

ANIMA ÜRBEM

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

In 1916 the macrocosmic tensions of global conflict became focused on the microcosm of Berlin, Ontario. The nationalistic turmoil of the First World War incited a series of destructive events resulting in a schism within the flourishing industrial community and pitting ethnic Germans against the loyalist British. The outcome of this internal conflict would see one identity forfeited for another, the name Berlin for that of Kitchener.

Over the next century, Kitchener's downtown succumbed to a series of massive urban fires perforating the dense fabric of the city with echoing voids of collective amnesia.

The historic fires of Berlin/Kitchener are the backdrop of the thesis, with two sites (the Foundation & Schneider's Creek) forming the stage upon which a shamanic transformation is enacted through an intuitive assembly of historical narrative, photography, archival film, newspaper articles and psychogeographical research, illuminating the liminal space between personal and collective memories.

Poetically inspired by the late Andrei Tarkovsky's cinematic masterpiece, *STALKER*, the likenesses of the film's primary characters have been composited into a series of montage images, standing in for the authors perspective and describing a mythic journey through the investigated sites, further blurring the boundary between history and memory, fact and fiction.

Summoned by The Call, the Wanderer leaves the common world and travels into the bowels of the city, a fantastic subterranean underworld of shape-shifting humans, shadow figures and mythical beings. Like the stalker of Tarkovsky's film, the Wanderer must navigate a shifting labyrinth of matter and memory to reach his final destination and reconcile with the fires of history. Only by answering The Call of memories forgotten can the Wanderer be reborn from the canal of the World Womb.

Part visual essay and part film treatment, *ANIMA URBEM* is an imagistic/textual document narrating a hallucinogenic unfolding of occurrences throughout the history of Berlin/Kitchener and accompanied by the original film *House of the Gathering*, a poetic refrain within the memory weave.

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F O R E W O R D

The following assembly of text, newspaper articles, archival photographs and constructed images can be interpreted as a notebook for the included films:
House of the Gathering & AMINA ÜRBEM.



PROL



OGUE

BERLIN



Figure 1.2 - Berliner Doughnut

THE BERLINER

The Berliner is a doughnut without a central hole. Sweet yeast dough is fried in lard and topped with icing or sugar. A jelly filling is injected by syringe after the doughnut is fried. A common practical joke is to inject a Berliner with mustard and place it among the traditional jelly Berliners; an imposter among the authentic.

THE KAISER

In 1871 Kaiser Wilhelm led the Kingdom of Prussia to victory over the Second French Empire, ending the Franco-Prussian War and 100 years of German conflict. Kaiser Wilhelm became a hero to Germans around the world. The victory meant German unification; a merging of the smaller states of the North German Confederation with the greater Kingdom of Prussia and giving birth to the German Empire; for which Berlin became the Capital.



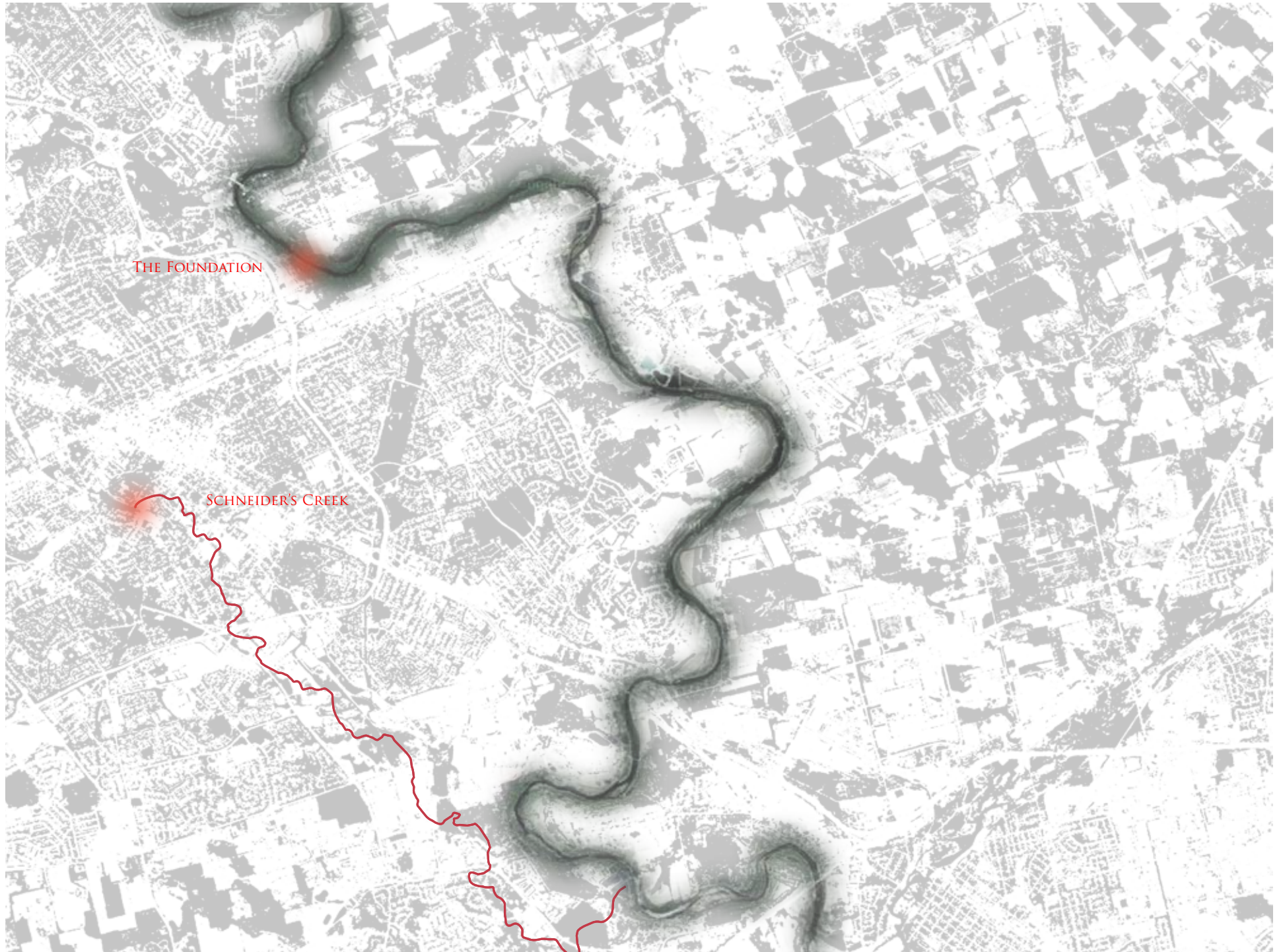
Figure 1.3 - Kaiser Wilhelm I



Figure 1.4 - Downtown Berlin

BIRTH OF A CITY

The Village of Berlin received its name in 1854 to honor the skill and labor exemplified by the German immigrants who were pivotal in the region's early prosperity. The small but flourishing village quickly grew in stature, known as Busy Berlin across the Dominion of Canada, renowned for skilled craftsman and industrial manufacturing. Coinciding with the unification of the German Empire, Berlin was designated a town in 1871. By 1912, Berlin was officially recognized as a city and known as one of the most prolific industrial cities in all of Canada.



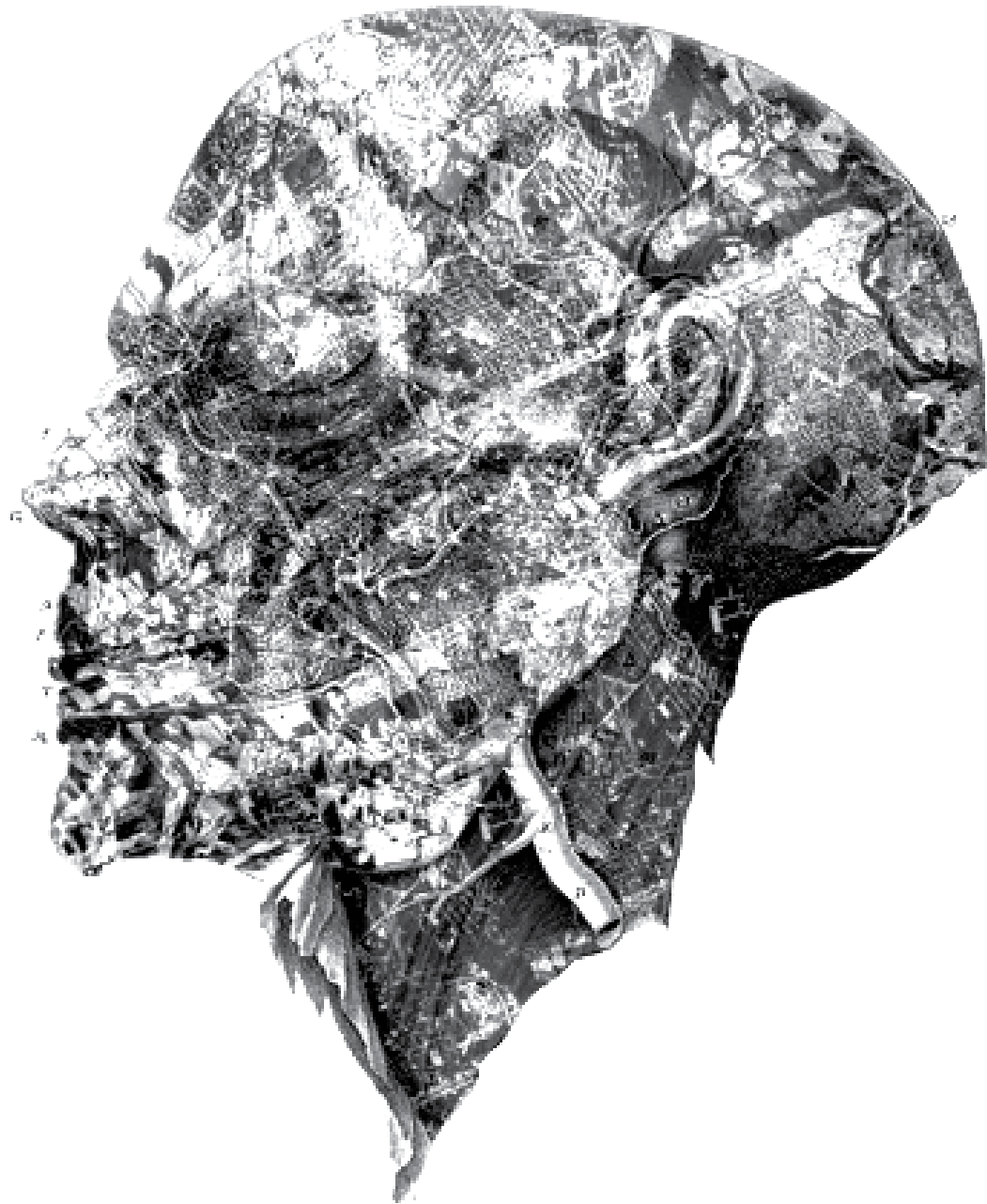




Figure 2.3 - The Foundation

THE FOUNDATION

The remains of an old pump house rests at the city's edge, surrounded by trees, on the bank of the Grand River. The building had pumped water from the river and produced steam to power a sugar mill; the sublimation of water by fire put to practical use. A three-foot tall and deteriorating, concrete wall demarcates a perimeter between the surrounding forest and the interior of the ruin. The floor of the ruin is fertile soil and is roughly the size of a small wartime house. Two levels remain within the footprint, one ground level and an excavated lower cellar. Many years later, as my memories of the old Foundation were fading, fate would inevitably draw me back again.

On a very ordinary day, in March of my 30th year, I received unsettling news. My father informed me that my older cousin had disappeared. I knew my cousin had been depressed since the estrangement of his wife and stepson. I would later find out that his doctor told him that he was going blind in one eye. I wanted to reach out to him weeks before, but was advised by my parents, with an extreme severity, that he did not want to see or speak to anyone. I wanted to search for him, but couldn't imagine where to begin.

Where does someone go to escape the horrors of their internal world?

I found myself at an impossible loss. "He will turn up", I thought; "You cannot find someone who doesn't want to be found." I resolved to put it out of my mind, as though everything was the same and nothing had changed.

The following day a stranger walking their dog along the path that passes the Foundation discovered his body, slumped over the barrel of a recently discharged shotgun. Dental records were used to identify the remains and notify family. His vehicle was found a short distance away, parked at the road. My cousin found peace at the Foundation, as I had found it in my youth.

After the funeral, I asked one of his childhood friends if he and my cousin had spent time at the Foundation, as children. He told me they never had. My cousin's reasons for choosing that place as the ground where he extinguished his life will forever remain a mystery to me; and although we had never shared with each other our common affinity for that place, his memory will forever rest within its walls and his fire will burn there eternally.

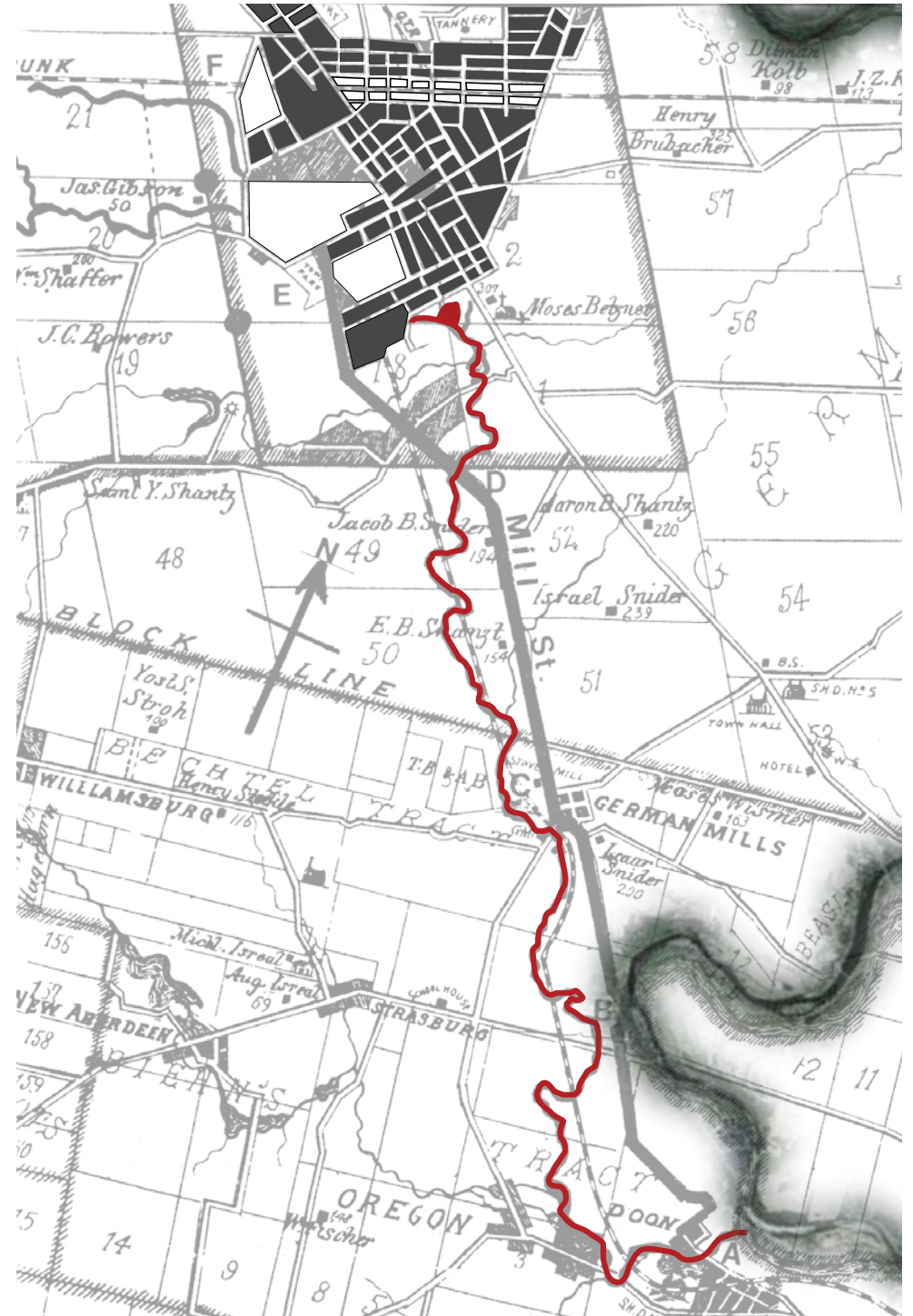


Figure 2.4 - Map of Schneider's Creek, Berlin 1916

SCHNEIDER'S CREEK

Schneider's Creek is named after Joseph Schneider, a Pennsylvania Dutch Mennonite settler from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He built his farmstead in 1807 along a creek side just south of a large swamp, now Victoria Park, in the valley of willow trees and sand hills that would be Berlin and later become Kitchener, Ontario.

Before Schneider, archaeological evidence suggests that the creek was home to Aboriginal natives known as the Attiwandaronk. Archaeological remains discovered in the area surrounding a swampland at the north end of Schneider's Creek are believed to have been an Attiwandaronk village. These remains dated the land use of the area as early as the 1600's. By 1639 the Attiwandaronk people had been all but decimated by the Iroquois Confederacy during the Beaver War. The last mention of the Attiwandaronk people in French records was 1671.¹

The stewardship of the Grand River was inherited by the Mississauga's of the Credit River. The Mississauga's lived at Doon,

where Schneider's Creek empties into the Grand River. When the cold winter came they would travel north up the creek to the swampland of their Attiwandaronk predecessors, where Kitchener's Victoria Park now rests.

The creek of the Aboriginals would become Schneider's Creek and one hundred years later, the City of Kitchener would repurpose the creek as a highly urbanized storm-water management system. The creek bed would be straightened and reinforced, fitted with twenty-foot high metal clad concrete walls and fenced off from the general public. The creek stream would be connected to a labyrinth of underground drains and tunnels, funneling the city's excess water down from the surface and back into the Grand River.

Although Schneider's Creek has been reduced to mere functionality and near invisibility, the stream is the slow pulsing artery of the region. And despite neglect, even hostility, continues to carry the blood of the land in its bed.

¹ Mills, Rych. *Victoria Park: 100 years of a park & its people : an historical and photographic essay on Victoria Park, Kitchener, Ontario-- : with illuminations on the neglected past and projected future.* Kitchener, Ont. The Committee, 1996.



Figure 2.5- Schneider's Creek, Kitchener 2013

THE BOY IN BLACK WATER

My first memory of Schneider's Creek is from my early years. One summer's day, when I was nearly ten-years-old, three friends and myself were presented with the opportunity to embark on a journey beyond anywhere we had ever dared to venture, a journey that would lead us to the veritable threshold of the underworld.

Another boy, a little older than myself, conveyed a tale of how he had climbed down into Schneider's Creek searching for crayfish, and while traveling through the waters of the stream, had come upon the entrance to an underground cavern. He described the opening as massive, large enough to drive a car through and darker than night itself. He explained that once he had found the courage to enter the passage he began to hear a strange growl and rumble echoing from deep in the darkness. He said that he wasn't too far down the cavern, maybe only twenty yards, when he began to smell what he could only

describe as a putrid campfire and a white mist began to surround him. He claimed that after walking a short distance into the mist he could see a flickering light further down the tunnel.

As he approached the light, an indescribable presence frightened him and he ran from the tunnel. He claimed that he ran so hard he lost a shoe in the water. Indeed, the boy stood before us on his bicycle, soaking wet and wearing only one shoe. After hearing the story we were left speechless and uneasy. We all knew the boy to be a gross exaggerator of facts if not an all out liar, but there was something in his story that seemed to penetrate my chest and stir in the pit of my stomach. Although his story was somewhat unbelievable, we mounted our bicycles and travelled with the boy far from our neighbourhood, scaling the walls of the creek downtown, to confront the dark tunnel.



Figure 2.6 - The Dark Passage, Schneider's Creek, Kitchener 2013

As the five of us rode our bicycles through the labyrinth of streets and laneways on our way to the strange destination, what I remember most clearly was the unfamiliarity of the city as a whole. Streets we had biked through many times before became foreign, as though the world had become suddenly alien over the period of a single afternoon. I recall becoming aware of the odd shift in perspective and being slowly overcome by an accelerated heart rate and rush of adrenaline.

We rode in complete silence; seconds passing like minutes and minutes like hours. We arrived at a trail that ran along the west side of the creek. It was a paved strip between a dense row of trees and chain link fence that separated us from the two-storey drop into the creek below. Looking down from above at the black water of the creek through the rusted metal fence, the realization washed over me; accompanied by a wave of anxiety, that I was approaching something for which I had no reference or

context. The pedals of my bicycle became stiff, my knees turned weak and felt like rubber. We stopped in a dusty parking lot, overgrown with lush green trees. Behind the trees the boy showed us a tall fence with a tear at the bottom large enough for a small boy to fit through. We dropped our bicycles in the tall grass surrounding the fence and crawled through the tear in the chain links.

We slid down a coarse concrete wall, stopping ourselves just short of the water. From there we walked along the angled edge of the wall parallel to the creek and found our way to a small tributary that branched off of the creek. A thick canopy of trees hung above us, blocking out the sun and adding a certain mystical ambience to my growing fear. We stood before the dark tunnel, not one of us brave enough to go inside, but could only stand at the threshold of its infinite blackness — a tear in the fabric of space and time.

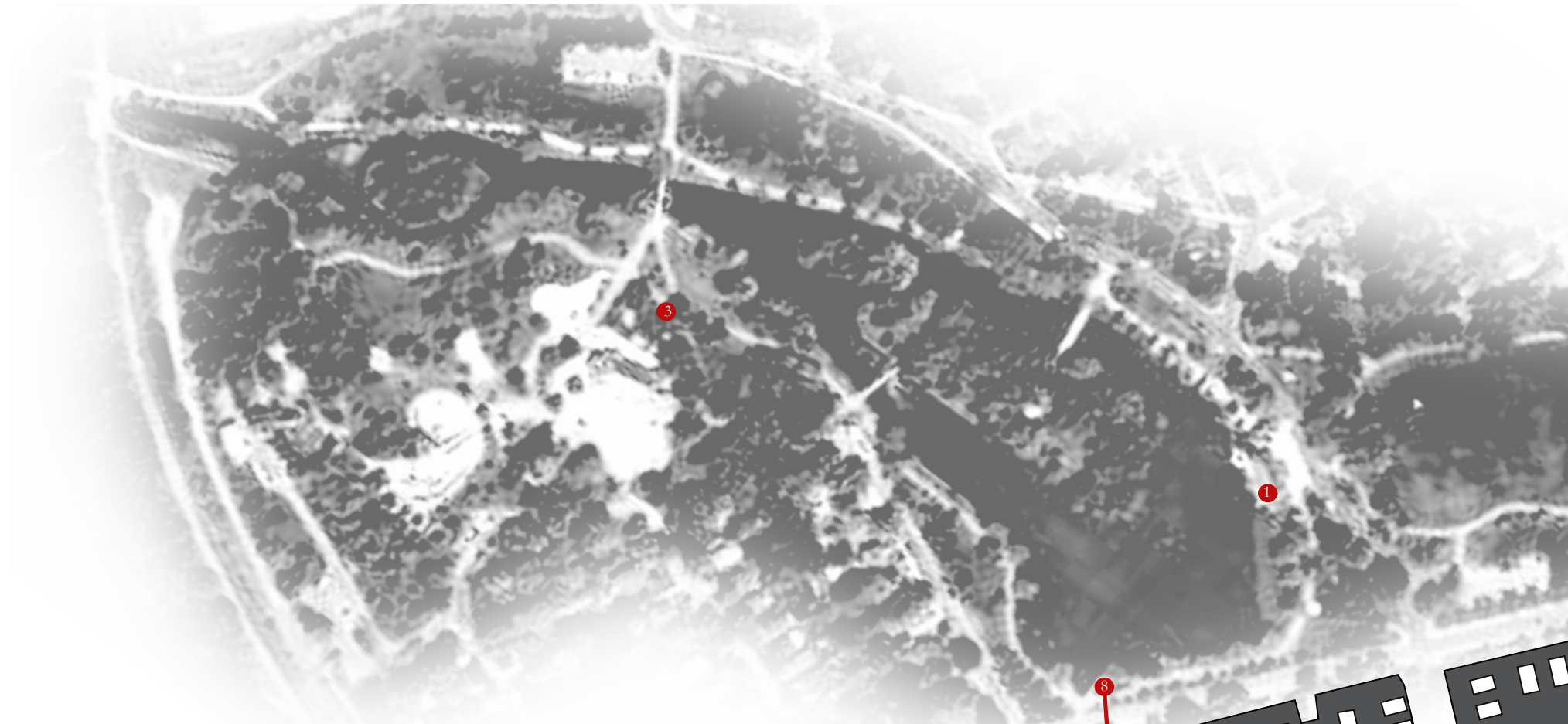


Figure 3 - Map of fires: Berlin / Kitchener 1916 - 1968

THE FIRES OF BERLIN / KITCHENER

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Drowning of the Kaiser's Bust 1916 | 5. Janzen Building Fire 1960 |
| 2. Concordia Hall Fire 1916 | 6. Mahr Building Fire 1960 |
| 3. Pavilion Fire 1916 | 7. Benton Baptist Fire 1968 |
| 4. Windsor Hotel Fire 1958 | 8. Schneider's Creek |





WINDSOR HOTEL

1958

Box Alarm / 5th Alarm Assignment:

- 3 Engine Companies
- 2 Ladder Companies
- 1 Battalion Chief



Figure 4.1 - Ascending the Fire

White clouds belched from vents and windows as cold drafts of air forced the smoke upward through the old brick, post and beam building and bathed all three floors of the hotel in a thick and acrid grey haze.

The misting spray of the fire hoses froze instantly in the sub-zero February air.

By 10:30am, half of an hour after the fire was discovered, the plate glass windows of the cafe storefront had crumbled under the intense heat and the restaurant filled with flames.

The teams of firemen had little effect on the fire's upward advance through the building and their attack on the rear failed to halt the blaze, as well. As the incredible heat radiated from the hotel's basement with increasing intensity, firefighters were forced to retreat from the blaze and the Fire Chief declared the fire "out of control."²

Word of the fire's origin had spread quickly through the crowd of Kitchener citizens gathered in front of the 100 year-old building.

2. Kenneth Putnam, "Five-Alarm Fire Guts Windsor Hotel," Kitchener Waterloo Record, February 29, 1956 pg.1



Figure 4.2 - White Daemon Rises



Quality
you trust

Drink
Coca-Cola

Canada
Bowls
Club



Windsor staff claimed that a foul odour, like that of a putrid campfire, had been emanating from the basement since the day before. Some described it as a “gas-like”³ smell, while others claimed to have sensed nothing of the sort.

Bowman, the hotel manager and spokesman for the property owners, denied rumours that the fire had been a result of a defective furnace. Although Bowman claimed to have been in the basement only moments before the fire alarm had sounded, he assured authorities that he neither saw nor smelled anything out of the ordinary.

While authorities were able to confirm the origin of the fire as erupting from the basement under the hotel, the cause of the conflagration has since remained a mystery.

The only certainty remains that an incredible heat had suddenly burst from under the building and burned its way upward, reducing the hotel to little more than a charred and empty shell while the essence of what once was ascended into the sky above, in a dense smoke.

3. Hotel Staff “Five-Alarm Fire Guts Windsor Hotel,” Kithener Waterloo Record, February 29, 1956 pg.3



Figure 4.4 - Faces of Loss





Rainbows of brilliant hues formed as the sun shone down into the misting spray, painting a poetic counterpoint to the sinister backdrop of the burning hotel.

Three engine companies, two ladder companies, one battalion chief and more than a mile of hose fought for two-and-a-half hours before flames began to ebb at 1:30pm.

The tide of the fight turned early in the afternoon, 15 minutes after the roof of the hotel caved in and allowed firemen to pour gallons and gallons of water down from serial ladders and onto the flaming shell of the building.

The debris from the building was later cleared and the hotel was never rebuilt.



Figure 4.6. The Ceiling Fell and the Sky Came Through







I

Figure 5.1



11

Figure 5.2



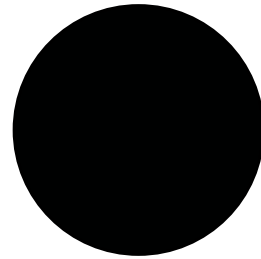
III

Figure 5.3



I V

Figure 5.4



MEMORY HOLE

A system of pipes, similar to pneumatic tubes, which were used to destroy documents. A document stuffed in the memory hole would be conveniently whisked away to the furnaces below - quickly & easily wiped from history.⁴

4. "Newspeak Dictionary," last modified March 11, 2009, <http://www.newspeakdictionary.com/ns-dict.html>

DEPARTURE



*I wake in the river of recollection... I drink the water from
the mouth of history... and I am drawn into the memory
hole... contemplating the future through the past... the
acrid sent of a burning memory... gazing in to the void.*



THE CARPET OF LIVING MEMORIES

Figure 6.1



WAKE IN THE RIVER OF RECOLLECTION

Figure 6.2



WATER FROM THE MOUTH OF HISTORY

Figure 6.3



UPON THE MEMORY HOLE

Figure 6.4



GAZING INTO THE VOID

Figure 6.5



CONTEMPLATING THE FUTURE THROUGH THE PAST

Figure 6.6



THE ACRID SENT OF A BURNING MEMORY

Figure 6.7

MEMORY HOLE I: THE ART OF DROWNING

The 150 pound bronze bust of Kaiser Wilhelm was erected as a peace monument, in place of a dying German Oak tree. The Oak had been planted in honor of the peace brought to the German Empire by the Kaiser's victory over the Second French Empire. The larger-than-life sized bust stood four feet tall and weighed over 150 pounds.



Figure 7.1 - Kaiser Wilhelm Peace Memorial, Victoria Park, Berlin 1914



Figure 7.2 - Bustless Pedestal, Victoria Park, Berlin, 1914

In the moist haze that hangs thick over Berlin's Victoria Park, the silhouettes of three men move feverishly across the athletic grounds to the edge of the lake where the bronze bust of the Kaiser rests on top of a concrete pedestal. The fluttering of shadows is the only break in the perfect stillness of the August night.

One man climbs the pedestal and, while crouching on the marble plinth, looks the bronze figure square in the eyes as he wraps his right hand around the long spike at the top of the massive helmet and places his left hand firmly on the Kaiser's shoulder.

Using the force of his entire body the man rocks the statue back and forth until it teeters and totters and crashes to the ground, nearly crushing one of the accomplices as the statue plummets into the soil below.

With great effort the three men heave the statue off of the ground and carry the Kaiser fifty yards to the footbridge over the lake. They raise the Kaiser up and over their shoulders, balancing him on the iron rail of the bridge as each man spits once in the Kaiser's face before thrusting him off of the rail and into water.







Figure 7.4 - Kaiser Retrieved, Victoria Park, Berlin, 1914

The calm of the lake is broken with the force of a crashing whale as the wake of the plunging statue ripples across the water's surface, the assailants soaked by the splash, as through the Kaiser had spat back at the three men for the offence.

Along the park's periphery, gas lamps in nearby homes light up, as are residents stirred awake by the noise breaking the perfect quiet of the night, as faces fill windows and stare out into the darkness of the park, curious as to the cause of the sound.

The men run into the blackness of the night while the Kaiser settles to rest at the bottom of the lake.

The following morning 3 adolescent boys, accompanied by two adults, dive into the water and retrieve the statue from the bottom of the lake.

Upon recovery of the statue, the Park Board opts to put the Kaiser in the keep of the Concordia Society, at Berlin's Concordia Hall.



I

Figure 8.1



11

Figure 8.2



III

Figure 8.3



IV

Figure 8.4

COMMUNION



*From a open hole seeps the structure of memory's eternal form...
memory is a rhizomatic field... a branch offers fruit... and a
shadow is cast... I eat the apple and commune with the forgot-
ten... the memory remains clear but I begin to fade... with new
eyes I am born.*



AN OPEN (W)HOLE

Figure 9.1



MEMORY MATTER

Figure 9.2



APPLE OF THE EYE

Figure 9.3



SHADOWS CAST

Figure 9.4



COMMUNION

Figure 9.5



FADED FROM THE MEMORY

Figure 9.6



SLEEPWALKER

Figure 9.7

JANZEN BLOCK

1959

The Janzen Block inferno of December 17, 1959 was an eerie reminder of the Wunder Block blaze at the same address on “Good Friday,” March 30, 1934. The ferocity of the blaze was the greatest ever encountered by Chief Putnam during his 30 years of service with the Kitchener Fire Department.



Figure 10.1 - Inferno

Fire Chief Putman:

“We waited to see if the colour of the smoke changed. If the black smoke turned white, that meant that steam was being created and we were quenching the heat with our hoses. We endeavored to drive the fire to the rear of the building, so that other streams shooting in from the backside could attack it. The colour of the smoke changed and that meant that we were controlling it...

But soon the heat became so intense that the men handling the hose up in the corridors of the three buildings had to back out. We tried desperately to confine the fire to the second floor but flames mushroomed out across the ceiling and carried on right through the roof. Then we heard the explosions and the heat became even more intense...

At one time it appeared as though a firestorm would develop. This is when a fire reaches such an intense stage that it creates it's own wind. If a firestorm occurs you don't know where you will be able to confine it.”⁵

5. Kenneth Putnam, “Tried Every Strategy, Chief Putnam Reveals,” Kithener Waterloo Record, December 17, 1959 pg.3







4:15pm

A Loblaw's cashier picked up some paper bags from the floor and was startled to find them melting into the linoleum. She opened the chute to the basement and was greeted by a billow of smoke. Moments later the store filled with a thick black fog and customers scattered to evacuate.⁶

5 pm

Plumes of smoke gushed from the building, floating like wraiths over Kitchener's City Hall, a half block away. Still, no flames had been seen by anyone — the black was the only indication of fire.

As word of the heat and smoke spread through the building; dentists and their patients, lawyers, real-estate agents, shoppers and shop employees, more than 200 in three buildings, headed for King Street, seeking safety from the dense black smoke.⁷

5:15pm

A crowd of 3000 citizens — patrons, workers and shop owners — stand by in apprehension as police push the massing crowd back, away from the buildings, and secure the area with rope.⁸

6. Dom Collora, "Warm Grocery Bags First Clue to Blaze," Kithener Waterloo Record, December 17, 1959 pg.1

7. Ibid 8. Ibid



Figure 10.4 - Digging Through the Rubble

6:45pm

A middle-age woman scales a fire escape to retrieve the feline she had left stranded in her apartment as clusters of young women rush into the street from the building's third floor beauty school, their hair in curlers and fresh mud on their faces. As flames roar closer, tenants in the neighbouring buildings that have become accustomed to downtown fires simply go about their business watching television, hanging laundry and soaking in warm baths. Police force is required to finally evacuate residents from surrounding buildings.⁹

6:50pm

Firemen begin to tire. Water flows deep in the King Street gutter. The first flames finally make themselves visible, and quickly lick and burn their way up to the third floor and then through the roof. Windows on the

second floor to the third floor burst open in showers of flaming glass, littering the surrounding street in tiny splintered shards. Many of the firemen are overcome by dense smoke and require oxygen relief.¹⁰

7:20pm

The Salvation Army arrives with coffee, cigarettes and sandwiches.¹¹

8:20pm

The Metropolitan Store becomes a giant torch. Aerial ladders soar over downtown and firemen go aloft. In shifts, the firefighters take refuge in a neighbouring men's wear store. The store manager provides new socks for the wet feet of firemen.¹²

9. Dom Collora, "Warm Grocery Bags First Clue to Blaze," Kithener Waterloo Record, December 17, 1959 pg.1

10. Ibid 11. Ibid 12. Ibid



Figure 10.5 - Descending the Furnace





8:30pm

Death is narrowly escaped when the ceiling of the Loblaw store caves in within inches of two firefighters.¹³

8:50pm

Multiple explosions erupt from within the Metropolitan building causing alarm throughout the downtown. One of the explosions inside the Loblaw store knocks the upper plate of false teeth from a fireman's mouth and into the flaming debris. The plate had been fashioned and installed by a doctor whose office now burns above the fireman as he retreats from the eruptions of the fire. Concerns arise that all structural walls will collapse.¹⁴

9:00pm

The roof explodes and the fire mushrooms upward into the night sky. The Fire Chief considers the use of dynamite to "pull" the walls of the building down before they collapse on to the street below. the Fire Chief fears that a *firestorm* is immanent, and that the entire section of the downtown could be lost.¹⁵

9:10pm

Sirens scream throughout the downtown core as auxiliary pumpers arrive from Galt. The joint forces of regional fire departments fight the inferno 150 men strong.¹⁶

Midnight

The blaze reaches climax and suppressed by fire fighters.¹⁷

13. Dom Collora, "Warm Grocery Bags First Clue to Blaze," Kithener Waterloo Record, December 17, 1959 pg.3

14. Ibid 15. Ibid 16. Ibid 17. Ibid









I

Figure 11.1



11

Figure 11.2



III

Figure 11.3



I V

Figure 11.4



Figure 12 - Hare with Sun

THE HARE

Nanabozho the Great Hare is a powerful figure found in the tales of the Algonquin tribes. In some stories, Nanabozho is a revered culture hero, creator of the earth, benefactor of humankind, teacher and the bringer of light and fire.

THE MENTOR



I wander through this dream with a peculiar lucidity... lured by a raft floating upstream... the raft bursts into flight... a denizen of the underworld approaches... and departs leaving me with a compulsion to follow... like a fool I stand thoughtless in the current... gazing not at a man but a hare.



AWAKE AND DREAMING

Figure 12.1



LURED BY THE RAFT

Figure 12.2



BURST INTO FLIGHT

Figure 12.3



STRANGER APPROACHING

Figure 12.4



FOLLOWING THE RABBIT

Figure 12.5



S H A P E S H I F T E R

Figure 12.6



THE WITNESS

Figure 12.7



Figure 12 - How to explain pictures to a dead bare

THE RABBIT IN THE MOON

When a journeying old man begged for food, the heron gathered fruits from the trees while the wolf pilfered a lizard and a pot of milk-curd. The rabbit, who knew only how to gather grass, instead offered its own body, throwing itself into a fire the man had built. The rabbit, however, was not burnt. The old man revealed himself to be divine and, touched by the rabbit's virtue, drew the likeness of the rabbit on the Moon for all to see. It is said the lunar image is still draped in the smoke that rose when the rabbit cast itself into the fire.¹⁸

18. Varma. C.B. "The Hare on the Moon". The Illustrated Jataka & Other Stories of the Buddha. 2002. <http://ignca.nic.in/jatak003.htm>

MEMORY HOLE II: CULTURE BURNING

Fearing that its presence may incite further incident, Park Officials deemed it too dangerous to leave the statue in view of the public and placed the bust in the charge of Concordia Hall. On February 16, 1916, in search of the bust of Kaiser Wilhelm, the 118th Battalion sacked Concordia Hall and incited the largest public riot in the history of the city.



Figure 13.1 - Concordia Club Masquerade Ball



Figure 13.2 - Boys of the 118th Battalion

Prideful politicians in Berlin saw the First World War as an opportunity to boost the city's image on a national scale. More interested in making grand gestures of militant support to the crown in England than considering the delicate nature of the situation in Berlin, the city's politicians pledged a battalion of soldiers, 2000 men strong, to fight for the King of England against the Hun. However; Berlin's population was predominately German, and most of those who had emigrated from Germany to Berlin sought refuge from the constant warring in Europe. Berliners were not warriors but crafts and trades people, artisans. Berliners had little desire to enlist in a military set on killing their former countrymen. The crown was promised 2000 soldiers from the region, and Berlin produced fewer than 200 men. Berlin's meager contribution to the war may have gone unnoticed had local politicians not been so eager to boast the city's support.

As a result, suspicions quickly arose amongst neighboring cities, and across the country, as to where Berlin's loyalty truly lay: was the city full of patriots or was it a nest of the enemy Hun? During the year of 1916, the small but industrious city of Berlin, Ontario became the microcosm of a global crisis.

A small group of patriots stationed in downtown Berlin, the enlisted men of the 118th Battalion, were to become a conduit of the angst and paranoia that had spread throughout the city and beyond. As the 118th Battalion awaited orders to ship overseas and join with the British to fight against the Germans, their frustration for being undermanned and under-appreciated while being stationed in a city which bore the namesake of the enemy, gave birth to a fire that would burn through them into the city of Berlin until Berlin would be no more. What smoldered inside the 118th Battalion would soon flare into an incredible flame of pure destruction.

The first mob arrived at Concordia Hall, ten men strong. They kicked in the glass door and ascended three flights of stairs to reach the clubrooms, above. Once inside they found the bronze statue of the Kaiser and dragged the 150-pound bust down into the street.

A procession quickly formed around the bronze Kaiser as it was dragged through Berlin, upside down. The heavy statue was only rested right side up at the corner of each block, so that young boys with sticks and old men with canes could beat the rhythm to “God Save the King” on top of the Kaisers head as a growing crowd joyously sang along.

Soon more citizens joined the soldiers; they sang and danced and hit and spat and pissed on the Kaiser’s head, and through the spectacle, an even larger crowd was formed. A mob of ten soldiers departed the crowd, escorting the Kaiser back to the barracks where they delivered his eulogy before they

interred him in a prison cell. A second mob of twenty-five, formed of civilians and soldiers alike, returned to the Concordia Hall. Their appetites moistened by the Kaiser’s parade and a smoldering heat inside of them all that required only a spark to become a flame.

At the club hall, the front door already smashed open, access for an angry horde of soldiers and civilians was simple and after they climbed several flights of stairs to reach the club hall the hanging paintings must have seemed they an obvious place to start. The walls of the club had been filled with classic images of Prussian countryside’s, images of the Fatherland, but more importantly, the walls had been filled with images of the enemy. In fire-line relay, every image brought down to the street level where eager hands waited to systematically smash and destroy each painting. A process of methodical destruction that continued until no images of the enemy land remained.

But still, the mob was hungry for more. A third time they returned in search of satiation to their destructive appetite and discovered what would be the red flag to the bull. In a locked back room, away from the main hall, a painting of King George rested in a corner, draped by a Prussian flag — the fire had been ignited.

Every Prussian portrait was torn down from the walls, smashed and strewn around the hall. All the furniture was systematically destroyed; tables, chairs, cupboards, metal ornaments, stage fixtures, bar fixtures, bunting and anything that could be crushed and ripped and shredded. Every window and glass door was smashed out, broken chairs, bunting, hymnbooks and ornaments were hurled out of the windows, three floors down, and into the street below. The furious mob, with broken table and chair legs in hand, beat and battered and smashed a piano to rubble, tossing what remained through the broken windows and into the growing pile

of debris on the street. Soldiers and civilians gathered the fragments of furniture, all the flags and ornaments that had come sailing out the windows, brought it together and placed it all into a great pile in the center of the street. Cans of gasoline already on hand were poured over the massing heap of rubble and set aflame, while crowds assembled, surrounding the blaze, scavenging about in search of bits and pieces of Prussian culture to keep the giant fire burning. Others marveled at the site as the hungry blaze was fed by the continuous flow of debris that fell in showers from the clubrooms above. The street and sidewalk, a mass of broken glass, smashed picture frames and literature; anything and everything inflammable was hauled down from the club and thrown onto the pyre. The people gathered around and the fire burned into the early hours of the morning, burned until the embers had become only ashes.







Figure 13.4 - The 118th Battalion gather around Kaiser's bustless pedestal, 1916

Following its seizure from Concordia Hall on the night of the raid, the bust of Kaiser Wilhelm was never recovered or seen again. Rumours abound that the statue had been melted down into bullets or into napkin rings bearing the insignia of 118th Battalion.



Figure 13.5 - Napkin ring with 118th Battalion insignia



I

Figure 14.1



11

Figure 14.2



111

Figure 14.3



I V

Figure 14.4

THE WOLF IN MY DREAMS



Figure 15

THE WOLF

The wolf embodies the wild and untamed nature of the unconscious mind and stands guard at the threshold that must be passed by the Wanderer, that they may enter the underworld and confront their shadow.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD



*I learn of fragility over the decaying shell of my mentor... a dead hare
whispers history into my ear... guiding me to the bicycle of my youth...
as an expulsion of the forgotten and unwanted pours fourth... history is
eroded, memories are eroded, the cycle of decay... I am confronted by me
shadow... and the shadow speaks... without fear I cross the threshold.*



THE FRAGILE

Figure 16.1



EXPLAINING HISTORY TO A DEAD HARE

Figure 16.2



BICYCLE OF MY YOUTH

Figure 16.3



EXPULSION

Figure 16.4



CYCLE OF DECAY

Figure 16.5



APPROACHING THE CAVE

Figure 16.6



THE CONFRONTATION

Figure 16.7



THE SHADOW SPEAKS

Figure 16.8



CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

Figure 16.9

MAHER BUILDING

1960

A crowd of more than 4000 people filled King street and the area surrounding the Maher Building soon after the fire alarm sounded at 6:20pm. At 8pm police were called in to control the gathered crowd. It was hours still, before police were able to push the surging crowd back to a safe distance. Ropes, fences and even barricades were installed to contain the spectators. It wasn't for another 3 hours, just before midnight when the gazing crowd finally thinned.



It's just before bedtime
We're all in our pajamas Watching us watch the television
We're are all watching the television Inside of a burning building
I can see smoke It happens so often now,
Seeping up through the baseboards on the wall You can hardly blame them for watching
Seeping up from somewhere below us So many buildings burning so often
Seeping up from somewhere in the basement Maybe it's better than television?
Mom runs to the window
Not a single person shouted FIRE
Two hundred people have gathered outside Not a single person had warned us
Two hundred people staring at us The black smoke fills our apartment
I pull the collar of my pajamas over my nose
Still my throat burns







Mom kicks out the chicken wire
Sealed over the window at the fire escape
And it tears my pajamas at the knees

But there is nothing else left to do
Nothing now but falling from the windows
Through the smoke I can see crowds
All gathered on the street
All gathered and staring up at us

I crawl out onto the fire escape
Jump, little brother
Shouting for us to jump

The metal grate is ice cold
Little brother right behind me
Losing his shoe, he falls from my side
Three storeys down to the street and the crowd



Figure 17.4 - Collapse (i)

His shoe an offering to the fire.



Figure 17.5 - Fire Escape (ii)

My body burns with fear
And frozen in the cold air
The skin of my hand freezes to the metal rail
And my Father tells me to jump
But my hand won't let go of the rail
I leap from the building
my hand is torn raw
I fall forever
Before I'm caught
By a man in a fire suit

We cried out for our budgies,
Blue and Tweet
We left them in a cage that hangs from the ceiling
Dad went back in

Back into the smoke and the flames
Mom held her breath
When dad emerged from the blazing fire
He carried only a small metallic box

They told us that Blue and Tweet were fine
They had flown away to a tree in the park
Then the building fell to the ground
And flames roared
Then the crowd was silent
And our home was gone
And our childhood ended



Figure 17.7 - Collapse (ii)







I

Figure 18.1



I I

Figure 18.2



III

Figure 18.3



I V

Figure 18.4



Figure 19

THE DOOR

In the dream I walk down the stairs of an old wooden house. A lingering scent of ash hangs in the air and the surfaces of the walls are charred black, revealing the scars of a home burned from the inside out. At the bottom of the stair stands a door, a hare's pelt nailed to its edge and a heron's skull hanging above. I can feel the thumping of a massive force crash against the door, a force ferocious and wild that wants desperately to break down the walls and come inside the house. With caution I approach the door violently rattling on its hinges and wonder if the door can hold or if it will burst open before I can brace it. With each terrible thrust the door opens just a crack more, opening just enough to see the wolf on the other side, snarling through its teeth, its fur pointed upward and jagged. Growling at the door, I can feel its heat and smell its breath. I know it wants to come inside. But, to my surprise and in spite of its damaged appearance, the burned door holds back the beast, and although I am not afraid, still I brace the door. Why? Why does this beast want to come inside and why do I refuse to let it in? I open the door to the wolf.

MEMORY'S WOMB



The walls speak in riddles of memories forgotten... my last exit is a crystal image... the only way out is further down... to hell I thought we were returning... I wade through the ever-deepening dark water... as the walls around me bleed black... and I am swept along by the irreconcilable memory... washed up on the shore of an enigmatic figure... I have become my dark reflection... the darkness gazes back upon me.



WRITING ON THE WALL

Figure 20.1



LAST EXIT

Figure 20.2



DESCENT

Figure 20.3



WADING IN DARK WATER

Figure 20.4



WALLS BLEED BLACK

Figure 20.5



CAUGHT IN THE FLOOD

Figure 20.6



THE DARK FIGURE

Figure 20.7



THE HARROWING OF THE SOUL

Figure 20.8



THE BLACK MIRROR

Figure 20.9

MEMORY HOLE III: THE PAVILION

The pavilion had been built to seat the public. It belonged to the city. It belonged to everyone. Fitting perhaps that the pavilion became a symbol for Berlin's internal struggle and another conduit of conflagration.



Figure 21.1



Figure 21.2

History has little to say about the burning down of the pavilion. The fire's cause was never determined. No culprit was held accountable. Berlin was divided and each side blamed the other for the pavilion's destruction.

Responsibility aside, many gathered in the park to watch the building burn. Although all that had gathered at the fire refused to see their reflection through the smoke, seeing only the image of the enemy, and not themselves as having a hand in the great fires of Berlin. The charred shell remained like a shadow in the park.







Figure 21.4

Perhaps the fire was necessary? Perhaps there are occasions when the only way to move forward is through the annihilation of what once was.



I

Figure 22.1



11

Figure 22.2



III

Figure 22.3



I V

Figure 22.4



Figure 23 - The Heron's Skull

THE HERON

When these flashes of fire, lightning or flight, surprise us in our contemplation, they appear to our eyes as heightened, universal moments not so much ours as given to us, moments which mark the memory and return in dreams, retaining their imaginary dynamism. We might term them, in fact, Phoenixes of Reverie.¹⁹

19. Bachelard, Gaston. *Fragments of a poetics of fire*. Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1990. pg.32

ATONEMENT



I step from the darkness and into the light... greeted by a bird named Bennu... Bennu tells me that memories illuminate but that which gives light must endure burning... the bird stirs... and an inferno rises before me... through the fire is atonement.



FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

Figure 24.1



A JOURNEY'S END

Figure 24.2



MEETING BENNU

Figure 24.3



THE CONVERSATION

Figure 24.4



FIRE STIRRING

Figure 24.5



SIGNALS OF CHANGE

Figure 24.6



ATONEMENT

Figure 24.7

BENTON BAPTIST

1968

Shortly before noon, on February 11, 1968, orange and red flames burst through the roof of the Benton Street Baptist church and beginning a blaze that guts the 81 year-old building in less than three hours.



The original congregation of Benton Street Baptist Church was formed in Bridgeport on September 10, 1851 and became the first German Baptist Church in Canada.

It was organized as the First German Baptist Church of Berlin with a charter membership of 16, and doubled this by baptism in the following month.

Brother Henry Schneider was ordained in November 1852, and became the first pastor.

Seven years later the English-speaking Baptists were invited to conduct their services at the church on alternate Sunday evenings. Later that year, English services were preached every Sunday evening, but discontinued due to marginal attendance.

In March 1918, the German services ended and two years later the Church separated from the Eastern Conference of German Baptist Churches to unite with the Ontario and Quebec Conference. In the early 1930s it severed this connection and declared itself an independent Baptist Church.²⁰

20. Richard K. Taylor, "Fire Guts Benton Baptist Church," Kithener Waterloo Record, February 11, 1968 pg.2







Figure 25.3

The previous night, a meeting of deacons had been held at the church until 11pm. The church assumedly remained vacant until the arrival of Reverend's. Harold E. Butcher, the office secretary. Reverend Butcher suffered a crippling attack of polio, and could no longer carry out regular pastoral duties. Reverend Butcher was alone in the office until 11:15am when Reverend Davison came over from the neighbouring manse. Reverend Butcher and Reverend Davison had been talking only 10 minutes when interrupted by the shouts of a 14-year-old boy, who had earlier been reported missing by Waterloo police.²¹

“When I understood that the church was on fire, I rushed into the church and saw flames in the basement. I rushed back and we called the firemen. We were right in the thick of the fire, Rev. Butcher and myself.”²²

The pastor telephoned to the church caretaker, who lived up the street from the church to bring the keys to admit the firemen to the building, but the fire had already taken control of the church.

21. Rev. Davidson, “Fire Guts Benton Baptist Church,” Kithener Waterloo Record, February 11, 1968 pg.2

22. Ibid



Figure 25.4

By the time fire fighters arrived, smoke was billowing from the eaves of the white-bricked church and the slender, shingled steeple.

Thick, acrid white smoke enveloped any fire fighters who fought against the blaze.

Crowds lined the street curbs around the building until rope barriers were erected to hold them back. For a time the firewatchers were in danger of the steeple falling upon them. However, the tower burned and twisted into a blackened skeletal posture that refused to topple.

“The steeple shell must be demolished today, even if I have to pull it down myself.”²³

23. Kenneth Putnam, “Fire Guts Benton Baptist Church,” Kithener Waterloo Record, February 11, 1968 pg.2



Figure 25.5





Figure 25.6

The following day the 14-year-old boy, who sounded the alarm to Rev, Butcher and Davison, confessed to starting the fire that burned down Benton Street Baptist Church. The boy admitted to starting two other fires in the region over the previous two weeks. He had entered Benton Street Baptist through an unlocked side door and set fire to a curtain in the basement.



Figure 25.7







I

Figure 26.1



11

Figure 26.2



111

Figure 26.3



I V

Figure 26.4









WALPER HOUSE

NO TRUCK

E P I L

O G U E

KITCHENER



Figure 28.2 - Kitchener Bun

THE KITCHENER

The Kitchener Bun resembles the Berliner, but distinguished by a deep incision through the middle of its body and containing a cream filling rather than jam or mustard.

LORD KITCHENER

Horatio Herbert Kitchener was a British Field Marshal, given the title Lord in 1898 after winning the Battle of Omdurman and securing British control of Sudan. Kitchener's military fame made him a symbol of strength and unity through the British Empire.

During the recruitment campaign of the First World War, Kitchener's face became the iconic symbol of British strength.

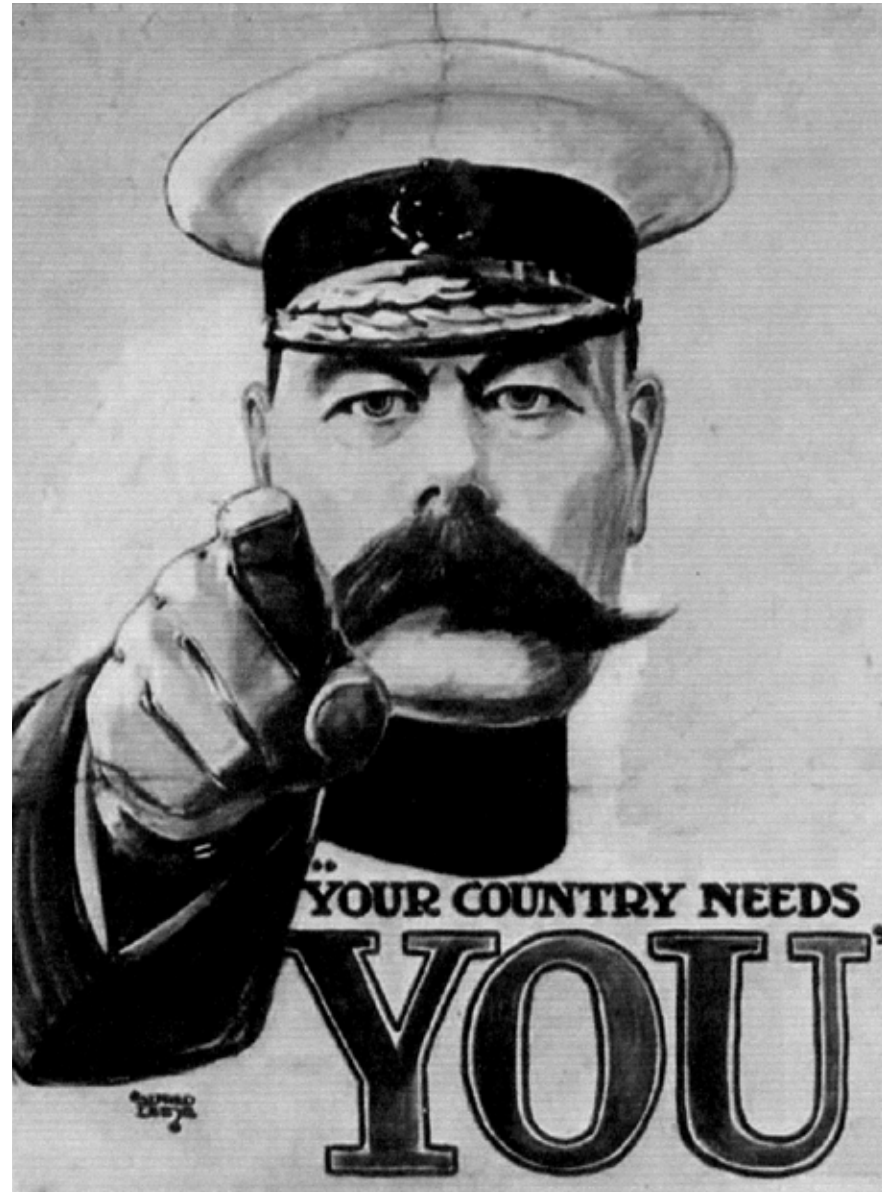


Figure 28.3 - Lord Kitchener

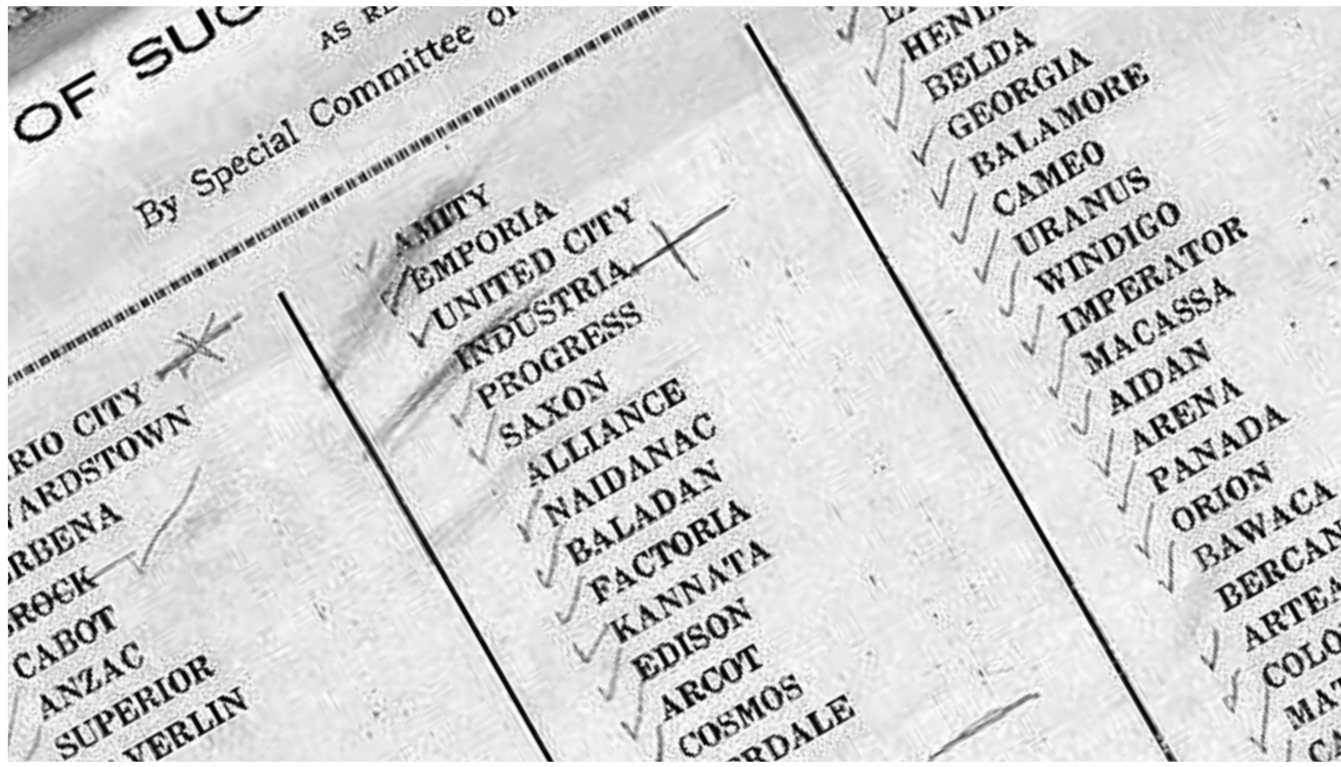


Figure 28.4 - List of Names

THE VOTE

In May 1916, Anti-German sentiment across the country incites a movement to rid the city of the name Berlin. A Special Committee of Berlin City Council is created to oversee a National contest to rename Berlin.

The National Archives of Canada notes; “Those citizens who supported the status quo were immediately perceived, by those who wanted change, as being unpatriotic and sympathizers with the enemy. Violence, riots and intimidation, often instigated by imperialistic members of the 118th Battalion, were not uncommon in the months leading up to the May 1916 referendum on the issue.”²⁴

From Berlin’s population of 15,000 citizens, 850 participated in the vote to change the name of the city. With only 346 votes, ‘Kitchener’ was selected as the city’s new name.

24. “What’s in a Name?”. Library and Archives Canada. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/firstworldwar/025005-3300-e.html>



Figure 28.5 - The Boer War

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Kitchener led the British Empire to victory over the Afrikaans-speaking Dutch rebels during the Second Boer War. The tide of the battle was decidedly turned when Kitchener implemented a Scorched Earth policy.

Scorched Earth targeted all resources that were potential sustenance for Boer guerrillas, effectively making resistance impossible. Scorched Earth is systematic destruction; it includes the burning of crops, homesteads and farms, poisoning of wells and the internment of women and children in concentration camps.



Figure 28.6 - Horse Party

OCTOBERFEST

Since 1969 Kitchener has been home to the 2nd largest Oktoberfest in the world, deemed *Canada's Greatest Bavarian Festival*.





APPENDIX: FILMOGRAPHY

This appendix is a video file of the films titled House of the Gathering & ANIMA URBEM. The file name of this video file is “ANIMA URBEM.mov”.

If you accessed this thesis from a source other than the University of Waterloo, you may not have access to this file. You may access it by searching for this thesis at <http://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca>.

Title:	House of the Gathering
Writer/Director:	James Anthony Usas
Country:	Canada
Language:	Silent
Production Company:	ElipsesAzure Studio
Sound Mix:	Dolby Digital
Running Time:	8mins
Format:	720p HD
Color:	Color
Aspect Ratio:	16:9
Camera:	Canon 7D, Zeiss Primes

Title:	ANIMA URBEM
Writer/Director:	James Anthony Usas
Country:	Canada
Language:	English
Production Company:	ElipsesAzure Studio
Sound Mix:	Dolby Digital
Running Time:	35mins
Format:	720p HD
Color:	Color, Black & White
Aspect Ratio:	16:9
Camera:	Medium Format Negative, Scanned Images, Composite Photographs, SD Video

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