

“An Unadulterated Cultural Expressway for the Arts”: Exploring the Theoretical Possibilities of *byNWR.com*

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Every film, regardless of its perceived merit, is worth being restored, saved, archived in the best fashion possible. Film is an innovation of the 20th century and, as such, a lot of our history over the last 100 years is captured on film. And the second even a little bit of it rots away, we are poorer for it.
—Ben Solovey, “Restoring the Hands of Fate”

Starting in 2012, Danish director Nicolas Winding Refn set out to restore and preserve low-budget exploitation films produced at the margins or outside the confines of the Hollywood system (Rife). Since then, Refn—director of such cult films as *Pusher* (1996), *Drive* (2010), and *The Neon Demon* (2016)—has amassed a vast library of vintage film prints that includes previously lost or half-forgotten grindhouse flicks like *Night Tide* (1961, Curtis Harrington), *The Nest of the Cuckoo Birds* (1965, Bert Williams), and *Cottonpickin’ Chickenpickers* (1967, Larry E. Jackson). Refn wanted to preserve these films and make them available to the public. Thus, in 2017, he teamed with *Mubi.com* and the Harvard Film Archive to launch *byNWR.com*, a free streaming service designed to not only screen digital copies of the director’s large collection of vintage exploitation movies, but also serve as an exhaustive archive of both the films and the outsider subcultures surrounding each one. In Refn’s own words, rather than a straightforward streaming service like Netflix or Hulu, *byNWR* is intended as an “unadulterated cultural expressway for the arts” that exists primarily to “inspire the youth” (Bradshaw).

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In addition to restoring, preserving, and screening a curated selection (chosen by guest editors including best-selling author Bob Mehr, critic and programmer Kier La-Janisse, and the staff of the London-based film magazine *Little White Lies*) of Z-grade films rejected by Hollywood, byNWR also contains a variety of supplemental materials, including archival photographs, original artwork, and numerous longform essays about the people involved in making the films and the cultures that defined them and were in turn influenced by them. As film critic Keith Phipps observes, “the site’s editors clearly want visitors to get lost not just in the movies, but in the stories of the men and women who created them, the times and places that shaped them, and the worlds suggested by them.” ByNWR takes a deep dive into the cultures (or, perhaps more appropriately, subcultures) that revolve around the films chosen for inclusion to provide insight into their production, reception, and cultural legacies. In other words, as Phipps explains, byNWR seeks to resurrect and replicate such dead or dying subcultural institutions as “the obsessively focused zine, the Web 1.0-era online magazine, and the video-store clerk willing to recommend something truly unusual to jaded viewers who think they’ve seen it all.”

The site’s mission proves increasingly vital during the early years of the 21st century, especially given the current popular discourse regarding film preservation (or the lack thereof) in the digital age. For instance, in her *Vanity Fair* article, “The Film Snob’s Dilemma,” Elizabeth Donnelly argues that while the Internet has increased access to numerous films produced since the dawn of the cinematic medium, streaming platforms and their search algorithms nevertheless tend to focus on newer popular films rather than classic movies or smaller efforts made at the edges or beyond the boundaries of mainstream Hollywood. She observes that “bad, computer-led curation also means that tiny films by first-timers and others can easily disappear into the ether.” In addition, the current focus by streaming services on producing original in-house content leaves little room for archival efforts. According to Donnelly,

The stars of the current streaming ecosystem—Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu—can also stymie film enthusiasts. Netflix, for example, seems to be too busy these days expanding its own in-house offerings [...] to provide much in the way of archival material; it’s expected to spend \$15 billion on original content in 2019 alone, even as it says farewell to some of its most-watched licensed content.

Donnelly’s argument echoes the fears of film critics such as Matt Zoller Seitz, who declared on Twitter that “one of the greatest tricks that streaming technology ever pulled was convincing the public that ‘everything’ would be available, and that physical media wouldn’t be necessary anymore.” Other users share Seitz’s concerns, noting that “the unspoken part of ‘once you put something on the internet, it’s there forever’ is that is only really certain if someone thinks they can make money off it. Everything else could get switched off at any time. Preservation is of zero interest to these people” (@NoChorus). It appears that at least some film fans worry that the appearance of more proprietary streaming means users may lose access to older films as studios place greater emphasis on the latest big-budget blockbusters or original series.

byNWR therefore stands as an important digital media object because it aims to preserve little-known exploitation flicks produced beyond Hollywood’s borders as well as highlight the subcultures that encompass those films. Perhaps more importantly, the site allows anyone with an Internet connection to access both the films and the supplemental materials free of charge. As such, byNWR presents a fascinating case study for media scholars. Currently, multiple ways exist to approach and analyze this text, all of which would yield different insights into both the site’s content and design aesthetic. The people behind byNWR preserve and screen obscure films in a way that recalls the efforts of boutique home video labels such as the Criterion Collection, providing numerous special features intended to help contextualize each film. The site also offers visitors the ability to link to essays, videos, photos, and other artifacts that are either directly or tangentially related to each film, organizing everything in themed volumes.

Thus, byNWR and the films housed there offer researchers several levels of multimedia texts for analysis, all of which can be examined through various theoretical or methodological lenses. This paper argues that byNWR’s complex multimodal structure requires an interdisciplinary approach that could include Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin’s concept of remediation (byNWR incorporates hypermediacy to store and screen each film, which themselves are remediated into a digital context), Jeffery Sconce’s ideas about paracinema (the films housed at byNWR demonstrate a counter-aesthetic and subcultural sensibilities), Ernest Mathijs and Xavier Mendik’s theories regarding cult cinema (the films conform to their anatomy of cult films), John Guillory’s idea of cultural capital (both the films and the site itself offer a challenge to mainstream cinematic canons), and Mikhail

Bakhtin's concept of the carnival and carnivalesque (the films and the subcultures chosen for preservation invert conventional tastes and sensibilities). This paper seeks to offer some suggestions for how to potentially examine byNWR from a variety of theoretical standpoints, thus providing scholars with a potential approach for analyzing this site and other similar networked digital archives. The following section introduces byNWR and considers how it sits at the intersection of archives and streaming services. Following this is a discussion of the various theoretical and methodological lenses that could be applied when analyzing the site.

“The Past Was Rarely This Scary”: byNWR as Digital Archive for Nontraditional Texts

As mentioned, byNWR positions itself as a digital archive dedicated to preserving cinematic history. However, the site also endeavors to generate an alternative history of cinema by focusing on outsider perspectives and amplifying marginalized voices that exist at the edges or outside of the mainstream canonical histories often taught in introduction to film courses. Thus, it becomes necessary to consider how archives distribute power or maintain existing structures. In his book *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida contends that archives function as extensions of memory, and that the act of preserving one memory often buries another (43). However, Derrida also claims that this act aids in modulating both the archive and the public memory of the past (56). Moreover, in their attempts to preserve the past, all archives are at once conservative and revolutionary. As Daniel Kieckhafer notes, the archive is “liberal in its general purpose as a repository, whose function is to serve (either society or some part thereof) and to extend the cultural patrimony” while its “conservative character derives from its need to maintain order, and the inherent necessity of caution and protection against outside forces, decay, and entropy.” All this becomes significant when considering that “leading institutions in fields like history, law, medicine, science, genealogy, and business” operate most archives and therefore define what constitutes “proper ‘archival’ materials” (Kieckhafer). Thus, such institutions can either reinforce existing sociocultural power structures and imbalances or challenge them depending on what materials they choose to include in the archive.

ByNWR performs a similar function because it seeks to preserve the past but does so in a way that challenges mainstream sensibilities and tastes. The site collects, restores, and preserves films informed primarily by outsider or

marginalized perspectives, as well as stories and other archival materials that offer vital insight into these subcultural ideologies. Phipps contends that byNWR ushers viewers into “dangerous, restless places where good taste finds no footing, and creativity draws blood” and allows them to “delve into film’s half-forgotten, disreputable past.” The site thus becomes a revolutionary archive in that it amplifies marginalized voices and challenges the established order exemplified by conventional ideas of cinematic history while also appearing to challenge ideas regarding what deserves to be included in the canon.

As an example of byNWR’s archival efforts, Volume 1: Regional Renegades centers on the exploitation movie *The Nest of the Cuckoo Birds*, an extremely low-budget film written, produced, directed by, and starring Bert Williams. Made in Florida, far outside the Hollywood system, the film was long thought lost, until Refn and the Harvard Film Archive stumbled upon a beat-up print in a collection salvaged from The Little Art Cinema in Rockport, Massachusetts (Coffey). In addition to the film, Volume 1 includes several essays, digital reproductions of some of Williams’ artwork, and a digitized collection of found photographs from around the time of the film’s release. The first essay, “Bert Williams: Stark Raving Drama,” describes the film’s production and profiles its creator. Following that is the “Art of Bert Williams,” a collection of Williams’ drawings and paintings made during the 1930s and 1940s. The next essay, “Discovering the Lost Cuckoo Bird Nest,” offers a comprehensive look at the discovery and subsequent restoration of the film. After this are several tangentially-related multimodal essays, including: “Naked I Take Your Money: The Relater” (which chronicles a sex worker’s on-the-job experiences); “Just Enough Stuff: The Saga of Margaret Doll Rod” (a profile of the trailblazing musician); “Family Man: Frankie Miller” (a profile of the country singer); “Loose on the Deuce: The Prince of Porn” (a profile of notorious pornographer Phil Prince); “Murder is my Beat: Florida” (a profile of singer and murderess Salwa Merrige-Abrams); and “Barbie and Me” (an examination of obsessive collectors of Barbie dolls). Rounding out the supplemental materials are “Charlie Beesley’s Discarded America,” a collection of found photographs, and “The Restorationists,” a short piece about the difficulty of restoring old films. These materials all serve to contextualize *Nest of the Cuckoo Birds*, because they preserve the subcultural attitudes and ideologies that both informed the film’s creation and were in turn informed by its content.

Yet byNWR is not an archive in the traditional sense, but rather something that exists at the intersection between a free streaming service and a digital archive that

exists entirely on the Internet. While the Harvard Film Archive houses and restores the physical films (either the original negatives or, more likely, existing prints), most byNWR users will likely never interact with these actual objects. Instead, they will access the content via the website, making it necessary to consider the site through the lens of existing research on digital archives. Cheryl Mason Bolick defines digital archives as collections of numerical data and digitized texts (i.e. images, videos, audio files, etc.) made available via the Internet. She argues that the creation of digital archives altered the act of doing historical research because they allowed historians wider access to historical documents and resources. According to Bolick, anyone with an Internet connection can access most digital archives free of charge (which brings up questions about who can afford to access these resources, but this issue remains beyond the scope of the current discussion). Bob Nicholson, meanwhile, observes that copyright concerns and other issues have prevented equal distribution of digital archives, particularly regarding media produced after the nineteenth century, but that historians have nonetheless “responded to the emergence of online archives with cautious enthusiasm” (61). Using newspapers and periodicals as his primary case studies, Nicholson considers the effect of digitization on research, noting that the contents of a digital archive undergo “a complex process of transformation” (64) that fundamentally alters how researchers interact with that material.

Both Bolick and Nicholson’s ideas apply to byNWR, a free streaming service that digitizes physical films and makes them readily available to both general audiences and media researchers. However, the site also actively challenges the mainstream cinematic canon and prevailing ideas regarding what makes a film worthy of preservation. In addition, it aims to keep outmoded traditions (such as zines and video store culture) alive while also shining a light on marginalized or forgotten subcultures. Thus, both byNWR and its content blur the lines between archive and streaming service, thus necessitating an interdisciplinary approach that draws on various lenses. The next section considers just some of theories that researchers can use when examining byNWR. This is not intended as a comprehensive list but rather a potential starting point for scholars who wish to consider the site, the films housed there, and the accompanying supplemental materials.

“Creativity Draws Blood”: Theoretical Approaches to byNWR

In an op-ed published by *The Guardian* on July 4th, 2018, Refn writes, “most of our culture comes to us via a small number of conglomerates whose sole purpose is the bottom line” rather than the promotion of “good, challenging art.” Here the director highlights the social hierarchy that deems mainstream Hollywood films that appeal to a wide audience and turn a hefty profit as more important than strange, cheaply-made movies that appeal to a small subset of cinephiles. According to Refn, byNWR challenges this cultural hegemony because it unearths bizarre exploitation movies and makes them readily available to users. As such, byNWR aims to overturn predominant sociocultural hierarchies by championing sleazy flicks that often challenge traditional notions of good taste, while dismissing more conventional fare such as that churned out by the Hollywood machine. The site archives films considered “bad” by mainstream filmgoing audiences and positions them as important cultural artifacts via the inclusion of comprehensive supplemental materials that place each film into its appropriate historical, social, and cultural context. ByNWR thereby inverts mainstream ideas regarding taste and success while also challenging more traditional cinematic archives that seek to preserve films deemed important by conventional cultural gatekeepers.

The films collected at byNWR all fall under the umbrella of exploitation cinema, a term that refers to movies that foreground “violence, sexual deviance, and cheapness” (Church 1). Due to their rebelliousness and/or aesthetic or moral depravity, exploitation films sometimes develop cult followings. According to Umberto Eco, cult films “must be loved, obviously,” but must also “provide a completely furnished world, so that its fans can quote characters and episodes as if they were part of the beliefs of a sect,” one “whose adepts recognize each other through a common competence” (68). Because most of the films archived at byNWR were either lost or forgotten, they cannot be considered true cult films (though some, like *The Nest of the Cuckoo Birds*, developed cult reputations precisely because of their status as “lost films”). Yet nearly all the films contain aspects of what Mathijs and Mendik refer to as the anatomy of cult film, including innovation, badness, transgression, genre, nostalgia, and gore (2-3). More importantly, perhaps, cult films and cult film viewers routinely position themselves in opposition to the mainstream, which is Refn’s mission statement for byNWR.

Given all this, the films housed at byNWR also demonstrate Sconce’s ideas regarding paracinema, which covers “such seeming disparate genres as ‘badfilm,’ splatter-punk, ‘mondo’ films, sword and sandal epics, Elvis flicks, government hygiene films, Japanese monster movies and beach party musicals” and more (101).

The films chosen for inclusion at byNWR represent a counter-cinematic canon that “[does] not easily admit the textual pleasures of more ‘commonplace’ audiences” and that also reinforces the idea that cinema “once held the promise of a revolutionary popular art form” (Sconce 108). Ultimately, paracinematic culture “celebrates excess” (Sconce 118). Excess serves as the defining feature of movies like *Orgy of the Dead* (1965, Stephen C. Apostolof) and *The Maidens of Fetish Street* (1966, Saul Resnick), and others housed at byNWR. The site therefore aligns with ideas about cult film and paracinema via its efforts to restore, preserve, and screen sleazy exploitation films that stand “at odds with the prevailing cultural mores, displaying a preference for strange topics and allegorical themes that rub against cultural sensitivities and resist dominant politics” (Mathijs and Mendik 11).

By archiving lost or forgotten exploitation films that contain content considered subversive, countercultural, or sleazy according to mainstream sensibilities, byNWR challenges conventional Hollywood traditions and the established cinematic canon. As such, the site hails an audience predisposed to such subversive spectacle. This appeal to bad taste or countercultural sensibilities once again aligns the films preserved and screened at byNWR with Sconce’s concept of paracinema, which he considers less a group of films and more of a reading protocol, one rooted in the culture of fanzines, film conventions, and memorabilia and embraced by an audience that seeks to challenge the status quo, thereby subverting conventional notions of good taste. Sconce’s ideas echo those that John Guillory puts forth in his book *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. Guillory writes that mainstream canons often serve to reproduce the dominant social order “with all of its various inequities” (ix). He further argues that “canonical and noncanonical works are by definition mutually exclusive; they confront each other in an internally divided curriculum in the same way that hegemonic culture confronts nonhegemonic subcultures in the larger social order” (20). At the same time, however, Guillory notes that alternative canons often allow dominant cultures to further codify subcultural groups as “other,” thereby maintaining their opposition to the canonical or the mainstream.

Of course, Guillory also contends that the canon continuously changes “in response to the frictional relations between institutional and social reproduction,” but that “a discourse of the aesthetic” determines what is deemed worthy of canonization (59). According to Guillory, the discourse of the aesthetic serves to evaluate or judge cultural works and thereby mediate “the specific social values expressed within,” ensuring that only those works that exhibit adequate “aesthetic

value” become canonized and therefore preserved (270). Yet Guillory concedes that this idea of aesthetic value can also lead to the canonization of texts that contain non-mainstream or subversive values. For instance, a canonical text might include material deemed immoral by the mainstream, and that this presents a challenge for defenders of the canon. Ultimately, though, it is possible to find redeeming qualities in so-called disreputable works and thus use them in the classroom for the purposes of teaching, thereby rendering them canonical.

This idea extends to byNWR, which canonizes both seedy exploitation films and subcultural ideologies in the name of educating viewers and inspiring them to “reshape the future” (Phipps). Furthermore, ByNWR presents an alternative to traditional ideas of cultural history by unearthing stories of individuals who helped shape American culture in some way but were cast aside by history. For instance, byNWR features a longform essay on country music singer Frankie Miller, Jr., a former country music sensation who toured with George Jones but is now largely forgotten by all but the most dedicated fans. The site also includes a 3D video recording of Miller performing several of his songs in his living room, thereby archiving his music as well. Similarly, byNWR houses an extensive three-part essay about punk rocker Margaret Doll Rod, former lead singer of the Demolition Doll Rods and a formative figure in the underground riot grrrl feminist punk rock movement of the late 1990s. The essay chronicles her significant contributions both to that scene and the mainstreaming of queer culture and includes a 3D video recording of Doll Rod performing songs with her new band, Heartthrob Chassis.

Because byNWR restores and archives obscure exploitation films marked by transgressive content and historical objects that document subcultures and subcultural ideologies, the site also performs an act of carnivalesque subversion. As such, it becomes useful to consider the site through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas regarding carnival. Bakhtin argues that during carnival sociocultural norms are upended and inverted: fools become kings, rich becomes poor, good becomes evil, and vice versa (*Problems* 176). Bakhtin originated the idea of the carnival and the carnivalesque in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* and then further developed it in *Rabelais and His World*. He relates the carnival to the Feast of Fools, a medieval festival during which participants overturn the social hierarchies of everyday life and celebrate traditionally marginalized or suppressed ideas and individuals. Yet Bakhtin considered liberation from all authority and sacred symbols an undesirable ideology (*Problems* 122, 160). Rather than an event that

advocates for anarchy, carnival extracts all participants from non-carnival life and any ideologies that manifest during the festival fail to exist outside of it.

In addition, byNWR aims to place each film within a specific historical and sociocultural context via the inclusion of extensive supplemental materials and historical ephemera. Thus, the methodology of remediation represents another lens through which to examine byNWR, which remediates several forms of old media—including film, photography, and music—into a new context. According to Bolter and Grusin, remediation refers to “the representation of one medium in another” (45). For Bolter and Grusin, media constantly comment on, reproduce, and replace each other, and as such new media always remediates old media (55). So, for example, a filmed adaptation of a book remediates the printed story, while a musician can then sample an audio clip from the film and insert it into a song. Bolter and Grusin contend that remediation defines new digital media, which constantly remediate prior media technologies such as television, radio, and print (45). However, Bolter and Grusin also note that remediation operates under a double logic, writing “Our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them” (5). For instance, most websites offer some combination of text, graphics, and streaming video, and therefore operate “under the logic of hypermediacy,” a term that refers to a “style of visual representation whose goal is to remind the viewer of the medium” (Bolter & Grusin 273). The authors provide the example of “computer applications that present multiple media (text, graphics, animation, video) using a hypertextual organization” (273). The website therefore comes between the viewer and the meaning of the photographs and video. At the same time, however, viewers desire immediacy and must either ignore the presence of the medium and the act of mediation, or actively attempt to diminish the medium’s representational function.

Given its graphics-heavy design and wealth of multimodal content, byNWR exemplifies the concept of hypermedia, as the site includes a propensity of “prose, graphics, animations, videos, and sounds,” all key components of hypermedia (Bolter and Grusin 36). The site remediates old films, photographs, paintings, and other forms of older media into a new digital context, using hypertextual organization to archive each one and present them to audiences. Of course, it could be argued that the site merely transcodes these old media as per Lev Manovich’s ideas regarding the digitization of physical film, photographs, music, etc. Here, Manovich argues that new digital media represent a “blend of human and computer

meanings” because computing and media converge and combine inside the computer (63). Yet byNWR utilizes hypertextual organization to organize the films and link them to the special features, thereby placing each selection into a new context that allows viewers to watch the films and/or explore their production, reception, and sociocultural legacies. Moreover, the site also allows viewers to wallow in the mediation (i.e. dig through the vast number of supplemental features) or ignore it entirely (i.e. focus solely on watching the film itself). Thus, byNWR aligns more with remediation than transcoding.

Significantly, as Caitlin Elizabeth Mullen explains, “Remediation does not refer to a fundamental opposition to the mainstream so much as the desire of the individual to express themselves.” This notion also applies to byNWR, which, according to Refn at least, seeks to inspire others to express themselves creatively (Bradshaw). At the same time, however, the site preserves films and subcultures deemed disreputable by mainstream institutions and conventional notions of good taste. By highlighting which texts were selected for canonization and which were excluded and thus forgotten, byNWR reveals the tensions that result from the power imbalances between the conventional and the subcultural. The idea of subcultural ideologies thus becomes important when considering that byNWR explicitly positions itself in opposition to conventional tastes and sensibilities via the films selected for preservation and the supplemental features housed alongside them, most of which focus on outsiders or radicals (such as Williams, Doll Rod, Miller, Jr., and Prince). Therefore, the site not only functions as an important digital archive of marginalized texts and subcultures, it also offers up a fascinating commentary on the nature of the archive itself. ByNWR thereby functions as an important document for studying both film history and digital archives.

Conclusion

As a media object, byNWR raises several questions, including: Why restore and preserve old, cheaply-made exploitation films that few people have even heard of much less seen? Why expend so much effort on collecting stories about largely forgotten character actors, minor punk rock singers, neglected country music stars, and infamous pornographers? What is the value of such an enterprise? More importantly, perhaps, how might a researcher approach byNWR from a theoretical perspective and thereby answer such questions? The answers to the first three questions remain beyond the scope of this paper as they require a much more

detailed and lengthy analysis, one that would likely benefit from comparing the site to other types of archives that also set out to collect and house outsider texts such as independently-produced video games or music. This paper hopefully laid the groundwork for answering the fourth question by suggesting an interdisciplinary approach for studying this multimodal networked digital archive.

ByNWR and other similar digital archival projects can house both primary texts and supplemental materials, contextualizing them in a way that highlights how subcultures and subcultural ideologies respond to, challenge, and sometimes subvert dominant ideologies. In the case of byNWR, utilizing traditional and emergent technologies highlights the dialectical tension of the traditional film canon, as originally preserved on celluloid, and the future potentials for that canon by acknowledging emerging film viewing technologies. ByNWR therefore demonstrates aspects of remediation and the carnivalesque, while also conforming to prevailing ideas regarding cult cinema and cultural capital.

Thus, when analyzing this site and its content, researchers would benefit from drawing on one or all the theoretical approaches discussed in this paper. For instance, considering the site's hypermediacy allows for an examination of how byNWR organizes and presents its primary texts (i.e. the films) and the supplemental historical documents that provide further information about those texts. It would also be useful to explore how the films conform to both Sconce's concept of paracinema and Mathijs and Mendik's ideas regarding cult movies and their relationship to more mainstream cinematic fare. This in turn could lead into a discussion of how the act of restoring and archiving these films serves to invert existing sociocultural hierarchies in a way that recalls Bakhtin's ideas regarding carnival and the Feast of Fools. In turn, these theories and methodologies contribute to a consideration of how this archive serves to generate an alternative canon that challenges the existing cinematic canon. Thus, the approaches outlined in this paper would provide a useful theoretical and methodological framework for analyzing byNWR, and an analysis that draws from each would likely prove comprehensive.

Other useful theoretical approaches could include Henry Jenkins' notion of convergence culture, given that byNWR represents a convergence of different media technologies (i.e. film, 3D video, MP3, text, etc.). In addition, researchers could look at the site's aesthetics, interactive design, and interface to examine how it presents content to viewers and whether the site is truly user friendly or if its graphics and interface simply serve as additional barriers between the audience and the content. It is also necessary to look at the films currently housed on the site, as

most were produced, directed, and/or written by white, heterosexual, cisgender males and therefore potentially reinforce patriarchal values. In addition, many of the films feature problematic material including rape, violence against women, and depictions of sex that cater specifically to the male gaze. Thus, researchers could apply Laura Mulvey’s concept of the male gaze and Judith Butler’s ideas regarding gender performativity when examining the site and its offerings.

Furthermore, useful insights may emerge from considering how byNWR and other archival sites preserve outsider artworks and whether their efforts constitute a subversive act or, as Derrida observes, merely reinforces existing power imbalances and sociocultural hierarchies. As such, comparing byNWR to other digital archival sites such as DOSBox, which preserves older games and thus challenges modern video game aesthetics and player expectations, may assist in understanding this process. Similarly, analyzing how queer video game archives create alternative archives that respond to heteronormative archives and thus heteronormative sociocultural ideologies may offer a useful contrast to byNWR’s own archival efforts.

Ultimately, byNWR serves as a rich text for considering how networked digital archives can either subvert or reinforce mainstream, hegemonic values, as well as how they alter the act of conducting historical research and studying film. The site becomes useful for popular culture studies because it allows researchers to consider subcultures that exist alongside of—or even in opposition to—mainstream popular culture, whether from a historical or contemporary perspective. Through its inclusion of films made outside or at the margins of Hollywood, as well as its wealth of supplemental materials, byNWR provides a voice to those who exist at the fringes of popular culture and whose attitudes and ideologies may run counter to the common sentiments of mainstream society but nevertheless remain worthy of remembering.

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