separate and contrast the two on-screen and during the practice. Both terms emphasise the constructive part of the filmmaking process, the act of putting pieces together to create a unity. Collage and montage begin with the process of tearing the material into pieces and reconstructing a different time and space where the elements play out in unison—or, pointedly, do not. While montage can make the seam of the edit invisible, collage draws attention to the points of contact, adding another layer to its chronotope. The most

creative of these works will often encourage the fluctuation of the spectators' attention between the narrative represented and questions of the motivation behind the choices made: which elements are extracted and what the significance of their juxtaposition is. These elements use methods of repetition to signify moments reflecting both the narrative and the filmmaker.

To better explain the method used in juxtaposing images and how this is important in constructing an effective chronotope, I will use an example of craftsmanship from a different medium, the Japanese ceramic art *kintsugi* (or *kintsukuroi*). *Kintsugi* highlights or emphasises imperfections, using gold with lacquer, and treats repairs as part of the history of the object rather than something that should be hidden. *Kintsugi* focuses on three major types of joinery. First is the crack, where gold dust and resin are used to attach broken pieces or fill in gaps, creating vein-like additions. Second is the piece method,

Fig. 9 - Single tear as the gold crack

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Fig. 10 – Tear separation as a tear method

Fig. 11 – Tears echo movement

where a replacement fragment is not available, so the addition is done using only gold. Third is the joint call, where a non-matching piece is used to replace a fragment missing from the original object, creating a patchwork effect.

Rather than looking to avant-garde film as the main metaphor for my work, I look to the art of *kintsugi* to further specify the importance of making the joints of my film visible. The tears on the paper always leave a white residue, which makes the spectator aware of the material. Although it is hard to differentiate which piece of paper on the screen the tear belongs to, the two images are always joined by tears. First, I use paper tears within one image, making the tear apparent as a reflection of the concern of the characters or a physical interaction on screen that draws attention to its edges (Figure 9). This is the equivalent of the gold crack in *kintsugi*. Slowly, these tears extend and separate, revealing a different timeline within the same image, the piece method (Figure 10*)*. Since I only print each frame once, when a tear goes across a frame, it means that the remaining image is filled by the previous or subsequent frame. This is the simplest way to create repetition and looping within single frames, which can be multiplied by drawing attention to movement within the screen space. As illustrated in Figure 11, Mr Toomey is shocked by his assault and is pulled away. His movement within the screen allowed me to freeze time at different parts and timings of the frame, creating the ghost effect of his path and illustrating his shock. The most important collision is the joint call, where the frame (the missing piece) revealed is different, bringing two different times and spaces together to create a new timeline. This is furthered explored in externalising the landscape (Figure 12) and illustrating the sci-fi elements of the story. It can also be used as a storytelling device, in how colliding images create the time and space for the narrative to develop, usually allowing Mr Toomey to become omnipresent (Figure 1). This leads us to the tension that arises when two
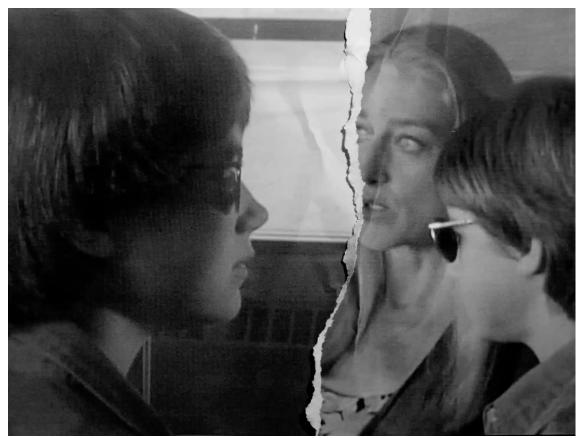
Fig. 12 – Landscapes colliding

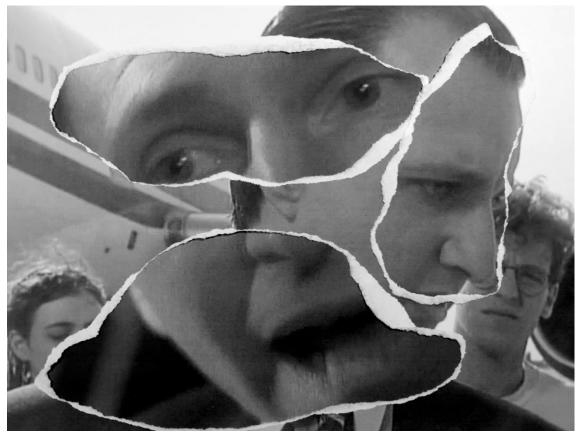
Fig. 13 – Image next to an image

Fig. 14 - Image within an image

different images collide, which originates in the line of contact but extends into the replacement piece of the collision. Further analysis of this third category requires a consideration of the simple juxtaposition of images that occurs in still paper collage. This can be divided as an 'image next to an image' (Figure 13) or as an 'image within an image' (Figure 14).

Restrictions are a key part of my practice, and I decided early on not to allow changes of scale in the printing, so that all my material is on an equal footing as I am not altering the shot scale of the original material. Referring back to Kubelka's approach to film, I consider the arena of my practice to be the still frame. My approach assimilates still-image techniques and attempts to expand them in a time-based medium. Images in film are not equated with the actual physical images recorded, but with the perception of movement created by the continuity of sequential frames. Still-image collage asks us to associate the two images that

collide and the points of collision. In moving collage, as in film editing, the points of contact become continuity or discontinuity of movement, rhythm or scale. Still-image collage displaces and re-contextualises the images, juxtaposing their content in ways that produce sparks, in my case narrative sparks, which are revealing to the protagonist and the audience. In *The Timekeepers of Eternity,* I use 'image next to an image' to create a new filmic time, almost like a split screen, where action plays out or repeats itself simultaneously. The audience is present in different places of the filmic space, but unlike in montage, those points of view collide with each other, creating new rhythmical associations. This allows for the creation of a third image, a combination of the two in continuous movement. This variation on the split screen also allows me to bring different environments together, creating the externalisation of inner space that Mr Toomey requires. When in motion, the film requires a focused spectator to engage with the narrative. William S. Burroughs, a good friend of Ballard's and avid collage maker, suggests that in many ways all of our perceptions can now be understood as the consumption of cutups, the constant confusion of juxtapositions:

> Cutups make explicit a psychosensory process that is going on all the time anyway. Somebody is reading a newspaper, and his eye follows the column in the proper Aristotelian manner, one idea and sentence at a time. But subliminally he is reading the columns on either side and is aware of the person sitting next to him.[137]

My collage film attempts to bring this process to the front, to overcome the normal barriers and expectations of film spectatorship. As my film progresses, the method of altering the footage becomes more complex, but I argue that the

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[137] William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 4.

viewer's attention shifts from the textures and rhythms created by the cutups towards the content, the narrative. The plot becomes the principal object of attention, as the paper texture becomes part of the world of the film. The viewer absorbs the image before realising what is happening, getting lost in the storyline, and the aforementioned process belongs to the protagonist, a shared cut-up perspective on reality.

Collage methodology consists of two parts: selecting the material and arranging it. Whole or fragmented objects are selected and then put together in a novel arrangement. Ballard notes about his practice: "We live inside an enormous novel. [. . .] The fiction is already there. The writer's task is to invent reality."[138] As such, for Ballard, the artist's role is to select and sort different images to create a new reality. My process of selecting material as mentioned in Chapter One, was to choose a source that would be personal to me, so that I could engage as a creator not just in the present but as a reworking of memory. Staying within the science fiction genre was also important, but choosing a stylistically conventional source allowed me to create deeper associations and devise more meaningful solutions to reinterpret the Ballardian chronotope. Walter Benjamin explains this best when describing his writing process:

> I won't steal anything valuable or appropriate any witty turns of phrase. But the trivia, the trash: this, I don't want to take stock of, but let it come into its own in the only way possible: use it.[139]

Having a very clear sci-fi source is liberating, and although the material is trivia, it has personal value to me or acquires value through the dedication the collage

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[138] Ballard, *Crash*, v.

[139] Walter Benjamin, 'N [Theoretics of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]', *Philosophical Forum* 15, no. 1 (1983): 1, 5. as quoted in Wees, *Recycled Images*, 30.

process requires. My process of selecting material was tedious but effective in transporting me from the mind-set of film montage to that of collage making. I initially created a digital rough edit of the original material, reducing it from three hours to 70 minutes by focusing the plot on Mr Toomey. From that edit, I printed sections on A4 pages (in timeline order) that I then numbered by hand so that each frame received a unique number, enabling me to track sequences. This was my first contact with the paper, stamping the printed frames by hand with their numbers. Slowly, the repetition of movements on the page refocused my brain on the details of the paper and how they could potentially interact in the creation of different phrases: I started thinking on paper. From the beginning of my animation, I perceived the film as an endless stack of paper, the layering of which would allow me to discover interactions—a representation of the psyche of the protagonist who tears through them to find salvation. The materiality of my film is not that of celluloid or digital pixels, although it draws inspiration from both, but rather from paper, which it explores obsessively and eventually transforms into the focal point of the story. This is the main reason why Wees's categories become problematic when I apply them to my practice, and more generally to our era in which found footage films have been transformed by technology. Paper allows me to deconstruct the space and time of the film, every twelfth of a second, into pages through which I can track the movements and emotions of the characters. When I reassemble the Ballardian cinematic chronotope, I am not only using the tools of montage to recreate a plot but I am cutting—literally on the page—the duration of the shots, the transition of movement that defines the rhythm of the film that could only be achieved through a dedication to this methodology.

Digital discoveries for analogue practice

My method is not affected only by analogue collage practices. The impact of digitisation on found footage filmmaking not only permits new developments in the practice but also affects the traditional notion of found footage films. Digital tools have simplified the process of gathering source materials and cutting and reassembling moving images. On one hand, the possibility of working on an infinite number of copies of a film, with tools that allow unlimited changes to the edit without consequences on the original material, removes the physicality of collage, but also the permanence of the results, as correcting mistakes becomes tedious. My choice of creating a paper texture, a medium that re-engages with the accidental but at the same time makes use occasionally of the benefits of digital technology, is rooted in allowing my practice methodology to evolve. On the other hand, having worked with motion graphics software, I realise the strength of digitally constructed moving collages in creating new spatial qualities—it is what Lev Manovich labels 'spatial montage'.[140] Whereas montage engages with the temporal quality of the film strip, the linear arrangement of images of equal size designed to be projected in sequence, spatial montage through digital compositing introduces a new process. Objects and figures are re-contextualised in unlikely environments; associations are made when images are juxtaposed, not just in a temporal fashion but also in a spatial one. Yvonne Spielmann uses "the term 'cinematic collage' to describe another form of the moving film image where montage techniques that usually transport continuity are crossed with matte and layering techniques" producing a "cinematic cluster"

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[140] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (MIT Press, 2001).

of which the spatial dimension is the dominant one.[141] These discoveries, emerging from digital collage, directly address the potential mechanisms the paper medium offers as I recreate analogue alternatives to digital potentialities.

When making *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, I attempted to introduce a digital working practice in the analogue medium. Each element of the collage carries a separate timeline that continues, composes, and overlaps in both spatial and temporal dimensions. As Manovich states, for digital practices, "reordering sequences of images in time, compositing them together in space, modifying parts of an individual image, and changing individual pixels become the same operation, conceptually and practically."[142] In *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, each partial frame used within a composition contains both its temporal and spatial quality, with a sense of continuity from the previous to the subsequent frame. These are re-fabricated in the animating process, engaging with a new form of montage, closer to digital compositing but without the options of an overall preview. The timelines and their interactions are only contained in the mind of the filmmaker, and the accidents and errors that occur become part of the aesthetics of the chronotope that is constructed. All the fragments of the composition converge into a cohesive whole. Vivian Sobchack discovers this "sameness of difference" in digital morphing as a "chronotopic cohesion of narrative time and space".[143] Through my practice, and in the particularity of the material I use, I discovered that the collage chronotope is malleable, as I can create new continuities and ruptures where continuity previously existed. This

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[141] "[T]he overriding linear structure of moving images is reversed into spatial density", Yvonne Spielmann, "Aesthetic Features in Digital Imaging: Collage and Morph", *Wide Angle* 21, no. 1 (1 January 1999): 131–48. 139

[142] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 35.

[143] Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Meta Morphing: Visual Transformation and the Culture of Quick-Change* (U of Minnesota Press, 2000), 18.

can have a seamless result, but more often creates a narrative pace that is distinct from the film. Moving collage can create conflicting vanishing points and conflicts of scale within one frame. In the film, I use this heavily in dialogue scenes where instead of cutting away to reaction shots, I nest them one on top of the other, allowing the exchange of the characters to acquire a new form within the frame. Added to the dimension of materiality created by the paper creases, it evokes new perceptions of the spatial and temporal qualities of film. Most filmmakers engaging with analogue film use effective techniques of scratching, drawing, or painting on the film strip (echoed in the paper creases I use), and drastically change the appearance of the found footage. I reiterate this by excluding any other kind of special effect from the original film. All the effects that do not belong to the realism of the original film's live-action footage, computer-generated or not, I have either excluded, replaced or recreated through

Fig. 15 – Material monsters

the paper animation. For example, the langolier monsters were originally computer-generated, an effect that is now dated. For my appropriation, the monsters needed to be part of the paper medium, and the element that allowed Mr Toomey to compose himself is revealed as the thing that has been hunting him. As the whole film is reprinted in black and white, the narrative becomes that of the ink on the paper. The langoliers become holes in stacked paper that devour all echoes of the past, leaving only a void. The traces of their movements erase the printed information, leaving only white paper (Figure 15). The monsters are replaced with whirls of white paper circles—constructed in layers to give a sense of infinite depth—around which the film world struggles to survive. By having the paper animation as the only platform on which the sci-fi special effects can be illustrated—including the monsters of the title that devour time and space—I am taking away the last shelter the protagonist had. Tearing pages is no longer the calming activity it once was.

Resolution within the Ballardian cinematic chronotope

Although my practice is dominated by the technical labour of animating, I chose to take specific steps in allowing the appropriation of *The Langoliers* to address a popular film audience. I am attempting to reach a wider audience furthering the practices of Tscherkassky and Arnold, because I am aiming for a feature-length genre film, an attempt to override the overwhelming aesthetic of the animation technique and embrace it as a plot instrument. Although we can assume simple but very thoughtful plots for Arnold's and Tscherkassky's films, revealing the power of the medium, through my practice I am applying their sense of experimentation to a plot structure that is in keeping with the genre. With his

short film *Fast Film*—his follow-up to *Copy Shop*—Virgil Widrich touches on the importance of plot over the medium. Using printed frames of classic films, he creates a universal chase story, a furious race through film history. Through this unique found footage appropriation, Widrich rediscovers these stories in three-dimensional space, as the papers fold into origami shapes to narrate the plot and are then re-photographed. As space and time are reconfigured, Widrich constructs a new environment for the plot to manifest. His process reflects the central characteristic of the chronotope, which creates a platform defined in its temporal and spatial qualities, to allow specific stories to be told. The tools of found footage films allow me to explore the narrative in depth. As Morson and Emerson explain: "Chronotopes are not so much visibly present in activity as they are the ground for activity [. . .] They are not contained in plots, but make plots possible."[144] To further use the chronotope as a tool, I would add that filmmakers can allow the chronotope to affect and discover the plot, which is my main aim with *The Timekeepers of Eternity*. I am creating a platform using the Ballardian chronotope, and allowing the non-Ballardian source to be transformed into something new that is a more loyal appropriation of the Ballardian landscape. Therefore, *The Timekeepers of Eternity* is not a blueprint for filmmakers to follow, but a specific example of a unique collision of myself, Mr Toomey and Ballard, all equally creating our story.

This collision of plot and technique is evident in the way I decided to resolve the ending of *The Timekeepers of Eternity*. Since I worked on the animation in sequential order, the plot was reinvented as the paper prints were being reassembled. Although I had an idea that the ending should be a collision

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[144] Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford University Press, 1990), 369.

between my protagonist and the Ballardian landscape, I was not sure how this could be done, and I trusted the process would reveal a solution. Having seen so many replications of the faces of the characters in the films, I kept wondering about all the other replicas of parallel personas they have created in different films, reproductions of different selves, and whether those could invade the world of *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, as mentioned briefly in the previous chapter. The ending to the original *Langoliers* was a happy resolution where the remaining characters returned to normality by flying through the time rip that initiated their trouble. According to Sears, the original film, and Steven King's novella, approach the rip in time as a disjointed present, an error or an event that helps us realise the existing world.[145] The return to the present is essential to the story. Although this struggle is linked to the Ballardian, the resolution or ethics of time are different. The adaptation of *The Langoliers* ends by offering the survivors knowledge of the workings of time, having existed briefly in this time out-of-joint. Since the main character of my plot is devoured by the Langoliers, I could not assume an ending that is so far away from the emotional centre of the film. It would be inconsistent with the Ballardian cinematic chronotope, as the world discovered would be lost once again.

(Please watch the alternative ending clip now.)

My initial approach was to try and establish the place where past and present coexist. To materialise an ending like that, the medium of the collage film became essential. The appropriation methodology allowed me to form an answer relevant to the nature of the medium. Most of the actors in *The Langoliers* have a rich filmography, so I enlisted all these different characters they have

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[145] John Sears, *Stephen King's Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 142.

impersonated, making their passage through the time rip a cinematic one. They get lost in different films and landscapes as they journey through different ages. They are literally lost within time and space, but their consciousness remains. The ending constructs a formal response to the film's technique. Once Mr Toomey dies and is devoured by his own inner space, the rest of the characters gain the same awareness, the essence of the world surrounding them. This ending is a smaller found footage compilation within a found footage film, one that allows the film world to expand into different universes, primarily addressing the science fiction genre that it claims to inhabit. Echoing the Ballardian cinematic, the film aimed at the very core of the Ballardian chronotope, using a multitude of films to reflect on our possible identities within our real world. Despite the effort needed to assemble such an ending, I realised that it was contradicting my motives of concluding the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. The compilation ending brought the construct of the film to the forefront, allowing the emotional build-up to dissolve into an overwhelming editing technique. The resolution and realisation of the function of *The Langoliers* are what ultimately frees Mr Toomey from his past connection to the world creating the structural point where the film forms a sense of an ending. In *The Timekeepers of Eternity,* the death of Mr Toomey is followed by the death of Dinah, who is still carrying his inner self as she was able to see through his eyes. Dinah's death is unique in the film, as she is lost between shuffling pages until her image ceases to exist. The remaining survivors attempt to fly through the time rip. Unfortunately, they forget they need to be in a state of sleep to successfully manage the transition; thus, they all disappear, leaving only the plane to linger in the sky. "It's so beautiful" are the last words of the pilot as he is looking straight into the layers of paper, the time rip in the sky. The line echoes Dinah's death, as she acknowledges the beauty she experienced through Mr

Toomey's eyes. Once the inner self of the protagonist becomes apparent, it is followed by the potentiality of peace in this newly established world; what was originally a horror element becomes Eden. The film concludes by regaining the emotional weight of Mr Toomey's adventure. The frame rate slows down towards a single frame of the plane mid-flight. The progression of paper frames finds a final rhythmical conclusion; there is no more paper left.

For my choice of film ending, I look back into the Ballardian adaptations. In Chapter Two, I noted the importance of the ending of Ballard's screenplay for *Concrete Island*. *Crash* makes the initial car accident James's fault, although in the screenplay—and the novel—James's accident is an unlucky occurrence due to darkness and rain. The film renders the crash a moment of character that is aligned with Bakhtin's concept that while on the road, the characters construct their own space of significant events,[146] leaving it up to others to recharge these places in new time-space relations. The film has a particularly astonishing and emotional ending, in which, by mutual agreement, James pushes Catherine's sports car off the freeway. In an aftermath that finds her not too badly injured, James apologises to her for not successfully killing her, while making love to her bruised body by the roadside. Bending over close to her, he asks tenderly, "Are you hurt?" "I think I'm all right," she answers, and now tears appear in her eyes. James consoles her, saying lovingly, "Maybe the next one, darling. Maybe the next one." These words are the exact ones he used in the first scene they share, as they exchange details of their failed daily sexual escapades. From a chronotopic point of view, the road movie genre goes from A to B in a finite and chronological time, and the narration follows an ordered sequence of events that lead inexorably to

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[146] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 98.

an end.[147] Cronenberg places the film without a beginning, but more importantly without an end. As Beard notes in his study of the cinema of Cronenberg, *Crash*'s conclusion remains a failure of the protagonist to crash through his inner self, and a failure of his redemptive female object-of-desire to redeem him. The film's grip of cold existential lifelessness remains almost as icy at the end as it is at the beginning, and the extraordinary, 'radical' transformative experiment has not succeeded in transforming anything.[148] The Ballardian chronotope exists only within a subjective time and space where even death is not an end but an occurrence that can be infinitely replayed through car crash re-enactments as far as *Crash* is concerned.

The Timekeepers of Eternity becomes a glimpse into the world of Mr Toomey, but eventually a failure to resolve it in a formal manner that addresses the medium, as the found footage methodology would require. The alternative ending belonged clearly in the area of the avant-garde, as it does not engage in the imagery but becomes further a critique of the medium. The struggle in *The Timekeepers of Eternity* was always to strike a balance between content and medium, and I decided for the ending to concentrate on the emotional centre of the film.

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[147] Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (Routledge, 2017), 301.
[148] William Beard, *The Artist as Monster: The Cinema of David Cronenberg* (University of Toronto Press, 2006), 410.

Conclusion

Where does Ballardian cinema become articulate?

Throughout this thesis, I have outlined a practice-based methodology to approach the Ballardian cinematic, the points where Ballard's writing converges with film, embracing or creating cinematic qualities. To understand and explain the characteristics of the Ballardian cinematic, I engaged with the mechanism of the Bakhtinian chronotope. The relations between time and space defined the ways I looked at the material and create paths to access Ballard's texts and consequent film adaptations to demonstrate a set of tools that I could further use as a filmmaker. Using the chronotope as a tool for film analysis is not new within cinema studies. More specifically, Robert Stam and Vivian Sobchack have used it in their process of analysing and understanding films and historicising the debate on filmic genre.[149] My research attempted to embrace a cinematic chronotope that does not derive from a specific film or a specific text, but instead describes a set of tools that instructed my filmmaking approach towards an exploration of the Ballardian. Taken beyond Bakhtin,[150] the term chronotope expresses the inseparability of time, space and identity constructions. Allowing the chronotope to exist between the texts and the adapted films offered me access to the essence

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[149] See for example Stam, *Subversive Pleasures*, Montgomery, *Bakhtin's Chronotope and the Rhetoric of Hollywood Film* and Sobchack, 'Lounge Time'.

[150] Peeren explains the term in Esther Peeren, *Intersubjectivities and Popular Culture: Bakhtin and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

of the Ballardian cinematic through the process of creating. Through my resulting film, the collage appropriation of *The Langoliers,* I explored the possibilities of applying Ballardian cinematic chronotope to non-Ballardian source material. Ballard's work changed drastically throughout his life, beginning with natural disaster novels, leading to his urban trilogy, and eventually turning towards autobiography and gated community dynamics. His work evolved, and I looked to find the elements that constructed his universe and apply them to my practice. My film, *The Timekeepers of Eternity,* will not be recognised as a Ballardian adaptation, and more importantly, I do not think it should be mistaken for one. Due to the original material and my interpretation of it, the Ballardian was established in the methodology of approaching characters, themes, and narrative but the outcome takes on a new life. The uniqueness of the results is specific to the material I used and to me as a filmmaker.

My research posed questions of adaptation and authorship, and informed practice allowed me to state the responses. In my approach, I looked at theorists Linda Hutcheon and Robert Stam and examined how I can further the discussion on film adaptation. My analysis acknowledged Ballard as the primary auteur, allowing my methodology to examine the tools used by the filmmakers in his adaptations. As I demonstrated through an examination of Ballard's screenplay of *Concrete Island,* I categorised the specifics of film that I needed to address in my research, introducing the areas that became vital places of analysis and synthesis. The Ballardian film adaptations were seen and accessed according to the areas that the filmmakers achieved to reinterpret the Ballardian chronotope and carve a new path. I further analysed the four major Ballardian adaptations (*Empire of the Sun, Crash, The Atrocity Exhibition,* and *High-Rise*) to discover the personal, subjective creative force that is so important to my methodology. This second layer of authorship—above and beyond the Ballardian source material—and the

paths the filmmakers followed to discover their truth through the material cautiously led my filmmaking practice. As Hutcheon notes, "An adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative—a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing."[151] From the beginning of my practice, when I chose *The Langoliers* as my source of appropriation, I struggled with the fine line Hutcheon describes. My practice did not directly adapt Ballard, but I allowed the Ballardian cinematic chronotope to define my methodology of approaching the material. My focus has not been on Steven King's work, but instead on the connection I have with the film. The kind of layering created by different authors created a rich environment for me to gain my identity as the filmmaker.

My response to the question of adaptation is best described in William Verone's words: "To be an adapter means exploiting the source material; it necessitates a creative change."[152] As my practice evolved, I altered my identity from an adapter to a filmmaker. My practice naturally pushed me towards reinventing my role into that of a creator. The palimpsestic quality of my collage film, as extensively described in Chapter Three, was not to adapt but to radically address the material as something new—a platform where I can explore beyond the content of the original film and discover a personal element of creation. Breton's words about collage create an element of the truth that I discovered through making:

> The marvellous faculty of attaining two widely separate realities without departing from the realm of our experience; of bringing them together, and drawing a spark from their contact [. . .] and of disorienting us in our

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[151] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 8.
[152] Verrone, *Adaptation and the Avant-Garde*, 32.

memory by depriving us a frame of reference.[153]

I aimed through the mechanism of paper rips to address this element of the collision of realities. I believe Andre Breton's words address my research equally on a different level. My research examined how Ballard's world collides with that of Spielberg or Cronenberg and eventually myself. The sparks that are created by the meeting of worlds where creators meet, I believe, fuelled my adaptation approach in practice and as a discipline. Timothy Corrigan addresses adaptations as consisting of this dual nature. He says:

> The relationship between two terms, "adaptation" and "discipline," strikes me as an especially useful framework within which to measure the [dynamics of film]. On the one hand, adaptation, in its specific and more general sense, suggests alterations, adjustments, and inter-textual exchanges, while on the other, discipline denotes and connotes rules, boundaries, and textual restrictions. The changing relationship between literature and film [. . .] can [. . .] be mapped across this gap between film as an adaptive practice and film as a discipline.[154]

The Ballardian cinematic chronotope once again creates clarity in this path by focusing on the science fiction genre. My thesis needed to address the science fiction of the next five minutes and how filmmakers can respond to inner science fiction, whether it stems from an adaptation or an original. Forcing myself to remain within the genre allowed my practice the boundaries of a discipline, leading me to examine the depths where the personal can be discovered within

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[153] André Breton, 'Max Ernst' (1920), in Robert Motherwell, ed., *Max Ernst: Beyond Painting and Other Writings by the Artist and His Friends* (Wittenborn, 1948), 177.

[154] Timothy Corrigan, "Literature on Screen, a History: In the Gap," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, eds. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 29–43, 30.

the expectations of a genre.

The layering of information is not only in the literal layering of paper frames, creating new meaning, but more in the layering of authors. Ballard acknowledged the adaptation as a continuation. When discussing the film *Crash*, he states: "Cronenberg began the film where my novel ended" and "that which remains latent in the novel becomes overt in the film".[155] Cronenberg develops the Ballardian chronotope through the film that furthers or even completes its precursor. In an interview, Cronenberg details his views on adaptation and, through his work addresses the palimpsestic aspect of approaching Ballard:

> But there are things you can do in fiction and in writing that you simply cannot do in cinema and vice versa [. . .] To read the book *Crash* and see the movie *Crash* together would be a much richer, much more dynamic experience than to experience either one alone.[156]

The Timekeepers of Eternity similarly built on the original text. The three-hour adaptation of the *Langoliers* is dismembered to its fundamental components and then restructured to reveal a new story and a new truth, a distillation of the original story focusing on a shared subjectivity between the character and filmmaker. Engaging with a collage film has been a labour of love and dedication that allowed me to fully embrace the Ballardian cinematic chronotope. I have to be not only the maker and the audience but also to become the protagonist, the leading creative force behind the plot. I have attempted to read Ballard and offer a way to understand and connect Ballard to film from a filmmaker's perspective. In my thesis, I have tried to discover a new path into film analysis, allowing my

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[155] Serge Grünberg, 'A Meeting with J. G. Ballard', *Cahiers du Cinema*, August 1996, 31.

[156] David Cronenberg and J. G. Ballard, 'Set for Collision', *Index on Censorship* 26, no. 3 (1 May 1997): 90–98, https://doi.org/10.1177/030642209702600316.

practice to guide and be shaped by the results.

Further to the new ground explored through my thesis, I am hoping that *The Timekeepers of Eternity* stands as an experiment on the Ballardian cinematic. On the one hand, I have aimed to create a film that furthers the use of avant-garde techniques to enable a plot, a narrative structure. Following the elements of the Ballardian chronotope, I centred the plot around one protagonist struggling with his environment. The paper technique was used to enhance the rediscovered narrative. On the other hand, I found that my practice was replicating the effects and techniques of found footage films, and my path into practice was informed and guided by the nature of found footage tools. As Chick Strand puts it, "Nothing is sacred. You just rip it out of one context—or leave a couple of the little sub-contextual things in it—and mix up the whole thing with something else entirely: make up a context."[157] My work was a process of discovering the context through the layers of authorship and my ability to construct a new film. Whether my efforts further the plot enough from the original *Langoliers* or not, *The Timekeepers of Eternity* approached the tools used in experimental cinema to create a narrative film and employed these methods to enhance the subjective gaze of the protagonist and, to an extent, the experience of the spectator.

In found footage films, and especially collage films, the creativity and subjectivity of the filmmakers and their methodology of assembling and restructuring material can provide ways into understanding spectatorship, structure, and aesthetics in ways beyond traditional means of filmmaking. I engaged with the particularities of analogue and digital film collages, bringing qualities of both areas to my practice. Within the process, I also discovered elements that many

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[157] Quoted in Wees, *Recycled Images*, 12.

artists have noted in their process: "A sense of purpose, an attachment to the objects of desire, an appreciation of arranging, and a strong urge to share, whether to egotistical or unselfish ends,"[158] allowing me to define my own methodology and expand the Ballardian cinematic chronotope outside the film medium. In the case of *The Timekeepers of Eternity*, the engagement with the collage was more than altering the *Langoliers*; it became a process of returning to its original condition. That condition was not the one in Steven King's novel or the one adapted into the film, but the one buried in my memory as my perfect subjective palimpsest of science fiction films. In the book *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* I find a description that furthers my practice to one of the personal discovery of self. Gabriel García Márquez describes the practice of Colonel Aureliano Buendia as he spent his later years:

> Enclosed in his workshop, his only relationship with the rest of the world was his business in little gold fishes. [. . .] He exchanged little fish for gold coins and then converted the coins into little fish, and so on, with the result that he had to work all the harder with the more he sold in order to satisfy an exasperating vicious circle.[159]

Soon, the Colonel sees a way to simplify the process. He skips one step in the cycle. Instead of selling the fish, he just melts them down and uses the gold to make more. What interested him was not the business, but the work. Although *The Timekeepers of Eternity* is a complete film in which I applied my analysis of the Ballardian chronotope, the process of ripping paper was the biggest discovery of my practice. As my creativity was being guided by the textural relationship

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[158] Ecke Bonk and etc, *Joseph Cornell/Marcel Duchamp: ...In Resonance*, 1st edition (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: New York, N.Y: Hatje Cantz, 1998).

[159] Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Penguin UK, 2014), 101.

with the material, I allowed myself to rediscover the character of Mr Toomey and reconstruct the landscape surrounding him.

To return to Peter Kubelka, the question for my research remains: Where does the Ballardian cinematic become articulate? Once again, I allowed Ballard to guide my answer.

> I treat the reality I inhabit as if it were fiction—I treat the whole of existence as if it were a huge invention. I don't take anything at face value—the angle between two walls, the perspectives that a given street or a given corridor offer me. I regard all these as data which will play their role in whatever hypothesis I am proposing to offer, to explain the significance of mysterious and apparently unrelated objects, this huge network of cyphers and encoded instructions, perhaps that surround us in reality.[160]

By creating a path into approaching the material by determining the source and the method of appropriation, I invented a reality. My search for the Ballardian cinematic has been elusive, but ever fruitful. For my practice and the primary material of the *Langoliers*, the Ballardian cinematic manifested in the hours of animating, the intense engagement with the material, and the trust in my filmmaking skills that allowed me to access the knowledge derived from the adaptation analysis. I hope that my research has opened up new paths for practice-based research in film studies, furthering and informing the theory with a creation that expands the ever-changing field.

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[160] Vivian Vale and Andrea Juno, *J.G.Ballard: No.8/9*, New edition (San Francisco, Calif: V/Search Publications,U.S., 1998), 43.

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