St Peter's Seminary, Cardross
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INTRODUCTION

Completed in 1966, St Peter’s Seminary at Cardross is celebrated widely as a highpoint of modernist architecture in Scotland (see Rodger 2001, 2007). Designed as a secluded rural space for the collective training of Roman Catholic priests, the building was effectively rendered obsolete before construction was finished when Vatican II (1962–65) championed community-based training programmes for priests. Eventually abandoned in 1980, the building has fallen into dilapidation and ruin, although the performance company NVA is planning an experimental restoration of certain elements of the building complex.1

This article examines the representation of St Peter’s in two experimental documentary films, *Space and Light* (Grigor 1972) and *Space and Light Revisited* (Grigor 2009). Produced when the building was fully functional, *Space and Light* is a twenty-minute-long cinematic celebration of the structure’s architectural qualities. *Space and Light Revisited* comprises the original film and an approximate shot-for-shot remake, filmed when the complex had fallen into a state of ruination, with both films projected simultaneously and side by side.2

The article, which performs, in part, an analogous simultaneity, begins by exploring the relationship between architecture and cinema before analysing how the films might influence the idea that the initial structure and the ruin of St Peter’s can be viewed as paradigmatic of the crisis of modernist regimes of measure and the functional logic of the factory system.

ST PETER’S SEMINARY

The factory system is often referred to as ‘Fordism’ in recognition of Henry Ford’s central role in developing the ordered logic and procedure of mass production with his initial introduction of a moving assembly line to the Ford automobile factory in Detroit, USA, in 1914. The system provided the organizational basis of post-war society in imposing a series of spatial and temporal divisions in everyday social life in order to organize both mass production and consumption. The organizing principle of St Peter’s can be conceived of as imposing a similar, indeed an even more comprehensive, control over the entire spatio-temporal existence of the young trainee priests

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2 As is evident in the analysis above, the 1972 film does not have the additional opening intertitle card that was included in the 2009 film.
within its walls. To a certain extent this rigid division is evident in the building’s concrete form: the modular dimension of one student priest’s dormitory is presented as an arch on the facade, and the series of these arches comprising the length of the building is thus an expression of the individual’s fully incorporated existence within the institution. As the seminary is an institution for training priests, it was important that there was a facility for many concurrent masses to be said on a daily basis. To that end there are five side chapels that reach out on each side of the church nave beyond the accommodation above, this spatial segregation allowing for multiple masses to be performed in the church simultaneously - almost like a factory to produce priests.3

To what extent, then, can the abandonment and gradual ruination of the strict spatially segregated and segmented complex of St Peter’s be read as an extreme paradigm for the dismantling of the regime based on measures and functional logic that came along with the Western crisis in capital and collapse of industrial production from the 1960s on? And how might these films contribute to such a reading of this building’s history? The thesis that we propose here is that it is in a metamorphosis of materials and light, exposed in particular configurations through the exposition of the ruination process, that the films achieve this reading. In order to examine that metamorphosis first we turn our attention to the relationship between film and architecture.

FILM AND ARCHITECTURE

Writing in the 1930s, Sergei Eisenstein argued that filmmaking owed a considerable debt to architecture, the ages-old discipline and art in which humankind manipulated, created and controlled space. For Eisenstein, the Acropolis of Athens could justifiably be described as ‘the perfect example of one of the most ancient films’ because in its architectural promenade the Greeks had created exemplary instances of ‘shot design, change of shot, and shot length’ (Eisenstein et al. 1989:117). Yet he suggested that cinema’s novelty lay in its capacity to enable the viewer to witness a ‘multiplicity of phenomena, far apart in time and space, gathered in a certain sequence into a single meaningful concept’ (116). If Eisenstein highlighted the shared interest of film and architecture in movement through space, Le Corbusier drew attention to another disciplinary commonality: their capacity to manipulate light. Writing broadly contemporaneously with Eisenstein, Le Corbusier noted similarities between his own and Eisenstein’s practices, and, commenting on the architectural promenade, argued, ‘The architectural spectacle offers itself consecutively to view; you follow an itinerary and the views develop with great variety; you play with the field of light’ (Le Corbusier cited in Bruno 2002: 58). Modernist architecture and early to mid-twentieth century cinema, then, shared a preoccupation with movement, space and light, preoccupations that found an expression in numerous educational and experimental documentaries, regarded as the best medium to showcase the work of modernist architects. Siegfried Giedion argued that, due to its capacity to represent movement, ‘only film can make the new architecture intelligible’ (Giedion cited in Janser 1997: 34).

Walter Benjamin’s essay ‘The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction’ (2007) also addresses the impact of film on architecture. Benjamin starts by comparing the effect of the development of film on our perception of space with Freud’s lapsus linguae (‘slip of the tongue’) and other parapraxes in his The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901). Benjamin notes, ‘This book isolated and made analyzable things which had heretofore floated along unnoticed in the broad stream of perception’ (235). Benjamin writes subsequently, ‘For the entire spectrum of optical, and now the acoustical perception, film has brought about a similar deepening of apperception’ (235). He explains the technical manner in which this is achieved: ‘With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of the snapshot does not simply render more precise
what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject’ (236). Benjamin then returns to psychoanalysis in his conclusion, stating that with the development of film a change in our perception of the architecture of the spaces in which we live is enabled because ‘an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man’ and that ‘the camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses’ (237). Freud’s psychoanalytical work reveals our everyday conscious operations to be haunted by a deeper level of unconscious mental operations as discovered by the work on parapraxes. Just so, film, by releasing us from our everyday habitually distracted physical engagement and negotiation with architecture, can allow us to perceive some deeper underlying forms that structure the space in which we operate.

The exploitation and manipulation of light effects through space is a feature for which the architecture of Andy MacMillan and Isi Metzstein of Gillespie, Kidd & Coia (GKC), who designed St Peter’s, is notable. Their modernist approach is described elsewhere as an architectonics that ‘had immediate effect, and no longer conceived of style as a necessary mediator, reconfiguring and recodifying historical precedent’ (Rodger 2007: 15). Critical work draws attention to their use, particularly in religious buildings, of ‘expressive fenestration’ in order to ‘reinforce the drama’ of their architectural set pieces, and lead users through an ‘itinerary’ as Le Corbusier puts it above, on certain routes and to certain destinations in their buildings (41–63). The daily play of light thrown through a passion cross onto the rear wall of the altar at their first church, St Paul’s in Glenrothes, Fife (1957), is an example of this phenomenon, and has been described as the ‘migrating sun rest[ing] on specific symbols and sequentially cast[ing] a restless shadow on the wall behind’ (42).

GKC introduce light into their sacred buildings to lend an appropriate and subtle ambience to each of their constituent parts: altar, baptistery, nave, sanctuary and so forth. In that sense the experience of their architecture is, in line with the thinking of Eisenstein and Le Corbusier, already a cinematic experience in that light is deliberately brought into the dark space in order to give meaning, intention and effect. This attention to space and light is made explicit in the titling of the films under discussion here. Grigor is an established documentarian of architecture,4 but what singles out Space and Light Revisited in his oeuvre is its simultaneous screening of an example of celebrated modernist architecture while fully functioning, as well as in a later period of decay and dilapidation.

An apparent celebration of St Peter's modernist architecture, this colour film, presented in 4:3 aspect ratio, opens with a black and white title card:

St. Peter's College, Cardross, was designed for the Archdiocese of the West of Scotland by Isi Metzstein and Andy MacMillan of Gillespie, Kidd & Coia. Completed in 1966 as a seminary for training priests, St. Peter's closed in 1980. It remains today a gutted ruin.

A mid-shot of the granite block of the altar, accompanied by harmonious organ music, follows. In the background, immediately above and behind the altar, the purple front of the tabernacle and a wooden crucifix hang from a white wall. The camera is stationary, yet as sunlight streams through the roof light, light and shade move back and forth across the wall. As shadow envelops both crucifix and wall there is a cut to a citation from Le Corbusier:

The value of all things lies in their purpose in the germinating seed ...
The fundamental principle is from the inside out.
Everything in life is in essence biological.
The biology of the plan or section is as necessary and obvious as that of a creature of nature.
The introduction of the word biology illuminates all researches in the field of building.
Living, working, cultivating body and mind, parallel processes to those of the blood, nervous and respiratory systems.

Following monochrome opening titles, a sequence of five shots introduces the building's exterior, effectively moving from the inside out. The first begins with a low-angle shot of crisp blue sky and white nimbus clouds before the camera pans right and settles on the

An apparent lament for the ruined state into which St Peter's has fallen, this monochrome film, presented in 16:9 aspect ratio, opens with a black and white title card:

St. Peter's College, Cardross, was designed for the Archdiocese of the West of Scotland by Isi Metzstein and Andy MacMillan of Gillespie, Kidd & Coia. Completed in 1966 as a seminary for training priests, St. Peter's closed in 1980. It remains today a gutted ruin.

A mid-shot of the seminary's graffiti-covered altar, accompanied by harmonious organ music, follows. In the frame immediately above the altar, a wall in the background reveals signs of distress. Above the wall, the timber roof beams are damaged considerably and missing completely on the left of the frame. The camera is stationary and there is no significant on-screen movement. The film then cuts to a citation from Le Corbusier:

The value of all things lies in their purpose in the germinating seed ...
The fundamental principle is from the inside out.
Everything in life is in essence biological.
The biology of the plan or section is as necessary and obvious as that of a creature of nature.
The introduction of the word biology illuminates all researches in the field of building.
Living, working, cultivating body and mind, moving from place to place, are parallel processes to those of the blood, nervous and respiratory systems.

Following monochrome opening titles, a sequence of five shots introduces the building's exterior, the partial absence of roof and walls effectively blurring the movement from the inside out. The first focuses on an entanglement of
north-west jutting cantilever of the classroom block. This is followed by a low-angle, still shot of the soaring cantilever’s shaded underside (fig. 4). To its left, smaller in the frame, we see a tower of the nineteenth-century baronial structure Kilmahew House. Both buildings are situated alongside deciduous and evergreen trees, their full branches moving gently in the breeze. Two extended panning shots follow. The first, taken from high in the baronial house, begins by focusing on the Kilmahew Estate’s wooded environs, with the Firth of Clyde apparent in the distance. The camera then moves left to once more show a view down on to the classroom block roof and then journeys slowly over the roof, revealing greater details of the building’s architectural composition as sunlight glistens on the seminary’s windows. In the second panning shot, the camera first focuses tightly on a copse of trees and then pulls back and moves right, revealing the pyramidal timber structure of the roof light atop the apsidal sanctuary and settling on the aggregate panelled rows of student bedrooms. At the frame’s centre, trainee priests stand outside conversing. This human dimension is further developed in the sequence’s final shot, which follows three men as they walk outside the living space. A combination of the men’s attire, the weather and the full tree branches signifies spring or summer. A fade to black concludes the sequence and Frank Spedding’s avant-garde score comes to a halt.

Le Corbusier famously defined a house as a ‘machine à habiter’ (a machine for living), thereby advocating an extension of Fordist efficiency into domestic design. (Le Corbusier 1924: 73) We see that definition at play in Grigor’s film as continuity editing highlights the building’s rational efficiency and the regularity of St Peter’s communal life. In the first of a series of shots presenting the priests’ daily lives, we witness the men exiting their bedrooms as sunlight pours in through a window in the frame’s centre. Further scenes reveal the men’s daily activities as they assemble to pray, study in the library, attend a lecture, enjoy leisure time, gather to snow-covered tree branches before the camera pans right and settles on the north-west jutting cantilever of the classroom block. Viewed from below, tree branches obscure the structure. This is followed by a low-angle still shot of the cantilever’s underside on the right of the screen; again, our view is partially obscured. Against a backdrop of a grey-white sky, an evergreen tree is present on the left of the screen; leafless, motionless trees occupy the centre and right. The nineteenth-century baronial structure Kilmahew House, which previously adjoined the building, is absent. The building is situated alongside deciduous and evergreen trees; the former’s denuded branches almost motionless. Two extended panning shots follow. The first, taken from a high position on the ruined structure, begins by focusing on the Kilmahew Estate’s wooded environs, although it is impossible to make out the Firth of Clyde in the distance. The camera then journeys slowly over the roof, revealing further details of the building’s deteriorating condition. In the second pan, the camera first focuses tightly on a copse of trees, some evergreen, some barren, and then pulls back and moves right across the ruin, highlighting the absent roof light: there is now only a gaping void. The camera rests on the aggregate panelled living quarters now with no glass in the fenestration. In the next shot the camera pans left over the abandoned, de-populated accommodation as snow cascades gently. A fade to black concludes the sequence and Frank Spedding’s avant-garde score comes to a halt.

The next shot demonstrates how the timber partitions enclosing the student rooms have collapsed or disappeared: the building is now a hollow shell. It is animated, however, by graffiti, which years of illicit visitations have left behind, and by the odd angles of fallen timbers. The camera moves through the concrete skeleton as light flits in from newly penetrated angles. Movement is evident in the continual but imperceptible reconquesting of this place by nature. In one shot of the library, weeds and undergrowth pour over the windowsills and reach down to join the collapsed timber ceiling. Gravity
eat, attend mass and take communion. A parallel series of shots follows the regimented lives of the seminary’s nuns as they pray, read, and work in the kitchens. These scenes fulfil a dual role: they convey a sense of the building’s inhabitants’ routines; but they also further showcase the building’s architectural qualities. The repeated pans, tilts and zooms employed in Mark Littlewood’s cinematography create a sense of movement: even when the camera is motionless, people move through the frame, trees blow gently in the wind and light and shadow passes across the screen. Everything, it seems, is changing, as per Benjamin’s analysis of film, bringing a dynamization of space.

Never revealed in its entirety, the closest we get to a full shot of the structure is an exterior shot after seventeen minutes. It begins with a close-up of the roof light, and then the camera pulls back until we have a near-comprehensive shot of the main block. The camera is positioned at a low-level, framing the building with blue sky, overhanging tree branches, and rhododendron bushes, highlighting the disjunction between the proliferation of nature and the building’s controlled geometrical forms. This disjunction is reinforced in the score, which shifts between harmonious and discordant registers that do not map on easily to what is presented on-screen. The process of situating the building within its natural environment is also at play in the closing shot. It begins with a long shot of the seminary and then the camera zooms in to focus on the roof light before panning left away from the building completely and settling on the surrounding landscape. Evergreen trees are present in the foreground; the Firth of Clyde, the hills of Rosneath and the Cowal Peninsula are evident in the background. The film connotes a sense that the building is as much a creature of nature as its natural surroundings: it is a modernist building at home in the woods, yet, filmed in the post-Vatican II era, to conceive of this shot as an et ego in arccadia type trope is a distinct indulgence.  

Fade to black and then monochrome credits roll.

5 One of the aims of Vatican II was to bring the church closer to the people of the church, and to abandon the practice of secluded seminaries for training priests. It also instigated the use of the vernacular languages in the liturgy, and banned the use of Latin in the mass.

has a visual presence, pulling everything down, like the icicles hanging from the concrete beams. These scenes fulfil a dual role: they further showcase the demise of the building, but they convey a sense of illicit inhabitations and furtive organic movements. The repeated pans, tilts and zooms employed in Seamus McGarvey’s cinematography effectively create a sense of movement in and around the ruin itself. Everything, it seems, is changing, as per Benjamin’s analysis of film, bringing a dynamization of space: even when the camera is motionless, trees move gently in the wind and snow falls softly to the ground. The absence of the building’s inhabitants, and the building’s dilapidated state, however, conjures an eerie tranquillity.

Never revealed in its entirety, the closest we get to a full shot of the ruin is an exterior shot after seventeen minutes. It begins with a close-up on the absent roof light before the camera pulls back until we have a near-comprehensive shot of the structure, revealing how the building has deteriorated. The camera is positioned at a low-level, framing the building with the grey-white sky, plants and overhanging tree branches. This creates a disjunction between restless nature and the crude geometry of the ruin’s concrete frame, which is reinforced by the score’s shifting registers. The process of situating the building within its natural environs is also evident in the film’s closing shot. It begins with a long shot of the seminary with the dilapidated living quarters, the absent roof light and the five snow-covered side chapels all framed by the environment. The camera then zooms in to focus on the space where the roof light was sited, before panning left and settling on the surrounding landscape with evergreen trees present in the foreground. Snow falls and we look through the trees to the grey, indistinct distance. St Peter’s, it seems, belongs to nature as much as does its biological and geological surroundings. We are left to speculate on how, at Cardross, as on every other patch of this earth, time and gravity bring all down in a blanket of formlessness, render null all striving for order and achievement.

Fade to black and then monochrome credits roll.
On first encounter the 1972 film appears to be a celebratory appreciation of St Peter’s architectural style, while the shot-for-shot remake appears to lament the ruined state into which the seminary has fallen. Andreas Huyssen notes that the ruin ‘poses the problem of a double exposure to the past and the present’ (2010: 20). Yet Grigor’s presentational mode, screening the two films simultaneously and side by side, ensures that the film’s engagement with ruins take a more complicated turn than the double exposure invoked by Huyssen. The juxtaposition of temporalities evident in Grigor’s staging establishes an alienation effect, which is furthered by the shooting of the second film in winter, in black and white and in a different aspect ratio. Benjamin’s proposition that film enables more complex ways of comprehending space is here elevated to another level, as the spectator is guided through the structure and its environs and is forced to shift gaze back and forth repeatedly across time and navigate different colour schemes and contrasting scales.

Grigor signals aspects of the relationship between film and architecture that he wishes to explore by italicizing Le Corbusier’s phrase from the inside out. These four words encapsulate modern architecture’s functionalist ethos, giving design precedence to a particular programme of functions in the interior, as opposed to the facadism evident in the decorative frontages of nineteenth-century neoclassical, Greek Revival and neo-medieval architectural styles. The second film’s opening shot, however, which reveals the desecrated, roofless sanctuary and altar, places the concepts of inside and out in a new relationship. If modernist architecture proceeds from the inside to the outside, cinema brings discrete forms of light from the open outside into the camera obscura. In filming the ruin of St Peter’s there is no simple inside/outside binary; walls fall, timbers crash, the roof and partitions collapse. Now open to the elements, light cascades through the sanctuary unmodulated by the previous architectural forms. Consequently, no cinematic effect plays delicately against the altar’s back wall, as in the 1972 film. As long as there is still a ruin and not just Georg Simmel’s ‘mere heap of stones’ (1958: 381), then the dynamic relationship between film, architecture, and now ruin, remains centred on how space and light operate within the inside/outside dialectic.

GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

In the film Ghost Dance (McMullen 1983) Jacques Derrida states that cinema ‘is the art of ghosts, a battle of phantoms’. In its capacity to represent through the movement of light in darkened space both presence and absence, film can conjure the ghost in the ‘machine à habiter’. This role appears to be heightened significantly in the case of Grigor’s return after thirty-seven years to stage an innovative and complex filmic haunting. That this haunting occurs in a post-war functionalist building means it lays no claim to the Burkean sublimity that attaches to the typical ruin through its great age, or obsolete or strange architectural typology or forms. Grigor, nevertheless, conjures a complexity of hauntings in the ongoing dialogic conversation between the films. Perhaps the most obvious haunting is by the ghosts of the functioning seminary. Although in the second filming humans are markedly absent, their ghostly presence is signified both by the seminary’s inhabitants that we witnessed in the 1972 film on the opposite screen and, uncannily, by the limited
snippets of their dialogue that we hear on the soundtrack. Now, however, all the meanings and intentions from their ritualistic and functionalistic comings and goings are shown as disappointed, frustrated, vain or, at any rate, irrecoverable in their integrity.

The 1972 film, in its hermetically sealed, isolated human world of belief and performance of ritual, is in turn haunted by the vast, seeming indestructible shell of the concrete frame, washed and blown by the eternal elements, which stands inert in the film to its side. This concrete shell endures beyond all the ephemeral fixtures and fittings of human habitation, as if to say, ‘Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair’ as per Shelley’s comment on the transitory nature of all civilization. Perhaps the most poignant haunting of all, however, is the palpable sense of the director’s declaration to reproduce a ‘shot-for-shot’ remake of the first film. The second film appears saturated with this intention, but the physical conditions have deteriorated, exemplified by the almost complete absence of Kilmahew House from which some of the first film was shot, further rendering a shot-for-shot remake an impossibility. Moreover, in one eight-second long shot, seven minutes in, on the left of the screen we see a high-angle shot of steps leading to the seminary, whereas on the right we see a high-angle shot of steps leading to Kilmahew House. It is easy to miss this very deliberate contrast, and throughout the film viewers find themselves comparing the actual shot of the second film with the shot of the 1972 film and imagining an ‘ideal’ shot. Johannes von Molkte suggests that the indexical link that both cinema and ruins have with their referent ensures that they have an epistemological commonality that, through ‘peculiarly modern forms of grasping contingency and temporality’, allows them ‘to activate ways of knowing the past and its relation to the present’ (2010:396). In Space and Light Revisited, the referent becomes, not the actually existing ruin at St Peter’s, but the revenant conjured up in the 1972 film and placed astride its 2009 counterpart.

‘Modernist’ can denote an approach that, as noted in reference to the work of GKC architects above, rejects ‘historical precedent’, and is ‘immediate’ and new. As such, it institutes a temporality that is sequential, a movement forward ‘with measure and functional logic’, and away from a superseded and abandoned past. Just like the sequential qualities of Ford’s production lines, one state of the object inevitably follows another on towards newness and completeness. With his 2009 work, however, Grigor, by showing two different filmings side by side confronts us with simultaneity and contemporaneity, not sequentiality. Celebration is placed alongside elegy; order and destruction unfold together; there is no supersession, no movement forward, just plurality and change.

One very important shot right from the beginning of the work establishes that different temporalities will run concurrently with no supersession of one by another. The shot is the second of the first sequence of five, as noted above. The juxtaposition of two shots, one from 1972 and one from 2009, ostensibly clear cut in their contrast, in fact announces the theme of exploration of infinite temporalities that are at work in the material and natural world. The shot in the older film shows the cantilever of the new educational block, behind the summer woods with both evergreen and deciduous trees in leaf in the forefront, and Kilmahew House poking its sandstone head up in the background. The most recent film shows in the same shot the denuded winter trees, with a bleak, ruined, windowless educational block, and grey sky where once stood the old house behind. Thus, we see the changes that time has worked through its natural seasonal aspects (in the leafed and leafless trees), its civil, historical and technological aspects (in the contrast of the old Baronial nineteenth-century turreted building, and the sleek concrete panelled profile of the modernist educational block), its enduring aspects (the evergreen trees), its ageing aspect (in the decay of the new building), its moral aspects (the desecration...
and vandalism wrought on the modernist building) and its existential/ontological aspects (in the complete absence of the old building – not even as a ‘mere heap of stones’ in the second filming). Such contemporaneity or multiplicity of temporality is foregrounded in the performativity of the title: *Space and Light Revisited*.

Andreas Huyssen describes Piranesi’s eighteenth-century etchings as the creation of the ‘authentic ruin’ (2010: 18). Grigor’s 2009 film stages the ruin of the modernist ‘original’ St Peter’s in an unsentimental, non-nostalgic way similar to Piranesi. As with Piranesi’s drawings, Grigor’s ambiguities with inside and outside and his juxtaposition of spaces, objects and temporalities at Cardross ‘lack spatial closure’ (24). The modernist regime, however – even in a Roman Catholic seminary – demanded compartmentalization of space and steady unidirectional flow of time. Grigor’s film, like Piranesi’s work, has a ‘threatening simultaneity of times and spaces, of condensed and displaced perspectives’ (26), such that no firm and fixed moral point of view can be maintained. But there is not only past and present in the ‘authentic ruin’. The suggestion in Simmel’s limit of the ruin as a ‘mere heap of stones’ is surely that, just like in the movement towards the never-attained destination in Zeno’s Dichotomy Paradox, no actual state of full and utter ruination, as in a mound of rubble with no structure and no inside–outside distinction whatsoever, can ever be truly reached.6 Thus, together in the endlessness of the authentic ruin there will always be, and always will have been, both architecture and cinema. Those three – ruin, architecture and cinema – will consist and persist together in endless variation and multiplicity of light, structure, gravity and interior. In Grigor’s film the manipulation of these four elements works in a similar way to Piranesi as described by Huyssen, in which ‘the borders between past, present and future no longer seem to obtain’, such that ‘the gaze of the spectator never comes to rest’ (25).

The gaze of Benjamin’s Angel of History is always ‘turned toward the past’ (2007: 257).

Where we ‘perceive a chain of events’, Benjamin’s Angel ‘sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed’ (257). Yet capitalist modernity, exemplified by the unidirectional conveyer belt of Fordism, hurls Benjamin’s Angel into the future, and prevents engagement in such restorative justice.

The end of that functionalist regime with its rigorously imposed regularization of time and compartmentalization of space, and the move to what is commonly referred to as postmodernity, heralds the possible return to, and engagement with, many catastrophic pasts. In revisiting the ruin of St Peter’s, Grigor’s film conjures up a multiplicity of ghosts – of St Peter’s, of the structure’s inhabitants, of modernism itself – the camera awakens the dead, and makes light of these stones.

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*In fact, Simmel, who writes of the architectural ruin as a dialectic between an upward striving spirit and a downward sinking nature, asserts that there is an ‘interminability of the moral process’ and that ‘nor by their compromise does it ever arrive at a definitive state’ (1958:384).*