

# Looking for a Place to Happen

## Collective Memory, Digital Music Archiving, and the Tragically Hip

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**ABSTRACT** This article takes the Canadian band the Tragically Hip as a case study in pro-amateur digital music archiving and also considers the larger place of the band's music within the context of cultural memory. After lead singer and lyricist Gord Downie's cancer diagnosis in 2016, the band made the remarkable decision to undertake a Canadian tour, which became one of the most obsessively documented rock tours in Canadian history. Drawing on close readings of the band's performances and some of the digital records that capture them, the article argues for the importance of considering questions of evidence and memory together, especially in the context of archiving popular music. The article begins with a discussion of the Tragically Hip's value as an archival case study, which is based on the band's linking of composition and live improvisation. It then turns to the engagement of the band's songs with the materials of Canadian collective memory, the work of bootleg collectors and pro-am archivists in the documentation of performance history, and the documentation of the band's final Canadian tour in 2016. Throughout, the article examines how professional and pro-am archiving can complement each other in the case of a band like the Hip, whose music is so closely linked to the idea of Canadian collective memory.

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**RÉSUMÉ** Cet article utilise le groupe canadien The Tragically Hip comme étude de cas de l'archivage de musique numérique pro-amateur et aborde aussi la place plus large qu'occupe la musique de ce groupe dans le contexte de la mémoire culturelle. Après le diagnostic de cancer du chanteur principal et parolier Gord Downie en 2016, le groupe a pris la remarquable décision d'entreprendre une tournée canadienne qui est devenue la tournée rock la plus hyper-documentée de l'histoire canadienne. En effectuant une lecture attentive des prestations du groupe et de quelques documents numériques qui les ont captées, cet article plaide pour l'importance de considérer ensemble les questions de preuve et de mémoire, surtout dans le contexte de l'archivage de la musique populaire. Cet article débute avec une discussion sur la valeur de The Tragically Hip comme étude de cas archivistique, qui est basée sur le lien que le groupe entretient entre la composition et l'improvisation en direct. Il explore ensuite l'engagement des chansons de ce groupe envers le matériel de la mémoire canadienne collective, le travail des collectionneurs d'enregistrement pirate et des archivistes pro-amateurs dans la création d'une documentation relative à l'histoire de leurs prestations, et la documentation relative à la dernière tournée canadienne du groupe en 2016. À travers l'article, l'auteur examine comment l'archivage professionnel et pro-amateur peuvent se compléter dans un cas comme celui du groupe The Tragically Hip, dont la musique est si étroitement liée à l'idée de mémoire collective canadienne.

This research was supported by an Insight Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. This article began as a keynote talk for the Archival Education and Research Institute at the University of Toronto in 2017, and I am grateful to the audience and organizers, especially Fiorella Foscarini and Heather MacNeil. I also wish to thank Jennifer Douglas, Patrick Finn, Jenny Kerber, Heather Murray, Matthew Schneider, Brock Silversides, Alan Stanbridge, Kelly Turner, and the anonymous *Archivaria* reviewers. Special thanks to the tapers and those who shared the audience recordings used in this research. A companion blog post with supplementary material can be found at <https://veilofcode.wordpress.com/hip-article/>.

*In this gradual transformation of the archivist from passive keeper guarding the past to active mediator self-consciously shaping society's collective memory, the archive(s) itself is changed from an unquestioned storehouse of history waiting to be found to itself becoming a contested site for identity and memory formation.<sup>1</sup>*

– Terry Cook, “The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country”

<sup>1</sup> Terry Cook, “The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the Changing Archival Landscape,” *Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (2009): 497–534, 533.

## Introduction

I remember exactly where I was when I heard Gord Downie had died. The lead singer and lyricist for Canada's most popular rock band, the Tragically Hip, had been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer in 2016, and on the morning of 18 October 2017, I was in Toronto's Pearson Airport, just about to board a flight to Los Angeles, when one of the ubiquitous TV screens informed me that Gord had died at the age of 53. It was oddly appropriate to receive this sad news alone in a crowd, given the Tragically Hip's well-earned reputation for connecting people in my country via shared cultural references in the band's music. But on my long, meditative flight across the continent, on my way to attend a manuscript digitization symposium at the University of California, Los Angeles, I found myself reacting to Gord's death alone, 30,000 feet in the air without an Internet connection, travelling to a country where relatively few people know the Tragically Hip's idiosyncratically Canadian music, and carrying only the materials of memory that I had brought with me.

In other words, I processed the news of Gord's death via the stuff of archives: my own memories, but also the various digital records – audio, pictorial, video – that happened to be on my computer's hard drive. As I watched a fan-circulated video of a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) broadcast of the Tragically Hip's final concert, the song "Gift Shop" happened to coincide with the pilot's announcement that we were passing over the song's geographical subject, the Grand Canyon. To complete a day of poignant coincidences, the evening I arrived in LA, I fought through jet lag to catch a show at one of West Hollywood's most famous live music venues, the Whiskey a Go-Go on Sunset Strip, where the Tragically Hip had played an early career show in 1993. The Whiskey's small stage has been the site of innumerable moments in rock history, but all I could think of that night was how that same stage, just a few feet away from me through the crowd, was the same place where Gord had stood 24 years earlier with a long life and career still ahead of him, performing music that disappears in the moment but endures in memory.

This article is about the interpenetration of memory, music, performance, and material records, and specifically about the challenges and opportunities that artists like the Tragically Hip present for rethinking the nature of music archiving in the digital age. I focus on one of Canada's most obsessively documented bands as a case study in digitally circulated performance recordings, which present-day

archivists and future historians must understand when dealing with popular music, especially in the form of seemingly ephemeral records of live performance. The social life of rock music is so often lived through its ephemera: an archivist working with the Tragically Hip's materials may encounter not only published recordings, but also promotional posters, t-shirts, fan mail, studio outtakes, concert recordings, and other materials – some obvious and some not.<sup>2</sup> Even the CBC broadcast of the Tragically Hip's final concert was a piece of digital ephemera when I watched it on my flight the day Downie died: at the time, the concert video recording had not yet been released commercially, and my copy of the broadcast took the form of digital files downloaded from a bootleg collecting website, The Ultimate Bootleg Experience.<sup>3</sup>

A visit to that website offers a glimpse into the world of community archives for music as they have taken shape online, in the hands of people who have been called, variously, community archivists, pro-am digitizers, amateur experts, do-it-yourself (DIY) heritage communities of practice, and even rogue archivists.<sup>4</sup> The institutional archiving of popular music has a relatively short history, and while exemplary archives such as the Grateful Dead Archive at the University of Cali-

2 On the Tragically Hip's history, see Michael Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present: The Story of Gord Downie and The Tragically Hip* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2018). On music and material culture, see Marion Leonard, "Constructing Histories through Material Culture: Popular Music, Museums, and Collecting," *Popular Music History* 2, no. 2 (2007): 147–67.

3 "The Tragically Hip – 2016-08-20 – Kingston, ON (DVDfull pro-shot)," The Ultimate Bootleg Experience, posted by "giovedì," 19 October 2017, accessed 22 September 2018, <http://theultimatebootlegexperience7.blogspot.ca/search/label/The%20Tragically%20Hip>. An official video of the concert has since been released as *A National Celebration*, by Universal Music Canada, 2017.

4 Community archives, as Rebecka Sheffield defines them, develop outside the "formal heritage networks" of professional archiving and include "local history museums, historical societies, ethno-cultural collections, religious and spiritual archives, resource centers, and sports and leisure clubs as well as . . . activist archives." Rebecka Sheffield, "Community Archives," in *Currents of Archival Thinking*, ed. Heather MacNeil and Terry Eastwood, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2017), 351–76, 351. On the rise of the professional-amateur (commonly abbreviated as *pro-am*), i.e., an amateur whose work approaches or meets a professional standard, see Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller, *The Pro-Am Revolution: How Enthusiasts Are Changing Our Economy and Society* (London: Demos, 2004). On pro-am digitization of cultural heritage specifically, see Melissa Terras, "Digital Curiosities: Resource Creation via Amateur Digitization," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 25, no. 4 (2010): 425–38. On the term *amateur experts*, see Nancy K. Baym and Robert Burnett, "Amateur Experts: International Fan Labour in Swedish Independent Music," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 12, no. 5 (2009): 433–49. Sarah Baker's work on do-it-yourself heritage institutions builds on Etienne Wenger's term *communities of practice*. See Sarah Baker, *Community Custodians of Popular Music's Past: A DIY Approach to Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2018); and Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). The term *rogue archivist*, referring to those who carry out archival projects online and largely outside of institutional and

fornia, Santa Cruz; the EMI Music Canada Archive at the University of Calgary; and the University of Toronto's Media Commons are making up lost ground in the archiving of popular music, the practical question of how to document something as ordinary as a concert tour remains a challenge. By focusing on the Tragically Hip as a case study in pro-am curation of popular musical heritage, I hope to shed light on the complementarity of pro-am and professional musical archiving – especially in the relatively neglected area of popular music.<sup>5</sup>

That complementarity has been amplified by the Web, and the work being done by online pro-am communities requires us to attend to what Costis Dallas has called digital curation “in the wild.”<sup>6</sup> Some scholars in fields related to memory and heritage studies have recognized the pro-am curation of bootlegs and audience recordings, especially where there is significant interdependence between genre, format, and the sense of liveness.<sup>7</sup> As Chris Atton notes (with respect to all live recordings, not just bootlegs), “while comparatively rare in rock music, recordings of improvised music have a particular significance in jazz, where they enable live performances to be preserved, studied and codified,

legal constraints, comes from Abigail De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 1–3.

- 5 Brock Silversides addressed this neglect in a talk entitled “The Academic Archivist's Fear of Popular Music,” given at the Canadian Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres conference, Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ottawa, 4 June 2015. I am grateful to him for sharing an unpublished version of his conference paper.
- 6 Costis Dallas, “Digital Curation Beyond the ‘Wild Frontier’: A Pragmatic Approach,” *Archival Science* 16, no. 4 (2016): 421–57, 445. Dallas notes ambivalence about the colonial connotations of the “wild frontier” metaphor, 439–40.
- 7 On the crucial distinction between commercial bootlegs and audience tape trading, see Lee Marshall, “For and Against the Record Industry: An Introduction to Bootleg Collectors and Tape Traders,” *Popular Music* 22, no. 1 (2003): 57–72. On the concept of “liveness,” which paradoxically depends on the possibility of recording, see Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2008) and his follow-up article “Digital Liveness: A Historico-Philosophical Perspective,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 34, no. 3 (2012): 3–11. The definitive histories of rock bootlegs are Clinton Heylin, *The Great White Wonders: A History of Rock Bootlegs* (New York: Viking Press, 1994) and Clinton Heylin, *Bootleg! The Rise and Fall of the Secret Recording Industry* (London: Omnibus Press, 2003). For examples of bootlegs in music scholarship, see Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 71–72, 76–77, 434; Lee Marshall, “Bob Dylan: Newport Folk Festival, July 25, 1965,” in *Performance and Popular Music: History, Place and Time*, ed. Ian Inglis (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 18; Sean Albiez, “Print the Truth, Not the Legend. The Sex Pistols: Lesser Free Trade Hall, Manchester, June 4, 1976,” in Inglis, *Performance and Popular Music*, 96; Susan Fast, “Popular Music Performance and Cultural Memory. Queen: Live Aid, Wembley Stadium, London, July 13, 1985,” in Inglis, *Performance and Popular Music*, 140, 152–54; Tim Hughes, “Nirvana: University of Washington, Seattle, January 6, 1990,” in Inglis, *Performance and Popular Music*, 155–71 passim; and Josh Heuman, “Unpacking the Gift: Negotiating Property and Custody in Archival Hardcore Blogs,” *Popular Music* 32, no. 2 (2013): 177–95.

processes that have enabled the historiography of jazz.”<sup>8</sup> This methodological tendency has consequences for archiving jazz music, as Atton goes on to note: “The collection, archiving and distribution of live recordings of improvisation have become part of a strategy of jazz historiography – even . . . an argument for considering the history of jazz as a history of its sound recordings.”<sup>9</sup> The Tragically Hip represents one of the relatively few instances of the sustained rock improvisation that Atton mentions – and, indeed, the only case I know of outside of freestyle hip-hop where that improvisation is primarily lyrical.

As the next section will show, the place of the Tragically Hip in the Canadian cultural landscape also makes the band’s work a valuable test-case for studying the relationship between archives, evidence, and memory in a digital landscape. Indeed, the relationship between the Tragically Hip and Canadian nationalism has been a vexing question both for the band and for researchers.<sup>10</sup> That relationship came under particular pressure during the band’s 2016 *Man Machine Poem* tour. In light of public knowledge of Downie’s terminal illness, it became a de facto farewell tour, culminating in the CBC’s live broadcast of the tour’s final concert, tellingly subtitled “A National Celebration.” Before arriving at a discussion of that final tour and the ways it was documented, this article will turn first to an overview of the Tragically Hip’s virtues as an archival case study, then to the band’s place within Canadian collective memory, and then to the importance of bootlegs and audience tapes as historical evidence. As I hope to demonstrate through close readings of songs as texts and concert recordings as documents, the question of the digital curation and archiving of live music requires us to explore the increasingly digital and distributed places where that work happens.

- 8 Chris Atton, “Curating Popular Music: Authority and History, Aesthetics and Technology,” *Popular Music* 33, no. 3 (2014): 413–27, 420.
- 9 Atton, “Curating Popular Music,” 420. On the latter point about jazz as a history of its recordings, Atton cites Lee Brown, “Phonography, Repetition, and Spontaneity,” *Philosophy and Literature* 24, no. 1 (2000): 111–25.
- 10 See C.E.J. Simons, “Peace, Order, and Their Discontents: The Tragically Hip,” in *Canadian Music and American Culture: Get Away From Me*, ed. Tristanne Connolly and Tomoyuki Iino (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 185–215; and Gregory Millard, Sarah Riegel, and John Wright, “Here’s Where We Get Canadian: English-Canadian Nationalism and Popular Culture,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 32, no. 1 (2002): 11–34.

## Evidence, Memory, and the Workshop

As an archival case study, the music of the Tragically Hip highlights what Terry Cook calls the “central competing dichotomy in the archival profession”: evidence versus memory.<sup>11</sup> The pragmatic questions about concert recordings as evidence that I explore throughout this article bear out Cook’s claim that “the central mantra of archives has traditionally focused on evidence” and on the role of archives as reliable sites for its preservation.<sup>12</sup> But Cook also points to the equal importance of memory as a subject that, though it may not lend itself to the same empirical rigour, nonetheless remains central to archives’ capacity to mediate and even reshape culture, not just document it. As he argues, “evidence and memory have evolved . . . in archival discourse in a kind of creative tension, each worthless without the other despite the contrary implications they seemingly have for the archival endeavour.”<sup>13</sup> As a field, archival studies has increasingly engaged with scholarship that could be broadly grouped under the term *memory studies*.<sup>14</sup> The concept of collective memory in particular has been taken up by archival scholars in recent years, and the relationship between the collective memories of social groups and the evidentiary value of archival records has prompted much interdisciplinary work.<sup>15</sup>

11 Terry Cook, “Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms,” *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 95–120, 99. See also Jennifer Meehan, “Towards an Archival Concept of Evidence,” *Archivaria* 61 (2006): 127–46.

12 Cook, “Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community,” 100.

13 Cook, “Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community,” 102.

14 A brief but useful overview of various strains of thought that fall under the term *memory studies* may be found in De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives*, 28–30. Barbara L. Craig surveys key texts in the field from an archival studies perspective in her review essay “Selected Themes in the Literature on Memory and Their Pertinence to Archives,” *American Archivist* 65, no. 2 (2002): 276–89. For a more detailed introduction to memory studies, see Anne Whitehead, *Memory* (London: Routledge, 2009).

15 The term *collective memory* originates with the philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, in his 1950 book *La mémoire collective*, published in English as *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). On the concept’s take-up by archivists, see Trond Jacobson, Ricardo L. Punzalan, and Margaret L. Hedstrom, “Invoking ‘Collective Memory’: Mapping the Emergence of a Concept in Archival Science,” *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 217–51. See also Hugh A. Taylor, “The Collective Memory: Archives and Libraries as Heritage,” *Archivaria* 15 (1982–83): 118–30; Hugh A. Taylor, “‘Heritage’ Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Material Culture,” *Archivaria* 40 (1995): 8–20; Cook, “Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community,” *Archival Science* 13 (2013): 95–120; Terry Cook, “What Is Past Is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift,” *Archivaria* 43 (1997): 17–63; Brien Brothman, “The Past that Archives Keep: Memory, History, and the Preservation of Archival Records,”

As Hugh Taylor asks in his foundational 1982 article on collective memory, “at what juncture do records (meaning in the fullest sense of all that is imaged or textually written for public or private business) become part of a national or local heritage?”<sup>16</sup> The Tragically Hip’s music pairs well with Taylor’s question, which comes from a foundational Canadian archival scholar and reflects the Canadian concept of total archives in its expansive definition of records.<sup>17</sup> Taylor also puts his finger on a central epistemological question when he asserts that “documents contain the record of events; they are not the events themselves.”<sup>18</sup> The events that archival theory is built upon have not tended to be rock concerts, but they can be a useful (albeit unconventional) context in which to test the relationship between events and their records – especially when those records’ creation and reception are so closely linked to the collective memory that Taylor emphasized in his discussions of archives.

My choice of the Tragically Hip as a case study for these questions follows a logic similar to David Wallace’s archival analysis of concert recordings of the Grateful Dead, whom he describes as “a 30-year travelling experiment in improvisational music and audience co-creation.”<sup>19</sup> The similar long-running relationship between members of the Tragically Hip and their audience makes the band another worthwhile example of community curation of popular music heritage – but with some important differences. With both bands, live improvisation

*Archivaria* 51 (2001): 48–80; Michael Piggott, “Archives and Memory,” in *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society*, ed. Sue McKemish, Michael Piggott, Barbara Reed, and Frank Upward (Wagga Wagga, NSW: Centre for Information Studies, Charles Stewart University, 2005), 299–328; and Margaret Hedstrom, “Archives and Collective Memory: More than a Metaphor, Less than an Analogy,” in *Currents of Archival Thinking*, ed. Terry Eastwood and Heather MacNeil, 1st ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2010), 163–79.

16 Taylor, “The Collective Memory,” 119.

17 On the concept of total archives, which holds that “publicly funded archival institutions . . . [should] acquire, preserve, and make available for public use both government and private sector records in *all* media, including . . . sound recordings,” see Laura Millar, “Discharging Our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada,” *Archivaria* 46 (1998): 103–46, 104 (emphasis added).

18 Taylor, “The Collective Memory,” 119. Cf. Heather MacNeil’s argument that one of the archival strategies of bureaucratic modernity is to “to conceive of the record itself as the event,” and to evaluate records “not in terms of their effectiveness in mirroring external events, but rather in terms of their completeness in accordance with bureaucratic standards.” Heather MacNeil, “Trusting Records in a Postmodern World,” *Archivaria* 51 (2001): 36–47, 42.

19 David A. Wallace, “Co-Creation of the Grateful Dead Sound Archive: Control, Access, and Curation Communities,” in *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory*, ed. Jeanette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander (London: Facet, 2009), 169.

means that no two performances are identical, and the variations between one and another night's versions of a song may be of great interest to fans and archival scholars alike. But where the Grateful Dead's live performances were characterized by musical improvisation – exemplified by the song “Dark Star,” whose live versions might extend 20–30 minutes beyond its original recorded length of 2:40 – the Tragically Hip's musical unpredictability was more lyrical than instrumental, with Downie experimenting on stage with established lyrics and evolving stories that might later become songs in their own right.<sup>20</sup>

In particular, the band had a long-running tradition of using the song “New Orleans Is Sinking” (released on the 1989 album, *Up to Here*) as a workshop in performance, in extended live versions where prototype lyrics and sometimes entirely new songs would be tested on audiences. As Michael Barclay, Ian Jack, and Jason Schneider describe in their history of Canadian rock music, *Have Not Been the Same: The CanRock Renaissance, 1985–1995*, “New Orleans Is Sinking” became the climax of the Hip's early career sets because it grew into a vehicle for the band's own creativity: it became a “window of opportunity every night where anything could happen; where the sketch of a new song could be embellished, or Downie's improvised monologues could meet the crowd's energy head on, creating an often extended, catastrophic narrative.”<sup>21</sup> As Downie himself described this workshopping approach,

in order for a show to be great something has to happen, and [“New Orleans Is Sinking”] is the type of song where, if you're feeling right, something can happen. *No matter who you are, you love a glimpse into the workshop.* At the Big Apple in Colborne [Ontario], there's the window where you can watch them making pies, and there's something about that. It's only the big corporations that have created this clandestine world where you're not supposed to see how something is made. In a weird way that song shows

20 As Downie commented, “I've read that I have goofy stage antics and that I have rants. I do know that I'm planning on a beginning, middle and end. I'm cognizant of composition.” Quoted in Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 15; see also 263–65. For this reason, when referring to Downie's longer improvisations, I use the term *story* rather than *rant* or even *monologue*, which overlooks the band's role as improvising collaborators in Downie's mid-song storytelling.

21 Michael Barclay, Ian A.D. Jack, and Jason Schneider, *Have Not Been the Same: The CanRock Renaissance, 1985–1995*, rev. ed. (Toronto: ECW Press, 2011), 596.

we really have nothing to hide, that it's an ongoing process when we're writing songs and that's the thing we care about most.<sup>22</sup>

Downie's words capture the essence of the relationship between musicianship and music archiving, and the "ongoing process" he describes can be documented as a process through the kinds of recordings that music archives can preserve.

There is no single institutionally based Tragically Hip archive (yet), but the potential value of one can be glimpsed by following the band's creative processes through various kinds of recordings. For example, other well-known Hip songs like "Ahead by a Century" and "Nautical Disaster" first reached audiences as live extensions of "New Orleans Is Sinking," which was also a workshop for unfinished musical ideas. The performance of "New Orleans Is Sinking" that appears on a 1991 bootleg known as "Live at the Roxy" (a.k.a. "Roxy and Elsewhere," discussed in detail later) features an extended jam over which Downie tells a surreal story – known as the "Killerwhaletank" rant (one word) – in which a hapless aquarium worker becomes entangled in a cetacean love triangle. The "Killerwhaletank" story never did become a song in its own right, but the 1991 Roxy Theatre performance of "New Orleans Is Sinking" became a touchstone for many Hip fans as the B-side to the single "Long Time Running" and through bootlegs. (At least one inflatable orca toy was sighted in the audience during the final performance of "New Orleans Is Sinking" in Kingston in 2016.)<sup>23</sup>

Other concert recordings from 1991 reveal variant versions of the "Killerwhaletank" story and others told during "New Orleans Is Sinking," including several performances where the band's background jamming includes seeds of the song "Nautical Disaster," released three years later on the *Day for Night* album.<sup>24</sup> Audiences in 1991 would not have recognized those few chord changes as a future classic, but on 5 September 1993, one of the first full performances of "Nautical Disaster" occurred as an interpolation within "New Orleans Is Sinking" at

22 Quoted in Barclay, Jack, and Schneider, *Have Not Been the Same*, 596–97 (emphasis added).

23 The orca toy can be seen in the audience occasionally – including in a well-timed breach on the song's final note – during "New Orleans Is Sinking," on the concert video *A National Celebration*.

24 For example, the best recorded rendition of the "Killerwhaletank" story is arguably the one performed at Kingston, Ontario, on 29 August 1991. Near the climax of the story, the band transitions into the slow Em–Dmaj chord change and descending Esus2–D6 guitar figure that closes "Nautical Disaster." See the concert archive on Hipbase.com for the 1991 Kingston recording.

Toronto's Ontario Place Forum.<sup>25</sup> Downie introduces "New Orleans Is Sinking" by saying "no Canadian band, no Canadian musician, would be complete without a song about a nautical disaster" – an unmistakable reference to Gordon Lightfoot's "Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*" (which the band would also cover).<sup>26</sup> Although "Nautical Disaster" would become a standalone song soon after, the performance history described here came full circle in the band's 2011 set lists, which paid tribute to the song's workshop origins by interpolating it within "New Orleans Is Sinking," just as the band did when first sharing it with audiences.

In this way, the Tragically Hip's live workshopping was part of what Downie called the "ongoing process" of the band's compositional practices, and the group's live recordings – official and unofficial – hold the kind of evidentiary value that also draws literary and textual scholars to archives. These kinds of researchers tend to embrace the messiness of workshops as generative spaces for creative work, and any comprehensive understanding of the work of creative artists such as the Tragically Hip requires archival research. But where a literary scholar interested in, say, Margaret Atwood's compositional choices, second thoughts, rearrangements, deletions, and uncompromised first thoughts in *The Handmaid's Tale* can view Atwood's manuscripts, annotated typescripts, and other documents at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, it is not so straightforward to arrange the documents of composition for "Nautical Disaster" on a table in a reading room.<sup>27</sup>

When we consider the nature of evidence for historical inquiry about popular music heritage, we must therefore also reconsider the nature of heritage institutions. As Melissa Terras has noted in the context of pro-am digitization, "ephemera and popular culture materials are often better served by their

25 See "Tragically Hip 1993-09-05 Ontario Place 'Kumbaya,'" YouTube video, 30:30, posted by "Tony Rampling," 23 March 2017, accessed 22 September 2018, <https://youtu.be/1fk5G0ao-fM>. (The song begins at about 16:30.) In the same performance, "At the Hundredth Meridian" contains early versions of lyrics that would become the song "Scared."

26 Sixteen years later, when introducing "Nautical Disaster" on the final show of a six-night residency at Toronto's Massey Hall, Downie would make the connection explicit: "Here's one for Gordie Lightfoot, a man who helped build this place. Who made it mandatory for every Canadian singer-songwriter to have at least one song in his or her repertoire involving a nautical disaster. In a country made of water, it just makes good sense." See the audience recording of the show from 19 May 2009 at [Hipbase.com](http://Hipbase.com).

27 I borrow the term *documents of composition* from Hans Walter Gabler, who distinguishes it from *documents of transmission* in the writing and publishing of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. For an overview of this distinction in Gabler's controversial edition of *Ulysses*, but with an eye to its broader applicability within editorial theory, see Jerome J. McGann, "Ulysses as a Postmodern Text: The Gabler Edition," *Criticism* 27, no. 3 (1985): 283–305, 286–87.

pro-amateur community than memory institutions.”<sup>28</sup> For example, the types of unofficial concert recordings that I discuss throughout this article fall into a grey area, if not a blind spot, in professional guidelines for institutions. The Association for Recorded Sound Collections’ *Guide to Audio Preservation*, published in 2015, acknowledges in a section on “special issues” that some audio collections may include bootlegs, but its two paragraphs on the topic focus exclusively on legal issues.<sup>29</sup> An earlier report published by the National Recording Preservation Board (NRPB) of the Library of Congress in 2010 notes that “privately held collections may also include recordings made in violation of policy or law, as in the case of a patron who smuggles a recording device into a concert and walks out with an unauthorized recording” but also that “unsanctioned provenance does not preclude the possibility that such recordings may be licensed for access or distribution in the future, but the challenges one must overcome to publish the recordings are formidable.”<sup>30</sup> Yet one can see these limitations being circumvented with remarkable ease when one steps outside of traditional institutions and into the world of pro-am or DIY heritage practices.

With popular music, and especially with artists like the Tragically Hip, fandom and collecting cultures have led to widespread pro-am practices, which constitute acts of archiving without necessarily aspiring to the institutional status of archives. These communities of practice have received increasing attention from scholars in various branches of heritage studies and the interpretive social sciences. As cultural sociologist Sarah Baker notes in her recent book on the subject, increasing interest in popular culture and intangible heritage has meant that “alongside prestigious national institutions . . . there exists a range of community-led, grassroots specialist archives, museums and halls of fame which are equally important to the preservation of popular music’s material past.”<sup>31</sup> As Baker demonstrates throughout her study, these material

28 Terras, “Digital Curiosities,” 436; cf. Silversides, “The Professional Archivist’s Fear of Popular Music” and Dallas, “Digital Curation Beyond the ‘Wild Frontier,’” 432–33.

29 Samuel Brylawski, Maya Lerman, Robin Pike, and Kathlin Smith, eds., *ARSC Guide to Audio Preservation* (Eugene, OR: Association for Recorded Sound Collections; Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources; National Recording Preservation Board of the Library of Congress, 2015), 163.

30 Robert Bamberger and Samuel Brylawski, *The State of Recorded Sound Preservation in the United States: A National Legacy at Risk in the Digital Age* (Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources and Library of Congress, 2010), 38.

31 Baker, *Community Custodians of Popular Music’s Past*, 3–4.

practices are increasingly relevant to those who study archiving through the lenses of communities, institutions, and the archival profession.<sup>32</sup> As a textual scholar, my own lens is primarily the *materials* of cultural heritage and the meanings they make through the processes of transmission and remediation, but my overall emphasis is on the connectedness of textual and archival perspectives on musical heritage and cultural history. From the perspective of collective memory, the work of the volunteers and amateurs that Baker studies is particularly interesting because, as she notes, their practices transform music heritage at an *epistemological* level by embracing materials that may be neglected by traditional institutions.<sup>33</sup> In that spirit, the next section considers the Tragically Hip's music not just as material to be archived, but also as musical texts that invoke – and sometimes critique – the idea of Canadian collective memory itself.

### **A Museum after Dark: Music and the Materials of Collective Memory**

The Tragically Hip's music is built out of the materials of collective memory, and frequently references identifiable locations, people, and events. As Downie commented in an interview, "I'm not a nationalist . . . I started using Canadian references not just for their own sake, but because I wanted to pick up my birth-right which is this massive country full of stories."<sup>34</sup> Examples of those stories include the Canadian hockey victory over the Soviet Union in the 1972 Summit Series (referenced in the song "Fireworks"); the mysterious death of Toronto Maple Leafs defenseman Bill Barilko in 1951 ("Fifty Mission Cap"); David

32 In addition to Baker, *Community Custodians of Popular Music's Past*, see Sarah Baker and Jez Collins, "Sustaining Popular Music's Material Culture in Community Archives and Museums," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21, no. 10 (2015): 983–96; Sarah Baker and Jez Collins, "Popular Music Heritage, Community Archives, and the Challenge of Sustainability," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 20, no. 5 (2017): 476–91; Sarah Baker and Alison Huber, "Notes Toward a Typology of the DIY Institution: Identifying Do-It-Yourself Places of Popular Music Preservation," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 5 (2013): 513–30; Les Roberts and Sara Cohen, "Unauthorising Popular Music Heritage: Outline of a Critical Framework," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20, no. 3 (2014): 241–61; and Sara Cohen, Robert Knifton, Marion Leonard, and Les Roberts, eds., *Sites of Popular Music Heritage: Memories, Histories, Places* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

33 Baker, *Community Custodians of Popular Music's Past*, 4. See also José van Dijck, "Record and Hold: Popular Music between Personal and Collective Memory," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23, no. 5 (2006): 357–74.

34 Quoted in Barclay, Jack, and Schneider, *Have Not Been the Same*, 619.

Milgaard's wrongful conviction in 1970 and release in 1992 ("Wheat Kings"); the mass shooting at the École Polytechnique in Montréal in 1989 ("Montréal"); Hugh MacLennan's 1958 novel, *The Watch That Ends the Night* ("Courage [for Hugh MacLennan]"); the 1990 English-only edict passed by the Ontario city of Sault Ste. Marie to protest Québec's distinct-society status ("Born in the Water"); and other Canadian cities and towns referenced in song titles ("Bobcaygeon," "Thompson Girl," "Goodnight Attawapiskat," "Toronto #4," and "In Sarnia").<sup>35</sup> On a personal note, the song "Bobcaygeon" happens to reference a local music venue where I have seen many bands, the Horseshoe Tavern ("That night in Toronto, with its checkerboard floors"), and apparently alludes to a 1933 race riot that took place in Christie Pits Park, just a few blocks from my home.<sup>36</sup>

That possibility of personal connection typifies the Tragically Hip's lyrical renderings of Canadian history and geography as lived experience. Like folk songs, the band's music traffics in references that, for many Canadians, can feel close to home – sometimes literally. Yet the historical referentiality of these songs is usually tempered by a poetic ambiguity that prevents their rendering of collective memory from seeming straightforwardly citational. As Barclay, Jack, and Schneider observe, with reference to the band's breakthrough 1991 album *Road Apples*, "The songs were not overtly political, nor were they the byproducts of the confessional ballad form. In some ways they were pure cut-and-paste pop art with roots in surrealism. The Canadiana references therefore became guideposts into the song's depths."<sup>37</sup> It is not a stretch to describe Downie's lyrical approach to history as archival: the songs weave together references to the shared materials of collective memory, but instead of narrating stories from history in the manner of the folk-song tradition (e.g., Gordon Lightfoot's "The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*" or "Black Day in July"), the lyrics often embody the fragmentariness and strangeness of history as glimpsed through archival records and material culture.

35 The Tragically Hip, "Courage (for Hugh MacLennan)," "Fifty Mission Cap," and "Wheat Kings," on *Fully Completely*, MCA Records, released 1992; "Born in the Water," on *Road Apples*, MCA Records, released 1991; "Fireworks," "Bobcaygeon," and "Thompson Girl," on *Phantom Power*, Universal Music Canada, released 1998; "Toronto #4," on *Music @ Work*, Universal Music Canada, released 2000; "Goodnight Attawapiskat," on *Now for Plan A*, Universal Music Canada, released 2012; "In Sarnia," on *Man Machine Poem*, Universal Music Canada, released 2016.

36 See Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 188–89.

37 Barclay, Jack, and Schneider, *Have Not Been the Same*, 599.

One such document of material culture is the hockey card from which Downie draws the story of vanished Toronto Maple Leafs defenseman Bill Barilko in “Fifty Mission Cap” (from the 1992 album *Fully Completely*). This personal item of hockey ephemera – the kind of thing one might encounter in an attic or archival records box – would find a public counterpart whenever the Hip played Toronto’s Maple Leaf Gardens or (later) the Air Canada Centre: as a tribute, Barilko’s no. 5 banner would be left hanging from the rafters during the concert and would sometimes receive a spotlight.<sup>38</sup> (On the day Downie died, the same banner was lowered in a moment of silence before the Leafs game.) As Barclay, Jack, and Schneider recount, the audience’s connection to collective memory through material culture was even stronger on earlier tours, when the band played “Fifty Mission Cap” in Barilko’s original arena, Maple Leaf Gardens, first as an opening act for bands like Rush, then for the first time as headliners on the 1995 *Day for Night* tour:

The Hip’s set list rarely changed from the first show, and everyone in attendance that night [10 February 1995] held back for the moment when “Fifty Mission Cap” kicked in and the ghost of Bill Barilko would momentarily be resurrected on his home ice. The band struggled to compete with the crowd’s roar throughout the song, yet for many this was the moment that would finally codify The Tragically Hip’s place in Canadian culture: the biggest band in the country, playing its most prestigious rock venue and doing a song about a Canadian legend.<sup>39</sup>

A complete video recording of the show survives, made surreptitiously by an audience member who shot it from beneath a coat.<sup>40</sup> The recording affirms this story about the crowd’s response to “Fifty Mission Cap” that night and captures

<sup>38</sup> For details on the original card that inspired the song, see Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 102–103. The song’s title and chorus were inspired by another historical artifact, a World War II pilot’s 50-mission cap, which Downie learned about while visiting the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC. See Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 104–105. See also Lance Hornby, “The Late Gord Downie Helped Us Remember Bill Barilko,” *Toronto Sun*, 18 October 2017, accessed 22 September 2018, <https://torontosun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/toronto-maple-leafs/the-late-Downie-downie-helped-us-remember-bill-barilko>.

<sup>39</sup> Barclay, Jack, and Schneider, *Have Not Been the Same*, 611; see also Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 112.

<sup>40</sup> “Tragically Hip 1995 02 10 MLG, Toronto FULL SHOW MUST SEE!!,” YouTube video, 1:57:14, posted by “Tony Rampling,” 14 April 2017, accessed 22 September 2018, <https://youtu.be/jn83UvFzbgj>. (“Fifty Mission Cap” begins at about 26:00.)

Downie's dedication of the song to the Maple Leaf Gardens staff. During the song's choruses, when the stage lights brighten to illuminate the crowd and arena, the amateur videographer pulls back for wide shots to capture the full significance of the song in that space (while at the same time revealing the coat that hides the camera). In the same spirit, the song has remained part of the Leafs' own warm-up and game-night playlist, and in 2001, Downie gave the team his manuscript of the song lyrics, which hangs in the players' lounge.<sup>41</sup> A hockey arena may not be an archive, but the symbolic presence of this material document in the Maple Leafs' dressing room shows how "Fifty Mission Cap" functions as a shared musical text and a site of cultural memory.

One of the band's more critical comments on collective Canadian memory may be found in a haunting image from the acoustic song "Wheat Kings" (mentioned above), which deals with David Milgaard's wrongful conviction for murder in 1970 and his 23-year imprisonment. The third verse begins with a reference to Milgaard dreaming alone in prison, with one kind of institutional isolation shading into another as he imagines being locked up in his high school after dark, as though it were a museum of his stolen past. However, by the second line, the pronouns change from the third-person singular and the song evokes an "us" that shares a sense of estrangement from the past. The pattern continues into the final verse, which describes Milgaard's exoneration and release and shifts to the perspective of a national collective memory, complete with a reference to Canada's public broadcaster: "Late-breaking story on the CBC, / A nation whispers, 'We always knew that he'd go free.'"<sup>42</sup> Yet the sentiment is clearly disingenuous, and the final verse hints at collective memory's capacity to be selective and self-serving, especially when nations have to face their roles in historical injustices. In this way, "Wheat Kings" and the Hip's other topical songs are not merely musical equivalents to plaques at historical sites (like the one that commemorates the Christie Pits riot). Instead, they function as shared poetic texts that complicate one's relationship to Canadian cultural history, just as archival records may complicate or contradict received narratives about what it means to be Canadian.

41 Amara McLaughlin, "Maple Leafs Honour Gord Downie before Game at ACC," CBC News, 18 October 2017, accessed 22 September 2018, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-maple-leafs-remember-Downie-downie-1.4361289>; see also Hornby, "The Late Gord Downie Helped Us."

42 The Tragically Hip, "Wheat Kings," *Fully Completely* (MCA, 1992). For full lyrics, see the band's official website at <http://www.thehip.com/albums/Fully+Completely/Wheat+Kings/> (accessed 19 October 2018).

It is no surprise then, that the Hip's music has inspired acts of DIY heritage work by pro-amateurs like the ones Baker and others have profiled. The most well-known DIY heritage project among Hip fans is the appropriately named website A Museum after Dark ([hipmuseum.com](http://hipmuseum.com)), created and run by Toronto-based English and history teacher Stephen Dame. The site takes its title from "Wheat Kings" and offers historical notes and interpretations for many Hip songs as well as extended essays on selected songs or topics related to the band, and a remarkable amount of detail about unreleased songs and variant versions in performance.<sup>43</sup> The museum metaphor is developed through the site's navigational structure, and the landing page offers a selection of topical entry points (e.g., "Montreal Massacre," "Riot@Pits," "Barilko Bombers," "PET [Pierre Elliott Trudeau] and Napanee," and "Tom Thomson"). The most revealing part of the site from a historical perspective is the "Search by Reference" page – one of the site's two structured finding aids, along with "Search by Song" – which categorizes linked topical references by people (e.g., Bill Barilko, Tallulah Bankhead, Jacques Cartier); places (e.g., Algonquin Park, Toronto's Horseshoe Tavern, New Orleans); and things and events (e.g., Hugh MacLennan's novel *The Watch That Ends the Night*, the sinking of the *Bismarck*, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge disaster).<sup>44</sup> Like a descriptive finding aid for an archival fonds, the "Search by Reference" page and other parts of A Museum after Dark function as what Margaret Hedstrom has called "interfaces with the past" and reflect the lyrics' own function as textual spurs to remembering the presentness of much of Canada's past.<sup>45</sup>

43 As the headnote to the unreleased songs page indicates, much of the information there was compiled by Rob Bertrand and Oren Bick before the page became incorporated into A Museum after Dark.

44 Comparing A Museum after Dark's commentary to the band's official website illustrates different but complementary approaches to annotation, much in the spirit of scholarly editions of literary texts. A Museum after Dark tends to gloss historical contexts and references, while the official website ([thehip.com](http://thehip.com)) provides official lyrical texts for the band's published songs. The official band site's entries for the *Man Machine Poem* album lyrics also contain several footnotes on sources for phrases and images; for example, a note on the song "Machine" attributes the phrase "fed on shadows" to Northrop Frye and includes the full sentence from which Downie took the phrase ([www.thehip.com/albums/Man+Machine+Poem/Machine/](http://www.thehip.com/albums/Man+Machine+Poem/Machine/)). A third approach to lyrical transcription and commentary may be found on the site Genius, which began in 2009 to enable crowdsourced line-by-line annotation of transcribed hip-hop lyrics and has grown to include other musical genres; a detailed entry for "Wheat Kings" can be found at <https://genius.com/The-tragically-hip-wheat-kings-lyrics>. See Amelia A. Clarkson, Julia L.M. King, and Jelena Stankovic, "The Variorum Hamilton and Other Annotated Rap Editions: A Bibliographical Perspective on RapGenius," *The iJournal: Graduate Student Journal of the Faculty of Information* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–8; and Regina N. Bradley, "Getting Off at the 13th Floor: Rap Genius and Archiving 21st Century Black Cultural Memory," *Journal of Ethnic American Literature* 4 (2014): 86–98.

45 Margaret Hedstrom, "Archives, Memory, and Interfaces with the Past," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 21–43; see her comments on archival description, 38.

My final example, the song “Montréal,” plays a very specific role in collective memory, as a work commemorating a tragedy, but its unpublished status also makes it especially interesting from the perspectives of archival and textual studies. Recorded during the sessions for the 1991 album *Road Apples* but never released, the song deals with a terrible moment in Canadian history: the mass shooting on 6 December 1989 at Montréal’s École Polytechnique, in which a 25-year-old gunman specifically sought out female victims and murdered 14 women before taking his own life. The event has been commemorated every December since 1991 with vigils, days of remembrance for violence against women, physical memorials, and anti-violence campaigns. Despite never being officially released, the song “Montréal” had a brief performance history in 1991 as an occasional addition to set lists. The song then dropped out of performances but resurfaced lyrically within other songs. For example, in the live version of “Courage” captured on the official release *Live Between Us*, Downie interpolates several lines from “Montréal” in the middle of the song (prefacing them with the comment, “It’s getting snowy in Montréal”) and repeats them over the coda.<sup>46</sup> Considering that *Live Between Us* was recorded in Detroit on 23 November 1996, not quite two weeks before the anniversary of the murders, the presence of the one song within the other is no coincidence.

The performance afterlife of “Montréal” also demonstrates the role that DIY heritage websites like A Museum after Dark can play in the preservation of popular culture. After 1991, “Montréal” was performed again only once in the band’s career, at Montréal’s Molson Centre on 7 December 2000, the day after the 11th anniversary of the École Polytechnique murders. An audience video recording of the concert reveals the crowd’s surprised recognition and documents Downie’s brief introduction of it as a song “about the identification process.” This ambiguous comment seems to reference the song’s subject and, specifically, the identification of victims’ bodies after the shootings. (The chorus refers to a grieving mother’s preparation of her daughter’s body for a wake.) But “the identification process” can also double as a reference to the recognition and recovery of the long-dormant song itself, by audience and band alike.<sup>47</sup> As the

46 The Tragically Hip, “Courage,” on *Live Between Us*, MCA Records, released 1997. See Barclay’s account of the making of the live album in *The Never-Ending Present*, 159–60.

47 “Tragically Hip - 2000-12-07 - Molson Centre, Montreal,” YouTube video, 2:21:49, posted by “Tony Rampling,” 26 June 2017, accessed 22 September 2018, [https://youtu.be/KHGj\\_be3s2A](https://youtu.be/KHGj_be3s2A). (The song “Montréal” begins at about 1:49:40.) Downie confirms the chorus’s meaning when he introduces one of the song’s rare early performances,

page for “Montréal” on *A Museum after Dark* recounts, Downie did not have ready access to the song’s lyrics prior to the concert, and as it was an unreleased song, he could not even consult its lyrics in the liner notes of a published album. Instead, Downie apparently checked the lyrics transcribed on *A Museum after Dark* itself and relied on that version before heading onstage.<sup>48</sup>

To return to the institutional concerns about bootlegs and other unauthorized recordings raised in the previous section, it is worth noting that the audience video recording that captured the entire 2000 Montréal concert nearly did not happen. That video occupies a strange position as both a historical document and a (seemingly) illicit product of the scenario described in the NRPB’s 2010 report, where someone “smuggles a recording device into a concert and walks out with an unauthorized recording.”<sup>49</sup> At about 18 minutes into the video, one can hear a member of the venue’s security staff approach the taper, who immediately replies, “They allow it [i.e., recording]” and attempts to explain the band’s policy of permitting audience taping for non-commercial use.<sup>50</sup> The security officer sounds unconvinced, promising to return after checking the taper’s story, but the recording continues uninterrupted and captures “Montréal” near the end of the set, thus becoming an important document of the song’s elusive performance history.

As the NRPB report goes on to note about unauthorized recordings, “some of these recordings, though made illegally, were not exploited illegally and may now add incalculably to the performance history of an artist, including the evolution of his or her repertoire or a particular composition with which the artist is closely identified.”<sup>51</sup> While this statement does not do justice to bands like the Tragically Hip, who condone audience recording for non-commercial use, it accurately captures the motivations for Hip fans who undertake the

on 3 August 1991, at Toronto’s Ontario Place Forum.

48 “Montreal References,” *A Museum after Dark*, accessed 16 July 2018, <http://www.hipmuseum.com/montreal.html>. See also the lyrics posted on the band’s official website under “Unreleased Songs,” The Tragically Hip, accessed 16 July 2018, <http://www.thehip.com/albums/Unreleased+Songs/>.

49 Bamberger and Brylawski, *The State of Recorded Sound Preservation*, 38.

50 For example, the band’s audience recording policy for the 2016 *Man Machine Poem* tour is still posted on the official website. “Capturing Photos, Video and Audio on the Man Machine Poem Tour,” The Tragically Hip, accessed 14 May 2018, <http://www.thehip.com/news/recording-photos-video-and-audio-on-the-man-machine-poem-tour/>. For earlier tours, the band would post downloadable release forms that tapers could show to venue staff.

51 Brylawski, Lerman, Pike, and Smith, *ARSC Guide to Audio Preservation*, 163.

DIY heritage work that A Museum after Dark represents. One lesson we can take from the examples of “Fifty Mission Cap,” “Wheat Kings,” and especially “Montréal” is that interest in Tragically Hip songs *about* history shades naturally into an interest in live recordings *as* history. If one could listen to recordings of every Tragically Hip concert in a given period in chronological order, one could follow the compositional process for some of the band’s future songs or observe lyrical experiments that went no further than live performance. For this reason, fans formed tape-trading communities early in the band’s career.<sup>52</sup> Presently, the comprehensive fan website Hipbase.com offers the most complete set of unofficial live recordings, drawn mostly from audience tapes but also from FM radio broadcasts.<sup>53</sup> One can, for example, use the Hipbase.com concert archive to listen to most of any given year’s performances of “New Orleans Is Sinking.” For a formative year such as 1991, this kind of archival listening provides more than merely a glimpse into the workshop.<sup>54</sup> Recordings such as these hold unique historical value for a band whose work cannot be understood solely through studio recordings and official live releases. As the next section will show, there remains a need to understand these vulnerable forms of popular music heritage as both archival records and textual artifacts.

### **Bootleg Philology: Understanding Bootlegs and Audience Recordings as Evidence**

In the monumental 700-page history of Canadian rock music, *Have Not Been the Same: The CanRock Renaissance, 1985–1995*, the Tragically Hip is one of

52 See Jason Schneider, “Bootlegging: The Underground Pipeline Is Live Music’s Lifeline,” *Exclaim!*, 1 February 2000, [https://exclaim.ca/music/article/bootlegging-underground\\_pipeline\\_is\\_live\\_musics](https://exclaim.ca/music/article/bootlegging-underground_pipeline_is_live_musics).

53 Marshall’s article “For and Against the Record Industry,” cited above, describes many of the types of sources for these recordings (e.g., audience, soundboard, and so on); see note 7. Until the Tragically Hip establishes an official archive, the next-best source of unofficial Hip recordings I am aware of is the Doug McClement fonds at the University of Toronto’s Media Commons Archives. McClement has worked as an audio engineer in Ontario since the late 1970s, and his fonds contains numerous high-quality soundboard recordings of Hip concerts over the band’s full career.

54 Downie’s “New Orleans Is Sinking” monologues in 1991, for example, include – in addition to “Killerwhale-tank” – one story about working as a dangerously underqualified ship’s helmsman and another about working as a police frogman and finding a family in a submerged car. Curiously, nearly all of Downie’s “New Orleans Is Sinking” monologues in this period are about aquatic disasters.

only three artists in the appended critical discography (along with the Rheostatics and Neil Young) whose listing includes a bootleg recording. The entry is innocuous enough: “*Live at the Roxy* (bootleg, 1992) Source of the radio-only ‘Highway Girl,’ with ‘Double Suicide’ monologue.”<sup>55</sup> The implications of this discography entry, however, present a challenge for music archivists, historians, bibliographers, and anyone else with a stake in how metadata can make historical evidence legible and accessible for study. As a work attributed to an artist, the pairing of “Tragically Hip” and “*Live at the Roxy*” seems straightforward, with the italicized title following the conventions of live recordings at venues famous enough to need no further contextualization (e.g., the Apollo, Royal Albert Hall, Budokan, Massey Hall, Red Rocks, the Fillmore East). The naming of the Roxy, just a block away from the Whiskey a Go-Go on Sunset Boulevard, places this recording in a specific venue, but the parenthetical pairing of “1992” and “bootleg” (in place of a record label, as in most other entries) begins to unmoor this entry as a straightforward discography item. Was the recording made in 1992 or just released in that year? Who made the recording, and who turned it into a public release? What is the source of the recording (e.g., soundboard, audience tape), and what was the distribution format in which the authors encountered it?<sup>56</sup> In other words, what is its history as a transmitted text and its status as historical evidence?

My point in asking these questions is not to criticize the authors of *Have Not Been the Same*; there is only so much detail they can provide in their critical discography, which is admirably comprehensive. Indeed, Barclay answers some of these questions in his follow-up book *The Never-Ending Present*, which notes that the Roxy bootleg almost certainly derives from a soundboard recording made by the band’s producer and engineer Don Smith for broadcast on the Westwood One radio network.<sup>57</sup> My point is rather that these kinds of questions do have answers, and music archivists, music historians, and bibliographers share a stake in extending the descriptive and analytical tools of textual disciplines

55 Barclay, Jack, and Schneider, *Have Not Been the Same*, 691.

56 A perfectly reasonable question for the band and its management to ask, of course, is “Who is profiting from the sale of this bootleg, and how can the artists be fairly compensated for their work?” As many bootleg collecting websites make clear, the fans most interested in finding sought-after bootlegs are usually the ones most interested in supporting bands by purchasing official releases, merchandise, fan club memberships, and concert tickets.

57 Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 76–77.

like philology, diplomatics, and bibliography to these kinds of recordings. For example, within archival studies, Geoffrey Yeo's article "Nothing Is the Same as Something Else: Significant Properties and Notions of Identity and Originality" serves as an important link between the fields of archival studies, digital curation, and textual studies by asking, "What does it mean to claim that one record, one archival object, is identical to another?"<sup>58</sup> This is essentially the question that gave rise to the subdiscipline known as textual criticism, which specializes in determining the authority and provenance of texts that exist in different versions. It is also the kind of question that leads to the "website philology" that Niels Brügger argues is necessary to understand the born- and reborn-digital materials of the Web as historical evidence.<sup>59</sup>

How, then, in the tradition of these philological disciplines, can we understand bootlegs and audience recordings as texts, with their own histories of transmission and reception? Oddly enough, pro-am bootleg collecting websites have made this question easier to answer. For example, what appears to be a version of "Live at the Roxy" can be found on one of the most prolific bootleg collecting sites, Guitars101.com. The post made in 2009 by "Bartender" offers considerably more metadata than the discography entry above and reflects a concern for the recording's transmission and reception:

- 58 Geoffrey Yeo, "Nothing Is the Same as Something Else: Significant Properties and Notions of Identity and Originality," *Archival Science* 10, no. 2 (2010): 85–116, 85. For other links between archival studies and textual studies, see Heather MacNeil, "Deciphering and Interpreting an Archival Fonds and Its Parts: A Comparative Analysis of Textual Criticism and the Theory of Archival Engagement," in *Research in the Archival Multiverse*, ed. Anne J. Gilliland, Sue McKemish, and Andrew J. Lau (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2017), 161–97; Heather MacNeil, "Archivalterity: Rethinking Original Order," *Archivaria* 66 (2008): 1–24; Heather MacNeil, "Picking Our Text: Archival Description, Authenticity, and the Archivist as Editor," *American Archivist* 68, no. 2 (2005): 264–78; Matthew Kirschenbaum, "The .txtual Condition: Digital Humanities, Born-Digital Archives, and the Future Literary," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (2013), <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/7/1/000151/000151.html>; Richard Cox, "Analytical Bibliography and the Modern Archivist: A Commentary on Similarities, Differences, and Prospects for Cooperation," in *American Archival Analysis: The Recent Development of the Archival Profession in the United States* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1990), 261–90; and Alan Galey, "Leaves of Brass: Shakespeare and the Idea of the Archive," in *The Shakespearean Archive: Experiments in New Media from the Renaissance to Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 41–77.
- 59 Niels Brügger, "Web Historiography and Internet Studies: Challenges and Perspectives," *New Media and Society* 15, no. 5 (2012): 752–64, 758–59. For an introduction to textual criticism, see G. Thomas Tanselle, "Textual Criticism at the Millennium," *Studies in Bibliography* 54 (2001): 1–80. On the links between textual criticism and archives, see MacNeil, "Archivalterity."

THE TRAGICALLY HIP - Roxy and Elsewhere  
 [notes about the band, made by the poster]

Lineage = Silver CD bootleg (soundboard 10/10) >  
 mp3 @ 192 by me

Setlist:

1. Lionized  
 [tracks 2–10]
11. Highway Girl (Double Suicide rant)
12. New Orleans Is Sinking (Killer Whale Tank rant)
13. On The Verge
14. Blow At High Dough

Recorded live at the Roxy, L.A. May 1991 and parts unknown 1993<sup>60</sup>

If we contrast this website posting with the discography entry above, we first notice the different title (“Roxy and Elsewhere”), which is explained by the additional detail about the bootleg’s provenance.<sup>61</sup> More provenance information appears in the “Lineage” notation, which follows the conventions of bootleg collecting websites. The word *soundboard* here answers one of my questions above: this was not an illicit audience recording but one made from the mixing board, almost certainly with the knowledge of the venue and band’s production staff and the band members themselves. (As noted above, the show was recorded by producer-engineer Don Smith for radio broadcast on the Westwood One network.)<sup>62</sup> The “Lineage” note does not tell us whether the recording was sourced from the FM radio broadcast itself or from prebroadcast production discs, but the phrase “Silver CD” (i.e., a professionally manufactured audio CD, not a home-burned CD-R) and the absence of radio static in the recording suggests a pre-FM source. The “10/10” notation indicates a top-quality recording, though

60 “THE TRAGICALLY HIP - Roxy and Elsewhere,” Guitars 101.com, posted by “Bartender,” 13 April 2009, accessed 22 September 2018, <http://www.guitars101.com/forums/f90/tragically-hip-roxy-elsewhere-84009.html>.

61 The alternate title, “Roxy and Elsewhere,” was likely chosen as a reference to a live album released by Frank Zappa and the Mothers in 1974, recorded at the same West Hollywood venue.

62 Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 76–77.

the conversion to low-bit-rate MP3 files by the poster, “Bartender,” would likely draw criticism from bootleg collectors who insist – sometimes aggressively – on circulation only in lossless file formats such as FLAC (free lossless audio codec).<sup>63</sup> Finally, the track listing also provides a level of detail that is not feasible in discographies, and song-level metadata attached to “Highway Girl” and “New Orleans Is Sinking” indicate that these tracks are of particular historical interest. (See above for the “Killerwhaletank” story attached to the latter song; we will return to “Highway Girl” below.)

What is not stated directly in this post, but may be the most important thing about it as evidence, is that the act of sharing on Guitars101.com actually changes the nature of this recording as a commodity. Here, “Roxy and Elsewhere” is no longer a bootleg, strictly speaking; rather, it has become a *liberated bootleg*, to use the online vernacular for unauthorized recordings that were originally sold for profit but are now shared freely online, often by fans who are happy to undercut piracy while supporting the artists. (Note “Bartender’s” desire to promote the band, echoed by commenters below the post.) Yet important facts of transmission such as this can be effaced by descriptive language that lacks the precision of disciplines attuned to the nuances of textual transmission. For example, a 1984 reference work for compilers of discographies offers a definition for *pirate recording* (“a recording made and marketed illegally”), under which it includes *bootleg recording* and *unauthorized recording*, but gives no indication that some unofficial recordings are not piracies.<sup>64</sup> Granted, this glossary was published over 30 years ago, and its definitions need updating in light of Internet-based bootleg collecting and the category of liberated bootlegs, but even in 1984, Grateful Dead fans were trading audience tapes non-commercially.<sup>65</sup> Such is the need for nuanced technical vocabulary in our descriptive language, which philological disciplines (such as bibliography and textual criticism) have traditionally supplied while also illuminating the larger stakes of textual transmission in a messy, complex world.

63 See the request for higher bit rate or lossless formats in the comments on this post, and “Bartender’s” response about reposting in the lossless WAV (waveform audio file) format. Not all discussions about format on sites like this are quite so civil.

64 Suzanne Elizabeth Thorin and Carole Franklin Vidali, *The Acquisition and Cataloguing of Music and Sound Recordings: A Glossary*, Music Library Association Technical Report No. 11 (Madison, WI: Music Library Association, 1984), 35.

65 See Wallace, “Co-Creation of the Grateful Dead Sound Archive,” and Marshall, “For and Against the Record Industry,” for discussions relevant to categorization and cataloguing.

It is the messy, reborn-digital nature of the Tragically Hip's liberated bootlegs that make them such valuable case studies for a joint archival-bibliographical perspective on the dichotomy of evidence and memory. For example, at least one other poster on Guitars101.com has sought to clarify the differences between "Live at the Roxy" and "Roxy and Elsewhere," much in the spirit of textual criticism as represented in Yeo's article.<sup>66</sup> But the discipline of bibliography, as it has evolved into the 21st century, also asks bigger questions about the social dimensions of textual transmission. A bibliographer working in the holistic tradition of Donald McKenzie's "sociology of texts" would ask not just about the origin of "Live at the Roxy," but also about its circulation and reception through various media.<sup>67</sup>

In this case, the reason "Live at the Roxy" shows up in *Have Not Been the Same's* critical discography, and the reason it became such a sought-after piece of musical ephemera, is not rarity for its own sake but specifically the transformations of two songs in the performances it captures. We have already considered the "Killerwhaletank" story that appears in "New Orleans Is Sinking," and this same 1991 concert also includes an extended version of "Highway Girl" over which Downie tells a darkly comic love story about a suicide pact gone awry. The story was not part of the song's studio release, nor did it ever become a new song in its own right – though images and lines from the story would show up on the band's next album in the song "Locked in the Trunk of a Car."<sup>68</sup> As Barclay notes, the story originated as a screenplay that Downie had written for a film class when he was a student at Queen's University in Kingston, making it not so

66 See "Tragically Hip - The Roxy 1991," Guitars 101.com, posted by "wolfsbane," 14 April 2014, accessed 22 September 2018, <http://www.guitars101.com/forums/f145/tragically-hip-roxy-1991-a-172374.html>. This post's metadata also lists several steps taken by "plaz" to preserve and improve the recording: e.g., "repaired digital glitches (DAT cloning errors)," "tracks 11–14: corrected phase offset (–0.045 msec) and increased stereo width by 10 dB," "attenuated Nyquist frequency (22.05 KHz) by 1 dB." This level of curatorial work is not unusual for posts on this site, and it exemplifies the pro-am ethos that many community members bring to bootleg collecting.

67 D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). On the different subdisciplines of bibliography and related fields, see D.C. Greetham, *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (New York: Garland, 1994); Neil Fraistat and Julia Flanders, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Textual Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and Leslie Howsam, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

68 The repeated verse in "Locked in the Trunk of a Car" that ends with the line, "Every day I'm dumping the body" appears with a few substantive variations in the "Double Suicide" story. The Roxy Theatre performance of "Highway Girl" also ends with an improvised line which, on the next album, becomes the lyric "Get Ry Cooder to sing my eulogy" in the song "At the Hundredth Meridian."

much a stream-of-consciousness improvisation as the performance adaptation of a written text.<sup>69</sup>

The public reception of the 1991 Roxy Theatre performance of “Highway Girl” also illustrates the complex paths of musical transmission and reception, which bibliographers traditionally study with respect to written and printed texts. Released officially as the B-side to the single “Twist My Arm,” from the *Road Apples* album, this version received airplay on several Canadian radio stations, and this was relatively well documented thanks to a listener’s complaint to the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) about the language and subject matter of the “Double Suicide” story.<sup>70</sup> The CBSC’s 2002 ruling on the complaint includes some (occasionally inaccurate) provenance information about the recording and helpfully notes that this particular version was the most requested song during the radio station’s Tragically Hip-themed charity fundraising weekend – a fact likely received with some consternation by the complainant.<sup>71</sup> In addition to some literary interpretation of violence and genre in the “Double Suicide” story, the report also includes a complete transcription of the story itself. Ironically, at the time it was made, this transcription was probably the most accessible version of the story, at least in the days before YouTube and other so-called rogue archives. Although this transcription was made not for musicological research but for a regulatory body’s investigation, it nonetheless speaks to Yeo’s points about transcription as an archival technique that always raises questions about copies and originals, substantive and accidental variants, and access to – and identity of – historical records over time.<sup>72</sup>

To paraphrase McKenzie, the sociology of the text of the “Double Suicide” story must therefore extend from its capture as analog signals through the soundboard at the Roxy Theatre, to its broadcast on the Westwood One radio network, to its bootleg versions on CD, to its conversion to other formats and circulation through liberated bootlegs, to its limited circulation on a single as

69 Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 264.

70 I am grateful to Matthew Schneider for bringing the CBSC complaint to my attention.

71 D. Braun, D. Ish, D. Dobbie, V. Dubois, R. Gallagher, and S. Hall, “CJCR-FM re song ‘Highway Girl (Live)’ by the Tragically Hip: CBSC Decision 00/01-0832. Decided 14 January 2002,” Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, accessed 15 May 2018, <https://www.cbcs.ca/cjkr-fm-re-song-highway-girl-live-by-the-tragically-hip/>. The report’s writers, apparently unaware of the recording’s provenance, inaccurately note that the “Double Suicide” story paraphrases “Locked in the Trunk of a Car.” (It was the other way around; see note 68 above.)

72 Yeo, “Nothing Is the Same as Something Else,” 86–88.

an obscure B-side, to radio station playlists, to a transcription in a government agency's report, and of course to the moment of its performance on a sweaty stage one spring evening in Los Angeles in 1991. To consider bootlegs and similar ephemera as part of the history of popular music is to embrace all the messiness and complexity that they involve. However, as we have seen, much of the challenge is mitigated by the work of pro-am bootleg collectors, who share archivists' concerns for provenance and descriptive metadata, if not necessarily a professional commitment to those concepts. In my final example, below, we will consider questions of evidence and memory together, as they played out in what became the Tragically Hip's final concert tour – when the audience's sense of the performances as unfolding history could not have been more intense.

### **"Don't Shoot, Just Watch": Documenting the *Man Machine Poem* Tour, Summer 2016**

The public disclosure of Downie's terminal illness and his death in October 2017 brought home a painful realization for the Tragically Hip's fans: we now have all the work by Downie and the band that we will ever have, preserved in memory and in various recorded forms. The Tragically Hip's management and Downie's doctor announced the diagnosis in May 2016, after plans were already forming for a concert tour for the new album *Man Machine Poem*. Astonishingly, the band embarked on a limited Canadian tour anyway. It became a de facto farewell tour, even though the group avoided presenting it as such, and concert tickets were so in demand that the situation prompted new legislation in Ontario to limit ticket reselling. This was the context in which the final live Hip recordings were made, officially and unofficially, and those recordings illuminate the challenges of documenting one of Canada's most historically significant concert tours.

From an archival perspective, one of the most basic forms of documentation for a concert tour is the set list for each show. The set list for the Hip's previous tour in 2014–2015 had a retrospective structure of its own, which featured a performance of the 1992 album *Fully Completely*, from start to finish. However, the *Man Machine Poem* tour set lists present considerably more structural intricacy for an archivist. No two concerts had the same sequence of songs, but each night's roughly two-hour set list was composed mainly of three- or four-song selections from particular albums across the band's career, with encores of two

or three songs from the same album. Two albums – *Man Machine Poem* and *Phantom Power* – were represented every night; otherwise, all of the band's 13 full-length studio albums made an appearance at some point during the tour, some frequently and others only once. For this reason, it would be impossible to document the tour using an average or representative set list, as many Wikipedia entries do for other concert tours. Rather, the *Man Machine Poem* tour, itself – as a whole – functioned as a retrospective on the band's entire catalogue.<sup>73</sup>

In the same retrospective spirit, lines from certain songs took on new meaning and resonance for audience members who knew they were seeing Downie on stage almost certainly for the last time. Audience recordings of the tour capture crowds audibly responding to lyrics that had new significance: for example, “Get Ry Cooder to sing my eulogy” (from “At the Hundredth Meridian”); “No dress rehearsal / This is our life” (from “Ahead by a Century”); and especially the concluding lines from the acoustic song “Scared”: “I gotta go / It's been a pleasure doing business with you.”

The hard facts of set lists, on one hand, and the deeply felt reinterpretations of lyrics, on the other, exemplify the differences between evidence and memory, as Cook describes them, but also their interdependency. As he argues,

each [is] worthless without the other despite the contrary implications they seemingly have for the archival endeavour. Without reliable evidence set in rich context memory becomes bogus, false, wishful thinking, or is transformed into imagination, fiction, ideology. Without the influence of and need for constructing memory/story, assigning value, determining priorities, evidence is useless, irrelevant, and unused, or buried in a sea of transient data.<sup>74</sup>

That interdependency is nowhere more apparent than in accounts of the Hip's final, historic concert of the tour, which has been documented in an official concert film and tour documentary, and most recently in Michael Barclay's

<sup>73</sup> At about 47:00 in the 2016 tour documentary, *Long Time Running*, band member Paul Langlois exhibits several large boards with song/album sequences written on them, which he used to assemble each concert's set list. See also Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 331–32.

<sup>74</sup> Cook, “Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community,” 102–103.

book *The Never-Ending Present: The Story of Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip*.<sup>75</sup> Barclay's deeply researched book offers a comprehensive history of the band, and its penultimate chapter offers a detailed description and interpretation of the final show, drawing on the memories of those who were there or watched the CBC broadcast. The interpretive mode of Barclay's chapter ("That Night in Kingston"), which also relies on historical evidence that published recordings alone cannot provide, is similar to other close readings of performances in music history writing, such as Mark Miller's account of the legendary 1953 Charlie Parker/Dizzy Gillespie concert at Toronto's Massey Hall.<sup>76</sup> My interest here lies not only in how the tour was documented but also in the stakes of reading a single performance in the context of a larger concert tour, let alone an entire musical career.

The Tragically Hip's final concert, on 20 August 2016, was played in the band's hometown of Kingston, Ontario, which has a relatively small arena compared to most other cities on the tour. Tickets for this final hometown show were incredibly hard to get, yet many fans travelled to Kingston just to watch the show together on a screen in a public square outside the K-Rock Centre. Public interest in the tour had been intense from its beginning, and the band's management and the CBC made the decision to broadcast the Kingston concert live. Barclay and others who were there describe the extraordinary nature of the concert they experienced first-hand, but I would also emphasize the extraordinary nature of the broadcast itself. Canada's public broadcaster carried the two-and-a-half-hour concert during eastern standard prime time without commercials, pre-empting coverage of the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was present as a long-time fan of the band. In addition to the crowd watching the video screen outside the Kingston arena, people gathered for communal viewings in city squares, parks, bars, and backyards across the country. The concert was even shown on video screens during another band's simultaneous concert, as the members of Blue Rodeo covered "Bobcaygeon" in tribute during their show the same evening

<sup>75</sup> *Long Time Running*, directed by Jennifer Baichwal and Nicholas de Pencier and produced by Banger Films, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2017. The CBC broadcast of the final Kingston concert was released commercially as *The Tragically Hip: A National Celebration* in late 2017.

<sup>76</sup> Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 383–93. For another account of the concert, see Mariah Horner, "You're Invited, Canada: What I Learned about Making Theatre from the Tragically Hip," *Canadian Theatre Review* 172 (2017): 100–104. For examples of close readings of performances, see Mark Miller, *Cool Blues: Charlie Parker in Canada, 1953* (London, ON: Nightwood Editions, 1989) and the chapters in Inglis, ed., *Performance and Popular Music* (see note 7).

at Toronto's Molson Amphitheatre. Across the country, an estimated 11.7 million people watched the broadcast, which means that one-third of the population of Canada stopped what it was doing to watch a rock concert together.<sup>77</sup>

Until the official release of the concert film in 2017, the only available digital records of the broadcast outside of the CBC archives were fan-circulated versions such as those posted on bootleg collecting websites like The Ultimate Bootleg Experience and Guitars101.com.<sup>78</sup> The fan-curated version captures some details not present in the official release. For example, the set list metadata notes the spontaneous singing of "O Canada" by the crowd prior to the band taking the stage. More substantially, the video file includes a brief introduction in which CBC sportscaster and *Hockey Night in Canada* host Ron McLean, wearing a *Man Machine Poem* tour shirt and flanked by Canada's Olympic team in Rio de Janeiro, provides a live transition from Olympics coverage to the Hip concert. McLean speaks for about a minute and a half, first introducing athletes from Kingston, then deftly segueing from hockey trivia (Downie's godfather coached Team Canada during the 1972 Summit Series) to an appreciation of the poetry of the song "The Wherewithal," and finally to a tribute to the band members themselves, referring to Downie as "Canada's Shakespeare." This brief segment is omitted from the official concert film, likely because it would have been an awkward inclusion – especially given that the concert film and broadcast already included an introductory video montage of band footage, fans, and generically Canadian imagery, with the song "Last of the Unplucked Gems" and a snippet from a Downie interview playing over it.<sup>79</sup> But that awkwardness is exactly what made the Ron McLean segment interesting from a historical perspective: it was a planned segue from the Olympics coverage, and it helped to emphasize the exceptional nature of the *National Celebration* broadcast. Its inclusion or omission in any video document of the broadcast represents an editorial choice about what actually constituted *A National Celebration* as an event.

77 The viewership figure is reported at "Accountability Plan: Our Performance – MEDIA LINES," in *Celebrating Canadian Culture: Annual Report 2016–2017*, CBC/Radio Canada, accessed 15 May 2018, <http://www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/site/annual-reports/2016-2017/accountability-plan/our-performance-media-lines-english-services-highlights-en.html>.

78 Versions sourced from broadcast video and FM radio may be found at The Ultimate Bootleg Experience website: <http://theultimatebootlegexperience7.blogspot.ca/search/label/The%20Tragically%20Hip>.

79 On the use of bootlegged television broadcasts and professionally shot concert videos as historical records, see Susan Fast's chapter in Inglis, ed., *Performance and Popular Music* (cited in note 7).

The challenge of reconciling memories of a performance with its documentary representations is also demonstrated by A Museum after Dark's Stephen Dame, who was present at the Kingston concert. In a review entitled "What the CBC Broadcast Failed to Catch," he describes how the broadcast made the event seem sadder than it was in his experience:

The CBC broadcast featured many close-ups of teary-eyed fans, long frames of Gord Downie holding back emotion and high-lighted the moments of missed lyrics and unreachable registers. In the building, it was very different. In fact, it was perfect. Not an off-note was noticed, nor was anyone sad within my sight. Quite the opposite was true. It was loud, it was joyous and it was physical.<sup>80</sup>

Recalling Cook's argument about the interdependence of memory and evidence, here we have memory functioning as a check on the notion that a concert video can function as a neutral document or transparent window on a performance or other event. As Dame notes, the CBC cameras select, edit, and frame the action in the space of the arena, constructing a representation of the event that no single audience member could have experienced. The same is true of the broadcast's audio feed, which captures the imperfections of Downie's performance more than the relatively forgiving house public address system.<sup>81</sup> Awareness of the perils of mediation was displayed by Downie himself in the Toronto concert on 12 August, when he prefaced "At the Hundredth Meridian" with some advice to all those who were experiencing the show through their smartphone screens, saying gently but firmly, "Don't shoot, just watch."<sup>82</sup>

Downie understood better than most the power of performance and its mediation by recording technologies, and the most historically significant moment in the Hip's televised Kingston concert is one where Downie displays full awareness of the presence of cameras. At the conclusion of "Blow at High

<sup>80</sup> "What the CBC Failed to Catch," A Museum after Dark, accessed 15 May 2018, <http://www.hipmuseum.com/review.html>.

<sup>81</sup> On the questionable fidelity of different kinds of live recordings, see Atton, "Curating Popular Music," 420–23, and Marshall, "For and Against the Record Industry," 60–61.

<sup>82</sup> Downie also mentions cellphone recording at the very end of the Hamilton, Ontario, concert on 16 August, commenting that "none of it will last much longer than the particular phone you're shooting it on." An audience recording of the concert is available on Hipbase.com, and Downie's comments appear at the end of "Twist My Arm."

Dough” in the first encore, before the band leaves the stage, Downie thanks Justin Trudeau for coming to the show and then takes the opportunity to comment on the Prime Minister’s record on First Nations issues in Canada – an area in which Downie was increasingly active in his later years, including through a multimedia project called *Secret Path*, which tells the story of an Anishinaabe boy named Chanie Wenjack, who died while trying to return home from an Ontario residential school in 1966. It is a remarkable moment in the history of Tragically Hip performances, with the terminally ill Downie using a national broadcast of his final concert with the band to draw attention away from himself and toward an issue that he knew would outlive him. (Downie made brief comments along the same lines earlier in the show, over the beginning of the song “Machine,” though the house lights were down and the CBC cameras did not show the Prime Minister.) As Barclay describes, there are differing interpretations of this moment in the concert – Was Downie genuinely praising Trudeau’s record on First Nations issues? Was Downie ironically pressuring Trudeau to do better? – but many commentators have taken this moment in isolation, as though the document and the event were the same thing.<sup>83</sup>

Again, this incident and responses to it raise the question of how collective memory functions in relation to pro-am archiving. One could make use of the ubiquitous documentation of the *Man Machine Poem* tour by asking how Downie used the stages of the tour overall to speak about First Nations issues. Hipbase.com currently offers audience recordings for 12 of the 15 dates on the *Man Machine Poem* tour. Overall, they indicate that Downie’s relatively few comments to the audience tended not to vary much from night to night, but also that he began to make comments about First Nations issues toward the end of the tour. He makes a brief reference at the end of “Fireworks” in Hamilton, Ontario, on 16 August, and again over the beginning of “Poets” in Ottawa on 18 August, but the most notable example comes from just a few days prior, at the concert I happened to attend on 12 August in Toronto. During the opening song, “Courage (for Hugh MacLennan),” Downie speaks directly to the audience over the coda: “All that courage. All that courage we’ve had for First Nations. Ten

83 See Clayton Thomas-Müller, “Gord Downie, When It Comes to Collective Indigenous Resilience, Let Us Speak For Ourselves,” CBC News, 28 June 2017, accessed 22 September 2018, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/downie-downie-let-us-speak-for-ourselves-1.4179478>; cf. the different takes on this moment in Simons, “Peace, Order, and Their Discontents,” 209–10, and Barclay, *The Never-Ending Present*, 388, 391, 400–401. On documents and events, see Taylor, “The Collective Memory,” 119 (cited in note 15).

thousand years they had on our two hundred years. We took good care of 'em. Yeah, courage, let's get some! Let's get some fucking courage!"<sup>84</sup> The irony is unmistakable as Downie's mini-rant descends into mock-bravado and bluster.<sup>85</sup> That irony is all the more pronounced considering that these comments appear in the night's opening song, which also happens to be one whose lyrics have been recontextualized by fans in light of Downie's terminal illness. In this particular performance of "Courage (for Hugh MacLennan)," Downie wrests the song away from the audience's good intentions, as it were, and tries to shift listeners' attention to the afflictions of others.

A complete archive of live recordings from 2016, even audience tapes, would allow us to pursue this question with historical rigour, and even the incomplete archive that we have provides evidence to contextualize what Downie said about Trudeau in Kingston. When we consider Downie's words from the stage within the mediatized landscapes of arenas on the final tour ("Don't shoot, just watch"), it becomes clear that, while audiences may have been focused on the historicity of the events – on the sense of Canadian cultural history happening there and then – Downie seemed intent at times on refocusing the audience's attention on the role of record-making itself within collective memory, and on reminding audiences that systematic forgetting continues to happen, too. In that light, it is worth keeping in mind that the Kingston concert, for all of its importance as the Tragically Hip's farewell to live performance as a band, was followed by Downie's performance of *Secret Path* two months later, on 21 October, at Toronto's Roy Thompson Hall. In other words, Downie's final live performance of his own work focused on telling someone else's story from the archives and on undoing the collective forgetting that has neglected the stories of Chanie Wenjack and others like him.

Considered from an archival perspective, the Tragically Hip's *Man Machine Poem* tour thus becomes a case study in how memories and documents of performance

<sup>84</sup> The recording was also posted to Guitars101.com: "The Tragically Hip - 2016-08-12 - Toronto, ON (AUD/FLAC)," Guitars 101.com, posted by "Edge," 23 August 2016, accessed 22 September 2018, <http://www.guitars101.com/forums/f145/tragically-hip-2016-08-12-toronto-aud-flac-276489.html>. Downie's comments begin at about 3:40 into the first song.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Downie's sly lyric substitution in "Fireworks" at the Kingston concert, where, in the second chorus, he changes the usual lyrics, "Isn't it amazing what we can accomplish / When we don't let the nation get in our way," to "When we don't let no First Nation get in our way." Considering that the song begins with a reference to Canada's legendary 1972 game-winning goal against Russia by Paul Henderson, Downie's variant lyric challenges any audience expectations of the song being a straightforwardly nationalistic hockey anthem.

do not always agree and may hold very different meanings depending on interpretation and context. Nor is the hand (or voice) of the author always a straightforward guarantor of meaning in documents of composition or transmission. It may be oddly appropriate, then, that at the Kingston concert, the Prime Minister himself introduced some document-themed iconography to the moment through his choice of clothing: when the CBC camera locates Trudeau during Downie's comments, he happens to be wearing a Tragically Hip tour shirt decorated with reproductions of Downie's manuscript drafts for song lyrics from the *Man Machine Poem* album art. The shirt itself offers a glimpse into Downie's lyrical workshop – almost like a photographic facsimile of an author's papers – but in this context, it also adds a subtle layer of archival symbolism to a scene that is already defined by memory, mediation, and the power of words (written and spoken). Wearing a shirt covered in Downie's handwriting, Trudeau is enlisted into Downie's final act of unpredictable onstage storytelling with the Tragically Hip, as the singer writes them both into a crucial revision of Canada's collective memory.

## **Conclusion: A Night that Disappears**

Throughout this article, I have argued for the Tragically Hip's value as a case study for digital music archiving for two reasons: first, that the deep roots of Downie's lyrics in Canadian cultural history reveal how popular music can participate in the construction of collective memory; and second, that the evolution of those songs over time reveals how ephemeral documents like bootlegs and audience tapes can provide evidence of creative evolution and a glimpse into the workshop via performance. These two themes – the historicity of the Hip's music and the archiving of its performance – together point to the need for deeper understanding of the collecting and archiving that finds a place to happen outside of traditional institutions as well as within them.

I have also argued for the value of textual scholarship as a discipline uniquely suited to acting as a bridge between archival studies and the close, detail-oriented study of cultural texts that work poetically, through irony, indirection, and metaphor. Even the Hip song whose title I have recontextualized for this article, "Looking for a Place to Happen," deals with its original subject through metaphor. The thing that is looking for a place to happen in the song is not archiving, but the European colonial project, and the song imagines European

explorers as guests at a house party whose late arrival is wryly noted by their Indigenous “hosts”: “Jacques Cartier, right this way / I’ll put your coat up on the bed.”<sup>86</sup> A live version of the song, recorded at Toronto’s Horseshoe Tavern in 1992, when it would have been new material to audiences, includes another of Downie’s deeply ironic introductions: “We’d like to do a song about the first people to come to this country: us. The discoverers of the Dominion of Canada.”<sup>87</sup> Placed beside Downie’s words to another audience 24 years later and a few blocks away, at the Air Canada Centre in 2016 (“Ten thousand years they had on our two hundred”), this introduction points to an imagined but potentially recoverable fonds of all the Hip’s recorded performances, from which one might tease out a running narrative about Indigenous and colonial history woven through seemingly offhand comments to audiences.

Such an approach to history, drawing on textual and archival scholarship alike, would bear out Pierre Nora’s claim that “modern memory is above all archival. It relies entirely on the specificity of the trace, the materiality of the vestige, the concreteness of the recording, the visibility of the image.”<sup>88</sup> Downie’s lyrics are not just historical in content; they are also historiographical in their poetic forms, in that they reflect – sometimes critically – on *how* and *why* history makes a difference in everyday life. Like archives themselves, the historiographical value of the Hip’s songs lies in how they represent difficult histories through specific traces: not through the narrative form of national chronicles, but intimately and fragmentarily, through the record-by-record and image-by-image experience of colonizers’ coats thrown on beds, hockey cards tucked into 50-mission caps, and the fingernails of drowning men scratching on the hulls of lifeboats.

One of the paradoxes of studying this material is that the ephemerality of recordings and the persistence of memory somehow live alongside each other, emphasizing their differences while also confirming their interdependence. One could just as easily speak of the persistence of recordings and the ephemerality of

<sup>86</sup> The Tragically Hip, “Looking for a Place to Happen,” on *Fully Completely*, MCA Records, released 1992. A Museum after Dark offers a detailed interpretation of the song’s treatment of colonialism and includes unpublished alternate lyrics. “Looking for a Place to Happen References,” A Museum after Dark, accessed 16 July 2018, <http://www.hipmuseum.com/looking.html>.

<sup>87</sup> The Tragically Hip, “Looking for a Place to Happen” [recorded live at The Horseshoe Tavern, 13 September 1992], on *Fully Completely*, deluxe edition, Universal Music Canada, released 2014.

<sup>88</sup> Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, vol. 1, ed. Lawrence Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 8.

memory, which is why, as Cook argues, memory and evidence need to be understood together.<sup>89</sup> Historians usually work at some distance from their subjects, but to understand digital music archiving and its connections to memory and evidence alike, the role of personal experience is unavoidable – as is the case with performance studies and ethnographic approaches to many other fields.

Throughout the discussion above, I have also considered several of the Tragically Hip's performance venues as social landscapes pervaded by recording media that capture – sometimes surreptitiously, and always incompletely – an experience that happens just at the threshold of recordability. The Roxy Theatre in 1991, the Horseshoe Tavern with its checkerboard floors in 1992, Maple Leaf Gardens with its Barilko banner in 1995, Montréal and its titular song at the Molson Centre in 2000, the final homecoming concert at Kingston's K-Rock Centre in 2016: all of these represent, in different ways, the kinds of landscapes where archivists, historians, and pro-am digital heritage collectors may find themselves trying to make sense of new forms of evidence and memory alike.

In the audience on 12 August 2016, at the second of the three Toronto shows, I found myself in just such another landscape at the Air Canada Centre, reflecting on memory and mortality amidst thousands of other fans, all singing some of Canada's best poetry together at the top of our lungs. At the time, I noticed that Gord made some comments from the stage that I could not make out over the roar of the crowd: something about First Nations during "Courage," which I almost caught, and then some final, seemingly important but indecipherable words over the coda of "Ahead By a Century," the final song of the night. Luckily, as I would discover later, a taper not far away from me in section 122, row 26, seat 23 (as he records in his metadata) captured something of the moment and shared his carefully documented recording on the Web.<sup>90</sup> Without that recording – without that pro-am archivist's labour and generosity – I would not have known what Gord actually said or been able to use it as evidence in the discussion above. Experience and memory were not enough.

This supposedly ephemeral amateur recording, like so many others in the Tragically Hip's history, turned out to be important. That night in Toronto, Gord

89 Cook, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community," 102–103.

90 See note 84. The taper notes his location and that the recording was made using "Mikes mounted on hat on a 5' 8" man acting like a microphone stand" – a reference to a long-running stage gag of Downie's about his occasionally unco-operative microphone stand.

happened to close the show with some words that speak to mortality, archiving, and memory all at once:

It's a night that disappears.

It's unlike almost everything there is.

It just disappears.

You can capture it on a lot of stuff, but it still disappears.

And that's ok too.

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