2024

Film Here Now: Daily Filmmaking and the Path to Well-being

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UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH

Film Here Now:
Daily Filmmaking and the Path to Well-Being

by

Raul Alvarez

A thesis submitted to University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Art, Design and Architecture

July 2023

Acknowledgements

I dedicate the work of the present thesis to my beloved parents, Raúl Francisco Alvarez Gutiérrez and María Aleida Lama Montes de Oca, two exceptional role models whose unwavering faith in education and the pursuit of knowledge as the antidotes to the ills of the world paved my way here.

For bestowing upon me their invaluable and generous guidance, support, mentorship, insight and wisdom, I extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisors Dr. Michael Bowdidge and Dr. Anya Lewin. Like a lighthouse shining on a dark stormy night, Dr. Bowdidge rescued me from becoming intellectually adrift early in my process, and, gently and expertly, pointed the way to harbor. From a front row seat in his workshops and during our personal interactions, I witnessed a master of the craft of teaching at work and gained lessons that shall stay with me for as long as I live. With great perspicacity, Dr. Lewin continually scrutinized my work and offered sobering critiques that challenged me to exercise parts of my brain I did not think myself capable of flexing. These top-caliber educators and thinkers have sparked a monumental intellectual and personal growth in me and, to both of them, I remain forever grateful.

Jean-Marie Casbarian served as my advisor early on in my project while Dr. Kayla Parker intervened to assist me in making the push to the finish during the final months. Jean-Marie's expansive and bottomless knowledge of the art of the moving image and her warmhearted positivity played a crucial role in shaping my initial ideas. In parks and cafés across the continents, we shared the kind of memorable conversations about cinema that remain, for me, one of the most gratifying rewards resulting from my doctoral pursuit. In the difficult aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic, Dr. Parker's salient expertise and perceptive feedback re-focused my attention and refueled my energies. Without her contribution, it is difficult for me to imagine I could have ever crossed the finish line. To Jean-Marie and Dr. Parker, a thousand thank-yous.

My thesis work further benefited from the many personal interactions I shared with other graduate students and faculty during residencies at both the Transart Institute and University of Plymouth. To them all, I owe a big thank you and more than one toast. I am especially indebted to those who began their doctoral journey alongside me: my "sister from another mother" Verónica Fazzio, Margaret Wagner Hart and Allison Geremia; and those who joined shortly after: Emilio Chapela, Luisa Greenfield and Cândida Borges. And I would be remiss in my acknowledgments if I did not give a shout-out to Christopher Danowski, the PhD OG, a champion in my corner who always believed (and predicted) I could do this.

I would also like to thank the organizers of the 2019 *Happiness Conference* at the University of Cambridge who took a chance on me and invited me to share my evolving work before event participants, an experience that boosted my courage and confidence as I continued on to my journey's destination.

Thank you also to the many relatives, friends, neighbors, acquaintances and strangers who agreed to participate and appear in my daily films, especially those who kindly granted me access to their homes and businesses.

Finally, my warmest, most heartfelt thank you to the many people who, during the course of this project, nurtured my heart and kept it afloat with their love, affection, friendship and company, especially Nanci DeBonis Iovino, Cassandra Mya Hohn, Rebecca "Becky" Thoreson, Curtis Marvin Hohn, Alex Thomas, Andy Schön, Jessica Auer, Ruby Jurado, Annett Wienmeister, Lucio Fernández, Jay González, Jorge Luís Seco, Ino Martel Casuso, Idania Figueroa, Adolfo "Fito" Sepúlveda, Frank Villar and my extended Cuban family and friends; Anna Villa-Bager, Steven Torres, Jamarr Neyland, Cedric Dimapilis, Teresa DeFabrizio, Maria Trice-Jenkins, Johan Bager and the rest of my colleagues and students at Marblejam Center for Creative Arts and Enrichment; Noaa Stoler, Kristine Bowen, Julian Tejera, Susan Cancro, Leah Fox, Celene Ryan and the rest of my colleagues at the Montclair Art Museum and Yard School of Art; Professor Kevin Burke, Blake Hawk, Michael Abitz, Zach Gerberick and the rest of my former colleagues and students at the University of Cincinnati where, a few years before my doctoral journey began, I first explored the *Actuality* film form in film courses I designed and taught as a professor in the Electronic Media department; Liz Steinberg and the Martys and Kendellan familes; and, of course, to the one and only May Steinberg, who stuck with me, kept me company during the many nights I burned the midnight oil and made sure I never went hungry.

Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

A programme of advanced study was undertaken, which included workshops and seminars at the Transart Institute Summer and Winter residencies in Berlin and New York and during University of Plymouth Spring residencies.

Presentations at conferences (as Raul Barcelona):

The Awakening of Cinema: Daily Filmmaking and Well-being
Happiness Conference: Enlightenment to Present,
University of Cambridge, UK, 2019.

Word count of main body of thesis: 70,684.

Signed: 

Date: July 15th, 2023

Abstract

Raul Alvarez
Film Here Now: Daily Filmmaking and the Path to Well-being

Film Here Now investigates the relationship between filmmaking and well-being with two specific aims: to illuminate how and why the process of making films inflicts stress on the filmmaker, and to determine what can be done within this process to prioritize the filmmaker's well-being. My empirical framework of inquiry combines a particular filmmaking practice with a reflexive analysis of my experiences and observations.

The practice component of my research consists of the daily production of films that adopt the aesthetic of *Actualities*, the minute long, single non-moving shot films by the Lumière Brothers, Thomas Edison and W. K. L. Dickson that dominated early cinema. Noël Burch's theory of film, wherein films are analyzed as a combination of Institutional and Primitive Modes of Representation, provides the framework I use to contextualize my films in relation to the dominant visual aesthetic of today's cinema.

From an examination of my process and the resulting films, I draw conclusions about how making daily *Actualities* affects the relationship between my perception of the world and the world itself. I pit these conclusions against the cinematic realism theories championed by André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer and Dziga Vertov. Unlike them, I reject the notion that the camera sees what I see and the idea that it has the ability to record or reproduce my experience of the world. Instead, I argue that the process of making daily *Actualities* serves as a tool that facilitates my ability to look at the world with greater awareness and, in consequence, expands my capacity for presence and acceptance. Through the philosophical works of Jiddu Krishnamurti and Alan Watts, I contend that it is these qualities—awareness, presence and acceptance—that pave the path to well-being and, if a filmmaking process is to prioritize the well-being of the filmmaker, it must thus be designed so as to facilitate the filmmaker's ability to attain them.

Overall, my thesis contributes a new assessment of the *Actuality* film form as a tool for expanding well-being and a new critique of realistic theories of film on the grounds that they run counter to the maximization of well-being. The conclusions I have drawn regarding the relationship between filmmaking and well-being stem from a singular case study—my own—consisting of a particular filmic approach under a specific set of conditions. Is my methodology transferable to other practitioners? I suggest it is and, moreover, I propose ways in which my findings may be applied to other forms and modes of filmmaking.

List of Figures

Note: All images and films contained herein are my own unless otherwise noted and are credited under my artistic and professional name, **Raul Barcelona**.

List of Daily Films
Produced from January 1st to December 31st, 2017.
Viewable at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIXVvP5PydvDEfk3m6a18wg/videos

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Introduction: The Myth of the Struggling Filmmaker

> A gray, overcast sky. Riverbanks lushly decorated with green vegetation. A soundtrack of insect and bird sounds. In the center of the frame, in a medium-closeup, a slender, mustachioed man wearing an olive green long sleeve shirt and a white undershirt looks at us. He appears seated on some type of rowboat as he floats on the murky brown waters of a river. His name is Werner Herzog and he is a filmmaker nearing the end of the troubled, five-year production of his film *Fitzcarraldo* (1982). Framing this scene from behind the camera is Les Blank, the filmmaker who, in turn, is directing a making-of documentary about Herzog's film. Blank asks Herzog: "What are your plans when this movie's all over? What are you gonna be doing?"[1]
>
> Herzog first looks away as he takes a deep breath, then down as he scratches the side of his face. "I shouldn't make movies any more," he says, lifting his head, looking directly at the camera again and drawing a smile. "I should go to a lunatic asylum right away." Blank chuckles off-camera. "But I don't know," Herzog continues. "It's uh…," he trails off, looking away in silence as the smile vanishes off of his face.
>
> The arduous production drama he has lived through the past few years seems to replay in his mind's eye in a flash: after 6-months of production and with half of the film shot, he was forced to start over when his lead actor, Jason Robards, got sick with dysentery and left the production; he recast the titular role with Klaus Kinski and then had to endure the volatile behavior of his temperamental new star, as well as the harsh conditions of the Amazon jungle, uncooperative weather, disease, crew injuries and warring and hostile native tribes who, at one point, invaded and burned down his production camp. Still, after all the experiences he has lived through in the making of his film, Herzog is not home free: as part of the central event in *Fitzcarraldo*, he and his crew are still struggling to haul up a 300-ton steamship over a muddy mountain.
>
> After a couple of seconds, returning to the present moment, Herzog turns his gaze back to the camera and tells Blank: "Very much of it is too crazy, too…" He never finishes the sentence, instead concluding: "Just not what a man should do in his life all the time."

Burden of Dreams (1982), Les Blank's film depicting the making of Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* (1982) and featuring the scene described above, can be interpreted as a cautionary tale of the detrimental effects that the process of making a film can have over a filmmaker's well-being. Watching it, I saw myself and my filmmaking experiences reflected on screen: in 2013 I tried to direct a narrative feature film and failed miserably. The pressures of a tight schedule and a very limited budget left little room for trial and error, leading to a demanding and tense production environment where creative and

[1] *Burden of Dreams*, directed by Les Blank (1982; New York, NY: Criterion Collection, 2005), DVD. 01:29:23.

personal conflicts among cast and crew soon emerged. These set off a chain reaction that spiraled out of control: personal conflicts delayed production, further intensifying the time pressure built into the schedule, raising interpersonal tensions even more, increasing people's propensity for making errors, which, in turn, further aggrieved cast and crew conflicts, starting the time-pressuring, tension-building, error-making and conflict-producing cycle over again with even greater intensity. Extending the daily shooting schedule did not ameliorate the situation, quite the opposite: physical and mental exhaustion began to set in, reducing the crew's ability to efficiently meet the project's demands while handling the production's mounting problems. Uncooperative weather made matters worse, intermittently halting production. All these circumstances negatively impacted the quality of the captured film content, all but guaranteeing that reshoots would have to be planned for, costing even more time and money. During five days of production, I lived in a constant state of sleep-deprived anxiety. With little of worth to justify the rapid depletion of the production's finances, my producing partners and I were finally forced to pull the plug on the project. The experience and the project's termination sent me into a deep depression for which I was eventually hospitalized.

As I recovered, I too began to question, like Herzog, whether I should ever make films again. I had previously enjoyed making documentaries and shorts, but narrative filmmaking did seem "too crazy." "Is filmmaking inherently incongruent with the filmmaker's well-being," I wondered, "or is there a process whereby one can make films as a path to a state of equanimity?" My attempt to answer this question drove the research I have conducted and that forms the basis of the doctoral thesis detailed in the pages that follow. Specifically, I have sought to meet two primary aims: first, to illuminate how and why the process of making films inflicts stress on the filmmaker and, second, to see what can be done within this process to prioritize the filmmaker's well-being.

a) The Terms of Filmmaking and Well-being

What is the "process of making films" I am hereby referring to and that concerns my thesis? At present—as throughout film history—the production methods visual artists employ to create works categorized as 'films' vary widely. An examination of filmmaking as a whole would then require a study of each of these methods, too monumental a task in the face of the limitations of time and space a doctoral thesis naturally imposes on the researcher. Out of the need to limit the scope of my project, I have focused my inquiry on a specific type of filmmaking that consists of a one-person production crew, wherein the filmmaker is at once the director, camera and sound operator, as well as the editor of the resulting film. Within this process, I imposed and observed a series of aesthetic rules on my work that I adopted from a genre of films, known as *Actualities*, that were largely popularized by Auguste and Louis Lumière, and by Thomas Edison and W. K. L. Dickson, during the mid to late 1890s.[2] *Actualities*[3] consisted of short silent films of about a minute in duration, generally depicting a singular, uninterrupted non-moving view. I

[2] I discuss the origins of *Actualities*, the work of the Lumières, Edison and Dickson in detail in Ch.1.
[3] As discussed in Ch. 1, the term *Actualities* originates from the French *actualités*. Because I am writing my thesis in English I have opted to use the English translation of the term rather than its French form.

adopted the duration limit and the singular, non-moving shot aesthetic of *Actualities* into my production of daily1-minute long films that consisted of a single, non-moving shot. For the entirety of a year—2017—I produced 365 daily *Actuality* films. The use of a camera to produce images that are then sequentially assembled and shared by way of light projection is central to this mode of filmmaking and I suggest that my findings, and the theories I developed from them, may extend to single-filmmaker productions that are equally camera-centric and focus on the audiovisual recording of unscripted scenes of the everyday.

Scripted films, then, are excluded from the context of my thesis and so are films whose production does not involve the use of a camera, such as ones whose images are painted directly onto a strip of film or created through the use of a computer. Films that require the use of a camera to photograph hand drawn images, paper cutouts, puppets, objects or people as they are altered or manipulated from frame to frame, also lie beyond the focus of my examination. My discrimination notwithstanding, I do consider these production methods to consist of legitimate modes of filmmaking, but whether my findings apply to them in any sense lies beyond the scope of my analysis.

Also excluded from my inquiry are single-filmmaker, camera-centric productions that do not involve or necessitate the continual presence and active participation of the filmmaker throughout the process of making a film. Films produced through the use of computer-controlled surveillance or motion-triggered cameras, for example, permit the absence of the filmmaker at the place and time of filming. Similarly, the employment of computer algorithms during editing can relieve the filmmaker from actively reviewing footage and making cutting decisions. Productions that rely on such automated filmmaking processes fall outside the focus of my thesis because the filmmaking process I investigate involves and requires the following: 1) the filmmaker's presence at the shooting location at the time of filming; and 2) the filmmaker's direct and active engagement in the act of looking, both through the camera during recording and in the course of reviewing the resulting footage for the purposes of editing. Modes of filmmaking whereby a filmmaker records accidentally or without looking through the camera,[4] or that consist of editing blindly or without viewing footage, then, are also excluded from my study because these methods do not constitute an active engagement with the act of looking during both filming and editing.

Moreover, I must clarify that my thesis concerns the relationship between filmmaking and well-being, and not the relationship between filmmaking and film viewing. The well-being of film audiences may be influenced or affected by the films they consume in ways that may be worth researching. But the present investigation limits its consideration of film spectatorship to the extent that it forms an integral part of the filmmaker's creative process. As the maker of my own films, I am also the spectator of my work when I watch what my camera records during shooting; when I review my footage during editing; and when I view the finished film to confirm its completion. I

[4] I made a film in this manner, *What My Camera Saw As I Left My House and Got Into My Car*, as part of my preliminary research to determine what form the practical component of my thesis should take. See Appendix D.

also watch my films to learn about myself, my filmmaking methods and my creative approach. Additionally, as part of my filmmaking process, I share my films with others in order to expose myself to perspectives on my work that may challenge or compliment my own. Because I do not seek to answer questions regarding the well-being of film audiences, I consider the experience of these select film viewers only to help me gain a deeper understanding of the relation of my filmmaking process to well-being.

And what is, after all, the conception of well-being that informs my project? First, it must be noted that, despite shifting definitions over the course of this thesis, well-being is not considered here as a state of being that, once reached or attained, remains constant for one's lifetime. Instead, well-being is conceived of throughout as a state of being that, although one cannot remain in it permanently, one may strive towards as part of a habitual practice. In this sense, as neuroscientist Sam Harris points out, well-being is akin to our general conception of health:[5] a state of healthiness, once attained, does not reach a sense of closure; instead, to stay healthy, one must continually strive towards a state of healthiness by actively engaging in actions conducive to health—eating well, exercising, etc. As conceptualized in this thesis, well-being, like healthiness, can never be completely attained: the most we can hope for is to maximize our experience of it.

So, then, the conception of well-being that informs my project is one that shifted over the course of my experiences making daily films, reshaped by my own reflections and informed by my review of psychological and philosophical texts on the subject.[6] When I began my daily *Actuality* filmmaking journey, I conceived of well-being as a state of being characterized by a minimal, practically negligent amount of suffering and distress. Moreover, I viewed well-being as largely determined by the material conditions surrounding me and their relation to my life goals. It is this viewpoint that informed the design of the practical component of my research: a daily filmmaking practice bound by production rules that aimed to largely reduce obstacles or stressors that might hinder my goal of making a film per day. In eliminating time-consuming elements from my process, such as scriptwriting and montage, and imposing duration and shot composition limits that reduced the need for decision-making, I sought to facilitate my daily production goal and expected my well-being would be safeguarded along the way. But, in the course of making daily *Actualities*, I discovered this was not necessarily the case and my research, then, gave way to an understanding of well-being articulated through key ideas in the philosophical works of Jiddu Krishnamurti and Alan Watts.[7]

Well-being, in Krishnamurti's worldview as in Watts', is also understood as a state of being consisting of little to no distress, but one that, rather than determined by situational conditions, is instead rooted in the activities of the human mind, where fragmented thinking—or the division of thought—gives rise to suffering in the form of conflict. "Division," explained Krishnamurti, "implies sorrow; it is the root cause of sorrow" and, where division or fragmentation persists, well-being cannot be because

[5] Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2010), 11-12.
[6] I discuss these texts in Ch. 3.
[7] I discuss the works of Krishnamurti and Watts in Ch. 3.

"goodness is a state of non-division."[8] In its proclivity to make sense of the world, the mind engages in thinking that divides, organizes and labels with words what it perceives: this is the sky, that is the sun, etc. "Thinking," as Watts pointed out, "is a method of representing events in the physical world with symbols" and, while this method "has great advantages" in facilitating our existence, "its disadvantage is that one confuses the world as symbolized with the world that is."[9] This confusion between our world-image and the world-as-is that thinking engenders represents a disadvantage precisely because, within the philosophical framework of these philosophers, it is the source of all suffering, the root of all conflict.

Krishnamurti illustrated the concept of conflict as a discrepancy in thought. When looking at an object, he explained, "if you think it is something, and I think it is something else, then there must be division and hence conflict."[10] Krishnamurti, however, considers conflict as more than a disagreement between two or more thinking minds: conflict also emerges within a singular mind from the disparity between what it thinks of the world and what the world actually is. In looking at a tree, according to Krishnamurti, "[w]e never see a tree, we see the tree through the image that we have of it, the concept of that tree."[11] In other words, rather than absorbing and attending to all the details of the tree—the intricate pattern of its branches, the peaks and valleys in the surface of its bark, the arrangement of its leaves—we simplify what we are seeing into an overall image or symbol we attribute the label "tree" to. "[B]ut the concept, the knowledge, the experience [of the tree]," as Krishnamurti notes, "is entirely different from the actual tree."[12] Therein, in this discrepancy between our image of *what is* and *what actually is*, lies conflict.

In both Krishnamurti's and Watts' outlook, all forms of an individual's suffering are manifestations of conflict, of a discrepancy or gap between the mind's thought-world and the world as it is. In grieving the loss of a loved one, for example, the mind's thought-world may be populated by mental images of joyful moments shared in their company, and this represents a discrepancy with the world as it is, where their presence can no longer be experienced. It is this discrepancy—this conflict—that gives rise to suffering. All suffering, therefore, is rooted in conflict and, conversely, conflict implies suffering. To overcome conflict in order to maximize one's state of well-being, then, an individual must strive to reduce or close the gap between the world as thought of and the world as it exists and, in so doing, avoid confusing the two as being the same. "The problem," Watts explained, "is in confusing the world thought about with the world that is; we eat the menu and not the dinner" and, if we are to end suffering and maximize well-being, we "can't confuse the map with the territory, the menu with the meal."[13] For

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[8] Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Meeting Life: Writings and Talks on Finding Your Path Without Retreating From Society* (n.p.: HarperOne, 1991), 46.
[9] Peter J. Columbus, and Donadrian L. Rice, eds., *Alan Watts—in the Academy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017), 348.
[10] Jiddu Krishnamurti, *The Awakening of Intelligence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), part V, chap. 1, para. 16, Kindle edition.
[11] Ibid, para. 1.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Columbus and Rice, *Alan Watts—in the Academy*, 348.

Krishnamurti, the solution to ending conflict, and thus suffering, is to engage in *seeing without images* or, in other words, *seeing* the world as is and not through the influence of mind-created beliefs, interpretations, thoughts, judgments and prejudices. His statement that "[w]e never see the tree" because "we see the tree through the image that we have of it," implies that to *see*, in Krishnamurti's view, means to *see without images*. And for him, "where there is seeing there is no conflict."[14]

The process of making static, single-shot daily films engaged my mind in a form of seeing and thinking that differed from ones I previously experienced when working in other filmmaking styles. Absent the need to consider and assemble multiple shots or angles, my thinking about my films became less fragmentary. The imposed 1-minute duration of my recordings and the inability to move the camera, encouraged a more focused form of attention on my part, one less taxed by distractions and interruptions. Whereas I initially considered well-being as determined by material conditions standing in the way of my goals, this new way of seeing and thinking about my films led me, over time, to thinking of well-being within my filmmaking practice in terms employed in Krishnamurti's and Watts' respective philosophies. Through the lens of key ideas in their perspectives, my daily *Actuality* filmmaking practice emerges in my analysis as a process that minimizes the need for the filmmaker to fragment the mind's thinking, thus alleviating the propensity for inner, personal conflict and suffering.

Moreover, my practice involves the creation of images or films that may be considered as models, representations or symbols of the world, a creative process that mirrors the mind's creation of images that, in Krishnamurti's and Watts' shared view, we tend to confuse with the world as is. To eradicate conflict and maximize well-being, Krishnamurti and Watts, in an overall sense, prescribe *seeing* the world as is rather than mistaking it for the mental representation of it our mind creates. Mapped onto filmmaking, this line of thinking suggests that, just as the symbolized world in our minds tends to engender conflict, considering films as representations of the world may similarly hinder a filmmaker's ability to see the world as is and, consequently, obstruct the path to well-being. To examine this idea, I place my reflections of my daily filmmaking experiences, together with a conception of well-being drawn from key ideas in Krishnamurti and Watts' work, in dialogue with cinematic realism theories endorsed by André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer and Dziga Vertov.[15] This examination sets the stage for my challenge of the pervading notion in film discourse that the products of filmmaking, that is to say, films, or motion pictures, closely represent my experience of reality. I do not favor the view that cinema's superior ability to captivate an audience emerges from its ability to produce a virtual reality that closely matches lived experience. Instead, I contend that cinema does not even come close to producing objects that match my experience of reality or of living. If cinema appears to do so, and if this illusion has been—and is—easy to overlook, it is because what films often do resemble is the simplified model of reality I adopt in my thinking about my experience of living. In short, films do not resemble my experience of reality; instead, they mirror the way I *tend* to think

[14] Krishnamurti, *Awakening of Intelligence*, part V, chap. 1, para. 14.
[15] I discuss the works of Bazin, Kracauer and Vertov, in Ch. 4.

about my experience of reality. The recognition of this seemingly minor distinction plays a key role in the filmmaker's path to well-being, or so I contend.

b) Daily *Actuality* Filmmaking Practice as Research

Thus far, I have established the questions I aim to answer in the present thesis, delineated the terms of filmmaking and well-being that my project explores, and hinted at a research approach consisting of a practical component and a reflexive analysis in dialogue with texts concerning well-being and realistic theories of film. This intertwining of practice and theory, then, forms the basis of my research methodology, which I consider to be "practice as research." As Robin Nelson defines it, "practice as research involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, in respect of the arts, a practice (creative writing, dance, musical score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice) is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry."[16]

Why did I opt for this methodology and not another? My path to this research approach was circuitous and began with the exploration of various textual forms. Initially, I gathered as much information as I could about what others had already stated in regards to filmmaking and its effects on the filmmaker's well-being. If I was to contribute new knowledge to the understanding of the relationship between filmmaking and well-being, ascertaining what knowledge already existed on the subject seemed like a necessary first step. Without it, how could I possibly know the knowledge I hoped to contribute was new? Over time, the mere accumulation of others' thoughts on the matter, however, did not provide me with a secure and solid sense of knowledge and understanding: I was becoming knowledgeable in what others had to say about the relationship between filmmaking and well-being, not about the relationship itself in a direct sense. Additionally, the more texts I explored, the greater the need became to discern the validity of the many perspectives I encountered and to assess whether the observations and conclusions contained therein constituted knowledge sufficiently strong to build my thesis on.

Faced with these problems, I decided to compliment my exploration of existing texts with my own film practice as an apt and feasible solution: putting the tools of my own craft in the service of finding answers related to my artistic process offered both the opportunity for direct, practical engagement with the issues I was exploring, and a method to test and evaluate others' assertions, as well as my own hypotheses. Within my own filmmaking practice, the tools and methods I employed played a crucial, though not exclusive, role in paving the way to new discoveries, thoughts, observations, reflections and ideas. After all, for an artistic practice to qualify as research it must involve more than mere practice. As Graeme Sullivan explains, "artistic practice can be seen to comprise a critical coalition of practices that involve an ongoing dialogue within and across, between and around the artist, artwork, and context, where each has a role to play

[16] Robin Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 8-9.

in the pursuit of understanding."[17] His words may as well have been written to accurately and precisely describe the totality of my own methodology: while the practice of making daily films played a key role in my investigation, it was continually informed, reshaped and complimented by what I ("artist") experienced in the process and in reaction to the resulting films ("artwork"), and my experiences and reactions were themselves influenced and challenged by my ever-deepening analysis of texts concerning filmmaking and well-being ("context").

Moreover, an art practice in itself may produce new works—such as my daily *Actualities*—but, as Henk Borgdorff argues, these may not necessarily enhance our knowledge.[18] Artistic research, on the other hand, "[contributes] not just to the artistic universe, but to what we 'know' and 'understand.'"[19] In Borgdorff's view, an artistic practice functioning as research does this in two ways: on one hand, "the results of the research extend further than the personal artistic development of the artist in question;" on the other, "the research is expressly intended to shift the frontiers of the discipline."[20] Within my project, in both the practical and textual materials therein, I have aimed to meet these two conditions. Specifically, I have sought to produce knowledge that may be of use to other filmmakers and their practice and that may inspire a shift in their understanding of filmmaking and its relation to their well-being.

In defending the validity of art practice-based research as a method of knowledge production, Dr. Angelika Boeck points out that this form of investigation "functions differently"[21] than the scientific approaches employed in the natural sciences. In the sciences, Boeck notes, research "require[s] the use of approved methods" that are "part of a theoretical discourse and a verifiable, generalisable and comprehensible depiction of the research process."[22] In art practice-based research, by contrast, the "methodological and the theoretical aspects can often only be identified retrospectively, through a process of *reverse engineering.*"[23] This process of "*reverse engineering*" involves, as Boeck explains, an examination of the art-creation process "in relation to the works of other artists, scientists and theorists in order to extract the components" that make up the "[methodological and theoretical] aspects" of the research.[24]

Both the artistic practice-as-research methodology of this thesis and the organization of its presentation reflect Boeck's thinking. I did not extract the form of my daily *Actuality* filmmaking practice from "approved methods" that are "part of a theoretical discourse" or that can be said to consist of a "verifiable, generalizable and

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[17] Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in Visual Arts* (London: SAGE, 2010), 119.
[18] Henk Borgdorff, "The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research," from *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, ed. Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson (London: Routledge, 2010), 54. Borgdorff writes: "The production of images, installations, compositions and performances as such is not intended primarily for enhancing our knowledge (although forms of reflection are always entwined with art)."
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Angelika Boeck, and Peter Tepe. "What is Artistic Research?," *w/k – Between Science and Art* (February 25, 2021), https://between-science-and-art.com/what-is-artistic-research/.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

comprehensible" illustration of a pre-existing research process. Instead, I engaged in my practice as a method of art creation that only retrospectively, in the following written thesis, I have examined in dialogue with "the works of other artists, scientists and theorists" to draw out its methodological and theoretical features.

c) Myths of the Sisyphean Filmmaker

Though my research approach would later shift, my initial, general survey of accounts, opinions, beliefs and thoughts on filmmaking and well-being indicate that I am not alone in my experience of filmmaking as a process detrimental to my well-being; that this subject is of potential interest to others; and that it is, consequently, worthy of investigation. For this reason, and because it provides the background that informs and justifies my subsequent choice of an art practice-based methodology, I share the results of my preliminary textual survey here.

At the outset of my investigation, before I knew what form it would take, I avidly watched films about filmmaking. I wanted to learn what other filmmakers had to say about their process through their own medium. Everywhere I looked, I found echoes of the sentiments Herzog—and Blank, by virtue of his film directing—expressed in *Burden of Dreams*: in *The Cameraman* (1928) a cop insists Buster Keaton's photographer-turned-filmmaker be committed to a mental hospital; Federico Fellini's *8 ½* (1963) opens with the filmmaker protagonist waking up after a mental breakdown in a bed surrounded by doctors and nurses and fantasizes about suicide to escape the pressures of his work; completing both a film and theater project negatively impacts the mental and physical health of the director at the center of Bob Fosse's *All That Jazz* (1979), resulting in his death; the filmmaker in Tom Dicillo's *Living in Oblivion* (1995) struggles to hold on to his integrity and vision as the clashing egos of his cast and crew and technical problems plague his production and continually destabilize his emotional state; the titular character in Michel Hazanavicious' *The Artist* (2011) spirals down into a state of depression and substance abuse when the film he has directed, produced and financed tanks on opening day and bankrupts him; as if heeding Herzog's words of advice, the aspiring filmmaker in Quentin Dupieux's *Reality* (2014) personally checks himself into a lunatic asylum by film's end when, in the process of meeting the demands of his producer, he begins to lose his grip on reality.

Collectively, these cinematic works—and others like them[25]—seemed, at first glance, to suggest that, yes, filmmaking is inherently incongruent with the filmmaker's well-being. On second thought, however, I concluded that their similar point of view does not serve as solid evidence that filmmaking is incompatible with the pursuit of well-being. For one, the narratives presented in these works, even those that are thinly veiled

[25] For example, Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen's *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), Francois Truffaut's *Day For Night* (1973), Joel and Ethan Cohen's *Barton Fink* (1990), Eleanor Coppola's *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, Robert Altman's *The Player* (1992), Tim Burton's *Ed Wood* (1994), Chris Smith's *American Movie* (1999), Spike Jonze's *Adaptation* (2002), Keith Fulton and Louis Pepe's *Lost in La Mancha* (2002), Kevin Smith's *Zack and Miri Make a Porno* (2008), Barry Levinson's *What Just Happened* (2008), Jaffar Panahi's *This is Not a Film* (2011), Caveh Zahedi's *The Sheik and I* (2012), David Gregory's *Lost Soul: The Doomed Journey of Richard Stanley's Island of Dr. Moreau* (2014), to cite a few more.

autobiographical accounts of their creators' experiences, are the result of a creative process often involving screenwriting, set design, wardrobe, casting, acting, lighting, shooting and editing decisions. As such, they may undergo distortions, embellishments and exaggerations in the interest of maximizing entertainment value, critical acclaim and/or box office receipts. Often under the influence of similar motivations, even films that may be categorized as "documentaries" or "nonfiction films," such as *Burden of Dreams*, offer an edited representation of events that impedes viewers' ability to experience them in the way they unfolded in real time in order to evaluate their veracity.

Early in *Burden of Dreams* Herzog describes the story of his main character, Fitzcarraldo, as "Sisyphus-like",[26] a characteristic that equally applies to Herzog as the main character in Blank's story. In both films, the steamboat takes the place of the boulder that, according to the Greek myth described in Homer's *The Odyssey*, king Sisyphus was condemned to push up a hill for all eternity.[27] Is filmmaking a similarly inescapable, repeating cycle of suffering, or are we to interpret the narrative of Herzog's struggles as mythical as Sisyphus'? Beyond the screen, Blank's accounts of the making of *Burden of Dreams* amplify the image of the filmmaker as anguished artist, strengthening its seeming veracity. In an interview, Blank explained how on his first day of filming for his making-of documentary, after witnessing how "a cameraman got all cut up" while filming down "severe rapids," Herzog asked him to join him and others in an armed attack on a hostile native tribe planned for the following day.[28] "I spent the whole night not being able to sleep and just worrying myself sick," Blank declared.[29] Herzog called the raiding party off in the morning but, according to Blank, that action-packed first day "was like going to war. I was scared shitless."[30] About two weeks into production, Blank intimated in his published production journal that "[m]y alienation and subsequent depression has been gradually building."[31]

The portrait of the filmmaker as a Sisyphean figure condemned to suffer thus reverberates with particularly persuasive power within, and behind the scenes, of *Burden of Dreams*. But the archetype of the tortured creative artist is nothing new and even predates the invention of cinema by a few centuries. As Margot and Rudolph Wittkauer demonstrated in *Born Under Saturn: The Conduct and Character of Artists* (1963), it can be traced back to the Renaissance, when it emerged out of the need of artists seeking to break free from the restrictive structures of guilds and patronage to distinguish themselves from mere "craftsmen"[32] in order to gain greater autonomy and status. More specifically,

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[26] *Burden of Dreams,* 00:02:00.
[27] Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles (London: Penguin Books, 2002), book 11, line 681, electronic edition.
[28] Jesse Pearson and Jerry Hsu. "Les Blank," *Vice.com*, August 31, 2009, https://www.vice.com/en/article/avjgbk/les-blank-127-v16n9.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Les Blank and James Bogan, *Burden of Dreams: Screenplay, Journals, Reviews, Photographs* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1984), 92.
[32] My use of the word "craftsmen" should not be taken to denote the gender of the artists, even if, the artists the Wittkauers discuss are largely male. I use the word "craftsmen" primarily because it is the one used in the English translation of the Wittkauers' book. Moreover, as Anne Curzan demonstrates throughout her volume *Gender shifts in the history of English* (2003), the form *man* or *mann* in Old English was used to refer to a

"[i]t was in Florence," in the 1400s, "that the new ideology, irreconcilable with the established order, first arose" as "artists themselves began to propagate it at the precise moment when [artist Filippo] Brunelleschi asserted his freedom in the face of guild laws."[33] According to the Wittkauers, "[a]t that critical moment in history arose the new image of the alienated artist."[34]

To determine when, how and why this image of the "alienated artist" took hold in the public's mind and what its features may have been, the Wittkauers' research methodology consisted of a critical analysis of three different types of documentation: 'neutral' documents (contracts, court minutes, and tax declarations); artists' personal writings (diaries, autobiographies, correspondence); and theoretical and biographical writings. In their research, they recognized that at the hands of biographers "character sketches of artists are highly debatable,"[35] especially in the case of biographers who were themselves artists whose interests may have led them to alter these accounts to suit their needs. Nonetheless, the Wittkauers opted to rely on these accounts for their conclusions because, despite their questionable accuracy, "they show what the writers believed to be worth communicating and the readers accepted as characteristic of the artists of their time."[36]

While I find this to be a valid justification for their decision, I myself was unable to apply a similar line of judgment in considering accounts about filmmakers in the form of films about filmmaking: my direct knowledge and firsthand experience of the manipulative nature of filmmaking and, in particular, film editing, exacerbated my ability to trust the images and sounds I witnessed in these films. I simply could not accept them as reliable evidence for my inquiry and, following the Wittkauer's example, I turned instead to other documents detailing accounts of filmmakers' experiences. However, to narrow the scope of my search, I limited my further investigation to the sphere of filmmaking where I located the failed production which had propelled me into this research: independent filmmaking.

d) Myths of the Struggling Indie Filmmaker

Independent (or "indie") filmmaking, which I understood as a practice of making films outside the structures of Hollywood or industrial cinema, seemed an apt label to categorize the film work I had heretofore produced. In seeking a more precise definition of "independent filmmaking" I identified three texts that had previously attempted to

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generic person of any gender. Current definitions of "craftsman" in both the Merriam-Webster Dictionary and the Cambridge Dictionary suggest as much in defining a "craftsman" either as a "worker" or "person", both gender-neutral nouns that imply that "craftsman" is also gender-neutral. Despite this, I am aware of, and sensitive to, the value of gender neutrality in language and understand that some modern readers might interpret "craftsmen" as reinforcing the attitude that those who practice "craftsmanship" must be males. Readers who interpret "craftsmen" in this manner should know that I have not opted to use other terms such as "craftspeople" or "artisans" in its place for the reasons I have hereby stated.

[33] Margot and Rudolph Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists* (1963; New York: New York Review Books. 2007), 14.

[34] Ibid, xxxiv.

[35] Ibid, xxxii.

[36] Ibid, xxxii.

establish one: Geoff King's *American Independent Cinema* (2005), Michael Newman's *Indie: An American Film Culture* (2011) and Sherry B. Ortner's *Not Hollywood: Independent Film at the Twilight of American Film* (2013). These texts, each proposing a different perspective, make evident that definitions of the term "independent film" remain highly debatable for it can carry widely different meanings for different people in different contexts. A consensual definition of the term is not required, however, to observe that filmmakers who identify as operating within the world of "independent film" share a general preoccupation with their well-being as it relates to their filmmaking practice, further proof that research into this topic is of potential interest to a sizeable group of film practitioners. Moreover, the multi-varied, contrasting accounts I uncovered within this area hint at the notion that the material conditions of a production—budget, production schedule, etc.—may not entirely determine the filmmaker's well-being, if at all.

Within the discourse of independent filmmaking, I looked for answers about well-being as it relates to film production in articles, blog posts and interviews where filmmakers shared and expressed their thoughts about their process. An article from July 22, 2015, titled "The Painful Truth About Filmmaking No One Tells You When You're Starting Out" on the popular filmmaking website nofilmschool.com, for instance, notes that filmmaking is "an uphill battle" and argues that the obstacles of the process are "debilitating, especially from a psychological perspective."[37] On his blog, famed independent film producer Ted Hope also laments that "for everyone involved in Indie Film simple survival is never very simple" and he asserts that independent filmmaking "can only be the provence [sic] of the young, the wealthy, and the so-committed-you-have-to-judge-us-as-insane."[38] In a 2014 promotional interview published in *The Guardian*, filmmaker Kelly Reichardt relates her experience in making her eighth film, *Night Moves* (2013), explaining: "I'm 49 years old and I've gone out to Oregon and in the course of eight months I stayed in 21 different places. And I thought: Jesus, I'm nearly 50 and here I am still couch-hopping. I'm so pathetic; this is such a pitiful existence."[39] Many other examples like these abound and continue to sprout across multiple mediums and platforms wherein this or that independent filmmaker speaks of filmmaking as a taxing experience. Presently, a podcast titled *Making Movies Is Hard*, created in June 2015, continues to explore, after more than 5 years in production and more than 300 episodes, "the everyday struggle of being an independent filmmaker."[40]

As much as I searched for answers in accounts of other independent filmmakers, I did not seem to get any closer to settling the question of whether filmmaking inescapably leads to suffering or if there is a way to make films that safeguards the well-being of the

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[37] Rob Hardy, "The Painful Truth About Filmmaking No One Tells You When You're Starting Out." *Nofilmschool.com*, July 22, 2015, http://nofilmschool.com/2015/07/painful-truth-about-filmmaking-no-one-tells-you-when-youre-just-starting-out.

[38] Ted Hope, "What are the biggest 3 problems in the indie film community today?," *Hopeforfilm.com* (blog), October 26, 2010, http://trulyfreefilm.hopeforfilm.com/2010/10/what-are-the-biggest-3-problems-in-the-indie-film-community-today.html.

[39] Xan Brooks, "Kelly Reichardt: 'My films are just glimpses of people passing through,'" *The Guardian*, August 21, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/aug/21/-sp-kelly-reichardt-my-films-are-just-glimpses-of-people-passing-through.

[40] Making Movies is Hard Podcast, "Making Movies is Hard!!!," https://www.makingmoviesishard.com.

filmmaker. The more filmmaking accounts I reviewed, the more I was reminded of the fact that every filmmaker, as well as every film project, is different. My original consultation of the abovementioned texts by King, Newman and Ortner on independent film, however, led me to a different approach to analyzing filmmakers' relationship to their process: while the work of both King and Newman was rooted in the discipline of cinema studies, Ortner's looked instead at the world of independent filmmakers through the lens of anthropology, just as Hortense Powdermaker had previously done in studying the Hollywood system of the 1940s.

An anthropologist by trade, Powdermaker employed an ethnographic methodology largely based on interviews and participant observation in examining how film production, as a system, influenced the content and meaning of popular cinematic works. In the book resulting from her study, *Hollywood, the Dream Factory: An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers* (1950), Powdermaker concluded that:

> Hollywood has the elaborated totalitarian elements we have described: the concept of people as property and as objects to be manipulated, highly concentrated and personalized power for power's sake, an amorality, and an atmosphere of breaks, continuous anxiety and crises.[41]

Decades later, citing Powdermaker as her inspiration, anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner recognized in her exploration of the independent film community, *Not Hollywood: Independent Film at the Twilight of American Film* (2013), that "making a very low budget film can be very difficult and very stressful."[42] "Even your average shoot," she concluded, "is not a comfortable experience."[43]

The process of making films, whether in or outside the Hollywood system, seemed inevitably to lead to "continuous anxiety" and "very stressful" uncomfortable experiences. Yet, contrary to the extensive first-hand accounts and field observations presented in Powdermaker and Ortner's works, evidence of positive filmmaking experiences do exist, reducing these anthropological studies to incomplete pictures of the effects of filmmaking on filmmakers' well-being. Consider that despite his conclusion that he "shouldn't make movies anymore" because "much of it is too crazy" and "just not what a man should do in his life all the time," Herzog has not followed his own words of caution: in fact, he has continued to prolifically make films for decades after the making of *Fitzcarraldo*, enjoying the acclaim, recognition and accolades befitting a filmmaker that, in spite of obstacles and difficulties, may be described as "successful." And though in *Living in Oblivion* filmmaker Tom DiCillo affirmed that the process of making a narrative feature film can lead a filmmaker to feelings of extreme despair, he also recognized, off screen, that it has its positives. In explaining his inspiration for the film on his website, DiCillo echoes Herzog's words in *Burden of Dreams*: "at times," he writes, "it really does feel that the entire

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[41] Hortense Powdermaker, *Hollywood, the Dream Factory: An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers* (1950; London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1951), 332.
[42] Sherry B. Ortner, *Not Hollywood: Independent Film at the Twilight of American Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 201.
[43] Ibid, 214-215.

process of making a film is designed to drive you into an insane asylum."[44] But then, in the next paragraph, he reveals:

> What was so surprising to me was the joy and pleasure I found in writing scenes that had originally been nightmares to me; absolutely excruciating to experience. I wrote the first half hour in 4 days. I gave it to [lead actress] Catherine Keener who was staying with us for a few days. I will never forget the shrieks of laughter coming from the back bedroom.

Films about filmmaking, filmmaker testimonials, anthropological studies—all seemed like a pit of quicksand on which to build a solid structure of knowledge regarding the relationship between filmmaking and well-being. Moreover, although everyone seemed to generally agree that filmmaking is—or at least can be—stressful, difficult and not for the faint of heart, no one addressed *why* it might be so. Not only were others' accounts unreliable or inconclusive, but also limiting in the amount of light they shed on the subject. As I have noted, it was at this juncture I decided to replace my pursuit to compile and examine others' stories about well-being in relation to filmmaking (particularly independent filmmaking) with my own filmmaking practice as the driving method of my research. My preliminary research into filmmaking accounts also led me to redefine my practice away from independent filmmaking and towards a solo, camera-centric filmmaking practice that could serve as a method of investigation. Making daily 1-minute films, I hypothesized, would enable me to produce and test my own observations and conclusions through direct experience rather than through what others had to say.

e) How this Thesis is Organized

Boeck suggests the "written reflection of the artist" accompanying the practical component of artistic research may follow this order: "formulating the question, identifying the context and conditions, providing information on the method and theory, self-reflection."[45] The overall arch of my written presentation follows a similar line of organization: the Introduction formulates the questions I seek to answer; Chapters 1 and 2 identify the context of *Actuality* filmmaking as well as the context, conditions and methods of my daily filmmaking practice; Chapter 3 provides the theory on well-being that in Chapter 4 I analyze in relation to realistic theories of film, yielding a self-reflection that is summed up in the Conclusion. A more detailed summary of the contents of each chapter follows below:

In Chapter 1 I detail the history of the *Actuality* film, I define the genre's distinguishing aesthetic qualities and establish the chronophotographic influences that shaped these. Moreover, I examine the divergent styles at the hands of the leading *Actuality* filmmaking teams of Edison/Dickson and the Lumière brothers. Lastly, following Noël Burch's lead, I contextualize the *Actuality* film form within cinema at large

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[44] Tom Dicillo, "Living in Oblivion (1995)," *Tomdicillo.com*, accessed August 14, 2021, http://www.tomdicillo.com/portfolio/living-in-oblivion/.
[45] Boeck, "What is Artistic Research?".

as one that opposes and resists what Burch refers to as the Institutional Mode of Representation.

In Chapter 2 I detail the conditions of my daily *Actuality* filmmaking practice and its evolution over the course of a year. In the process, I highlight key production moments that led to a paradigm shift in my views and experience of filmmaking. I also contextualize my daily films in relation to the work of other filmmakers.

In Chapter 3 I establish a framework for understanding well-being within my filmmaking practice. I begin the chapter with an analytical survey of psychological models of well-being developed during the latter part of the 20th century up until today. I then review the literature on art therapy, a discipline that bridges psychology and art practice, focusing on its potential applications for filmmaking. Next, I find in John Cage a model for employing an art practice for the purposes of facilitating the well-being of the artist, one largely influenced by key concepts drawn from Asian philosophies. Lastly, I explore the philosophical ideas of Krishnamurti and Watts from which I extract the framework I will utilize to examine well-being within my daily filmmaking practice.

In Chapter 4 I transpose Krishnamurti's and Watts' ideas about well-being to the practice of filmmaking. The confusion of *what one sees* with *what one thinks one sees,* according to Krishnamurti and Watts, obstructs the path to well-being. I argue that engaging in my daily filmmaking process, in many respects, leads to habits of thought that perpetuate this confusion which, I further propose, is encouraged and reinforced by the realistic theories of Bazin, Kracauer and Vertov. I examine these theories in order to dispel the notion that films closely mirror or reflect the experience of reality. Additionally, I explore Hugo Münsterberg's film/mind analogies in examining how my *Actuality* filmmaking process can facilitate self-transcendence, presence or awareness of the present moment, and minimize fragmentation of thought.

Finally, in the conclusion, I sum up my key findings, my contributions to knowledge and speculate how these may be applied by other film practitioners and pave the way for future research.

CHAPTER 1—*Actuality* Filmmaking: History and Aesthetics

What is an *Actuality*? What are its defining qualities? What gave rise to the *Actuality* filmmaking style? What shaped it? What are the attitudes and values it reveals? Where does the *Actuality* film genre stand in relation to cinema as a whole? In this chapter I will answer these questions through an exploration of the history of *Actualities* and an examination of their aesthetic qualities. In doing so I aim to show that *Actuality* films emerged from, and were largely driven by, a desire to facilitate and enhance human visual perception.

The development of the *Actuality* filmmaking style and its eventual dominance during cinema's early years largely resulted from the work of two distinct filmmaking teams: Thomas Edison and W. K. L. Dickson on the one hand, and the brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière on the other. These early filmmakers were themselves inventors who, in the last decade of the 19th century, sought to further photographic technology to capture and reproduce images of sequential motion. The *Actuality* films these inventor-filmmakers produced with their newly created cameras revealed, as I will argue, their aim to help expand people's ability 'to see.'

Yet, while *Actualities* may represent an effort to inspire viewers to *see more*, to *see with greater clarity*, the history of these early films, ironically, is steeped in obfuscations emanating from the tendency of *Actuality* creators and chroniclers alike to distort, embellish, manipulate, exaggerate and mythologize. In 1961, historian Gordon Hendricks recognized, and sought to clean up, "the morass of well-embroidered legend with which the beginning of American film is permeated."[1] "Romances," Hendricks wrote, "have thus been built around the work of pioneers" and "[w]ith too few exceptions these romances have been left undisturbed."[2] Though aimed at the historical accounts of Edison and Dickson's film work, I consider Hendricks' statements to be reflective of my own experience of the broader history of *Actualities* and their makers, including the Lumières. My research has shown that numerous accounts of early cinema still contain "well-embroidered legends" and "romances" that have remained largely "undisturbed."

The task of disentangling facts from fictions in the history of *Actualities* is not central to my present discussion. Nonetheless, the legends surrounding the Edison/Dickson and Lumière filmmaking teams are worth dispelling here as a form of preamble for two reasons. For one, given their entrenchment in cinematic discourse, I find it necessary to dismiss these myths outright in order to establish a more clear-eyed perspective before entering a discussion regarding the work of these filmmakers. Moreover, these mythological accounts foreshadow a theme I will explore more at length within the context of well-being in Chapter 4: the tension between cinema's facilitation of the act of *seeing* and the proclivity to confabulate that the medium inspires.

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[1] Gordon Hendricks, *The Edison Motion Picture Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961; reprinted in *Origins of the American Film*, New York: Arno, 1972), vii.
[2] Ibid.

a) Myths of the Early *Actuality* Filmmakers

The myths surrounding Thomas Edison's film work largely originated from the man himself. As Hendricks documented in *The Edison Motion Picture Myth* (1961), Edison often credited himself as the first and sole progenitor of motion pictures, diminishing or entirely dismissing the accomplishments of both his collaborators and competitors.[3] In truth, Louis Le Prince, in 1888, and William Friese-Greene, in 1889, invented and obtained patents for motion picture cameras[4] before the Edison Manufacturing Company filed for one in 1891, which would not be approved until 1893.[5] Moreover, as Hendricks painstakingly demonstrated through his meticulous analysis of legal and archival documents in *The Edison Motion Picture Myth*, "the chief credit for what is generally known as the Edison motion picture work must rest with Edison's employee, W. K. L. Dickson."[6]

Hired by Edison as an electrical engineer[7] in 1883,[8] William Kennedy Laurie Dickson was tasked by his employer with inventing a motion picture system in 1889[9] and, as project leader, did "[m]uch of the work"[10] to make it a practical reality by 1892.[11] During this time Dickson also became the official photographer at Edison's laboratory[12] and, unquestionably, his expertise as "an accomplished photographer"[13] aided his success. Edison's own technical knowledge and understanding of photography, by contrast, appears to have been poor, at least at the outset: in the initial documents he filed with the patent office in anticipation of his patent application, as Hendricks' examination reveals, Edison did not seem to understand the difference between a positive and a negative image,[14] and, more generally, appeared to be describing a "completely inoperable apparatus."[15]

Dickson left Edison's employ after 12 years, in 1895,[16] and went on to co-found a very successful rival motion picture company, the American Mutoscope Company, later

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[3] Hendricks, *Edison Picture Myth*, viii. Hendricks lists numerous examples of such claims.
[4] Robert Spottiswoode, "The Friese-Greene Controversy: The Evidence Reconsidered," *The Quarterly of Film Radio and Television* 9, no. 3 (Spring, 1955): 222.
[5] Hendricks, *Edison Picture Myth,* 130-7; Paul Spehr, *The Man Who Made Movies* (Bloomington, IN: John Libbey Publishing, 2008), 225-227.
[6] Hendricks, *Edison Picture Myth*, 3.
[7] Paul Spehr, "Dickson, William Kennedy Laurie," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 266.
[8] Hendricks, *Edison Picture Myth*, 150.
[9] Charles Musser, *Thomas Edison and His Kinetographic Motion Pictures* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 9.
[10] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film History: An Introduction*, 2nd edition (New York: McGraw Hill, 2003), 16.
[11] Paul Spehr, "Edison Kinetograph camera," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 287.
[12] Margaret Julia Hames, ""I Have No Pride": William Kennedy Laurie Dickson In His Own Words - An Autobiography," *Proceedings of the New York State Communication Association*, vol. 2010, article 6 (2011): 88-89.
[13] Musser, *Thonas A. Edison*, 9.
[14] Hendricks, *Edison Picture Myth*, 20.
[15] Ibid, 17.
[16] Gordon Hendricks, *The Kinetoscope: America's First Commercially Successful Motion Picture Exhibitor* (New York: The Beginnings of American Film, 1966; reprinted in *Origins of the American Film*, New York: Arno, 1972), 146.

known as Biograph.[17] Unhappy with this turn of events, Edison declared that he and Dickson "are not the best of friends"[18] and proceeded to sue Biograph, "as he did all his competitors."[19] During this time, Edison and his attorneys may have sought to establish a narrative in which he was the sole originator of cinema as part of a legal and public relations strategy to win favorable rulings in the Biograph and other lawsuits against the competition. But it was a myth that judges ruling in Edison's appeal in his lawsuit against the Mutoscope/Biograph Company were not persuaded to believe. In fact, the judges invalidated Edison's patents,[20] writing in their March 10th, 1902, decision:

> It is obvious that Mr. Edison was not a pioneer in the large sense of the term, or in the more limited sense in which he would have been if he had also invented the film. He was not the inventor of the film. He was not the first inventor of apparatus capable of producing suitable negatives, taken from practically a single point of view, in single-line sequences upon a film like his, and embodying the same general means of rotating drums and shutters for bringing the sensitized surface across the lens and exposing successive portions of it in rapid succession.[21]

Undeterred by such a resounding takedown, Edison and his supporters would continue to publicly cultivate the myth that he was the sole inventor of motion pictures. Eight years after the above ruling, an article published in 1910 about Edison's contribution to cinema, for example, describes him as "the greatest inventor of all times, to whom we are indebted for the motion picture idea" and fails to make any mention of Dickson.[22] A similar viewpoint continues to be expressed in more contemporary accounts. For example, in *Thomas Edison and His Kinetographic Motion Pictures* (1995) film historian Charles Musser acknowledged Edison's fictions,[23] as well as his dependability on the work of "collaborators and employees,"[24] yet still concluded that it was Edison who "synthesized the key ideas that made possible the invention of motion pictures," declaring him "the progenitor of today's technology-based entertainment industry."[25]

Undoubtedly, Edison's sponsorship provided the financial resources and the creative environment in which Dickson's research and ideas flourished. Clearly, the corporate structure of the Edison Manufacturing Company also facilitated the dissemination and commercialization of Dickson's work. But the invention of the first commercially successful motion picture system, as the historical record indicates, must largely be attributed to Dickson's technical know-how and ingenuity.

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[17] Norman O. Keim, *Our Movie Houses: A History of Film and Cinematic Innovation in Central New York*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 14.
[18] Hames, ""I Have No Pride"," 105.
[19] Keim, *Our Movie Houses*, 14.
[20] Musser, *Thomas A. Edison*, 31.
[21] Hendricks, *Edison Picture Myth*, 174.
[22] "Who's Who in the Film Game: Facts and Fancies About a Man You Ought To Know," *The Nickelodeon* IV, no. 3 (August 1st, 1910): 63-64, https://www.loc.gov/collections/edison-company-motion-pictures-and-sound-recordings/articles-and-essays/whos-who-in-the-film-game/.
[23] Musser, *Thomas A. Edison*, 9. Musser writes "[Edison] claimed that certain events occurred earlier than they actually did."
[24] Ibid, 56.
[25] Ibid.

Figure 1. In what once was Thomas Edison's laboratory in present-day West Orange, New Jersey, today known as the *Thomas Edison National Historic Park*, this sign informs visitors of W. K. L. Dickson's role in the development of the first Edison motion picture system, which consisted of the Kinetograph and the Kinetoscope. Yet, it perpetuates false claims about the Kinetograph: it was not the "first motion picture camera" (although, it was the first commercially successful one) and it was not created in 1888 but, instead, completed four years later in 1892.[26]

Like Edison's, the role the Lumière brothers played in the development of motion pictures is similarly shrouded in myth, although of a different kind. As Martin Loiperdinger documents in his 2004 paper titled *Lumière's Arrival of the Train: Cinema's Founding Myth*, many film histories cite the screening of the Lumière film *Arrival of a Train* as cinema's inaugural event.[27] The account of what happened during the first screening of this 50-second black and white film, further retold and perpetuated in news articles[28]

[26] Spehr, "Edison Kinetograph camera," 287-288.
[27] Martin Loiperdinger, "Lumière's Arrival of the Train: Cinema's Founding Myth," trans. Bernd Elzer, *The Moving Image* 4, no. 1, (Spring, 2004): 89-93; Christa Blümlinger, "Lumière, the Train and the Avant-Garde," *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 245. Loiperdinger cites numerous examples. Published two years after Loiperdinger's paper, Blümlinger's article begins with the words: "The history of cinema began with a train […]."
[28] For example: Stan Schroeder, "Watch this legendary short movie from 1895 colorized and in 4K: Wow," *Mashable.com*, February 5th, 2020, https://mashable.com/article/train-arrival-restored-ai. The author notes the account of the audience's terror is rooted in "[u]rban legend" but does not dispute its veracity nor does he relegate it to mere fiction.

and popular entertainment to this day,[29] has cemented its iconic status. The story goes something like this: to showcase their newly invented film camera and projector system, the Lumière brothers projected this film for a small audience in a café in Paris and, having no previous experience of cinema, the spectators, upon seeing the images of a train approaching confused it for a real train that would soon run them over, jumped from their chairs in shock and horror and ran for the exit.

It is understandable that writers seeking to excite their readers have chosen to initiate their histories of film, time and again, with this attention-grabbing and confounding story, for it inspires and demands both awe and reverence for cinema's innate ability to deceive and ultimately move—both physically and emotionally—humans too ill-equipped to escape its power. Yet, the historical record does not support the idea that *Arrival of a Train* marks the birth of cinema: *Arrival of a Train* was not the first film the Lumière brothers ever recorded, nor was it the first they ever displayed[30] (*Workers Leaving the Factory* was[31]); nor was *Arrival of a Train* showcased during their first public screening on December 28th, 1895, if the program of the event, which lists no films about trains, is to be trusted.[32] Moreover, other inventor-filmmakers made and screened films before the Lumière December 28th event: Edison and Dickson had publicly done so by May 9th, 1893;[33] Woodville Latham and his sons Otway and Gray on April 21st, 1895;[34] Charles Francis Jenkins and Thomas Armat on (or shortly after) September 25th,1895;[35] and brothers Emil and Max Skladanowsky on November 1st, 1895.[36]

As for the story of "the audience's terror" on seeing *Arrival of a Train*, it may continue to be "passed on as a proven fact"[37] but, as Loiperdinger concludes, this fantastical account of audiences' run for safety is supported by "neither evidence nor even references to contemporary sources," and, therefore, "must be relegated to the realm of film historical fantasy."[38]

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[29] For example, in Martin Scorsese's film *Hugo* (2011).
[30] See Appendix A: Lumière Screenings Before December 28th, 1895.
[31] Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History*, 19.
[32] "La première séance publique payante." *Institut Lumière*, accessed August 14th, 2021, http://www.institut-lumiere.org/musee/les-freres-lumiere-et-leurs-inventions/premiere-seance.html.
[33] Regarding this claim, see *Appendix B: Debunking Reports of 1891 Edison-Dickson Motion Picture Demonstration*.
[34] Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History*, 9.
[35] H. Mark Gosser, "The Armat-Jenkins Dispute and the Museums," *Film History* 2, no. 1 (Winter, 1988): 2.
[36] André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, "Introduction: American Cinema Emerges (1890-1909)," in *American Cinema 1890-1909: Theme Variations*, ed. André Gaudreault (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 6.
[37] Loiperdinger, *Lumière's Arrival*, 91.
[38] Ibid.

b) What is an *Actuality*?

Brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière first coined the term *Actuality* in 1895 to describe their first films depicting real-life activities.[39] The original French term, *actualité*, can be understood as "factual film" as it concerns itself with the "actual" or that which exists in fact.[40] The term, however, also implies a "temporal reference,"[41] for the actual not only exists in *fact* but exists *now*, in the present moment. *Actualities*, then, are films that reveal that which exists in fact, *here* and *now*. Given that films cannot be photographed in the past or in the future, but only in the present moment, couldn't all works that result from filming what is before the camera be referred to as *Actualities*?

Since the Lumières first coined it, the term *Actuality* has been primarily understood as referring to "non-fiction pictures" covering a wide range of subjects, from scenes of quotidian life to newsworthy events, consisting of "travelogues, industrial films, scientific films, sports films, boxing films."[42] But *Actualities* also consisted of "re-enactments": the 1903 *Actuality* catalogue of English filmmaker R.W. Paul, for example, distinguishes between "Pictures of the Transvaal War" and "Reproductions of Incidents in the Boer War" which were "[a]rranged under the supervision of an experienced military officer from the front."[43]

Whether "re-enactments" can be considered "non-fiction" is certainly debatable, but, in fact, some *Actualities* also consisted of fictional, staged narratives, as showcased in segments titled "Fiction" in the Lumière *Actuality* compilation films produced by the Institut Lumière released in 1997 and 2017.[44] Because they encompass such a wide range of staged/unstaged, fictional/non-fictional subject matter, distinguishing *Actualities* from other films on the basis of their content proves elusive at best. The films do, nonetheless, share an aesthetic form that helps differentiate them from other cinematic works that also depict the "present moment" before the camera. What are, then, the defining aesthetic characteristics of *Actualities*? In short, what do *Actualities* look like?

All the *Actualities* produced by the Lumière brothers and the Edison/Dickson team were shot and exhibited in black and white and without synchronized sound. The vast majority of the films consisted of a single, continuous shot. Despite a few notable exceptions in which the camera was mounted on a moving vehicle—as in the films by Lumière cinematographer Alexandre Promio,[45] who mounted his Cinématographe on

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[39] Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.
[40] Frank Kessler, "actualités," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 6.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Kessler, "actualités," 7. Paul's re-enactments of the Boer War are also cited by Ian Christie in "Paul, Robert William," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 735. A digital copy of the 1903 R.W. Paul *Actuality* catalogue referred to by Kessler can be found online at http://www.cineressources.net/consultationPdf/web/o000/280.pdf.
[44] *The Lumière Brothers' First Films*, edited by Thierry Frémaux, narrated by Bertrand Tavernier (1895-1897; New York: Kino on Video, 1997), DVD; *Lumière! L'Aventure Commence*, directed, edited and narrated by Thierry Frémaux (1895-1897; Lyon: Institut Lumière, 2017), DVD.
[45] Promio is some times referred to in film histories, such as Bordwell and Thompson's, as Eugène Promio (see Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History*, 23) but is clearly the same person as Alexandre Promio, as noted

moving boats to record moving views of Venice[46] and Egypt's Nile river[47]—the single shot of an *Actuality* film invariably remained fixed and non-moving for its entire duration.

The description of the *Actuality* film form as consisting of a single shot that is continuous and non-moving may first appear to be clear and straightforward enough. Under scrutiny, however, it proves to be otherwise because, in the parlance of cinematic discourse, the meaning of terms such as "shot," "continuous" and "non-moving" is imprecise and often points to perceptual illusions that only exist in viewers' minds rather than to tangible elements that exist in physical reality. In *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (2012), for example, Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell define "shot" as "[c]ontinuous action on the cinema screen resulting from what appears to be a single run of the camera."[48] But what viewers may perceive as continuous action on the screen is a perceptual illusion: what they are in fact seeing consists of series of discreet, individual pictures (frames) that flash rapidly and sequentially before their eyes. The use of the term "shot", as Kuhn and Westwell define it, then, can obscure the essential nature of film and generate confusion about what one is in fact seeing when watching a film: one may think one sees "continuous action" when in fact one is seeing a series of separate pictures displayed in rapid succession. Moreover, the meaning of "shot" is further complicated when, as Kuhn and Westwell recognize, filmmakers employ the term differently in different contexts. On set, for example, "shot" may refer to a "setup," which consists of a specific camera position and angle of view, whereas in editing "shot" may refer to another take from the same camera position and view. If this distinction is not made explicit and "the director simply asks for another 'shot'," Kuhn and Westwell write, "it will be unclear to cast and crew whether he or she requires another take of the same setup or a move to a new setup."[49]

In light of these considerations, I find it necessary to establish a more specific meaning of the term "shot" in order to define the *Actuality* aesthetic. From this point forward, and for the purposes of my thesis, I define *Actualities* as consisting of a single shot, wherein "shot" shall be understood as a series of frames (pictures) that meets two conditions: 1) the defining edges of the frames in the series remain in the same fixed position with respect to the space or location they were photographed in; and 2) the frames in the series result from a camera operator starting and stopping the film's recording no more than once.

The first condition of this definition of "shot" does imply that a shot is, inherently, the result of a recording during which neither the camera nor its lens moved. In other words, this definition implies there is no such thing as a "moving shot" because, according to its terms, any change in the edges of a frame—due to panning, tilting, zooming or simply moving the camera—would indicate a new shot altogether. I do not deny that in

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by film historian Luke McKernan in "(1868-1926): Jean Alexandre Louis Promio," in *Who's Who of Victorian Cinema*, revised October 2008, https://www.victorian-cinema.net/promio.

[46] Tom Gunning, "camera movement," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 133.

[47] Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History*, 13.

[48] Kuhn and Westwell, *Dictionary of Film Studies*, 384.

[49] Ibid.

some filmmaking contexts it may be useful to speak of a series of frames that results from a camera's gradually changing frame as a "moving shot." Within the context of defining the *Actuality* aesthetic, however, excluding the possibility that a "shot" can be a "moving" one does not present a problem. Films such as the already cited ones produced by Lumière operator Alexandre Promio featuring moving views of Venice and the Nile river, consist of a series of frames whose edges change with respect to the location they were photographed in and, as such, could not be said, under my definition, to consist of a single shot. Rather than a problem, excluding such films can serve to further highlight their outstanding exceptionality during the reign of the *Actuality* form during the years 1895-1905. Promio's films, after all, stand out as the very rare exception to the general aesthetic rule of Lumière productions.

The second condition of my definition of "shot"—that the series of frames that make up the shot must result from a camera operator starting and stopping the film's recording no more than once—also implies that any interrupted recording from the same vantage point of view will consist of more than one shot. If a camera operator were to begin recording a train arriving at a station, then stop and begin recording again a few minutes later from the same position, the resulting film, though maintaining the same fixed picture frame throughout, would then consist of two shots and, as such, it would not qualify as an *Actuality*.

As film historian and theorist Tom Gunning has noted, some films consisting of parades or processions, such as the Lumières' *Paris: Les Souverains Russes et le Président de la République aux Champs- Elysées* [Paris: The Russian Sovereigns and the President of the Republic on the Champs-Elysées] (1896) or Edison's *Free-for-all Race at Charter Oak Park* (1897), while maintaining the same singular view, contain jump cuts resulting from operators stopping their camera during event lulls before resuming filming.[50] My definition of the *Actuality* aesthetic as consisting of one shot would disqualify such films but, like Promio's moving views, these are rare exceptions to the general aesthetic rule in the Lumière and Edison film catalogues. Exceptional trick films such as the Edison Manufacturing Company's *The Execution of Mary Stuart* (1895),[51] in which the camera was stopped in order to replace an actor with a dummy to create the illusion of decapitation, would similarly be excluded from my definition.

The single shot that characterizes *Actualities* exhibits another defining quality: generally, in terms of its duration, it lasts about one minute. In the case of films produced between 1895 and 1905, this duration was dependent on the physical length of the film the camera could hold as well as the recording and projecting frame rates. The film reels Auguste and Louis Lumière used, for example, consisted of 17-18 meters in length, limiting the duration of their films to a few seconds short of a minute.[52] Higher recording

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[50] Tom Gunning, "editing: early practices and techniques," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 293. The Lumière film *Paris: Les Souverains Russes et le Président de la République aux Champs- Elysées* (1896) can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7u32s0myZCA. The Edison film *Free-for-all Race at Charter Oak Park* (1897) can be viewed here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694210.

[51] The film is viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694120/

[52] Louis Lumière, "1936 The Lumière Cinematograph," *SMPTE Journal* 105, no. 10 (October 1996): 609.

frame rates would shorten the amount of time the camera could record, while higher projecting frame rates would speed up the action of the film, thus shortening its onscreen duration. Slower frame rates would have the opposite effect of higher ones during recording and projection. The Lumières shot their films at a rate of about 16 frames per second.[53]

The length of film used in Edison and Dickson's Kinetograph consisted of about 15 meters (50 feet).[54] The early films they produced that preceded those of the Lumière brothers have also been labeled as *Actualities*, although these were generally shorter in length due to the higher frame rate of about 38-40 frames per second they were shot in.[55] Likely influenced by the work of the Lumière brothers as it spread and captivated audiences across the globe in the years following 1895, Edison/Dickson *Actualities* lengthened to some times a few seconds over the 1-minute mark and expanded in subject matter once the Edison Company abandoned the Kinetograph for a "newly-invented mobile camera" that "made it possible for the Edison Company to film everyday scenes in places outside the studio in a fashion similar to the French Lumière films."[56] An 1898 *Actuality* produced by Edison titled *Freight Train* (1898)[57] lasts a little over a minute, a much longer duration than films made by Dickson in the early 1890s, such as *Carmencita* (1894),[58] which lasted roughly 20-30 seconds. For the sake of simplicity, and for the purposes of this thesis, I shall define *Actualities* as being, roughly and generally, about one minute in duration.

To sum up, the term *Actuality* shall refer from this point forward to films of the present moment—of the actual—that exhibit a specific aesthetic form defined by the following characteristics: they consist of a single shot of roughly one minute in duration.

What does the *Actuality* aesthetic I have defined communicate or express? To answer this question, I turn now to the historical origins of this cinematic form and the context that gave rise to it.

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[53] Ibid, 608.
[54] Musser, *Thomas A. Edison*, 14.
[55] Hendricks, *The Kinetoscope*, 7.
[56] Library of Congress, "Shift to Projectors and the Vitoscope [sic]," Collection: *Inventing Entertainment: The Early Motion Pictures and Sound Recordings of the Edison Companies*, accessed August 14, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/collections/edison-company-motion-pictures-and-sound-recordings/articles-and-essays/history-of-edison-motion-pictures/shift-to-projectors-and-the-vitoscope/. The "newly invented camera" is also mentioned in Library of Congress, "Overview of the Edison Motion Pictures by Genre," Collection: *Inventing Entertainment: The Early Motion Pictures and Sound Recordings of the Edison Companies*, accessed August 14, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/collections/edison-company-motion-pictures-and-sound-recordings/articles-and-essays/history-of-edison-motion-pictures/overview-of-the-edison-motion-pictures-by-genre/.
[57] Viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694211/.
[58] Viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694116/.

c) Chronophotography and the Emergence of the *Actuality* Film

The legendary December 28th, 1895, Lumière *Actuality* screening event may not have marked the birth of cinema, or even the birth of Lumière *Actualities*,[59] but it did mark the beginning of the global domination of the *Actuality* film form up until 1905. As David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson have noted, "the history of the cinema in many nations begins with the arrival of the [Lumière] Cinematographe."[60] What had motivated and informed Louis and Auguste Lumière's cinematic journey up to this point?

Many accounts suggest that it was their father Antoine, himself a seasoned photographer, "excellent portraitist" and owner of the family's photographic plate business,[61] who, upon the introduction of Edison and Dickson's Kinetoscope in Paris during September 1894, challenged his sons to design and create an "animated photography" device that would "improve upon existing appliances."[62] The Lumières were likely very much aware of Edison and Dickson's motion picture work by the fall of 1894. But, as historian Marta Braun has suggested, the idea that it was the Kinetoscope that set the brothers' project in motion is likely part of the "mythmaking hyperbole" surrounding the Lumière family.[63]

Regardless of the influence the Edison/Dickson Kinetoscope had on the Lumières, in the larger historical context, the work of both filmmaking teams traces back to the work of photographers and inventors known as "chronophotographers,"[64] who, in the latter part of the 19th century, studied and aimed to perfect the "rapid taking of multiple sequential photographs of a subject in motion."[65] Consequently, *Actualities,* as I aim to show, owe their aesthetic form, and the ethos it reveals, to the chronophotographic works that preceded them.

In his seminal work, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (1983), Erik Barnow traces the "prenatal stirrings," as he put it, of the first *Actuality* films back to the work of French astronomer Pierre Jules César Janssen who, on December 9th, 1874,

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[59] See Appendix A: Lumière Screenings Before December 28th, 1895.

[60] Bordwell & Thompson, *Film History*, 23. In pages 19-23, Bordwell and Thompson also note that during 1896 and 1897, following the success of the December 28th screening, Lumiére programs of *Actualities* were publicly exhibited for the first time in England, Belgium, Spain, Russia, India, Brazil, China, Mexico, Egypt, Venezuela, Japan and Bulgaria. As a result, Bordwell and Thompson note, the Lumière film catalogue quickly expanded to include *Actualities* featuring views of many countries. As the authors explain, even more Lumière *Actualities* were then produced once the brothers made their Cinématographes commercially available in 1897.

[61] Auguste and Louis Lumière, *Letters: Auguste and Louis Lumière*, eds. Yvelise Dentzer and Jacques Rittaud-Hutinet, trans. Pierre Hodgson (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 15n1.

[62] Ibid. A similar account can also be found in Jean-Marc Lamotte, "Lumière, Auguste and Louis," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 572.

[63] Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne Jules-Marey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 192-193.

[64] Tom Gunning, "The Attraction of Motion: Modern Representation and the Image of Movement," *Film 1900: Technology, Perception, Culture*, eds. Annemone Ligensa and Klaus Kreimeier (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 166.

[65] Deac Rosell, "chronophotography," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 169.

became the earliest chronophotographer upon successfully recording sequential images from Japan of the passing of Venus across the face of the sun.[66] To do so, he invented a photographic revolver,[67] a cylindrical camera in which a circular photographic plate periodically rotated before a shutter, resulting in the automatic recording of 48 sequential exposures along its circumference during a span of 72 seconds.[68]

Two years before Janssen trained his revolver on the Japanese sky, in 1872, Eadweard Muybridge had embarked on a quest to capture sequential images, not of celestial bodies in orbit, but of trotting horses.[69] Under the patronage of former California Governor Leland Stanford, Muybridge sought to produce clear photographic evidence that would settle, once and for all, whether horses always keep one of their hoofs on the ground while running, or if, at some point, they lift all their legs in the air. In 1875, with the help of a team of engineers, Muybridge eventually devised an electrically powered shutter mechanism fast enough to record exposures at a thousandth of a second.[70] To track the horse's position, Muybridge ended up opting for an array of multiple cameras set up parallel to a track, each producing a single image triggered by trip wires snapped by the passing horse.[71] On June 11th, 1878,[72] a group of reporters were invited to witness a horse running past this very setup, then watched over Muybridge's shoulder as he developed the camera negatives, finally producing the kind of photographic evidence of a horse's motion he had first attempted to procure almost six years prior.[73]

Despite employing different tools and methods, Janssen and Muybridge each produced image sequences that already exhibited the singular fixed view that would later characterize the Edison/Dickson and Lumière *Actualities*. This aesthetic element becomes particularly salient when the Janssen and Muybridge sequences are respectively assembled and played in video/film form. In Janssen's images, for example, viewable at the following link https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1874_Pierre_Jules_César_Janssen_-_Passage_de_Venus.webm, the position of the sun remains fixed from frame to frame as Venus moves across its face. Muybridge's photographs were each taken by a different camera and thus do not represent the same fixed view from frame to frame in the literal sense. Yet, the viewpoint of the image sequence remains the same in another respect: the horse's size, position and angle with respect to the camera all remain fixed within each picture frame, as can be seen here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Horse_in_Motion-anim.gif.

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[66] Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 3.
[67] F. Launay and P. D. Hingley, "Jules Janssen's "Revolver photographique" and its British derivative, "The Janssen slide"," Journal for the History of Astronomy 36, part 1, no. 122 (2005): 60, http://articles.adsabs.harvard.edu//full/2005JHA....36...57L/0000060.000.html.
[68] Ibid, 61, http://articles.adsabs.harvard.edu//full/2005JHA....36...57L/0000061.000.html.
[69] Gordon Hendricks, *Eadweard Muybridge: Father of Motion Pictures* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1975), 46.
[70] Braun, *Eadweard Muybridge*, 137.
[71] Ibid, 142.
[72] Ibid, 141.
[73] Ibid, 142.

Inspired by the work of Janssen and Muybridge, French physiologist and chronophotographer Etienne-Jules Marey developed his own *fusil photographique* by 1882,[74] a shotgun shaped camera reminiscent of Janssen's revolver, that allowed him to track and photograph the movement of birds in flight at "split-second intervals."[75] Despite having the ability to track and photograph a bird along its flight path with his moveable shotgun camera, Marey, like Janssen and Muybridge, eventually gave preference to the fixed frame aesthetic in his motion studies of the early 1890s as can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKlNZSnkvsg.

Why did these chronophotographers opt for a non-changing vantage point relative to the subject in their image sequences? Janssen, Muybridge and Marey sought to facilitate the study and observation of motion and the choice of a fixed viewpoint in their photographic studies served to meet this goal. When the edges of the picture remain fixed from frame to frame, the viewer can more easily detect, contemplate and scrutinize any motion occurring throughout the duration of a given image sequence. On the other hand, a changing composition may cause both the background and the moving object of interest to appear to move within the picture frame, detracting from a viewers' ability to focus on the key details of the subject's displacement. In this way, a moving, changing view or composition would make it more difficult to appreciate and study the details of Venus's passage, a horse's limb movements, or the flight of a bird.

Actualities adopted the same fixed viewpoint aesthetic of the chronophotographic motion studies that preceded them because their makers, too, initially aimed to facilitate the observation of motion. In fact, as the historical record suggests, the work of the Edison/Dickson and Lumière teams evolved out of a desire to better fulfill the goals of chronophotography. The many documented interactions of these filmmaker-inventors with Janssen, Muybridge and Marey demonstrate as much.

In 1888, Edison and, "it is assumed," Dickson,[76] attended a lecture Muybridge gave in Orange, New Jersey, on his human and animal locomotion studies in which the photographer also demonstrated his Zoopraxiscope, a device for displaying images of sequential motion.[77] While in town, Muybridge visited Edison at his nearby lab and would do so again later that year when making another public presentation nearby.[78] Subsequently, Edison purchased from Muybridge plates of the running horse, which he then displayed in the library of his lab during the time Dickson and Edison developed their motion picture system.[79]

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[74] Pasi Väliaho, "Marey's Gun: Apparatuses of Capture and the Operational Image," in *Téchnē/Technology: Researching Cinema and Media Technologies – Their Development, Use, and Impact*, ed. Annie van den Oever (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 170.
[75] Barnow, *Documentary*, 4.
[76] Paul Spehr, *The Man Who Made Movies* (Bloomington, IN: John Libbey Publishing, 2008), 75.
[77] Ibid, 75-76.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid, 77-78.

In 1889, Edison visited France on the occasion of the Universal Exposition (or world's fair) in Paris, attended by "almost everyone who was somebody important."[80] In an event "celebrating the fiftieth birthday of photography," Janssen introduced Edison to an audience that counted among its members Marey, Antoine Lumière and his sons Auguste and Louis.[81] While in Paris, Edison visited Janssen's observatory and spent time with Marey, whose exhibit of animal motion studies Edison had viewed at the fair.[82] Marey showed Edison his facilities and his equipment, including his "most recent chronographic camera."[83] Shortly after his return to the United States, Edison filed documents with the patent office explaining details of his and Dickson's motion picture system that appear to be a direct influence of Marey's inventions.[84] Hendricks also suggested that Dickson, who could read French fluently, "kept up with the Marey work through the prominent periodical references" (or scientific publications) that Edison's lab subscribed to.[85] In any case, Dickson and Marey would pose for a picture together in the French chronophotographer's lab around 1897-1898 which does suggest a friendly relationship existed between them.[86]

As mentioned, many accounts attribute the introduction of the Kinetoscope in the fall of 1894 in Paris as the spark that set the Lumières' project in motion. The arrival of the Edison/Dickson motion picture system may have inspired a sense of urgency in the brothers' pursuit to invent their Cinématographe, but, as Marta Braun points out, the mechanism of their machine suggests it drew its inspiration from other sources and, specifically, from the technical developments in chronophotography advanced by Marey and his former assistant, Georges Demenÿ, himself a renowned chronophotographer.[87]

The Lumières were the major photographic suppliers of Marey's lab and, as Braun suggests, likely were kept abreast of the work and cameras developed there.[88] Demenÿ left Marey's employment in 1894 to devote himself to the refinement of his own chronophotographic apparatus, the Phonoscope.[89] In the fall of that year, around the same time the Kinetoscope was making its debut in Paris, Demenÿ and Louis Lumière exchanged letters. Demenÿ sought to convince Lumière, who "had already been looking into the matter of projecting long series of cinematographic images for some while," to invest in his Phonoscope.[90] The relationship did not bear fruit and it was not long until,

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[80] Charles Musser, "A Cornucopia of Images: Comparison and Judgment across Theater, Film, and the Visual Arts during the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film 1880-1910*, ed. Nancy Mowl Mathews (Manchester, VT: Hudson Hills Press, 2005), 24.
[81] Spehr, *Man Who Made Movies*, 144.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Hendricks, *Edison Motion Picture Myth*, 52.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid, photo featured between pages 142 and 143.
[87] Braun, *Picturing Time*, 192-193.
[88] Ibid, 193.
[89] Laurent Mannoni, "Demenÿ, Georges," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 244-245.
[90] Lumière, *Letters*, 195-200.

in February 1895, the Lumières obtained their first patent for their Cinématographe, which they modified the following month to reflect refinements in its design details.[91]

A few months later, in June 1895, Auguste Lumière filmed the members of the Congress of the French Photographic Societies disembarking a boat.[92] Among the people featured in this early Lumière *Actuality* was none other than the first chronophotographer: astronomer Pierre Jules César Janssen. During the Congress, after the Lumière brothers screened a few *Actualities* demonstrating the merits of their newly invented Cinématographe, Janssen gave a talk wherein he recalled the success of his own photographic revolver, acknowledged how Marey had transformed it and, finally, "[joined] these achievements to the Lumières'."[93] *Actualities*, it was clear, represented the culmination in a lineage of research and technological innovation rooted in chronophotography.

The chronophotographic origins of both the Edison/Dickson and Lumière *Actualities* help explain the characteristic aesthetic of these films. The emphasis of motion contained within the picture frame motivated the choice of a fixed—rather than a moving—view for the majority of *Actualities*, just as it did in the image sequences by Janssen, Muybridge and Marey. In designing their motion picture devices, it did not occur to Edison, Dickson or the Lumière brothers to equip their cameras with panning, tilting or zooming functionalities and the reason is clear: their devices were designed with the primary intent of facilitating the seeing of motion, which itself could be experienced most clearly from a singular, fixed vantage point. *Actuality* filmmakers' use of a single shot that is not interrupted by jump cuts or edits appears to be similarly motivated: interrupting a view with a cut might stir the sense of stillness the films required to maximize viewers' ability to contemplate, to observe, to study, to see. In short, the single shot aesthetic of *Actualities* enabled viewers to look upon depicted scenes with the attentive, observant and scrutinizing eye of a chronophotographer. For this reason, it became the natural stylistic choice for these films.

The chronophotographic origins of *Actualities* influenced not just their aesthetic form but also their content. Edison and Dickson, as Nancy Mowll Mathews notes, chose film subjects that were "true to their heritage in […] chronophotography"[94] and the same could be said of the Lumières. A scene of blacksmiths, for example, was shot by Muybridge,[95] by Marey,[96] by Dickson,[97] and by the Lumières, who screened it as an *Actuality* in their December 28th, 1895, screening.[98] Repeating themes across the work of

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[91] Braun, *Picturing Time*, 194.
[92] Ibid. The resulting film can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASX2GRbuX5E.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Nancy Mowll Mathews, "Early Film and American Artistic Traditions," in *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film 1880-1910*, ed. Nancy Mowl Mathews (Manchester, VT: Hudson Hills Press, 2005), 47.
[95] Musser, "A Cornucopia of Images," 30.
[96] Braun, *Picturing Time*, 324.
[97] Mathews, "Early Film," 47.
[98] Jacques Aumont, "Lumière Revisited," trans. Ben Brewster, *Film History* 8, no. 4, International Trends in Film Studies (1996): 429, note 2. As previously noted, the original program with the list of films can also be viewed here: http://www.institut-lumiere.org/musee/les-freres-lumiere-et-leurs-inventions/premiere-seance.html.

chonophotographers and *Actuality* filmmakers alike render even more visible the inextricable role chonophotographic motion studies played in shaping the emergent *Actuality* film genre.

d) Lumiére vs. Edison/Dickson: Different *Actuality* Filmmaking Styles

Whether at the hands of Edison/Dickson, the Lumières, or other early filmmakers, *Actualities* produced between 1895-1905 largely maintained the same appearance with respect to their essential, identifying feature: the single shot resulting from about 1-minute of uninterrupted recording. The Edison/Dickson and Lumière cameras, however, each imposed different demands on the filmmaking process, resulting in varying stylistic qualities in the films produced with each device.

Edison and Dickson's Kinetograph was a "bulky, electrically driven apparatus weighing several hundred pounds."[99] Its weight and need for electrical power highly restricted, if not entirely prohibited, its portability. By contrast, the Lumières' Cinématographe "weighed slightly over sixteen pounds,"[100] it was "compact, versatile, portable"[101] and, because its operation relied on a hand-crank, it did not require electrical power.[102] The Cinématographe could roam the world in the search for film subjects, but the world had to come to the Kinetograph.

To make such an accommodation, Dickson designed and constructed a photo studio, known as the "Black Maria" due to its close resemblance to New York paddy wagons of the same name,[103] in which the environment around the Kinetograph could be controlled so as to facilitate good exposures. An open roof allowed for sunlight to cast down on the studio's light-absorbing black walled interior. As the sun made its way across the sky, the Black Maria could be rotated thanks to the 360 degree rails it sat on, permitting consistent lighting during a shoot as long as clouds would cooperate.[104] Inside the studio, the Kinetograph could be "carefully positioned:" mounted on a table on rails, it could move forwards and backwards and could be lowered or raised as needed.[105] A few *Actualities* produced at the Edison laboratory complex display outdoor views, such as *Bucking Broncho* (1894),[106] but these rare exceptions "were made adjacent to the studio, with the camera positioned in the building and pointing out the open side door or the rear of the building."[107]

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[99] Robert C. Allen, "Vitascope/Cinématographe: Initial Patterns of American Film Industrial Practice," *Journal of the University Film Association* 31, no. 2, ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRY HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN FILM (Spring 1979): 16.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Paul C. Spehr, "1890-1895: Movies and the Kinetoscope," in *American Cinema 1890-1909: Theme Variations*, ed. André Gaudreault (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 42.
[102] Allen, "Vitascope/Cinématographe," 16.
[103] Amy Villarejo*, Film Studies: The Basics* (Obingdon: Routledge, 2007), 5.
[104] Spehr, "1890-1895: Movies," 32.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694113/.
[107] Spehr, "1890-1895: Movies," 32.

The design of Dickson's studio brought flexibility to the operation of the otherwise cumbersome Kinetograph, but making films within this system required a team of people to handle various specific tasks. A hierarchical, organizational structure characterized the various teams researching and developing inventions at the Edison laboratory complex in West Orange, NJ, which housed the Black Maria.[108] It seems only natural, then, that a similar approach would be employed in the making of Edison/Dickson *Actualities*. In the Black Maria, "moving pictures were produced by a team."[109] "[A]s the director and sometimes as producer," Dickson "oversaw the work, planned and rehearsed the shot, and evaluated the results."[110] William Heise, Dickson's assistant, took on the job of camera operator, "prepared the film and loaded and set up the camera," and, at the end of each recording, "removed the film, developed it, and operated the contact printer."[111]

By contrast, the Cinématographe, designed as "camera/projector/printer in one," permitted the "collapsing of some of the functions of filmmaker, distributor, exhibitor and projectionist into a single individual."[112] A single Lumière operator could travel the world with the portable Cinématographe and singlehandedly "take, develop, and show films while on tour."[113] Capitalizing on the ease of transportability and operation of their camera, the Lumière brothers developed a global network of "trained" cinematographers, or camera operators,[114] that counted among them Alexandre Promio,[115] Francis Doublier,[116] Charles Moisson,[117] and Felix Mesguisch.[118] Of the 1,423 Lumière *Actualities* produced between 1895 and 1905 (of which only 18 remain lost), only about 60 were filmed by Louis Lumière himself.[119]

The differences between the production methods of the Edison/Dickson and Lumière teams resulted in *Actuality* films that appeared strikingly different. Those photographed in the Black Maria presented a shallow sense of space, flattened by the black studio wall used as a backdrop. Providing a strong contrast, the non-descript, dark

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[108] A. J. Millard, *A History of Edison's West Orange Laboratory*, PDF file (October 1987), III-9-III20, http://npshistory.com/publications/edis/w-orange-lab-history.pdf. Millard writes: "Edison developed a team approach to innovation which exploited the diverse skills of his work force. The success of his method was based on an ability to frame the problem and then pick the right man for the job. Edison broke each experimental project down into its component parts and allotted teams of men to each part."
[109] Spehr, "1890-1895: Movies," 33.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Allen, "Vitascope/Cinématographe," 17.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Spehr, "1890-1895: Movies," 43. As Spehr writes, "the Lumières were leading photographic entrepreneurs who trained their camera operators to produce quality images."
[115] Glenn Myrent, "Promio, Alexandre,"*Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 780. As previously noted in footnote 44, Promio is referred to in some histories as Eugène.
[116] Glenn Myrent, "Doublier, Francis," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 275.
[117] Ibid. See also Paolo Caneppele, "Austro-Hungary," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 73.
[118] Glenn Myrent, "Mesguich, Félix," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 615.
[119] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Lumière Films," accessed August 14, 2021, http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/memory-of-the-world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/registered-heritage-page-5/lumiere-films/.

background may have served to highlight the subjects before it, but it also stripped them of scenic context. The Lumière films, on the other hand, offered views of subjects that included their surrounding environment, thus exhibiting a far greater sense of depth. A tightly framed Lumière *Actuality* like *Le Repas (de bébé)* (1895),[120] for example, shows a building receding towards the trees behind the subjects in the foreground, displaying far greater depth than the Edison-produced *Kïss* (1896),[121] whose subjects, similarly shot in a medium close-up, have nothing behind them but impenetrable darkness.[122]

The sense of depth conveyed by the Edison/Dickson *Actualities* was further limited by the confined space of the Black Maria studio. Once positioned within the Kinetograph's view, subjects had but a small area within which they could move without exiting the picture frame. In the Edison/Dickson *Actuality* titled *Sioux Ghost Dance* (1894),[123] for example, a group of Native American performers from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show appear to cram themselves around a small circle as they dance. By contrast, the group of workers exiting the Lumière factory in *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895)[124] take many steps towards the Cinématographe, displacing themselves a far greater distance in the picture frame as they move from the bowels of the factory, disperse out into the street and, ultimately, exit the picture frame.

Evidently, the Black Maria could not accommodate enormous subjects such as moving locomotives or transatlantic ships, both of which were featured, respectively, in the Lumière *Actuality* films *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (1895)[125] and *Launch of a Ship* (1896).[126] In Lumière *Actualities* one could view waves on a seashore extending out into the horizon, as portrayed in *The Sea* (1895);[127] or observe the bustling heart of a metropolis, as featured in *Cordelier's Square in Lyon* (1895).[128] But wide scenic views lay far out of the reach of Dickson's studio, where the widest angle of view that could be achieved with the Kinetograph barely accommodated a person's full height, as can be seen in the previously mentioned *Carmencita* (1894)[129] or in *Band Drill* (1894).[130] As a result, Edison/Dickson *Actualities* tended to favor close-up and medium close-up shots in contrast with the wide compositions generally preferred by Lumière operators.

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[120] Viewable here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSdrbpMMGeo.
[121] Viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694131/.
[122] It may be worth noting that W. K. L. Dickson did not participate in the making of *Kïss* (1896), as he had, as previously mentioned, left Edison's employ by this time. This *Actuality* then cannot be said to be a proper Edison/Dickson *Actuality*. The film, nonetheless, was made following the production method Dickson himself had developed and established at the Black Maria and it was shot by William Heise, his former assistant and camera operator, as noted in the Library of Congress page hosting the film noted in the previous footnote.
[123] Viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694139/.
[124] Viewable here: https://youtu.be/6TwV4uCrDhY.
[125] Viewable here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:L%27arrivée_d%27un_train_à_La_Ciotat_(1895)_-_frères_Lumière.webm.
[126] Viewable here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lancement_d%27un_navire.webm.
[127] Viewable here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKYEXbD2PpM.
[128] Viewable here: https://youtu.be/nBIqX9KrOtY.
[129] Viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694116/.
[130] Viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694111/.

The method of projection employed by each filmmaking team also likely played a role in the differences in choice of shot. Edison/Dickson *Actualities* were exhibited within the Kinetoscope, "a peep-hole viewing machine"[131] that permitted only one person at a time to view a film. A viewer would bend over the cabinet-like projector and, peering through a hole, would look down to see images 1.5 inches wide on a backlit strip of film rolling past in rapid succession.[132] Dickson's inclination to photograph his subjects up-close, a byproduct of the camera and studio at the heart of his filmmaking process, also served to make the most of the small dimensions in which his films were presented: close-up views maximized the presence and visibility of each subject within each little 1.5 inch wide frame, whereas wider views would have greatly reduced the size of objects displayed in such a small area, making details appear smaller and less appreciable to the viewer peering down through the Kinetoscope's eyepiece.

Unlike the Kinetoscope films, Lumière *Actualities* were projected on the wall of screening rooms for groups of people to see. A chocolate manufacturer from Cologne, Ludwig Stollwerck, who visited Paris in March 1896 and attended Lumière *Actuality* screenings at the Salon Indien, related to a business partner in New York that the films "are projected to a wall, which is 280 cm wide and 2 meters high [about 9 by 7 feet]."[133] To view Lumière *Actualities*, then, spectators had to look up rather than bend over and look down, and, once they did, they saw images larger than their own individual human form. In this context, the wide views that characterize the majority of films in the Lumière catalogue were served by the projection's enlargement, which aggrandized the smallest of details for the audience to see and appreciate.

Shortly after 1895, due to technological changes in the tools of production, *Actualities* produced under the Edison Manufacturing Company name would begin to resemble the Lumière films with their wide shot, deep space aesthetic style. With Dickson now departed from his employ, Edison would entirely abandon the Kinetograph camera and the Kinetoscope projector, adopting instead motion picture systems that allowed him to compete with the Lumiéres as well with other emergent film companies, including Dickson's American Mutoscope and Biograph Company.[134] In 1896, Edison purchased Charles Jenkins and Thomas Armat's Phantoscope, a projector capable of displaying "large-scale" images,[135] which he would market and advertise as "Edison's Vitascope."[136] Around the time the Vitascope made its debut, Edison's employees developed a new portable camera which William Heise, Dickson's former assistant and camera operator,[137] first used to record a scene in the heart of New York City's Manhattan island that has often been mistaken as depicting Herald Square.[138]

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[131] Charles Musser, "kinetoscope," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 515.
[132] Ibid, 516.
[133] Loiperdinger, *Lumière's Arrival*, 94-95.
[134] Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History*, 28.
[135] Musser, *Thomas A. Edison*, 26.
[136] Ibid, 25.
[137] Paul Spehr, "Heise, William," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 425.
[138] See Appendix C: Mislabeled Edison Manufacturing Company Films.

Now, equipped with a portable camera and a wall projector, the Edison team produced films practically indistinguishable from the Lumière *Actualities*, featuring outdoor, wide scenic views from distant locations. *Actualities* like *Armour's Electric Trolley* (1897)[139] and *Freight Train* (1898)[140] mirror the diagonal, deep perspective compositions of various Lumière train films such as *Arrival of a Train at Perrache* (1896)[141] or *Arrival of a Train at Battery Place* (1896);[142] while *Falls of Minnehaha* (1896)[143] and *Surf at Monterrey* (1897)[144] recall Lumière views of Niagara Falls[145] and the sea.[146]

Despite these developments, *Actuality* production soon began to wane at the Edison Manufacturing Company as films relying on editing tricks and multiple shots emerged and grew increasingly popular with audiences. In 1896, French magician Georges Méliès, who himself began his film career making *Actualities*,[147] premiered his short film *The Vanishing Lady* (1896),[148] which employed the same in-camera, editing technique as seen in the previously mentioned, Edison-produced *The Execution of Mary Stuart* (1895):[149] with the camera stopped, an object or person would be replaced so that when filming resumed it would appear to have transformed or vanished altogether. Méliès' *The Haunted Castle* (1896)[150] and *The Nightmare* (1896)[151] both demonstrate how the combination of this simple filming technique with elaborate sets, props and costumes, could result in complex narrative fantasies. Yet, inventive as these films were, they still exhibited a visual style consisting of a singular viewpoint. It would not be long, however, until the concept of combining multiple camera views emerged.

Beginning in 1898, the films of British filmmakers Robert W. Paul, George Albert Smith and James Williamson, would pave the way for the cinematic complexity that would, in due course, supersede and outmode the *Actuality* aesthetic. Paul's short film *Come Along, Do!* (1898),[152] consisting of two shots exhibiting the exterior and interior view of a museum, introduced the idea of continuity of action. The actors in the film exit the

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[139] Viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694146/.
[140] Viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694211/.
[141] Viewable here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjvFSQyJufs.
[142] Viewable here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ur7tLeeTL_o.
[143] Another mislabeled Edison film; see Appendix C. The film is viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694199/.
[144] Viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694312/.
[145] Such as the one viewable here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVMD-Nz5Bss.
[146] Such as the one viewable here: https://youtu.be/RKYEXbD2PpM.
[147] Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History*, 24. Bordwell and Thompson write that "[Méliès's] earliest work, most of which is lost, included many Lumiere-style scenics." An example of a Méliès *Actuality*, itself a recreation of a Louis Lumière *Actuality*, can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/t2zfxKXbLlQ. Surviving frames of a train *Actuality* by Méliès can also be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqrfkqx0w7E.
[148] Viewable here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Escamotage_d%27une_dame_chez_Robert_Houdin_(1896).webm.
[149] Viewable here: https://www.loc.gov/item/00694120/.
[150] Viewable here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Haunted_Castle_1896.ogv.
[151] Viewable here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_Cauchemar,_1896,_M%C3%A9li%C3%A8s.webm.
[152] The surviving fragments of this film can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScD_yiykAro.

frame of the first exterior shot and, after a jump cut, reappear in the second, interior shot, conveying the idea that they have continuously moved from one location to the other. Also in 1898, hypnotist George Albert Smith, who was in "continual correspondence" with Méliès,[153] released a series of short films featuring double exposure techniques that, within a single frame composition, permitted the simultaneous display of multiple scenes or views. In *The Mesmerist, or Body and Soul,* (1898) and *Photographing a Ghost* (1898),[154] Smith used the technique to create the illusion of a see-through ghost. But in films like *Santa Claus* (1898)[155] he used double-exposure to show two separate locations within the same picture frame in order to convey the idea of parallel action. In subsequent years, through short narrative films like *As Seen Through the Telescope* (1900),[156] *Grandma's Reading Glass* (1900)[157] and *Let Me Dream Again* (1900),[158] Smith continued exploring new ways of combining multiple shots, including the use of close-up inserts, subjective and objective point-of-view shots and dissolve transitions. Around this time, James Williamson, a close friend of Smith's,[159] also produced and released a series of short, multi-shot narrative films that created the illusion of fluid, continuous action across multiple, separately filmed locations. These films included *Attack on a China Mission* (1900),[160] *Fire!* (1901)[161] and *Stop Thief!* (1901).[162]

The Edison Manufacturing Company's embrace of the evolving cinematic trends introduced by the narrative fantasy films of the late 1890s, and its subsequent loss of interest in *Actuality* production, is perhaps best reflected in its employment in late 1900 of Edwin S. Porter. A former film exhibitor initially hired to help improve Edison's projector and new rooftop studio, Porter soon became "chief cameraman and studio head."[163] The elaborate films Porter produced for Edison, as Bordwell and Thompson rightly note in their *Film History*, have prompted historians to credit him with "virtually all the innovations of the pre-1908 period" of cinema, "including making the first story film" and "inventing editing as we know it," when, in fact, he "often drew upon techniques already used by Méliès, Smith, and Williamson."[164] Following in the direction of these inventive filmmakers, then, Porter cemented the end of *Actualities* at the Edison Manufacturing Company.

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[153] Barry Salt, "The Evolution of Film Form up to 1906," *Cinema 1900-1906: An Analytical Study*, ed. Roger Holman (Brussels: FIAF, 1982), 282.
[154] Both of these films are lost but we know of their contents because of catalogue descriptions. See Murray Leeder, *The Modern Supernatural and the Beginning of Cinema* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 83-84.
[155] Viewable here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Santa_Claus_(1898)_-_George_Albert_Smith.webm.
[156] Viewable here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:As_Seen_Through_a_Telescope_(1900)_-_yt.webm.
[157] Viewable here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Grandma%27s_reading_glass.webm.
[158] Viewable here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_Trick_Films,_1900%27s.webm.
[159] Frank Gray, "Williamson, James," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 1001.
[160] Viewable here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Attack_on_a_China_Mission_(1900).webm.
[161] Viewable here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:James_Williamson_Fire!_(1901).webm.
[162] Viewable here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stop_Thief_(1901).webm.
[163] Charles Musser, "Porter, Edwin S(tanton)," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 760.
[164] Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History*, 30.

During this time at the Lumière Company, whose profits from the Cinématographe amounted to only 15% of its earnings between 1896 and 1900,[165] *Actuality* production continued despite commercial pressures emanating from the growing popularity of increasingly complex fictional films produced by Porter and others. Five years after Porter's hiring at the Edison Company, in 1905, however, the Lumière brothers finally relented and ceased *Actuality* production altogether.[166]

e) Contextualizing the *Actuality* Film Form

What relationship do *Actualities* bear with other film forms? Film historians and theorists Tom Gunning and Noël Burch have each offered up analytical frameworks that can help contextualize the *Actuality* film genre within the larger scope of cinema. In general terms, Gunning's Cinema of Attractions,[167] a term he first introduced jointly with André Gaudreault in 1985,[168] considers early *Actuality* films as works motivated by a desire to astonish and shock, whereas, in Burch's view, films exhibit two representational tendencies, one towards illusionism and another—which *Actualities* reveal—away from it.[169] In this section, I consider and examine the applicability of these frameworks in contextualizing the *Actuality* film form.

Actualities as a Cinema of Attractions

Within the scope of early cinema, Gunning describes the Cinema of Attractions as "an exhibitionist cinema," a cinema that "bases itself on […] its ability to *show* something,"[170] and, moreover, a cinema consisting of "a series of visual shocks."[171] Under this category, Gunning classifies together trick and multi-shot films, like those made by Smith and Mélies, with single-shot *Actuality* films void of editing trickery. What unifies these radically divergent films, in Gunning's view, are a number of factors: their

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[165] Jean-Marc Lamotte, "Lumière et fils," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 571.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Although Gunning and others do not capitalize the phrase Cinema of Attractions, I do as a way of denoting that it stands for a particular theoretical framework, or school of thought, regarding early cinema.
[168] Wanda Strauven, "Introduction to an Attractive Concept," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 11-13. As Strauven explains, the phrase "Cinema of Attractions" was first coined by Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault in a joint paper they presented at a conference in 1985. In 1986, Gunning published both a solo paper (titled "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde") and a joint one, in French, with Gaudreault (titled "Le cinéma des premiers temps: un défi à l'histoire du cinéma"). Although Gaudreault played a role alongside Gunning in the coinage and introduction of the phrase Cinema of Attractions, it is Gunning's elaborations on the concept across numerous articles spanning decades that I strictly focus on here. Hence, I will be referring to "Gunning's Cinema of Attractions" or "Gunning's theory of the Cinema of Attractions" rather than "Gunning and Gaudreault's theory".
[169] I use the word "illusionism" here borrowing from David Bordwell's interpretation and discussion of Burch's theory in his paper "The Power of a Research Tradition: Prospects for Progress in the Study of Film Style", *Film History* 6, no. 1, Philosophy of Film History (Spring, 1994): 70-72.
[170] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-garde," *Wide Angle 8.3-4* (Fall 1986): 64.
[171] Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment and the (In)Credulous Spectator," in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 116.

concern with 'monstration', or the act of display, rather than with narrative; a temporality that tends towards suddenness; and the shared presentational form in which these films were originally exhibited for audiences.

Méliès's films are, for Gunning, "emblematic" of the Cinema of Attractions because their onscreen transformations "endlessly [replay] the effect of surprise and appearance."[172] *Actualities* are, in Gunning's view, also emblematic of the Cinema of Attractions because he considers their aesthetic quality to consist of the same illusionistic character found in Méliès' work. As Gunning writes, "the single, monolithic shot functions as a trick" in the sense that it "is often an appearance rather than a reality."[173] *Actualities* may not offer the kind of sudden surprises exploited by Méliès as objects and actors in his films appear and disappear, but Gunning argues that "some sense of wonder or surprise nonetheless underlies all these films [*Actualities*], if only wonder at the illusion of motion."[174] Ultimately, under the Cinema of Attractions, trick films and *Actualities* alike are united by their emphasis of the act of display rather than on narrative. As Gunning writes, "even the seemingly stylistically neutral film consisting of a single-shot without camera tricks involved a cinematic gesture of presenting for view, of displaying."[175]

Films of the Cinema of Attractions share not just their focus on the act of display but also the temporal quality that results from it. Films concerned with narrative may require an evolving or unfolding temporality in order to establish story points, but films concerned only with presenting unique views to the audience are not shackled by such necessities. As Gunning explains, the act of display central to the Cinema of Attractions manifests itself "as a temporal irruption rather than a temporal development,"[176] what elsewhere he refers to as a "temporality" that "tends towards suddenness."[177] Méliès's films, with their numerous substitution tricks, exemplify this "temporal irruption," this "temporality towards suddenness," or, as Gunning also puts it, "this burst of attraction."[178] *Actualities,* consisting as they do of a single shot void of interruptions resulting from editing cuts, may first appear to display a different kind of temporality than that found in trick films. But rather than consider *Actualities* as individual, separate works, Gunning considers them as the collective showcases they were often presented as. Viewed in this way, he argues that "a series of brief actualities of the Lumière sort, appearing one after another" are as "emblematic" of the Cinema of Attractions as the Méliès films in which the action is interrupted to display or surprise the spectator with something new.[179]

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[172] Tom Gunning, "Now You See It, Now You Don't: The temporality of the cinema of attractions," in *Silent Film Reader*, eds. Lee Grieveson & Peter Krämer (London: Routledge, 2004), 46.
[173] Tom Gunning, "'Primitive Cinema': A Frame-up? Or the Trick's on Us," *Cinema Journal* 28, no. 2 (Winter, 1989): 4-5.
[174] Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment," 125.
[175] Gunning, "Now You See It," 42.
[176] Ibid, 46.
[177] Tom Gunning, "cinema of attractions," *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 179.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Gunning, "Now You See It," 46.

The modes of presentation employed in the exhibition of the first early films are, for Gunning, yet another unifying element of the Cinema of Attractions, as well as further evidence of the act of display motivating these works. "[I]n the earliest Lumière exhibitions," Gunning points out, "the films were presented as frozen unmoving images, projections of still photographs" until, "flaunting a mastery of visual showmanship, the projector began cranking and the image moved."[180] As he suggests, this might explain the mythical reaction audiences suffered when watching *Arrival of a Train*: they did not so much believe a train would run them over, as much as they were taken aback by a still image suddenly coming alive with motion.[181] The Lumière exhibitor's action in rolling the film before the audience, for Gunning, "signals his allegiance to an aesthetic of astonishment which goes beyond a scientific interest in the reproduction of motion."[182] In other words, Lumière screenings were, in Gunning's view, so designed in order to maximize spectators' shock and awe.

Another presentational element characteristic of early film screenings Gunning considers is the presence of a lecturer who, "like a fairground barker," often provided a speech accompanying the film or films, building "an atmosphere of expectation, a pronounced curiosity leavened with anxiety as he stresses the novelty and astonishing properties which the attraction to be revealed will possess."[183] According to Gunning, this presentational style particularly transpired onto the screen in films like those by Méliès, where "actors nodded and gestured at the camera" in an overt act of showmanship emphasizing the demonstrative nature of the films.[184]

Gunning recognizes that *Actualities* "may have derived technically" from chronophotography[185] but insists that whereas "chonophotography offered scientific quantification," cinema's reproduction of motion "supplied entertainment and novelty."[186] The ethos of the *Actuality* film form, in Gunning's view, does not originate in chronophotography but "in the late 19th and early 20th centuries show business, such as the fair/fairground, vaudeville, or circus."[187] To defend this position, Gunning primarily points to the presentational modes employed in the screening of *Actualities*—the still projected frame suddenly triggered into motion by a projectionist; the presence of a barker-like lecturer; a program consisting of a series of views—and to the accounts of spectators who experienced these films as novelties and spectacles. "Many early spectators," he writes, "recognized the first projection of films as a crowning achievement in the extremely sophisticated developments in the magic theater."[188] Films produced by Méliès and Smith, who themselves shared a background in theater magic and illusionism, may have been viewed as "crowning achievements" in magic theater, but I disagree with Gunning's assessment that this was also the case with respect to *Actualities*.

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[180] Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment," 118.
[181] Ibid, 118-119.
[182] Ibid, 119.
[183] Ibid, 120.
[184] Ibid, 121.
[185] Gunning, "The Attraction of Motion," 116.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Gunning, "cinema of attractions," 179.
[188] Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment," 116.

Upon viewing the first *Actualities* in person during the mythical December 28th, 1895, screening, Méliès proclaimed them "an extraordinary trick,"[189] a reaction Gunning cites as evidence that these films were largely considered, from the very beginning, as mere forms of entertainment designed to cause shock and awe. But Méliès's response can also be viewed as the prejudicial, subjective viewpoint of someone steeped in the world of stage magic and illusionism, primed to recognize the entertainment potential of new devices and technologies. By contrast, Janssen, upon viewing his first Lumière *Actualities* at the Congress of the French Photographic Societies, saw the films not as a culmination in the development of magic theater, but as the culmination in the development of the photographic study of motion. Janssen's scientific and chronophotographic background may have influenced his assessment, but, unlike Méliès' reading of the films, Janssen's is evidenced by the historically documented interactions between early *Actuality* filmmakers and chronophotographers I have detailed and that were further reflected in the aesthetic form of *Actualities*.

In exhibiting their films, both the Lumière and Edison/Dickson teams may have adopted a presentational style drawn from popular amusements, like the vaudeville and magic shows, but such an exhibition mode does not necessarily imply the films themselves drew their style from the same show business traditions. The choice to style film screenings or showcases after popular entertainment forms can be explained by a motivation on the part of *Actuality* filmmakers to disseminate their work to the widest possible audience: to that end, they employed methods of attracting audiences and maintaining their interest that already had a proven track record of success in their time.

Gunning, however, insists that the ethos of the Cinema of Attractions—consisting of a "confrontation" with the spectator, a "directness of the act of display", an emphasis on eliciting an immediate reaction from the viewer—rules not only the "mode of exhibition," but, also, "the form of its films."[190] Within the form of *Actualities*, in Gunning's view, "on-coming locomotives present the shock of cinema", offering "an experience of assault;"[191] and films featuring dance performers exemplify an emphasis of motion as "one of cinema's major attraction,"[192] revealing the "spectacle of transformation of matter into motion."[193]

Absent from these considerations of the form of these films are the formal elements I have highlighted above as essential to the *Actuality* aesthetic, such as the singular shot and the roughly minute-long duration. To Gunning, it seems, the form of *Actualities* largely consists of the subject matter on display—the moving train, the dancers—which give these films their attraction-like quality. But foregrounding the shot singularity and minute-long duration of these films, one can argue that the *Actuality* form does not represent an aesthetic of astonishment, that it reveals, instead, a contemplative ethos: because the camera does not move and the action does not cut, the viewer can, in the span of a minute, carefully observe and contemplate the movement of a train as it

[189] Gunning, "'Primitive Cinema'," 4.
[190] Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment," 173.
[191] Ibid, 121.
[192] Ibid, 165.
[193] Ibid, 167.

approaches, or to admire the movements of a dance performer without interruption. In this way, the single, minute-long aesthetic does not inject shock value but offers an invitation to see.

Gunning's writings appear to suggest that such an aesthetic of contemplation and observation, one that facilitates the act of seeing, is not incongruent with his conception of the Cinema of Attractions because, as he writes, "the cinema of attractions solicits highly conscious awareness of the film image engaging the viewer's curiosity."[194] But Gunning's theory does not imply that the "highly conscious awareness" these films solicit is one consisting of a sustained effort of undivided attention. Instead, it is the repeated delivery of shocks and surprises to the viewer that Gunning considers to be "soliciting" a "highly conscious awareness," demanding that the viewer pay attention to what is happening on screen. But are these insistent calls for attention not a disruption and fragmentation of the viewer's attention, rather than an intensification of it? Within a film displaying a singular, non-moving vantage point, a change in the picture frame, due to a sudden camera movement or a cut to a different shot, interrupts the viewers' attention as it is redirected to the details of a view other than the one they were just focused on. Such cinematic shocks, then, can be viewed not as calls for attention, but as distractions derailing the viewer's ability to reach a greater level of awareness of the onscreen image.

Gunning's assessment that *Actualities* concerned themselves with the act of display, with eliciting "wonder at the illusion of motion,"[195] reveals the films' chronophotographic origins. Presented through methods that primed audiences to interpret them as novel spectacles, *Actualities* may have shocked, astonished and awed audiences from the late 1890s and early 1900s, unaccustomed as they might have been to photo-realistic images coming alive with motion. But it was clearly the context in which the films were shown, not their form, that suggests an aesthetic of shock. Within a present-day context, where the regular consumption of moving images in the form of films, television, online videos and advertisements rich with color, sound, visual effects and multitudes of shots has become an integral part of modern life, the silent, black and white, singular shot *Actualities* of early cinema seem unlikely to produce shock and astonishment.

The aesthetic of Lumière and Edison/Dickson *Actualities*, largely characterized by its minute-long singular shot, does not demonstrate the proclivity to shock and awe that later films, like those by Méliès, Smith, Williamson and Porter exhibited. *Actualities* featuring numerous theater and vaudeville performers invited to the Black Maria studio, may be understood as showing Edison's and Dickson's consideration of *Actualities* as attractions meant to entertain the masses. Such a reading is in fact supported by the Edison Company's subsequent abandonment of the *Actuality* aesthetic around the mid to late 1890s for an aesthetic more reliant on optical tricks, editing and multiple shots. But from their beginning in 1895 to their end in 1905, Lumière *Actuality* productions remained largely impervious to developing trends, demonstrating a great reluctance to affect audiences in the way characteristic of Gunning's Cinema of Attractions. If the brothers intended to deliver attraction-style shocks to audiences, surely the Lumière film

[194] Ibid, 121.
[195] Ibid, 125.

style would have, in time, followed in the footsteps of Edison's. Ultimately, the aesthetic of *Actualities* reveals values that differ greatly from those reflected in the works of Méliès, Smith, Williamson and Porter. Additionally, a divergent attitude distinguishes the films of the Edison/Dickson team from those of the Lumières. In classifying Méliès, Smith, Edison/Dickson and Lumière films together under the umbrella of the Cinema of Attractions, Gunning's theory does not encourage such essential distinctions, and herein lies its biggest shortcoming in serving to contextualize *Actualities* within the scope of cinema at large. Burch's theory, on the other hand, allows for the separation of *Actualities* from the films that followed them and for the distinction of both style and approach between the Lumière and Edison/Dickson *Actualities*. It is Burch's approach I now examine in the following section.

Actualities as Opposition and Resistance to Institutional Cinema

In *Life to Those Shadows* (1990), filmmaker and film theorist Noël Burch lay down an analytical groundwork to explore the ways in which film language evolved during the earliest years, specifically the period of 1895-1929. In the process, he conceived of cinema as exhibiting two general modes of representation, what he called the Primitive Mode of Representation (PMR) and the Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR). The PMR is "primitive in the sense that it is 'first' and 'original', but also in the sense that it is 'rough' and 'crude' in respect to all the norms that we have all (in all classes) come to accept in the industrialized countries."[196] The IMR is the mode of representation that characterizes the institution of cinema or what can also be referred to as the "cinematic experience most widespread 'amongst us'."[197] In Burch's view, the IMR "has been explicitly taught in film schools as the Language of Cinema," and is the mode of representation that, regardless of who we are "we all internalize at an early age as a reading competence thanks to an exposure to films (in cinemas or television) which is universal among the young in industrialized societies."[198] Implicit in Burch's formulation, then, is the idea that the Primitive Mode preceded and, over time, formed the basis of the Institutional Mode of Representation.

Burch does not employ his terminology as a sharply delineated classification of two types of films—primitive and institutional. Instead, the terms PMR and IMR demarcate an analytical framework that considers films as systems of elements whose cumulative effect exhibits one representational tendency over another. According to Burch, for example, the "sum of signifying systems" in institutional cinema serves to fully immerse the viewer in the inner world of its films, causing what he calls a "full diegetic effect."[199] Films of the IMR, then, tend towards the representation of a closed fictional world that envelops the spectator. "[P]rimitive cinema" on the other hand, "is indeed non-closed as a whole"[200] because, rather than aiming to enclose the spectator within the world of its projected illusions, it offers a representational mode that obstructs this kind of involvement.

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[196] Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 3-4.
[197] Ibid, 4.
[198] Ibid, 3-4.
[199] Ibid, 188.
[200] Ibid.

From Burch's viewpoint, then, Lumière and Edison/Dickson *Actualities* represent the PMR, not just because these films precede more elaborate film forms and appear "rough" or "crude" by comparison, but also because they offer an experience of non-closure in the sense that they do not seek to entrap or absorb viewers into the illusory world they display. *Actualities* may contain narrative elements and feature actions that read as beginnings and endings, but the cumulative effect of their form maintains viewer involvement at a distance. In an *Actuality* film, the camera never moves in order to get closer to the action, to highlight details, to elicit a greater emotional engagement from the viewer, and, moreover, the film's short duration does not permit the establishing of intricate story developments one can get invested in. From this perspective, then, Burch also considers the work of Méliès, including his most recognized masterpiece, *Trip to the Moon* (1902), as exhibiting the PMR[201] because with its stage-like, fixed wide shots it prevents the viewer's total immersion in its narrative fantasy.[202] *Actualities* and trick films alike, then, for Burch, belong to the primitive cinema.

But, unlike Gunning's, Burch's form of analysis allows for distinctions among primitive films based on the degree to which they exhibit a tendency towards institutional representation. Burch recognizes, for example, that Méliès did occasionally employ close-ups, a key feature of the IMR, but still considers his films primitive because of the overall effect that the sum of their stylistic elements imparted.[203] Regarding *Actualities*, Burch argues that the formal elements in the work of Edison/Dickson reflect a tendency towards the IMR, whereas the work of the Lumières resisted it.

In recounting the production of the Lumière brothers' *Workers Leaving the Factory*, Burch notes that "as well as this being a decisive experiment made with the prototype of this historical camera, it also represents an experiment in the observation of reality; as we would put it today, it was a matter of 'catching' an action, known in its overall lines beforehand, predictable within a few minutes, but random in all its details."[204] The formal elements of the film—the single view shot, its frontality, the distance between the camera and its subjects, the breadth of the field of vision—, are, in Burch's analysis of the Lumière aesthetic, intertwined with the filmmaking attitude and approach of the sibling filmmakers. The Lumière brothers, he argues, saw themselves as scientists and researchers whose filmic approach was more akin to the scientific approach "manifested by Muybridge, Marey, etc."[205] In support of this view, Burch points to the fact that the first showing of *Workers Leaving the Factory* took place at the end of a lecture given by Louis Lumière on color transparencies.[206] Burch elaborates further:

> […] it is above all Lumière's attitude to his subjects, the framing that generally allows ample space for the development of the action in all directions, that reveals a quasi-scientific attitude. The scene in fact seems to unfold before his camera

[201] Ibid, 198.
[202] Ibid, 164 & 198.
[203] Ibid, 165.
[204] Ibid, 15.
[205] Ibid, 17.
[206] Ibid, 19.

> rather like the behaviour of a micro-organism under the biologist's microscope or the movement of the stars at the end of the astronomer's telescope.[207]

Burch also cites an interview Louis Lumière granted near the end of his life where he stated: "My endeavours were endeavours of technological research. I have always been a technician and a researcher."[208]

The attitude or approach of the Lumières, Burch argues, was "diametrically opposed"[209] to that of Edison and Dickson. Shooting their first films in the Black Maria studio, Edison and Dickson shot at much closer angles of view and against "a black backdrop that would centre the pictures,"[210] revealing their desire to "locate the spectator subject at the centre of an imaginary space."[211] In seeking to immerse the viewer in an illusory, fictional world, the primitive Edison/Dickson *Actualities* anticipated the Institutional Mode of Representation to come.[212] By contrast, the Lumière films modeled a different desire: to "catch a moment of reality, then to film it without any attempt to control it or to centre the action."[213] As a result, the Lumière *Actualities* provided a "sense of closeness to reality" in a "non-linear, non-centred" manner[214] that, while illusory, "does not locate the spectator subject at the centre of an imaginary space."[215] The marked ideological difference between the Lumière and Edison/Dickson teams gave Burch reason to believe that "the pleasure—and also the knowledge—[Louis Lumière] produced is of quite another kind from the pleasure of the Institution to come."[216]

Drawing from Burch's theory, *Actualities* can be contextualized within the scope of cinema at large as films that, through their form, resist or oppose the dominant, institutional tendency towards illusionism. As films, *Actualities* themselves can certainly be viewed as illusions. But the pursuit of illusory qualities within their form is severely limited by their singular, non-moving shot aesthetic. In their tendency towards illusionism, Edison and Dickson encountered such limitations and, as a result, abandoned the *Actuality* form altogether. Void of the sort of stylistic elements that pervade modern cinema—rapid cuts, camera movement, special effects, etc.—*Actualities*, in comparison with works of the institutional cinema, largely model a resistance or opposition towards the inclination to produce artifice. I consider my own *Actualities* to be similarly positioned within the scope of cinema at large. They are the focus of the next chapter.

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[207] Ibid, 18-19.
[208] Pierre Hodgson, ed. & trans., "Founding Father: Louis Lumière in Conversation with Georges Sadoul," in *Projections 4: Film-makers on film-making*, eds. John Boorman, Tom Luddy, David Thomson and Walter Donohue (London: Faber & Faber, 1995), 9.
[209] Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, 18.
[210] Ibid, 29.
[211] Ibid, 34.
[212] Ibid, 33.
[213] Ibid, 34.
[214] Ibid, 33.
[215] Ibid, 34.
[216] Ibid.

CHAPTER 2—Daily *Actuality* Filmmaking and the Now

> *Note: To facilitate the viewing of my films mentioned in this chapter, I have enabled the text of their titles as clickable, live links. I have also included the links corresponding to individual films as footnotes in consideration of readers accessing this text in print (rather than digital) form.*

This chapter presents an account of the practical component of my thesis, which consists of a yearlong filmmaking project, beginning on January 1st, 2017, in which I aimed to make an *Actuality* film every day. The defining qualities of this daily process of art creation did not emerge from *a priori* exhaustive research into methodological and theoretical discourses concerning filmmaking and well-being. Instead, as part of my art practice-based research methodology, my daily filmmaking project served to produce the evidence that, along with a review of relevant texts and a theoretical analysis, forms the object of my inquiry. In short, my research did not define my practice inasmuch as my practice led my research.

This is not to say that the characteristics of my daily filmmaking process were thoughtlessly defined. Admittedly, these were facilitated and circumscribed by the situational circumstances of my social position as a well-employed educator gaining a level of income that affords me the privileges of food, shelter, clothing, transportation, technological access and the means of travel. But the deliberate features of my process were themselves brought forth from reflections on my previous experiences as a filmmaker and colored by my initial, vague notions of what well-being is. Working in documentary, experimental and commercial productions, I recognized my tendency to deliberate in exploring multiple avenues to solve creative problems and, seeking to restrict it, I designed my daily practice through the implementation of the production rules that, specifically, limited me to making a film per day of one minute of duration using only one single shot.

Also judging from past experiences, I originally conceived of my well-being in the role of filmmaker as relating to the successful attainment of goals: if a filmmaking process permitted me to meet the goals set forth in a given production trouble-free, I presumed, I would experience well-being; if the opposite was true, in turn, I would experience suffering. With this initial conception in mind, I chose to design my process around resources I had immediate access to so as to minimize obstacles and ease the success of my daily challenge. Consequently, then, I chose to use equipment and social media accounts I already owned to produce, share and archive my films. In light of ongoing debates regarding the negative impact of social media on well-being,[1] the choice to employ YouTube and Facebook in my process may seem impetuous, but I chose to abide by these tools because, given their ready accessibility and ease of use they offered me, they did not represent a burdening expenditure of resources or energy in the way of my goals. My engagement with these platforms, moreover, was limited to the uploading of videos for the purposes of archiving and sharing my work.

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[1] See, for example, Ethan Kross, et al., "Social Media and Well-Being: Pitfalls, Progress, and Next Steps," in *Trends in Cognitive Science*, Vol. 25, no. 1 (January 2021): 55-66, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1364661320302515#s0005.

Previous filmmaking experiences led me to adopt production rules that restricted my process, but past occurrences had also taught me that my ability as a filmmaker to adapt to contingencies was often necessary to meet a production's goals. For this reason, within the boundaries of meeting my daily challenge, I permitted myself to act freely in my role as filmmaker with the knowledge I would later, retroactively, examine my methods and actions with measured, scholarly rigour. Not only did I give myself the freedom to film whatever I pleased, but also to film as much footage as I deemed necessary and to manipulate it in post-production if I so chose. The exercise of my freedom of choice in these areas, over time, brought to light the prejudicial nature of my creative decisions, conditioned by my past engagement with filmmaking. Specifically, it manifested itself in the form of my constant, impulsive need to alter or improve upon the raw recordings my camera registered in order to meet the imagined needs or demands of their imagined future audience. My recognition of my own conditioning was greatly aided by comments I received from close acquaintances I chose to share my work with. Gathering feedback from those close to me was not intended as an effort to collect an exhaustive data set of audience opinions, but as a method within my filmmaking approach to expand my viewpoint through the perspective of viewers whose thoughts and opinions are easily accessible to me.

In making daily *Actualities*, the revelation of my conditioning was accompanied by a reduction in the fragmentation of my thinking about the material in my films. Working with a single shot, and unable to edit its contents between the beginning and end, preemptively voided the need for my mind's thoughts to scatter in considering multiple camera views and montage possibilities. The increasingly self-aware, less fragmented outlook I acquired through my daily practice began to reshape my initial notion of well-being as a state related to the successful realization of goals into a conception approximating Krishnamurti's and Watts's, wherein, as I discuss in Chapter 3, well-being is formulated as a state encumbered by the fragmentation of thought and facilitated by the awareness of the present moment. The account of my yearlong, daily filmmaking practice that follows in this chapter, however, is not intended as a presentation of new knowledge that sheds light on filmmaking and its relation to well-being, but, instead, as partial evidence that, in my final analysis, helps validate my eventual abandonment of my initial idea of well-being; justifies my later adoption of one drawn from the philosophies of Krishnamurti and Watts; and that, in dialogue with realistic theories of film in Chapter 4, at last illuminates my research topic.

In this chapter, then, I explain why I decided to make a daily 1-minute film for a year; I detail the production methods and tools I employed; I share my thinking process in choosing what to film and edit; I describe my thoughts in navigating aesthetic and ethical considerations; I discuss the influence of my process in expanding my ability to be present and to accept things as they are; I relate how my practice strengthened my bonds with others; I situate my daily filmmaking process within the practice of everyday life; and, lastly, I offer a brief comprehensive review of film practitioners whose work bears relevant connections to my daily *Actuality* films. Due to the subjective nature of the account that follows, it is worth noting that, in contrast with other chapters in my thesis, the language in these passages at times adopts a more casual, anecdotal character in accordance with the disposition of my personal experiences and self-reflections.

a) Why I Chose a Daily *Actuality* Filmmaking Practice

The rationale behind my decision to engage in a daily *Actuality* filmmaking practice traces back to my idea that making a film a day might shed some light on questions regarding the relationship between filmmaking and well-being, such as: is filmmaking inherently a stressful process wherein the filmmaker cannot avoid suffering? If so, what causes filmmaking to be stressful? Is it the pressures of time and money? Or the need to work and collaborate with others? Is filmmaking only stressful when it entails a particular mode of production and not another? Is the experience of filmmaking as stressful a matter of perception, subject to one's point of view, and further exacerbated by one's own particular idea of what a film is—or should be—and how it must be made?

In considering these questions, the thought arose that challenging myself to make a film a day might open up new pathways of investigation leading to a deeper understanding and further exploration of the relationship between my filmmaking practice and my well-being. Could I make a film a day, every day? If not, what would stand in my way of meeting this challenge? And could it be avoided, circumvented or overcome? If I succeeded in making a film a day, every day, what would be the key to my success? And whether I was successful or not, what impact would this process have on my well-being? The process of making a film a day, I thought, would provide me with direct, first-hand experiences I could observe and analyze with the goal of rendering evident the obstacles that stood in the way of my ability to maximize my well-being during the filmmaking process.

In my first attempt to make daily films during September 2016, I did not adhere to the aesthetic and technical rules I would later adopt from the Lumière *Actualities*, such as the 1-minute duration and the single, non-moving shot. At this time, I simply required myself to complete a film per day and to do so with free rein. As long as I met the production quota of a daily film, irrespective of the methods I employed in doing so, I would consider the challenge successfully met. In consequence, the films resulting from this first attempt to engage in a daily filmmaking practice ranged in style.[2] I wrote and also acted in some of them. Others consisted of documentary-style interview clips or brief snapshots centered on a theme that I would film throughout my day and then compile and edit. Yet others consisted of footage collected throughout my day and set to a voiceover narration I would perform. Some were promotional videos I was hired to produce and yet another was a film I made in collaboration with my young film students during a summer camp.

As the days wore on, it became increasingly more difficult for me to meet the goal of making a film a day and, eventually, I stopped after about a week. In total, I managed to complete a total of ten films. During this period, my daily productions would continually grow in ambition once I seized upon an initial idea. Time and again, I found myself unable to restrain my creativity to concepts I could produce and satisfactorily complete within the span of a single day, wherein domestic and professional responsibilities limited the time I could devote to them to less than 24 hours. I wanted to

[2] The films are listed, with links, in Appendix D.

write more, to plan more, to shoot more, to edit more, to develop complexity into the films, but soon the clock would strike midnight. Time was always catching up with my aspirations and frustrating my desire to do more. Looking back at what I managed to produce during this period, I realized I needed to set some parameters and rules of production that would help me to limit the creative scope of each film in order to make the daily production feasible and manageable over the long run. In short, I needed to establish some rules that would help me succeed in completing my daily filmmaking goal for a sustained period of time.

After September 2016, I stopped making daily films and gave myself some time to reflect and to search for a way to simplify my production process to a less time consuming one that would inherently impose limits on my creativity. In my film history and filmmaking classes, I would often show students some of the most prominent *Actualities* from early cinema: the Lumières' *Arrival of a Train* and *Workers Leaving the Factory*; Thomas Edison and W. K. L. Dickson's *Boxing Cats* and *The Kiss*. These films represented the simplest film form I knew of and, soon, I thought of the film genre they belonged to—*Actualities*—as a possible model for my daily films.

The process of making *Actualities* seemed straightforward enough: set up a camera and, without moving it or changing its angle of view, let it film whatever is in front of it for one whole minute. This process did not require the complexities of sorting and combining multiple shots that make editing such a time consuming endeavor, one where the filmmaker can get lost in creatively exploring a large number of shot and sequence arrangements before settling on a final cut. The process of making *Actualities* also did not necessitate writing or scripting, another part of the filmmaking process that may require long periods of time as one deliberates, considers and thinks through a whole range of ideas. Moreover, making *Actualities* did not necessitate the use of props, sets or special locations, nor the collaboration of actors and other production crew. At minimum, making an *Actuality* only required me to use a camera to record whatever happened to be in front of it which, rather than resulting from an expenditure of time and effort in arranging the scenery or constructing specific images and sounds, could be entirely left to chance and circumstance. The more I thought about *Actualities* and the simplicity they represented in comparison to the films I was used to making, the more I thought that, if there was one type of film I could produce on a daily basis for the course of a year, this could certainly be it.

Because the *Actuality* film form dominated cinema at a time that preceded the more intricate aesthetic and convoluted production methods that would come later, it promised more than a viable way to simplify my daily filmmaking practice in order to make it a feasible endeavor. Engaging with the form might help me to experience firsthand how and why *Actuality* filmmaking grew and evolved into increasingly more complicated film forms, both in terms of content and modes of production, forms that other filmmakers, myself included, came to view as detrimental to the filmmaker's well-being. In making *Actualities*, perhaps I could discover for myself why or how the practice of setting a camera and recording 1 minute of footage was largely abandoned and gave way to filmmaking processes involving the use of multiple shots, multiple cameras and

angles, editing tricks, technical crews, actors, sets, props, narratives, special effects, sound design, coloring, etc.

I aimed to emulate the Lumière *Actuality* style in terms of duration and static shot singularity, but my films differ aesthetically from those made between 1895 and 1905 largely because of the different context they were filmed in. The cinematographic and editing technologies available to the Lumière brothers, for example, differ greatly from those that were within my reach more than 110 years later in 2017: I could capture my images in color, with synchronized sound, with varying focal lengths and from a wider range of camera positions and angles, whereas the Lumière Cinématographe largely (if not entirely) limited these capabilities. Moreover, I made my *Actualities* within the context of a daily ritual designed with the specific aim of investigating the relationship between filmmaking and well-being. The Lumières, on the other hand, did not abide by a daily production schedule and, in collaboration with a team of dedicated cinematographers, made their films largely for the purposes of displaying the virtues of their cinematographic invention to promote their family business around the world.

Differences in the purpose of production, intended audience and screening context account for some of the aesthetic differences between my *Actualities* and the Lumières'. But the formal features that distinguish one set of films from the other, to a large degree, stem from differences in production technology and procedural methods. The tools and rules that defined the conditions under which I made my own daily films are the subjects I now turn to.

b) The Initial Tools of Production

I set out to meet the challenge of making an *Actuality* a day for a year with a specific set of tools and following particular rules of production. But these evolved over time as new challenges, questions and considerations arose in the making of these daily films.

For the sake of simplicity and in order to maintain a streamlined production method—from shooting to editing and distributing—that would consume the least amount of time for me, I opted to commit to using the same exact camera and lens for the entire process of making 365 *Actualities*. Specifically, I opted for a digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera I had owned for a few years, the Canon 5D Mark III, and equipped it with a Canon EF 24-105mm zoom lens I was very familiar with. Unlike my bigger production cameras, the 5D, due to its smaller size and lighter weight,[3] guaranteed ease of portability and, thus, flexibility and versatility in shooting in many different locations, environments and situations: I could carry it with me wherever I went at all times if necessary. Yet, unlike the camera in my iPhone, which guaranteed even greater ease of portability, the 5D had some weight to it and, especially with a long zoom lens attached to it, could not easily be hidden from view. I wanted the process of making these *Actualities* to be felt. I wanted to constantly be aware of it. The Lumière Cinématographe

[3] See Appendix E: Dimensions and Weight of Canon 5D Mark III Camera and 24-105mm Zoom Lens

operators were burdened with carrying the 16-pound[4] wooden box with its attached tripod and I wanted to be similarly (if not equally) burdened with having to carry my main filmmaking instrument during my productions. A smartphone could easily be put away in my pocket, hidden from view and its presence soon forgotten. But the presence of a camera of greater dimension and heftier weight could not be easily ignored and, in this way, the 5D better suited my needs as well as the integrity of the project.

Additionally, I wanted my filmmaking process to be visible to others, rather than surreptitious, especially in situations when I might be filming in public.[5] Smartphones or tiny spy cameras may permit a filmmaker to capture footage without alerting a subject that they are being recorded. But such covert filming may also require the filmmaker to expend considerable energy and attention to avoiding detection for fear of creating a conflict upon being discovered. With the goal of expanding my well-being in mind, I decided that the best way to free myself of such worries and fears during filming would be to embrace a process that would be as fully transparent to onlookers as possible. The appreciable size of the 5D would help alert others that I was operating a camera whenever I was filming, all the while advertising that I had no intent to hide from view or to film covertly, thereby helping to appease or minimize any suspicions passersby may harbor towards my filming activities.

Both the Lumière Cinématographe and the Canon 5D are box-like objects with an opening that allows light to enter and travel through the glass of a lens before leaving an impression in the bowels of their inner chamber. The basic principles of photography underlie both their designs, yet these instruments differ in other operative ways.[6] In particular, the 5D records digitally rather than on analogue film. For this reason, my initial production toolbox also included a couple of SD cards and a laptop computer with non-linear editing software and internet access for sharing and archiving my films online. It is worth noting that during the course of my daily *Actuality* productions I limited the tools I carried in the field to shooting equipment in order to maximize my comfort and ease of mobility. Thus, I never carried my laptop along with me when I was filming. Armed with a 5D camera with a 24-105mm lens, an SD card, a laptop computer with non-linear editing software, then, I set out on my daily filmmaking journey.

c) The Rules of Production and Their Evolution

The goal to complete an *Actuality* every day appeared simple and straightforward at the outset of my yearlong experiment. But, as soon as I began to make the first films, questions emerged about how I should proceed in meeting my daily filmmaking quota. Should I restrict myself to recording only 60 seconds per film? Could I film more and then edit the footage down to fit the one minute time limit? Should I include titles and, if so, would their duration count towards the duration of each *Actuality*? These sorts of questions, and the considerations they elicited, led me to amend my overarching rule of making an *Actuality* a day with greater specificity. In this section, I relate how, over time,

[4] See Ch. 1, section d.
[5] I discuss filming in public later in this chapter.
[6] I have outlined these in Appendix F.

the rules I established for my filmmaking methodology evolved and grew in detail. Whenever possible, I aimed to maximize the flexibility of these rules so as to lessen the impact they might impose on my sense of well-being.

Filming, Editing, Titling and Exporting Rules

On the eve of December 31st, 2016, before my first day of production, I was in Spain visiting with friends. Traditionally, in Spain and other Spanish speaking countries, people celebrate the arrival of the new year by eating 12 grapes during the year's first 12 seconds. Doing so successfully, so the superstition goes, guarantees good fortune in the coming year.[7] As my friends and I awaited the turn of the clock at midnight, I decided that, because it represented the first moments of the year, the consumption of the 12 grapes would be the subject of my first *Actuality*. I rested my camera on the arm of the sofa in my friend's living room and framed the shot so as to ensure all of us would be visible in the resulting film. Seconds before the new year I hit the record button and entered the frame to join my friends in eating the 12 grapes.

As I loaded the raw footage of this *Actuality* into my laptop computer for editing, new questions regarding rules I should follow in my daily process arose: What did it mean, for example, for me to "make an *Actuality*"? When would I know I had completed this daily task? Was it enough to simply record it? Did I need to add titles to it, edit it and share it? I decided that, for me, to make a film meant the film was finished and done with and therefore it must not only be shot but edited, with titles, and out in the world for others to see. This, inadvertently, offered me some flexibility when it came to filming because it meant I did not necessarily have to film every day: on a given day, I could collect footage for more than one *Actuality* that I could then edit at a later time. In the event I would find myself unable to film on a given day, I could edit footage I had previously shot into an *Actuality* and this would still mean I had "made an *Actuality*" that day, even if I had filmed its source footage at another, previous date. The important thing for me was to "complete" a film per day, whether or not the shooting and the editing were completed together on the same day. My reasoning was motivated by a desire to set myself up for success in meeting my daily goal, should life events interfere with my project. Despite the safety net this rule offered me, only on very few occasions did I make an *Actuality* from footage that was not filmed on the day I completed it.

As I reviewed the footage of my friends and I celebrating the arrival of 2017 on my laptop, more questions arose: should the film have a title and, if so, how long should it be, and would it count towards the film's overall duration? Because the Lumière and Edison/Dickson films were often accompanied by titles, I decided to include ones in my daily films. The original Lumière *Actualities* I was inspired by were not precisely one

[7] Jeff Koehler, "Green Grapes And Red Underwear: A Spanish New Year's Eve," *NPR.org*, December 31, 2012, https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2012/12/26/168092673/green-grapes-and-red-underwear-a-spanish-new-years-eve. Koehler recognizes that the "exact origins [of this tradition] remain debatable." He also writes that "old newspaper articles have been republished that show the tradition began decades earlier, in the 1880s" although he does not cite specific sources. The earliest reference to this tradition I was able to locate in a Spanish newspaper, dates back to January 1894 and can be found in PDF format here: http://hemerotecadigital.bne.es/issue.vm?id=0000175619.

minute long, often hovering around the 50-55 second mark, often depending on the speed of the Cinématographe operator's hand-cranking movements. In light of this, I decided to limit the maximum duration of my titles to 4 seconds, which would count as part of the overall 1-minute duration of each film. In my view, Lumière and Edison/Dickson *Actuality* titles proved useful in offering a way to catalogue and refer to the films which also indicated the general subject of each film. I opted for a system of titling my films that offered a similar utility: my titles would consist of the word *Actuality* followed by the film's number (*Actuality #1*, *Actuality #2*, etc.) and a single descriptive word. The Lumière and Edison/Dickson *Actuality* titles often featured more than one descriptive word, but I wanted to restrict any creative tendency I might have in titling a film by limiting myself to using one single descriptor. Reducing the title to the simplicity of a number and a single word seemed like a good way to rein in my creativity in the process of creating labels for my films which would facilitate my ability to refer, recall or write about them.

In editing the first *Actuality*, then, I cut 56 seconds worth of footage from this new year's eve scene by marking a beginning and ending spot in my editing software and added 4 seconds of a title: "Actuality #1: GRAPES." I exported the final video file, uploaded it to a dedicated YouTube channel I created[8] and shared the film on my Facebook timeline for those in my social network to see.[9]

At this early stage in my process, I thought it was important to share my films with others as I made them in order to gain feedback that could prove insightful and inform the making of future *Actualities* as the days wore on. Specifically, I chose to share my films with close friends and relatives. I discuss the benefits I drew from others' comments on these early *Actualities* in this chapter's section on Sharing. Here, I must note that about in early May, though I continued to make daily films, I stopped sharing and uploading them on a daily basis for a number of reasons. In the midst of making these daily *Actualities*, Facebook changed the YouTube sharing feature that allowed users to view YouTube videos in their timeline without having to access an external website. Reportedly, this was done to encourage people to upload their videos to Facebook rather than YouTube.[10] Facebook had been my forum of choice to gain feedback from others about my films and with this change in its video shareability, it no longer seemed that useful to share my films on the social media platform. Around this time, I also traveled to Cuba, where I did not have the ability to upload my daily films to the internet. On my return from Cuba, the PhD process demanded I devote more time to writing and reading in order to submit documents regarding my ongoing work by specific deadlines. I knew at the end of my PhD I would have to share all my daily films after all, so excluding uploading and sharing from the daily process seemed a reasonable action to take midway through my year.

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[8] As noted in the List of Daily Films at the beginning of this thesis, the Youtube channel can be accessed at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIXVvP5PydvDEfk3m6a18wg/videos

[9] *Actuality #1: GRAPES* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YYPprCslgk.

[10] John Koetsier, "Facebook Native Video Gets 10X More Shares than YouTube," *Forbes*, March 13, 2017, https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkoetsier/2017/03/13/facebook-native-video-gets-10x-more-shares-than-youtube/?sh=3052a2801c66.

Aside from the change regarding daily sharing, I would follow the same production process I used in my first film, *GRAPES*, for all subsequent *Actualities*: filming, importing footage into the computer, reviewing it, editing it, adding a title and exporting it.

Figure 2. Screenshot of comments for *Actuality #1: GRAPES.*

In the immediate aftermath of sharing my first daily *Actuality*, I began to question whether or not I should restrict my appearance in the films I made. As I shot the next few *Actualities* that followed, I decided I needed to be behind the camera, operating it like Lumière cinematographers did in their day, so I could view the filmmaking process from a vantage point that offered the ability to simultaneously observe the camera and the scene unfolding before it. Being in the shot, in front of the camera and taking on the role of subject could potentially lead me to new discoveries about some aspects of the filmmaking process as experienced from the other side of the lens. But insights I could gather as camera operator, rather than as the film's subject, seemed more pertinent to the questions about filmmaking I sought to explore in my investigation. After all, the participation of on-camera talent was not essential to the process of making films I engaged in, whereas the operation of the camera and recording with it definitely was.

Sound, Color Correction, Stabilization and Additional Tools

Questions regarding the sound aspect of my films emerged as early as my second daily film: *Actuality #2: SAIL*.[11] To make this film, I lay down flat on the wooden boards at the end of a pier that jutted out from a beach, where I was less protected from the winter winds blowing that day. From this vantage point, I filmed a distant sailboat, backlit by the sun, gliding over the sea's surface and across my frame.

[11] *Actuality #2: SAIL* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWRWNQQQFzc.

Figure 3. The making of *Actuality #2: SAIL*. Photo by Carlos Velasco.

During editing, I realized that the on-camera microphone barely picked up any sound other than loud wind noise. With this particular film, I opted to remove the audio altogether for, in my view, it did not capture the tranquility I experienced while shooting. As I watched the footage, the rumbling wind noise interfered with my ability to appreciate the feeling of serenity that the movement of the sailboat, the scenery of a calm tide and the beauty of the sun inspired in me.

From this point on, I decided to give myself the option to remove or edit the sound if, to complete a daily film to my satisfaction, I thought it necessary. Other *Actualities* I recorded outdoors using the on-camera microphone were also plagued by wind noise, such as *Actuality #4: PEAKS*.[12] At the top of the rocky mountains in northern Spain where I made this film, the strong winds made it difficult to hear even my relatives who stood nearby watching the sunset. The recorded rumbling sound, as in *SAIL*, grated on the sense of admiration, contemplation and peace that the view before my eyes had

[12] *Actuality #4: PEAKS* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6yTrHRj1Zo.

stirred in me at the moment of filming. The experiences with windy noise in these early films led me, in time, to invest in an external, portable microphone with a windscreen to capture cleaner sound when filming outdoors that would more closely resemble what I would hear during filming.

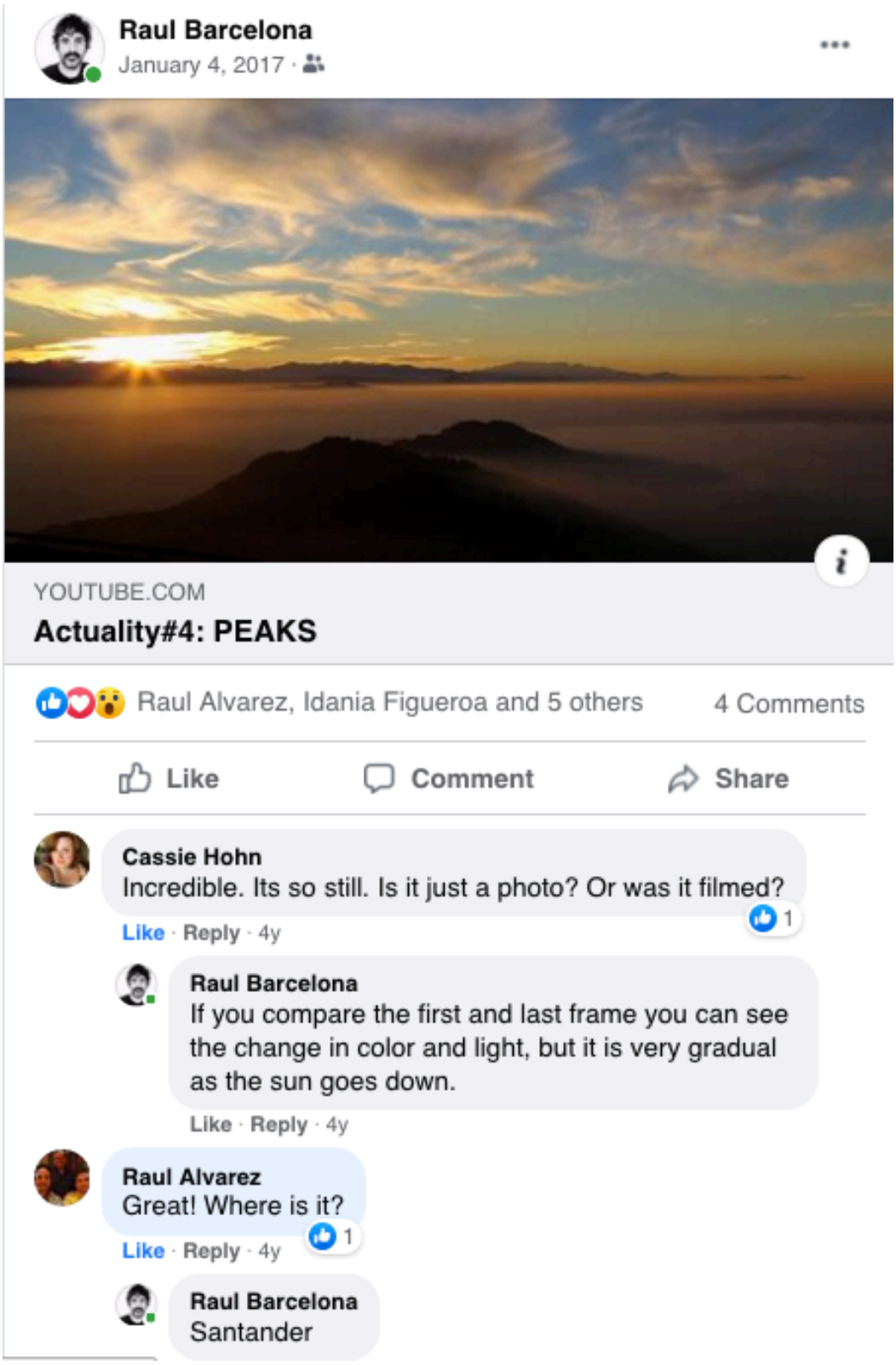

Figure 4. Screenshot of comments for *Actuality #4: PEAKS*.

Just as I did with sound, I also gave myself the option to perform color correction to the image component of the films if I saw fit. But for nearly all *Actualities* I did not alter the exposure, dynamic range between darks and lights, nor the color of these films after recording. *Actuality #83: CITY*[13] is one notable exception that did undergo some considerable color correction. In this case I performed a color correction technique known as "crushing the blacks,"[14] which consists of making the dark areas of an image perfectly black. I wanted to highlight my experience of sitting in the dark of night by the shore of the Hudson river while looking out at the lights on Manhattan island, but the raw footage exhibited more light than I had perceived with my eyes and I felt this did not match my experience of the darkness that enveloped me where I stood.

[13] *Actuality #83: CITY* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fk4G12FYJa0.
[14] For a reference discussing this technique, see this article: https://www.rocketstock.com/blog/crush-the-blacks-in-color-grading/.

Figure 5. Screenshot of comments for *Actuality #83: CITY*.

Initially, I did not employ the use of a tripod to produce my *Actualities*. Instead, I continually sought ways to steady or prop up my camera in whatever setting I found myself in. As a result, the static shots I produced were largely influenced by, or were a byproduct of, the objects I could find in my immediate environment to safely rest my camera so it would not move during recording. The sidewalk or the pavement, public benches, trees, rocks, public trash cans, furniture, railings, vehicles—all became temporary tripods. Occasionally, I would use my wallet, my phone, my backpack or other personal belongings within reach to support the camera's position or angle. Most of the time, the vantage point from which I observe the world, as I wander through it and navigate it, is largely dictated by my height which, itself, largely determines the position of my head, my eyes and ears. Propping the camera on objects in my vicinity or on my

belongings often pushed me to lay down, kneel, crouch, climb, and to discover vantage points that offered me views I was less acquainted with. The need to stabilize my camera, then, often pushed me to observe and film the world from unfamiliar viewpoints.

Figure 6. Using my backpack as a tripod.

Figure 7. Using a cardboard box as a tripod.

Figure 8. Using my sandbag as a tripod on the curb of a sidewalk in Havana, Cuba. Photo by Idania Figueroa.

Figure 9. Using my girlfriend's purse as a tripod.

Just as I expanded my ability to record sound with the purchase of an external microphone, I did eventually invest in both a portable, lightweight tripod and a sandbag to expand the possibilities of angles and camera positions I could use while maintaining the static quality of my shots. The sandbag offered versatility in spaces too small or too difficult for the legs of my tripod to adapt to. The tripod, with its extendable legs, a ball bearing head and a column that could be reattached to the legs perpendicularly, at 90 degrees, offered many possibilities to position the camera at different heights and angles. Despite having these new camera-stabilizing tools in my arsenal, I did not abandon the use of objects in my periphery and on my person as temporary tripods. These new tools simply expanded the range of camera positions I could shoot from while maintaining shot stability.

Figure 10. Using a luggage carousel as a tripod.

Figure 11. Using my sandbag to steady the camera on a metal railing.

Figure 12. Using my sandbag to steady the camera on the arm of a reclining chair.

Figure 13. Using my tripod on a snowy, icy hill.

Ethical Considerations in Filming Others

I have previously mentioned that my choice of the Canon 5D camera as my primary tool was partly motivated by a desire to make my process visible to others during filming. Whenever I made films of people in private spaces, such as homes, I always obtained verbal explicit consent from the participants. In such situations, I did not need my equipment to alert subjects of my filming because I had previously made them aware of it. But, in the course of my yearlong project, I anticipated I might film strangers in public, a situation that might pit my right, or aim, to document my observations against someone else's right, or desire, to protect and control the use of their image and likeness. Choosing a noticeable camera, while initially useful, did not prove to be, by itself, a sufficient measure to help me navigate the intricate ethical issues concerning the filming of others in public. Such instances demanded I weigh and strike a balance between governing laws, social norms, and the aims and potential value of my project against the well-being of others. I share the thoughts and considerations that guided me in this process in the following paragraphs.

My choice of a sizeable camera aided me in avoiding potential conflicts when filming in public areas where I was permitted to do so by law without others' consent. Should a person who might categorically object to being recorded enter my vicinity, they would be more likely to spot me and avoid my camera if it was noticeable and in view.

Of course, the visibility of my camera did not guarantee that objectors would steer clear of my picture frame: someone could be lost in thought, distracted or simply not realize I was making a film as they passed before my camera. Could I reasonably expect such a person to be wholly responsible for avoiding being in my film? Or was the responsibility of involving them in something they may not want to be a part of entirely my own?

The laws that govern the photographing of others in public spaces can vary from country to country and from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The terms of these laws are often general and vague, making it difficult to ascertain whether one is legally permitted to film others in a given location under certain conditions. In the UK, for example, as Professor of Media Ann Macaskill from Sheffield Hallam University writes in her *Guidance on Ethical Issues in Visual Research (photographs, film and video)*, people are permitted to "take photographs or film individuals or places in the public domain," but "definitions of public domain can be difficult" and "[w]hether a hospital, shopping centre, concert hall, or lecture theatre is considered a public space is debatable."[15] In such instances, Macaskill recommends that the ethical thing to do is "to ask for permission from the owners of the space wherever possible and to advertise the presence of the [visual] researcher and obtain consent from participants if this is feasible."[16]

Nick Dunmur, Business and Legal Advisor for the Association of Photographers, "a UK based Membership Organisation that promotes, and protects the rights of photographers," [17] also asserts that one can legally photograph anything and anybody, including children, while in public[18] but, like Macaskill, he recognizes it is often unclear what constitutes a public space, which makes determining the legality of filming others in public difficult.[19] What one can legally do with the images one records of others in public, according to Dunmur, might depend on whether one intends to use them for "commercial use," although, as he recognizes, "commercial use" is another term that, like "public space," is also difficult to define.[20] In territories like the US, as Dunmur explains, individuals may have more freedom to film in public but are governed by local, state and federal laws that can vary widely, further complicating one's ability to determine what is legally permissible in given situations.[21] Like Macaskill, Dunmur prescribes an approach to navigating the ethical challenge of filming others that consists of remaining friendly, transparent and communicative with others.[22]

Most of the time, if possible, I would obtain the expressed consent of my subjects when filming in public or publicly accessible places. When walking through a park, for example, I spotted two young women practicing soccer moves. I approached them,

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[15] Ann Macaskill, *Guidance on Ethical Issues in Visual Research (photographs, film and video)*, December, 2018, https://www.shu.ac.uk/-/media/home/research/quality/guidance-on-ethical-issues-in-visual-research.pdf?sc_lang=en&hash=55A6768DA002C60D003AF60E3284D608.
[16] Ibid.
[17] https://www.the-aop.org/.
[18] Sean Tucker, "Law and Ethics in Street Photography," YouTube video, 23:15, October 13, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1vCiZUHKVc, 6:55.
[19] Ibid, 3:57.
[20] Ibid, 7:37.
[21] Ibid, 14:10.
[22] Ibid, 15:20.

camera and tripod in hand, and explained I was working on a project where I film something every day for one minute and, "Would you mind if I record just a minute of you kicking your ball around?" They were happy to oblige.[23] At another park, I spotted a man practicing his flute playing. I made eye contact with him and, without interrupting his playing, I gestured to my camera and, with signs and gestures, asked if it was okay for me to record him. He nodded his head while he played and I proceeded to film him. When he finished, we engaged in a conversation about my daily filmmaking project and his flute playing.[24] At times, when filming in public spaces, I occasionally framed city scenes that included buildings in which people, in their private spaces, might be within view.[25] In such instances, I always filmed from a distance that would render people unidentifiable so as to preserve their anonymity and respect their right to privacy.

Spaces open to the public but privately controlled—such as restaurants, cafés, supermarkets, museums, some parks—are generally governed by rules imposed at the discretion of property owners, so long as these do not violate basic human rights.[26] In the context of 2017, the proliferation of portable camera phones and the existence of social media networks have encouraged a growing social acceptance towards people's ability to film others without permission in such places that has, in turn, put pressure on owners to relax whatever filming rules or restrictions they may have sought to impose on people using their publicly accessible spaces. For these reasons, I felt justified in filming in publicly accessible places without the explicit consent of others so long as I did so in full view so as to give potential objectors a chance to challenge or prevent my actions. But, in fact, in making *Actualities* in private spaces open to the public without explicit consent, not a single person—neither property owner, nor visitor—ever objected or sought to restrict my filming.

Occasionally, when I sensed the presence of my camera and my filming might raise concerns within a privately governed, publicly accessible space, I would ask for permission to film in advance of my recording. For instance, in accompanying a friend to his local barbershop I asked the barber if it would be okay for me to film a minute's worth of him shaving my friend's head and the barber pleasantly agreed.[27] Another time, while lunching with friends at a kebab restaurant in Berlin, I asked the manager for permission to rest my camera on the counter in order to film the spinning meat cone behind it for one minute, and he acceded.[28]

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[23] See *Actuality #54: PRACTICE* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyudGhMfX-k.
[24] See *Actuality #56: FLUTE* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9kv8Jwzsok.
[25] See, for example, *Actuality #175: DWELLING* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-zTXfqr2a0.
[26] For example, a rule that punishes those who violate filming rules with violence or death might be considered unlawful.
[27] See *Actuality #5: SHAVE* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L29q1KKYlsQ.
[28] See *Actuality #209: ROTISSERIE* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdq1ZOrQyxs.

Figure 14. Using my sandbag to steady my camera on a restaurant counter.

Still, whether I felt legally, socially or morally justified in my filming activities, someone might claim to experience distress in being filmed against their will. During the whole year I made *Actualities*, occasionally, curious observers would approach me to enquire about my filming and engage me in a conversation about my project and filmmaking in general. But nobody ever approached me in distress to demand I cease filming them or that I erase what I might have recorded. Had such a situation taken place, I would have gladly accommodated such requests for the sake of the person's well-being as well as my own.

Another ethical consideration in my productions concerned representations of people in my films that some might read as harmful or insulting to the reputation of their human subjects. It is worth noting that the chosen form of my films limited my ability to distort or manipulate what I recorded because the angle of view could not be altered, nor could the film include other images or graphics that could change the original context of the footage. Nonetheless, even when I am legally filming in a public place, someone could object to being filmed if they are engaged in an act they consider disreputable to their image. In *Actuality #27: LEASH*,[29] for example, I filmed a man struggling to walk his dog through the snow. Watching friends viewing this film, I witnessed them flinch the moment the man appeared to jerk the leash, pulling his dog to his side across the snow.

[29] *Actuality #27: LEASH* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUtPMthylWM.

Was the man's gesture one of abuse or one of love and care towards his dog? If the man in question were to object to my recording of his actions in light of negative interpretations, how would I ethically defend the film against his objections? I would argue that my film, due to its aesthetic, does not impose one interpretation or judgment on the man's actions. Its frame may be said to direct the viewer's attention to the scene within it but, once established, the frame does not move in order to alter the viewer's feelings.

Similarly, daily films I recorded featuring people sleeping in public might be interpreted by some as conveying ridicule or as affording a lack of dignity towards human subjects, such as *Actuality #111: LEFTOVERS*.[30] Spectators who hold this view might be influenced by their understanding of film as a sensationalist form of entertainment and spectacle rather than one of documentation and study; or perhaps their interpretation might stem from their own inadequate feelings of embarrassment towards the idea of sleeping in public view of strangers; or perhaps they consider public sleeping as representing a low form of dignity unworthy of respect. I do not share such views. As a sensitive sleeper, I have been prompted to record such scenes out of a sense of awe and admiration for those with a capacity to succumb to slumber in places as noisy, and busily populated as the streets of my home city of New York. My films, by their framing, may direct the attention of the viewer to this phenomenon, but the restricted aesthetic of my films limits my ability to manifest how I feel or how I want others to feel towards what I have framed.

d) Where to Put the Camera and What to Film

Within the process of producing daily *Actualities*, I repeatedly asked myself: "Where do I put the camera?" The production of each and every daily film also required me to sort out, time and again, the question of what to film. With only a 24-hour period to make each film, deciding where to put the camera and what to film was not a problem I could devote extensive thought to or dwell on. The looming arrival of each day demanded I resolve this problem *today* and as quickly as possible because, soon, I would have to solve it anew for the following day's production.

Indulging my innate desire to deliberate on filmmaking decisions became prohibitive in light of my desire to meet the goal of making an *Actuality* a day. The 24-hour production limit also restricted my ability to dwell on a film once I had completed it: I practically had no time to celebrate its beauty, to indulge in a sense of pride about its making; and if, instead, it disappointed me, dwelling on the shortcomings of its production, to wallow in misery and let my failures get the best of me, also became too time consuming an endeavor. Soon, the arrival of a new day was upon me and I had to make a new *Actuality*, a process that forced me to shift my attention away from my feelings—positive or negative—about the previous day's production, and towards the impending challenge of creating a new film which, invariably, would bring me back to the same questions, again and again: "where do I put the camera?" and "what do I film?".

[30] *Actuality #111: LEFTOVERS* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGjpLplJ5W8.

As I look back on my choice of subject matter during my first *Actualities*, I recognize a desire, on my part, to film things I thought others might consider "compelling", "interesting," "beautiful" or "worth viewing." In the case of subjects I considered to be insufficiently awe-inspiring in-and-of themselves, I recognize my efforts to frame them in ways I thought might enhance the beauty or visual interest the resulting film might hold for its potential viewers. The impetus behind this filmmaking approach did not stem from my desire for an audiences' approval as much as it did from my own belief about what constituted the role of the filmmaker: for as long as I had been making films, I had never articulated—much less questioned or challenged—my own notion that a filmmaker's inherent duty largely consists of assessing the quality and worth of all the elements that add up to a film and, moreover, to do so on behalf of the film's future audience.

Is this subject I have chosen to film "good"? Have I framed it in the "best" way? What will the people who might see the resulting film think? I considered answering these questions to be an essential part of my process in determining where to put the camera and what to film. I labored to answer them through an internal dialogue with the beliefs that I, as filmmaker and film viewer, held about what makes a film "good." Early in my daily *Actuality* filmmaking process, this internal dialogue manifested itself in my tendency to want to film more takes and more subjects on a given day for fear the ones I had already filmed were of insufficient quality. Pursuing more takes and more subjects appealed to, and appeased, my sense of identity as a filmmaker. Moreover, it catered to my own sense of well-being within my filmmaking process: to be well as a filmmaker, for me, required me to make work that satisfied me, that I considered "good." While I did not have a concrete sense of what made a film "good," "better" or "more perfect," to disengage from pursuing improvement or perfection, I believed, equated to not doing my job and to abandoning my own well-being as a filmmaker.

In the process of making daily *Actualities*, however, filming multiple subjects and multiple takes on a given day became a luxury I could not afford: the day would soon end, forcing me to commit to a decision and let go of my insistence to carefully consider the merits of my unfolding work. My ingrained desire to fulfill what I believed to be my duty as a filmmaker drove me to not only shoot more but also to evaluate, reassess, judge, deliberate, hesitate, second-guess and doubt the quality of my choices of subject and camera position, a process that consumed too much of a day's time and too much of my energy. To meet the creative demands of daily *Actuality* production, then, led me to loosen my grip on my beliefs about my role as filmmaker and, consequently, to give up the importance I placed on judging the virtues of my choices. As I let go, a gradual paradigm shift in my views of filmmaking began to take hold.

I first recognized my faith in my assumed filmmaking duties dissipating shortly after I made *Actuality #29: WINTER*.[31] For this film I recorded a stark, leafless tree swaying in a light breeze against a backdrop of dense stormy clouds. For the duration of the *Actuality*, the tree lightly trembles and shakes in the wind, which cannot be heard due to my choice to remove the soundtrack. I made this film after I got home from work.

[31] *Actuality #29: WINTER* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vggskbYsUjY.

Tired and exhausted, I ventured out into the cold, snowy evening, camera and tripod in hand, searching the streets for a subject matter worthy of my next *Actuality*. Soon, the discomfort in my hands, face and feet due to freezing temperatures grew intolerable and I felt the need to cut my quest short with greater urgency than my inner filmmaker voice would have liked. Each passing minute further aggravated my annoyance at having to complete my daily filmmaking task. In protest of my own self-imposed obligation to make an "interesting" *Actuality*, I decided to film the most banal thing in sight. Without wasting another second, I picked the nearest tree, trained my camera on it, hit the record button and, after a minute, hurried back to the warm comfort of my apartment.

Shortly after, I shared the progress of my daily filmmaking project thus far with Annett, a friend of mine from Berlin. After watching all the *Actualities* I had made and posted on YouTube to date, she sent me a letter sharing her thoughts on my films. She wrote:

> It was very obvious to me with "WINTER" (29), my absolute favorite so far (though there are others I like for specific reasons). I watched it four times cause I was so struck by my perception changing from not seing [sic] the wind in the tree, then going back, focusing on it, then focussing [sic] just on the pattern of the branches, and then, watching it the forth [sic] time – seing [sic] something beyond this, which I would put to words like this:
>
> winter: moving fingers, just a little, as if beginning to wake up"[32]

How could it be that an *Actuality* I had created in haste, in a fit of annoyance and as an expression of contempt for my own filmmaking process, was Annett's "absolute favorite"? My investment of time and effort in shooting multiple takes in all previous 28 *Actualities*, in thinking through and evaluating various camera angles to film them, seemed now absurd: it did not produce, in Annett's view, *better* films. Had she known about the details of the film's making or experienced the conditions of its production, would Annett's enthusiasm for *Actuality #29* have been different?

In reading Annett's comments, I found myself agreeing with her assessment that this silent *Actuality* of a stark, trembling tree contained, in its details, a depth of beauty and mystery that had initially escaped my purview. Could it be that my own internal metric for assessing the quality of my own films was faulty or unreliable? Even in the editing stage I had failed to appreciate the qualities my friend had engaged with, focusing instead on removing the disruptive wind noise and quickly uploading and exporting the film to meet my daily goal. Not once during the process of its making did it occur to me that *Actuality #29* could be considered my most accomplished *Actuality* to date. In fact, I had thought quite the opposite: that its hasty and capricious production diminished its value in comparison to all other previous *Actualities*, making it my worst.

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[32] Annett Wienmeister, email message to author, February 1st, 2017. See Appendix F: Email Letter from Annett Wienmeister (February 1st, 2017).

Annett's words shook the trust I had in my own internal vetting process for deciding what to film and how to film it. They also made me question the value I placed on making "good" films in order for me to retain a sense of well-being in my work. Thinking myself to be an experienced filmmaker, a knowledgeable film teacher and a discerning film viewer, I had adopted a sense of confidence about my views of filmmaking that now, in light of my friend's viewpoint, rang hollow. Confronted with my friend Annett's comments, I realized that, somewhere along my career path, I had allowed myself to accept that making and viewing films in a professional capacity, as I had, validated the opinions, thoughts and beliefs that drove my filmmaking process. After all, people did pay me to share what I claimed to know about making films with students and, surely, this was an indication that I knew something they did not. In making my daily films, I had proceeded under the assumption that, thanks to my filmmaking background, I had somehow earned or acquired the capacity to distinguish a "good" *Actuality* from a "bad" one. But now Annett's letter caused me to consider that this notion was a form of delusion.

I had heretofore operated from an unspoken belief that the greater the internal struggle I suffered in making decisions during the making of an *Actuality*, the greater the quality of the resulting film. Annett's experience of my *Actualities* suggested otherwise and exposed the absurdity of my criteria. A subsequent introspective search produced no better rationale I could think of for gauging the quality of an *Actuality*, its subject and/or its form, and I concluded that my judgments in this regard were, despite my filmmaking experience, as arbitrary and subjective as anyone else's. How could I have fooled myself into believing otherwise? I stood in awe of my blind irrationality. How could it have taken me this long to recognize it?

That some films are better than others; that I, through my expertise, have the ability to spot them; that to make good films requires struggle—these delusions, I determined, served to feed my sense of security about my status as a filmmaker. I bought into them without question because, in order to preserve my sense of worth, I needed to believe that there was more to being a filmmaker than simply recording or arranging a sequence of images. The thought that my craft could be reduced to such terms seemed unbearable: it threatened to render a large part of my creative life—spent devoting time and effort to assessing and making filmmaking decisions—into meaningless insignificance. Unwilling to accept such a conclusion, I had unconsciously adopted the above series of beliefs that helped blind me to the truth that my friend's words had now made inescapably clear: the process of making films requires nothing more than the recording of sequential images. Other related procedural actions and considerations—choosing the subject matter, the placement of the camera, composition and moment of filming— may result from my ability to make aesthetic choices in the moment but these, whatever their nature, can never disqualify the recording I make from being a film. Whether I devote thought, effort, struggle to a given production does not make it less or more of a film. It seemed obvious *now*, but up until this point I had operated as if the opposite was true.

In sharing her thoughts with me, my friend Annett inadvertently gave me permission to pursue subjects and shots for my films without the need for justification. My impatience and lack of commitment to some sense of perfection in the making of

Actuality #29 bore no direct influence in the value she attributed to the film. Now, when making daily films, it seemed silly and a waste of time to further entertain my inclination to ruminate on my choice of subject and to film multiple takes. Knowing that shooting a subject on a whim could potentially produce a film that a viewer could love so much as to watch it four times freed me from my need to find reasons for choosing one subject or camera angle over another. I now felt emboldened to make films of things on a moment's impulse simply because I chose to and to do so in any way I pleased without a forethought. Moreover, any inkling that a subject was too ordinary or banal now sparked my motivation to make a film about it in order to remind myself of what Annett had taught me: that the fascination a viewer experiences towards a film is not a quality contained within its contents but is, instead an attitude the film viewer adopts. I had dismissed my own film of a stark tree as banal, boring, not worthy of repeated viewings, but Annett had inadvertently demonstrated to me that my appreciation for the film could shift if I paid close enough attention, if I really looked, if I, in other words, allowed myself to become fascinated by it the way she had been. Could it be that there were no boring films, only viewers whose prejudices thwart their ability to fully appreciate them? Annett helped me open up to the possibility this was so, leading me to transcend my views and to find value in a film I had all but disowned. Could my initial dismissive attitude towards a subject be reversed if I made a film about it and watched it with the level of scrutiny and awareness Annett had dedicated to *Actuality #29*? Indeed, I always found this to be the case whenever I challenged myself to do so in the making of subsequent films.

The subjects of my 2017 daily *Actualities* mostly consist of things I filmed for no other reason than they caught my attention, fascinated me or stimulated my curiosity as I went about my life. Yet others resulted from things I encountered within my view, some of which I may have originally dismissed as unworthy of my attention but became absorbed by and interested in as I began to make a film about them. A few were themselves inspired by the Lumière and Edison/Dickson *Actualities*.

e) Thematic Influences

I embarked on my yearlong project with only a passing familiarity with the most famous Lumière and Edison/Dickson films, but the more I developed my own catalogue of *Actualities*, the more I wanted to know about the other subjects these early pioneers of film had tackled in their oeuvre. The films in the Lumière and Edison company catalogues showcased a diverse range of scenic landscapes and urban scenes; they featured views of sports, physical and work related activities; and depicted ordinary scenes of quotidian life. In watching them, I recognized themes present in my own *Actualities*.

The Lumière *Actualities* showed people boarding and disembarking from trains and boats, coming and going in the hustle and bustle of cities; my films showed people in planes, in airports, in trains, disembarking from a ferry boat, driving a car, waiting for a bus, walking the streets. Edison and Dickson had produced films documenting boxing, performers enacting dances for the camera; my films showed people playing tennis, soccer, volleyball, swimming, performing dances and playing instruments. Both the Lumière and Edison/Dickson films showed people at work, such as blacksmiths and construction workers; my own films contained scenes depicting mechanics, restaurant

workers, teachers, office workers. During their public December 1895 screening event, the Lumières had screened an *Actuality* of the sea and, inadvertently, among my early *Actualities* there is a film focused on sea waves splashing over beach rocks, while yet another depicts a frame halved by the line where the ocean meets the sky.

Noting these thematic parallels, I entertained the idea of filming other subjects that had previously been documented in early *Actualities* if only for my own amusement. Walking through a local park one day I spotted a group of men engaged in a game of pètanque (or bocce) and, recalling a Lumière *Actuality* documenting a similar scene, I decided to film it. While working as a videographer at a local theater, I heard a speeding train loudly go by in the vicinity and, later that night, I decided to walk to the edge of tracks to attempt filming an *Actuality* of a moving train that echoes the Lumières' most well-known film. While visiting relatives in Cuba, I recalled the Edison-produced *Actuality The Kiss* (1896), often credited as the first film recording of a kiss, and I ask my second-cousin Adolfo and his life partner Vivian to sit before my camera so I may document them kissing for a whole minute.

Despite thematic similarities, my choices of shot at times differed wildly from those employed in the Lumière and Edison/Dickson *Actualities*. A number of my films, for example, consist of close-up and extreme close-up views that exhibit a shallow depth of field. Lumière *Actualities* almost always framed their subject from a wide frontal view with a deep focal length and Edison-produced films followed suit, even if early ones shot in the Black Maria studio featured close-up views against a black backdrop. My films at times adopted the wide, frontal view with deep focus so prevalent in early cinema, but I also tended to angle my camera, often shooting objects from above, below or from canted angles. Some times my decision to do so was largely influenced by the shooting conditions: if I was without a tripod and the floor was the only surface where I could rest my camera, for example, the resulting film would be shot from a low-camera angle. Other times I might choose to diverge from a wide, frontal view with deep focus for no other reason than to satisfy my own cinematic taste or simply because my equipment made it possible to do so. My numerous variations of frame composition and depth of field, in contrast with the Lumière and Edison/Dickson films, give my *Actualities* a richer sense of aesthetic variety.

Contemplating similarities of subjects found in my films and those of the Lumière and Edison/Dickson teams suggested to me that the experiences occupying human lives in my time consisted, to a large degree, of those documented in the late 1890s and early 1900s. The world appeared more technologically advanced in my films and people dressed differently more than a century after the 1890s, but they appeared engaged in the same general type of activities their forebears had participated in. My subject matter choices, mirrored in the early *Actualities*, even suggest that I myself, as an *Actuality* filmmaker, am not that different in my interests from the filmmakers who produced *Actualities* in cinema's early dawn.

While some of my choices of subject were directly inspired by the Lumière and Edison/Dickson films, a few were inspired by the films of American artist Andy Warhol that embody some of the qualities of *Actualities*. Largely recognized for the silkscreen

paintings he produced in the mid to late 20th century, Warhol made a series of films that, while not strictly *Actualities*, adopted their stationary, uninterrupted shot aesthetic, were shot in black and white and with no sound. Passing by the Empire State building in Manhattan one day, I recall Warhol's *Empire* (1964), an 8-hour film (shot for 6-hours but slowed down during projection[33]) consisting of a single, static view of the iconic New York landmark during the course of a summer night in late July. Warhol had "arranged access to an office on the 41st floor of the Time & Life Building"[34] to photograph his film. I had no such access and, inspired by my memory of the film, and in answer to it, I decided to make an *Actuality* of the iconic building from my point of view as a pedestrian standing at its base and looking up: *Actuality #100: EMPIRE*.[35]

[33] Callie Angell, *The Films of Andy Warhol Part II* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994), 18.
[34] Blake Gopnik, "Monumental Cast, But Not Much Plot," *The New York Times*, January 16, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/17/arts/design/andy-warhols-empire-shown-in-its-entirety.html.
[35] *Actuality #100: EMPIRE* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=An-d4q-6ZkQ.

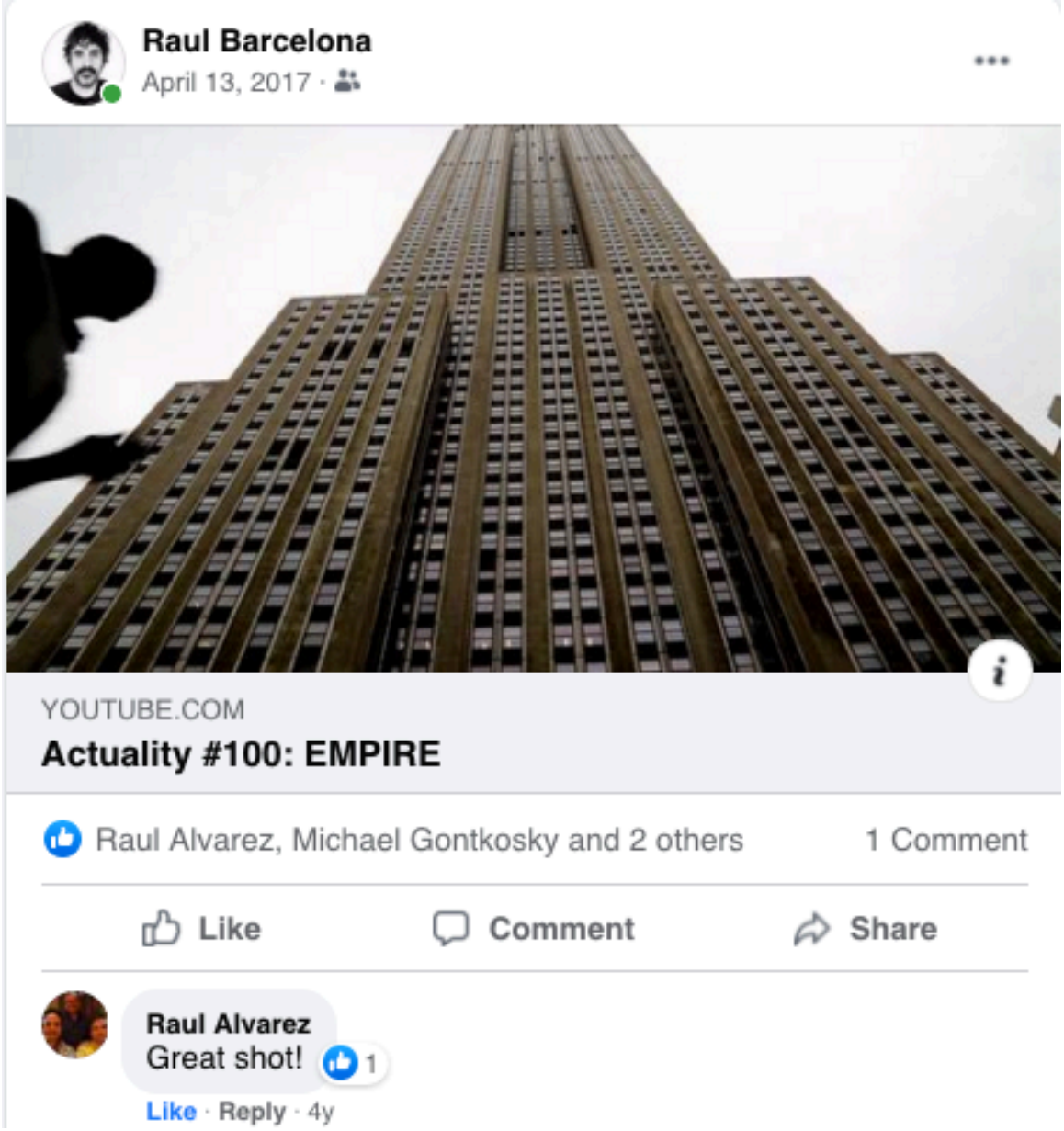

Figure 15. Screenshot of comments for *Actuality #100: EMPIRE*.

Later in my daily filmmaking project, realizing that people were the things I spent the most time interacting with and looking at in my daily life, I thought of Warhol's screen test films. Made between 1963 and 1966, these black and white, silent, static single-shot films recorded images of a person sitting before the camera for 3 minutes.[36] Encouraged by this precedent, I began to make *Actualities* wherein I would ask someone to sit for a minute before my camera without further instructions, resulting in a series of film portraits reminiscent of Warhol's tests.[37]

[36] "Lesson: Screen Tests," The Andy Warhol Museum, accessed August 14, 2021, https://www.warhol.org/lessons/screen-tests/.
[37] See, for example, *Actuality* #'s 233, 236, 254, 256, 270, 283, 286, 290, 292, 295, 296, 302, 304, 308, 310, 312, 314, 317, 319, 321, 323, 324, 325, 338, 345, 355.

Partly a nod to his static film work, these *Actualities*, however, diverge from Warhol's in their method of production and contrast with his larger artistic aims. In the making of *Empire*, Warhol worked with a crew consisting of John Palmer and Jonas Mekas, who took turns loading and threading the reels every 35 minutes.[38] The film's shot was framed by Mekas himself and approved by Warhol,[39] who, during the 6-hour shoot, seemed more interested in engaging his crew and guests with banter about the phallic nature of the film than in the kind of attentive, prolonged act of observation his film conveyed.[40] Warhol appeared similarly disengaged from the process of film shooting during the making of his *Screen Tests* when, after setting up the camera and commencing recording, he would often walk away to work on other projects, "a kind of desertion that could be very unnerving" to his film subjects.[41] During these productions, Warhol also variously counted on the help of others who would load and position the camera, set up the chair and lights.[42] Whereas I shot my *Actuality* portrait subjects in the locations I encountered them and with available light, Warhol shot his often famous subjects in his studio against a flat, plain backdrop under bright lights and asked them to "hold as still as possible, refrain from talking or smiling, and try not to blink," directions that amounted to "a set of diabolically challenging performance instructions for sitters" who "struggled to hold a pose while their brief moment of exposure was prolonged into a nearly unendurable three minutes."[43] In contrast with *Actuality* portraits, Warhol's later *Screen Tests* from 1966 "often demonstrate a surprising amount of camera movement—jiggles, swerves, sudden in-and-out zooms, as well as in-camera edits, extreme close-ups and rapid changes in camera aperture settings."[44]

Rather than serving as conduits to restore cinema to the careful observation of reality, the productions of *Empire* and his *Screen Tests* appealed to Warhol as a portrait artist interested in the iconography of the famous, or "stars" (he referred to the Empire State Building as a "star").[45] Moreover, these films further facilitated Warhol's exploration of the plasticity of the film medium. Both the 8-hour film of the iconic New York building and his film portraits became part of Warhol's extravagant, multimedia immersive live "expanded cinema" event known as the Exploding Plastic Inevitable, or EPI,[46] a "collaboratively orchestrated" spectacle that from 1966 to 1967 combined the simultaneous projection of films with movable slide projectors, strobe and pistol lights, colored gels, mirror balls, loudspeakers playing various records at once, and live music

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[38] J. J. Murphy, *The Black Hole of The Camera: The Films of Andy Warhol* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 31.
[39] HENI Talks, "Jonas Mekas: The Making of Andy Warhol's 'Empire' | HENI Talks," YouTube video, 9:06, April 24, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnN1NqXr1Qs.
[40] Jonas Mekas, *Movie Journal: The Rise of the New American Cinema*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016), 157.
[41] Callie Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné Volume 1* (New York, NY: Abrams, 2006), 15.
[42] Ibid, 17.
[43] Ibid, 14.
[44] Ibid, 19.
[45] Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 158.
[46] Murphy, *The Black of the Camera*, 81.

and dance performances.[47] As Branden Joseph suggests, "far from redeeming earlier cinematic models, the Exploding Plastic Inevitable […] employed Warhol's films as components of an intermedia space with all the impure promiscuity that [art critic Rosalind Krauss] ascribes to television" and its chaotic discourse and incoherence.[48]

Warhol's interest in the malleability of film and its conventions may have been obscured in the *Actuality*-like traces of *Empire* and his *Screen Tests*, but is more overtly pronounced within the singular, fixed and prolonged shot aesthetic of his loosely scripted *Kitchen* (1965). Co-directed with Ronald Tavel,[49] the film presents a domestic scenario of marital tensions culminating in murder,[50] a narrative that, across its 66 minutes, becomes continually subverted as the actors pose for a photographer taking production stills and forget their lines which are whispered to them off-camera.[51] Once the production ends, the camera continues to record the actors and crew as they mingle and break the set down. Like a restaurant kitchen where dishes are prepared, "Warhol's *Kitchen* consistently reveals the preparatory and occluded stages of filmmaking."[52]

Considered within the larger context of Warhol's film ouvre, then, *Empire* and the *Screen Tests* reveal methods and intentionality that depart from the ones informing my project. Although I was initially drawn to the static and durational quality of Warhol's films, their influence on my daily *Actualities* remained limited to inspiring my choices in subject matter.

f) Film Here Now and the Practice of Presence

Thanks to the revelation sparked by my friend Annett, I had proceeded to make daily films with a more lighthearted, freewheeling approach that helped open my mind to subjects and frame compositions I may have disregarded because of my previous inhibitions. Letting go of my preoccupations regarding reasons and justifications for my filmmaking choices, I could now devote more of my mental capacity to scanning, with greater scrutiny and sensitivity, my moment-to-moment field of view in order to mine from it more subjects for my *Actualities*.

The anticipation of the continual demand to produce a daily film instilled in me a hyperawareness of everything happening all around me. Anything I saw could be the subject of an *Actuality*, so I began to walk about the world as if on a reconnaissance mission. Paying attention to things I might have otherwise been oblivious to or dismissive of, in turn, made me aware of the vast expanse of subject matter available to me in my immediate surroundings at any given moment. There was always something happening,

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[47] Branden W. Joseph, ""My Mind Split Open": Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable," *Grey Room* 08 (Summer 2002): 81.
[48] Ibid, 95.
[49] Patrick S. Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Research Press, 1986), 502.
[50] Homay King, "Girl Interrupted: The Queer Time of Warhol's Cinema," *Discourse* 28.1 (Winter 2006): 108.
[51] Murphy, *The Black Hole of the Camera*, 3.
[52] King, "Girl Interrupted," 111.

something to be filmed, something I had not yet documented with my camera. The more I looked about and the more attention I paid, the more I saw and discovered in my day-to-day life.

As my newfound appreciation for the richness of the world before me grew with each new *Actuality*, I could not help but think about how much of my waking experience I had been blind to throughout my life up to this point. How could I have missed out on so much that was so readily in front of me at all times? How could I have been so oblivious to so many things that had previously been within my field of view?

I recognized that, prior to my daily filmmaking challenge, I might spend idle moments preoccupied with things other than the physical reality in front of me. While on a walk, I might have been immersed in thinking about events that had happened; thinking about things I had to do; thinking about feelings I harbored for people in my professional or personal life; thinking about regrets, sorrows and joys. While riding a bus or a train, I might be engaged with the contents of a book, a text or phone conversation, a piece of music or a podcast. In such instances, even if I did see the world passing by before me, I usually did not take note or stock of its details, quickly forgetting them as if I had never even seen them. But, now, the process of meeting my daily filmmaking challenge would, in such moments, cause me to break out of the spell of my thoughts, however briefly, in order to *really* look, observe and consider what might be happening out in the world before me because sooner, rather than later, I would have to make a film of some part of it. In challenging myself to make a film per day, being vigilant in the present moment initially developed as a nervous tick of sorts that would disrupt my proclivity for self-absorption, a nervous tick that the repetitive nature of making daily *Actualities* for a year shaped into a habitual practice.

In an effort to get ahead of the daily challenge, especially when expecting busy days ahead, I would complement my more attentive study of what I saw with mental notes of specific locations, objects and events I could film in the future. Driving home from work late one evening, for example, I spotted bright stadium lights at a nearby park and noticed multiple teams engaged in simultaneous soccer games. As I passed by, I decided that the following day, when repeating the commute, I would stop by and film a few minutes of play for my daily *Actuality*.[53] Another time, on a walk to visit a neighbor who lived around the block from my apartment, I spotted a big melting icicle in a snow-covered alleyway, saw a tied up red balloon outside of a local business, and noticed a construction site with busy workers. I vowed to document these subjects in the coming days.[54] Engaging in this mental game in which I kept track of my observations during my toings and froings expanded my field of awareness, as well as my ability to pay closer attention to my surroundings even in the absence of my camera.

When I did not think ahead of time about what to film, I knew, as my friend Annett's comments had taught me, that I need not worry because I could always, in the here and now, point my camera to any part of my surroundings and, thus, produce a

[53] See *Actuality #84: GOAL* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_LsIctQkYk.
[54] See *Actuality* #'s 77, 109, and 115.

worthy *Actuality*. The moment of filming, whether I had previously planned it or not, invariably focused my attention back to the present moment, forcing me to consider what was in front of me as I readied to press the record button. Even subjects I had thought of ahead of time—like the soccer game, the icicle, the balloon or the construction site—still required me to spend time with them at the time of filming, in the present moment. Once filming commenced, there was little more for me to do beyond supervising my camera while it proceeded in its recording of images and sounds. I could not pan, tilt, zoom or cut until at least a minute had passed. In that time, as I waited, I often became absorbed in watching the images my camera was recording and observing their details.

Making daily *Actualities* trained me to be ever more present with my surroundings during my waking hours. Whether I was in the process of shooting a film or thinking about making one in the near future, and regardless of what was happening in my day-to-day life, the process continually compelled me to contemplate and pay attention to the present moment. The practice of making a daily *Actuality*, then, doubled as a practice of presence in which I continually exercised my ability to become consciously aware of the present moment before me.

g) Editing, Memory and the Practice of Acceptance

The process of editing *Actualities* always began with a review of all the footage I had filmed for a particular scene. Prior to the present doctoral project, when working on different types of films, I had approached the editing stage of filmmaking with a particular set of intentions. Normally, in making documentaries, short films and commercials, I would cut a particular shot for the purposes of clarity, brevity, continuity, or to maintain or establish a particular visual rhythm. Often, what motivated a cut was a desire on my part to shift the viewer's attention to another shot. For example, in editing an establishing shot of a building at the beginning of a scene, I might consider that this view had, in the span of a few seconds, sufficiently communicated the location of the unfolding scene and, therefore, there was no need to retain any more footage of it, leading me to make a cut that would perhaps transition to an interior shot.

In editing *Actualities*, such considerations and decisions could not be applied within the restrictive 1-minute, single shot form I abided by. My editing job in this process was reduced to simply choosing the beginning and end point of a shot. Once I chose these boundaries, the need to preserve the integrity of the shot's duration to meet my goal prohibited me from interfering with the film any further: I could not cut it in the interest of furthering the plot or to clarify a point; nor because I thought it was boring; nor because I wanted to alter or speed up the action; nor because I wanted to control or direct the viewer's attention; nor because I wanted to cut to *another* shot for, in fact, there was never another shot to consider cutting to within my chosen form.

When deciding where to begin or end an *Actuality*, I was often driven in most of my early films by a desire to highlight some sort of story arc or narrative structure within the films, however subtle or thin it might be. Specifically, as I reviewed the footage, I would look for a moment that marked a change. Once identified, I would then seek to arrange my cuts so as to make that change mark a beginning, ending or climactic middle

point. For example, in editing the footage of a soccer game I had captured on my way home from work,[55] I marked the scoring of a goal as my ending and let the preceding seconds form the actions that would lead up to this resolution, giving the film a dramatic story arc. Similarly, in reviewing footage I captured while on a hike through snowy woods,[56] I identified a moment in which a chunk of snow suddenly drops from a tree. I marked this event as my ending and, later, when I shared the resulting film on Facebook, my friend Ben would comment, perhaps with some humorous intent, that "the surprise ending got me" (see Figure 18). In editing another *Actuality* of a dirt road in the countryside featuring two women approaching me in the distance,[57] I chose the moment they turned around and walked back as the middle point in my edit. The structure of the resulting film, then, moves through three distinct events consisting of a beginning, middle, and end: the women approach the camera, then turn around and, finally, walk back.

[55] See *Actuality #84: GOAL* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_LsIctQkYk.
[56] See *Actuality #81: WOODS* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeAHWxJHY7o.
[57] See *Actuality #39: TURNABOUT* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1-gZnc_gEk.

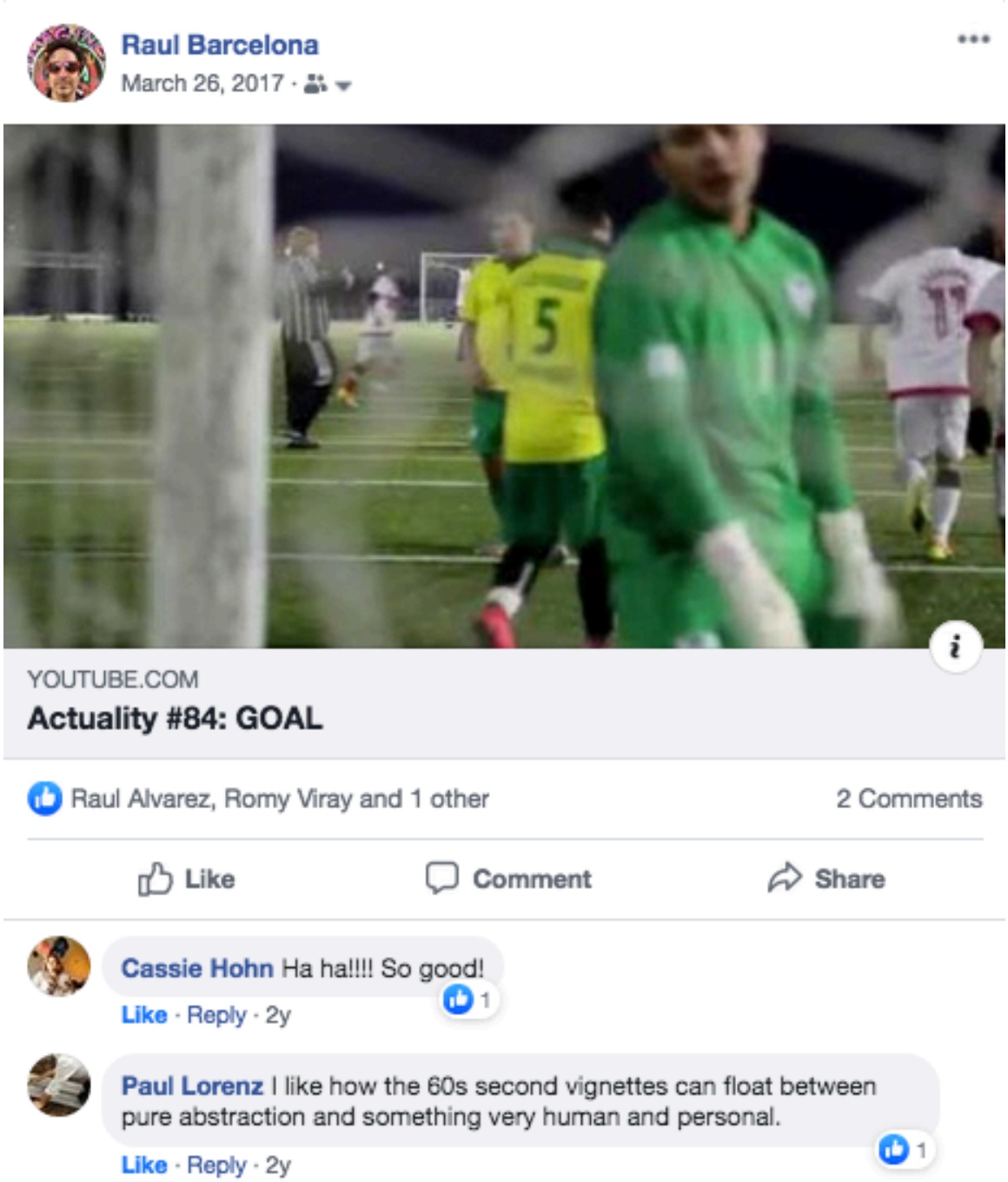

Figure 16. Screenshot of comments for *Actuality #84: GOAL*.

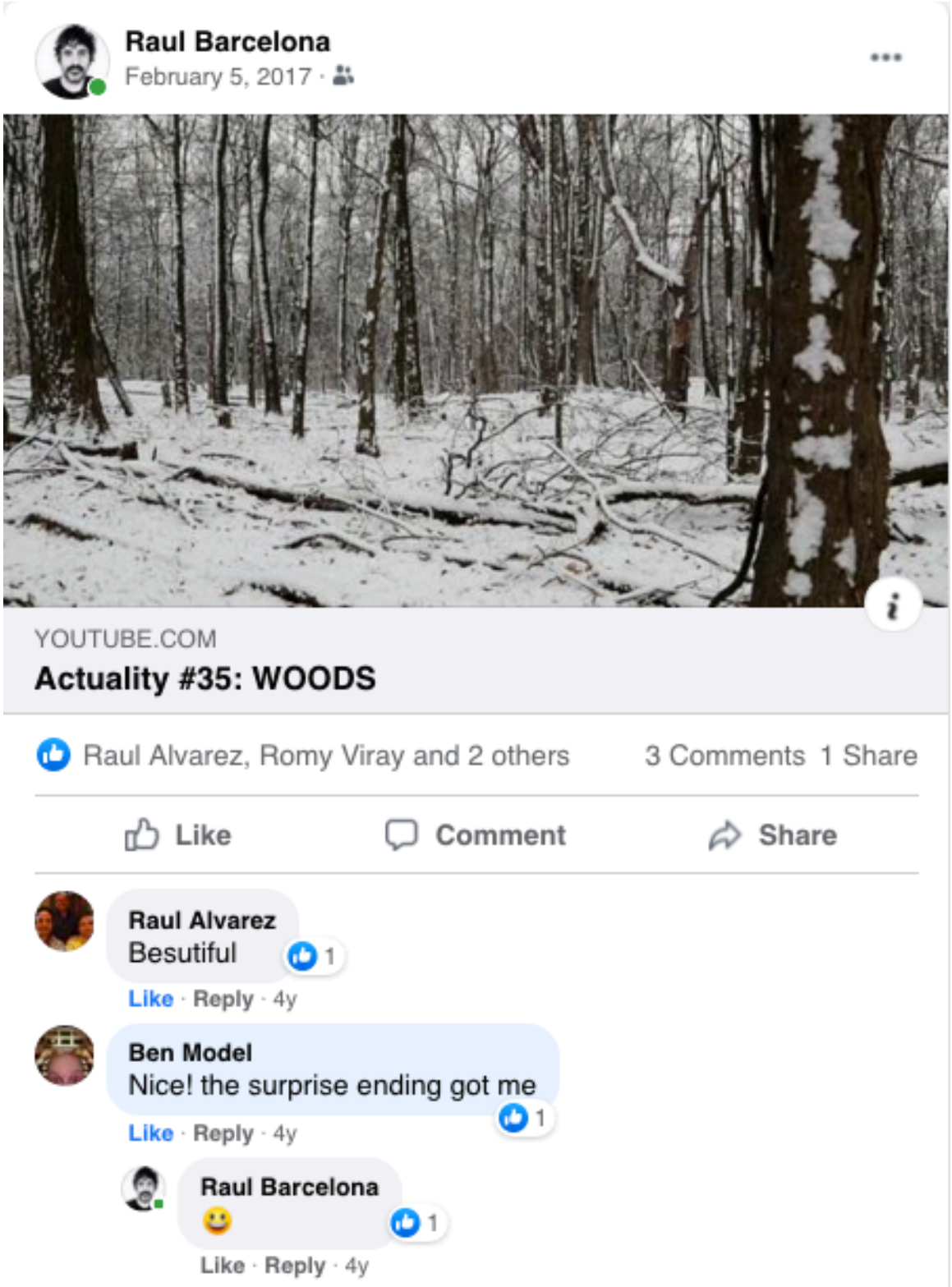

Figure 17. Screenshot of comments for *Actuality #35: WOODS*.

I have previously described how my friend Annett's comments of *Actuality #29* emboldened me to begin letting go of my attitude regarding *Actualities* where not much seemed to happen. The more present I became to this way of thinking as my project evolved, the less I pursued my editing strategy of identifying a change in action and building the film around it. The more films I made where no salient events stood out, the less important organizing the footage through a story arc seemed to be. Just as I grew disinterested in the idea of recording subjects potential viewers might consider worthy, my inclination to frame sequences with some type of dramatic arc from which others could extract meaning or entertainment from waned over time. I decided it was not my duty, during editing, to make my films interesting for the viewer, just as it was not my duty to make them so during filming.

In reviewing footage for the purposes of editing, I observed that I would often record footage that would exceed the 1-minute mark by more than a few seconds, some times even lasting a few minutes. Other times I shot alternative takes. Because the editing process compelled me to choose 56 seconds to keep, allowing room for a 4-second title in the final film, more footage to review resulted in more time spent making editing decisions. As with my experience with choosing what to film and where to put my camera, over time I came to view such deliberations as a luxury I could not indulge in given the time constraints imposed by my daily filmmaking challenge.

Watching my raw footage, I recognized my compulsion to shoot more than I needed as a habit that years of making films and videos had ingrained in me. In productions of all sorts, I had often heard the phrase "for safety," as in: "let's do another take, for safety;" "let's get shots of all the objects in the room, for safety;" "let's get the reverse angle, for safety." Such utterances revealed an approach to filmmaking that, out of fear of discovering problems during post-production, erred on the side of recording more than was needed. I myself had repeated the phrase "for safety" many times and now, in working alone to produce my *Actualities*, it reverberated automatically in my head whenever I was engaged in film recording, driving my behavior to collect more than the 1-minute's worth of images I needed.

The more I watched extra takes and extra minutes of my daily films, the more compulsive and obsessive my behavior appeared to me, as if driven by a desire to quench a nagging fear and anxiety that what I had heretofore recorded might be insufficient or unsatisfactory. Away from the field and in front of my computer, the extra time and effort spent shooting, and now reviewing, seemed unnecessary and a waste as the minutes and hours of a given day ticked away and a new *Actuality* soon needed to be made. I realized that more time spent shooting and reviewing footage had little impact on the resulting *Actuality*. Just as I could point my camera anywhere in my surroundings to pick a subject without justification, I realized I could pick any edit point in a given sequence and, if there were 56 seconds of footage before or after that point, I would end up with a film that would naturally have a beginning, middle and end, whether these were marked by some change of action or not. With the filming and editing of each *Actuality*, this realization took root with increasing strength in my filmmaking approach and, over time, I got into the habit of filming footage closer and closer to the 1-minute mark, without the

excess of additional recording time or multiple takes, thus limiting my editing options as well as my overall production time.

As mentioned, repeating the challenge of making a film a day caused my ability to pay attention to the world to gain greater intensity, scrutiny and sensitivity. But even as my awareness expanded, during the editing process I always, without fail, discovered things I had missed at the time of filming. The more I reviewed the footage I had shot for a given *Actuality*, the more things I would discover that I had entirely missed during recording. If I had filmed a scene with a figure in the foreground, I may have not noticed what was happening in the distance at the time of filming. But in editing, with each viewing, I was able to detect and absorb a vast quantity of details that had escaped me during filming. In all of my *Actualities*, whether they consisted of close-ups or wide shots, there was always far more to see than I could pay attention to in the span of a minute. During the filming of a scenic view of the Mediterranean sea,[58] I could not appreciate in full all the tiny, individual rippling movements on the water's surface. While filming a frying egg,[59] I could hardly keep track of all the pops and trembling movements erupting from the pan as it gradually cooked and its translucency gave way to an opaque whiteness. No matter how attentive and aware I was during these moments of filming, I seemed incapable of absorbing the multitude of things happening before me. Only during the editing phase, and thanks to repeated viewings, could I gain a better appreciation for all the nuances of the events I had witnessed through my camera's lens.

The editing process, then, highlighted for me the limitations of my powers of attention, especially in comparison to my camera. My camera could register all changes of light in its field of view, and whereas my viewpoint was often very similar to that of my camera as I stood near it, I seemed unable to register in my own memory more than just a fraction of what I was seeing. Even when I did manage to retain in my memory a great number of details, I could not do so with the kind of permanence afforded to the images my camera stored in its memory card. If the process of shooting daily films instilled in me a greater sense of awareness as I went about my life, the process of editing humbled me over and over, showing me that my capacity to pay attention, though it had expanded as a result of daily filmmaking, was still incredibly limited.

While my attention and memory appeared to me to be severely limited in the process of editing, I also discovered I tended to experience my films through my recollection or memory of what I lived through during their making. If I initially failed to appreciate *Actuality #29: WINTER* as deeply as my friend Annett did, it was because what I saw in that film was the misery and annoyance I felt as I walked about in the cold, grey winter looking for something to film, not the look of the tree and its naked branches. Annett was not privy to my experience or memory as she watched: all she had was the image of the tree against the stark gray background, slightly swaying in the wind. I experienced my film through its past, through my memories, rather than watching it solely as it presently existed.

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[58] See *Actuality #20: SEA* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5TBj2QIvAI.
[59] See *Actuality #47: EGG* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mpxH3FSIfE.

The editing process did expand, for me, the ability to let go of my recollections, to appreciate the images of my films as they presently existed. Within the time constraints of daily production, dwelling on any discontent I may have suffered in the making of a film while I reviewed its footage became counterproductive. Time and again, I had to reach a moment in my editing decisions in which I accepted the images I had recorded for what they were. Letting go of my memories, or reducing the value I attached to them, eased this decision making process, but, sometimes, it was easier said than done.

As I began to make daily *Actualities*, I would often get rather upset when, for example, an unexpected pedestrian walked into my frame and blocked my shot. "My film is ruined!" my inner film director voice would cry out. My attitude towards situations when the action I was filming did not unfold as I wished began to change during the making of *Actuality #26: OPENING*.[60] I was attending an art gallery opening in New York and I positioned myself in the back of the room where I could get a wide shot of the crowd mingling in front of the paintings on the wall. One of the attendees spotted me splayed on the floor looking through my camera and she felt compelled to walk all the way from the other side of the gallery to the front of my camera, where she planted her shoes and blocked my lens. She did not speak to me once I stopped recording and got up from the ground and I never learned what compelled this woman to perform this action. Perhaps she wanted to playfully show off her shoes to my camera. Perhaps she wanted to bask in the attention my camera and I were giving the scene. Maybe she just wanted to block my shot to antagonize me. I myself did not, in that moment, have the motivation to find out: I was too caught up in my anger and frustration now that she had, in my view, "ruined" my film, and I walked away. Later, during the editing, I relived my strong negative emotions as I watched her inexplicably walk towards the lens, her shoes growing bigger in the frame. In trying to decide a beginning and ending point for this *Actuality*, I reviewed multiple takes of the scene at the gallery. As I did so, I recognized that the woman's movement towards the lens and her eventual blocking of my shot were the events I reacted most strongly to. Nothing else in the footage of gallery attendees stirred, moved me or seized my attention as much as the woman's actions. As a result, I decided to make the moment that had angered and frustrated me the focus of the film. A film "ruined" had, then, now become a film completed and, in the process, I managed to turn my feelings of frustration and anger into a positive celebration of serendipity.

Suddenly, editing became a way to short-circuit any negative feelings I may have harbored or endured during filming. Rather than discarding what I considered to be mistakes, mishaps or accidents, I began to celebrate these, giving them center stage when cutting my footage. In so doing, I managed to void whatever power they may previously have had over my emotions, strengthening, in turn, my ability to let go of my expectations and to accept any turn of events. Coupled with my diminishing reliability on extra footage beyond the 1-minute mark, this newfound use of editing to turn perceived mistakes, accidents or mishaps into main attractions of my films accelerated the expansion of my capacity to accept whatever footage my camera recorded. In light of this discovery, shooting "for safety" now felt like an act of cowardice. I laughed in the face of the idea that anything could ever go wrong during filming because, as I had just

[60] *Actuality #26: OPENING* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwV5Ygp96fU.

learned, any perceived wrong could be made right by virtue of my editing choices. From here on I took on the challenge of making subsequent daily films fearlessly and with a greater sense of confidence.

Watching the final cuts of my films, I noticed that the 1-minute non-moving shot form of my *Actualities* equalized all subjects. Each uninterrupted 56-second view compelled me, as viewer, to give the same amount of consideration and attention to each and every one of them. A water drain, a frying egg, trees, a boat on a river, a squirrel, crawling insects, toll booths, people dining, walking, dancing, working—all of these were given equal screen time in my *Actualities* and, in that span, the camera's view of them never changed nor was it ever interrupted. As a viewer, I was then compelled to watch all the things depicted in my films in equal measure, a process that inspired in me a sense that everything was worthy of fascination and that everything was part of the whole of my total field of experience. To watch these films was akin to being confronted to accept whatever they had to show me because the camera would never pan, tilt, zoom or cut away to show me anything else for as long as they lasted. In this way, the final stage of editing—watching and declaring a cut final—further expanded my capacity for acceptance.[61]

h) Sharing and Connection

In recruiting strangers and acquaintances alike for my films, whether filming in public or in private, I discovered people were often more than willing to participate in my project and help me in my quest. As a result, I felt supported and cared for and, moreover, I experienced a greater sense of closeness and connection with others. In sharing my films, I similarly felt more connected with those around me as they generously gave their time to view my films and to express their thoughts and feelings about them.

The process of sharing my films on a daily basis, at least until I stopped doing so for the reasons I have explained above, was an important one: other people's feedback encouraged me to let go of my thoughts and beliefs regarding my own films and the values I may have attached to them. The comments that friends, relatives and acquaintances shared in response to my films on Facebook enabled me to see, interpret and understand my films through the eyes of others. The comments reduced the importance and relevance of my opinions, my justifications and thought process in making the films themselves and, as a result, I became less attached to my prejudices as the maker of my own films with every daily production.

Though by no means extensive, the comments I received on the *Actualities* I shared with others highlighted, time and again, the subjective perspective of those who watched my films. In reading or hearing these comments and reactions, I learned more about these than about the subject or the films themselves. Even when brief, I discovered biases, beliefs, interpretations I had not injected into the films or made explicitly clear. Moreover, I shared the films without any explanation as to the film's content, so others' reactions were elicited solely by the images contained within the *Actualities* they were

[61] I further discuss my growing sense of acceptance as a result of my daily filmmaking in Ch. 4.

viewing. The interpretations viewers shared through their comments revealed that they were seeing things I had not seen in the films or thought about. Often, they pointed to a particular meaning, such as Rochele's comment on the *Actuality #20: SEA*[62] (see Figure 19). In her comment she claims this is a very appropriate film given current events: "the calm before the storm," she wrote. But there was no oncoming storm related to my film nor was my film related in any way to any disturbing current events she might have been thinking about at the time. I simply captured a 1-minute film of the sea because it looked beautiful.

[62] *Actuality #20: SEA* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5TBj2QIvAI.

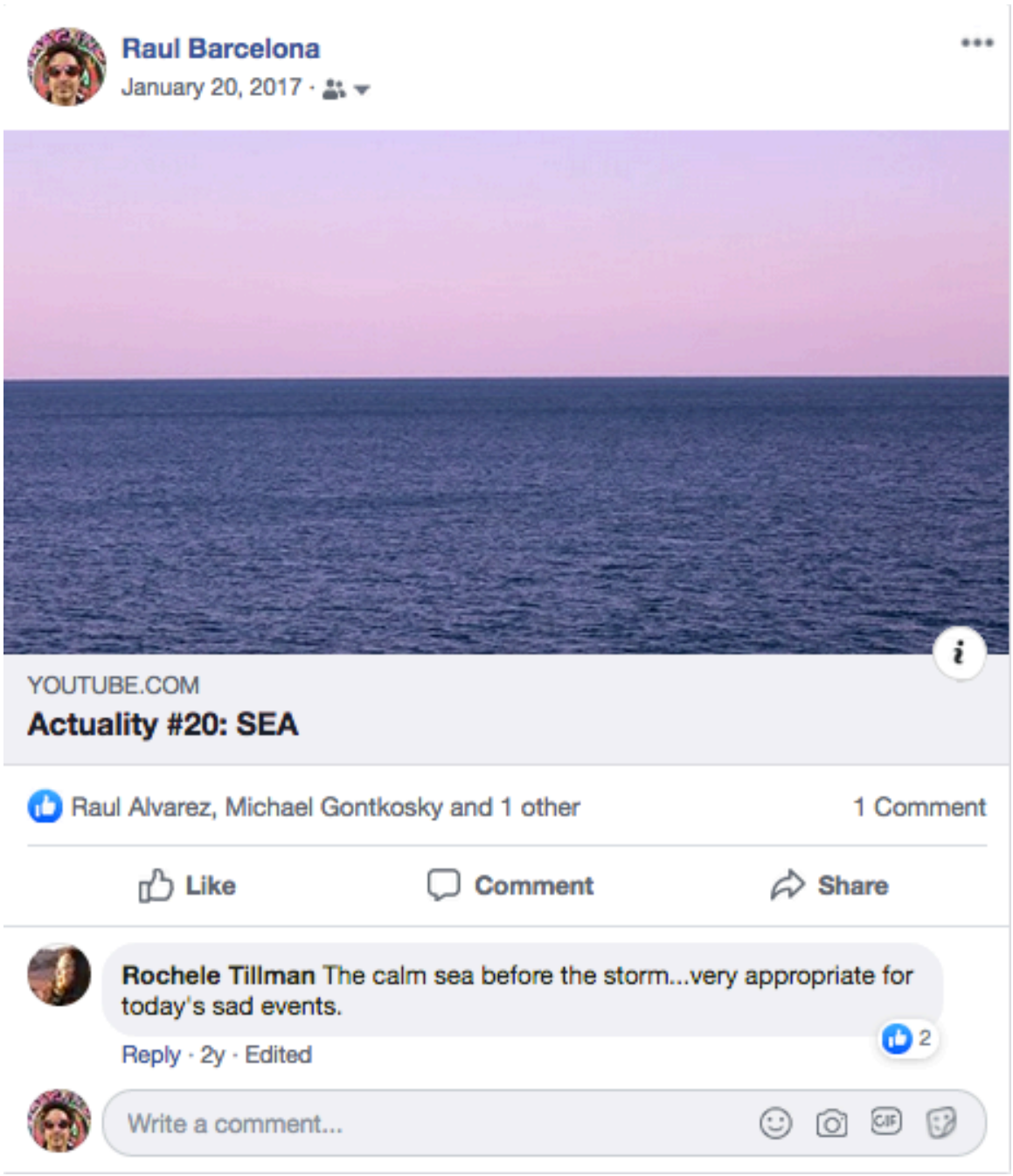

Figure 18. Screenshot of comments for *Actuality #20: SEA*.

Others saw merit and congratulated me on particular aspects of my films—the light, the composition, the color, the technique. Others saw drama, excitement, comedy, finesse, elegance in sequences I had captured. Even metaphors: an *Actuality* of a river became, in my dad's eyes, a metaphor for life (see Figure 20). But when I filmed that river I was not concerned with what the image meant: I was focused on framing the view before me, operating my camera and staying warm. Over time, the comments would make me laugh when I began to recognize how much of the thoughts they expressed were not contained in my films but only existed as a figment of the viewers' imagination. It

was a liberating realization that freed me from the stress and anxiety of having to work and labor to get my film to convey something specific or to impart a particular effect on the audience: it was clearly all out of my control.

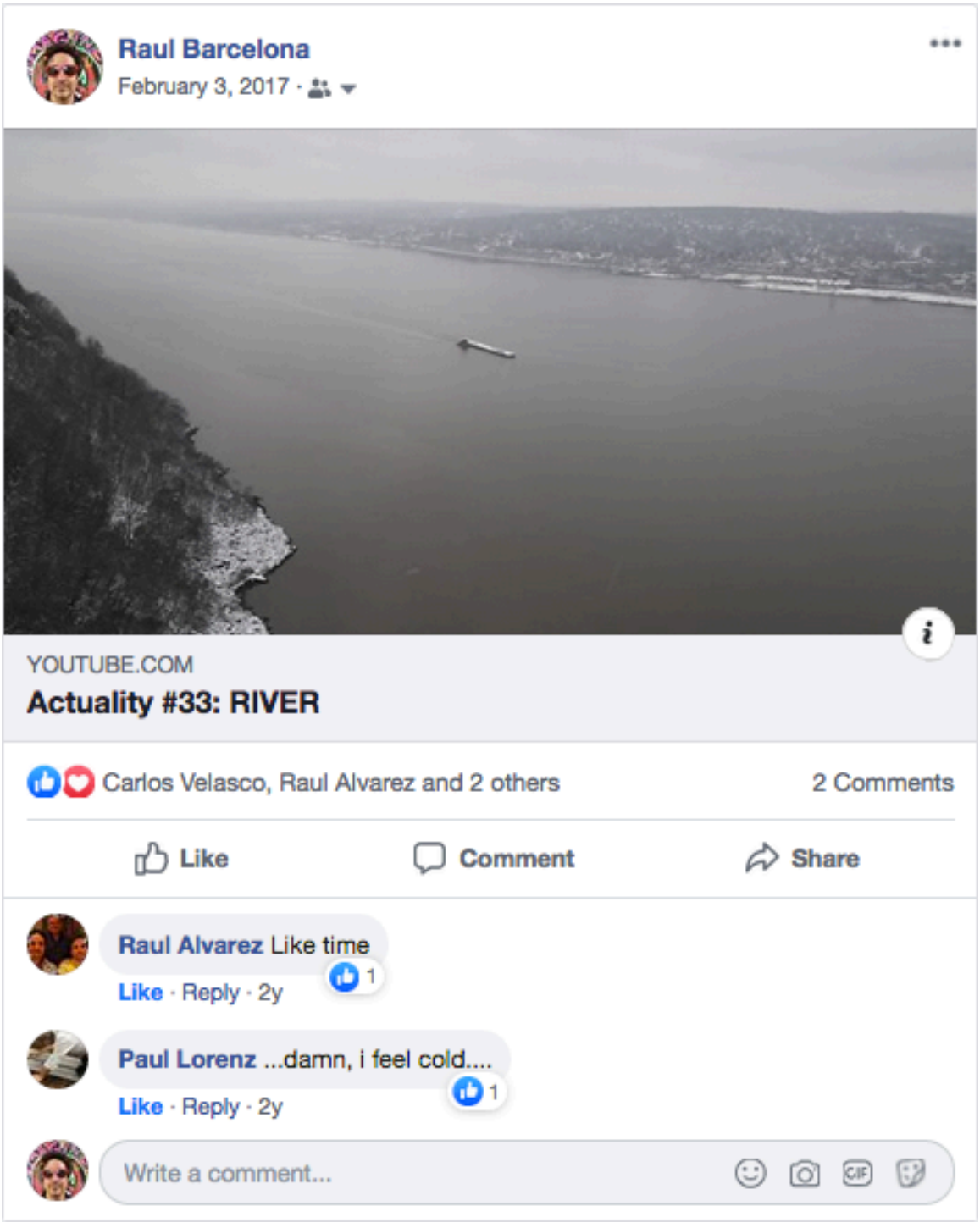

Figure 19. Screenshot of comments for *Actuality #33: RIVER*.

In their essence, my films only offered pixels that at times changed in color and light, along with sounds. Any labeling of what viewers saw beyond that expressed bias, interpretation, value, judgment. The words used to describe reactions did not so much reflect the contents of my work as much as they projected viewers' subjective, prejudicial viewpoint in experiencing it. As soon as they attached words to what they saw in my films, my friends and relatives were automatically in the process of judging and interpreting flickers of light and sound. I found this realization very freeing because as a filmmaker, for years, I have been very hard on myself regarding the quality or worth of my own work, as if striving for some abstract level of perfection that nobody other than myself is dictating or imposing on my films. The consideration of my *Actualities* as only showcasing light liberated me in profound ways because it negated my fears and anxieties of making "bad" films.

i) Daily Actuality Filmmaking in the Context of Everyday Life

Cultural theorist Michel de Certeau envisioned daily life as an environment in which institutional power structures, seeking to prioritize their interests, deploy what he called "strategies" that impose relations on the everyday lives of individuals who, then, navigate and resist them through the use of "tactics."[63] De Certeau's conception of daily living as the interplay between institutional strategies and individual tactics provides a fitting intellectual model to contextualize my daily *Actuality* filmmaking practice within the practice of everyday life.

Through this de Certeauvian lens, the activities of my daily life appear dictated by the drive to accumulate capital and consume goods and services imposed by the capitalist system I inhabit. Commuting, working, interacting with colleagues and friends, shopping, eating, sleeping—all these routines seem inextricably organized within and around the institutional strategies of commerce, governance and law. Yet, while the act of making a daily *Actuality* film is also borne of the strategic forces that produce the camera and computing technology I employ, it is, nonetheless, an act that alleviates the pressures these forces exert because it remains unmotivated by the drive to make money or the need to meet an employer's demands. In repeating the process day to day, *Actuality* filmmaking, then, can become the type of everyday gesture de Certeau considered as enacting the "possibilities of emancipation from overarching rhythms, constraints and fatalities" that dominate everyday life.[64]

De Certeau's model also renders visible the tactical character of my daily *Actuality* filmmaking in its resistance to strategies of industrial cinema that aim to subjugate filmmakers to produce films that can be commercialized and generate revenue. My daily *Actualities* are not produced to gain the interest of a paying audience, evidenced by their form, which contrasts with films of the Institutional Mode of Representation. Instead, as a daily creative, artistic practice, my *Actuality* filmmaking takes on the character of the *derivé,* proposed by French philosopher Guy Debord as a tactical practice "meant to

[63] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), xix.
[64] David Courpasson, "The Politics of Everyday," *Organization Studies* Vol. 38, no. 6 (2017): 844.

subvert established routines," and "to disrupt presumed order" by "letting go of the impulse to adapt to a structural system."[65] For Debord, this disruption can only take place within the oppressive forces of everyday life: "the critique and perpetual re-creation of the totality of everyday life," he wrote, "must be under taken in the present conditions of oppression, in order to destroy these conditions."[66] In other words, the *dérive*, as a tactical practice, does not offer an alternative structure to everyday life, but instead produces a sort of "temporary *anti-structure*"[67] that lasts until the weight of institutional strategies—to use de Certeau's term—inevitably absorbs or dissolves it anew. As Debord declared, "[e]very project begins from [everyday life] and every realization returns to it to acquire its real significance."[68]

j) Daily Actuality Filmmaking in Relation to Other Film Practices

In this section I place my daily filmmaking practice in dialogue with the work of filmmakers whose work bear traces of my daily *Actualities*. The following is not intended as an exhaustive survey of filmmakers who make films and engage in production methods similar to my own. Rather, I focus here on exploring a comprehensive set of salient examples drawn from the terrain of contemporary cinema that opposes Institutional Modes of Representation. First, I discuss Antje Ehmann and Harun Farocki's participatory project, *Labour in a Single Shot*, because of its direct relation to early *Actualities* and its similarity in its online presentation to my own film catalogue. I then discuss the diaristic work of Jonas Mekas due to its focus on everyday life as its primary source material. An examination of James Benning's use of fixed shots and prolonged film duration that recall the *Actuality* aesthetic then follows. Lastly, I consider the urban film portraits of Jem Cohen, a filmmaker who assembles footage from his travels and daily experiences into works that prioritize the act of observation.

Antje Ehmann and Harun Farocki's *Labour in a Single Shot*

German filmmaker Harun Farocki first engaged with the work of the Lumières in his 1995 film *Arbeiter verlassen di Fabrik (Workers leaving the factory)*,[69] a work consisting of found-footage clips about the subject of labour culled from "narrative and documentary films" from cinema's first century.[70] Using the Lumières' early *Actuality* of workers leaving the Lumière factory as the referential point of focus in his film, Farocki then weaved it with his clip selections in combination with a voiceover narration to "reflect on the relative invisibility of labour processes in cinema," and "to show how at the moment in

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[65] Jack Richardson, "Creating Situations: Drifting as Critical Inquiry," *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* Vol. 21, no.1 (2003): 80.
[66] Guy Debord, "Perspectives for Conscious Changes in Everyday Life," *Situationist International Anthology,* ed. and trans. Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 98.
[67] Richardson, "Creating Situations," 80.
[68] Debord, "Perspectives," 92.
[69] Viewable here: https://vimeo.com/59338090.
[70] Roy Grundmann, Peter J. Schwartz, and Gregory H. Williams, "Labour in a Single Shot: Critical Perspectives – Editors' Introduction," in *Labour in a Single Shot: Critical Perspectives on Antje Ehmann and Harun Farocki's Global Video Project*, eds. Roy Grundmann, Peter J. Schwartz, and Gregory H. Williams (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 32.

which moving pictures first seemed to promise to make the world visible in a new way" the Lumières hid from view "the labour [of their workers] that had made cinema possible."[71] Farocki would later reimagine the film in 2006 as a 12-channel video installation that did away with the voiceover narration but reused "much of the source material from the 1995 film, while also adding more."[72] Farocki's work did not result from a camera-centric mode of filmmaking, relying instead on found footage, but it is nonetheless worth noting here because it informs Farocki's preoccupation with the *Actuality* form's relation to labour depictions which, in collaboration with Antje Ehmann, he subsequently explored in *Labour in a Single Shot* (2010-2014), a project which holds greater relevance for the context of my work.

Developed over the course of four years, Farocki and Ehmann conceived of *Labour in a Single Shot* as a participatory project in which, over the course of two-week workshops[73] held in 15 countries,[74] participants were asked to make single-shot, unedited films lasting one to two minutes on the subject of labour. In total 550 films were produced[75] which were then presented through "international exhibitions"[76] and now live online[77] "assembled in a grid with thumbnails four across, requiring scrolling down."[78] According to Farocki and Ehmann, the "web catalogue" of these films does not represent a "selection of our favourite videos, but a documentation of everything that was produced."[79] The workshop videos themselves, made under the restrictions of the singular, unedited one-to-two minute shot aesthetic, bare close resemblance to my own with the exception of those consisting of a moving, rather than static, frame as permitted by the production rules Farocki and Ehmann imposed.[80] Thematically, with their singular focus on the topic of labour, the films differ from the wide ranging scope of subject found in my own *Actualities*. Collectively, the workshop films do not represent, as mine do, the work of a singular filmmaker but the work of many.

Nonetheless, the presentational mode of Farocki and Ehmann's online archive mirrors my own catalogue of *Actualities* hosted on YouTube in the form of thumbnails similarly arranged in grid-like fashion. In their reluctance to curate, select or assemble the videos in linear fashion to produce a longer work of film, Farocki and Ehmann's choice of online presentation also reflects the resistance to institutional cinema's

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid, 33.
[73] Ibid, 30.
[74] Detlef Gericke, "Foreword: Eine Einstellung zur Arbeit/Labour in a Single Shot," in *Labour in a Single Shot: Critical Perspectives on Antje Ehmann and Harun Farocki's Global Video Project*, eds. Roy Grundmann, Peter J. Schwartz, and Gregory H. Williams (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 18.
[75] Dale Hudson, and Patricia R. Zimmermann, "Ten Propositions," in *Labour in a Single Shot: Critical Perspectives on Antje Ehmann and Harun Farocki's Global Video Project*, eds. Roy Grundmann, Peter J. Schwartz, and Gregory H. Williams (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 211.
[76] Grundmann, Schwartz, and Williams, "Labour in a Single Shot: Critical Perspectives – Editors' Introduction," 29.
[77] The catalogue may be accessed here: https://www.labour-in-a-single-shot.net/en/films/
[78] Hudson, and Zimmermann, "Ten Propositions," 211.
[79] Antje Ehmann, and Harun Farocki, "Concept," Eine Einstellung zur Arbeit | Labour in a Single Shot, accessed April, 2023, https://www.labour-in-a-single-shot.net/en/project/concept/.
[80] Ibid.

inclination, shared with my own catalogue, to enclose the viewer within a fixed cinematic space. I myself explored the selection and assembly of my *Actualities* to make a longer film for the purposes of presenting a lecture about my work, but this mode seemed to counteract the aims of my project. Specifically, in preparing a lecture for the 2019 *Happiness Conference* at Cambridge University,[81] I edited 30 of my *Actualities* into a film that, while maintaining their original duration, displayed them in sequence and without titles to the assembled audience. This form of editing seemed to intrude upon each film's distinct individuality, particularly transforming the discreet fixed-view aesthetic into one that, as part of a collection, appears to shift and change with each cut over the course of the new film. Separately, each *Actuality* maintained its point of view from beginning to end but, within the beginning and end of the collection, the films interrupt each other and collectively display a continual shift in both content and form that was previously guarded in their singular, uninterrupted, static shot aesthetic.

Farocki and Ehmann consider the early *Actualities* as films "forced by the immobile camera to have a fixed point of view" and thus distinct from "the documentary films of today [that] often tend to indecisive cascade of shots."[82] A presentation consisting of a film assembly of these films, then, might constitute or approximate a "cascade of shots" that undermine or counteract the aesthetic of resistance in the original films. Presented online in grid-like form, the viewer chooses what films to watch and in what order free of the dictates imposed by the filmmaker's editing, which naturally imposes a fixed sequential relation between shots that further foregrounds their association to each other and the larger whole. The act of having to choose and click, in both the *Labour in a Single Shot* archive and my own *Actuality* catalogue, serves as a reminder that every film is distinct and that its relation to the others remains open-ended. In this manner, the online presentation of both these projects represents a decentralized viewer experience that opposes the tendencies of institutional modes of representation.

In addition to highlighting the *Actuality* form as oppositional to the IMR, Farocki and Ehmann's project can also be seen as an act of resistance towards the institutions of cinema that, as "a discursive and institutional field wont to privilege individual creators," ignores amateurs "while established artists enjoy attention."[83] Most of the films produced during the workshops were "made by relative or complete novices"[84] through a "collaborative, horizontal workshop model" that "democratizes the means of production and "moves away from individual expression towards collaborative action."[85] Farocki and Ehmann's project then positions *Actuality* filmmaking as a form of film production accessible to the masses that, more than as a tool of expression, can serve to investigate a specific aspect of human experience—such as labour—in collaboration with others.

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[81] Raul Barcelona, "The Awakening of Cinema: Daily Filmmaking and Well-being," (Lecture, Happiness Conference, Cambridge University, UK, October 20th, 2019).
[82] Ehmann, "Concept."
[83] Roy Grundmann, "One Shot, Two Mediums, Three Centuries," in *Labour in a Single Shot: Critical Perspectives on Antje Ehmann and Harun Farocki's Global Video Project*, eds. Roy Grundmann, Peter J. Schwartz, and Gregory H. Williams (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 153.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Hudson, and Zimmermann, "Ten Propositions," 215.

The Diary Films of Jonas Mekas

Lithuanian-American filmmaker Jonas Mekas began transforming his diaristic written practice in late 1949 "into a diaristic cinema with few predecessors."[86] His ouvre centered on the filmic representation of his own subjectivity in order to "capture reality as closely as possible to how my Self is seeing it."[87] To that end, Mekas created diary films combining handheld footage and sounds drawn from his everyday experiences with music and reflexive annotations in the form of intertitles and voiceover commentaries.[88] Up until 1989 Mekas used analogue film to record footage, but onwards he shot exclusively on video.[89] The adoption of video technology led Mekas to incorporate synchronous sound, to record longer takes and to include further reflexive inscriptions into his diaries in the form of camera addresses.[90] Despite changes in his methods, Mekas' work remained characteristically "digressive and fragmentary"[91] through both his film and video phases, as the following salient examples illustrate.

Mekas' first major diary film, *Walden*, shot in 1964-1968 and edited between 1968-1969, with a running time approximating 180 minutes,[92] opens with a dedication to "Lumière" that highlights, as Tom Smith points out, "cinema's origins in the representation of daily life" and that suggests a call for "the simple documentation of daily life" to "become the norm again."[93] But *Walden*'s similarities to the work of the Lumières do not extend beyond the silent recordings of the everyday as Mekas' film proceeds with a style that diverges wildly from the form of early *Actualities*. In contrast to the static, prolonged singular shot aesthetic employed by the Lumières, Mekas' film presents scenes drawn from his encounters with "situations, friends, New York, seasons of the year"[94] in a form that Scott MacDonald deems "aggressively "personal"," driven by his refusal to "hold the camera still" and his preference for "an openly gestural style."[95] Moreover, Mekas edited all his footage in-camera in a "wildly erratic manner"[96] using a technique referred to as "single-framing" which consisted of "rewinding his film and re-exposing the negative" to create "superimpositions" and to insert "lens flares" that interrupt the flow of his original recordings.[97] Mekas' footage is further interjected by intertitles that announce the content of the images shown or about to be shown,[98] "[offering] a respite from the

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[86] Scott MacDonald, "The Country in the City: Central Park in Jonas Mekas's Walden and William Greaves's Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One," *Journal of American Studies*, 31, 3 (1997): 5.
[87] Jonas Mekas, "The Diary Film (1972)," in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: New York University Press, 1978): 192.
[88] MacDonald, "The Country in the City," 341.
[89] Tom Smith, "The Representation of Subjectivity in the Diary Films and Videos of Jonas Mekas," PhD diss., (University of Edinburgh, 2016), 115.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid, 72.
[92] Jonas Mekas, "Catalogue: Walden 1969," The Film-maker's Cooperative, accessed April 2023, https://film-makerscoop.com/catalogue/jonas-mekas-walden.
[93] Smith, "The Representation of Subjectivity," 56.
[94] Jonas Mekas, "Catalogue: Walden 1969," The Film-maker's Cooperative, accessed April 2023, https://film-makerscoop.com/catalogue/jonas-mekas-walden.
[95] MacDonald, "The Country in the City," 346.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Smith, "The Representation of Subjectivity," 63.
[98] MacDonald, "The Country in the City," 341.

fragmented imagery to allow the viewer a moment of stillness."[99] The voiceover narration Mekas added to the images in post-production is also "fragmented," characterized by an accent that "bares the traces of [his] dislocation" as a Lithuanian exile,[100] and combining "the diarist's naiveté" of his filming with "the retrospective knowledge of the autobiographer."[101] Mekas' voiceover recognizes "that some people may be bored or uninterested" in watching what he has filmed and presented, giving viewers permission to discontinue their engagement with his work.[102]

Overall, through its extensive duration, personal motifs and fragmented style, Mekas' *Walden* expresses the "defiantly personal sensibility"[103] that largely characterizes his ouvre as centered on the act of disruption: the disruption of his own recordings with edits, titles and voiceover; the disruption of his portrayal of lived events with his own commentary; and, ultimately, the disruption of "contemporary film standards"[104] through the totality of his work, which repeatedly subverts and challenges viewer expectations. Mekas' defiant stances continued throughout the video work he began in the late 1980s, but were expressed through this technology in different ways. In video, Mekas recorded much longer takes than the length of film reels permitted, resulting "in a greater scope of experiences being represented than in his films."[105] In the new format, Mekas abandoned the single-framing technique characteristic of his film work, but adopted the use of synchronous sound which allowed him to record his voice commentaries at the time of filming, rather than in post-production.[106] In his video work, Mekas directly speaks to his camera or from behind it, "[collapsing] the act of speaking and recording into the same temporal moment."[107] These features of his later diary films are all present in Mekas's *365 Day Project* (2007),[108] a work worth noting for its combination with a daily practice that is presented online in a mode that recalls Farocki and Ehmann's *Labour in a Single Shot*'s online archive, as well as own on YouTube.

In *365 Day Project*, Mekas released a daily video for every day of 2007 on his website.[109] The films, varying in duration from about 2 to 20 minutes,[110] combine footage shot in 2007 with previous film and video recordings from Mekas' extensive archive,[111] at times varying from the single filmmaker process by incorporating videos shot by "close friends and family."[112] In some films, Mekas revisits and recontextualizes moments he recorded long ago, revising them through his own direct commentary, whereas in others

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[99] Smith, "The Representation of Subjectivity," 75.
[100] Smith, "The Representation of Subjectivity," 78.
[101] Ibid, 79.
[102] Ibid, 78.
[103] MacDonald, "The Country in the City," 341.
[104] Ibid, 345.
[105] Smith, "The Representation of Subjectivity," 143.
[106] Ibid, 113.
[107] Ibid.
[108] The diary films of this project may be viewed here: https://jonasmekasfilms.com/365/.
[109] Ibid, 145.
[110] Ibid, 151.
[111] Ibid, 152.
[112] Ibid, 161.

he speaks to the camera relating daily experience in the style of "vloggers."[113] Similar to the bookending of my *Actualities* with an opening title and an ending black screen, Mekas' daily diary films consistently open with a title bearing his website and the date and end with a drawing of flowers on a branch.[114] Collectively, the 365 films do not exhibit a tendency to center the viewer around a cohesive interpretation of Mekas' subjective experience, resulting in a portrayal that lays bare its fragmentation. The presentation of the project as an online archive reinforces this idea, as it offers—as my own archive does—a decentralized viewing experience in which the viewer can choose to watch whichever and however many of the films in arbitrary order. Hosting his archive in his personal website, Mekas protects it from the influence of algorithms that, in my own YouTube archive, structure the layout of the films and potentially disrupt the viewer's willful choices with viewing suggestions.

Generally, Mekas' ouvre shares its focus on the everyday with my own daily *Actuality* project, but the constant reflexivity of his work, his destabilizing filmic style and his focus on the representation of his own subjectivity—his thoughts, his memories, his feelings—separate it from my own. Mekas' filmmaking methods—his handheld camera movements, erratic editing, titles, voiceover narration—served his goal of creating portraits that approximated his fragmented subjective experience in its complexity. In my films, I have not sought to portray the fragmentation of my own experience, but in seeking to maximize my well-being through their creation I have experienced its reduction. It is possible Mekas' insistence to revisit and reflect on his impressions of past experiences may have served him as a therapeutic method to expand his well-being, but his films' fragmented nature suggests an existential restlessness that, as his life and work unfolded, never seemed to abate nor to give way to a state of acceptance of things as they are without the need for commentary. Mekas' body of work further suggests that engaging in a daily filmmaking practice alone may not lead a filmmaker to experience less fragmented forms of thinking but quite the opposite. In light of his work, the stylistic restrictions limiting editing and camera movement I imposed on my mode of filmmaking seem justifiable in leading the filmmaker of the everyday away from disruptive thinking and towards a more contemplative outlook.

The Films of James Benning

The films of American filmmaker James Benning, such as *El Valley Centro* (2000), *Los* (2001), *Sogobi* (2001), *13 Lakes* (2004), *Ten Skies* (2004) and *RR* (2007) are recognized for their combination of a static frame with long duration, "exemplifying a minimalist tendency."[115] They generally focus on natural landscapes similar to my *Actualities* featuring mountains, lakes, rivers, oceans, sunsets and woods. Benning "[works] with no crew," "[does] all the work [himself]"[116] and relates that his process is "about having

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[113] Ibid, 160.
[114] Ibid, 153.
[115] Jihoon Kim, "Expressing Duration with Digital Micromanipulations: Digital Experimental Documentaries of James Benning, Sharon Lockhart, and Thom Andersen," Jihoon Kim *Cinema Journal*, vol. 57, no. 3 (Spring 2018), 106.
[116] *James Benning: Circling the Image*, directed by Reinhard Wulf (Germany: German United Distributors Programmvertrieb, Germany, 2003), DVD. 00:03:58.

something portable, […] being alone, contemplating what I see with nobody around"[117] and that his films are "about seeing and hearing more of what's already around you,"[118] an affinity they share with my own. The three films that make up Benning' California Trilogy (*El Valley Centro, Los* and *Sogobi*) are each composed of 35 static shots of 2.5 minutes in duration[119] that aesthetically resemble my *Actualities* and that emphasize Benning's privileging of the act of paying attention. Benning extended the duration of his static shots to 10 minutes in the subsequent *13 Lakes*, and even further in *Nightfall* (2012), a film consisting of a single, static shot of 98 minutes.[120]

Benning's aesthetic is motivated by his desire "to go back to the beginning of filmmaking" and film in the style of early *Actuality* filmmakers who, "in order to film the arrival of a train or a kiss, they just set up a camera and [shot] a whole reel [of film]."[121] In *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* Mary Ann Doane relates that the Lumière *Actualities* were considered "semiotically insufficient" and thus became "historically short-lived," [122] leading to complex representations of time that relied on devices such as editing and multiple shots. Benning seems intent on reversing or correcting this course of events through his work for, in his view, "filmmaking grew up too quickly," towards "the study of narrative language" and away from "the real study of the image."[123] He recognizes that duration "brings narrative to [his] films" because "if you look at something long enough, the brain just functions that way, it wants to make some kind of sense and the first easiest sense is to make narrative sense, and to try to put a story onto that image."[124] In extending the duration of his static shots past conventional limits, Benning seeks to transcend the tendency to interpret the image as narrative because "maybe there is an essence to an image that isn't even about narrative, [that is] about what it is, and outside narrative terms."[125]

Benning's celluloid-based films can then be understood as presentations of real-time because, as Doane explains, when "physical film is not cut and its projection speed equals its shooting speed" then its representation of time is "isomorphic with filmic time, or what is generally thought to be our everyday lived experience of time" and hence may be interpreted as "real."[126] However, Benning's foray into digital video beginning in 2009 "complicates," as Jihoom Kim explains, "real-time approximation" in his work through his use of "micromanipulations" that deepen "temporal discrepancies between

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[117] Ibid, 00:04:52.
[118] Scott MacDonald, "Testing Your Patience: An Interview With James Benning," *ArtForum*, September 2007, https://www.artforum.com/print/200707/testing-your-patience-an-interview-with-james-benning-15707.
[119] Ibid.
[120] The Film-maker's Coop, "James Benning," accessed April 2023, https://film-makerscoop.com/filmmakers/james-benning/bio.
[121] *James Benning: Circling the Image*, 00:01:54.
[122] Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 178.
[123] *James Benning: Circling the Image*, 00:02:00.
[124] Ibid, 01:22:28.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Doane, *Emergence*, 173.

the camera's record and what the viewer sees."[127] In *Ruhr* (2009), which consists of shots ranging from seven minutes to an hour,[128] for example, the filmmaker employs dissolves to eliminate the appearance of vehicles he "did not like" from his static shot of a tunnel.[129] In a different part of the film, Benning uses color correction to accentuate a shot's gradual transition from light to dark in order to create a representation that more closely mimicked his own experience at the time of recording.[130]

Benning's inclination to cut out parts of his recordings in *Ruhr* mirror my own tendency to trim my *Actuality* footage to leave out elements I did not like. His color correction also parallels my manipulation of the footage in *Actuality #83: CITY* which, as noted, I darkened to more closely represent my experience when I filmed it. Benning's surrender to his desire to change his recordings in post-production represents a lack of acceptance of his footage as it was imprinted in his camera. In the context of the 24 hour time limit of my productions, and over the course of a year, the temptation to manipulate my footage took on the appearance of a time consuming task that imperiled my ability to satisfactorily fulfill my goals. As a result, I grew detached from my own need to engage in the types of manipulations Benning employed in his digital film and, instead, my process led me to adopt a greater acceptance towards the recordings my camera registered in their original state, irrespective of their relationship to my lived experience at the time of shooting.

The Urban Portraits of Jem Cohen

American filmmaker Jem Cohen works in a variety of film contexts ranging from feature-length dramas and documentaries to multi-media live music performances and short experimental films.[131] Here, I particularly focus on his nonfiction films portraying metropolitan life in various cities, works that recall thematic and stylistic features of my *Actualities* shot in urban environments I often occupy in my everyday, as well as in my travels. Cohen's method of production as a solo filmmaker of unscripted, everyday scenes, and his experiences behind the camera, also bear close resemblance to methodological features of my daily filmmaking practice.

Cohen's urban portraits have been described as drawing on the tradition of American street photography and involving a "measured and meditative approach"[132] that is readily apparent in his *Gravity Hill Newsreels — 12 Short Portraits of Occupy Wall Street* (2011/2012). In newsreel no. 2,[133] for example, Cohen's camera bears witness to the proceedings of a massive crowd gathering in New York's Times Square with a sense of calm that contrasts with the increasing sense of claustrophobia unfolding before it as

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[127] Kim, "Expressing Duration," 112.
[128] Ibid, 108.
[129] Ibid, 111.
[130] Ibid, 112.
[131] Jem Cohen, "Biography," JEM COHEN FILMS, accessed April 2023, https://jemcohenfilms.com/short-biography/.
[132] Rhys Graham, "Just Hold Still: A Conversation with Jem Cohen," *Senses of Cinema* 9 (September 2000), accessed April 2023, https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2000/feature-articles/cohen-2/.
[133] Viewable here: https://vimeo.com/62813667.

people squeeze past each other, against building walls and through police barricades. Through its slightly more than 3 minutes of duration, the film proceeds unhurried, with little camera movement, depicting moments that lie outside the main concern of the protest: a pair of friends who hug in greeting, a woman snapping a photo, a child passing by on the shoulders of an adult. Cohen's editing limits his shots to far shorter durations than ones in Benning's films, roughly around 5 to 10 seconds. But the contemplative outlook, nonetheless, perseveres in the film because neither police officers nor civilians ever address the camera, nor are there voiceover narration or titles intruding with additional insight or explanation beyond what the images and sounds already provide. In his montage, Cohen creates a sense of parallel action when, after cutting to various views, he returns, multiple times, to the same shot of a reflective building symmetrically dividing the frame similar to my own in *Actuality #241: SYMMETRY*.[134]

Cohen's *unseen unsaid* (2015),[135] an 8-minute portrait of Essex Road in London lacking voiceover and spoken word, exhibits an observational aesthetic similar to that employed in his newsreels but with slight differences. Shot mostly in close-ups, with even less camera movement and a shallower depth of field, passersby come and go before the camera while others sit and wait at bus stops, the sound of their presence largely drowned out by the roar of engines, car horns and emergency vehicle sirens. Cohen's parallel editing becomes more pronounced here as he cuts back and forth from the city sidewalks to the clouds hovering above. Images of a dog sitting behind a storefront and a statue are also repeated. Shooting through city structures, moving crowds and storefronts, Cohen's camera views are often obstructed, giving the film an air of voyeurism that a man posing directly for the camera appears to address when he silently holds up a book titled "The Law of Privacy and The Media." In this understated manner, Cohen encapsulates the complexities of filming private citizens in public spaces I have cited in this chapter and that he likely encountered.

The contrast between contemplative, discreet shots and fragmentary editing gains sharper relief in Cohen's *Counting* (2015), a 110-minute "wistful meditation on the world"[136] communicated in 15 chapters that stitch together "fragments" or "story shards"[137] shot in multiple locations, including Russia, Istanbul and New York City.[138] As in the previous films, Cohen combines both his static and gently moving shots at a leisurely editing pace that allows for a lingering observation of details, even when their duration is kept well under the roughly 1-minute mark of *Actualities*. Parallel editing continues to be present throughout but, in order to hold together the greater amount of wide ranging material, Cohen resorts to the use of music and intertitles that, sporadically, provide dates and the names of places, people and things portrayed in the various chapters. The cumulative effect of these cinematic devices brings forth a sense of story,

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[134] Viewable here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISVJwFUf5Q0.
[135] Viewable here: https://vimeo.com/156812125.
[136] Manhola Dargis, "Review: 'Counting,' a Meditation in Story Shards," *The New York Times*, July 30, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/31/movies/review-counting-a-meditation-in-story-shards.html (accessed April 2023).
[137] Ibid.
[138] Jem Cohen, "Counting," JEM COHEN FILMS, accessed April 2023, https://jemcohenfilms.com/counting/.

specifically "that of an itinerant, persistently independent filmmaker."[139] But the subjective experience portrayed in *Counting* never reaches the dizzying, frantic intensity of Mekas' diaries as Cohen's silent presence behind the camera repeatedly foregrounds the film's "insistence on ordinary beauty."[140] Additionally, the minimal context Cohen provides through his titles prevent a strong biographical and personal narrative from taking root at the center of the film. Reviewing the film for *The New York Times*, film critic Manhola Dargis confessed she herself had to resort to the press notes to learn that a shot of a construction site represents the view from Cohen's own New York residence.[141]

Although Cohen's films stylistically diverge from my own, particularly in their adoption of montage and camera movement, his method of production closely resembles my own as it involves "shooting material constantly, day to day, in his native New York, in countries through which he is travelling, or wherever his wandering camera takes him."[142] Cohen admits his urban portraits "have to do with one person navigating the planet," but he does not think "that the films are about [him]" or "explicitly about [his] 'self'."[143] Instead, he says, "[t]hey have to do with the way that I see things," which consists of a view that "would have it that the world that exists *is* interesting" and "inherently wondrous and surprising and always special."[144] Cohen's reflections suggest that, in prioritizing the representation of observation rather than self-identity, his filmmaking method, like my own daily *Actuality* production process, can lead the filmmaker to adopt a less self-centered, more appreciative outlook towards daily existence.

In this chapter I have detailed my daily production practice to establish the context of the filmmaking experiences I wish to examine. I had foreseen that in making daily films within the *Actuality* parameters I had set for myself my well-being would be safeguarded. While my sense of well-being expanded overall, I still experienced pangs of anxiety and stress related to my day-to-day filmmaking which caused me to question my original notion of well-being. In the next chapter, I review the literature on well-being in search of a more precise and fitting definition of it that can help me in my final analysis.

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[139] Dargis, "Review: 'Counting'."
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Graham, "Just Hold Still."
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.

CHAPTER 3—A Framework For Understanding Well-Being

Thus far I have discussed the history and aesthetic of *Actualities* and detailed the ways in which I adopted this mode of filmmaking into a daily practice. I originally set out to investigate the relationship between filmmaking and well-being and, now, having discussed the former, I turn my attention to the latter: well-being. More specifically, in this chapter I seek to establish a framework for understanding well-being within my filmmaking practice.

I begin this quest with a comprehensive overview of models of well-being resulting from psychology researchers' application of the scientific method during the latter half of the 20th century until today. Informed by psychology, the recent discipline of art therapy has sought to develop creative processes with the intent of enhancing human well-being and it is the findings of this field I evaluate next. I then study the case of John Cage, an artist who sought to expand his well-being within his practice through the application of concepts drawn from Asian philosophies. Following Cage's precedent, I draw and adopt philosophical ideas from the works of Jiddu Krishnamurti and Alan Watts to establish the framework for understanding well-being I finally settle on.

Before proceeding, it is worth recognizing that, as other researchers have noted, "[t]he emergence of wellbeing as a central concept in public policy, particularly in the Western World," is "linked to […] the shift from traditional capitalism to late capitalism and modernity."[1] Although the forces of capitalism are arguably inextricable from my process of daily filmmaking, I do not delve here into discussions about their influence on well-being due to limitations of space. While I do recognize, as Professor Tim Kasser et al. have demonstrated, that the values and goals of advanced capitalism seem to counteract those that facilitate well-being,[2] I limit the scope of this chapter to establishing a conception of well-being for the purposes of analyzing not advanced capitalism at large, but the more narrow sphere of camera-centric solo filmmaking I have practiced.

Before I started making daily *Actualities*, I considered my well-being to be largely a byproduct of the material conditions of my filmmaking process. Although I have never made a film in the Peruvian jungle, prior to the present research I saw my views on well-being—vague as they were at the time—reflected and reaffirmed in Werner Herzog's plight during the making of his film *Fitzcarraldo*. Les Blank's *Burden of Dreams* suggests the root causes of Herzog's suffering resulted from the material conditions of his production. Recalling my own harrowing experiences making films,[3] I similarly recognized the material conditions of a given production as the sole factors hindering my ability to experience well-being within filmmaking.

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[1] Vincent La Placa, and Anneyce Knight, "The Emergence of Wellbeing in Late Modern Capitalism: Theory, Research and Policy Responses," *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, vol. 5, no. 3 (March 2017): 1.

[2] Tim Kasser et al., "Some Costs of American Corporate Capitalism: A Psychological Exploration of Value and Goal Conflicts," *Psychological Inquiry*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2007): 1–22.

[3] Discussed in the Introduction.

As related in the Introduction, during the 2013 production of my first attempt at directing and co-producing an independently-financed fiction feature film, I lived in a constant state of sleep deprivation punctuated by relentless, intense pangs of anxiety. I attempted to counter my distress by devoting as many of my waking hours off the set to analyzing and anticipating future potential fallbacks, preparing and devising plans to avoid them and to make up for lost time. I slept less and less between production days and an ever-growing knot seemed to have tied up my stomach, killing my appetite and making it difficult to keep down whatever food I managed to ingest. Each sleepless night and skipped meal further compromised my ability to focus, think, evaluate and make decisions, to perform tasks well. I continually worried about failure—the failure of the production, my failure as a filmmaker, my failure as a human being. I grew more and more impatient and ill-tempered, fraying and damaging my relationships with my collaborators, family and friends. When my co-producing partner (also the film's screenwriter) and I decided to indefinitely halt production to reassess our options, my sense of failure was alleviated by the immense sense of relief I felt at the end of what had been a torturous time for me.

After the production's demise, I obsessively replayed in my mind all the events that led to its premature end, hoping to extract lessons about the filmmaking process I had engaged in that could help me avoid failure and such high levels of distress in the future. In recalling all that happened, my conclusions would oscillate between two general lines of thought: on one hand, I considered the possibility that filmmaking, despite other filmmaking experiences I had enjoyed, was a process of expression unsuitable for me and my well-being; on the other, I pondered whether it was possible to retool the process of filmmaking to suit my needs so as to cultivate and promote my well-being. These reflections led me to use my doctoral thesis as a space in which to investigate these matters with greater depth and, as part of my research process, I redesigned my filmmaking process, as I have previously described,[4] into a daily *Actuality* filmmaking practice that eliminated many of the material conditions filmmakers often associate with their suffering. I expected that once I removed the most distressing ones from my filmmaking process, few factors, if any, would then hinder my ability to experience it. Nonetheless, I did discover that my well-being was not altogether assured by a mere simplification of my practice: I still managed, within my relatively bare bones daily filmmaking methodology, to experience distress. Were some of the material conditions I had eliminated from my process key determinants of my well-being? Were some of the material conditions that still remained in my process detrimental to it?

To answer these questions, I needed a framework for understanding well-being that could give depth to my heretofore hazy notions of it while, at the same time, providing me with an analytical structure for examining it within the context of my practice.

[4] See Ch. 2.

a) Psychological Models of Well-being

In *A Brief History of Psychology* (2011), professor Michael Wertheimer recognizes that the definition of the science of psychology as "the empirical, objective study" of "behavior and mental life" has been "blurred" in the first decade of the 21st century.[5] As he explains, "the general public now appears to identify psychology" as a discipline that, in addition to scientifically studying "behavior and mental life," also concerns itself with "the subjective" and "with efforts to help individuals" who struggle to cope with "disturbing feelings and social interactions."[6] Despite this expanding definition, Wertheimer chooses to primarily consider psychology as a "science in the sense of rigorous empirical endeavor" because, in his estimation, "almost all practitioners of "professional psychology"" view it as a scientific one at its core.[7] In my present discussion of the field I adopt this broad conception of psychology as a discipline that empirically studies behavior and mental life.

In *The Science of Well-being: The Collected Works of Ed Diener* (2009), professor Ed Diener acknowledged that, prior to the mid-20th century, philosophers and scholars "usually relied on intuition and casual observation" to form their "opinions about well-being."[8] But, in his view, the process of "obtaining valid answers" about such matters has since "accelerated" because "we now have the advantage of understanding the scientific method."[9] According to Diener, it was after 1960 that the "empirical methods of science" were used to study "large scale surveys of happiness" and to produce psychological models of well-being.[10]

In 1969, American psychologist Norman Bradburn was the first to put forth a model of well-being suggesting it consists of a multidimensional, rather than unidimensional, structure.[11] According to this model, humans do not experience well-being along a single continuum consisting of two opposing ends, such as positive and negative feelings. Instead, Bradburn proposed, these two extremes are in fact separate dimensions of experience that are influenced or affected by different factors and whose correlation, rather than their individual presence, is the key determinant of well-being.[12]

In *The Structure of Psychological Wellbeing* (1969), Bradburn explained that this conceptual model of well-being emerged from a study he and his colleague, David Caplovitz, had previously conducted for the US-based National Opinion Research Center[13] in which they sought to develop ways to measure mental health within a given

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[5] Michael Wertheimer, *A Brief History of Psychology*, 5th edition (New York: Psychology Press, 2011), viii.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ed Diener, *The Science of Well-being: The Collected Works of Ed Diener* (Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media, 2009), 5.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Diener, *The Science of Well-being*, 1-2.
[11] Bruce Headey and Alex Wearing, *Understanding Happiness: a Theory of Subjective Well-being* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1992), 12.
[12] Norman M. Bradburn, *The Structure of Psychological Well-being* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), vi.
[13] A nonpartisan research organization at the University of Chicago. See https://www.norc.org/.

population. In it, Bradburn and Caplovitz asked a "cross section of the population of four small towns" if they had experienced, within the "past week," various states of feeling, such as "on top of the world," "lonely or remote from other people," "bored" or "particularly excited or interested in something."[14] In analyzing the results, Bradburn and Caplovitz discerned that responses were divided along two dimensions they referred to as "positive affect" (positive feelings) and "negative affect" (negative feelings).[15] Moreover, positive and negative affect appeared to be relatively independent of each other: an individual's score on positive affect, for example, was not indicative of the individual's score on negative affect, and vice versa.[16] An individual's overall self-rating of well-being, on the other hand, could be predicted from the discrepancy between positive and negative affect. From these observations, Bradburn formulated his model as follows:

> The model specifies that an individual will be high in the degree of psychological well-being in the degree to which he has an excess of positive over negative affect and will be low in well-being in the degree to which negative affect predominates over positive.[17]

Bradburn's model suggests, then, that one must aim to lower negative affect and increase positive affect in order to experience well-being. This seemingly simple formula, however, inevitably leads to questions about the nature of positive and negative affect: what do they consist of and what conditions produce, increase and diminish them? In the end, Bradburn's model shifts the problem of answering questions about the nature of well-being over to the problem of answering questions about the nature of positive and negative affect.

Following the publication of *The Structure of Psychological Wellbeing*, Bradburn's work, despite its shortcomings, heavily influenced the form of subsequent research. Since then, psychologists have continued to propose, test and debate various models of well-being consisting of an ever increasing number of particular components. In the 1970s and early 1980s, through studies of their own, Bradburn's critics sought to challenge his conclusions, particularly his claim about the independence of positive and negative affect.[18] Through the use of various methodologies, researchers eventually confirmed Bradburn's findings that positive and negative affect are distinct, separate dimensions of well-being[19] and, moreover, they expanded on his model. As early as 1974, Morton Beiser's study of mental health in a rural Canadian community was the first to suggest an

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[14] Ibid, v-vi and 9.

[15] Bradburn and Caplovitz never explicitly define the term "affect" but the context of their writing suggests they use it in accordance with the definition dictated by the *American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology*, which describes "affect" as: "any experience of feeling or emotion, ranging from suffering to elation, from the simplest to the most complex sensations of feeling, and from the most normal to the most pathological emotional reactions." See https://dictionary.apa.org/affect.

[16] Ibid, 9.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Diener, *The Science of Well-being*, 18.

[19] Ibid. Diener writes that "the independence of positive and negative affect has now been confirmed using other measures and methodologies" and cites various studies in support of this claim.

amended third dimension to Bradburn's model in the form of "long-term satisfaction."[20] In 1976, Frank Andrews and Stephen Withey replicated Bradburn's data on a national sample[21] and, in their extensive study of the perception of well-being titled *Social Indicators of Well-being: Americans' Perception of Life Quality*, they similarly identified this third dimension as "feelings of life-as-a-whole."[22] In his review of well-being literature in 1984, Diener formally consolidated these findings by suggesting a model of well-being consisting of positive affect (PA), negative affect (NA) and life satisfaction (LS) that has come to be known as the "tripartite model" of well-being.[23]

In his review, Diener also first coined the term "subjective well-being" (known by its acronym SWB), a term that has since pervaded the literature on well-being. Diener, however, employs the term not to differentiate between two forms of well-being—subjective and objective—but to distinguish between two different approaches to well-being research: the *subjective approach* and the *objective approach*. As he defines it, "[s]ubjective well-being (SWB) is the field in the behavioral sciences in which people's evaluations of their lives are studied."[24] In other words, according to Diener, subjective well-being is not a *state* of well-being but, rather, an *approach* to the study of people's well-being that relies on self-reports. Mark Western and Wojtek Tomazewski make the distinction Diener originally sought to make with his terminology explicitly clear when they write:

> Two conceptual approaches dominate wellbeing research. The objective approach examines the objective components of a good life. The subjective approach examines people's subjective evaluations of their lives.[25]

The distinction between *subjective* and *objective* approaches to well-being suggests a separation between people's judgments of their well-being and the material conditions surrounding their lives. But are these not inextricably intertwined? What do people's judgments of life satisfaction consist of, after all, if not of subjective assessments of how the material conditions (or objective components) of their lives influence their state of being? Diener himself has reflected on the effect of income—an objective component—on well-

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[20] Morton Beiser, "Components and correlates of mental well-being," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 15, no. 4 (December, 1974): 321–323.
[21] Angus Campbell, "Subjective Measures of Well-being," *American Psychologist* 31, no. 2 (February 1976): 119.
[22] Frank M. Andrews and Stephen B. Withey, *Social Indicators of Well-being* (New York: Springer US, 1976), 309-335. See also, Diener, *The Science of Well-being*, 22.
[23] Ed Diener, "Subjective Well-being," *Psychological Bulletin* 95, no. 3 (May 1984): 542-575; Michael A. Busseri and Stan W. Sadava, "A Review of the Tripartite Structure of Subjective Well-Being: Implications for Conceptualization, Operationalization, Analysis, and Synthesis," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 15, no.3 (August, 2011): 290-314; Ed Diener and William Tov, "Subjective Wellbeing," *The Encyclopedia of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, edited by Kenneth D. Keith (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2013): 1239-1245.
[24] Ed Diener, *Assessing Well-being: The Collected Works of Ed Diener* (Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media, 2009), 67.
[25] Mark Western and Wojtek Tomaszewski, "Subjective Wellbeing, Objective Wellbeing and Inequality in Australia," *PloS One* 11 (10), e0163345 (October 3, 2016), https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0163345. According to Western and Tomazewski, an example of an "objective component of a good life" is income. Others may consist of other material conditions of a person's life, such as housing, access to food and water, education.

being, conducting an analysis of Global Gallup Poll data and determining, from resulting graphs, that:

> As can be seen, well-being increases rapidly as people rise out of poverty, but then improves more slowly after that. There is a very steep rise in well-being from dire poverty to about 20,000 dollars a year, and then a slow trend upwards, and then another slowing of the rise after about 50,000 dollars per year.[26]

As long as one considers Global Gallup poll data a reliable measure of well-being, this conclusion seems to indicate that external factors do indeed impact well-being: specifically, that one needs a minimum level of income in order to attain it. But, as Diener himself points out, this data is flawed because "language comparability has not been strongly tested."[27] In other words, we do not adequately know how particular concepts related to well-being track across different cultures. Cultures may, for example, be more materialistically driven than others and evaluate their well-being based on these conceptions. The concepts or values desert nomadic tribes in the Arabian peninsula associate with well-being may be very different from those that business executives living in a metropolitan environment may associate with it.

The conclusion that a minimum level of income must be attained to ensure human well-being is, as Diener himself recognizes, complicated by other findings. As he notes:

> Many demographic variables have been correlated with SWB, with the typical finding being that advantaged groups such as the wealthy are slightly happier than others.[28]

But, this is not always the case for, as he points out:

> some advantaged groups such as men and the highly educated do not always report higher levels of well-being […]. In general, resources such as health, income, and physical attractiveness have shown surprisingly small correlations with SWB, whereas personality variables have been much stronger predictors […].[29]

Elsewhere, other research suggests that Diener's conclusion about objective components being weak predictors of human well-being is correct. In comparing the life satisfaction of lottery winners with that of people who suffered terrible accidents, researchers found

[26] Diener, *Assessing Well-being*, 241. Dollar amounts presumably refer to American dollars.
[27] Ibid, 32.
[28] Ibid, 34.
[29] Ibid.

> that after a few months, the lottery winners were no happier than people in general. And what is even more surprising is that the accident victims, although somewhat less happy than people in general, still judged themselves to be happy.[30]

These findings strongly suggest that the objective approach to well-being, consisting as it does in the observation of objective components, does not lead to a greater understanding about the determinants of human well-being. Moreover, they seem to indicate that, when it comes to well-being, material conditions surrounding one's life matter little.

Diener's own "tripartite model" of well-being at first appears to be supported by extensive and rigorous studies conducted over the years but, like Bradburn's, it raises more questions than it answers about well-being's inner workings and its determinants. Even if one accepts that the distinct and essential components that form an individual's sense of well-being are positive affect, negative affect and life satisfaction, however they are defined, how do they fit together to do so? What is the relationship among these components within the total experience of well-being?

25 years after Diener's "tripartite model" formulation, the authors of a 2010 paper titled *A Review of the Tripartite Structure of Subjective Well-Being: Implications for Conceptualization, Operationalization, Analysis, and Synthesis* investigated this very question.[31] To do so, they analyzed and evaluated strengths and weaknesses of five variations of the tripartite model in which these three components related to each other in independent and interdependent ways. While all the variant models they analyzed share the assumption about what the key components of well-being are, the authors recognize that these are characterized by "conflicting assumptions concerning several fundamental issues," ranging from whether well-being is a psychological construct versus an area of research, to the nature and meaning of the relations between well-being and its components.[32] In the end, they conclude, "little consensus exists concerning how these components should be treated" and "the tripartite structure of SWB [subjective well-being] has yet to be determined."[33]

The lack of consensus regarding the tripartite model led other researchers to propose their own models of well-being to supplant it. In 1989, Carol Ryff criticized Bradburn's work and its derivative research as insufficiently grounded in theory.[34] As a result, prior formulations of well-being, according to Ryff, "neglect[ed] important aspects of positive psychological functioning."[35] To remedy this she proposed her own empirically tested model in which well-being breaks down into the following six factors:

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[30] Barry Schwartz and Andrew Ward, "Doing Better But Feeling Worse: The Paradox Of Choice," in *Positive Psychology in Practice*, 1st Edition, edited by Stephen Joseph and P. Alex Linley (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2004), 96.
[31] Busseri and Sadava, "Review of Tripartite Structure," 290.
[32] Ibid, 305-6.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Carol D. Ryff. "Happiness is Everything, or Is It? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-being," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57, no. 6 (December 1989): 1070 & 1077.
[35] Ibid, 1070.

i. Self-acceptance
ii. Positive relations with others
iii. Autonomy
iv. Environmental mastery
v. Purpose in life
vi. Personal growth[36]

In her study[37] Ryff demonstrated individuals ranking high scores in their self-ratings of these factors correlated with positive reports of well-being.[38] In 2006, Kristin Springer and Robert Hauser put Ryff's model to the test through their examination of three major "self-administered surveys."[39] In their data analysis, Springer and Hauser found that personal growth "correlated highly with self-acceptance (0.951), purpose in life (0.942), and environmental mastery (0.911),"[40] indicating that four of Ryff's six dimensions of well-being "empirically may be one dimension only."[41] In revisiting her original model more recently, in 2014, Ryff continued to defend her model's reliability and validity despite findings by Springer and Hauser and others, pointing instead to numerous studies her model inspired while acknowledging the need for more research.[42]

In 2002, Martin Seligman first articulated his concept of well-being (then referred to as "authentic happiness"[43]) as a destination that can be reached through the pursuit of three elements: pleasure, meaning and engagement.[44] In 2010, he revised, expanded and reformulated his ideas in a new model he encapsulated within the acronym P.E.R.M.A., which stands for the five conditions of well-being Seligman proposes: Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment.[45]

Some of these conditions bear strong similarities to the factors in Ryff's scale. Both Seligman and Ryff recognize, for instance, that positive relationships play an important determinant role in an individual's well-being. Seligman's condition of Achievement mirrors Ryff factors of Personal Growth and Environmental Mastery. After all, isn't

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[36] Ibid, 1071.
[37] Ryff's study specifically focused on 321 "relatively healthy, well-educated, financially comfortable" men and women of various ages. See Ryff, "Happiness is Everything," 1071-2.
[38] Ryff, "Happiness is Everything," 1069.
[39] Kristen Springer and Robert Hauser, "An Assessment of the Construct Validity of Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being: Method, Mode, and Measurement Effects," *Social Science Research* 35, no. 4. (December 2006): 1085.
[40] Ibid, 1091.
[41] Dirk van Dierendonck et. al., "Ryff's Six-factor Model of Psychological Well-being: A Spanish Exploration," *Social Indicators Research* 87, no. 3 (July, 2008): 474.
[42] Carol Ryff, "Psychological Well-Being Revisited: Advances in the Science and Practice of Eudaimonia," *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 83 (2014): 10-28.
[43] Seligman, Martin E. P., *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (New York: Free Press, 2002).
[44] Christopher Peterson, Nansook Park and Martin E. P. Seligman, "Orientations to happiness and life satisfaction: the full life versus the empty life," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 6, no.1 (March, 2005): 27. The authors cite Seligman's *Authentic Happiness* (2002) as a source of their contribution of this 3-factor model.
[45] Martin Seligman, "Flourish: Positive Psychology and Positive Interventions," *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (October 7, 2009), accessed August 14, 2021. https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_resources/documents/a-to-z/s/Seligman_10.pdf, 231.

personal growth attained through achievement? Aren't personal growth and environmental mastery, in and of themselves, anything but personal achievements? Similarly, Ryff's factor of purpose in life appears to be translated in Seligman's model through the condition of Engagement. Can one be engaged in the activities of life without purpose? Doesn't a lack of purpose equate with a diminished level of engagement in life?

Despite similarities, Seligman's proposal differed from previous ones in a significant way: it was accompanied with suggestions for exercises, or "positive interventions," that could help individuals maximize their well-being through the five conditions of the P.E.R.M.A. model. One exercise Seligman suggests, invariably referred to as "three good things"[46] or "The Three Blessings" or "What-Went-Well Exercise,"[47] consists of writing down three things that went well and why every day for a week. Seligman explains that "[i]t turns out that when people do this, six months later they are less depressed and have higher positive emotion compared to placebo—even though the exercise says to do it for only one week."[48] This exercise recalls my daily *Actuality* filmmaking process which also involves a recurring daily activity and, as my friend Paul suggested when he considered my *Actualities* as an expression of thanks for the little things,[49] it can also function as an exercise in acknowledgment, gratitude and appreciation. Perhaps the production of *Actualities*, like "The Three Blessings," could be considered and understood as a positive intervention for the filmmaker to help maximize the conditions of Seligman's P.E.R.M.A. model and, in turn, well-being. But Seligman's articulation of his model offers no specific guidance on how these types of interventions could be successfully implemented within an artistic or filmmaking practice.

In this section I have reviewed the development of psychological models of well-being since they first began to be formulated in the latter part of the 20th century. The examples I have focused on do not represent an exhaustive list: other models of well-being have been proposed over the years, like Headey and Wearing's Stocks and Flows (which transposes financial concepts onto the psychology of well-being)[50] or the See-saw model (where well-being is the balance between resources and challenges) proposed by R. Dodge et al.,[51] to name a few other examples. My hope is that the key, salient models I have cited and reviewed illustrate the general idea that, despite decades of study, little consensus exists within the field of psychology about these models and, more importantly, about what well-being is. The literature on psychological well-being is peppered with statements like "little consensus exists" or "more research is needed." In light of this, I find little reason to justify adopting one of these models over another as an analytical framework through which to examine my well-being as a filmmaker.

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[46] Ibid, 237.
[47] Martin Seligman, *Flourish* (Sydney: Random House Australia, 2011), ch. 2, sec. "What-Went-Well Exercise (Also Called "Three Blessings")," electronic edition.
[48] Seligman, "Flourish: Positive Psychology," 237.
[49] Paul's comment is cited in Ch. 2.
[50] Rachel Dodge et al., "The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing."
International Journal of Wellbeing 2, no. 3 (August 2012): 227.
[51] Ibid, 229-232.

My review of scientific investigations into the nature of well-being conducted by psychology researchers illustrates the difficulty in rigorously defining well-being. But, as the second 2015 edition of the multi-author volume *Positive Psychology in Practice* shows, some of these models, like Seligman's, have been put into practice and examined in educational and work environments.[52] Perhaps the findings of psychological research into well-being could also be applied within an art practice. The recent field of art therapy has sought to do just that and it is this discipline I turned to next.

b) Art Therapy

Art therapy is a discipline that, through the combination of practical psychology with art making, investigates the cognitive impact of the creative process as it relates to well-being. More specifically, art therapy seeks to employ the use or art making to "improve and enhance the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages."[53] As art therapist Cathy Malchiodi notes in *The Art Therapy Sourcebook*, "the idea that art making can be therapeutic is very old, and art making is one of the most ancient forms of healing."[54] Here, she is referring exclusively to drawing, painting and sculpture. Since Malchiodi first published her volume in 1998, others working within the discipline of art therapy have begun to explore filmmaking and its inherent therapeutic value.

In *Art Therapy Practice: Innovative Approaches with Diverse Populations* (2000), Harriet Wadeson recognizes the therapeutic value of "video making" when she cites the work of art therapist William Kasser, who discovered that video production helped his patients living with HIV "distance themselves from their daily lives in order to offer a more reflective perspective."[55] In collaboration with Kasser, patients storyboarded, shot, scored and roughly edited videos that told the story of a typical day in their lives. As Wadeson explains,

> Each participant reviewed the rough cut and the soundtrack and selected changes for the final video footage, which was the relationship each participant developed with Kasser as he entered their lives, followed their directions, and heard and saw their reactions to the conditions of their lives.[56]

While she recognizes the therapeutic benefits of this specific video project on its participants, Wadeson falls short of claiming that filmmaking outside the discipline of art therapy can function as an art making process that can be soothing, stress-reducing and a way to transcend troubling circumstances or life's problems.[57]

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[52] Stephen Joseph, ed., *Positive Psychology in Practice*, 2nd edition (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2015), 2.
[53] Susan Hogan and Annette M. Coulter, *The Introductory Guide to Art Therapy: Experiential Teaching and Learning for Students and Practitioners* (East Sussex: Routledge, 2014), 10.
[54] Cathy A. Malchiodi, *The Art Therapy Sourcebook* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998), xii-xv.
[55] Harriet Wadeson, *Art Therapy Practice: Innovative Approaches with Diverse Populations* (New York: Wiley, 2000), 357.
[56] Ibid. It is unclear whether the rough cuts were refined into final cuts or if these videos were ever screened with an audience. It is also unclear to what extent the participants performed their own editing.
[57] In her 440-page volume exploring a wide range of art therapy approaches, Wadeson's discussion of filmmaking is limited to three pages.

"Media psychologist"[58] Joshua L. Cohen has devoted the greater part of his career to "develop a theory on the use of filmmaking in therapy."[59] In *Video and Filmmaking as Psychotherapy: Research and Practice* (2016), Cohen writes that "the entire film production process allows clients to tell their stories by facilitating the development of a language that merges conscious logic with unconscious aspects of the psyche."[60] Cohen has found editing to be particularly beneficial to his clients, as it is a process where they "can talk about and project their fantasies in ways that allow them to make meaning of them, as well as to make up a new script for their lives through a more powerful way of relating to issues or topics that concern them."[61]

Cohen cites two of his own case studies concerning patients of his who are filmmakers to support his conclusions about the psychological benefits of the filmmaking process.[62] It is unclear how much the filmmaking process itself led to patients' recuperation due to Cohen's prescription of anti-psychotic medication in both cases.[63] Moreover, Cohen's studies involving filmmaker clients raise questions about why these clients were unable to benefit from filmmaking before hiring Cohen's services. If filmmaking has the power to heal patients' psyches, as Cohen believes, why were these filmmakers in such a state of distress if they were already engaged in the filmmaking process to begin with? Did the filmmaking methodology Cohen employ with his patients differ from the one they practiced in their professional lives? And if so, how so? Cohen never elucidates answers to these questions, nor does he address to what extent the nature of a film's content—autobiographical versus fictional, for example—plays a role in a patient's ability to benefit from therapeutic effects of the filmmaking process. Must a patient produce a fantasy version of their lives or a fact-based one for the process to benefit them? Must the film be autobiographical? Cohen's work does not answer such questions. Lastly, because Cohen worked exclusively with patients whose occupation is filmmaking, another unanswered question arises: can non-filmmakers who engage in this process also enjoy the benefits of this form of art therapy?

Overall, art therapy literature focused on filmmaking appears to suggest that, at least for specific case studies under certain conditions, the process of making films could be employed for the purposes of maximizing well-being. Yet, many questions about filmmaking and well-being remained largely unexplored within the field of art therapy at large. The concept of employing a creative practice as a method of maximizing well-being, nonetheless, prompted me to wonder if there were any artists who deliberately,

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[58] Routledge, "Featured Author: Dr Joshua Lee Cohen," accessed August 14th, 2021, https://www.routledge.com/authors/i13230-dr-joshua-cohen.
[59] Joshua L. Cohen and Penelope P. Orr, "Film/Video-Based Therapy and Editing as Process From a Depth Psychological Perspective," in *Video and Filmmaking as Psychotherapy: Research and Practice*, edited by Joshua L. Cohen, J. Lauren Johnson, and Penny Orr (London: Routledge, 2016), 30.
[60] Ibid, 31.
[61] Ibid, 40.
[62] Ibid, 38-9.
[63] Ibid. In the first case, Cohen treated a filmmaker, editor, and producer who suffered from a bipolar disorder. According to Cohen, "this case demonstrated that individuals with manic energy can channel it and their attention into a focused activity like editing if they are compliant with medication and thus able to concentrate."

and reflexively, used the tools and techniques of their craft in this manner. I found the most fitting example of such an artist in John Cage.

c) The Case of John Cage and the Influence of Asian Philosophy

Born in Los Angeles in 1912, John Cage was an American composer, musician, visual artist and art philosopher. In the early to mid-1940s, "during the same three or four years that were making Cage a figure in American musical life"[64] he found himself in the throes of a personal life crisis: his extramarital relationships with men had eroded his marriage to his wife Xenia beyond repair. In the midst of this crisis "stress is fracturing Cage's view of himself" and "his life, his art, his loves, and his self-image are all in a headlong collision."[65] During this time, from 1942-1944, "his mood [finds] its way into compositions,"[66] works whose "titles and nature […] register his sadness and anxiety,"[67] that "follow the rise and fall of his heart."[68] Finalized in 1945, the trauma of Cage's divorce to his wife sparked a reassessment of not just his personal life, but a rethinking of the driving force in his practice and his role as a composer. As Cage explained:

> I was disturbed both in my private life and in my public life as a composer. I could not accept the academic idea that the purpose of music was communication, because I noticed that when I conscientiously wrote something sad, people and critics were often apt to laugh. I determined to give up composition unless I could find a better reason for doing it than communication. I found this answer from Gita Sarabhai, an Indian singer and tabla player: The purpose of music is to sober and quiet the mind, thus making it susceptible to divine influences. I also found in the writings of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy that the responsibility of the artist is to imitate nature in her manner of operation. I became less disturbed and went back to work."[69]

Cage's shift in perspective had a profound, transformational effect in his attitude towards his creative practice. From here on he would work tirelessly, until the end of his life in 1992, to challenge the long-held notion that music must communicate or transmit something, and to shatter audience's expectations that a composer or musician must do more than simply present the sounds that nature makes readily available.

Cage's newfound ethos is perhaps best embodied by his most talked about and enduring composition, *4' 33"* (1952).[70] The score of *4'33,"* as composed by Cage, instructs the performer to not play a single note on any instrument for the entire duration

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[64] Kenneth Silverman, *Begin Again: A Biography of John Cage* (New York: Knopf, 2012), ch. 3, "Merce Cunningham; Xenia Leaves," para. 1, electronic edition.
[65] Kay Larson, *Where the Heart Beats John Cage, Zen Buddhism, and the Inner Life of Artists* (New York: Penguin, 2012), part I, ch. 4, "NOT SAYING ANYTHING," para. 10, electronic edition.
[66] Ibid, part I, ch. 4, "THE MOOD AT MIDNIGHT," para. 6.
[67] Silverman, *Begin Again*, ch. 3, "Merce Cunningham; Xenia Leaves," para. 9.
[68] Larson, *Where the Heart Beats*, part I, ch. 4, "THE MOOD AT MIDNIGHT," para. 1.
[69] Ibid, part I, ch.5, "SONATAS AND INTERLUDES," para. 7.
[70] As recently as 2019, Cage's *4' 33"* was the sole focus of an extensive music box set release (available at: (http://mute.com/stumm-433) wherein 58 contemporary artists recorded their interpretations of it.

of the piece, which is about 4 minutes and 33 seconds. As the performer remains silent, ambient sounds become the musical notes of the composition. With *4'33"* and other works that similarly foregrounded noise as music,[71] Noël Carroll argues that "Cage may well have created a new aesthetic category, that of *ordinariness*," but it is an ordinariness that does not function as a negative antithesis to art,[72] that is, it does not serve to bring attention to established notions of what qualifies as music. Carroll recognizes that Cage's works are about "ordinary sounds" as well as "the contrast between ordinary sounds and (traditionally) musical sound," but suggests that "Cage's noise functions to introduce a positive aesthetic predicate, *ordinariness*, which focuses attention on a newly discovered realm of value."[73] In other words, while Cage's compositions affront entrenched musical ideas, they point to *ordinariness* as a primary source of artistic value: their sounds are worth listening to because they are ordinary, not merely because they challenge, or offer an alternative to, what we understand as music. The ordinary sounds in Cage's *4'33"* may inherently be, as Carroll describes them, "semantically mute" because they "are not about anything,"[74] in the sense that they do not, in and of themselves, express or communicate thoughts or feelings. In framing ordinary sounds within the context of a concert hall, however, Cage infuses them with value, un-muting them in order to celebrate their *ordinariness*.

As a result of his personal and artistic crisis, Cage came to recognize his prior work and attitude had been conditioned by his education and the musical expectations of the culture he lived and operated in. He had previously adopted the idea that music must say something, have meaning, convey emotion, consist of harmony, contain melodies, entertain. In Cage's words, "until that time, my music had been based on the traditional idea that you had to say something."[75] His acceptance of this externally imposed standard as the driving engine behind his work was the source of his discontent with his own practice and, as biographer Kay Larson writes, he alone was responsible for it:

> So who is torturing him? The answer is inevitable.
> He is torturing himself, with thoughts. With likes and dislikes. With ego constructs and value judgments.[76]

To wean himself off of his conditioned thinking, Cage resolved to remove purpose from his compositions as much as possible:

> […] I believe that by eliminating purpose, what I call awareness increases. Therefore my purpose is to remove purpose.

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[71] For example, *Imaginary Landscapes No.* 4, a piece whose main instruments are 12 radios, as cited in: Noel Carroll, "Cage and Philosophy," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52, no. 1, The Philosophy of Music (Winter, 1994): 94.
[72] Ibid, 96.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid, 94.
[75] Larson, *Where the Heart Beats*, part II, ch. 6, "MIND VERSUS HEART," para. 3.
[76] Ibid, part II, ch. 7, "THE MIND OF THE WAY," para. 25.

> It's very simple to show, and we've already talked about it. If I have a particular purpose, and then a series of actions comes about, and all I get is an approximation of my purpose, then nothing but a sort of compromise or disappointment can take place. And perhaps that still takes place when my purpose is to remove purpose, namely, I see that I haven't really done it. But at least I'm going along in that general direction.[77]

In spite of his efforts, Cage's work remains, as Carroll notes, "purposive and has a point."[78] One of its purposes is to promote the abovementioned value of *ordinariness*. Yet another is to "[broaden] the range and richness of auditory experience."[79] Just like Benning's films are "about seeing and hearing more of what's already around you,"[80] Cage's compositions encourage a more perceptive listening awareness, a purpose Cage rendered visible in part through his attempts to make his work purposeless. In addition to framing ordinary sounds as music in compositions like *4' 33,"*, Cage engaged in other methods to remove purpose consisting of "chance operations" to "generate random numbers and use them to find sounds" that would then make up his musical pieces.[81] While these procedures did not result in the eradication of purpose from Cage's work, they did largely eliminate authorial intent from the sounds he chose. In doing so, Cage denied the audience's capacity to interpret his compositions in terms of his authorial expression or intention, limiting listener engagement "to attending to the qualities of the sounds themselves" given that, as Carroll notes, "there is nothing else to which one could attend"[82] when experiencing Cage's work. Cage's attempts to remove purpose from his compositions, then, expanded and strengthened the function of his work to motivate attention to sounds, and qualities of sound, that may otherwise go unnoticed.

In addition to expanding the audience's listening awareness and its appreciation of ordinary sounds, Cage's work also served to expand his own well-being within his practice. Engaging in methods that deferred his decision-making to elements of chance, Cage eliminated the need to engage with "likes and dislikes," with the type of "value judgments" that were previously "torturing" him as a composer. Furthermore, in allowing the framing of his compositions to dictate the outcome of his music, Cage also disengaged from the "ego constructs" that had pained him: his process no longer required him to preoccupy his thoughts with the ways his work might reflect or express his self-image. Similarly, "[c]hance operations," as Larson notes, "allow[ed] Cage to dissociate his music from his inner turmoil."[83]

Cage's redefinition of his music practice and his resulting shift in perspective was fueled and informed by concepts he encountered in his explorations of various Asian schools of philosophical thought. It was out of "[his] early contact with Oriental

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[77] Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage* (1988; New York: Routledge, 2003), 220.
[78] Carroll, *Cage and Philosophy*, 96.
[79] Ibid.
[80] As cited in Ch. 2.
[81] Larson, *Where the Heart Beats*, part II, ch. 6, "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS", para. 11.
[82] Carroll, *Cage and Philosophy*, 94.
[83] Larson, *Where the Heart Beats*, part II, ch. 6, "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS", para. 11.

philosophy," as he put it, "that [his] interest in silence naturally developed."[84] Moreover, he was motivated to adopt new ways of thinking out of both personal discontent and a sense of alienation from his peers:

> I got involved in Oriental thought out of necessity. I was very disconcerted both personally and as an artist in the middle forties… I saw that all the composers were writing in different ways, that almost no one among them, nor among the listeners, could understand what I was doing. So that anything like communication as a raison d'etre for art was not possible.[85]

Cage's philosophical wanderings were influenced by his personal acquaintance with intellectuals such as Joseph Campbell, Alan Watts and his Buddhist mentor D.T. Suzuki.[86] Invariably, he cited Zen Buddhism and Hinduism as primary sources of inspiration. In his "study of Oriental thought" Cage "found that the flavor of Zen Buddhism appealed to [him] more than any other."[87] Moreover, he "was especially convinced of the truth of the Hindu theory of art" and "tried to make [his] works correspond to that theory." [88] Cage, then, picked and chose ideas he liked from various Asian schools of thought while ignoring others and, in turn, he synthesized the ones that appealed to him into practical methodologies as he saw fit.

Cage's borrowings and his pronouncements on his sources have become a point of criticism in Cageian studies because, as Edward James Crooks points out, "the manner in which Cage represented and combined [his Asian influences] tended to hide how he diverged from his sources and how those sources presented highly essentialized versions of the traditions they depicted."[89] According to Crooks, in forming his artistic philosophy through "his own essentialized picture of what 'Eastern philosophy' was,"[90] Cage often "erased the philosophical differences within and between the different traditions he borrowed from," resulting in simplified or distorted representations of these creeds in his work and musings.[91] Furthermore, in Crooks' assessment, Cage's selective study of Asian philosophies focused "only on anti-rational and anti-logical" concepts from a small group of philosophical schools and interpretative sources.[92] As a result, Cage, through his appropriations, "reinforced the [stereotypical] assumptions of Orientalism"[93] that presuppose that Asian philosophy is "irrational and illogical,"[94] differing from the "rational Occident."[95]

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[84] Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, 66.
[85] Larson, *Where the Heart Beats*, part I, ch. 4, "WHAT IS THE SELF? ," para. 10.
[86] Ibid, part II, ch. 7, "THE MIND OF THE WAY," para. 2.
[87] Ibids, part I, ch. 4, "WHAT IS THE SELF? ," para. 10.
[88] Ibid, part I, ch. 5, "SEEKING TRANQUILITY," para. 2.
[89] Edward James Crooks, *Cage's Entanglements with the Ideas of Coomaraswamy,* (PhD diss., University of York, 2011), 29.
[90] Ibid, 266.
[91] Ibid, 260.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid, 260.
[95] Ibid, 92.

Cage's misrepresentations and their influence on misunderstandings about the Asian schools of thought he drew from, while fair subjects of criticism, lie beyond the central concern of my inquiry. Arguably, the ideas Cage enacted in the retooling of his artistic methodology may not have resulted from—nor reflected—faithful interpretations of Zen Buddhism, Hinduism and other Asian systems of thought, but they did help facilitate the expansion of his well-being within his practice. The content of these ideas and their relation to well-being, then, are of greater importance here than their labeling. Cage's adopted methods amounted to a striving towards silencing his authorial voice, resulting in an "increase" in awareness and leading him to a "less disturbed" state of being. How or why did the minimization of self-expression and the expansion of awareness lead Cage to lessen his distress? To answer this question I followed his lead and investigated philosophical frameworks based on concepts that, similar to those found in various Asian philosophies, propose the silencing or transcendence of one's self-image and the expansion of awareness as key elements in the path to well-being. Specifically, I narrowed my search to the philosophies of Jiddu Krishnamurti and Alan Watts, thinkers whose work, though notably informed and inspired by Asian traditions, did not lay claim to representing a particular school or system of thought, nor -ism's of any kind—Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. In the next section, I extract key concepts from the philosophical works of Krishnamurti and Watts to form the conception of well-being that will inform my final analysis in Chapter 4.

d) The Philosophical Works of Jiddu Krishnamurti and Alan Watts

Both contemporaries of Cage, Krishnamurti—born in India in 1895— and Watts—born in England in 1915—each developed philosophical ideologies that, while differing in their defining strokes, both revolved around two key concepts: 1) the fragmentation of thought as the root of suffering; and 2) the mind's awareness of its process of fragmentation as the antidote to its suffering and the facilitator of its well-being. In this section, I examine Krishnamurti's and Watts' thoughts on fragmentation and awareness to extract from these the conception of well-being that will inform my final analysis in the next chapter. Before proceeding to their philosophical ideas, I first establish and defend the work of these philosophers as appropriate for academic study.

Krishnamurti and Watts in the Academy

Conveying their philosophies through the medium of language naturally required that Krishnamurti and Watts engage in the process of translating their thoughts into linguistic symbols such as words, terms, definitions, explanations. This process, however, ran counter to their shared aim of promoting a resistance to understanding the world as symbolized. As a result, in the presentation of their respective ideas, they demonstrated a reluctance to invent taxonomies of philosophical terms or to express themselves in a scholarly voice. Moreover, they endorsed an adamant rejection of labels and definitions of themselves and their philosophies, a matter that has complicated discourse on their work and, consequently, impacted their recognition as philosophical thinkers within an academic context.

In her 1996 doctoral thesis, titled *The Phenomenology of Compassion: A Study in the Teachings of J. Krishnamurti*, Veronica Boutte recognizes Krishnamurti's impact on "the twentieth century philosophical scene" and his ability to take "readers and listeners far beyond the limits and conventions of intellectual and psychological thinking."[96] Yet, she admits that categorizing Krishnamurti and his work proves difficult and, moreover, antithetical to the man's worldview: "Can the man be labeled as [a mystic or humanist], or labeled as anything?," she asks.[97] Rather than opting for the term "philosopher," she instead refers to him as an "awakener," as a kind of "wisdom activist."[98] Regarding Watts, the author of *Zen Master Who?: A Guide to the People and Stories of Zen*, James Ishmael Ford, acknowledges Watts' influence in the popularization of Asian philosophical thought as one of D.T. Suzuki's "most notable followers,"[99] yet, Ford dismisses Watts as a "trickster," referring to him as a "scandalous libertine" and an "interesting eccentric."[100]

The negative impact these types of characterization have had on the reputations of Krishnamurti and Watts is exacerbated, on the one hand, by their own denials of having any special knowledge or philosophical authority and, on the other, by their repudiation of institutional authority on human thought and knowledge. Krishnamurti himself notoriously renounced the messianic role of "World Teacher" he had been given by the Order of the Star in the East, an organization founded by the Theosophical Society to prepare the world for the arrival of this new messianic entity. Krishnamurti was given this role while still a teenager but outgrew it once he matured. In his notorious renunciation speech, in 1929, he proclaimed that "truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect."[101] Moreover, Krishnamurti "[rejected] external and internal authority in the form of experts and gurus, beliefs and ideas,"[102] an attitude expressed in his encouragement to readers and listeners that "[y]ou have to be a light to yourself."[103] "This light," he said,

> is not to be lit by another, however experienced, however clever, however erudite, however spiritual. Nobody on earth or in heaven can light that, except yourself, in your own understanding and meditation.[104]

For his part, Watts renounced in 1950 his position as Episcopalian priest, chaplain and theologian at Northwestern University before moving to San Francisco to join the

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[96] Veronica Boutte, *The Phenomenology of Compassion: A Study in the Teachings of J. Krishnamurti* (PhD diss., University of South Africa, 1996), 5, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/43175165.pdf.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] James Ishmael Ford, *Zen Master Who?: A Guide to the Stories and People of Zen* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006), 64-5.
[100] Ibid, 65.
[101] Jiddu Krishnamurti, "Truth is a Pathless Land," transcribed speech, *The Krishnamurti Foundations* , accessed August 14, 2021, https://jkrishnamurti.org/about-dissolution-speech.
[102] Peter Butcher, "The Phenomenological Psychology of J. Krishnamurti," *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 18, no. 1 (1986): 37.
[103] Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti to Himself: His Last Journal* (n.p.: Krishnamurti Foundation Trust Limited, 1987), "BROCKWOOD PARK, HAMPSHIRE: Monday, May 30, 1983," para. 13, electronic edition.
[104] Jiddu Krishnamurti, *This Light in Oneself: True Meditation* (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), 23.

American Academy of Asian Studies as a faculty member, later becoming its director.[105] Despite his employment as professor, Watts often referred to himself as a mere "philosophical entertainer" and a "rascal,"[106] and rejected the authority of teachers and educational institutions, calling the modern system of education that prepares children for some future promised land containing a job and other material comforts "a hoax."[107]

In spite of their stance as outsiders railing against the structured, intellectualizing ways of the academy, both Krishnamurti and Watts participated and contributed to academic discourse through their work. From the 1940s on, Krishnamurti "spoke an average of 175 times a year to crowds ranging from 50 to 8,000 people" in "the United States, England, Switzerland, and India" as well as in "Australia, South America, Canada, and Italy among other places."[108] In the United States, during the rise of the 1960s counterculture, "[c]ollege campuses were," as biographer Dr. David Edmund Moody writes, "fertile territory for Krishnamurti's views, especially during a period of upheaval within the culture of those who were coming of age in America."[109] Between1968 and 1969, Moody explains, Krishnamurti shared his philosophy in an academic context through "thirty-seven talks and dialogues" he gave "to students at nine American universities"[110] including the New School for Social Research, Brandeis University, Harvard University, Claremont College, University of California at Berkeley, University of California at Santa Clara and Stanford University.[111] In this period, Krishnamurti also formed a rapport and "[conducted] meaningful conversations" with professors of religious studies Huston Smith, Jacob Needleman and Alan Anderson.[112]

From the mid to late 20th century, Krishnamurti's philosophical ideas enjoyed the reverence and respect that inspired eminent intellectuals and scientists of his generation to participate in public conversations with him. For the influential and accomplished theoretical physicist David Bohm, "the man [Albert] Einstein once spoke of as his intellectual successor,"[113] his "mutual exploration with Krishnamurti remained the most significant encounter of his life."[114] Suzuki, Cage's mentor, was once asked "if there were any living persons in the Western world who were in contact with reality" and, in response, "[h]e mentioned Krishnamurti who, although Indian, spent most of his time in the West."[115] Today, Krishnamurti's philosophy remains alive and relevant through the work of foundations in the United States, the United Kingdom, India, Spain and Latin America, which oversee the administration, dissemination, publication and translation

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[105] Columbus and Rice, *Alan Watts—in the Academy*, 1.
[106] Kenneth S. Cohen, "'You can tell a yogi by his laugh': reminiscences of Alan Watts' last summer," *Self and Society* 43, no. 4 (2015): 299.
[107] Alan Watts, *Eastern Wisdom, Modern Life: Collected Talks 1960-1969* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2006), part 3, ch. 8, "FROM TIME TO ETERNITY," para. 40, electronic edition.
[108] Hillary Rodrigues, *Krishnamurti's Insight: An Examination of His Teachings on the Nature of Mind and Religion* (Varanasi, India: Pilgrims Publishing, 2001), 17.
[109] David Edmund Moody, *Krishnamurti in America* (Ojai, CA: Alpha Centauri Press, 2020), 107.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid, 137-8.
[113] F. David Peat, *Infinite Potential: The Life and Times of David Bohm* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996), 1.
[114] Ibid, 230.
[115] John E. Coleman, *The Quiet Mind* (Seattle, WA: Pariyatti Press, 2000), 123.

into more than 30 languages of Krishnamurti's handwritings, books, transcripts, and hundreds of video and audio recordings of his talks.[116]

In his scholarly examination of Krishnamurti's philosophy, Dr. Hillary Rodrigues recognizes that Krishnamurti's "expressed disdain for scholarly studies" may have "induced scholars to give him a wide berth."[117] Nonetheless, while Krishnamurti "did not set himself up as a scholar,"[118] Rodrigues considers that his "teachings are themselves firmly aligned with the scholarly enterprise"[119] if we accept that "a scholar is one who insists on truth."[120] Philosophy Professor Dr. Raymond Martin expresses a similar view in his own study of Krishnamurti's work, noting that "even though Krishnamurti disdained theorizing, he theorized in spite of himself" and, "in theorizing, he had important things to say about issues of philosophical concern," particularly "about the human condition and especially about the self."[121] In Martin's view, "what Krishnamurti had to say is highly relevant to current academic concerns and can be worked up and considered in a standard academic way."[122]

Watts played an even greater role than Krishnamurti in the development of the counterculture brewing in 1960s America, as "[e]ven his most outspoken critics would describe him as a "counter cultural [sic] superstar"."[123] Involved with the 1950s Beat subculture,[124] Watts rubbed shoulders in the 1960s with other countercultural luminaries, such as psychedelic drug advocate Timothy Leary and Beat poet Allen Ginsberg,[125] and "was seen to be a spokesman for the movement."[126] Watts' engagement with the academy was also more direct than Krishnamurti's: in addition to serving as faculty and eventual director of the abovementioned American Academy of Asian Studies, Watts was appointed "visiting scholar" at Harvard University from 1962-1964 and at San Jose State University in 1968.[127] As speaker, he "guest lectured at leading universities and medical schools worldwide, including Stanford, Berkeley, Chicago, Yale, Cornell, Cambridge, and the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich."[128] Despite his academic roles, Watts' philosophical work reinforced his role as outsider because "the way of life he envisaged

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[116] The Krishnamurti Foundations, accessed August 14, 2021, https://jkrishnamurti.org/foundations.
[117] Rodrigues, *Krishnamurti's Insight*, 29-30.
[118] Ibid, 29.
[119] Ibid, 31.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Raymond Martin, *On Krishnamurti* (United States of America: Wadsworth, 2003), 3.
[122] Raymond Martin, quoted in "Krishnamurti at the University," *The Link*, no. 15 (Autumn/Winter 1998): 32-33.
[123] Mark Watts, introduction to *The Culture of Counter-Culture*, by Alan Watts (Boston, MA: Tuttle Publishing, 1999), viii.
[124] Peter J. Columbus, and Donadrian L. Rice, eds., *Alan Watts–Here and Now: Contributions to Psychology, Philosophy and Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 4.
[125] Kevin Mitchell Mercer, "The Houseboat Summit: A Countercultural Vision for a Utopian Drop-Out Society," *Society for U.S. Intellectual History* (blog), August 1, 2017, https://s-usih.org/2017/08/the-houseboat-summit-a-countercultural-vision-for-a-utopian-drop-out-society/.
[126] Mark Watts, introduction, vii.
[127] Columbus and Rice, *Alan Watts—Here and Now*, 3.
[128] Ibid.

and embodied ran counter to dominant cultural expectations."[129] Watts' book *Psychotherapy East and West* (1961), for example, "positioned [him]," as Colin James Sanders writes, "outside of and against the grain of established academic and psychological traditions in North America."[130] Efforts to correct Watts' image as academic outsider and to validate his philosophy's rightful place within academic discourse continue through the publication of recent scholarly volumes.

Published in celebration of what would have been his 100th birthday, the book *Alan Watts—in the Academy* (2017)[131] challenges Watts' image as academic outsider, acknowledging his contributions to academic life and philosophical thought in order to restore his reputation as a serious thinker.[132] In the introduction, authors Peter J. Columbus and Donadrian L. Rice relate that their primary motivation for producing this volume lies in the large numbers of academics they encountered who are "in the closet," so to speak, when it comes to Alan Watts: these professors reveal only in private conversation that Watts remains their favorite philosopher, but do not do so publicly for fear of being criticized or laughed at in academic circles where Watts is looked down upon as a popular thinker of the masses. Philosophy Professor Samir Chopra is cited as confessing:

> I enjoy reading Alan Watts' books. This simple statement of one of my reading pleasures, this revelation of one of my tastes in books and intellectual pursuits, shouldn't need to be a confession, a term that conjures up visions of sin and repentance and shame. But it is a veritable coming out of the philosophical closet.[133]

With a conflicted sense of guilt, Chopra continues:

> I am supposed to be "doing serious philosophy," reading and writing rigorous philosophy; the works of someone most commonly described as a "popularizer" do not appear to make the cut. Even worse, not only was Watts thus a panderer to the masses, but he wrote about supposedly dreamy, insubstantial, woolly headed, mystical philosophies. An analytical philosopher would be an idiot to read him. Keep it under wraps, son.[134]

Other academics, such as Syracuse University Professors Louis Nordstrom and Richard Pilgrim, recognized "the enormous contribution" Watts "made in awakening people all over the world to the spiritual path" while simultaneously leveling "excessively harsh" and "severe" critiques of his work. "It is precisely because of Watts' influence," they confessed, "that we have been harsh."[135]

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[129] Colin James Sanders, "Alan Watts and the Re-Visioning of Psychotherapy," *Self & Society*, Vol. 45, no. 3-4 (2017): 246.
[130] Ibid, 253.
[131] Columbus and Rice, *Alan Watts—in the Academy*, 1.
[132] Ibid, xi.
[133] Ibid, 4.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid, 4.

In spite of the academic marginalization of Watts, the late 20th century brought forth a "growing body of scholarship acknowledging the current relevance […] of Watts and his work,"[136] that gave rise to a "Wattsian Renaissance"[137] in the second decade of the 21st.[138] At this time, according to Columbus and Rice, Watts' philosophy "[garnered] renewed attention from emerging scholars and established thinkers in psychology, philosophy, religion, history, art and literary theory."[139] The recent revival of academic interest in Watts' philosophy supports the conclusion that "Watts was a more important and substantive thinker than is typically remembered, acknowledged, or appreciated by considerable numbers of academics."[140]

In spite of their voiced opposition to academic institutions and the systems of thought they promote, then, Krishnamurti and Watts produced philosophical works worthy of academic interest and study. Their dissenting stance was informed by their philosophical approach and colored the non-systemic presentation of their ideas. Both Krishnamurti's and Watts' primary method of philosophical inquiry consisted on the direct observation of the present moment, in the here and now, in order to discover insights into questions about life, existence, reality and well-being. As Doctor of Philosophy R. K. Shringy noted, "[Krishnamurti's] technique is original and unique and derives its validity, not from any authority but from his direct communion with reality."[141] As Columbus and Rice note, Watts similarly centered his philosophy on a "unique contemplative approach" that he "forged" out of his "experiences of ego transcendence."[142] Like Krishnamurti, Watts was also considered "one of the few contemporary philosophers for whom contemplative reflection precedes action in the world."[143]

Krishnamurti's and Watts' philosophies, then, were not founded on comparative examinations of previously established philosophical ideas or texts, nor were they presented through rigorously structured taxonomies of terms and definitions. Instead, they privileged a contemplative approach which earned their presentation an elegant simplicity of language that, in the absence of jargon, sharpened the clarity of Krishnamurti's and Watts' arguments. As Dr. Shringy observed, Krishnamurti "[presented] his understanding in a language that is intelligible and therefore convincing," rendering "his endeavor at awakening the intelligence of humanity" as "effective and fruitful."[144] Similarly, in 2006, cultural critic Erik Davis noted that Watts' "writings and recorded talks still shimmer with a profound and galvanizing lucidity."[145]

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[136] Ibid, 8.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid, 7.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid, 6.
[141] R. K. Shringy, *Philosophy of J. Krishnamurti: A Systematic Study* (New Dehli, India: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1977), 373.
[142] Columbus and Rice, *Alan Watts—Here and Now*, 7.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Shringy, *Philosophy of J. Krishnamurti*, 373.
[145] Erik Davis, *The Visionary State: A Journey Through California's Spiritual Landscape* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006), 159.

Like Krishnamurti's and Watts' philosophical approach, daily *Actuality* filmmaking similarly involves a "direct communion with reality" and a "contemplative approach." For this reason, the work of these thinkers offers a fitting framework for analyzing my process. Moreover, the eloquent simplicity of language endorsed by Krishnamurti and Watts also parallels the *Actuality* form's privileging of simplicity over the greater complexity of other cinematic styles. In the next section, I examine Krishnamurti's and Watts' philosophies to draw out their salient features and synthesize them into a conception of well-being that revolves around two key ideas: conflict as the fragmentation of thought, and awareness as the antidote to conflict.

Conflict as the Fragmentation of Thought

Krishnamurti's philosophy is driven by the idea that all suffering is essentially the product of conflict. War, crime, violence, social unrest are manifestations of conflict as Krishnamurti used the term, but, in his conception, conflict also takes place internally at the individual level: "most of us are in conflict, live a life of contradiction, not only outwardly, but also inwardly," he wrote.[146] Division, or fragmentation, according to Krishnamurti, is the pre-condition that gives rise to conflict. For a war conflict to occur, for example, the world must first be divided or fragmented into nations or tribes. Krishnamurti noted that "[o]ne sees division in the world, national, religious, economic, social and all the rest of it," observing that "in this division there is conflict."[147] Conflict among individual viewpoints, as Krishnamurti explained, also arises due to division:

> When you and I see that it is the moon, then there is no disagreement, it is the moon. But if you think it is something, and I think it is something else, then there must be division and hence conflict.[148]

Following this way of thinking, Krishnamurti proposed that a singular mind also creates conflict within itself when, in making sense of its perceptions, it proceeds to fragment the contents of its thoughts into labels, categories, ideas, names, words, concepts, memories, or what he referred to as *images*. "[W]hen Krishnamurti talked of constructing an *image*," as Martin clarifies, "he simply meant conceptualizing something" as a way of "interpreting an item of experience."[149] In looking at a tree, for example, the perception of it makes an impression upon the mind which it recognizes or categorizes as representative of the concept called "tree." Once it has conceptualized its perception as "tree," the mind may proceed to generate thoughts about it in the form of judgments, opinions, wishes, memories about its conception of the tree. As Martin notes, "in Krishnamurti's manner of speaking, both of these ways of interpreting the tree"—its initial labeling and the subsequent thoughts about it—"would be ways of forming images."[150]

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[146] Jiddu Krishnamurti, *The Book of Life: Daily Meditations with Krishnamurti* (New York: HarperCollins e-books, 2010), ch. 6, "Where There Is Contradiction There Is Conflict," para. 1, electronic edition.
[147] Krishnamurti, *Awakening of Intelligence*, part VII, ch.7, para. 16.
[148] Ibid, part V, ch.1, para. 17.
[149] Martin, *On Krishnamurti*, 23.
[150] Ibid.

Krishnamurti's understanding of perception and thought recalls the philosophical works of philosophers who similarly envisioned mental activity in terms of images. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, insisted that "mental activity is directly dependent on manifold forms of signification"[151] such as language, which, in his view "conveys not sensations but 'copies of sensations,' not things but images of our perception of things."[152] Images, then, in Nietzsche's view as in Krishnamurti's, are sensations thought through, described with or translated into the symbols of language. According to Nietzsche, the process of labeling experience with the symbols of language begins with the perception of "a nerve stimulus" that is then, in thought, "transferred into an image" he calls the "first metaphor."[153] This image, the initial metaphor, "in turn, is imitated in a sound" or "second metaphor" and, as this process of metaphor creation transitions from image to image, "each time there is a complete overleaping of one sphere, right into the middle of an entirely new and different one."[154] To Nietzsche's thinking, the mind's process of converting nerve stimuli into images is "if not the mother, then the grandmother of every single concept"[155] that exists in the mind. In his description of the mind's symbolizing, Nietzsche's view of perception and conceptualization appears to coincide with Krishnamurti's except that for Nietzsche "perceptions are already interpretations."[156] Sensations are filtered through the delimited perspective of a given human system of perception and this filtering appears, in Nietzsche's view, to be itself an interpretation, though one not yet formulated in language. This understanding appears to have informed Nietzsche's statement that in experience "facts are precisely what there are not," instead there are "only interpretations."[157] By contrast, Krishnamurti did not qualify perceptions as factual or biased. In his view, there is in subjective experience simply a perceiving and, in the interest of expanding well-being to its maximum, what matters is not how delimited the perceiving may be by its point of view, or the physiological constitution that facilitates it, but, rather, whether the perceiving proceeds without the influence of mind-created images. When mental images interfere, influence, distort or affect perception then, in Krishnamurti's perspective, conflict arises as division or fragmentation between perceiving and thinking. To conceive or think of a perception as a "perception," to describe or even name it, clearly transforms it into an interpretation. But in Krishnamurti's view, in contrast with Nietzsche's, perceptions (as yet unnamed) occur at the very moment of perceiving, in the present, where they are free of the mind's signification process, whereas interpretations exist separately as mental images the mind attaches to its perceptions.

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[151] Gregory Moore, and Thomas H. Brobjer, eds., *Nietzsche and Science* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 91.
[152] Patricia Bizzell, Bruce Herzberg, and Robin Reames, eds., *The Rhetorical Tradition*, 3rd ed. (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2020), part 4, "CONTEMPORARY RHETORIC," "Friedrich Nietzsche 1844 – 1900."
[153] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanties Press, 1990), 82.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid, 85.
[156] Moore and Brobjer, *Nietzsche and Science*, 59.
[157] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power: Selections from the Notebooks of the 1880s*, ed. R. Kevin Hill, trans. R. Kevin Hill and Michael A. Scarpitti (Great Britain: Penguin Random House UK, 2017), 287.

The concept of image also played a central role in the work of French philosopher Henri Bergson, although its meaning oscillated between different notions within his conception of matter, perception and memory. To begin with, Bergson envisioned matter as an "aggregate of 'images'" wherein an "image" is understood as that which exists "half-way between the 'thing' and its 'representation.'"[158] In Bergson's view, then, a human body encounters matter as a system of images from which its sensory system filters the few that make up its perception of the world. Thus, images are what constitute material things (matter) and, following Bergson's thinking, they are also the contents of perception, half-way between the material object in reality and the mind's representational model of it. In other words, perception is material and matter is itself perception, or, as Bergson stated, "pure perception, which is the lowest degree of mind — mind without memory — is really part of matter, as we understand matter."[159] Moreover, in Bergson's view, pure perception differs from memory because, whereas "in pure perception, the perceived object is a present object" whose "image then is actually given, […] with memory it is otherwise, for a remembrance is the representation of an absent object."[160] The mental representation of an absent object is itself an image Bergson refers to as a "memory-image" which exerts its influence on "pure perception," resulting in the process he calls "complete perception." As Bergson wrote: "complete perception is only defined and distinguished by its coalescence with a memory-image."[161] In Bergson's conception, then, image is both matter and the product of the mind, and yet, as Dr. Temenuga Trifonova notes, in Bergson's thinking "matter remains thing-like" as he "continues to distinguish, if only implicitly, thing from image."[162] For example, Bergson seems to have categorized image as belonging to thought rather than the world of things, when asking: "Above all, how are we to imagine a relation between a thing and its image, between matter and thought?"[163] Here, then, in spite of his imagistic conception of matter, Bergson's classification of image as the product of thought and as separate from the world of things appears to coincide with Krishnamurti's, wherein images are categorized as products of the mind in the form of memories, interpretations, beliefs, prejudices, reflections, wishes, regrets, etc. In Bergson's view there is "in perception something which is entirely absent from memory, a reality intuitively grasped"[164] and, on this point, his philosophy also coincides with Krishnamurti's, which considers reality as intuitively grasped through observation free of the activities of thought, which include memory.

Yet another point of convergence between Bergson's and Krishnamurti's worldviews appears in Bergson's analysis of movement where he recognized what Krishnamurti called the fragmentation of thought that the mind's conceptualizing produces. In Bergson's view, we experience "real movement" as an "undivided whole"

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[158] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London, UK: George Allen & Unwin, 1919), vii-viii.
[159] Ibid, 297.
[160] Ibid, 314.
[161] Ibid, 163.
[162] Temenuga Trifonova, "Matter-Image or Image-Consciousness: Bergson contra Sartre," *Janus Head* 6, no.1 (2003): 101.
[163] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 33-34.
[164] Ibid, 85.

which our mind, through its mental activity (referred to as "imagination") fragments, like a flash, into discreet snapshots.[165] As Bergson wrote, "[t]he division is the work of our imagination, of which indeed the office is to fix the moving images of our ordinary experience, like the instantaneous flash which illuminates a stormy landscape by night."[166] Bergson's analysis of the experience and conception of movement mirrors Krishnamurti's general understanding of perception and its vulnerability to become fragmented as a result of the mind's mental processes. Moreover, Bergson recognized, as did Krishnamurti and Watts, that "[a]ll division of matter into independent bodies with absolutely determined outlines is an artificial division."[167]

In Krishnamurti's perspective, the habitual process of interpreting the world through images is, itself, a process of fragmentation that results in a mental model of the world as divided into concepts and ideas. This mental model, in turn, hampers the mind's perception of the world as it exists outside of its own thinking and classifications. As Krishnamurti stated, "[t]he mind that is always condemning or identifying" in its effort to make sense of the world, "cannot understand [the real]"[168] because, in his view, the mental model the mind constructs through images results in a division or separation between the world as conceived and the actual world the mind encounters at the moment of perception. Within this disparity, according to Krishnamurti, there resides conflict. "Because we have separated the external [world as is] and the inner [world as conceived]" he observed, "contradiction begins, the contradiction that breeds conflict and pain."[169]

In his own philosophy, Watts also recognized that "[a]ll classification seems to require a division of the world."[170] In his view, the mind's process of "translating what is going on in nature into words, symbols, or numbers" proves useful because "it has," for example, "given us such technology as we have."[171] Nonetheless, the mind's conceptualizing process often leads it to "confuse the world as it is with the world as it is thought about, talked about, and figured about—that is to say, with the world as it is described" and "the difference between these two," according to Watts, "is vast."[172] As the mind accepts its fragmented, symbolized model of the world as a stand-in for the world as is, it adopts a view that conflicts with things as they are because, as Watts noted, "the fundamental realities of nature are not, as thought construes them, separate things."[173] Moreover, the confusion of our symbolized mental model of the world for the world as is explains "why we all feel psychologically frustrated" for, as Watts illustrated, just as "[y]ou cannot quench anybody's thirst with the word *water,*" the mental symbols the mind creates can never be the world they aim to conceptualize.[174]

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[165] Ibid, 247-8.
[166] Ibid, 248.
[167] Ibid, 259.
[168] Jiddu Krishnamurti, *The First and Last Freedom* (New York: HarperCollins e-books, 2010), ch.18, para. 5, electronic edition.
[169] Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti to Himself*, "OJAI CALIFORNIA: Wednesday, March 28, 1984," para. 4.
[170] Alan Watts, "Psychotherapy East and West," in *Three* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1961), 34.
[171] Alan Watts, *Eastern Wisdom,* part 4, ch. 15, "NOT WHAT SHOULD BE BUT WHAT IS," para 12.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Watts, "Psychotherapy East and West," 57.
[174] Ibid.

In both Krishnamurti's and Watts' philosophies, then, the fragmentation of thought plants and cultivates the seed of suffering within the human mind and impedes its ability to attain a maximum state of well-being. In both worldviews, the fragmentation of thought not only gives rise to the conflict between the world as thought of and the world as is, but it also takes on the form of two other illusions that obstruct individuals' path to well-being, namely: the conception of one's self-image as an entity distinct from its surrounding world; and the separation of time as past and future. Both the mind's self-image and its division of time as past and future, are themselves mentally created models that represent the world as conceived and, as long as these models persist within it, the mind shall remain in conflict.

As Krishnamurti articulated, the mind's fragmentation leads to the formation of the concept of the self, or self-image. "When there is no harmony there is fragmentation" and, out of that fragmentation, he explained, "then thought creates the division as the 'me' and the 'not me,' the observer and the observed."[175] The "me," or the sense of self the mind creates, is, in Krishnamurti's view, "composed exclusively of images"[176] consisting of "memories, experiences, accidents, influences, traditions."[177] His perspective aligns with Bergson's sense that, "as a result of experience" the individual "adopts" a "centre" that "become[s] our representation,"[178] an image like any other mental construction from which "arises the notion of interiority and exteriority" and "the distinction of my body and other bodies."[179] Similarly, for Krishnamurti, as the mind accumulates experiences and translates them in the form of mental images, these "harden into a center"[180] and "[w]e live and have our being in this center" which is itself a cumulative, constructed mental image invariably referred to as the "me," the "observer" or the "self."[181] Watts similarly described the formation of the self, or what he called "ego," as emerging from the "narrowed, serial consciousness, the memory-stored stream of impressions."[182] This "stream of impressions" is, to Watts' view, "the means by which we have the sense of ego," which "enables us to feel that behind thought there is a thinker and behind knowledge a knower—an individual who stands aside from the changing panorama of experience to order and control it as best he may."[183]

In both Krishnamurti's and Watts' view, once the conception of self has taken root, the mind tends to use it as a filter of both its new perceptions of the world as is and the other mental images it creates to understand what it perceives. "One image, as the observer," Krishnamurti related, "observes dozens of other images" and between the conceptual observer the mind has created and the images it generates "there is a division" and, therefore, this process of centering experience around a self-image "creates

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[175] Krishnamurti, *Awakening of Intelligence*, part VII, ch. 7, para. 30.
[176] Martin, *On Krishnamurti*, 24.
[177] Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Freedom from the Known*, edited by Mary Lutyens (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2011), ch. XII, para. 3.
[178] Bergson, *Matter*, 43.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Martin, *On Krishnamurti*, 33.
[181] Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Choiceless Awareness: A Selection of Passages from the Teachings of J. Krishnamurti*, rev. ed. 2001, ed. Albion W. Patterson (Ojai, CA: Krishnamurti Foundation of America, 1992), 47.
[182] Alan Watts, *Nature, Man and Woman* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 70.
[183] Ibid.

conflict."[184] Similarly, in Watts' view, the mind's conception of self sets the stage for "one hell of a conflict" as it leads individuals to adopt the view that they "stand over against and in opposition to everything else," in confrontation with an "external world" that "doesn't give a damn about [them]."[185] For Watts, the arrangement of self as separate from "the external world" is a "hallucination" because in physical reality "there really is no way of separating myself as a physical body from the natural environment in which I live."[186] This mental division, then, can be seen as a "trick" that "turns [an individual] into a permanently alienated personality."[187] As Watts summed it up: "The hallucination of separateness prevents one from seeing that to cherish the ego is to cherish misery."[188]

In its construction of a self-image, the fragmented mind necessitates that its model of the world conceive of time as consisting of what it labels "the past," for it is the past that informs and defines the conception of self. According to Krishnamurti, the mind's concept of self is made up of mental images such as "all the memories, all the knowledge, all the experience, all the pain, the anxiety, the loneliness, the despair, the uncertainty," in short, "all that is the past."[189] As the mind fragments its perceptions into images, it conceives of their accumulation as a storage, repository or archive of mental impressions that it refers to as the past, which also facilitates its oppositional conception of the future. In this way, the mental conception of the past and the future is not actual time, but can be seen, as Krishnamurti does, as "the psychological time that thought has built,"[190] in other words, as an image or mental conception of temporal experience that divides or fragments it into the categories of past and future. "So long as there is this interval of time which has been bred by thought," Krishnamurti concluded, "there must be sorrow,"[191] because, as established, fragmentation produced by thought creates conflict.

Krishnamurti's distinction between actual time and psychological time differs from Bergson's differentiation between time as measured by clocks and its subjective experience which he called "duration." In Bergson's conception, "[p]ure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego […] refrains from separating its present state from its former states."[192] Bergsonian duration, then, is the experience of time that shall result once the mind's models, including its conception of ego, cease to fragment its contents. In Krishnamurti's terms, the experience of Bergsonian duration can be recognized as the experience of actual, rather than psychological, time. For Krishnamurti, as for Watts, the time of clocks is not itself actual time but yet another mind-made convention. Actual time, for both philosophers, exists

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[184] Martin, *On Krishnamurti*, 25.
[185] Alan Watts, *The Essence of Alan Watts* (Millbrae, CA: Celestial Arts, 1977), 3-4.
[186] Ibid, 4.
[187] Watts, "Psychotherapy East and West," 171.
[188] Alan Watts, *The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), 70-1.
[189] Jiddu Krishnamurti, "An Action with No Past or Future" (public talk, Madras, India, December 28, 1985), J. Krishnamurti Online, https://www.jkrishnamurti.org/content/action-no-past-or-future.
[190] Jiddu Krishnamurti, "Is psychological Time an Invention of Thought?" (public talk, Brockwood Park, UK September 4, 1976), J. Krishnamurti Online, https://www.jkrishnamurti.org/content/psychological-time-invention-thought.
[191] Krishnamurti, *Freedom from the Known*, ch. IX, para. 11.
[192] Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2001), 100.

only in the now, which is the moment of perception that precedes the mind's interpretative construction of images.

The mental division of time, as Watts recognized, can prove useful when, "for the purposes of discussion we have divided events into certain periods."[193] But, as he elucidated, "[i]n reality there are no separate events" because "[l]ife moves along like water" and, rather than fragmented, "it's all connected as the source of the river is connected to the mouth and the ocean."[194] In Watts' view, "all events are really one event" and "when we talk about different events" we are then looking "at different sections or parts of one continuous happening."[195] It follows, then, that the mental conception of time as divided into past and future engenders a view that conflicts with the actual state of reality as "one continuous happening." From Watts' perspective, "[t]he future," like the past, "is a concept" and, as such, "it doesn't exist" in actuality because "time is always now."[196] Additionally, the fragmentary model of time conceived as past and future engenders, in Watts' view, the "fallacy" of "causality" which consists of the notion that "events are caused by previous events from which they flow or necessarily result."[197] From Watts' perspective, what we choose to call the beginning of an event, such as the beginning of life, is "purely arbitrary" and "it has validity only because we all agree about it."[198] There are no beginnings, nor endings, that can delineate or separate events from what Watts calls the "one continuous happening" of reality and, therefore, causality appears as a false notion that there are, firstly, separate events and, secondly, that they are linked through "a mysterious process called cause and effect."[199]

To sum up, then, following Krishnamurti's and Watts' thinking yields an understanding of suffering as rooted in the conflict-ridden, fragmented mental models the mind creates to make sense of the world. In its tendency to divide and fragment its experiences for the purposes of understanding, the mind creates two salient fictions that perpetuate its state of conflict: a conception of the self as separate from its surrounding world, and a conception of time as divided into the categories of past and future. To maximize well-being, then, requires that the mind's fragmentation diminishes or ceases altogether. Both Krishnamurti and Watts propose that this can be achieved not by the cessation of mental activity, but through the practice of awareness of the present moment.

Awareness as the Antidote to Conflict

To break free from conflict, Krishnamurti and Watts both proposed that one exercise awareness, which consists in devoting one's powers of perceptual attention to the present moment of existence. Through this contemplative approach, they surmised, individuals would experience an acceptance of the world as is that resists or rejects the need for the mind's fragmented process of conceptualization. In Krishnamurti's view,

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[193] Watts, *Essence*, 117.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid, 118.
[196] Ibid, 47.
[197] Ibid, 114.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid, 118.

awareness or, as he often termed it, "seeing with awareness," is the key to overcoming fragmentation for, as he explained, "if I am attentive, aware, then there is no building of images"[200] and, therefore, the mind's fragmented models of thought cannot take root. Seeing with awareness for Krishnamurti, then, means seeing without the influence of the images the mind has created, that is, without the bias of labels, beliefs, memories, feelings, judgments which, as previously established, are part and parcel of an illusory past that informs a false self-image.

The process of seeing with awareness is what Watts himself described as "the act of watching everything that is happening, including your own thoughts and your breathing, without comment."[201] Engaging in this process, as he illustrated, leads one to overcome the fiction of a separated self and to see, instead, the world as a unified whole in which division and fragmentation disappear:

> After a while, thinking, or talking to yourself, drops away and you find that there is no 'yourself' other than everything which is going on, both inside and outside the skin. Your consciousness, your breathing and your feelings are all the same process as the wind, the trees growing, the insects buzzing, the water flowing, and the distant prattle of the city. All this is a single many-featured "happening," a perpetual *now* without either past or future, and you are aware of it with the rapt fascination of a child dropping pebbles into a stream.[202]

Krishnamurti further echoed Watts' description of self-transcendence when he attested that:

> When you give your attention completely, that is, with your mind, with your eyes, with your heart, with your nerves—when you give complete attention, you will find there is no centre at all, there is no observer and therefore there is no division between the observed and the observer, and you eradicate conflict totally, this conflict brought about by separation, by division.[203]

The experience of the world as a unified, non-fragmented whole and the consequent self-transcendence that results from seeing with awareness that is central to Krishnamurti's and Watts' worldview, may be to blame for inspiring others to apply the term "mystic" to these philosophers. But there is nothing "mystical," in a "spiritually mysterious" sense, about the ideas Krishnamurti and Watts described. In laboratory experiments neuroscientists have confirmed the veracity that people's sense of self—the notion that they exist as an entity distinct and separate from the world that lives inside the human mind—is indeed an illusion. As neuroscientist Bruce Hood puts it in *The Self Illusion: How the Social Brain Creates Identity* (2012), "the brain science shows that this sense of our self is an illusion," nothing but a "powerful deception generated by our brains."[204]

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[200] Krishnamurti, *Awakening of Intelligence*, part VII, ch.4, para. 20.
[201] Alan Watts, *In My Own Way: An Autobiography, 1915-1965* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 367.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Krishnamurti, *Awakening of Intelligence*, part V, ch. 3, para. 14.
[204] Bruce Hood, *The Self Illusion: How the Social Brain Creates Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), ix.

Neuroscientist Sam Harris expands on this same idea:

> The feeling that we call "I" is an illusion. There is no discrete self or ego living like a Minotaur in the labyrinth of the brain. And the feeling that there is—the sense of being perched somewhere behind your eyes, looking out at a world that is separate from yourself—can be altered or entirely extinguished. Although such experiences of "self-transcendence" are generally thought about in religious terms, there is nothing, in principle, irrational about them. From both a scientific and philosophical point of view, they represent a clearer understanding of the way things are.[205]

As Watts described it, the experience of self-transcendence goes hand in hand with the realization that there is no past nor future, but only a "single many-featured happening," a "perpetual *now*."[206] The non-fragmented state of mind one can attain in seeing with awareness, then, extends not only to our understanding of the world before us and our concept of ourselves in relation to it, but also our understanding of time. According to Watts, we live "entirely hypnotized by the illusion of time" that the mind has created "in which the so-called present moment is felt as nothing but an infinitesimal hairline between an all-powerfully causative past and an absorbingly important future."[207] As a result, "[w]e do not realize that there never was, is, nor will be any other experience than present experience"[208] and, therefore, our fragmentary, illusory conception of time obstructs our ability to see reality clearly as it is. As Watts put it, "[w]e confuse the world as talked about, described, and measured with the world which actually is."[209]

In Watts's view, all there ever is *is* the present moment in which the here and now can be naturally perceived. To realize and understand this as the reality of the experience of time is to break free from the mind's fictional models and, therefore, from conflict. As Watts explained,

> The secret to waking up from the drama—all these endless cycles—is to realize that only the present exists. It's the only time there is. And when you become awake to that, boredom ends, and you are delivered from the cycles—not in the sense that they disappear, but that you no longer go through them. Well, you do go through them, but you realize they're not going anywhere. And you don't even try to hurry up and get to the end of it all faster, because just like music, the point of listening isn't to get to the end of the piece—you can sit back with interest and let it all be. You can look at every little detail of life in a new way, saying, "Oh! Look at that!" By living totally here and now, one's eyes are opened in astonishment."[210]

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[205] Sam Harris, *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 9.
[206] Watts, *In My Own Way*, 367.
[207] Alan Watts, *The Way of Liberation: Essays and Lectures on the Transformation of the Self*, eds. Mark Watts and Rebecca Shropshire (New York: Weatherhill, 1987), 91.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid, 92.
[210] Alan Watts, *Out of Your Mind: Tricksters, Interdependence, and the Cosmic Game of Hide and Seek* (Boulder: Sound True, 2017), pat V, ch. 13, para. 31, electronic edition.

In Krishnamurti's view, seeing with awareness leads to the mind breaking free from the past because the past is what an individual's collective, preconceived images of the world add up to and, so long as the mind's activity focuses on attending to perception rather than to its labeling, it cannot create images. "Knowledge," understood by Krishanmurti as a mind-created model of the world, "is the past"[211] and to break free from knowledge, then, is to overcome the fragmented thinking that engenders conflict. "It is only when the mind is free from the old," said Krishnamurti, "that it meets everything anew, and in that there is joy."[212] To see with awareness then, without images, is not only to be free of the past but to be free of conflict. To see with awareness, to be free of conflict, to be free of the past—these, in Krishnamurti's worldview, are all variants of the same experience which consists of living fully in the present: in seeing with awareness, one lets go of the past and, simultaneously, fully inhabits the present and becomes free of fragmented thinking and, therefore, conflict. For both Krishnamurti and Watts, then, to be free of conflict and, in consequence, maximize well-being, requires attending to the present moment, to the now, as fully as possible, with total awareness.

One may argue that the concept of now is itself an illusion, that as a matter of physics and neuroscience, as Harris puts it, "there is no now" because "our conscious awareness of the present moment is, in some relevant sense, already a memory."[213] What we might observe in the stars in the night sky, for example, may be a past event whose light reaches our retinas long after it occurred at a distant source in outer space. But as Harris' counters, "as a matter of conscious experience, the reality of your life is always *now*."[214] Harris continues that "there's probably nothing more important to understand about your mind than that, [that the reality of your life is always now] if you want to be happy in this world"[215] and, here, his idea converges with both Krishnamurti's and Watts's view that the expansion of one's well-being hinges on the careful observation of the present moment.

The thinking mind may seek "to make predictions" by "studying" its "memory" of the recent *now*, a mental process wherein, as Watts explained, "the future assumes a high degree of reality."[216] To Krishnamurti, "a mind that is trained to think of the past or of the future, trained to run away in multifarious directions, such a mind is incapable of understanding what is."[217] In Watts' view, "the basic mind which knows reality rather than ideas about it, does not know the future," for, in fact, "[i]t lives completely in the present, and perceives nothing more than what is at this moment."[218] Therefore, as he articulates, "what we know of the future is made up of purely abstract and logical

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[211] Krishnamurti, *Awakening of Intelligence*, part I, ch. 1, para. 34.
[212] Krishnamurti, *First and Last Freedom*, ch. 26, para. 6.
[213] Sam Harris, "Death and the Present Moment," lecture in *A Celebration of Reason - 2012 Global Atheist Convention*, presented by the Atheist Foundation of Australia (Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre, 13th-15th April, 2012, uploaded to YouTube June 2, 2012) 22:00 to 23:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITTxTCz4Ums.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Alan Watts, *The Wisdom of Insecurity: A Message for an Age of Anxiety* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), ch. IV, para. 12-13, electronic edition.
[217] Krishnamurti, *First and Last Freedom*, ch.18, para. 4.
[218] Watts, *Wisdom of Insecurity*, ch. IV, para. 12-13.

elements—inferences, guesses, deductions—it cannot be eaten, felt, smelled, seen, heard, or otherwise enjoyed."[219] The pursuit of the future, then, is the pursuit of a "phantom" that explains, in Watts' conclusion, "why all the affairs of civilization are rushed, why hardly anyone enjoys what he has, and is forever seeking more and more."[220]

Having established the salient features of Krishnamurti's and Watts' respective philosophies, I now draw from these a framework for understanding well-being that conceives of it as a state characterized by a minimal or negligent amount of fragmented thinking and which can be maximized when one strives to observe the present moment with full awareness. Krishnamurti and Watts both acknowledged that the mind's process of categorizing sensory input may hold practical value in human affairs but, through their respective philosophies, they aimed to highlight how this mental process continually leads individuals to confuse the world-as-interpreted with the world-as-is. In its effort to make sense of the world, the thinking mind translates sensory experience into symbols, producing a conception of the world as divided, or fragmented, into labels such as "house," "tree," "sky," "me," "other," "past," "future." But this conception of the world, one whose defining essence is division or fragmentation, is not the world as it exists: it is the world as interpreted by the mind. Both Krishnamurti's and Watts' philosophies propose that, as long as the mind holds on to its understanding of the world as fragmented, the conditions that enact its suffering will pervade. To keep these conditions from taking hold, both philosophers suggest the mind must strive to become fully aware of its process of conceptualizing the world-as-is, and this can be accomplished through the full, attentive observation of the present moment of experience.

The kind of contemplative approach Krishnamurti and Watts prescribed to transcend conflict and, thus, expand well-being, is not to be confused, as Watts clarified, with a careless, nihilistic attitude towards existence. "The art of living" as he explained, "is neither careless drifting on the one hand nor fearful clinging to the past on the other. It consists in being sensitive to each moment, in regarding it as utterly new and unique, in having the mind open and wholly receptive."[221] My daily *Actuality* filmmaking similarly demanded I stay sensitive to each moment in my daily existence, to observe it attentively. For this reason, the conception of well-being I have constructed through the ideas of Krishnamurti and Watts, as a state of being in which fragmentation is highly, if not entirely, reduced through awareness of the present, offers a fitting framework of analysis for my process. In the next chapter, I engage this framework of well-being with realistic theories of film, film/mind analogies and with my own daily filmmaking practice in order to illuminate how my own well-being is affected within my process.

[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid, ch. VI, para. 17.

CHAPTER 4—Daily *Actuality* Filmmaking & the Path to Well-Being

In this chapter I transpose Krishnamurti's and Watts' ways of thinking about well-being to my daily filmmaking practice. In particular, I examine how the production of my *Actualities* influenced the fragmentation of my thinking and facilitated my awareness of the present moment. As discussed, in both Krishnamurti's and Watts' view, the mind's fragmentation may manifest in various ways: as a division between the world as perceived and the world as thought about or interpreted; a discrepancy between the world as is and the mind's mental image(s) of it; a conception of one's self as separate from the world; a partitioning of time as consisting of past and future.[1] I begin my discussion of my daily practice's effect on my mind's fragmentation by first assessing the extent of any gap between my actual experience of reality—which includes my observations of the recording process as well as surrounding events—and the experience of what my *Actualities* depict—which consists of my observations as viewer of my work. To do so, I engage with theoretical frameworks founded on the idea that the medium of film possesses a remarkable ability to closely reproduce reality, specifically those proposed and established by André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer. Secondly, informed by Dziga Vertov's camera-as-eye metaphor, I examine the disparity between my camera's process of image creation and my own observational and perceptual experience. Next, I investigate whether my daily films represent me as a self or if they reveal, instead, what Krishnamurti and Watts asserted, that the conception of a self as distinct from the world is a mind-created, illusory one. Then, I highlight how the repeating, daily obligation to make a film and the restrictive production rules I observed expanded both my sense of awareness and my acceptance of the present moment of perception in the here and now. Lastly, through Hugo Münsterberg's conception of films as reflections of the human mind's thinking processes, I contrast the fragmented thinking my *Actualities* elicit from me as a filmmaker with the fragmentation encouraged by films of the IMR.

The myth surrounding the screening of the Lumière Brothers' *Train Arriving at the Station*[2] through both its content and perpetuation, highlights the kind of Krishnamurtian and Wattsian confusion that a mind engaging with the contents of a film experiences, namely, its confusion of its interpretation of what it perceives for what it in fact perceives. This account of audiences fearfully running for the exit upon seeing a black and white image of a train projected on a wall resists debunking efforts and continues to be retold more than a century after the original event,[3] indicating it is not so easily dismissed as fiction. Perhaps it resists debunking because, hyperbolic and unbelievable though this account may be, it reflects what I recognize in myself as the mind's reflexive tendency to engage with films not as simple fluctuations of light and sound, but through the lens of mind-created interpretative models. In other words, when watching an *Actuality* of a train moving towards the camera, I seem to automatically impose an interpretation on what I am witnessing that results from my mental, thinking process that decodes, reflects on and extracts meaning from the contents of my viewing experience and, then, without realizing it, I take my interpretation to be what I am indeed seeing and hearing, confusing what I

[1] See Chapter 3, pp. 125-135.
[2] Cited in Chapter 1, pp.19-20.
[3] For example, in Martin Scorsese's film *Hugo* (2011).

actually perceive—fluctuations of light and sound—with my mental conception of what I think I perceive—a moving train coming towards me. Much of the literature on film discourse generally reflects the mind's tendency to view and understand films through mind-created interpretative, symbolizing and conceptualizing models of thought. Realistic theories of film, in particular, promote the mind's tendency to interpret the contents of films as depictions or models of reality.

The realistic theories of film developed by Bazin and Kracauer, for example, champion and celebrate what their proponents perceived to be cinema's distinguishing, and most valuable, feature: its ability to capture and mirror reality with great approximation.[4] The theory developed by Vertov, while not strictly realistic, is similarly rooted in the belief that film has an extraordinary ability to reveal reality. In a general sense, these theories suggest that what I see and hear when watching one of my *Actualities* amounts to a close approximation of my experience of events as they occurred in reality. Within the framework of Krishnamurti's and Watts' philosophical ideas, the close approximation of reality I may think I perceive when watching an *Actuality* appears, not as a matter of pure perception of how things are, but as a product of my mind's conceptualization of the flickers of light and sound it first senses and then interprets, through its thinking, as bearing some relation to my past experience. In other words, the close approximation of reality I think I perceive when watching one of my *Actualities* is not what I see and hear, for I only see fluctuations of light and hear sounds; rather, the close approximation of reality I think I perceive is, itself, the interpretation my mind imposes on the fluctuations of light and sound I sense. The contents of a given *Actuality* film are not the reality they depict in the Wattsian sense that 'the menu is not the meal.' To follow Watts' metaphor,[5] I may conceive of thought models that delineate all the relationships that link the menu to the meal, just as I may produce theoretical models that explain or detail the relations that exist between an *Actuality* I have filmed and what I experienced in reality at the moment of filming. But just as no amount of thinking or explaining can ever make the menu be the meal, no model of thought can aspire to make the film I have made into the ontological equivalent of what I experienced. Theoretical frameworks such as Bazin's, Kracauer's and Vertov's, which conceive of films as approximate records of reality, then, can be seen as manifesting the human mind's tendency to first label and interpret the sensory data it receives and, moreover, its subsequent proclivity to view its interpretation as equivalent or approximate to what it perceives at the level of sensation.

When I watch an *Actuality* of a train moving towards the camera, such as my own *Actuality #70: LOCOMOTIVE*,[6] I see a train as a result of my interpretation of what I am witnessing. But there is no train before me: all I am seeing are fluctuations of light flickering on a screen. Not only do I think I see a train where there is none, but I think I see, specifically, a *moving* train. In short, I think I see movement. A close look at the

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[4] Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures* (Madden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 202. Carroll writes: "These [realist] theorists were often called realists because they thought that the essential feature of cinema is photography (cinematography) and that this feature committed cinema to meeting certain standards that emphasized the recording and disclosure of reality."

[5] Cited in the Introduction, p. 5.

[6] *Actuality #70: LOCOMOTIVE* can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/rtdYXqcmcV4.

sequence of still images that constitute such an *Actuality*, however, demonstrates that this perception of movement is illusory: every frame contained within the sequence that makes up this film unequivocally shows a non-moving train within its edges. Under the spell of a powerful optical illusion, a continuously moving train is *what I think I see*. But, as the evidence brings to bear, it is not *what I see*, for there is no continuously moving train to be found within the essential components—the still frames—that make up the film. The coinage and use of the terms "motion pictures," "moving pictures" and "movies" to refer to films—and to distinguish them from other kinds of pictures—reflect a general tendency to interpret films' illusory presentation of movement as actual movement.

As with movement, my perception of continuity is equally illusory when watching an *Actuality* of a train moving towards the camera. As the film unfolds, I consider the train as a *continuously* moving object. Specifically, I assume that the train depicted in the second frame of this film, for example, is the continuation in time of the train I saw in the first frame. In other words, I think it is the same train. This may seem like an obvious and fair assumption to make while watching the film. But, as with movement, a close look at the still images that make up this film reveals that there is no tangible evidence for the continuity I am convinced of: the film is made up of *separate* still images which are, ontologically speaking, all different. Moreover, what happened to the moment in time—the fraction of a second—between the first frame and the second frame which the camera did not photograph? It is highly improbable the train ceased to exist in that moment, yet it is a moment that, in its absence, represents a gap in continuity in the images that make up the film. It is only when these images are flashed rapidly before my eyes that, despite gaps, I perceive the object depicted in them as being the *same* continuous object. While continuity cannot be found in the essential components of the film—the still frames—it is produced by my mind when I watch the *Actuality* play before my eyes. Continuity is, in this way, a perceptual illusion.

To think I see a train where there is none; to think I see movement where there is none; to think I see continuity where there is none—these are examples of the confusion my mind experiences in watching my *Actualities* at the time of recording, during editing and as finished films, namely: the confusion of *what I see* with *what I think or interpret I see*. To remain in this state of confusion, as Krishnamurti would say, is to remain in conflict and, as he and Watts prescribed, attentive awareness of what I perceive opens the path to escaping it. One may argue that my ability to become aware of my films' illusory presentation of movement and continuity is facilitated by my privileged access as creator to the film's essential components—its discreet, still frames—and not through my actual viewing or perceptual experience when watching them. The films' speed of projection, admittedly, renders their constitutional still frames undetectable before my powers of perception during viewing. If projection hides the true nature of my films from my perception, then, couldn't the movement and continuity my mind interprets in them be considered true, rather than false, given that this interpretation is in accordance with my perception of what appears to me as an undetectable illusion?

French philosopher Gilles Deleuze posited such a question in introducing his philosophy of film in *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (1983). Deleuze sought to respond to Bergson's estimation that films do not communicate reality but, rather, the model of

reality that exists in our subjective knowledge of the world. "We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality," wrote Bergson, and we "string them" in the "apparatus of knowledge" in a manner he equated to film's synthesis of discreet frames into cohesive sequences.[7] For Bergson, "there is a kind of cinematograph inside of us" and "the mechanism of our ordinary knowledge is of a cinematographical kind."[8] In Bergson's thinking, then, films cannot aim to reproduce actual movement through their synthesis of discreet frames just as the mind's conception of movement as "snapshots of passing reality" cannot aspire to recreate actual movement in thought. Deleuze responded to Bergson's dismissal of cinema's ability to reproduce movement by asking: "is not the reproduction of the illusion" which cinema presents "also its correction?"[9] In Deleuze's view, what cinema presents is not a series of "immobile sections" but "an intermediate image" in which movement is "immediate[ly] given."[10] In other words, Deleuze's thinking invites us to consider a film not as a representation or simulation of movement, but as movement itself. If "the reproduction of the illusion" is "its correction" we can presume that Deleuze's argument equally applies to films' presentation of continuity.

From both a Krishnamurtian and Wattsian point of view, to overlook the illusory nature of films and accept that they contain objects that both move and exist continuously as they do in reality represents a rejection of what is and an engagement with the kind of illusory thinking their philosophies warned against. But even surrendering to Deleuze's proposal to consider films as capable of reproducing actual movement (and, by inference, continuity) because during viewing films' discreet still images remain hidden, the cinematic presentation nonetheless still reveals other aspects of reality that films fall short of depicting or reproducing. In this chapter, I aim to elucidate these qualities that escape the representational powers of my films by casting my attentive awareness to the ways in which their contents differ from my experience of reality and my direct observation of it. As noted, Watts considered that, as total awareness of the present moment reveals, the difference between the world as is and the world as thought about "is vast."[11] Similarly, I aim to show here that the differences between the world as I encounter it and my *Actualities* are also immense.

Before proceeding, a brief clarification about what I mean by terms I use in this section such as "reality," "perception" and "image" seems appropriate here. As Watts claimed, "no one can say" what reality is "because it isn't words."[12] Neither he, nor Krishnamurti ever defined the term "reality," and neither did the film theorists I discuss in this chapter. As employed by Krishnamurti and Watts, the term "reality" appears to refer to the part of the physical universe we can perceive through the 5 basic senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Some people may consider thoughts, ideas and

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[7] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (1911; United States of America: Random House, 1944), 332.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London, UK: The Athlone Press, 1986), 3.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Cited in Chapter 3, p. 128.
[12] Alan Watts, "2.5.6. – Art of Meditation," *Alan Watts Organization*, June 20, 2019, https://alanwatts.org/2-5-6-art-of-meditation/.

perceptions as existing in the physical universe and, thus, as part of reality. But in the present discussion they are excluded from the assumed definition of reality because these cannot be perceived through the 5 senses: one can think a thought, but one cannot see it, hear it, smell it or taste it in the physical sense. Reality, then, shall be understood as the physical realm we can perceive while the realm of thoughts and sensations lies outside of it.

In the present chapter, "perception" can be understood as the general process of gathering sensory information about reality. As noted, in Krishnamurti's and Watts's view perception occurs in the present moment and is distinct from the mind's symbolizing, conceptualizing and interpretation. Humans' ability to perceive reality can at times be hampered by biological impairments, pathologies or deficiencies. The thinkers I focus on leave out such considerations, restricting their arguments with an assumed view of human perception as free of imperfections. I have followed their example.

The term "image" as used in this chapter refers to one of two types of impression. On one hand, the term refers to the kind of mental image that, in Krishnamurti's conception, consists of impressions that the human mind registers as a result of its thought process in the labeling of perception. This mental image exists in the realm of thought and not in physical reality. The other type of image discussed in this section consists of a photographic or cinematographic image which consists of the impressions of light a camera (whether analogue or digital) registers. Because my camera also registered impressions of sound during recording, the images I produced may be considered as exhibiting an auditory quality. Nonetheless, I have opted to refer to these camera-produced, hybrid recordings of sound and image as simply "images."

Bazin, Kracauer, Vertov and Münsterberg developed their ideas when filmmaking was primarily an analogue process. Although I used a digital camera and a computer to produce my films, my production process still entailed the essential actions of analogue filmmaking: positioning a camera, looking through it, framing the action and choosing when to start and stop recording. For this reason, I have largely ignored distinctions between analogue and digital filmmaking in examining the work of these theorists.

a) *Actuality* versus Reality

Film theorist and critic Noël Burch suggested the Lumière Brothers saw their Cinématographe as a tool for investigating the world[13] and, in the process of making my own daily *Actualities*, I came to similarly view my camera as an instrument to investigate the world about me. Moreover, I came to view the films I produced within my process as snapshots of the reality I inhabited at the moment of filming. In this section, I scrutinize the notion that my daily films mirror a close approximation of reality as championed in realistic theories of film. Specifically, I focus on those established by Bazin and Kracauer.

[13] Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, 18-9.

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Born in 1918, French film critic and theorist André Bazin began writing about film in 1943 and, in the course of a decade and a half, until he passed away in 1958, he developed his influential theory of film through a series of individual essays published over the years and ultimately gathered in two volumes: *What is Cinema? Vol. 1* (1967) and *What is Cinema? Vol. 2* (1971). As such, Bazin's analytical approach, as others have recognized, constitutes a "fragmentary" rather than a cohesive theory.[14] Nonetheless, a belief that film's defining feature consists of "its ineffable bond with the social world and an ability to truthfully depict life's beauty and complexity"[15] consistently permeates Bazin's ideas. Collectively, then, they can be viewed as both a celebration and an unwavering defense of realist aesthetics. Moreover, Bazin's thinking is unified by what film historian and theorist David Bordwell has recognized as its "dialectical" nature,[16] rooted as it is in the idea that film is divided into two main tendencies: one seeking to reveal physical reality and one aiming to overcome the realistic tendencies of the medium by revealing its aesthetic forms.[17] As Bazin put it, there are "those directors who put their faith in the image and those who put their faith in reality."[18]

In his writings, Bazin articulated his reasons for believing that film's ability to capture and depict reality render cinema into a superior art form. But his premises and the conclusions he drew from them do not square with the observable nature of filmmaking. Bazin stated, for example, that the advent of photography is "essentially objective" because "for the first time an image of the world is formed without the creative intervention of man."[19] In his view, cinema is, in its essence, photography over a period of time, and therefore, if photography is "essentially objective," then, he concluded, "cinema is objectivity in time."[20] As if acknowledging the fallacy in his own argument, he then wrote: "the personality of the photographer enters into the proceedings only in his selection of the object and by way of the purpose he has in mind."[21] Here, his use of the adverb "only" indicates the insignificance Bazin accorded to the photographer's role in producing an image. In fact, he considered the photographer's participation in this process to be so insignificant as to be non-existent: "All the arts," he wrote, "are based on the presence of man, only photography derives an advantage from his absence."[22]

Bazin's conception of filmmaking is not, to echo Krishnamurti and Watts, *what is*: filmmaking is a process wherein the photographer's (or filmmaker's) selection of an object

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[14] David Bordwell, "The Power of a Research Tradition: Prospects for Progress in the Study of Film Style," *Film History* 6, no. 1, Philosophy of Film History (Spring, 1994): 69. Bordwell writes: "[…] Bazin's Dialectical version has not been used in the same wholesale fashion. This is partly due to the rather fragmentary way in which it was assembled, in a series of essays over a decade and a half."
[15] Kevin McDonald, *Film Theory: The* Basics (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 46.
[16] Bordwell, "The Power of a Research Tradition," 63-74.
[17] Ibid, 67.
[18] André Bazin. *What is Cinema?: Volume 1*, translated by Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 11.
[19] Ibid, 13.
[20] Ibid, 14.
[21] Ibid, 13.
[22] Ibid.

and the purpose she may have in mind are not a mere, negligible aspect of image-making. In his writing, Bazin may have aimed to highlight photography and cinema's ability to reproduce images of reality with a camera as distinct from the way images are created in other arts. But however a camera operates, photography and cinema alike do require an agent to produce the final image(s). My own *Actuality* films would not exist were I not present in the process of making them. Cinema is, therefore, not "objectivity in time," as Bazin claims.

In his essay "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," Bazin declared that "[t]he photographic image is the object itself."[23] In other words, a photographic image is not a reproduction, a depiction, a representation of the model before the camera, but, indeed, "it *is* the model."[24] On their face, Bazin's words assert his belief that the photographic image—and, by extension, the images that constitute a film—represent reality so closely, so accurately as to be practically indistinguishable from it. But is this what he *really* meant?

As Kevin McDonald notes in *Film Theory: The Basics* (2016), "the exact meaning of Bazin's assertion has been the source of tremendous consternation."[25] Moreover, for McDonald, Bazin's understanding of the photographic image as the object being photographed "was the linchpin in Bazin's commitment to realism,"[26] presumably because his statement does not reflect the realistic view that a photograph of an object exists in reality as an entity separate from the object. Similarly, in his 2006 academic paper titled *Rethinking Bazin*, Daniel Morgan recognizes that Bazin's idea "seems on its face to be an uncomfortably strange one."[27] Because Morgan "[wants] to take Bazin's claim seriously," he speculates over the pages of his paper on various possible interpretations of it, concluding that Bazin's formulation is metaphorical and that "his metaphors represent a series of attempts at understanding the peculiar ability of photographs to give us more than a representation, however direct and unmediated."[28]

Philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce interpreted Bazin's assertion that the "image is the object itself" to mean that the photographic image is a "a sign" that "shares an existential bond with [its] referent."[29] Film theorist Peter Wollen further developed Peirce's understanding of Bazin's idea in his own semiotic analysis of film, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (1969), which interprets Bazin's words as elucidating a quality Wollen refers to as the "indexical character of the photographic image."[30] But Bazin never used the terms "index" or "indexical" in his writing, and, as Gunning notes, Wollen's interpretation, while clever, strays too far from Bazin's original ideas and into

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[23] Ibid, 14.
[24] Ibid.
[25] McDonald, *Film Theory*, 46.
[26] McDonald, *Film Theory*, 47.
[27] Daniel Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics," *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 452.
[28] Ibid.
[29] McDonald, *Film Theory*, 46.
[30] Ibid, 94.

the realm of "appropriation" and "transformation."[31] Wollen's work may have helped rationalize what others might consider Bazin's "uncomfortably strange" claim, but in departing too far from the original text, as Gunning puts it, "it may have also cut us off from a different understanding of the power of the photograph implied in some of Bazin's less understandable passages."[32] Whether understood literally or metaphorically, Bazin's words exhibit a tendency to think of the images of a film as reproductions of objects so faithful and/or approximate as to be practically indistinguishable from the objects themselves as they exist in the world. Considered as elucidating the indexical quality of a photograph to signify its referent object, Bazin's statement also reveals the overall character of his thoughts on film: it exemplifies Bazin's insistence that film has the ability to produce an approximate or accurate facsimile of reality.

To consider an image of an object as the object itself, as Bazin's theory invites us to do, is to engage in what Krishnamurti considers to be a confusion between *what we see* and *what we think or interpret we see*. Within the process of filmmaking, it is the camera that, operated by the filmmaker, produces images that, to Bazin's way of thinking, are or appear just like reality or something very close to it. Without the camera, when I look at a tree, to Krishnamurti's way of thinking, I may form a mental picture of the tree, a picture that, however fresh it may feel in my mind, is not, and can never be, the tree itself. The tree (unnamed as such at the level of perception) is *what I see* and the image of it in my mind is *what I think or interpret I see.* If I film the tree, the resulting filmed images are also not the tree itself. When I play back the film of the tree, I think I see the tree, but the actual tree is still planted in the spot where I filmed it and is, therefore, not what I see. In looking at the filmed images I recognize, as Bazin did, that there appears to be a relationship between my filmed images and the tree itself, one I may call "indexicality." Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the indexical link between the filmed images and the tree is itself a mind-created interpretative model that, while helpful in guiding my decisions of what objects to point my camera to in order to produce films about them, does not exist in reality. The link between my filmed images and the tree remains a concept, an explanation produced by thought that seeks to establish that *this* (my film) is like, refers to, or resulted from, *that* (the tree). From Watts' perspective that causality is a false notion,[33] I can begin to see that the indexicality between my film and the tree similarly exists only within a very narrowly defined section of the "one continuous happening"[34] of reality, namely, what might be called the filming event. Within it, the light bouncing off the tree may appear to have caused the creation of the images in my camera. But following Watts' thinking that there are no separate events in reality, I become aware that the light that traveled from the tree into my camera's lens could not do so without other contributing events, such as the rain falling from the sky onto the soil that led to the tree's growth from its seed. It may seem absurd to claim rain caused the images in my camera and, yet, my film of the tree would not exist without it happening. Indexicality, then, like causality, while useful when discussed within a narrowly defined

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[31] Tom Gunning, "What is the Point of an Index? or, Faking Photographs," in *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, edited by Karen Beckman and Jean Ma (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 36.
[32] Ibid.
[33] As cited in Chapter 3, p. 131
[34] Ibid.

event, becomes a false notion within the totality of the "many-featured happening"[35] that is reality. The perceived indexical quality between image and object seems to have inspired Bazin's words to bridge the two but, just as Watts insisted that the map is not the territory and that the menu is not the meal, my film is not the tree and no amount of explanation about the links between the two can ever close the ontological gap that exists between them.

To believe, as Bazin did, that the photographic images that constitute cinema are a facsimile of reality—or something close to it—is, from Krishnamurti's and Watts' viewpoint, to remain steeped in conflict. A filmmaker striving to maximize her well-being within the practice of filmmaking, as Krishnamurti and Watts might prescribe, must strive to recognize and transcend the illusion that the images of cinema, like the thought-generated images in the mind, are not themselves the reality they are derived from and never can be, no matter how precisely or faithfully they may appear to depict its visual characteristics. It is through the kind of awareness Krishnamurti and Watts recommended that the notion that images drawn from reality approximate our experience of it can be dispelled. Taking a closer, attentive look at how my films and reality compare can reveal the immense differences that exist between them. My experience of reality is vastly complex and the medium of film is extremely limited in its ability to represent its many facets. Rather than presenting an exhaustive list, I will simply note here a few readily observable limitations of the medium in this regard.

Film as it existed in the time of the Lumière Brothers could only depict very limited visual aspects of reality: the contours of shapes in space, their relational distance based on their location and size difference within the field of view, the visual cues of light and dark variations that provide a sense of volume. Presently, moving image sequences recorded with a camera can represent other aspects of visual experience, such as color, as well as aspects of auditory experience of reality in the form of sound. These representations of color and sound depend on so many variables that it is highly improbable that a film depicts color as I see it with my naked eye, or that it reproduces sound the way I hear it, in any precise sense. In filmmaking, the reproduction of color can vary from camera to camera, and, once processed for editing, is likely to change again depending on what compression and import settings one uses, in the case of digital, or what film stock and chemicals one uses, in the case of analog. Viewing devices—projectors, TVs, etc.—add yet another series of layers that affect and alter the representation of color. The reproduction of sound similarly varies from microphone to microphone and its quality further depends on the ways it is processed, the qualities of the media it is recorded on and the devices it is played on. To say that a film reproduces with precision what I perceive through my optical and hearing systems, then, is to ignore a vast multitude of differences I have only begun to enumerate here between, on one hand, what I see and hear and, on the other, the images and sounds a film presents.

Film is not only limited in its ability to reproduce color and sound as I perceive them, it also falls short of reproducing other aspects of my perception of reality. For example, film currently is unable to communicate or transmit to an audience my

[35] As cited in Chapter 3, p. 133.

experience of smell, or my experience of warm or cool temperatures, so they may share in in my experiencing. I can smell an odor, or feel the warmth or coolness inside a room, but these experiences cannot presently be directly transmitted to a viewer's sense of smell, taste or touch through the contents of cinema as she watches a film on her smartphone, computer, TV or on a wall or screen projection. A film can describe, illustrate or explain the perception of smell, taste and touch but it cannot record or reproduce these experiences in a way that enables others to directly and physically sense them.

Another key distinction between film and reality lies in the way I observe them: in watching a film, I can observe the contours of the picture frame that define the edges of the film. My field of vision may be limited as I look in a singular direction, but as I look about by moving my eyes or body, reality offers no such observable edges: reality has no frame around it demarcating where it ends, as the edges of a picture frame do for a film. There is also no point from which I can observe reality that is removed at a distance from it the way I can observe a film without being in it.

Bazin's tendency to consider the image of an object as the object itself, then, overlooks, on one hand, film's incredibly limited ability to reproduce my perception of reality and, on the other, the ways in which my experience of film and reality differ. One may argue that Bazin's tendency is understandable for it is integral to the enjoyment of cinema: when I sit to watch a film, whether it is one of my *Actualities* or a 2-hour science fiction epic, insisting that what I am seeing are *not objects* but *the visual representation of objects*, that what I see is nothing more than patterns of light flickering on a screen, is a call to my attention that might take the fun out of the whole movie viewing experience. But it is well-being as I have defined it—not enjoyment and fun—that I am concerned with pursuing within filmmaking and, along that path, Bazin's consideration of film represents a move in the wrong direction: it encourages an engagement with films through a mind-created interpretation of their contents as reality or a depiction of it. As I have argued, there exists a large division between reality as I experience it and as portrayed in my films and in this division, as Krishnamurti would say, there is conflict. To understand my films as reproducing or approximating reality, then, prevents the potential maximization of my well-being. By contrast, the realization that any *Actuality* I produce cannot aspire to closely capture or reproduce my experience of the world dissipates the anxiety that motivates my need to record multiple takes or correct my footage because, in light of this new understanding, striving towards creating a film that faithfully recreates my perceptions seems an absurd pursuit.

Bazin's belief that film approximates or faithfully reproduces reality has been perpetuated by those arguing in support of it or extrapolating from it new theories of film. Expressed through his various ruminations on the realistic merits of film, Bazin's dialectical conception of the nature of film would particularly cohere in the work of Siegfried Kracauer and form the core of his theory of film.

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Two years after Bazin's death, German cultural critic, journalist and film theorist Siegfried Kracauer published his book *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*

(1960) which "established [him] as one of the preeminent experts in the still developing field of film study."[36] In his theory, Kracauer proposed that there are two main tendencies in film: the realistic and the formative.[37] The realistic tendency strives "towards realism and culminates in records of nature," while the formative tendency aims "towards artistic creation."[38] According to Kracauer, the prototypes of these two tendencies "were [Louis] Lumière, a strict realist, and Méliès, who gave free rein to his imagination."[39]

In Kracauer's view Lumière *Actualities* "recorded the world about us for no other purpose than to present it," and what they captured "was life at its least controllable and most unconscious moments."[40] Emphasizing that "films are true to the medium to the extent that they penetrate the world before our eyes,"[41] Kracauer's theory offers, on its face, a tempting theoretical framework within which to contextualize my own *Actualities*: I do view my process of producing daily *Actualities* as a way of investigating the world before my eyes and, moreover, working within this aesthetic does restrict the level of control that I, as a filmmaker, exert on the images produced. Kracauer's conception of film, however, is problematic for reasons that revolve around his—and Bazin's—belief that the essence of cinema emanates from its relation to reality. Kracauer made his belief explicit when he wrote: "In establishing physical existence, films differ from photographs in two respects: they represent reality as it evolves in time; and they do so with the aid of cinematic techniques and devices."[42]

Theorists like Bazin and Kracauer, as Carroll notes, "mistook certain period-specific developments in motion picture history to reveal the essence of cinema" and having made this mistake then sought to prove "that certain options of film stylization were uncinematic."[43] But, as Carroll recognizes, instead of demonstrating that only certain film styles (realistic ones) reveal the essence of cinema, "what [these theorists] did was to allow their stylistic preferences to shape — indeed, to infect — their conception of the essence of cinema."[44] Kracauer, like Bazin, favored the "stylistic preferences" that result in a realistic aesthetic and, consequently, to follow Carroll's point, Kracauer's preferential value of realism "shaped" his "conception of the essence of cinema" as it did for Bazin: it led him to consider films as presentations of reality.

"[F]ilms may claim aesthetic validity if," Kracauer wrote, "they build from their basic properties; like photographs, that is, they must record and reveal physical reality."[45] Central to Kracauer's theory of film, then, as for Bazin's, is a tendency to confuse *the observed* (film) with *the interpretation of the observed* (a presentation of reality). Kracauer

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[36] McDonald, *Film Theory*, 37.
[37] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 30.
[38] Ibid, 11-2.
[39] Ibid, 30.
[40] Ibid, 31.
[41] Ibid, ix.
[42] Ibid, 41.
[43] Carroll, *Philosophy of Motion Pictures*, 204.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 37.

manifested this tendency in the articulation of his ideas, beginning with his definition of the realistic and formative tendencies in film. Kracauer's distinction between the realistic and formative approaches to filmmaking hinges on the presumption that there exists a difference—a discernable quality—between films made up of images captured in "the world about us,"[46] resulting in works that are "records of nature,"[47] and films drawn from the substitution of "staged illusion for unstaged reality,"[48] resulting in works that aim "towards artistic creation."[49] The premise of this idea is problematic for two principal reasons. For one, it assumes that a "staged illusion," to use Kracauer's terms, is distinct from "unstaged reality." Secondly, it rests on the assumption that film viewers can readily detect whether the film before them is the result of either "staged" or "unstaged" scenes.

Kracauer's distinction between "staged illusion" and "unstaged reality" assumes a particular meaning of these words—staged/unstaged; illusion/reality—that he never defined. Within the context of his views, one can infer that Kracauer aimed to distinguish between two filmmaking approaches: one where the filmmaker limits her role to setting the camera and filming the reality before it without intervening in its appearance; and one where the filmmaker is an active participant in the arrangement of said reality for the purposes of changing its appearance. What is unclear, given the terminology that Kracauer employed, is whether the arrangement of reality in order to change its appearance *always* results in an illusion. In other words, is an illusion, by its very definition, inherently staged? And is reality, consequently, that which is unstaged? Reality appears as it does in the here and now because a multitude of actions and events—including the choices that have led me to be here and now—have orchestrated the appearance it exhibits the moment I witness it. In this sense, can reality be said to be staged?

Theory of Film leaves unclear what constitutes "staging" for Kracauer. He specifically used his distinction between "staged illusion" and "unstaged reality" to distinguish the Lumière brothers' approach to filmmaking from that of Georges Méliès. As he did, he assumed the Lumières did not stage their *Actualities*, when, in fact, they often did. Kracauer cited the Lumières' *Teasing the Gardner* (L'arroseur arrosé), more commonly known in English as *The Sprinkler Sprinkled*,[50] as an example of a film that "enjoyed immense popularity because it elicited from the flow of everyday life a proper story with a funny climax to boot."[51] In it, a man appears to water a garden with a hose while, unbeknownst to him, a boy sneaks up and interrupts the water flow by stepping on the hose. Perplexed, the man looks at his hose to, in the end, get splashed in the face as the boy lifts his foot. Kracauer insisted that in this film the "story was just a real-life incident,"[52] when in fact it was a staged gag for which the Lumières produced at least two

[46] Ibid, 31.
[47] Ibid, 11-2.
[48] Ibid, 32.
[49] Ibid, 11-2.
[50] This is the English title as featured in the two Lumière *Actuality* compilation films produced by the Lumière Institute, *Lumière The First Films* (1997) and *Lumière! L'Aventure Commence* (2016).
[51] Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 30.
[52] Ibid, 31.

surviving versions with different compositions. Director of the Institute Lumière Thierry Frémaux, in his Lumière *Actuality* compilation film *Lumière! L'Aventure Commence* (2016), refers to the earliest version as "the first fiction"[53] highlighting the performative nature of the film by calling attention to two telling details: the gardener dragging the boy back to the foreground of the frame so as to give him a beating in full view of the camera for the viewers' benefit; and the "furtive glance"[54] the boy gives the camera before exiting the frame at film's end, acknowledging the director and his apparatus. The second version of this film, according to Frémaux, "uses depth of field and more sophisticated acting"[55] as it shows the boy approaching the gardener from the background towards the foreground, rather than from right of the picture frame towards the left. Moreover, it is this version that Frémaux uses to open a "new chapter" in his Lumiére compilation film that "will show that Lumière is also fiction, COMEDY."[56]

Kracauer also cited *Workers Leaving the Factory* as yet another example of the Lumière brothers' approach to making films of "life at its least controllable and most unconscious moments."[57] But the brothers made not two, but three versions of this film, suggesting the scene was not the product of a spontaneous decision to film "unstaged reality" but the product of a premeditated filmmaking effort.[58] The three takes look alike in composition but vary in content: the first features images of a carriage pulled by one horse; the second features images of a carriage pulled by two horses; the third shows no carriage and ends with a man rushing to close the factory gates. In the voiceover narration of *The Lumière Brothers' First Films* (1997) Bertrand Tavernier, then Director of the Institute Lumière, explained that in making *Workers Leaving the Factory* "[Louis] Lumière put his camera in front of his factory and asked—begs [sic], orders[sic]—his workers to go out."[59] Tavernier also pointed out that "[t]he workers, mostly women, know they are [being] filmed because they are not looking at the camera."[60] Frémaux, in his own narration in *Lumière! L'Aventure Commence* (2016), alludes to the mixture of formal and working clothes participants are wearing to suggest that the presence of "[w]ould-be high brows and would-be comics, [proves] the film is directed."[61]

It is reasonable to accept, to a high degree of certainty, that these particular *Actualities—The Sprinkler Sprinkled* and *Workers Leaving the Factory*—were indeed "staged" in the sense that they were not products of "life at its least controllable and most unconscious moments"[62] but the products of some level of planning and staging. Are staged scenes equivalent to what Kracauer considered to be a "staged illusion"? The

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[53] *Lumière! L'Aventure Commence* (2016), 00:07:04.
[54] Ibid.
[55] *Lumière! L'Aventure Commence* (2016), 01:00:00.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 31.
[58] *The Lumière Brothers' First Films*, 2:19. The three takes look alike in composition but vary in content. They are shown here in the order they are believed to have been made. The first features images of a carriage pulled by one horse; the second features images of a carriage pulled by two horses; the third shows no carriage and ends with a man rushing to close the factory gates.
[59] *The Lumière Brothers' First Films*, 2:32.
[60] Ibid, 2:57.
[61] *Lumière! L'Aventure Commence* (2016), 00:04:00.
[62] Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 31.

ideas articulated in *Theory of Film* offer up contradicting views on this matter. When distinguishing the formative tendency of Méliès's from the realistic tendency of the Lumiére brothers, Kracauer wrote that "[Méliès's] main contribution to cinema lay in the substitution of staged illusion for unstaged reality, and contrived plots for everyday incidents."[63] This statement seems to indicate that Kracauer viewed "staged illusion" and "unstaged reality" as separate and distinct, for, if they weren't, how could one be said to substitute the other? Moreover, Kracauer's statement implicitly considers "staged illusion" as the polar opposite of "unstaged reality," for it is these two that, in his view of filmmaking, demarcate one stylistic approach from another.

Yet, Kracauer complicated his view when, a few pages later, he allowed that films "may seize upon physical reality with all its manifold movements by means of an intermediary procedure which would seem to be less indispensable in photography—staging."[64] In the context of creating a "narrative intrigue," Kracauer acknowledged that "a film maker is often obliged to stage not only the action but the surroundings as well."[65] Whether aiming for "narrative intrigue" or not, *Actuality* filmmakers such as Edison, Dickson, the Lumières brothers and their cinematographers, could also be said to have been "often obliged" to stage both action and surroundings, as their own films demonstrate. Kracauer excused such a staging of reality from the formative tendency, from the realm of staged illusions because, to him, "this recourse to staging is most certainly legitimate if the staged world is made to appear as a faithful reproduction of the real one."[66] But isn't a "staged world" that "appears as a faithful reproduction of the real one" the very definition of a "staged illusion"? Kracauer elaborated on his point, stressing the condition that must be met to justify such a staging of reality: "The important thing is that studio-built settings convey the impression of actuality, so that the spectator feels he is watching events which might have occurred in real life and have been photographed on the spot."[67] Here, then, in Kracauer's view, what matters in differentiating one filmmaking tendency from another is not whether a film draws its images from a "staged illusion" or "unstaged reality," but whether the film *appears* to the spectator as "real life." This perspective undermines Kracauer's own conception of film and the application of his own concepts: why propose a conception of two filmmaking tendencies as distinguished by whether they are the result of a "staged illusion" or an "unstaged reality" if an illusion so staged as to appear to the viewer as "unstaged reality" can render the distinction moot?

Yet, when considering the possibility that a film produced from "staged illusion" could look identical to one produced from "unstaged reality," Kracauer insisted on defending his conception of film as consisting of two filmmaking tendencies. "One may ask," Kracauer wrote, "whether reality can be staged so accurately that the camera-eye will not detect any difference between the original and the copy."[68] Given "two identical film scenes," one shot in nature and one staged in the studio, Kracauer argued that "the

[63] Ibid, 32.
[64] Ibid, 34.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid, 35.

former has a quality not found in the latter."[69] Having justified the "recourse to staging" as "most certainly legitimate if the staged world is made to appear as a faithful reproduction of the real one,"[70] he then denied that this is even possible to achieve given that, in his view, there is always a discernible quality between a film "shot in nature and one staged in the studio."[71] Kracauer never articulated what this quality might be before concluding his thoughts on the matter: "Presumably large parts of our environment, natural or man-made, resist duplication."[72] Smell is certainly one example of such an element that resists duplication within the medium of film. But given the context of Kracauer's discussion, it is reasonable to assume he was exclusively referring to elements of the environment that have the quality of visibility, that can be seen and, thus, also photographed. In 1960 it may have been true that parts of the environment could not be visually reproduced on film in a manner that matched what people could perceive with their naked eye. Now, more than 80 years later, great technological advancements in all aspects of filmmaking—from cinematography, set design, hair and makeup to special effects and editing—it is difficult to imagine this is still the case today.

Despite current filmmaking technology, one may argue there are still instances in which Kracauer's dualistic categorization of filmmaking modes as either realistic or formative may still bear relevance. For example, it may be useful, within discussions about political films, to use the categories of realistic and formative in distinguishing films that reflect the integrity of factual events from those that distort them with the intent of manipulating viewers' perceptions and beliefs. But whatever merits and applicability his theory might have in such instances, what is relevant to my present thesis is that Kracauer's distinction makes salient his overall assumption that film can duplicate reality. In writing that "[p]resumably large parts of our environment, natural or man-made, resist duplication,"[73] Kracauer implied that there are at least *some* "parts of our environment" that *can* be duplicated within film. As I have argued earlier on in this chapter, film is extremely limited in its ability to reproduce (duplicate) the vast complexity of reality. For one, film concerns itself with visual and, in the case of sound film, aural representations and, even in its duplication of what reality might look or sound like to one person—not to mention multiple people—it is incredibly imprecise. Kracauer's theory of film is founded on the idea that film *can* or *does* replicate the world as we experience it. It is this false belief that underlies and informs the distinction of films as either realistic or formative central to his theory.

Kracauer appears to have considered *Actualities* as having either no form or a negligent one, for he implicitly characterized them as not aiming "towards artistic creation." More contemporary film thinkers such as Deleuze and film critic Bill Nichols similarly dismissed *Actualities* as possessing insufficient form. For Deleuze, "[t]he evolution of the cinema […] was to take place through montage, the mobile camera and the emancipation of the viewpoint"[74] and so, from his perspective, uninterrupted single-shot

[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid, 34.
[71] Ibid, 35.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 3.

Actualities represented an unevolved cinematic form that did not realize cinema's full expressive potential. Nichols excludes *Actualities* from his conception of what he terms "discourses of sobriety," which he defines as "ways of speaking directly about social and historical reality"[75] that documentary films belong to. In his view, "[t]he early cinema of Lumière and others […] still lacked the voice that would come to characterize documentary."[76] Additionally, for Nichols, "what [the Lumières and their operators] shot mattered more than how they shot it."[77] But *Actualities* inescapably do have form, a form largely determined by the motivations, beliefs and attitudes of their creator(s): the compositional frame, the angle of view, the depth of field—all of these formal elements result from the filmmaker's actions which are informed and propelled by her particular attitude and point of view. In the case of Lumière *Actualities*, as Burch has argued, their form reveals a filmic approach different from Edison and Dickson's, who worked within a similar aesthetic. These films—contrary to Kracauer's, Deleuze's and Nichols' beliefs—are substantial enough in their form as to facilitate the distinction between Lumière and Edison *Actualities*. Moreover, if Lumière *Actualities* can be said to tend towards the realistic, to aspire to be, as Kracauer put it, "records of nature," it is largely because of their reliance on, and privileging of, a particular film form consisting of a frame that does not move and that, during its prolonged duration, does not give way to other angles of view. The artistic expressive potential of this form is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the work of Benning, whose stated artistic aim is to return cinema to its *Actuality* roots because this form was too quickly dismissed. Demonstrably, then, *Actualities* do bear artistic form, specifically one that results from the filmmaker's involvement and actions. Kracauer's distinction between realistic and formative, when applied to *Actuality* filmmaking, only makes sense if one accepts that realistic films lack sufficient form and this is easily done if one falsely believes, as Bazin and Kracauer did, that a film can be so close a representation of nature as to make the filmmaker's hand in the making of it negligent or invisible.

Not long after the publication of *Theory of Film* critics accused Kracauer of being "overly schematic, even pedantic," casting his views as "naïve if not entirely wrongheaded."[78] In light of these assessments Mcdonald characterizes Kracauer and his work as "[falling] victim to the volatility of ever-changing scholarly sensibilities" in the 1960s and 1970s.[79] Film scholar Miriam Hansen is largely credited with defending Kracauer's standing as a film theorist[80] in light of the "long and varied history of critical rejection" *Theory of Film* "enjoyed."[81] In the 1990s, Hansen "[prompted] a return"[82] to Kracauer's work within film discourse by arguing that "the significance of Kracauer's *Theory of Film* can only be grasped in the tension between the early drafts and the later

[75] Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 36.
[76] Ibid, 125.
[77] Ibid, 127.
[78] McDonald, *Film Theory*, 37-8.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid, 171.
[81] Miriam Hansen, ""With Skin and Hair": Kracauer's Theory of Film, Marseille 1940," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 3 (Spring, 1993): 437.
[82] McDonald, *Film Theory*, 171.

book, in the process of endless rewriting, systematization, and elimination."[83] Hansen mined Kracauer's personal archives to trace the evolution of his ideas to produce a portrait of a thinker who was anything but "naïve" and "wrongheaded."[84] Recent articles celebrating Kracauer and his ideas,[85] as well as a recently published volume "analysing the close similarity between the film image and visual perception" titled *Cinematic Realism: Lukács, Kracauer and Theories of the Filmic Real* (2020),[86] attest to Hansen's success in reviving an interest in Kracauer's work to this day. Yet, her re-evaluation of *Theory of Film* does not address the objections I have raised here, and she herself recognized that his "text remains uneven, opaque, and contradictory in many places, defying the attempt to deduce from it any coherent, singular position."[87]

In my estimation *Theory of Film* is a work built upon assumptions, prejudices and contradictions that reflect an imprecise, clouded and conflicted way of thinking about cinema, one that cannot be deemed what Krishnamurti might have called *seeing with awareness*. Although Carroll critiques *Theory of Film* from a perspective different from mine, my conclusions about the text converge with his sense that "[Kracauer's] theory is more like quicksand" rather than "a firm theoretical foundation."[88] As Carroll writes:

> […] the deeper one goes in the text, the more the clear categories seem to muddy. As Kracauer applies his theory to examples, caveats, qualifications, extenuating circumstances, mitigating conditions, and compensating considerations multiply so that one is never sure that one could apply Kracauer's system in a way that would coincide with Kracauer's own results.[89]

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Bazin's and Kracauer's overall conceptions of cinema as a presentation of reality illustrate what I have experienced as an almost irresistible tendency to interpret and decode the meaning of films in terms of the reality they appear to depict. It is an inclination that allows so-called "moving pictures" to be employed as a valuable and useful form of human communication. But while reading a film as "reality," or as an approximate representation or semblance of it, affords me a valuable and powerful means of communication, I do so at the expense of distracting my attention from *seeing with awareness*—with great clarity—what cinema *is*. The medium of language by way of analogy, might help illustrate the dichotomy I face when my mind engages with the contents of a film: for language to be of use I must interpret the arrangement of letters

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[83] Hansen, ""With Skin and Hair"," 438.
[84] Hansen's efforts in this regard are exemplified in the already cited article, ""With Skin and Hair": Kracauer's Theory of Film, Marseille 1940," as well as in her book *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
[85] Thomas Quist, "Is There a Cure for Film Criticism? Or: Some Happy Thoughts on Siegfried Kracauer's "Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality"," *MUBI*, October 20, 2020, https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/is-there-a-cure-for-film-criticism-or-some-happy-thoughts-on-siegfried-kracauer-s-theory-of-film-the-redemption-of-physical-reality.
[86] See official book description at https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/book-cinematic-realism.html.
[87] Hansen, ""With Skin and Hair"," 438.
[88] Noël Carroll, *Engaging the Moving Image* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 296.
[89] Ibid, 281-2.

and words as representing ideas and concepts, and I do so at the risk of becoming oblivious to the fact that letters and words are not the ideas or concepts themselves, but symbols that do not inherently have meaning and instead acquire it because I attribute it to them. Similarly, the contents of a film do not contain meaning, or reality: cinema, on its face, consists only of fluctuations of light and sound.

In Krishnamurti's and Watts' worldviews, the conception of self may prove useful in navigating life, but it is nonetheless an illusion that can get in the way of seeing things as they are: that I am an entity inseparable from the universe that surrounds me. It is my mind, in its striving to make meaning of what it witnesses, that fools me into thinking I, as a self, am the protagonist of my life story. Similarly, it is my mind, in its attempt to understand what it is perceiving when watching my *Actualities*, that leads me to believe or think that the fluctuations of light and sound before me are people and things like the ones I encounter in the world about me, in reality. This process of interpretation may be necessary for audiovisual communication to take place through the medium of film, but it constitutes, nonetheless, in Krishnamurti's and Watts's respective views, a conflation of *what is* with *what I think there is* that keeps me anchored in conflict. For this reason, conceptions of film as a presentation of reality, such as Bazin's and Kracauer's, run counter to the pursuit or expansion of well-being as defined in the philosophical views endorsed by Krishnamurti and Watts.

b) The Camera As an Eye that Sees Without Images

In the literature of film discourse the idea that the camera sees and, specifically, that it sees (or captures) what the filmmaker sees remains prevalent. In support of a volume titled *The Camera Eye Metaphor in Cinema* published in 2019, for example, Oxford Brookes University Lecturer in Film, Warren Buckland, is quoted as saying:

> The metaphor of camera as eye is fundamental to both everyday discussion as well as more academic theories of cinema: it is a pervasive metaphor through which we understand cinema on several levels.[90]

One of the earliest and most prominent proponents of this way of understanding cinema is Soviet (Ukrainian) filmmaker and theorist Dziga Vertov. Born in 1896 in Bialystok, Russia (present-day Poland), David Abelevich Kaufman[91] adopted the name Denis Arkadyevich Kaufman[92] before later settling on the pseudonym Dziga Vertov. As a filmmaker, Vertov's repudiation of "scripted documentary"[93] and "traditional fiction film,"[94] led him to develop a filmmaking style that synthesized a devout faith in the

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[90] Warren Buckland, "Reviews," in "The Camera-Eye Metaphor in Cinema," *Routledge*, accessed August 14th, 2021, https://www.routledge.com/The-Camera-Eye-Metaphor-in-Cinema/Quendler/p/book/9780367873271.
[91] John MacKay, "Dziga Vertov (1896-1954)," in *Russia's People of Empire*, edited by Stephen M. Morris and Willard Sunderland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 283.
[92] Ibid, 285.
[93] Ibid, 283.
[94] Barnow, *Documentary*, 54.

camera's ability to capture "the prose of life"[95] with a "fanatically 'formalist'"[96] approach that embraced experimentation and celebrated the fullest display of a wide range of filmmaking methods and techniques. Central to Vertov's style of filmmaking— perhaps best embodied by "his masterpiece"[97] *The Man With a Movie Camera* (1929)—is his camera-as-eye metaphor. Articulated in his collected writings, it offers a view of the relationship between filmmaking and reality that, unlike Bazin's and Kracauer's, highlights the subjective nature of the process of filming the world.

Comprised of a series of manifestos published throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Vertov's writings on film continually refine his concept of the 'kino-eye'—literally, 'cine-eye'—the term he coined to describe his filmic approach and to label the filmmakers that operated within it.[98] Vertov emphasized the superiority of the camera—the 'kino-eye'—over the human eye:

> The essential thing is:
> The sensory exploration of the world through film.
> We therefore take as the point of departure the use of the camera as a kino-eye, more perfect than the human eye, for the exploration of the chaos of visual phenomena that fills space.
> The kino-eye lives and moves in time and space; it gathers and records impressions in a manner wholly different from that of the human eye.[99]

How do these modes of seeing—the kino-eye's and the human eye's—differ? According to Vertov the camera-eye makes "the invisible visible, the clear unclear, the hidden manifest, the disguised overt, the acted non-acted, making falsehood into truth."[100] This differentiation, like most of Vertov's writing, is shrouded in poetic, figurative language that obfuscates the specific nature of the experience he was describing. Cameras with telescopic or microscopic capabilities can certainly permit us to see details—the craters of the moon; bacteria in contaminated water—that might escape the perceptive capabilities of the naked human eye. Excepting cameras so designed as to detect part of the light spectrum the human eye cannot see, a camera generally does not make "the invisible visible" or "the hidden manifest:" by its very nature, a camera can only register impressions of light from that which is visible within the light spectrum it is designed to detect, while all that is invisible will escape the purview of its lens and, thus, remain hidden within the resulting images.

What Vertov's words allude to is what might be more accurately described as the usefulness the camera affords the filmmaker in helping to bring into her field of awareness details about the world that might have otherwise escaped her attention. Moreover, Vertov's metaphorical language raises an important point: a camera (kino-eye) perceives

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[95] Ibid.
[96] MacKay, "Dziga Vertov," 283.
[97] McDonald, *Film Theory*, 35.
[98] Jeremy Hicks, *Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), xi.
[99] Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, translated by Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 14-5.
[100] Ibid, 41.

the visual differently than the human eye. The functionality humans have built into the film/video camera allows it to function like a human eye with respect to its ability to register impressions of light. Color and shape, detectable to the eye as variations of light that reflect off of surrounding objects, can also be similarly registered by the camera. A camera with focus controls allows for a shift in attention from objects that are close to those that are far (and viceversa), a shift the eye also affords its human proprietor, so long as biological and cognitive deficiencies do not impede it. The intricacies of how the camera and the human eye accomplish these feats bare a vast number of differences that emanate, as one might expect, from the constitutional difference between an artificial, inanimate, non-living object and a biological structure within a multicellular, living organism. Leaving aside most of these constitutional differences, perhaps the most salient distinction between a camera and a human eye lies in the eye's attachment to the brain.

A camera, due to its human design, may exhibit discriminatory judgments or interpretations of reality: for example, a digital camera might represent the color red in a way that is specific to the light sensor and signal compressor it employs; whether digital or analogue, a camera might filter light more or less clearly depending on the kind of glass chosen for its lens. But, once designed, a camera does not, of its own accord, make judgments of what it registers the way the human brain does. If it can be said to *see*, the camera, as Krishnamurti would say, *sees without images*. Or, it *sees* free of the influence of the past, completely unattached from what Watts called the "narrowed, serial consciousness, the memory-stored stream of impressions."[101] For the human eye—a part of the human brain—seeing is inextricably linked with mental activity of thought. For the camera, to see is to simply register impressions of light.

What happens when a camera operator or, what Vertov called a 'kinok-pilot', "who not only controls the camera's movements, but entrusts himself to it during experiments in space," enters the process of filmmaking? What happens when the camera and the human eye come together in this process? Vertov wrote:

> The result of this concerted action of the liberated and perfected camera and the strategic brain of man directing, observing, and gauging—the presentation of even the most ordinary things will take on an exceptionally fresh and interesting aspect.[102]

Here, Vertov echoed the technique of defamiliarization first discussed within the French avant-garde movement of the 1920s. The term defamiliarization was first coined by literary theorist Victor Shklovsky to differentiate between the perception of poetry in contrast with that of everyday speech.[103] In film, this technique was used to present images of ordinary objects in a new and strange way in order to "evoke a sense of wonder, something beyond rational logic, and it could also be used to force viewers to question the nature of everyday existence and the relationships that allow reality to

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[101] As cited in Ch. 3, page 129.
[102] Ibid, 19.
[103] Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd Edition, edited by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Maiden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 17-21.

appear matter-of-fact."[104] Filmmaker and theorist Jean Epstein pointed to the close-up as the cinematic device that best represented this technique. In looking at a close-up of an opening mouth, Epstein saw "clouds," "seismic shocks," "waves," "a theater curtain", "a ripe fruit."[105] Film theorist Béla Balázs also noted the close-up's ability to capture facial expressions in new and unexpected ways: when the camera moves in close on the face of a man it "shows just his chin, and reveals it as weak and cowardly," and "nostrils, ear lobes and neck all have their own face."[106] Balázs recognized defamiliarization as part of film's ability to bring details of reality into the filmmaker's field of awareness: the actual, physical face, "the face beneath the play of expression," is "obscured by our conscious expressions"—our thoughts, our emotions—"[b]ut the close-up brings it to light."[107] In short, the close-up "brings us closer to the individual cells of life."[108] Film theorist Rudolf Arnheim also acknowledged this effect in his writing about a shot from René Clair's *Entr'acte* (1924) in which the camera films a ballet dancer from underneath a glass panel:

> The strangeness and unexpectedness of this view have the effect of a clever coup d'esprit ('to get a fresh angle on a thing'), it brings out the unfamiliar in a familiar object.[109]

The result that Vertov and these theorists described is akin to what I have experienced in filming my daily *Actualities*: through the process of filming common objects and people's faces in my everyday life I have learned to see them with a newfound appreciation for the details that define them. I would qualify the term "defamiliarization" as misleading, however, because, in the process of filming these objects and people, I do not defamiliarize as much as I re-acquaint, or "refamiliarize," myself with them, reviewing or reliving details I had previously recognized while discovering others that may have previously escaped my awareness. "Refamiliarization," thus, seems a more appropriate term to define this technique and I will use it in the place of "defamiliarization" from here on.

The role of the close-up in the process of "refamiliarization," as the abovementioned theorists failed to acknowledge, is vitally aided by its combination with other formal elements of film, namely the long take and the non-moving frame. Fast moving close-ups of short duration, as ones that may be employed in a car chase action sequence, do not give viewers a chance to scan and absorb the changing details presented in the shot so they may refamiliarize themselves with the image of filmed objects. Instead, they often serve to intensify dramatic action. Long, static close-up shots of about 1-minute in duration as may be found in my *Actualities*, on the other hand, facilitate the experience of refamiliarization, of seeing with fixed and attentive awareness, due to their duration and fixed view.

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[104] McDonald, *Film Theory*, 26.
[105] Richard Abel, ed., French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, Volume I 1907–1939 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988) 235-6.
[106] Béla Balázs, *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory*, edited by Erica Carter, translated by Rodney Livingstone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 102.
[107] Ibid, 104.
[108] Ibid, 37.
[109] Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 39.

For Vertov, seeing the unfamiliar in the familiar—what I call refamiliarization—was a byproduct of the process of filmmaking, which combines the seeing ability of the filmmaker and the seeing of the camera. Eventually, Vertov dissolved this separation between filmmaker and camera when he declared: "I am kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it."[110] In filmmaking, the camera and the filmmaker's eye, undoubtedly, do not fuse together, but through his figurative language Vertov encouraged the filmmaker to adopt the seeing ways of the camera, to become as much like a camera as possible, to see without the fog of "conscious expressions," to borrow Balazs' phrase, or to *see without images*, to borrow Krishnamurti's. In effect, Vertov proposed a filmmaking approach that, in this regard, converges with Krishnamurti's and Watts' prescription for attaining well-being: one must strive to see *what is* with the most complete awareness, just as a camera would.

"The what is," said Krishnamurti, "is never static, and to be passively watchful of it there must be freedom from all accumulation."[111] A camera can be said to accumulate images in the sense that it records and stores them, but these do not influence the manner in which the camera then faces, looks upon or 'sees' the next scene it might record. In the making of an *Actuality*, my camera remains "passively watchful" of the *what is* and its watching is "free from all accumulation" of thought. My seeing, on the other hand, is often influenced by whatever memories, reflections, judgments, beliefs I may have collected in my brain. I see, in other words, through what Watts referred to as the "Veil of Thoughts."[112] For him, thinking was a "symbolizing process" that involved "the use of signs, words, symbols, numbers to represent what's going on in the external world or the world of nature."[113] This process then "leads us into a curious confusion" wherein "we confuse the symbolic process with the actual world."[114] In short, "[thinking] is the symbolizing of the world, but it is not the real world."[115] To see the world through the veil of my thoughts, then, is to remain rooted in conflict. To see like a camera—detached from the inner workings of a human brain—is to eradicate conflict and, thus, clear the path to well-being. Thinking may be, as Watts noted, "an extraordinarily useful faculty" but it is, nonetheless, "a means of concealing truth,"[116] an obstruction of the *what is*. To overcome such a conundrum, Vertov suggested one must adopt a camera's way of seeing: "[f]rom the view of the ordinary eye, you see untruth," whereas "[f]rom the viewpoint of the cinematic eye […] you see truth."[117]

The fusion of Krishnamurti's and Watts' philosophical ideas with Vertov's conception of seeing like a camera is perhaps most eloquently summed up in a passage

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[110] Vertov, *Kino-Eye*, 17.
[111] Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Commentaries on Living: 1st Series*, edited by D. Rajagopal (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1967), 225.
[112] Alan Watts, "1.4.1. – Veil of Thoughts – Pt. 1," *Alan Watts Organization*, June 20, 2019, https://alanwatts.org/1-4-1-veil-of-thoughts-pt-1/.
[113] Alan Watts, "1.4.2. – Veil of Thoughts – Pt. 2," *Alan Watts Organization*, June 20, 2019, https://alanwatts.org/1-4-2-veil-of-thoughts-pt-2/.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Alan Watts, "1.4.3. – Veil of Thoughts – Pt. 3," *Alan Watts Organization*, June 20, 2019, https://alanwatts.org/1-4-3-veil-of-thoughts-pt-3/.
[116] Watts, "1.4.1. – Veil of Thoughts – Pt. 1."
[117] Vertov, *Kino-Eye*, 124.

written by Bazin himself in which he articulates, with great clarity, how the adoption of the camera's viewpoint can lead to the eradication of conflict and result in a state of utmost well-being:

> Only the impassive lens, stripping its object of all those ways of seeing it, those piled-up preconceptions, that spiritual dust and grime with which my eyes have covered it, is able to present it in all its virginal purity to my attention and consequently to my love.[118]

c) *Actuality* Filmmaking and Self-Transcendence

For Watts as for Krishnamurti, to see with total awareness as a means of transcending conflict involved more than adopting a non-prejudicial outlook towards the world. To see with total awareness is to observe and recognize that one does not exist as an entity distinctly separate from the world, to realize that one's identification with a self—the idea of *selfhood*—is itself a construction of thought, formed by means of accumulated memories, experiences, feelings, thoughts. "[T]he prevalent sensation of oneself as a separate ego enclosed in a bag of skin," as Watts wrote, "is a hallucination"[119] and, moreover, as noted, "[t]he hallucination of separateness prevents one from seeing that to cherish the ego is to cherish misery."[120] The view of oneself as an ego separate from the world represents a way of thinking about one's experience that is, after all, rooted in fragmentation: from this view, one sees the "I" as a fragment or division from the world. Fragmentation implies conflict and, so, to eradicate conflict, to expand well-being, one must transcend the ego or self-illusion, to see past the false or fictitious division between the world and "I", or as Krishnamurti put it, "between the observer and the observed." "When there is a division between the observer and the observed," Krishnamurti explained, "there is no ending of sorrow."[121]

With respect to my *Actualities*, who is the observer? In the process of shooting a daily film, my actions play an instrumental role in shaping the resulting recording. My positioning of the camera, my choosing of a compositional frame and my pressing of the shutter release button to start and stop recording—all of these help determine essential elements of a given *Actuality*. For this reason, I tend to think of films that exist as a result of my actions as "my films," or as "products of my being", or as "expressions of myself." As forms of speech, these phrases instill in me the notion that the *Actualities* I have photographed are inextricably linked to me, to who I am: without the "me," they would not exist. In centering these films around my being—around my *self*—it is easy for me to take the leap into believing that the films I photograph represent me and that their images are records of my observations. But when I look carefully at the moment of shooting, *with awareness*, it becomes evident that the images the camera records, that make up my *Actualities*, are not my observations.

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[118] Bazin, *What is Cinema*, 15.
[119] Watts, *The Book*, ix.
[120] Ibid, 70-1.
[121] Krishnamurti, *Book of Life,* ch. 8, "The Duality of Thinker and Thought," para. 2, electronic edition.

As part of my documentation process, I would occasionally take photographs with my phone as I stood behind my DSLR camera while filming an *Actuality*. Because they included a view of the camera, as well as the scene unfolding before it, the still images I captured with my phone represented a closer approximation of my viewpoint during the shooting process. No matter how close I got to it, or how tightly I might press my eye to its viewfinder or LCD screen, the camera was always part of my field of view as I filmed (excepting the one *Actuality* where I stood in front of the camera). The camera's field of view, on the other hand, never included a view of itself from behind it or through its own viewfinder. The camera's field of view was never my own. The pictures taken with my phone also do not depict my precise point of view because, as I stood behind my phone's camera lens to take them, the phone itself was in my periphery. Nonetheless, the pictures I took to document my shooting process do illustrate the gap that always exists between the camera's viewpoint and my own:

Figure 20. The making of *Actuality #228: RABBITT*.[122]

[122] *Actuality #228: RABBITT* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mTCTr_Px8s.

Figure 21. The making of *Actuality #240: GYM*.[123]

[123] *Actuality #240: GYM* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwekKVPil4w.

Figure 22. The making of *Actuality #187: TRAINING*.[124]

[124] *Actuality #187: TRAINING* can be viewed here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRY-_teFUKU.

Figure 23. The making of *Actuality #197: DEMOLITION*.[125]

[125] *Actuality #197: DEMOLITON* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBkuIB7KcYs.

Figure 24. The making of an unused take of *Actuality #259: WEDDING*.[126]

[126] *Actuality #259: WEDDING* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZZQa_R9rCs.

Figure 25. The making of *Actuality #246: VISITORS*.[127]

[127] *Actuality #246: VISITORS* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEuW3LiyKjQ.

Figure 26. The making of *Actuality #330: FRY*.[128]

[128] *Actuality #330: FRY* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8hyVvCsMn8.

Figure 27. The making of *Actuality #196: WINERY*.[129]

As the above images of my shooting process demonstrate, the images in my *Actualities* cannot possibly represent my observations and, thus, I am not the "observer" in these films. My actions may have resulted in the existence of my *Actualities* but the notion that I, as a *self*, am represented, reflected, mirrored or contained in them is a fictitious or false one. In seeing the way things are with awareness I discover what Krishnamurti and Watts articulated, that my *self* or *ego* is nowhere to be found because it is a "hallucination," an "illusion," itself the product or construction of thought. In watching my films, I cannot find *me* or my *self* anywhere in them.

During the shooting of my daily *Actualities*, I am an integral part of the filming process: I look about, I choose a subject, I set my camera, I frame the shot, I start recording, I observe, I stop recording. Likewise, I am an integral part of the post-production process: I upload my footage to my computer, I review it, I choose a beginning and end, I add titles, I export the film. But in photographing my *Actualities*, my observations did not become the film's images; and my editing choices did not instill my essence, my ego or my *self* within the picture frame. Without my involvement, the "happening"—to borrow Watts' term—that is the making of one of my daily films could not happen, but the moment I cease to participate in it as I turn my attention to other endeavors, the filmmaking "happening" ceases with me and I am no longer a part of it.

[129] *Actuality #196: WINERY* can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnP4tL53vbs.

At that point, my filmmaking actions become the past as I continue to live in the here and now. I am not somehow embedded in the films I have made. Rather than tied up in their essence, I am presently *here*, *now*, typing these words on this computer.

In thinking about my films in relation to my *self*, I had previously adopted, without challenge, the viewpoint that works of cinema embody or encapsulate the essence of their respective authors. In adopting this view, I ceased to perceive films as they are, seeing them, instead, through a presumed understanding of what I thought they were. In truth, the vision of filmmakers—whether vision is understood as what filmmakers *see*, or as a worldview or perspective they might hold—is not somehow tangibly entrapped in the contents of the film(s) they make. Vision, as the act of seeing, can only exist in the eye of its beholder in the present moment, in the here and now. Worldviews and perspectives—consisting of beliefs, judgments, prejudices—are themselves the construction of thought that constitute the conception of the *self*, which is, itself, an illusion, a hallucination.

Considering films as manifesting the *self* of their author(s) may seem like a necessary presumption on which to build the broad conversation about the many facets of cinema as a mode of communication. The notion that cinema communicates *something*, however, is itself built upon the presumption that films can or do contain messages, feelings, thoughts, viewpoints, opinions, values, beliefs, stories; that they hold and transmit meaning. If such things can be recognized in films it is only because of an agreed-upon system of symbols one employs in interpreting and analyzing them. As a form of communication, a written letter may be understood as expressing the thoughts and feelings of its writer. But such a letter does not contain thoughts or feelings, only symbols one may recognize as part of the system of language used to interpret and decode its meaning when it is read. Such a realization does not necessarily invalidate discussions about the letter's meaning which may help produce a greater understanding of its author. It simply represents a clearer view of what a letter, in fact, is and is not. Similarly, a film may appear to communicate and, specifically, to communicate something inextricably connected to its maker. Such a consideration can, unquestionably, help generate a greater understanding of both films and filmmakers alike, as I have previously demonstrated in distinguishing between the filmmaking style of the Lumières and the Edison Company's. Yet, this perspective requires one to accept that the fluctuations of light and sound of a film are more than they readily appear to be; it requires that one sees in them clues, symbols, objects, ideas, feelings, thoughts, beliefs. But all of these things do not tangibly exist in a real sense within the frames of a film, just as thoughts or feelings are not physically enclosed in the contents of a written letter. From a view removed from the conventional system of symbols of film discourse, it becomes apparent that there is nowhere within the physical elements of a film one can point to as the location where a filmmaker's vision, much less anything we might call a *self*, resides. A filmmaker's vision and *self* may conceptually exist within the rhetorical forms of discourse or analysis but these cannot be found in the tangible, physical reality a filmmaker's film occupies.

The realization that my films do not represent me, my *self* or the thing I call "I" in any tangible, real sense has liberated me from the anxieties I would previously experience when entangling my concerns for my self-image with my productions. In making films, I would often strive and struggle to shape them into a particular vision: my own. I would

obsessively tinker with the various elements of my work, reshooting multiple takes of the same scene, changing or adjusting the frame composition, asking a person or actor to perform an action once more before my camera, producing various alternate edits for comparison. I believed these tasks to be essential to the labor of filmmaking and engaging in them reinforced my sense of identity as a filmmaker, my sense of *self*, my ego.

Considering my films to be inextricably bound to my sense of identity, I continually worried about whether they adequately reflected my self-image. When I felt they did not, my concern would balloon into a deep pang of anxiety, fueling and driving my need to exert even greater control over every step of my filmmaking process in order to produce an outcome I could live with as a suitable representation of me. The more controlling I would become, the more irascible and miserable I would grow when things would not go my way. Without being aware of it, I wanted my films to reflect me perfectly and, also, to reflect the most perfect me possible. I used my productions not only as a means of reinforcing my sense of identity, but also to channel, transmit or express my sense of self out into the world. Through my films, I soothed and championed my ego. "[T]o cherish the ego is," as Watts wrote, and as I experienced, "to cherish misery."[130]

Disentangling my concept of *self* from my films unburdened me of preoccupations whose absence now led me to adopt a more carefree and joyful approach. Recognizing my *Actualities* did not—could not—represent my *self*, I no longer felt the need to judge them in relation to my perceived sense of how they reflected me. Without such concerns, I could now record or review an image sequence while experiencing sheer delight in simply watching, with deep fascination, the detailed interplay of light in my frames.

d) *Actuality* Filmmaking and the Present Moment

For Krishnamurti as for Watts, life happens in the now, in the present moment. And it is exclusively in the now that films can be shot, for one cannot photograph image sequences in the past, nor in the future. As I have previously discussed, the obligation to produce daily *Actualities* continually shifted my attention and awareness to the present moment, interrupting my inner, mental wanderings so I could focus my attention on my immediate surroundings and think, instead, about where to put my camera and where to point it next. Over time, as a result of this habitual practice, my mind's chatter quieted down, weakening my propensity to worry, overthink and ruminate that fueled my daily stress and anxiety.

With each passing day and production, I grew increasingly aware of how many moments of my day-to-day experience went unrecorded and faded into oblivion. As the realization that these films did not represent my observations or experiences dawned on me, I also began to recognize how, collectively, they did not reflect my sense of my own life. Too many moments were absent from my accumulated library of *Actualities* for me to consider them as mirroring any semblance of my life. Moreover, the moments portrayed in them offered views that were not necessarily meaningful within my conception of my

[130] Watts, *The Book*, 71.

own life story. But my daily *Actualities* were, in fact, products of my own lived experience. How could they not match, even in some small, incomplete way, my idea of my life?

As I lived more intensely in the present moment, as a result of my daily filmmaking process, a widening gap between my sense of my own life and my collection of *Actualities* entered into my awareness. I thought of my life as a selective sequence of events unfolding over time: from my birth to the happy and tragic events of my childhood; the forging of my first friendships, later impacted by my family's multiple migrations to other countries; the beginnings and endings of romantic relationships; my professional development featuring a series of jobs and the pursuit of academic degrees; professional successes and failures; the deaths and births of others close to me. Yet, my lived experiences resulting in my *Actualities* consisted of events like the contemplation of a tree's leaves swaying in the wind, the observation of ripples on the surface of a lake or grocery shoppers pushing shopping carts. These were also events or moments I experienced in my life, but ones that, without realizing it, I excluded from my conception of my life story. Why did I do so?

It seemed I had conceived of my life as some type of story of which I was the editor, selecting moments while discarding others in order to shape it. But this edited version was not my *actual* life, just a mental construction of my own making, as my *Actualities* had revealed. As a result of my daily filmmaking experience, I could see that my daily life consisted of a vast, unquantifiable, multitude of moment-to-moment experiences, most of which I could not absorb into my memory nor record with my camera. Instead, I was left with bits and pieces resulting from my lived experiences in the form of memories, or in the case of my daily *Actualities*, film recordings. In their totality, neither my memories nor my films could even begin to model my *actual* life in any approximate sense because too many aspects of my lived experience were left out of them. Where, when or what, then, is my *actual* life?

As my awareness of the present moment expanded within my daily filmmaking practice, the more attuned I became to the notion that I am only able to experience life in the same realm in which *Actualities* can be filmed, that is, in the now. To live in the past or in the future are impossibilities and matters of make-believe that, as Krishnamurti and Watts pointed out, rely on the illusory powers of the mind. If the past and the future do not exist, it also follows that my conception of life as a story is itself a fiction that relies on an inexistent past to support it and that anticipates a non-existent future in which it will be completed. My life only happens here and now, in the only moment in which it can be lived. It has no past and no future.

In reaching and accepting this conclusion about how things *really* are, it has become increasingly difficult for me to give credence to my sorrows and worries. How seriously can I bemoan events of the past when I know, full well, that it no longer exists except within the confines of my own thoughts? If the past is a fiction, then my feelings about it are themselves founded on fictions and, as such, are easier to let go of. My worries and anxieties about the future now follow a similar fate when I realize they are not real.

The mental models of the past and the future, then, may be of value in certain situations in spite of their illusory nature. But when my well-being is weighed down by negative, anxiety-inducing thoughts concerning the past and the future of my life story, I can now easily short-circuit my suffering and instantly expand my well-being by shifting my attention to the present moment and becoming aware that it is all there is.

e) *Actuality* Filmmaking and the Fragmentation of Thought

German-American Hugo Münsterberg, one of the earliest film theorists and a "leader in the field of applied psychology,"[131] proposed in his 1916 text *The Photoplay* a way of thinking about films as replicating cognitive procedures of the human mind, particularly as "[mimicking] the mental mechanisms of attention, memory, and emotion."[132] In his view, for example, the close-up resembles "our mental act of attention"[133]—our experience of focusing it—while the flashback reflects "our mental act of remembering."[134]

In a 1989 paper titled *Film/Mind Analogies: The Case of Hugo Munsterberg*, Carroll summarily dismissed Münsterberg's consideration of film as mimicking cognitive processes because, in Carroll's view, we know so little about how the mind works, yet so much about how cinema works that any analogy bridging the two becomes useless. "[D]o we really learn anything by being told that the close-up is an analog to the psychological process of attention," Carroll asks rhetorically, "when we know so little about the way in which the psychological process of attention operates?"[135] To Carroll's way of thinking, analogies like these "have no explanatory force where we have so little grasp of the nature and structure of the mind,"[136] a conclusion he bases solely on his belief that "in order to be instructive theoretically, an analogy must be such that one knows more about the term in the analogy that is supposed to be elucidating than the term that is supposed to be elucidated."[137] But one can indeed learn something from an analogy that, while not necessarily elucidating the nature of its terms, sparks comparisons that provoke new ways of thinking. Vertov's analogy between the camera and the human eye provides a useful framework for exploring the differences and similarities between filming and seeing that can elucidate a clearer understanding of the filmmaking process without necessarily shedding light on the mysteries of the human eye. How the human mind functions, how thoughts are generated, how memory is stored or how attention is controlled may not be explained by Münsterberg's consideration of film as representing thinking processes. But his film/mind analogy opens a path of inquiry into whether there

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[131] Noël Carroll, "Film/Mind Analogies: The Case of Hugo Munsterberg," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46, no. 4 (Summer, 1988): 489.
[132] Murray Smith, "Consciousness," in *Routledge Companion of Philosophy and Film*, edited by Paisley Livingstone and Carl Platinga (Oxon: Routledge, 2009): 44.
[133] Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study and Other Writings*, edited by Allan Langdale (New York: Routledge, 2002), 87.
[134] Ibid, 90.
[135] Carroll, "Film/Mind Analogies," 497.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.

are film forms that exhibit more fragmented ways of thinking than others and that are, as a result, more closely tied with conflict rather than with well-being.

According to Münsterberg's account of the evolution of early film, the Edison/Dickson and Lumière *Actualities* first captivated audiences simply because they exhibited the illusion of depth and movement, but "[t]he trivial acts played in less than a minute without any artistic setting and without any rehearsal or preparation soon became unsatisfactory."[138] To maintain the interest of audiences, "the scenes presented on the screen became themselves more and more enthralling,"[139] resulting in a "movement to reproduce stage performances" which "deviated from the path of drama" once "elements were superadded, which the techniques of the camera allowed."[140] Close-ups, flashbacks, cross-cutting between locations and moments in time— such cinematic techniques evolved, in Münsterberg's view, in the service of telling fictional cinematic stories. And it is the narrative fiction film, or what he called the "photoplay," that "obeys the laws of the mind rather than those of the outer world."[141] "[The photoplay]" wrote Münsterberg, "has the mobility of our ideas which are not controlled by the physical necessity of outer events but by the psychological laws for the association of ideas."[142]

Münsterberg's distinction between films displaying "[t]rivial acts in less than a minute" and photoplays that "obey the laws of the mind" parallels Burch's distinction between the Primitive and Institutional Modes of Representation (PMR and IMR, respectively). As previously discussed, the films of the IMR, according to Burch, seek to envelop or enclose the viewer in the illusory world they display. If photoplays evolved to conjoin elements of stage drama with camera techniques, it was because they were similarly motivated by a desire to absorb and engage viewers as completely as possible with the action of their narrative. *Actualities*, particularly those produced by the Lumières, resisted the tendency to envelop the viewer or to mimic the processes of the mind.

What kind of thinking do photoplays or the films of the IMR mirror or reflect? "The dramatic manipulation of time and space in the photoplay," wrote Münsterberg, "is its natural manner of telling a story, taking us into the past (memory) and the future (imagination), and freely and creatively breaking the space-time continuum."[143] The photoplay, then, "does not and must not respect this temporal structure of the physical universe" and, within it, "today is interwoven with the day before yesterday."[144] In Krishnamurti's view, such a display of mental faculties represents a fragmented way of thinking, an inability to live fully in the present moment that keeps one living in conflict. The photoplay's "natural manner of telling a story" may not respect the "temporal structure of the physical universe," which, to Krishnamurti and Watts, consists only of the present. As long as one divides time "into past, present and future," as Krishnamurti

[138] Münsterberg, *The Photoplay*, 53.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid, 59.
[141] Ibid, 91.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid, 22.
[144] Ibid, 133.

argued, one "will always be in conflict."[145] For Krishnamurti, "[a]wareness is an integral process, not a process of division," or fragmentation, and, "[i]n awareness, there is only the present."[146]

In some sense, my *Actualities* exist as fragments: the compositional frame naturally forces me to divide the total view before me in two: that which forms the content of the film, and that which remains beyond its edges. Moreover, the frame rate of 24 frames per second also implies that fractions of time might escape my camera's recording that I could perhaps capture if I was shooting at, say, 60 frames per second. My *Actualities*, then, offer only a fragmentary view of the world. In filming them, however, I experienced a heightened sense of awareness due to the aesthetic and technical rules I observed in my daily process. Once I started recording, I had to sit, wait and observe for at least one full minute. In reviewing my films for editing, I saw footage free of multiple shots, edits or camera movements. My mind might wander while I filmed or reviewed footage, but the images I could see through my camera or on my computer did not encourage the interruption of my attention. Instead they facilitated my ability to focus because, even if actions or the light changed, the compositional frame never did. Within the view of my recordings, my boredom, impatience or lack of interest was never compensated or catered to with a cut to a different shot, to a different "time" or "place." Instead, the films appeared as a sustained, minute-long effort in awareness that I had no choice but to engage with in order to make my films.

When considered as models of thinking, my daily *Actualities* compared to the works of the IMR or photoplays, appear as a cinematic form minimally fragmented. By contrast, films of the IMR are replete with cuts that fragment time and space, that break up, disrupt, collapse and intertwine moments originally recorded by the camera. Moreover, IMR films encourage the viewer's attention to continually shift and fragment. In my experience, *Actualities* mirror and elicit awareness and undivided attention; whereas photoplays and the films of the IMR encourage short attention spans and distraction. Even if one rejects films as models of thinking, it is clear that *Actualities* and films of the IMR involve different processes and actions on the part of the filmmaker that encourage variant degrees of fragmentation. Photoplays and films of the IMR, for example, demand, or encourage the filmmaker to think of reality as divided in a multitude of shots and scenes, to fragment recorded images with editing cuts that further fragment the illusion of time and space. In short, the films of the IMR, by their very nature, engage the filmmaker in the practice of division and fragmented thinking to a greater degree than *Actualities*. The making of my daily films largely discouraged my inclination to engage in fragmentation: I had to record at least a minute without moving the camera and, within that minute, I could not cut up the footage for any reason during the filming process. Unable to engage in fragmentation to any substantial degree within my daily filmmaking process, or to instill it within the aesthetic of my films, I exercised instead my ability to accept my films as they were. I could not edit, manipulate or tinker with my *Actualities* to the extent I would otherwise be inclined to if I found fault with them or if I sought to

[145] Krishnamurti, *Freedom from the Known*, ch. IX, para. 4.
[146] Krishnamurti, *Book of Life*, ch. 6, "Introspection is Complete," para. 1.

envelop the viewer in some form of narrative. If I felt dissatisfied with a given *Actuality* and felt compelled to do something about it, I only had a very limited amount of time within a given day in which to indulge my need to shoot another take or make modifications. The daily time constraint, as I have previously mentioned, continually pushed me to accept what I had produced and to move on to the next film.

Within my daily *Actuality* filmmaking process, my role as filmmaker was largely reduced to a few tasks centered around observing, watching, contemplating and accepting. Previously, I had experienced filmmaking as a process in which I continually sought to identify my discontents so that I may labor to eradicate them. Unhappy with a take, I would reshoot it; unhappy with the look of a scene, I would restage it; unhappy with the performance of an actor, I would ask them to repeat it; unhappy with a sequence of shots, I would re-edit it. Filmmaking had been, for me, the practice of stubborn non-acceptance, fragmenting my process and my thinking into a plethora of tiny considerations which themselves were avenues to discovering yet more dissatisfactory things I would refuse to accept.

In making daily *Actualities*, no such proclivities towards my discontents could be indulged. The more *Actualities* I accepted as they were, the more accepting I became within and outside of my practice. As my capacity for acceptance expanded, so did my ability to become absorbed in watching, reviewing my recordings for pure worry-free enjoyment. As I turned to other aspects of my lived experience, I approached them with a similar lighthearted fascination; without entangling them in my mind with my thoughts, feelings, worries, and anxieties; accepting them, instead, as their own reward.

* * *

In this chapter I have demonstrated that Bazin and Kracauer's consideration of film as reproducing or duplicating reality promotes fragmentation in the form of the confusion of *what is* with *what one thinks or interprets there is* and, thus, their ideas run counter to what Krishnamurti and Watts suggest one must do to maximize well-being. Moreover, I have shown that Vertov's insistence that filmmakers must see more like a camera aligns with Krishnamurti's and Watts' recommendation that to transcend conflict and attain well-being one must practice seeing with awareness and free of the judgments the human mind imposes. I have also articulated the ways in which my daily *Actuality* filmmaking process has facilitated my ability to transcend the illusion of the self and my capacity to live more fully in the present moment. Lastly, I used Münsterberg's comparison of films to mental processes to illustrate that my *Actualities*, in comparison to films of the IMR, promote a less fragmented filmmaking experience and, thus, a more expansive sense of well-being.

Conclusion

In this project, I set out to investigate the relationship between filmmaking and well-being. To do so, I redesigned my filmmaking practice as a daily, solo-filmmaker process wherein, over the course of a year, I produced static, 1-minute, single-shot films in a form inspired by the early *Actuality* films by the Lumières and the Edison Manufacturing Company. In reviewing and examining the history of the *Actuality* film form, I positioned early *Actualities* and my own, through Burch, as oppositional to Institutional Modes of Representation. Reflecting on my daily *Actuality* filmmaking I determined I experienced an overall greater sense of well-being than when working in other filmmaking modes. Moreover, in the course of my daily process, I came to recognize how my professional and personal conditioning obstructed my path to well-being during my productions. In time, engaging with daily *Actuality* filmmaking I gained a more contemplative, attentive outlook towards the present moment of lived experience. To more specifically understand how my daily process affected or related to my well-being, I reviewed various models of well-being proposed within the field of psychology. Finding none suitable, I turned instead to the philosophical ideas of Krishnamurti and Watts, from which I derived a conception of well-being wherein fragmentation of thought is the root cause of personal suffering and total awareness of the present moment its antidote. In my final analysis, I determined that realistic theories of film, such as Bazin's and Kracauer's, which promote the understanding of film content as approximating reality, promote fragmented thinking and run counter to the pursuit of the maximization of well-being. Vertov's camera-as-eye metaphorical conception of cinema, on the other hand, promotes viewing the world with awareness and without the influence of fragmented thinking. Through Münsterberg's comparison of mental processes to film techniques representative of photoplays and the IMR, I concluded that my *Actualities* expanded my sense of well-being because their making elicited a far lesser degree of fragmentation than other filmmaking modes.

Having completed my investigation, I now return to the original research questions that propelled me into this journey, explain my contribution to knowledge and consider future avenues of investigation.

a) Answering the Research Questions

How and why does the process of making films inflict stress on the filmmaker? The conception of well-being I have drawn from the work of Krishnamurti and Watts suggests that fragmentation of thought is the root of inner, personal conflict—the antithesis of well-being—and that attentive awareness of the present is the solution to reduce or eradicate it. The process of making films, then, inflicts stress on the filmmaker insofar as it promotes or augments fragmented thinking which clouds or impedes total awareness of the now. In essence, the process of filmmaking consists of fragmenting light and sound into discreet frames and sequences which requires (or leads) the filmmaker to consider these artifacts as divided from the rest of the world and each other. Fragmentation, then, remains inextricably intertwined with the process of making a film, which suggests that a complete and total sense of well-being cannot be experienced within the practice of filmmaking.

Is filmmaking, then, inherently incongruent to the filmmaker's well-being? My daily production experiences and analysis thereof indicate that, if not fully, the filmmaker's sense of well-being can at least be amplified when the rules and methods of production are so designed as to discourage fragmented thinking and promote, instead, presence, acceptance and awareness. During the course of a year, the set of production rules I observed in making my daily *Actualities* limited my propensity to shoot more, to edit more and, more importantly, to deliberate. Within this process, the actions of judging, evaluating and deliberating impeded my success in meeting my daily film quota, while adopting a more accepting attitude towards my recordings guaranteed it. Over time, I largely extricated myself from these activities— judging, assessing and deliberating— which I previously considered as essential duties a filmmaker needs to fulfill. Disengaging from these activities freed mental energy I could now devote to paying more attention to my surroundings, to observing them with greater intensity, scrutiny and awareness. In the process of making 365 daily *Actualities*, then, the rules I designed for myself inspired, encouraged and pushed me to live more fully in the present, to worry less about how things might have been or might turn out to be, to grow more accepting of whatever might unfold before me or my camera in the *here* and *now* without objection. Inadvertently, my daily production process led me, in the end, to discover it is possible to make films more lightheartedly, without constant struggle and with a more expansive sense of well-being.

As I grew into a more contemplative and watchful filmmaker, I became more attuned to each present moment and, particularly, to the illusions I allowed myself to believe, unquestioningly, about my films, my identity, my past, my future and my life story, beliefs that colored and clouded my moment-to-moment experience to the detriment of my own well-being. In paying close attention to my experiences and my films, I discovered the vast gap that exists between my recordings and my experience of reality. I also learned that my films do not represent me or my sense of self, which is itself an illusion. The knowledge that my films cannot even begin to approximate a duplication of my experience of reality, nor reveal or express my concept of self, renders absurd any suffering that may arise when I fall short of realizing these impossibilities.

At the outset of my investigation, I deemed it necessary to incorporate a practical component into my research process to help validate my findings within textual reviews which, in and of themselves, could only provide me with others' thoughts and perspectives, amounting to an indirect sense of knowledge. Thus, my daily *Actuality* filmmaking practice played an essential role in producing direct evidence that informed my review and analysis of texts concerning well-being and filmmaking. My daily production process can also now, in retrospect, be seen as evidentiary knowledge that it is possible, within the process of making films, to expand my own well-being. Moreover, my daily filmmaking process offers a methodological template others can follow. Future research may be needed to examine whether others who engage in daily *Actuality* filmmaking will experience the same results I did. Benning's comments that his films expand attentive seeing and hearing, and Jem Cohen's that his films promote a view that the world is wondrous and interesting as it is, at least suggest that it is likely filmmakers who engage with filmmaking modes centered on the use of static frames and prolonged

duration will experience greater awareness of the present moment and, thus, a more expansive sense of well-being.

b) Contribution to Knowledge

My findings contribute knowledge to disciplines concerned with film discourse and well-being, particularly film studies and art therapy. Firstly, my thesis presents a reassessment of the *Actuality* film form that aligns with Benning's notion that cinema "grew up too quickly" from its first films. In combination with a daily practice, *Actuality* filmmaking, as I have demonstrated, offers great potential for the exploration of well-being; for the dissipation of mental models of thought, such as the concept of the self and the fragmentation of time between past and future; and for the acquisition of a more contemplative, observational, meditative outlook. This particular capacity of the *Actuality* film form as a tool to investigate personal well-being appears largely unidentified and unexplored within film discourse disciplines such as film studies.

Secondly, my thesis, through Krishnamurti's and Watts's philosophies, reframes realistic theories of film, such as Bazin's and Kracauer's, as interpretative models that run counter to the pursuit of maximum well-being. The insistence on the part of these theories that films capture, mirror, replicate or simulate reality to a great degree of approximation obstructs a clearer view of the way things are: paying close attention, one can begin to realize that the differences between reality and the contents of films, like the differences between reality and mental models of thought, are, indeed, vast. The critique of these theories on the grounds that their adoption negatively impacts the pursuit of well-being remains absent from film discourse.

Considering films through Krishnamurti's and Watts' philosophies, then, advances the idea that understanding filmmaking and its products through the lens of realistic theories can exacerbate the delusions and unclear thinking that the mind's mental models often generate in striving to make sense of existence. The filmmaker seeking to attain a greater sense of well-being, to follow Krishnamurti's and Watts' thinking, must avoid understanding the world through either cinematic or mental images and focus, instead, on minimizing the impulse to do so through the incorporation of awareness within the process of making films. As Krishnamurti and Watts proposed, the mind becomes fragmented and conflict-ridden when it sees the world through the mental images it creates and, similarly, so does the mind of the filmmaker who considers films as replicas of reality.

Within the field of art therapy, William Kasser and Joshua L. Cohen recognized the potential of filmmaking tools to produce therapeutic benefits for their respective patients. Their methods, however, focused on the application of film narrative devices. The daily *Actuality* filmmaking methodology I have detailed here can be seen as an alternative practical art therapy approach that is substantiated by the increase in well-being experienced by at least one test subject—myself. Further research would be needed to substantiate to what extent others may similarly benefit from my methodology within an art therapy setting.

c) Future Research

Both the works of Benning and Jem Cohen suggest it is possible for other filmmakers engaging with an aesthetic that prioritizes static shots of prolonged duration to acquire the contemplative, meditative, accepting kind of awareness I myself experienced in the making of daily *Actualities*. Can others following the filmmaking methods and analytical approach I have outlined here experience an expansion of their well-being, a lessening of their fragmented thinking and a greater awareness of the present moment? This question opens up the avenue for future research and the work of psychologists Seligman, Joshua L. Cohen and artists Ehmann and Farocki suggest possible models of investigation.

In support of his formulation of the P.E.R.M.A. model of well-being, Seligman suggested a daily exercise individuals may engage with to maximize their well-being which consisted of writing three things that went well every day for a week. A daily *Actuality* filmmaking exercise could be similarly implemented and studied as part of an art therapeutic regimen. Clinical studies of various durations could be so designed to test whether the yearlong *Actuality* filmmaking methodology I practiced could result in a greater sense of well-being for participants engaging with it for shorter periods of time, like a week or a month. During such studies, rather than instructed to write about things that went well, individuals could instead be asked to record a daily *Actuality* about something they loved or appreciated in a given day and to share the film with others. At various points in the progress of such studies, participants could also be asked to generate self-reports about their state of well-being that could provide further evidence for analysis regarding the relationship of daily *Actuality* filmmaking and well-being.

Within his clinical, therapeutic practice, Joshua L. Cohen worked one-on-one with patients and guided them through the making of films with the intent of relieving their trauma and suffering. My daily *Actuality* filmmaking method could similarly be explored within a therapeutic setting with the intent of guiding patients towards the discovery that reality differs from the contents of films, just as it differs from mental models; that the concept of self and, consequently, the sense that one is the protagonist of a life story of the mind's making is false; that practicing total awareness of the present moment alleviates suffering. Cohen's work with patients employed within the film industry also suggests the possibility of examining the question of whether adopting a daily *Actuality* practice as a de Certeauvian tactic within industrial filmmaking could help alleviate any negative effects that filmmakers operating in commercially driven productions might experience in their everyday.

Ehmann and Farocki's international workshops point to a group model within which my daily *Actuality* filmmaking method could be taught and explored with people of different national and economic backgrounds and with varying degrees of technical skills. Compared to Cohen's one-on-one model, the greater number of participants in workshops could help accelerate the production of evidence through group discussions, screenings, surveys and self-reports, all of which could then be analyzed to elucidate how well the filmmaking methods and analytical approach I have outlined here could yield similar results for individuals living under widely different social, cultural and economic

conditions. An online archive in the style of Ehmann and Farocki's resulting from such international workshops could help further share and promote the daily *Actuality* methodology and its effect on personal well-being and, more importantly, invite further research and debate.

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Overall, film literature generally limits its consideration of the *Actuality* film form to discussions of its role during the specific period of early cinema it dominated. Framing the *Actuality* aesthetic within this historical context has served to highlight, on one hand, its contributions to the early development of film technology and methodology and, on the other, its assumed simplicity and limited applicability. The findings of my thesis, however, suggest there remain valuable, uncharted areas in which *Actuality* filmmaking can prove useful, particularly in the expansion of human well-being. Now, then, more than a century after the Lumière brothers, Edison and Dickson brought it into cinematic prominence, I propose it is time to revive the *Actuality* film form and to explore in full its potential application in the betterment of humanity.

Appendix A: Lumière Screenings Before December 28th, 1895

Despite what many film histories lead readers to believe, the screening of Lumière *Actualities* that took place on December 28th, 1895, at the Salon Indien in the Grand Café in Paris did not constitute the first time Auguste and Louis Lumière screened *Actualities* before an audience.

Louis Lumière first showed a version of *Workers Leaving the Factory* in March 22nd, 1895, during a lecture he gave to the members of the Société d'Encouragement pour l'Industrie Nationale in Paris, a crowd largely "made up of scientists."[1]

Lumière *Actualities* were also screened on the 10th, 11th and 12th of June at the Congress of the French Photographic Societies;[2] on July 11th "in the reception rooms of the *Revue Générale des Sciences* in Paris, before a crowd of about 150 people, largely outnumbering the 33 in attendance at the famed December screening;"[3] on November 10th for "the fellows of the Association Belge de Photographie" and on November 12th for the "Artistic and Literary Club" in Brussels.[4]

While not the first Lumière *Actuality* screening, the December 28th event was the Lumières' first public demonstration of their Cinematographe for a paying audience and, as the evening's program makes evident, it consisted of a showing of ten *Actualities*.[5]

[1] Gaudreault and Gunning, "Introduction: American Cinema Emerges," 4-5.
[2] Lumière, *Letters*, 311.
[3] Ibid, 42.
[4] Ibid, 49.
[5] "La première séance publique payante." *Institut Lumière*, accessed August 14th, 2021, http://www.institut-lumiere.org/musee/les-freres-lumiere-et-leurs-inventions/premiere-seance.html.

Appendix B: Debunking Reports of 1891 Edison/Dickson Motion Picture Machine Demonstration

Reportedly, Thomas Edison and W. K. L. Dickson demonstrated the projection of motion pictures on May 20th, 1891, as noted in André Gaudreault's volume *American Cinema 1890-1909* published in 2009.[1] But it is highly improbable that what people saw on that day at the Edison lab in West Orange, NJ, was an actual demonstration of a functional motion picture system given that in May 1891, as Paul Spehr documented in *The Man Who Made Movies* (2008), Edison and Dickson did not, at this time, have a fully operable version of the Kinetograph or the Kinetoscope, both of which would be completely redesigned in the following months.[2]

Illustrations of the purported showcased device accompanied hyperbolic press reports of the demonstration[3] and revealed an apparatus that did not exist and whose functionality, as depicted, is doubtful at best. As Gordon Hendricks noted in *The Edison Motion Picture Myth* (1961): "Clearly such a photograph-taking apparatus did not exist except in the imagination of the artist."[4]

What visitors of Edison's lab saw on May 20th, 1891, I surmise, was likely an unfinished prototype meant to illustrate the result Dickson intended to achieve in the near future, rather than an already successfully completed motion picture system. Edison, as he was often inclined to do, likely sought to prematurely hype up the unfinished prototype as a functioning invention to the press as a way of generating publicity in anticipation of the project's completion and patent filings.

The pursuit of such news reportage can also be viewed as a preemptive legal strategy on Edison's part, one that relied on establishing in the public record the (false) idea that he had completed his project sooner than any of his potential competitors. Should legal disputes arise concerning Edison's patent, news articles in the public record could then become key evidence he could use to gain favor from a court of law. In fact, as Hendricks demonstrated throughout *The Edison Motion Picture Myth*, manufacturing evidence in this manner was common practice for Edison and his attorneys. For example, in "straining to overcome the priority claims of [English inventor William] Friese-Greene," who successfully obtained a patent for a motion picture machine in1889, Edison and his attorneys dated a horizontal-feed camera "as an 1889 apparatus," even though "there is no evidence that it existed" before the summer of 1895, and "much to suggest it was manufactured for legal purposes in, possibly, 1896."[5] It is possible, then, that such deceptive tactics similarly motivated Edison's misinformation campaign with respect to the May 20th, 1891, demonstration at the West Orange lab.

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[1] André Gaudreault, ed. "Timeline: 1890-1909," in *American Cinema 1890-1909: Theme Variations* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), xiii.
[2] Spehr, *The Man Who Made Movies*, 200-201 & 218-231.
[3] Hendricks, *Edison Motion Picture Myth*, 111-122; Spehr, *The Man Who Made Movies*, 218. Hendricks meticulously analyzes several of the press accounts of the May 20th, 1891, event at the Edison lab to demonstrate contradictions and falsehoods.
[4] Hendricks, *Edison Motion Picture Myth*, 114.
[5] Ibid, 180. At the time of writing his book, Hendricks noted that this apparatus was still dated at the Museum of the Edison lab in West Orange, NJ, as an 1889 invention.

Appendix C: Mislabeled Edison Manufacturing Company Films

In the course of my research into the Edison/Dickson *Actualities*, I have identified two films whose titles appear to be mislabeled or that have, at least, led historians to misidentify their contents.

Herald Square (1896)

As noted in Chapter 1, William Heise, Dickson's former assistant and camera operator, debuted the 1896 newly developed portable Edison camera by filming a scene in the heart of New York City's Manhattan island. The resulting film is often referred to as *Herald Square* (1896) and is commonly mistaken as depicting the titular square. In *Thomas A. Edison and His Kinetographic Motion Pictures*, for example, Charles Musser related that "[o]n May 11th, William Heise brought the camera to Herald Square and photographed the busy intersection from a second story window."[1] More recently, a 2015 *New York Times* article refers to the film as "*Herald Square"* and cites historian James Sanders describing the film's contents as depicting the "surging traffic along 34th street" where Herald Square sits to this day.[2]

These citations appear to be in error as, according to the Library of Congress, researcher Liz Muller has identified the film's actual location as being Union Square,[3] which is located between 14th and 18th streets in Manhattan. Unfortunately, the link to the Library of Congress webpage devoted to the film (https://www.loc.gov/item/2020600000/), while noting the misidentification of the film's location, misattributes the date of filming to the year 1889—an impossibility. The same film, however, posted in 2009 on the Library of Congress' YouTube channel, lists the correct May 11th, 1896 production date in its description, as can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghX0TfvuLtw.

Falls of Minnehaha (1896)

Another Edison Company *Actuality* with a misleading title, *Falls of Minnehaha* does not present a view of the falls of Minnehaha in Minneapolis, Minnesota, though the film may have been inspired by a Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poem about them.[4] The falls featured in the film are in fact the Haines Falls in the Catskills Mountains in New York,[5] located in much closer proximity to the West Orange Edison lab in New Jersey.

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[1] Musser, *Thomas A. Edison*, 26.
[2] Michael Pollak, "The First Film Shot in New York City," *The New York Times*, April 18, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/nyregion/the-first-film-shot-in-new-york-city.html.
[3] Library of Congress, "[Hendricks (Gordon) Collection. No. 38, New York City street scene, Union Square and Lincoln Building--unidentified works]," Collection: *Inventing Entertainment: The Early Motion Pictures and Sound Recordings of the Edison Companies*, accessed August 14, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/item/2020600000/.
[4] Library of Congress, "Falls of Minnehaha," Collection: *Inventing Entertainment: The Early Motion Pictures and Sound Recordings of the Edison Companies*, accessed August 14, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/item/00694199/. See the note regarding the poem that inspired the film.
[5] Ibid. See the notes regarding the common misconception that the pictured falls are in Minneapolis, MN.

Appendix D: Films I Made in 1st Attempt at a Daily Filmmaking Practice

In my first attempt at a daily filmmaking practice in the fall of 2016, I made a total of 10 films. Collectively, these productions served as a way to test whether it might be possible for me to make a daily film for a sustained period of time. Moreover, they helped me to identify elements of my filmmaking process that might need to be retooled, modified, rethought or restricted in order to make a daily filmmaking practice feasible in the long term within the framework of my daily life.

All the films listed below can be viewed on YouTube at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeJLIw4jEdWizqeUqr5eBiA/videos

TITLE	Creation Date	Upload Date	Duration
This is the Film	September 9th, 2016	September 11th, 2016	4 mins 14 secs
What My Camera Saw As I Left My House and Got Into My Car	September 10th, 2016	September 12th, 2016	2 mins 32 secs
Concrete Animals	September 11th, 2016	September 12th, 2016	3 mins 22 secs
Things I Wish I Hadn't Said	September 12th, 2016	September 12th, 2016	59 sec
All Angela Wanted to Do Was Make Coffee	September 13th, 2016	September 14th, 2016	3 mins 18 secs
Locked Out (Silent Film for Moviemaking Summer Camp)	September 14th, 2016	September 14th, 2016	2 mins 25 secs
The Shoe Thief Divas	September 15th, 2016	September 23rd, 2016	4 mins 36 secs
Flies on the Window	September 16th, 2016	September 23rd, 2016	3 mins 36 secs
Trailer for Neil Labute's reasons to be pretty	September 17th, 2016	September 24th, 2016	47 secs
Cold Turkey Silence	September 18th, 2016	October 25th, 2016	5 mins 39 secs

Appendix E: Dimensions and Weight of Canon 5D Mark III Camera and 24-105mm Zoom Lens

5D Mark III Camera Body:[1]

- Dimensions (Width x Height x Depth): 152.0 x 116.4 x 76.4 mm (6.0 x 4.6 x 3.0 in)
- Weight: 950 g (33.5 oz) (includes battery)

EF 24-105 mm Zoom Lens:[2]

- Dimensions (Diameter x Length): 83.5 x 118 mm (3.3 x 4.7 in)
- Weight: 795 g (28.04 oz)

[1] Canon Camera Museum, "EOS 5D Mark III," *Interchangeable Lens Digital Cameras: Digital SLR Camera*, accessed August 14, 2021, https://global.canon/en/c-museum/product/dslr808.html.
[2] Canon Camera Museum, "EF24-105mm f/4L IS II USM," *EF Lenses: STANDARD ZOOM Lens*, accessed August 14, 2021, https://global.canon/en/c-museum/product/ef457.html.

Appendix F: Operative Differences Between Lumière Cinématographe and Canon 5D Mark III Camera

	Cinématographe	**5D Mark III**
Recording Medium	Negative film.	SD card.[1]
Recording Operation	Hand crank.[2]	Recording button.
How Images are Processed for Viewing/Editing/Distribution	Using the camera as printer, images are transferred from a film negative into a film positive that can then be projected with the aid of a lamp.[3]	Images stored in SD Card as video files are extracted using file transfer technology to a computer where they can then be viewed, edited or distributed.
Frame Rate	Dependent on hand-cranking movements of operator.	Set through camera's menu options. For all my films, I chose a frame rate of 24 frames per second, which, though listed as such in the camera's menu, technically consists of 23.976 frames per second.[4]
Image Resolution	35mm film.	1920 x1080 pixels (Full HD).[5]
Color Recording Capability	Black and white.	RGB color spectrum.[6]
Synchronized Sound Recording Capability	None.	Automatically records synchronized sound through built-in or externally attached microphone.

[1] Compact Flash cards can also be used to record images in the 5D but I shot all my *Actualities* using SD cards.
[2] See Ch. 1, section d.
[3] Museudelcinema, "Cinematographe Lumière. Museu del Cinema," YouTube video, 3:39, November 11, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Q_SgMvTO-o. This video produced by the Museum of Cinema in Girona, Spain, depicts a "[v]irtual recreation of how the cinematograph run [sic]."
[4] Canon Camera Museum, "EOS 5D Mark III," *Interchangeable Lens Digital Cameras: Digital SLR Camera*, accessed August 14, 2021, https://global.canon/en/c-museum/product/dslr808.html
[5] Ibid.
[6] The Canon 5D can be modified to capture monochromatic images by use of picture style profiles that can be stored in the camera's menus, but I opted to shoot all my films in the default color mode.

Appendix G: Email Letter from Annett Wienmeister (February 1st, 2017)

Subject: AW: greetings from Berlin

From:
"Wienmeister, Annett" <annett.wienmeister@uni-bamberg.de>
To:
"Raul Barcelona" <raulbarcelona@nycmail.com>
Date:
Feb 1, 2017 6:30:59 PM

Hallo Raul,

thank you so much for your last emails. I meant to get back to you earlier, but there have been deadlines for applications at the end of January that really pushed me, puh - let's see if anything good comes out of it...

So funny - you write that this film festival in Cleveland rejected your film. I don't see why, cause I was thinking after seing your film that yes, it's about NYC, but then, it is really about people, their goals and characters. And you show this universal perspective on humans so kindly.

Hope you enjoyed all these silent movies - too bad we cannot watch most of them, as digitalizing would cost too much probably. Germany has recently decided to spent some public money on preserving film material, so at least some of this cultural heritage can be saved.

I was thinking about your friend, Ben, the silent film piano player. Here is the movie theater in Berlin that has its own organ player (the only one of her kind in Germany). Her name is Anna Vavilkina and the name of the "Kino" is "Babylon" (here an English page I found with some information on it).

http://secretcitytravel.com/berlin-march-2014/babylon-kino-silent-films-berlin.shtml

Especially nice at the Babylon: every Saturday night 00:00 they play one silent film, with Anna accompanying it. It's free, and sometimes they have really good films (with more infos on Anna and the organ, but all in German, sorry)

http://www.babylonberlin.de/stummfilme.htm

One last note on this topic for now - remember how we talked about movie theatres that show special movies, sometimes having a series etc. this would be the "arsenal" in Berlin, which might be of interest for you

http://www.arsenal-berlin.de/en/home.html

So, I have been following you;) - watching your actualities almost every day, if not, catching up a day later. Remeber how we said that this project might be about finding out what directing your consciousness to something specific on a regular basis will do to your mind? I found that taking the time to watch your film is kind of making me think about the thoughts I have about your movies as well. So, coming back every day for this one minute of a chosen outlook on the world, from this repetition, I realize how I see these films. It was very obvious to me with "winter" (29), my absolute favorite so far (though there are others I like for specific reasons). I watched it four times cause I was so struck by my perception changing from not seing the wind in the tree, then going back, focussing on it, then focussing just on the pattern of the branches, and then, watching it the forth time - seing something beyond this, which I would put to words like this:

winter: moving fingers, just a little, as if beginning to wake up

So, in each movie, I find that there is so much to be seen. And I learn that what I see in it, depends heavely on my mind which is trained in abstract thinking. For example, when watching the "sea" (20) I saw this:

sea: up and down, up and down – change is visible from sideways on

So thank you for sharing this! It's a pleasure also from the point of view of having the chance to see a bit of what you see, the ocean, a park, snow - beautiful things, sometimes funny things (the vaccum!)

What are your experiences and thoughts so far? Do you still like your commitment to every day filming? I wonder, how you experience that aspect of repetition? In buddhist philosophy, that is a very important aspect of finding out about the mind.

For the moment, I hope you enjoy winter and film-making!

Bis bald, liebe Gruesse

Annett

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