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The Parenthetical Voice-over: Dialectical Audiovisual Structure in Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)* and Jonas Mekas's *The Song of Avila*❖

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discuss the use of the voice-over in first-person cinema and its unique audiovisual structure. Employing notions of caméra-stylo from Alexandre Astruc, horizontal montage from André Bazin, sonic interstices from Laura Rascaroli, and Michel Chion's discussion on the sound in cinema, I try to examine in this paper how the voice-over has become the most common approach for revealing the filmmaker/author's presence, and further, how voice-over narration interacts with images within a dynamic parenthetical structure. By using Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)* and Jonas Mekas's *The Song of Avila* as case studies, I aim to establish that in parenthetical structure, the voice-over functions in various ways and can be seen as a novel perspective for treating audiovisual structure in the first-person cinema.

KEYWORDS: voice-over, Hollis Frampton, Jonas Mekas, *(nostalgia)*, *The Song of Avila*, essay film, diary film

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I. Re-thinking the Image and the Voice-over in the Essay Film and the Diary Film

> Generally, even in politically engaged documentaries or those with a specific point to make, the image (which is to say, the uniquely cinematic element) effectively constitutes the primary material of the film. The orientation of the work is expressed through the choices made by the filmmaker in the montage, with the commentary completing the organization of the sense thus conferred on the document. With Marker it works quite differently. I would say that the primary material is intelligence, that its immediate means of expression is language, and that the image only intervenes in the third position, in reference to this verbal intelligence. The usual process is reversed. I will risk another metaphor: Chris Marker brings to his films an absolutely new notion of montage that I will call "horizontal," as opposed to traditional montage that plays with the sense of duration through the relationship of shot to shot. Here, a given image doesn't refer to the one that preceded it or the one that will follow, but rather it refers laterally, in some way, to what is said. . . . The montage has been forged from ear to eye. (Bazin 44)[1]

In his film review, André Bazin describes Chris Marker's *Letter from Siberia* (1958) as "an essay documented by film" in which "intelligence flows from the audio element to the visual" and "montage has been forged from ear to eye" (44). Bazin is especially impressed with Marker's experimental use of language expression in relation to the image. Bazin focuses on Marker's inquisitive and insightful treatment of a section of the film composed of a brief sequence of images—"at once full of significance and completely neutral" (45), as Bazin puts it—that were photographed (by cinematographer Sacha Vierny) along a main street in Yakutsk. The sequence of shots shows: a bus, car and bicycle moving through an intersection; then a road construction crew at work; then one of the Siberian workers walking between the road work and the camera; and then a shot of the work crew again.

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[1] André Bazin's "Bazin on Marker" was originally published in *France Observateur*, October 1958.

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Chris Marker repeats this brief visual montage sequence four times, with a different scripted voice-over each time. In the initial iteration, Marker's narrator states that he has attempted to document life in this Soviet Siberian city "as objectively as possible" (Marker, *Letter*),[2] but is unsure if everyone will be pleased. This is followed by three more repetitions of the identical montage sequence accompanied by documentary voice-overs (read by narrator Georges Rouquier) expressing three different perspectives: positive pro-Soviet progressivism, capitalist critique of oppressive Communism, and conventional ethnographic travelogue.

André Bazin notes that the operation of this audiovisual assemblage that explores the "lateral" or "horizontal" montage potential between voice and image is "precisely dialectic, consisting of placing the same image in three different intellectual contexts and following the results" (45). Chris Marker's horizontal montage technique frees the narrative voice from conventional conformity to the naturalized or presumptive objectivity of the traditional image montage. In doing so, his work elevates not only the importance of language in film but also the presence of the author who uses language as a way of personal expression. More importantly, it provides a new possibility of approaching and understanding the audiovisual relationship in a more first-person, essayistic and diaristic mode of filmmaking. As Laura Rascaroli observes, "one of the key features of the essay film is the direct address to the receiver; voice-over is the most simple and successful way of producing such an address" (*Personal Camera* 37). Also for first-person cinema, the voice-over is used as "an instrument of expression of the author's subjectivity and thought" (16). As often seen in films of Chris Marker, Agnès Varda and Jonas Mekas, the voice-over indeed plays a crucial role, for it effectively conveys the author's subjectivity and thought; while the image, according to André Bazin, "only intervenes in the third position" (44). Therefore, the audiovisual relationship in first-person cinema and personal filmmaking, unlike the traditional one in film, requires special attention and consideration for the following reasons: first, a new audiovisual structure is created through the use of first-person voice-over narration, hence a new way of interpreting its relationship is needed. In traditional audiovisual montage, both voice-over and image need to be either in

[2] The voice-over transcript in *Letter from Siberia*, narrated by Georges Rouquier.

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juxtaposition or in counterpoint to produce meaning.[3] In the first-person cinema, however, the inserted voice-over and the counterpart image is often constructed and assembled in an arbitrary or exploratory relationship rather than a conventional and simply logical arrangement. Second, unlike the traditional audiovisual structure, the importance of the voice-over in the first-person cinema should be reconsidered, because the image sequence track in first-person cinema is no longer simply dominant as in traditional cinema. Jonas Mekas has proposed the idea of "image-over" (Personal interview),[4] in which the voice-over and the images both contribute in the process of the narration. In this paper, I will discuss Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)* (1971) and Jonas Mekas's *The Song of Avila* (2006), in which both filmmakers adopt the use of voice-over narration as a narrative strategy to convey authorial subjectivity.

II. Asynchronization of Audiovisual Montage in Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)*

In Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)*, the audiovisual structure is complicated and multileveled. It contains thirteen still photographs,[5] Frampton's written diary texts and Michael Snow's voice-over narrations. Each still photograph was taken by Frampton himself from the period of 1959 to 1966, except the last one "The Texas Fruit-grower." These photographs were presented in chronological order. They include the following topics and motifs:[6]

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[3] For S. M. Eisenstein, the theory of montage is based upon creating "something qualitatively new" from juxtaposition of different depictions (296; see "Montage 1938"). The key factor here is "juxtaposition." In "Vertical Montage," Eisenstein continues to emphasize the principle of the new form of cinematic montage by comparing it with musical orchestral score, in which all elements correspond "graphically to the movement of the music and vice versa" (330).

[4] In the interview in 2012, Mekas talks about his idea of the voice-over narration in his films: "I don't know if I would call it voice-over. It's just part of film. It's the same function as images, which is not a voice-over; it's just another element. Voice-over is like you make comments about the images that you see. I don't make comments about the images. I add another level of content. So it's not a comment, not a voice-over. You could say that [it's] image-over . . . sometimes the sound is more important, sometimes images. Images illustrate the sound."

[5] I should emphasize that in *(nostalgia)*, the total number of shots are seventeen: including thirteen still photographs, a production company title card (in the first shot), a black screen (in the second shot), a title card of the film *(nostalgia)* (in the third shot), and a personalized mark of Hollis Frampton in the last shot (the seventeen shot).

[6] See Lee 115. In order to elaborate my argument on asynchronization structure in *(nostalgia)* in the following discussion, the classification of photographs by different topics and motifs is needed.

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1. The portraits: They include Frampton himself (I6),[7] Carl Andre (I5), Frank Stella (I9) and James Rosenquist (I10).
2. Frampton's art creations: *A Cast of Thousands* (I8), Two Toilets (I12).
3. Snapshots: Cabinet maker's window (I7), a Bank's window (I11), Spaghetti (I13), and Michael Snow's studio (I14).
4. A photo from newspaper: The Texas grapefruit grower (I16).

One by one, Hollis Frampton puts them on a hotplate, and lets them be burnt slowly by the heat from the plate. On the sound track, Frampton describes each photograph in detail with his written texts through voice-overs.[8] For example, in the fourth shot, the voice-over (V4) narrates: "This is the first photograph I ever made with direct intention of making art. I had bought myself a camera for Christmas in 1958. One day early in January of 1959, I photographed several drawings by Carl Andre, with whom I shared a cheap apartment on Mulberry Street." Also, in the sixth shot, the voice-over (V6) says: "This photograph was made in September of 1960. The window is that of a dusty cabinetmaker's shop, on the west side of West Broadway somewhere between Spring Street and West Houston." The voice-over in the film provides background information about the photograph, including when the photograph was taken and what the photograph is about. The thirteen descriptive voice-overs are presented in rather a flat tone and recital manner. However, some words in these voice-overs are worthy of mention; they serve not only as detailed description of each photograph, but also as reflection of Frampton's trifling everyday life matters. In V4, the voice-over tells us that "I had bought myself a camera for Christmas in 1958" (a flashback narration), and depicts the friendship between Frampton and Carl Andre: "with whom I shared a cheap apartment on Mulberry Street." And in V7, the voice-over narrates "[i]n 1961, for six or eight months, I lived in a borrowed loft on Bond Street, near the Bowery" (a flashback and a digression), and "the girl, who had never said a dozen words to me, laughed, and then laughed outrageously, and then,

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[7] For both analytical and comprehensive purposes, I will use abbreviations "I" and "V" to discuss the different segments in the film *(nostalgia)*: capital "I" stands for the image track, "V" for the voice-over in the sound track; the number stands for the shot in the film. For example, "I6" refers to the image seen in the sixth shot of the film "the portrait of Hollis Frampton"; "V6" refers to the voice-over narration heard in the sixth shot of the film "this photograph was made in September of 1960." For details, please see the storyboard of *(nostalgia)* in Table 1 at the end of this paper.

[8] In *(nostalgia)*, there are thirteen voice-overs (V4-V16), two dialogues (V1 and V3), and one opening statement (V2). For the detailed transcript, please see Table 1.

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outrageously, kissed me." A crucial example is in V12, when the voice-over describes making the spaghetti photograph: "Later in the fall of 1964, a painter friend asked me to make a photographic document of spaghetti, an image that he wanted to incorporate into a work of his own. . . . Then, instead of disposing of the spaghetti, I left it there, and made one photograph *every day*. This was the eighteenth such photograph" (emphasis added). After making the photographic document for his friend, Frampton intentionally left the spaghetti there and made a photograph "every day" as it gradually decomposed, as if he were writing a diary with the camera.[9] It is all the details hidden behind the voice-overs that make *(nostalgia)* a diary of a period of Frampton's life. Both visual and audio narrations function as diary entries because they are continuous (the acts of documenting from 1959 to 1966) and at the same time discontinuous (the fragmentary nature of both visual and audio narrations).[10]

Besides the arrangements in the sound track, the image track in *(nostalgia)* also exhibits elements of continuity and discontinuity. First of all, we can consider the thirteen photographs as the condensation of Hollis Frampton's past memory. In these thirteen photographs, there are different moments of the past, which invoke Frampton's memories expressed through the use of the voice-over. The act of taking pictures started in 1959 and ended in 1966, which can be seen as a series of continuous diaristic image documentations. However, the arrangement of these photographs does not form a seamless and coherent narration. Between each memory there are temporal gaps, and between each photograph there is also an interval of black screen separating them. Frampton's film *(nostalgia)* is a work that combines various diaristic materials—written texts, photographs, and voice-overs—that are scattered and staged in multiple levels and modes of narration.

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[9] Here I try to emphasize the nature of diary keeping as a constant and periodic activity by comparing Frampton's act of taking a picture everyday with daily diary writing. See Lee 116.

[10] Continuity and discontinuity are the two fundamental qualities in diary writing and diary film traditions, for writing periodically and continuously are essential in forming the unique temporal structure of the diary. As Philippe Lejeune observes, "the diary's discontinuities are organized in series and rewoven into continuities," and the unique structure of the diary is like "a piece of lacework or a spiderweb" which is often "made up of more empty space than filled space" (179, 181). However, it is also essential that diary, as a unique genre, is bound to be fragmentary for it offers only "a series of discontinuous presents" (Sitney 245).

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During the viewing process, the spectator begins to notice an audiovisual incongruity between the images and the voice-overs in *(nostalgia)*: the presentation of diaristic recollections and photographs is not synchronized in the conventional way. In editing the film, Hollis Frampton deliberately presents the audio track voice-over narration in advance of the particular photograph that it describes. This arrangement creates a unique audiovisual structure, which partially breaks or suspends the typical cinematic illusion of narrative and emphasizes the function and mechanism of the voice-over. The audiovisual structure in *(nostalgia)* works as follows (Figure 1):[11]

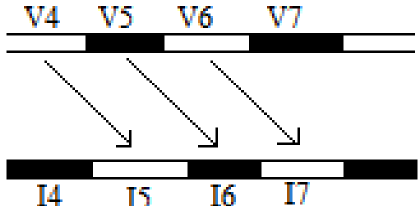

Figure 1. The Audiovisual Structure in *(nostalgia)*

As Figure 1 shows, the spectator first hears the voice-over description (V4) of a photograph, but only sees this now previously described photograph (I5) in the next film segment, during which the audio track is presenting voice-over description (V5). The spectator witnesses and becomes a participant in an asynchronous multilayered flow: for instance, the voice-over narration in the fourth shot is not describing the photograph in the same shot, but the photograph that will appear in the fifth shot. The spectator hears in the voice-over: "This is the first photograph I ever made with the direct intention of making art"—but sees the photograph of a dark room in the fourth shot (Figure 2).

[11] Figure 1 illustrates the asynchronic structure of *(nostalgia)* (Lee 119).

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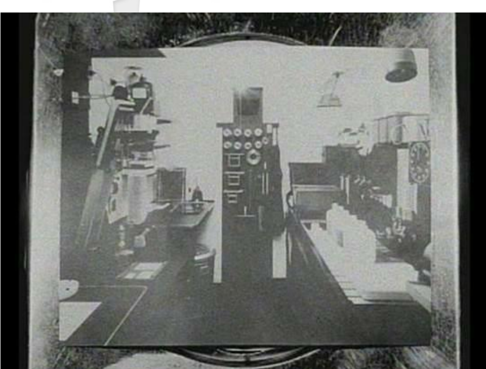

Figure 2. I4, Photograph of a Dark Room

In the photograph in the fourth shot (I4), the spectator does not see Carl Andre's drawings or the picture frame that North gave to Carl—"a handsome small picture frame that had been given him years or so before by a girl named North"—or the metronome that accidentally "entered the scheme" (Frampton). The spectator only sees the portrait of Carl Andre (Figure 3) and the metronome in the fifth shot when I5 photograph appears.

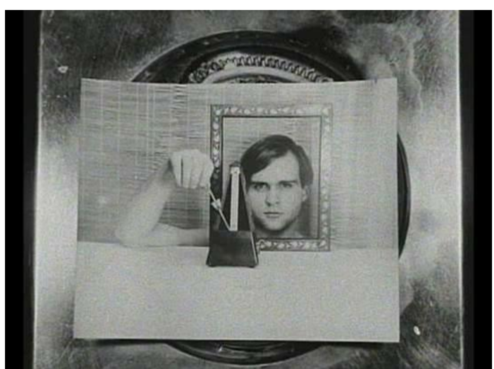

Figure 3. I5, Portrait of Carl Andre

However, just as the photo of Carl Andre (I5) appears and the spectator finally recognizes some of the elements and features of the image that the (V4) voice-over had just mentioned, the narration again moves ahead: the (V5) voice-over starts to describe the next photograph (Hollis Frampton's portrait, I6). Thus, in (*nostalgia)*, the voice-over describes the soon-to-appear image, and the image illustrates the voice-over that has just passed in the prior segment.

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The audio and visual tracks are desynchronized and never match in the traditionally expected way throughout the film.[12] We might wonder why Hollis Frampton makes this arrangement. In my opinion, the purpose of this deliberate arrangement highlights the temporal gap between the past and the present. In *Hollis Frampton: (nostalgia)*, Rachel Moore also points out that the temporal gap between the past and the present are a key concept raised by Frampton in the film. By deliberately confining the photographs to a hotplate and let them combust, Frampton adds "another temporal layer to the film's structure. . . . The photographs come from specific times in the recent past. The stories as we hear them are spoken while the fires burn and are part of the present, simultaneous with our viewing, but they wander into these past moments" (qtd. in Moore 50). In the asynchronized structure, the image is always chasing the voice-over, but the direction is backwards, from present to the past. The two will never meet, for there is always a temporal gap between them. The structure and the tension within it seem to be the drive that initiates the diary writing scenario—in which the diarist must maintain the act of writing constantly in order to avoid forgetting. However, for the diary film, the situation is more complex. The retrospection in the diary film is multileveled: the moment of filming and the moment of editing and post-production. The images become past memories once captured. However, the diary filmmaker is able to revisit the past in the editing process. Moreover, by putting voice-over to the film,[13] the temporal structure becomes more complex and the reflexivity of the film is highlighted as the process of post-production is revealed. By delaying the image in *(nostalgia)*, Frampton intentionally enhances the gap between the sound track and the image track with asynchronous montage. It not only makes the spectator aware of the multileveled structure of the diary from different materials (both written and visual), but also poses the question of where the narration in the diary film lies. Is it in the voice-over or in the image? The question becomes even more crucial in *(nostalgia)* when the voice-over and the image are in asynchronization. To answer this question, I suggest to focus on the metaphorical parentheses in *(nostalgia)*.

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[12] The analysis of the audiovisual asynchronization in *(nostalgia)* was taken from Lee 120. In this paper, the discussion of the temporal gap is crucial for it plays an important role in the development of my argument in the following sections.

[13] The adding of the voice-over is crucial in the diary film for it divides the film into two different temporal phases. I will elaborate on this in the discussion of Jonas Mekas's *The Song of Avila* in the following sections.

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III. Audiovisual Structure in Parentheses in *(nostalgia)*

In *(nostalgia)*, Hollis Frampton deliberately arranges the photograph in the center of the hotplate. When the photograph turns into carbon ashes, the spectator sees the metaphorical parentheses as the burnt out ashes are enclosed by the hotplate Figure 4. This pictorial framing and composition, where a photograph is enclosed in parentheses, can be seen as a metaphor of the audiovisual structure in *(nostalgia)*. This metaphor provides a chance to re-examine the asynchronization of audiovisual montage in *(nostalgia)*. I shall call this audiovisual arrangement "parenthetical structure."

Figure 4. I6, Portrait of Hollis Frampton

Several characteristics and functions of parenthesis as a literary or rhetorical device may be noted:[14]

1. In Greek, "parenthesis" means "to place in beside" (Williams 60). What is enclosed in parentheses is placed beside a text, serving as adjunct.
2. It is secondary and subordinate to the principal text, but also an "independent textual segment" (Suleiman 460).
3. It functions as an explanatory as well as an independent narrative.
4. The insertion of a parenthetical sequence constitutes an "isolated block within the narrative" (Suleiman 460).

[14] See Lee 122.

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From a narrative perspective, a parenthetical segment cannot exist on its own without the primary segment. It is indeed placed in a subordinate position (next to the principal segment). The parenthetical segment means something only when the preceding segment exists before it. However, the fact that the parenthetical segment cannot exist on its own does not necessarily mean that it is secondary or irrelevant to the narration. Indeed, the parenthetical structure of the relation between the principal segment and the segment in parentheses is associative, interdependent and dialectical. The parenthetical segment discloses and reveals details and information that the main segment does not tell, and notably, it may communicate or signify in a register or mode that the main segment *could not* tell.[15]

In *(nostalgia)*, we can assume that the principal segment belongs to the voice-over (the sound track) for two reasons: first, Hollis Frampton's clear intention of arranging the photographs (the image track) in the center of the hotplate as parenthetical segments, physically and symbolically; second, the voice-overs are always heard first (see Figure 1). In this asynchronous structure, for instance, when the voice-over in the fifth shot (V5) starts narrating, it occupies the primary position for the spectator. The meaning of the I5 photograph is temporarily suspended and placed in parentheses. And when the I6 photograph appears in the sixth shot, it then becomes supplementary to the V5 voice-over. The V5 voice-over and I6 photograph thus form a parenthetical structure. Within the parenthetical structure, the voice-over tells a story while the image shows details: the profile of Carl Andre (I5), Hollis Frampton's self-portrait (I6), the numbers recorded in plaster in *A Cast of Thousands* (I8), and the two toilets (I12; Figure 5). For the voice-over (the principal segment) could not show details, it could only *describe*; and conversely, the image (the parenthetical segment) could not describe, but instead, it shows. This is how the audiovisual elements function in parenthetical structure—a constant shifting between two modes of expressions, *describing* in voice-over and *showing* in image.

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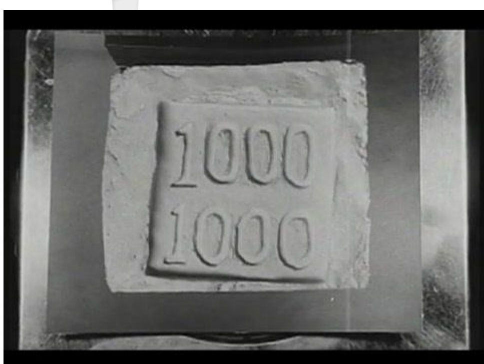
[15] See Lee 122.



I8. *A Cast of Thousands* (11:27-14:08)

I12. Photograph of Two Toilets (22:45-24:03)
Figure 5. Stills from *(nostalgia)*

In "Narration and Monstration in the Cinema," André Gaudreault discusses how film narrative combines two modes of representation: "telling" (narration) and "showing" (monstration; 29). "Telling" belongs to verbal narrative, as it "'tells' what has happened" (30), whereas "showing" originates from theatrical narrative, and "in order to show what was, it has to show it in the here and now" (31). In most story-telling feature films or audiovisual synchronization situations, "telling" and "showing," as two different representational systems, work together and complement each other. In *Invisible Storytellers*, Sarah Kozloff is thoughtfully critical of the position implied in Roland Barthes' essay, "The Rhetoric of the Image," that "it is words that anchor the viewer's identification and interpretation of the image's free and neutral signifiers" (15). Kozloff suggests "that Barthes is telling only half the

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story here" because "while the caption anchors the image, the image . . . simultaneously anchors the meanings possible in the verbal text alone" (15). In conventional "overlapping" or "complementary" film narrative situations, "each track anchors the meaning of the other, pinning down possible ambiguities" (104). However, in Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)*, the audiovisual asynchronization of voice-over and image suspends and disrupts the usual harmony and reciprocity of audiovisual synchronization. While Chris Marker experimentally decouples the conventionally expected and normalizing reciprocal congruence between the audio track and the image montage by serially suspending and floating multiple styles and tones of descriptive narration over an identically reiterated image sequence in *Letter from Siberia*, Frampton goes a step further in loosening the typical linkage between narrative and image by deliberately bracketing, suspending and delaying the presentation and ritual decomposition of each of his photographs in a carefully crafted asynchronous cinematic diary composed of images, stories, and silences. This audiovisual asynchronization in *(nostalgia) again* resonates with André Bazin's concept of horizontal montage, in which the filmmaker's intelligence is posited as the primary material of the film, with voice-over narration and image in the second and the third positions in the dialectic.

In *(nostalgia)*, the parenthetical assembling of voice-over and image through deliberate asynchronization highlights the functions of image and word as showing (monstration) and telling (narration). Within this filmic narrative structure, the two co-exist and are inseparable from each other. Each track (aural and visual) presents details and content in distinct yet interrelated modes. They are both indispensable in the parenthetical audiovisual structure. The other characteristic that has been emphasized by Hollis Frampton is the retrospective nature of the diary film. In *(nostalgia)*, two different forms of diary—the image track (photograph) and the sound track (voice-over)—are vertically engaged with each other as the film proceeds horizontally through time. In *(nostalgia)*, the vertical misalignment structure of the sound and the image in *(nostalgia)* makes retrospection in the diary film prominent: at the structural level, the photograph is retrospective in relation to the voice-over, since it appears *after* the voice-over in the following shot; at the narrative level, the written diary entry (narrated through the voice-over) is retrospective in relation to the photograph, for it is added later during the editing process. Therefore, in *(nostalgia)*, every aspect is about retrospection of the past—the

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sentimentality hidden in the ashes of photographs, the indifferent tone and amnesia in the voice-overs, and the absence in the images (the "Darkroom" mentioned in the voice-over in the fourth shot).

IV. Sonic Interstices and Vertigo of Spacing

Laura Rascaroli introduces the concept of "sonic interstices" in her analysis, "Sonic Interstices: Essayistic Voiceover and Spectatorial Space in Robert Cambrinus's *Commentary* (2009)." Borrowing from Gilles Deleuze's idea of "spacing," Rascaroli proposes that the interstitiality in the essay film exists in multiple ways: it is a spacing "between two actions, between affections, between perceptions, between two visual images, between two sound images, between the sound and the visual . . ." (Deleuze 180; qtd. in Rascaroli, "Sonic Interstices" 3). Interstices may also produce what Maurice Blanchot terms a "vertigo of spacing"—meaning that by placing the voice-over in an extra-diegetic position, it dialectically interacts with other diegetic elements in a "reciprocal imbrication" (qtd. in Rascaroli, "Sonic Interstices" 3, 2). Rascaroli notes that "as much as the voice may seem to control the frame," the visuals and diegetic elements "can equally be said to frame the voice," thus creating a complex "layering and stratification" between voice-over and diegesis ("Sonic Interstices" 2). Rascaroli further describes the interstitial space that the essayistic voice-over generates "between the text on which it comments and the audience it addresses" (2). The interstitiality created by the layering of diegetic and extra-diegetic can be seen as a variation of parenthetical structure. Considering the voice-over as an extra segment, the voice-over is an added-on structure, as if the voice-over is bracketed by marks and placed next to, or above, the diegetic. Nevertheless, Rascaroli continues to explain that "what the voice-over brings out, ultimately, is a series of interstices" (9). This placing of extra-diegetic structure is similar to the parenthetical insertion: it creates a space, an interstice. Moreover, interstices in the essay film are also "shaped by the speaking voice as spaces of thought, and thus as gaps that enable reflection" (9).[16] The gaps created by interstices becomes the place for diversity of voices in the essay film. In this place, on one hand, the author confirms his/her authorship through the use of subjective voice-over; on the other hand, it is also

[16] See also Lee 135.

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a space for the essay film to make direct connection with the spectator. As in the essay film, the "spectator may establish a relationship with the speaking subject and negotiate between the superimposed commentary and the images that are commented upon" (2). As Rascaroli suggests, the spectator is invited into the interstices, to "follow his/her reasoning, and to respond by actively participating in the construction of meaning" (2). In my opinion, the sonic interstices, the parenthetical structure, the audiovisual relationships in the essay film and the diary film share similarities and can resonate with each other, especially from the perspective of "space," which I will discuss next using Jonas Mekas's *The Song of Avila* as a case study.

V. The Missing Images in the Voice-over in *The Song of Avila*

> I arrived in Avila early that day. It was hot and I had not eaten for two days, uh, I did not feel like eating, uh, I wanted to be—I don't know what made me not eat—so I was—and I walked, the whole day I walked, all to every street of Avila, and around the town—every street and every place that was important for Santa Teresa. And ha ha, I picked up some flowers from the field, and I put them in Santa Teresa's church. I said "This is from the film makers."
>
> And I continued walking and walking. And then I, ha ha, I was—stood in the street trying to decide to go to eat and not to eat. At that point a little dog came from I don't know where, and began licking the dust from my shoes. And he licked all the dust from my shoes. And I felt like it was something that connected me and Santa Teresa to this little dog. It was like uh, uh, I walked the streets for her. And this dust on my shoes was something that to this little dog connected, and brought us together. I walked the streets for her.
>
> In the morning I walked to the station. It was still, the city was still sleeping. And I jumped in to the first train. And I looked back, the sun was rising. (Mekas, *Song*)[17]

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[17] This is the voice-over transcript in *The Song of Avila* in the 2006 version, narrated by Jonas Mekas.

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The Song of Avila is a short film which depicts a day Jonas Mekas spent in the town of Avila on 22 July 1967 in Spain.[18] During the stay, Mekas wandered around the town with his 16-millimeter camera and filmed what he encountered. Interestingly, *The Song of Avila* has two different versions: the silent version completed in 1967 as a part of *Travel Songs* (1967-81), and the voice-over version in 2006 from *The First 40*.[19] The two versions are basically identical except that the later version is "slightly, sometimes more than slightly, changed" (Mekas, *First 40*), as Mekas claims. The film proceeds chronologically in the way the images were shot. The image track can be divided into three sections: the arriving as the train is approaching Avila (00:16-20), the wandering in the town Avila (00:21-02:40) and leaving the town (02:41-44). The film starts from the train approaching the town, followed by the observations of the people and the landscape of the town, and finally ends with the train's departure. Mekas spent a day in the town Avila, and the images are highly condensed into less than three minutes. In my interview with him, I asked him why he did not film the dog he mentions in the voice-over. Mekas says "[n]o, I did not film the dog. I stayed there at least twenty-four hours, and I filmed only two minutes. I filmed only two minutes of footage, and you see it all. I did not cut out anything. So it means that I omitted twenty-three hours and fifty-eight minutes. So many things are missing, not only the dog" (Personal interview).[20] The missing dog Mekas mentions is the key to understand the audiovisual structure in *The Song of Avila*.

The initiation of the new internet project in 2006 provides this opportunity for Jonas Mekas to fill the temporary gaps by adding voice-over[21] to the film as

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[18] On his official website, Jonas Mekas explains the purpose of this trip: "This is in Timothy Leary's place. In 1966 I came up upon a book of Meher Baba, the Indian guru/scientist, in which he said that there are three great holy places in Europe: Avila, Assisi, and Fatima. In 1967, I decided to visit Avila where I had an enlightening experience. This is a filmed record of my visit to Avila, with my voice telling how I felt there and what happened (especially with the little dogs)" (*Song*). See Mekas, *Song*.

[19] This new internet project is called *The First 40*: "The cycle of FIRST FORTY I made in late 2006 as an introduction to my work for my new, internet audience. All of them are based on my earlier films but slightly, sometimes more than slightly, changed. I consider them works complete in themselves, separate from the main body of my film work." See Mekas, *First 40*. The silent version of *The Song of Avila* was a part of *Travel Songs*, which was completed in 1981.

[20] See also Ming-Yu Lee, *The Diary Film in America and in Taiwan*, p. 136.

[21] The voice-over, in Michel Chion's discussion, designates "any acousmatic or bodiless voices in a film that tell stories, provide commentary, or evoke the past" (49). Following Pierre Schaeffer, Chion proposes "acousmatic" as "a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen" (18), a voice

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a new dimension. The voice-over in the soundtrack in *The Song of Avila* can also be divided into three sections: the arrival and the visiting to Santa Teresa (00:04-01:19), the wandering and encountering the dog (01:22-02:29), and the departure on the train (02:33-52). Compared to the silent version of *The Song of Avila* in 1967, the voice-over recorded in 2006 comes later and should be considered as a secondary segment in the parenthetical structure; it interacts with the images shot in 1967 in a rather spontaneous manner without audiovisual synchronization. In the viewing process, the spectator soon realizes the asynchronization of the voice-over and the image. As mentioned earlier, the interstices created by audiovisual asynchronization is where meaning is produced. In the asynchronization, the spectator is aware that in the voice-over narration, there are things that never appear in the images:[22]

1. Mekas brings flowers to the church of Santa Teresa: "I picked up some *flowers* from the field and I put them in Santa Teresa's church" (00:23-25; emphasis added).
2. The mysterious little dog Mekas encounters: "At that point a little *dog* came from I don't know where, and began *licking* the *dust* from my *shoes*" (01:42-52; emphasis added).
3. The sense of belonging: "I felt like it was something that *connected* me and Santa Teresa to this little *dog*. It was like, uh, I walked the streets for her" (01:59-02:13; emphasis added).
4. The sunrise: "I jumped into the first train, and I looked back, the *sun* was *rising*" (02:41-53; emphasis added).

Interestingly, the real narrative starting point begins with the voice-over added in 2006: "I arrived in Avila early that day," begins from 00:04. It is not until the first voice-over finishes that the first image of the film (the traveling shot on the train) appears. Except for the order of appearance, the duration of the voice-over and the duration of the image are not the same. The voice-over

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from an unseen character that may or may not be seen later. Chion's concept of voice-over and acousmatic does provide insightful views on film narrative. However, I shall point out that in this paper the term "voice-over" may have broken away from its traditional sense and have more complicated implications. The key factor would be in Chion's discussion, the different types of narrative scenarios focus mainly on fiction film, in which various voices were narrated by various "characters." In the first-person cinema such as the films of Hollis Frampton and Jonas Mekas, filmmakers narrate from reality, as him/her-self rather than creating a character. Therefore, in this paper, the use of the term "voice-over" is based on the fact that this voice, as Chion describes, comes from "offscreen, outside the image" (23), from a different time and place.

[22] See Lee 137.

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segment is longer than the image segment: the duration of the voice-over is two minutes and forty-eight seconds (starts from 00:04 and ends in 02:52), and the duration of the image is two minutes and forty seconds (starts from 00:16 and ends in 02:56). In other words, it seems that the images are the parenthetical segment, not the voice-overs. The voice-over now occupies the primary position, and the images become secondary. However, in *The Song of Avila*, the principal and subordinate relationship is dynamic, interactive and constantly shifting. For instance, we can take a look at things that appear in the images but are never heard or mentioned in the voice-over:[23]

(1) Donkeys (00:21-22, 00:41-44, 02:11-12, and 02:18).
(2) A boy riding a donkey (00:29-33 and 02:45-50).
(3) A little boy in white underwear (01:13-14).
(4) Kids playing in the town square (01:25-54).
(5) Birds (02:00 and 02:28-32 [intermittently]).
(6) Tourists (02:02-10 and 02:20).
(7) Sunset (02:12-25 [intermittently]).

The above-mentioned are people, objects and themes appearing in the diegetic images but never heard in the voice-over narration. It seems that the images, when understood as being within parentheses as secondary elements, fill the gaps in the voice-over as well. Therefore, the audiovisual structure in *The Song of Avila* is asynchronized as Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)*, and yet they are not deliberately separated from each other as a narrative strategy as in *(nostalgia)*. In *The Song of Avila*, the voice-over does not explain any of the images, nor do the images illustrate the voice-over. They are like two narrative threads that proceed simultaneously; they accompany and interact with each other as the narration proceeds, producing effects that resonate with the "vertigo of spacing" and "layering and stratification" described by Laura Rascaroli.

VI. Voice-over as an Authorial Manifestation

The random switching of places of the parenthetical marks between the voice-over and the images creates interstices: physically, as the voice-over audio track was added after the film's completion decades ago; and metaphorically, by establishing an interstitial space of narrative enunciation

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[23] See Lee 138.

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created through Jonas Mekas's off-screen voice. Moreover, Mekas's looking back from 2006 to the Avila of 1967 to assemble a new version of the same film can also be seen as a gesture coming from an off-screen space, creating interstices between the past and the present. More interstices were also created by the different narrative durations associated with the film: the time Mekas stayed in the town (twenty-four hours), the duration of the voice-over narration (two minutes and forty-eight seconds) and the duration of the visual narration (two minutes and forty seconds). These three narrative durations parenthesize one another, creating interstices which not only provide spaces for the spectator to freely associate images with voice-over (or voice with image-over,[24] as Mekas proposes), but also allow the author himself to travel back and forth between past and present. For the first-person cinema, the registration of authorship is confirmed not only through subjective voice-over, but also by the act of narrating. As Michel Chion suggests, the power of voices in film narrative lies in the fact that "voices have presented images, made order of things in the world, brought things to life and named them" (49). Through voices, objective representation of reality turns into subjective, and the presence of the author can thus be identified. In *The Song of Avila*, Mekas's authorship is expressed and established by his first-person voice-over narration, the use of subjective pronoun "I" in the voice-over ("I walked . . . , I felt . . . , I wanted to . . ."), the distinct slow tempo of his talking, his pauses when speaking, and the sounds of his laughter (appearing twice in 01:00 and 01:33). The use of voice-over is essential in first-person filmmaking in terms of identifying the authorship. In "The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments," Laura Rascaroli argues that the use of voice-over is "the prime location of the author's subjectivity" in the essay film (39). Certain notions such as Alexandre Astruc's caméra-stylo and André Bazin's horizontal montage highlight the importance of the filmmaker's personal expression as author of a film, and at the same time

[24] The concept of "image-over" proposed by Jonas Mekas is useful when dealing with deliberate asynchronization of voice-over and image in first-person cinema. However, I shall emphasize that it is more of an idea than a well-developed theory. For Mekas, the denial of the term "voice-over" comes from his refusal to consider his oral narration in his films as commentaries, or values voice as adjunct to image. In my opinion, the concept of "image-over" focus mainly on its ability to add another level to the film, and thus creating a novel meaning which either associates with parenthesized images from the image track, or breaks away from them. As Rita Azevedo Gomes proposes, "the voice-over narration . . . adds an additional image that comes from what is being heard to what is being seen on the screen. This . . . creates a third element beyond the sound track, the dialogue and, even, beyond the film" (30).

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consider language as a means for authorial expression. Traditionally, the presence of the filmmaker can be foregrounded through various cinematic techniques, but the voice-over remains "the most simple and successful way" (Rascaroli, "Essay Film" 38). The use of the voice-over, especially in Mekas's case, plays a crucial role in locating and identifying the presence of the filmmaker, for his voice, as the images in his films, is unique and prominent. However, for Mekas, the way he adopts voice-over narration is very similar to his filmmaking approach—it is all based on spontaneity and improvisation. I asked Mekas in my interview with him about the use of the voice-over in his filmmaking process, especially in the post-production, and he replied that "I was not reading. I was talking" (Mekas, Personal interview).[25] This scenario of Mekas talking to himself on the editing table in post-production can be associated with writing in literary diary. In diary writing, the diarist also has to situated him/her-self in solitude and a private space. In the safe space the diarist can write anything without being interrupted by the outside world. A private space also symbolically appears in the diary notebook, which can often be locked so that the secrets can be secured.

VII. Impossible Retrospection

Regarding the way in which the voice-over and image-over function in the interstices created by audiovisual asynchronization in *The Song of Avila*, I would like to continue the discussion of how the parenthetical structure functions in the film. There are two animals in the film worth emphasizing here—the donkey and the dog. As heard in the voice-over, it is this dog that makes Jonas Mekas feel "connected" to Santa Teresa,[26] whereas the donkey that

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[25] It is an excerpt from the interview in 2012. The full question was "in your short film *The Song of Avila*, near the ending there's a sound of page turning. So I was thinking, did you also read something like notes or your written diaries when you recorded the narration for this film?" Mekas answered very quickly: "No, I was talking, I was not reading. I was talking. I don't know what that sound was." See also Lee 139.

[26] It is obvious from the text that there is a religious implication between Jonas Mekas and Santa Teresa. The connection between Mekas and Santa Teresa could be traced back to Mekas's mystical experience in his childhood after he recovered from serious illness, as Santa Teresa did in her early life. As Mekas mentions: "I was very sick when I was five or six years old. I don't know what the disease was but I was close to death. . . . Then suddenly I began seeing things. I could tell who was on the next street. When there was a car crash on the other side of the building, I would see the red of blood" (qtd. in

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carries a boy does not seem to be important at first glance. That is to say, the voice-over here functions as the principal segment in the parenthetical structure and adds another level to the images, while the images may initially seem subordinate and parenthetical. However, within this parenthetical multivalent audiovisual structure, Mekas strategically engages his concept of "image-over." In *The Song of Avila*, the voice-over narration indeed dominates the film narrative. The images illustrate details that are missing from the voice-over or appear as supplements to the narration. However, one interesting question can be raised here: why does Mekas use the image twice (00:29-33 and 02:45-56), if the image of the boy riding the donkey is not important for Mekas and merely served as a supplement? (Figure 6)

(00:29-33) (02:45-56)

Figure 6. Stills from *The Song of Avila*

The image of the boy and the donkey appears twice in the film. This arrangement is obviously against the chronological development of the film, as the second time the image appears *after* Jonas Mekas leaves the town on train (02:41). In terms of the order of the narrative, it is practically impossible for Mekas to see and even film the boy riding a donkey. However, one might notice that these two images are nearly identical except the second one is left-right reversed. Here the same question can be pushed further: why does Mekas use it twice, and reverse it from left to right? In order to answer this question, we might look at clues in the voice-over. When the second left-right reversed image appears, Mekas's voice-over in the sound track narrates: "And I jumped in to

Northover 73). Another possible connection of Mekas and Santa Teresa comes from Santa Teresa's writings about the experience of rapture and ecstasy. In the same interview, Mekas seems to connect the notion of ecstasy with his diary filmmaking approach: ". . . for me ecstasy is doing something when you don't even know what it is that you are doing . . . you are completely immersed in it. . . . You are just in that moment" (73). However, despite the obvious religious implication in the film, the discussion here focuses only on the use of the voice-over in the film. See also Lee 127.

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the first train. And I looked back, the sun was rising." The timing of appearance of the voice-over here is intriguing. As mentioned earlier, the voice-over and the images in the film are in asynchronous and spontaneous manner. However, at this intriguing moment, there is somehow a synchronicity. This synchronicity obviously comes from Mekas's deliberate arrangement of audiovisual elements. When the second time the donkey and the boy appear, Mekas intentionally overlaps the voice-over ("and I looked back") with the image to create a poignant montage effect. The particular audiovisual synchronization can be understood as a retrospective gesture of Mekas. According to the voice-over, Mekas was already on the train leaving Avila. At the moment, it was impossible for him to see the donkey and the boy when he looked back. Moreover, in this final image sequence, the spectator never sees the sunrise mentioned in the voice-over. The brief moment of synchronization, therefore, should be considered as a metaphor—Mekas metaphorically looks back from 2006 to 1967. From this perspective, the left-right reversed image of the donkey and the boy has a different implication. Mekas did not physically look back on 22 July 1967 when leaving Avila, nor did he see the reversed image. The retrospection is metaphorical. And what Mekas really saw is his own memories. He looked back to his memories through the train window and through the little screen on the editing table. The left-right reversed image is the reflection from memory and is distorted through time. There is an interval or spacing of thirty-nine years between Mekas sitting at the editing table recording his recollections and Mekas walking through Avila filming the donkey and the boy with his handheld 16-millimeter camera. Which side of the road were the boy and the donkey really on in 1967, the left or the right? Memories blur through the distance of time. In the case of *The Song of Avila* the temporal distance is thirty-nine years (1967-2006). The questions may never be answered, even by Mekas himself.

VIII. Conclusion

By providing the parenthetical structure as an analytic tool, I aim to establish a new perspective for looking at the voice-over and its relationship to the narrative in first-person cinema, including the essay film and the diary film. The subjective first-person voice-over in the essay film and the diary film should be differentiated from the commentary often seen in documentary or

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fiction film and should be treated with special attention. As Roger Odin suggests, the real narration of the diary film "is in the voice-over rather than in the images."[27] For André Bazin, too, in his concept of horizontal montage, there is an emphasis on the directorial flow from narrative voice to visual montage, and a recognition that the filmmaker's intelligence and presence manifests itself dialectically in the craft of assembling voice and image in meaningful and provocative ways. In the first-person cinema, the use of the voice-over is not only the most common approach, but also a key aspect for the registration and the identification of authorial presence. By narrating in the form of voice-over, the filmmaker is able to re-visit the past, and at the same time to add another narrative and temporal dimension to the film. The spectator, on the other hand, confirms the identity of the author by the quality of the voice, which "describes the author's subjectivity" (Odin), and moreover, gathers information provided by the voice-over, in order to piece together the puzzle and unlock the secrets. The principle of the parenthetical audiovisual structure follows the dynamic positioning between the image and the voice of the author, and results in the form of the voice-over or the image-over. The parentheses oscillate between the voice-over and the image, suspending and disrupting conventional audiovisual structure and, at the same time, creating temporal gaps and interstices of discontinuities. In the cases of Hollis Frampton's delayed audiovisual structure and of Jonas Mekas's donkey, the asynchronized situations place the voice-over as the principal segment in parenthetical structure, and image in secondary. The voice-over and the image complement each other at their best, but more importantly, in parenthetical audiovisual structure in first person cinema, the voice-over and the image operate dialectically in the space created by sonic interstices. Their relationship thus remains neither overlapping nor disparate; they work together in certain degrees of complementary, arbitrary and associative fashions.

In the discussion of Marguerite Duras's voice-over in her films, Michel Chion describes Duras's voice-over as "siren voices calling the cinema to its ruin" (120). In the voices of siren we hear the sound of waves even though there

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[27] The two famous examples of highlighting voice-over as main narrative device can be seen in Marguerite Duras's *L'Homme Atlantique* (1981) and Derek Jarman's *Blue* (1993). In these two films, the colors of black (*L'Homme Atlantique*) and blue (*Blue*) taken over the screen (for *L'Homme Atlantique* there are still some images of a man occasionally), while acousmatic voices speaking from off-screen spaces. There are only plain colors on screens, and yet for spectator the images are indeed lie in the voice-over narration, or invoked by the voice-over narration.

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is nothing on screen except the black. The same strategy was also adopted by Chris Marker in the beginning of *Sans Soleil* (1983): segments of black filmstrip intercut with images of three children staring at the camera and the image of a fighter aircraft. The voice-over narrates, "if they don't see happiness in the picture, at least they'll see the black" (Marker, *Sans*).[28] The anonymous "he" in the voice-over tries to find the image of happiness and other image that could link to it, but "it never worked" (Marker, *Sans*). Where is the happiness, we might ask? The happiness is neither in the image nor in the voice-over. It soars once the synchronization of the voice-over and the image has been suspended and intentionally redeployed; it hovers in the space between the screen and the spectator's imagination. It is the internal image from Jonas Mekas's impossible retrospection in 2006 to the town Avila in 1967, and it is the invisibles in Hollis Frampton's fearful gaze at the reflection of the truck's rear-view mirror. Duras's siren voice-over does not ruin the cinema, it revives it.

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[28] The voice-over narration at the beginning of Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil*.

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Table 1: The Storyboard of *(nostalgia)*

Shot	Image Track	Voice-Over (excerpt)
1	"FOCUS" title card	
2	Black screen	White noise. Breathing. Voice 1: "Is it alright?" Voice 2: "It's alright." Voice 1: (Clearing throat). "These are recollections of a dozen of still photographs I made several years ago." (00:15-24)
3	"*(nostalgia)*" title card	Voice 1: "Does it sound alright?" Voice 2: "Yes, yes, perfectly. It's fine." (00:25-31)
4	Photograph of a dark room	"This is the first photograph I ever made with the direct intention of making art. I had bought myself a camera for Christmas in 1958. One day early in January of 1959, I photographed several drawings by Carl Andre, with whom I shared a cheap apartment on Mulberry Street. . . . The picture frame reappears in a photograph dated March 1963, but there isn't time to show you that one now. I discarded the metronome eventually, after tolerating its syncopation for quite a while. . . . I despised this photograph for several years. But I could never bring myself to destroy a negative so incriminating." (00:32-02:00)
5	Portrait of Carl Andre	"I made this photograph on March 11, 1959. The face is my own, or rather, it was my own. As you see, I was thoroughly pleased with myself at the time, presumably for having survived to such ripeness and wisdom, since it was my twenty-third birthday. . . . I sent that one

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		to a very pretty and sensible girl on the occasion of a vernal equinox, a holiday I held in some esteem. I think I wrote her some sort of cryptic note on the back of it. I never heard from her again. Anyhow, photography had obviously caught my fancy. . . . I take some comfort in realizing that my entire physical body has been replaced more than once, since it made this portrait of its face. However, I understand that my central nervous system is an exception." (03:18-05:11)
6	Portrait of Hollis Frampton himself	"This photograph was made in September of 1960. The window is that of a dusty cabinetmaker's shop, on the west side of West Broadway, somewhere between Spring Street and West Houston (clearing throat). I first photographed it more than a year earlier, as part of a series, but rejected it for reasons having to do with its tastefulness and illusion of deep space. . . . So I chose the one photograph that pleased me most after all, and destroyed the rest. That was years ago. Now I'm sorry. I only wish you could have seen them." (06:08-07:53)
7	Cabinet maker's window	"In 1961, for six or eight months, I lived in a borrowed loft on Bond Street, near the Bowery. . . . My photographs failing as an excuse, I decided to ingratiate myself in the household by making a realistic work of art. I carved the numerals you see out of modeling clay, and then cast them into plaster. The piece is called *A Cast of Thousands*. The numbers are reversed in the cast, of course, but I have them

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		reversed again in printing, to enhance their intelligibility. Anyway, I finally unveiled the piece one evening. I suppose the painter was properly horrified. But the girl, who had never said a dozen words to me, laughed, and then laughed outrageously, and then, outrageously, kissed me." (08:58-10:51)
8	*A Cast of Thousands* (two sets of number "1000")	"Early in 1963, Frank Stella asked me to make a portrait. He needed it for some casual business use. . . . This one amuses me because Frank looks so entirely self-possessed. I suppose blowing smoke rings admits of little feeling beyond that. Looking at the photograph recently, it reminded me, unaccountably, of a photograph of another artist squirting water out of his mouth, which is undoubtedly art. Blowing smoke rings seems more of a craft. Ordinarily, only opera singers make art with their mouths." (11:51-12:58)
9	Frank Stella blows smoke rings	"I made this photograph of James Rosenquist the first day we met. That was on Palm Sunday in 1963, when he lived in a red brick building at number 5 Coenties Slip. I went there to photograph him in his studio, for a fashion magazine. . . ." (14:39-16:14)
10	Portrait of James Rosenquist	"This photograph was made at about 3 o'clock on the morning of June 6, 1963, in Lower Manhattan. It may even have been Wall Street. It is seen from the sidewalk, through the window of a large bank that had been closed for renovation and partially demolished inside. A big crystal

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		chandelier is draped in a dust. . . ." (17:22-18:34)
11	Window of a closed bank	"This photograph of two toilets was made in February of 1964, with a new view camera I had just got at that time. As you can see, it is an imitation of a painted renaissance crucifixion. . . ." (20:04-59)
12	Photograph of Two Toilets	"Later in the fall of 1964, a painter friend asked me to make a photographic document of spaghetti, an image that he wanted to incorporate into a work of his own. I set up my camera above an empty darkroom tray, opened a number . . . number 2 can of France-American spaghetti, and poured it out. Then I stirred it around until I saw a suitable random arrangement of pasta strands and finished the photograph in short order (page turning). Then, instead of disposing of the spaghetti, I left it there, and made one photograph every day. This was the eighteenth such photograph. The spaghetti has dried without rotting. The sauce is a kind of pink varnish on the yellow strings. The entirety is covered in attractive mature colonies of molds in three colors: black, green and white. I continued the series until no further change appeared to be taking place: about two months altogether. The spaghetti was never entirely consumed, but the mold eventually disappeared." (22:45-24:03)

13	Spaghetti	"This photograph was made in Michael Snow's studio, sometime in 1965. It was made into a poster announcing a show of his Walking Woman Works at Poindexter Gallery in that year. . . . If you look closely, you can see Michael Snow himself, on the left, by transmission, and my camera, on the right, by reflection. . . ." (25:24-26:41)
14	Michael Snow's Studio	"This posed photograph of Larry Poons reclining on his bed was made early in 1966, for *Vogue* magazine. I was ecstatically happy that afternoon, for entirely personal reasons. . . ." (28:06-57)
15	Larry Poons reclines on bed	"I did not make this photograph, nor do I know who did. Nor can I recall precisely when it was made. It was printed in a newspaper. . . . The man is a Texas fruit-grower. His orchards lie near the Gulf of Mexico. The spheres are grapefruit. . . ." (30:49-32:50)
16	Texas Fruit-grower	"Since 1966 I have made few photographs. This has been partly through design and partly through laziness. I think I expose fewer than fifty negatives a year now. Of course I work more deliberately than I once did, and that counts for something. But I must confess that I have largely given up still photography. So it is all the more surprising that I felt again, a few weeks ago, a vagrant urge that would have seemed familiar a few years ago: the urge to take my camera out of doors and make a photograph (page turning). It was quite simple, obtrusive need. So I obeyed

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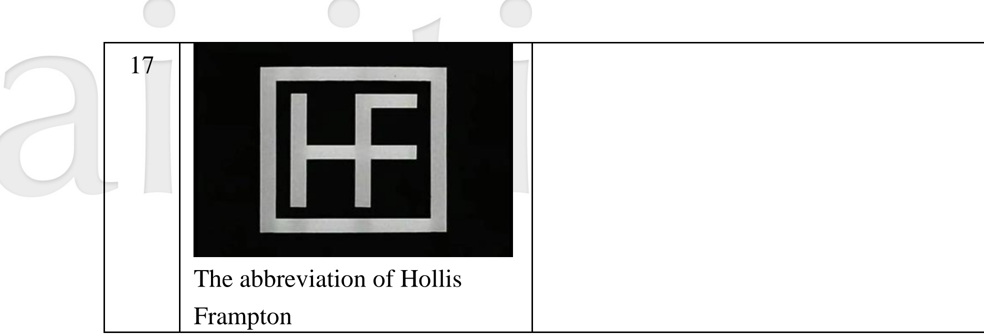
		it. I wandered around for hours, unsatisfied, and finally turned towards home in the afternoon. Half a block from my front door, the receding perspective of an alley caught my eye. A dark tunnel with the cross-street beyond brightly lit. As I focused and composed the image, a truck turned into the alley. The driver stopped, got out, and walked away. He left his cab door open. My composition was spoiled, but I felt a perverse impulse to make the exposure anyway. I did so, and then went home to develop my single negative. When I came to print the negative, an odd thing struck my eye. Something, standing in the cross-street and invisible to me, was reflected in a factory window, and then reflected once more in the rear-view mirror attached to the truck door. It was only a tiny detail. Since then, I have enlarged this small section of my negative enormously. The grain of the film all but . . . but obliterates the features of the image. It is obscure; by any possible reckoning, it is hopelessly ambiguous. Nevertheless, what I believe I see recorded, in that speck of film, fills me with such fear, such utter dread and loathing, that I think I shall never dare to make another photograph. Here it is! Look at it! Did you see what I see?" (33:31-35:55)

17	 The abbreviation of Hollis Frampton	

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