

# A History of Synchronized Swimming<sup>1</sup>

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## <sup>1</sup>Proem

*No fish, no fowl, nor other creature whatsoever that hath any living or being, wether in the depth of the sea or superficies of the water, swimmeth upon his back, man only excepted.*<sup>2</sup>

From articles-fragments-scrounging-primary evidence-sources-references-facts-propaganda<sup>3</sup> (the above quotation dated 1595 is the earliest of my fragments), I assemble here a history of synchronized swimming, or at the least, I compose an essay in which I ponder synchronized swimming at the same time as I tread against the flow<sup>4</sup> of the established methodology of “sport history”

*Historians take unusual pains to erase the elements in their work which reveal their grounding in a particular time and place, their preferences in a controversy—the unavoidable obstacles of their passions. . . . The genealogist. . . must be able to recognize the events of history, its jolts, its surprises, its unsteady victories and unpalatable defeats—the basis of all beginnings, atavisms and heredities. . . . Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. [It] identif[ies] the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely—the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us. . . .*<sup>5</sup>

On genealogy, historical methodology, “items” and “pondering,” I am influenced by Walter Benjamin. Benjamin insisted, “I have nothing to say, only to show.”<sup>6</sup> Benjamin kept thousands of word passages, poetry pieces and “wish images” that he juxtaposed, fit, and disassembled to archive the arcades of the world through which he wandered. In her vast study of Benjamin, Susan Buck-Morss describes this project of Benjamin:

The case of the ponderer is that of the man who already had the resolution to great problems, but has forgotten them. And now he ponders, not so much about the thing as about his past meditations over it. The thinking of the ponderer stands therefore in the sign of remembering. . . . The memory of the ponderer holds sway over the disordered mass of dead knowledge. Human knowledge is piecework to it in a particularly pregnant sense: namely as the heaping up of arbitrarily cut up pieces, out of which one puts together a puzzle. [. . .] The allegorist reaches now here, now there, into chaotic depths that his knowledge places at his disposal, grabs an item out, holds it next to another, and sees whether they fit; that meaning to this image, or this image to that meaning. The result never lets itself be predicted; for there is no natural mediation between the two.<sup>7</sup>

I humbly create my history of synchronized swimming to be Benjaminian.

## Keywords<sup>8</sup>

IOC; US Olympic Synchro Team; 40-year struggle to gain recognition; Eastern Bloc disapproval; Tracy Ruiz; gold medal possibilities; hard work paying off; poetry in motion-beauty-elegance-music-culture-athleticism; limits undefined.

*And, beyond this, there is all the symbolism of swimming—its imaginative resonances, its mythic potentials.*<sup>9</sup>

## Origin of Synchronized Swimming

The first tableau. The first tableau was the opening for doorways and windows. Paul Virillio notes that to understand the first tableau, we would have to try to return to the visual unconscious, to the nature of opening and closing.<sup>10</sup>

Although my primary evidence never mentions origins, tableaux or essences, what I really wonder about is the form and essence of synchronized swimming, the history of the making and the naming of that essence. I would like to claim that in its practices and intentions, synchronized swimming has always been the same: a work of art in water. Because it is art, the life in synchronized swimming (the swimmers) must appear as if they are frozen in a moment, “spellbound.”<sup>11</sup> The performance—all performance—must be framed-by time, by a televisual screen, a pool, the water and so on. The exemplar of this framing in terms of synchronized swimming conceivably occurs at the end of the second part of Leni Riefenstahl’s *Olympia (Festival of Beauty)*, which shows a montage of synchronous divers, summarizing all of the West’s framing notation-obsession

At least half the material for this sequence was shot after the competition—some of the dives are clearly made in an empty stadium. After a while the angles become more extreme, the editing more abstract. Divers dive, but do not fall. There are at least two shots played in reverse. Bodies fall through the air; other bodies spin and rotate, timelessly, as though defying gravity. The last few divers never reach the water, left in the air performing their gyrations.<sup>12</sup>

As it may be, the prototype of synchronized swimming of modern times could be forwarded as the synchronized swimming sequence from the 1984 George Butler film *Pumping Iron II The Women*.<sup>13</sup> In the synchronized swimming series of shots, the Miss Olympia body-building contestant, Carla Dunlap, is centered alone in a neoclassical geometric-design-painted swimming pool that is bordered by *faux* Greek and Roman statuary (i.e., the Nike of Samothrace). She dances a gracefully slow synchronized swimming routine that mirrors the posing routine she later performs on stage to win the contest. The camera angles exclusively on severe closeups of the swimmer's arms, hand, goggled face, crotch, and sole of the foot, calling attention not only to the abstractions of femininity/muscularity that are posed throughout the film (i.e., "a woman is a woman and she should look like a woman"; "you can create a beautiful feminine body with body building"; "I hope they [the judges] stick with the feminine look"), but also to the binary of race when the camera consciously pans to the white sole of Dunlap's black foot during the synchronized swimming routine.

After all, I decide to mark synchronized swimming as a glorious *tableau vivant*, the archetype of which must be Hollywood's<sup>14</sup> choreography of Esther Williams' 1950s movies<sup>15</sup> *Million Dollar Mermaid*, *Dangerous When Wet*, *Bathing Beauty*,<sup>16</sup> and *Neptune's Daughter*<sup>17</sup>—lavish smoke and water spectacles of swimming synchronicity. These filmic depictions of synchronized swimming<sup>18</sup> transcend anything that the Olympic Games have ever produced. Or, maybe not. . . Coca Cola advertisements showcasing musician Robert Palmer and back-up synchronized swimmer-models-singers, as well as various MTV videos that incorporate synchronized swimming into their art, are quite marvelous tableaux, too.

But for now, dive into *my* narrative tableau of a history of synchronized swimming. You can swim in circles, above and below, without having to gulp a linear argument.

## Definition

"Synchronization: art of becoming one with the other and with the music."<sup>19</sup> Or, as Walter Benjamin would say, "Making gestures quotable."<sup>20</sup> Or, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker's dialogue recounting *Swimmer and Sun*, a painting by Alex Colville that depicts a swimmer's head, face-on just breaking the surface of water backgrounded by a fluorescent sun, as the definition of synchronization:

... the head only breaks the surface of the water to announce the bleak truth of the future of the virtual head. . . here there is no communication, only the floating eye as a liquid sign of the virtual body's disappearance into an optical after-effect. No social solidarity. . . And certainly no memory, since the silencing of the mouth intimates the suffocation of the fleshly body below the plane of the water.<sup>21</sup>

Or, Giorgio Agamben's passage from *The Coming Community* to stand as the definition of synchronization:

What was technologized was not the body but its image. Thus the glorious body of advertising has become the mask behind which the fragile, slight human body continues its precarious existence, and the geometrical splendor of the “girls” covers over the long lines of the naked anonymous bodies in the camps, or the thousands of corpses mangled in the daily slaughter on the highways.<sup>22</sup>

Yet, these dystopian definitions are too nihilistic for me. I like synchronized swimming!

## Literature Review

*(to know all that is here:  
all is here, even the gods  
who have climbed out of their forms  
to reproduce and be smelled  
touched, tasted, seen—. . . .  
silent themselves as great opened books  
with all the seductive powers words dryly mimic  
the names you give enclose stale air  
but their documents of cells breathe life  
still you may bear new music  
in each limitation, each bound name  
for it will propagate a thing.)*<sup>23</sup> (italics mine)

Synchronized swimming “not of American origin. Germany had floating competitions for years; England held group swimming galas; Canada held Annual Championship of Ornamental Swimming. . . . But, competition did originate with us in the United States.”<sup>24</sup> In 1923 Katherine Whitney Curtis founded the first synchronized swimming club called the “Tarpon Club” and later the “Century of Progress Modern Mermaids Club” at the University of Chicago.<sup>25</sup> Whitney Curtis recounts:

My interest in stunt swimming originated in 1915 while I was a student at the University of Wisconsin under. . . Coach Joe Steiner. I was a graceful versatile swimmer, but had neither the speed nor the interest necessary for competitive swimming. Stunts. . . were a challenge to me. . . stimulated my imagination. I started one of the first, if not the first of the College Women’s swimming clubs, the Tarpon Club. While working with this group the ballet or synchronized type of performance was developed. . . . we added music to group swimming. . . . At first this music was merely an accompaniment but later the movements in the water were synchronized exactly with the beat and measure of the music just as one would synchronize dance steps.<sup>26</sup>

## Origins

Origin of the term “synchronized swimming”: Norman Ross in 1933 at the Century of Progress at Chicago—or, Norman Ross in 1934 at Chicago World’s

Fair.<sup>27</sup> First co-educational Synchronized Swimming Club in the United States, 1938, Wright Junior College, Chicago. First duel meet in synchronized swimming (under leadership of Frank Havlicek), Chicago Teachers College, May 1939.<sup>28</sup> Amateur Athletic Union, 1940. Synchronized Swimming Committee of the Central Amateur Athletic Union, 1940. Rules for conducting synchronized swimming meets, descriptions of, and “difficulty multiples,” first found in Amateur Athletic Union Swimming Handbook, 1941.<sup>29</sup> Ballet and duet competition.<sup>30</sup> Competitive sport since 1946. Introduced to Pan American Games in Buenos Aires in 1951.<sup>31</sup> Recognized “internationally,” 1952.<sup>32</sup> First synchronized swimming symposium, 1955, University of Michigan.<sup>33</sup> The Olympic Training Center at Squaw Valley is made available to individuals and groups interested in advanced skill development, May 1979.<sup>34</sup> European Championships, 1977.<sup>35</sup> Solo, 1984. Duet, 1987. Team, 1996. Technical-artistic-water-minimum 9 feet deep-three and a half to five minute performance—hold your breath that long.<sup>36</sup>

A University of Wisconsin master’s degree student has already written *The History of Synchronized Swimming*, in 1956.<sup>37</sup> For the next twenty years, Beulah Gundling filled in the missing pieces—*Dancing in the Water; Fun with Aquatic Figure Variations; Aquatic Enchainements and Petite Compositions; The Aquatic Art Book of Water Shows*; and *Creative Synchronized Swimming*.<sup>38</sup> She also formed the International Academy of Aquatic Art.<sup>39</sup> The North American Society for Sport History’s (NASSH) Betty Spears contributed, too—she gave us *Fundamentals of Synchronized Swimming* in three editions (1950, 1958 and 1966).<sup>40</sup> For an update on the historical truth about synchronized swimming, see *The Athlete’s Handbook /United States Synchronized Swimming, Inc., 1996*.<sup>4 1</sup>

## Also Known As

Water ballet, ornamental swimming, water acrobatics, water show, water pageant,<sup>42</sup> aquatic art,<sup>43</sup> aquacades,<sup>44</sup> syncro.<sup>45</sup>

## Scoring

135 recognized figure<sup>46</sup> with difficulty ranging from 1.1 to 2.4.<sup>47</sup> Execution-synchronization<sup>48</sup>-difficulty-confidence-poise-timing-height-stability-control.<sup>49</sup> Points awarded, 0-10.<sup>50</sup>

*The validity of two subjective approaches to judging in synchronized swimming were examined through a multitrait-multimethod matrix. Results indicated that judging panels tended not to differentiate between execution.*<sup>5 1</sup>

## Type of Meet

Intermediate, Senior, Midwestern, Invitational, Association Meet, North Zone Championships, Junior Nationals, Jantzen U.S. Nationals.<sup>52</sup>

## The History of the Science of Synchronized Swimming<sup>53</sup>

“Archimedes’ Principle of Buoyancy”; “Newton’s Law of Inertia”; “Newton’s Law of Acceleration”; “Newton’s Law of Action and Reaction”; “Center of Gravity”; “Center of Buoyancy”; “Static Equilibrium in the Water”; Bernoulli’s Principle;<sup>54</sup> “Hydrostatics”; “Fat and Air”; “Water Pressure,” “Ear Trouble,” “Anatomical Differences”;<sup>55</sup> “Theoretical Square Law”;<sup>56</sup> Labanotation;<sup>57</sup> Sports Medicine.<sup>58</sup>

*The memory of water along with the indivisibility of particles and the black hole hypothesis (there being a secret correspondence between all these things) is the greatest gift science has made to the imagination in recent times. Even if this remains eternally improbable, it is true, from now on, as a metaphor of the mind.*<sup>59</sup>

## Synchronized Swimming Competition Themes

Patriotism, travel, water stories, festivals,<sup>60</sup> fairy tales, music, seasons, weather, daytime, nighttime, representative groups in the United States, cities, circus,<sup>61</sup> “The Happy Japanese Hunter,” “Join the Navy and See the World,” “The Sultan’s Pearl,” “Wet Spots in History,” “Santa Claus’ Visit to Waternymphia,”<sup>62</sup> “Altar Boy”<sup>63</sup> “Deep in the Heart of Texas,” “In the Shadow of the Sphinx,” “Anna in Siam,” “Me and My Shadow,”<sup>64</sup> “The Four Seasons,” “Reenactment of the Kobe Earthquake,” “Fantasia on Orchestra,”<sup>65</sup> and, finally, the Holocaust (at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games, the French Olympic synchronized swim team performance alluded to the Holocaust in its routine).<sup>66</sup>

## Oral History

“We’re forming patterns and moving together, so we all have to be doing exactly the same thing at the same time. . . Pretty much we all even have to breathe together.”<sup>67</sup>

“The smiles on their faces, their hair neatly tucked under a beautifully designed water-proof sequin hat, and the synchronicity of movements you have taught them makes the whole process worthwhile.”<sup>68</sup>

*Heart rates were recorded by radiotelemetry in ten elite and national-class synchronized swimmers as they performed competitive figures of high degrees of difficulty. The focus was on changes in heart rates and electrocardiogram patterns for each body position, especially those requiring facial immersion and breath-holding.*<sup>69</sup>

## Fin de Millennium Synchronized Swimming

—Donald Chu is the 1996 Olympic Syncro Team’s strength trainer.<sup>70</sup> Chu brags, “We keep the team working at an anaerobic threshold of 160-180 heartbeats a minute. . . We keep them working fast and hard. . . . The goal is to build ‘six packs,’ the seriously developed washboard abdominals of magazine cover fame, to serve as another kind of unheralded base.”<sup>71</sup>

—In July 1996, US Olympic team synchronized swimmers Nathalie Schneyder and Margo Thien posed nude for *Life* magazine's study of the muscles of Olympic athletes. I download the 482x360 pixel image at <http://gro-system.gsfc.nasa.gov/images/swimming.jpg> and make it into a slide using PowerPoint software. These photos are surely pinups, but they are not unique to this photographic genre. All of the synchronized swimmers' photos that I lay bare on the WWW duplicate the stance and look of the centerfold.<sup>72</sup>

—Anna Kozlova, 1992 Russian synchronized swimming team: gold medals in team, duet and individual competition.

—Bill Mays made Olympic history when he competed at the Jantzen National Synchronized Swimming Championships in Indianapolis on April 24-28, 1996. He trains with the Santa Clara Aquamaids.<sup>73</sup>

—Synchronized Swimming is chartered as an all-female sport at the Olympic level.<sup>74</sup>

—Extraordinary comedic synchronized swimming routines were aired as "Saturday Night Live" and Jay Leno skits.<sup>75</sup>

—98,300 sites match my WWW "Tracy Ruiz" search. 319,732 sites match my "synchronized swimming" search.

—I visit a WWW video room of Japanese synchronized swimming<sup>76</sup> at the University of Tsukuba. I download the movie, then peek into the "swimmers" and "coaches" "rooms." All filled with conversation about training the body, waterproof make-up, hair plaster, perpetual smiles, secret routines. These are now my primary sources, all sites where history is being made, sites of the coming community.<sup>77</sup> I link to synchronized swimmers' WWW pages from Finland, Canada, Belgium, Italy, Russia, France, Mexico, China, Cincinnati, Troy, Tualatin, Kortrijk, Ottawa and Tucson.<sup>78</sup>

## "Truth"<sup>79</sup>

*There is an essential rightness about swimming, as about all such flowing and, so to speak, musical activities. And then there is the wonder of buoyancy, of being suspended in this thick, transparent medium that supports and embraces us.*<sup>80</sup>

*Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. . . . Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which induces it and which extends it. A 'regime' of truth.*<sup>81</sup>

*One can move in water, play with it, in a way that has no analogue in the air. One can explore its dynamics, its flow, this way and that: one can move one's hands like propellers or direct them like little rudders; one can become a little hydroplane or submarine, investigating the physics of flow with one's own body.*<sup>82</sup>

## Finale

Reason, empiricism, progress, toleration, freedom, secularism, America, streamlining, weightlessness, assembly lines, musicalization,<sup>83</sup> stockpiling,<sup>84</sup> the spine, the body,<sup>85</sup> time clocks,<sup>86</sup> the city, scientific management, travel,<sup>87</sup> voyeurism, “fear of flesh that moves,”<sup>88</sup> geometric formations, miniaturization<sup>89</sup> speed,<sup>90</sup> pornography, flight mime,<sup>91</sup> the slow motion of film, the actor in front of the camera,<sup>92</sup> disciplined bodies, colonialism, binarism, cyborgs, play,<sup>93</sup> performativity,<sup>94</sup> gender,<sup>95</sup> capitalism, violence,<sup>96</sup> spectacle, celebrity, liminality,<sup>97</sup> sport history: all are *tableaux vivant* that frame the inventions, performances and reproductions of modern ways of living in culture. These and more, in the end, are what this essay has been about. This is a history of synchronized swimming. The formations, lines and centerfolds of the essay can also be read synchronously as a description of the academic field/subdiscipline of sport history in North America, and as a history of our times. The keywords of the article that I listed at the beginning of the essay both echo and juxtapose all of the words of this essay’s subsections and finale. They perform a history.

## Notes on a Postmodern History of Synchronized Swimming

The oxymoron of “postmodern” “history” notwithstanding, below find my ideas on what would constitute a postmodern history of synchronized swimming:

- not called history; perhaps instead, from Benjamin, ur-<sup>98</sup>history.
- not a written text, instead performative/virtual: conceivably unrehearsed and/or choreographed theater/dance in style of Merce Cunningham, Samuel Beckett, or Bertolt Brecht’s works. Takes place in zero gravity: water, space and/or virtual reality.
- in addition to gorgeous and unsurpassed performance, music and synchronicity, perhaps also involve drownings, brandings, bleeding, sex acts.<sup>99</sup>
- perchance the synchronized performers are machines with kinesthetic intelligence. . .
- totally exotic and new at the same time as being somehow familiar and primal.

## Epilogue

*Listen to Benjamin's words in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History”: “to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was.’ (Ranke) It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”<sup>100</sup> This present essay about history and synchronized swimming is one example of a hybrid text that “seizes hold of memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”*

*I have directed this written piece to an audience of late twentieth century scholars trained in the so-categorized humanities and social sciences. I would like this essay to count as “sport history.”<sup>101</sup> Within our journals and conferences, the art of doing, reporting and becoming sport history requires fluidity and experimentation.*

I designate my essay as a modern text with postmodern concerns. My postmodern concerns have first to do with recognizing that history-is-science-is-art. My postmodern concerns are directed also toward illuminating disciplines, such as synchronized swimming and sport history, that Foucault argued “invest, mark, train and torture the body; they force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, and to emit signs.”<sup>102</sup> The postmodern concerns of this essay have been semiotic: to acknowledge the modern conception that in, through, and out of language we create, discover, invent and signify our world.<sup>103</sup> The postmodern concerns of this essay have been to show how crises of legitimization, representation<sup>104</sup>—authorship—in history, synchronized swimming, and other disciplines may play out in a work such as this. That is, in this essay, I have endeavored to break up form, to imagine, to “display the seams of [my essay’s] construction.”<sup>105</sup> The postmodern concerns of this essay have been directed toward illuminating the ongoing production of disciplinary boundaries, to destroying definitional attempts to classify “sport,” and to provoking conversations about sport, history and the world as they are, and as they are becoming.

In writing my history of synchronized swimming, I was loyal to the canon of historical methodology and theory, I was true to my grounding in classical source use, I was faithful to observing continuity and change, I was conscious of the complex problems concerning truth, relativism, and representation that are entangled in the practices of being an historian. And out of my allegiance to these things, I re-membered synchronized swimming, producing what I believe is my finest work in the twentieth century discipline-genre known as “sport history.”

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1. Appreciation to Mel Adelman, Cheryl Cole, Steve Hardy, Nate Kohn, Kyle Kusz, Vicky Paraschak, Bob Rinehart, Ron Smith, Nancy Spencer, Chuck Springwood. I am indebted to Dwight Zakus, who organized the “Method and Methodology in Sport History: Is There Any One Way?” session, May 1997, North American Society for Sport History Conference, Springfield, MA, at which a version of this unpublished paper was first presented. I thank Steve Hardy for reading multiple drafts and providing criticism of great detail of this work.
  2. Christofer Middleton, “To Turn on the Back,” *A Short Introduction for to Learne to Swimme* (London: Edward White, 1595) II 3, reprinted in Nicholas Orme, *Early British Swimming, 55 BC-AD 1719* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1983) 11-208; quotation, p. 134.
  3. In the “Method and Methodology in Sport History: Is There Any One Way?” session of the 1997 North American Society for Sport History Conference (see note 1), panel members (Adelman, Hardy, Sydnor, Zakus) representing disparate sport history perspectives each responded to a one-page article, Michael Minich, “Synchronized Swimming,” *Olympian* (July 1984): 52, and to the corresponding sport histories created from this article by panel members Sydnor and Zakus.
  4. For examples of alternative methods of “writing up” sport studies, see especially Robert Rinehart, *Players All: A Search for Authenticity in Twentieth Century Sporting Rituals* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming); Rinehart, “Pentecostal Aquatics: Sacrifice, Redemption, and Secrecy at Camp,” in Norman K. Denzin, ed., *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press Inc., 1995), 109-121; Jim Denison, “Sport Narratives,” *Qualitative Inquiry* vol. 2 no. 3, (1996): 351-362; Nate Kohn, “Exposed and Basking: Community, Spectacle and the Winter Olympics,” *Journal of International Communication* vol. 2 no. 1 (1995): 100-119; Soile Veijola, “Metaphors of Mixed Team Play,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* vol. 29 no. 1 (1994): 31-50; Sydnor

- and Nathaniel H. Kohn, "How do you warm up for a stretch class? Sub/in/di/verting Hegemonic Shoves Toward Sport," in G. Rail and J. Harvey, eds., *Sport and Postmodern Times* (Albany: SUNY Press, forthcoming), 21-32; Sydnor Slowikowski and Kohn, "(Un)toward joy: Movement, Sport and the Meaning of Life," in Margaret C. Duncan and Alan Aycock, eds., *Play Writes: Diversions and Divergences in Fields of Play* (Greenwich CT: Ablex Press, 1998) 275-287; Sydnor Slowikowski, "Symbols, Sport, History: Theoretical Sketches," in Floris J.G. van der Merwe, ed., *Sport as Symbol, Symbols in Sport* (Berlin: Academia Verlag, 1996), 237-258. For discussions of alternative methodologies begin with Norman K. Denzin, "The Sixth Moment," chap. 9 in *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 250-314; and Meaghan Morris, "Henry Parkes Motel," in John Frow and Meaghan Morris, eds. *Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 241-275.
5. Cheryl Cole suggested these quotations. See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 81.
  6. From Benjamin's filing system, *Konvolut V*, 574 [Nla, 8], as archived by Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1993), 222.
  7. Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, 33, 240-241. See also Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Benjamin (H. Arendt, ed.), *Illuminations*, H. Zohn, trans. (New York, Schocken Books, 1968, original work published 1936), 217-251; Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, Quintin Hoare, trans. (London: Verso, 1973); Michael Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, eds., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Volume 1 1913-1926* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996); Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne, eds., *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), x-xi.
  8. These keywords from the initial primary evidence (see note 3).
  9. Oliver Sacks, "Water Babies. Why I Love to Swim," *The New Yorker* (May 26, 1997): 45.
  10. Paul Virillio, *The Lost Dimension*, Daniel Moshenbourg, trans. (New York: Semiotext(c), 1991), 91.
  11. See Walter Benjamin, "On Semblance," in Bullock and Jennings, eds., *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, 1913-1926*, 224: "No work of art may appear completely alive without becoming mere semblance, and ceasing to be a work of art. The life quivering in it must appear petrified and as if spellbound in a single moment."
  12. Taylor Downing, *Olympia* (London: British Film Institute, 1992), 83.
  13. I thank Cheryl Cole for directing me to this synchronized swimming filmic representation. See also Christine Anne Holmlund, "Visible Difference and Flex Appeal: The Body, Sex, Sexuality and Race in the *Pumping Iron* Films," *Cinema Journal* vol. 28, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 38-51.
  14. See Charles Sprawson, *Haunts of the Black Masseur: The Swimmer as Hero* (New York: Pantheon Books), 264-267, for discussion of Ziegfeld showgirls, Miami, Hollywood industrialists, and swimming pools in the 1930s.
  15. See Besford, *Encyclopedia of Swimming*, 250: "Williams, Esther (United States). Esther Williams from Los Angeles might have been an Olympic swimming champion. Instead, she became an aquatic film star."
  16. See Esther Williams' website and links at [http://www.turner.com/tcm/TCMWeb96/July96/Esther\\_Williams.html](http://www.turner.com/tcm/TCMWeb96/July96/Esther_Williams.html).
  17. Sprawson, *Haunts of the Black Masseur: The Swimmer as Hero*, 267.
  18. E.g., Sprawson, *Haunts of the Black Masseur: The Swimmer as Hero*, 266: "Eleanor Holm would march at night on to the stage in silver high-heeled slippers and cape, which she would remove dramatically before diving into the black water in a silver leotard, where

- she performed a prolonged water ballet with Weissmuller, while the orchestra played "The Blue Danube" or occasionally Bing Crosby crooned."
19. As explained at <http://www.cyberneering.com/usof/stories/syncswim.html>.
  20. Walter Benjamin, "What is Epic Theater?" in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 151.
  21. Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, *Hacking the Future: Stories for the Flesh-eating 90s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 45.
  22. Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, Michael Hardt, trans. (Minneapolis and London: The University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 50.
  23. Quotation from David Rosenberg, *The Lost Book of Paradise: Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden* (New York: Hyperion, 1993), 50-51, translated from the *Book of J*, c. 1100 BC.
  24. Katharine Whitney Curtis, *Rhythmic Swimming: A Source Book of Synchronized Swimming and Water Pageantry* (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co., 1936), 1.
  25. Betty J. Vickers, *Teaching Synchronized Swimming* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), 2. See also Carol Tackett, ed., *Synchronized Swimming Handbook* (Indianapolis: Amateur Athletic Union of the United States, 1980), 1.
  26. Curtis, *Rhythmic Swimming: A Source Book of Synchronized Swimming and Water Pageantry*, 1.
  27. Juliane von Wietersheim, *An Approach to the Teaching of Composition in a Synchronized Swimming Course* (Unpublished MS thesis, Smith College, 1955), quoted by Betty Spears, *Fundamentals of Synchronized Swimming*, 1.
  28. Curtis, *Rhythmic Swimming: A Source Book of Synchronized Swimming and Water Pageantry*, 1.
  29. Curtis, *Rhythmic Swimming: A Source Book of Synchronized Swimming and Water Pageantry*, 2.
  30. Vickers, *Teaching Synchronized Swimming*, 2.
  31. Vickers, *Teaching Synchronized Swimming*, 1.
  32. Pat Besford, *Encyclopedia of swimming* (New York and London: St. Martin's Press, 1971), 205.
  33. Vickers, *Teaching Synchronized Swimming*, 3.
  34. Margaret M. Swan, "Synchronized Swimming—The Training at Squaw Valley," *Journal of Physical Education and Recreation* vol. 50 no. 5 (May 1979): 45-47.
  35. Besford, *Encyclopedia of Swimming*, 205.
  36. See footnotes 1-16, 19-22.
  37. Marian Louise Stoerker, *The Origin and Development of Synchronized Swimming in the United States* (Eugene: University of Oregon Microcard Publications, 1956; original M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin).
  38. E.g., Beulah O. Gundling, "Synchronized Swimming—A Sport or an Art?" *Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation* vol. 24 (April 1953): 7; Gundling, *The Aquatic Art Book of Water Shows* (Cedar Rapids: International Academy of Aquatic Art, 1969); Gundling, *Fun with Aquatic Figure Variations* (Cedar Rapids: International Academy of Aquatic Art, 1971); Gundling, *Aquatic Enchainements and Petite Compositions* (Cedar Rapids: International Academy of Aquatic Art, 1972); Gundling, *Dancing in the Water* (Cedar Rapids: International Academy of Aquatic Art, 1976); Gundling and Jill E. White, *Creative Synchronized Swimming* (Champaign, IL: Leisure Press, 1988).
  39. See Peg Seller and Beulah Gundling, *Aquatic Art: A Textbook for Swimmers and Instructors in Aquatic Art* (Cedar Rapids: Pioneer Litho Co., 1957), 1.
  40. E.g., Betty Mary Spears, "How to Start Synchronized Swimming," *Recreation*, vol. 48 (January 1955): 36; Spears, *Fundamentals of Synchronized Swimming* (Minneapolis: Burgess Pub. Co., 1966).

41. E.g., *The Athlete's Handbook / United States Synchronized Swimming, Inc.* (Indianapolis: United States Synchronized Swimming, Inc., 1996). For *historical truths* of synchronized swimming, see also Sarah Henry, "Hey! A Little Respect, Please," *Women's Sports & Fitness* vol. 18 (July/August 1996): 70-72; "Gold-Medal Make Overs," *McCall's* vol. 123 (August 1996): 24-27; "Bathing-Suit Heroines," *The New Yorker* (August 12, 1996): 30-33; "Unsung Sports," *US. News & World Report* (July 15-22, 1996): 71-72; William Oscar Johnson, "Gut of Sync," *Sports Illustrated* vol. 77 (August 17, 1992): 54-55; John Howse, "Synchronized Sensation," *Maclean's* vol. 105 (July 27, 1992): 54-5; Stephanie Tuck, "Hot Fashion," *Rolling Stone* (May 14, 1992): 95-99; Doug Drotman, "Back in Sync," *Women's Sports & Fitness* vol. 10 (August/September 1988): 56; "Swim Gym," *National Geographic World* vol. 151 (March 1988): 4-9; Joseph P Kahn, "Why the Winter Olympics are More Fun to Watch than the Summer Games," *TV Guide* vol. 36 (February 13-19, 1988): 12-14; "Is Synchro in Danger of Sinking?" *Women's Sports & Fitness* vol. 8 (January 1986): 16; Nancy Faber, "Candy Costie and Tracie Ruiz are at Their Most Buoyant When They Get that Synching Feeling," *People Weekly* vol. 21 (April 16, 1984): 122-123; Lisa Schmidt, "The U.S. Olympic Team: Synch & Swim," *Ms.* vol. 12 (December 1983): 110-11; Debra E. Blum, "Emerging Sports for Women," *Chronicle of Higher Education* vol. 40 no. 24 (February 16, 1994): A43-44; David Willings and Bill Greenwood, "Some Ways of Helping Underachievers," *Gifted Education International* vol. 7 no. 1 (1990): 27-32; "Sponsorship in Synchronized Swimming," *Adweek's Marketing Week* vol. 30 no. 28 (July 10, 1989): 49.
42. Lillian A. C. Burke, "Aquatic Pageant Procedures," *Journal of Health and Physical Education*, vol. 18 no. 6 (June 1947): 372.
43. Seller and Gundling, *Aquatic Art: A Textbook for Swimmers and Instructors in Aquatic Art*, 1.
44. Sprawson, *Haunts of the Black Masseur: The Swimmer as Hero*, 266.
45. WWW pages often shorten the spelling of "synchronized" into "synchro."
46. See Robert Crowther, *Pop-Up Olympics: Amazing Facts and Record Breakers* (Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1996), 5, who describes some of the names of synchronized swimming "figures" (moves) in his children's book thusly: "Egg Beater Kicks Eiffel Tower. Synchronized swimming moves have some strange names: Egg-beater kick, Oyster, Shark, and Eiffel Tower."
47. Jean K. Lundholm and Mary Jo Ruggieri, *Introduction to Synchronized Swimming* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Publishing Company, 1976), 123.
48. Betty Baldwin, "Let's Synchronize," *Beach and Pool* vol. 23 (June 1949): 14.
49. See footnote 14; and Karen Allen, "Despite Bumps, Bruises, This Isn't a Contact Sport," *USA Today* (July 1, 1996) at <http://gro-system.gsfc.nasa.gov/070lbrt.htm>.
50. Besford, *Encyclopedia of Swimming*, 206.
51. Jacqueline A. Douglass, "Validation of Two Subjective Rating Systems for Synchronized Swimming," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* vol. 39 no. 2 (Summer 1979): 373-380. See also J.L. Starkes, L. Gabriele, and L. Young, "Performance of the Vertical Position in Synchronized Swimming as a Function of Skill, Proprioceptive and Visual Feedback," *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, vol. 69 no. 1 (August 1, 1989): 225; F. Fugura, G. Cama, and L. Guidetti, "Heart Rate, Alveolar Gases and Blood Lactate During Synchronized Swimming," *Journal of Sports Sciences* vol. 11 no. 2 (April 1993): 103; and B.N. Davies, G.C. Donaldson, and N. Joels, "Do the Competition Rules of Synchronized Swimming Encourage Undesirable Levels of Hypoxia?" *British Journal of Sports Medicine* vol. 29 no. 1 (March 1995): 16.
52. [Http://gro-system.gsfc.nasa.gov/synchro.htm](http://gro-system.gsfc.nasa.gov/synchro.htm).
53. See also Frances Jones and Joyce Lindeman, *The Components of Synchronized Swimming* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975); *Advanced Aquatic Skills in Synchronized Swimming Activities; Report of the Workshop on Advanced Aquatic Skills and Related Activities, held at the Twelfth Annual Meeting, Conference for National Cooperation in Aquatics*,

- November 14 and 15, 1962, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana (Washington DC: Conference for National Cooperation in Aquatics, 1964); Fern Yates and Theresa W. Anderson, *Synchronized Swimming* (New York, Ronald Press Co., 1958).
54. According to Robert Rinehart, former University of Redlands, United States Swimming, "Bruce Miller Learn to Swim Camps" coach.
  55. George Rackham, *Synchronized Swimming* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 95, 100-101, 165.
  56. Jean K. Lundholm and Mary Jo Ruggieri, *Introduction to Synchronized Swimming* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Publishing Company, 1976), 1-10. See also Laurette McCormick, "Application of Physics to Synchronized Swimming," *The Physics Teacher* vol. 35 no. 4 (April 1997): 240.
  57. Mary Ann Hoyle, *The Use of Labanotation for Synchronized Swimming* (Greensboro: Unpublished M.S. thesis, Woman's College, University of North Carolina, 1963).
  58. *Sports Medicine Meets Synchronized Swimming* (Reston, VA: National Association for Girls & Women in Sport; American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance and Amateur Athletic Union of the United States, 1980).
  59. Jean Baudrillard, *Cool Memories II: 1987-1990*, Chris Turner, trans. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 5.
  60. Fern Yates, "Building Swimming Formations," *Journal for Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, vol. 14 no. 5 (May 1943): 262.
  61. Spears, *Fundamentals of Synchronized Swimming*, 104.
  62. Curtis, *Rhythmic Swimming: A Source Book of Synchronized Swimming and Water Pageant*, 79-103.
  63. Ferne Price, *Water Ballet Pageants: Plan Design Produce* (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co., 1965), 148. See also Olive McCormick, *Water Pageants, Games and Stunts* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1933), 131-134, for bibliography of water pageants.
  64. Vickers, *Teaching Synchronized Swimming*, 85-88.
  65. <http://gro-system.gsfc.nasa.gov/0701brt.htm>; <http://gro-system.gsfc.nasa.gov/synchro.htm>.
  66. See Prudence Crowther and James Taibi, "Olympic Notes (Suggested Routines for French Synchronized Swim Team)" *The New York Review of Books* vol. 43 (August 8, 1996): 50; R.J. Lambrose, "The Abusable Past," *Radical-History-Review* (Winter 1997): 218-222, Martha Duffy, "Sunk So Low," *Time* vol. 147 (June 17, 1996): 101.
  67. Heather Pease, US Olympic team, quoted in Allen, "Despite Bumps, Bruises, This Isn't a Contact Sport," at <http://gro-system.gsfc.nasa.gov/0701brt.htm>.
  68. Kim E. Van Buskirk, ed. *Coaching Intermediate Synchronized Swimming Effectively* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1987), 125.
  69. Karen Erickson Gemma and Christine L. Wells, "Heart Rates of Elite Synchronized Swimmers," *Physician and Sportsmedicine* vol. 15 no. 10 (October 1987): 99-106.
  70. On synchro coaches, see Margaret Swan Forbes (with contributions by Donald T. Kane, Dawn Bean, and United States Synchronized Swimming Staff), *Coaching Synchronized Swimming Effectively* (Champaign, IL: Leisure Press, 1989); and Van Buskirk, *Coaching Intermediate Synchronized Swimming Effectively*, 129-131.
  71. Karen Allen, "Underwater Teamwork Powers Graceful Look," *USA Today* (July 1, 1996) at <http://gro-system.gsfc.nasa.gov/0701art.htm>.
  72. E.g., [http://www2.eos.net/gsmize/gator\\_home\\_page;ttp://service.iotek.ns.ca/han/synchrolinks.html](http://www2.eos.net/gsmize/gator_home_page;ttp://service.iotek.ns.ca/han/synchrolinks.html); <http://acs.tamu.edu/~dcs1808/synchro.html>; <http://www.iotek.ns.ca/synchrosim/synchrosim.html>.
  73. <http://gro-system.gsfc.nasa.gov/synchro.htm>.

74. Susan Preston-Mauks, *Synchronized Swimming is for Me* (Minneapolis: Lerner, 1983); Janet Chiefari and Nancy Wightman, *Better Synchronized Swimming for Girls* (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1981).
75. "Synchronized Swimming Notebook," *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (June 17, 1996) at <http://gro-system.gsfc.nasa.gov/synchro.htm>.
76. See [http://www.taiiku.tsukuba.ac.jp/~ohgi/JSW/Synchro/index\\_e.html](http://www.taiiku.tsukuba.ac.jp/~ohgi/JSW/Synchro/index_e.html).
77. See Agamben, *The Coming Community*, "Example," 10.1: "[the coming community] is composed of pure singularities that communicate only in the empty space of the example . . . they are expropriated if all identity, so as to appropriate belonging itself. . . Tricksters or fakes, assistants or 'toons, they are the exemplars of the coming community"
78. E.g., [http://www2.eos.net/gsmize/gator\\_home-page](http://www2.eos.net/gsmize/gator_home-page).
79. I am indebted to Cheryl Cole for the idea of this subsection.
80. Sacks, "Water Babies. Why I Love to Swim," 45.
81. Cheryl Cole suggested this quotation. See James D. Marshall, "Foucault and Educational Research," in Stephen J. Ball, ed., *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 13.
82. Sacks, "Water Babies. Why I Love to Swim," 45.
83. Andreas Huysean, *Twilight Memories: Making Time in a Culture Of Amnesia* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 14, 25, 31. Musealization refers to the framing, captioning and/or public display of anything as a "collection." See also James Boon, "Why Museums Make Me Sad," in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Levine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institute, 1992), 255-278; Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Paul Foss, Paul Patton, Philip Beitchman, trans. (New York, Semiotext(e) Inc., 1983); James Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 96-116; Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, William Weaver, trans. (San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976).
84. Jean Baudrillard, *Cool Memories II: 1987-1990*, Chris Turner, trans. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 19: "Our entire linear and accumulative culture would collapse if we could not stockpile the past in plain view. We need an invisible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin to reassure us as to our ends."
85. E.g., A. David Napier, *Foreign Bodies: Performre, Art and Symbolic Anthropology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 68, 174-175.
86. On time clocks and Olympic Games, see Buck-Mors, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, 326, from Benjamin's unpublished Konvolut I, *The Interior, Trace*, 1039-1040.
87. Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hperreality*, 9-39.
88. Joanna Frueh, "The Fear of Flesh that Moves," *High Performance* vol. 55 (1991): 71. Frueh used the phrase "fear of flesh that moves," to describe models of feminine perfection, writing that "the flesh that moves disgusts the self that is designed out of Western thought."
89. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 37-69.
90. Virillio, *The Lost Dimension*.
91. E.g., Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 19; Hillel Schwartz, "Torque, The New Kinaesthetic of the Twentieth Century," in Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter, eds., *Incorporations* (New York: Urzone Inc., 1992), 99.
92. E.g., Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973), 74-199; Rodolphe Gashé, "Objective Diversions," in Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne, eds., *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience* (New York and London: Routledge,

- 1994), 192-193; Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins, "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of National Geographic," in Lucien Taylor, ed., *Visualizing Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 366.
93. Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 295-324; Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 228-265.
  94. E.g., Elin Diamond, "The Shudder of Catharsis in Twentieth Century Performance," in Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Performativity and Performance* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 152-172; Joseph Roach, "Culture and Performance in the Circum-Atlantic World," in Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Performativity and Performance* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 148.
  95. For example, as performed within Robert Mapplethorpe's photos in *Ten by Ten* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1980); and in R. Marshall, ed., *Robert Mapplethorpe* (Boston, Toronto and London: Whitney Museum of American Art, Bulfinch Press, and Little, Brown and co., 1988).
  96. Richard Schechner, "Ritual, Violence, Creativity," in Smadar Lavie, Kirin Narayan and Renato Rosaldo, eds., *Creativity / Anthropology* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 296-320.
  97. On liminality see Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee, trans. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960, original work published 1909), 138-139, 170-171; Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 93-111; Sydnor Slowikowski, "Symbols, Sport, History: Theoretical Sketches," 237-258.
  98. For Benjamin's use of the "ur" conception, which he contemplated from Goethe and Georg Simmel, see Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing. Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project*, 71-74. Generally, "ur-phenomenon" such as an "ur-history" of synchronized swimming is "a concrete, factual representation of those historical images in which capitalist-industrial economic forms could be seen in a purer, embryonic stage" (Buck-Morss, 73).
  99. I.e., Richard Schechner, "News, Sex and Performance Theory," in Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 300-307, 324.
  100. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 255. So, when I heed Benjamin, please do not react by "policing, punishing, mocking, even ridiculing" (Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, 251) such an essay as mine as not 'real' history. Do not dismiss my take on synchronized swimming as "postmodern mumbo jumbo" (anonymous reviewer of one of my manuscripts, August, 1995). Instead, I want the reader/listener to engage with me and/or many others in disparate "complex subtle arguments" (Norman K. Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century* (Thousand Oaks, CA, and London: Sage Publications, 1997), 255, which I know this essay will provoke.
  101. On dissolution of disciplinarity see Agamben, *The Coming Community*, Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge), 1994.
  102. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, A. Sheridan, trans. (New York: Pantheon, 1977, original work published 1975), 25. See also Cheryl Cole and Melissa Orlie, "Hybrid Athletes, Monstrous Addicts and Cyborg Natures," review of John Hoberman, *The Science of Performance and the Dehumanization of Sport*, and Jimmie Reeves and Richard Cambell, *Cracked Coverage: Television News, the Anti-Cocaine Narrative, and the Reagan Legacy* in *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 22 no. 3 (Fall 1995): 228-239; John Hoberman, *Mortal Engines: The Science of Performance and the Dehumanization of Sport* (New York: Free Press, 1994).
  103. Also, on putting this idea into practice, see Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 324: "These kind of performances undermine not only classic Euro-American aesthetics but the social reality these aesthetics were constructed to reflect and support."

104. Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, 3-89, 261.
105. These are the words of Stephen Muecke writing to Cultural Studies Listserv (cultstud-1@nosferatu.cas.usf.edu), Feb. 4, 1997: "display the seams of its construction," to describe the genre of "fictocriticism."