The Place of Poetics within Documentary Filmmaking

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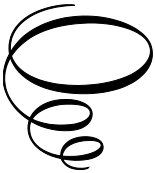
The Art of Fact

Edited by

Keith Marley

Cambridge Scholars Publishing



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This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-1872-8
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-1872-8

This book is dedicated to my late father, Keith Walter Marley, and my late mother, Olwyn Marley.

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Kirby, T. (2012). Carrington. https://vimeo.com/409770382.

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https://www.aspera.org.au/fleur-del-sel
(2019) Expanded Documentary: The aesthetics of pleasure
https://journals.openedition.org/inmedia/1748
(2017) The Art of Fact: An exploration between theory and practice in documentary filmmaking (PhD Thesis)
https://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/7607/3/2017MarleyPhD.pdf

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2020, "Photography, Space Artefacts and the Ethnographic Self", Journal of Narrative Politics, vol. 6, no. 3.
2020, « La sociologie comme elle s'apprend », https://youtu.be/8E1KX5hOfw8

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PREFACE

The idea that documentary is a *reflection* of reality suggests that film acts as a *mirror* held up to society in order to produce *authentic* and *objective* representations of particular events, people or places. The purpose of this book is not to debate issues around authenticity and truth in documentary film (there are many publications that already do this admirably), rather this book aims to analyse the means of expression that filmmakers use to explore and represent the real world in ways which are not always easily explicable and tangible.

For some filmmakers and scholars, the idea that aesthetics be the central focus of documentary film production problematizes the very essence of documentary, in that information and knowledge exchange should be seen to take precedence over form and style. Again, debates around the essence of what documentary film *should do* or *should be* are not of primary concern here, rather the central premise of this book acknowledges that all documentary film is a form of mediation, which acts an expression of an individual or institutions of production, which will, and do, have an impact on *how* the world is represented in film. In any analysis of style and aesthetics in documentary film, the focus on *how* a film speaks to its audience, over *what* is being said, will always be of primary concern, and is therefore a concern which is in evidence in all of the chapters in this collection.

The contributions to this collection are from documentary filmmakers and scholars who discuss how and why the poetic form is of crucial importance to either their own filmmaking or the filmmaking of others. The purpose of this book is not necessarily to provide the reader with a specific definition of a documentary poetics, in fact it is this very lack of specificity that I hope the reader will find interesting: in that documentary poetics is a multi-accentual term that will mean different things to different people. As such, a documentary poetics can manifest itself in film a whole host of ways.

From my own personal perspective, I see a documentary poetics as an approach to filmmaking that utilizes a variety of aesthetic techniques, in order to create a film that is both evocative and impressionistic, and as such,

becomes a film that inherently disrupts the formal associations between documentary film and empirical objectivity.

Keith Marley 2023

CHAPTER ONE

POETICS IN DOCUMENTARY: EXPOSITION AS EXPRESSION

KEITH MARLEY

> 'Much of the attraction of, and debates and controversies around the documentary genre, derives from being a hybrid form, straddling both conflicting paradigms within the social sciences on the one hand, and the aesthetic dimensions of art and entertainment, on the other.' Wayne in Austin and de Jong (2008:7).

Prologue

At its core, there is a tension inherent within the very nature of documentary film: on the one hand it is associated with instruction and information, on the other with aesthetics and art. It is this very tension that has allowed documentary to develop into such a rich and varied form. Within this chapter, the focus is firmly on the aesthetic qualities associated with the documentary form. That is not to say that the informative or expositional potential of documentary is not important, however in this instance, it is how documentary film can speak to its audience that is of primary concern here.

Many scholars have argued that documentary's association with information and exposition has suppressed its aesthetic development. Bill Nichols claims that documentary can thus be labelled as a 'discourse of sobriety' (Nichols, 1991, 68), whereby its emphasis on exposition and seriousness has restricted the expressive and lyrical potential of the film form. Renov suggests that the sober nature of documentary representation has resulted in what he calls, 'aesthetic straightjacketing' (Renov, 1993, 35), whereby innovative forms of representation are largely absent, with the formal characteristics associated with exposition and observation dominating the landscape of documentary. Beattie echoes Nichols' and Renov's concerns

by claiming that documentary's focus on the objective and the didactic denies the audience a sense of viewing pleasure: 'one effect of the imposition of a representation of a rational truth as the core of documentary is to reduce documentary to the realm of the serious where pleasure and associated conceptions of fun are weakened or attenuated – to the point that documentary is characterized as a discourse of sobriety' (Beattie 2008: 29).

Sobriety, however, has not always been associated with the documentary form: its development in the early 20th century was a period of fervent experimentation, where the initial links between Modernism and documentary were firmly established, especially in Continental Europe and the Soviet Union. Many of the films produced during the 1920s and into the 30s now exist as iconic examples of a documentary poetics and are rooted in the semiotics of meaning construction, realised through the fragmentation, deconstruction and abstraction of actuality footage. In many ways it was the Modernist avant-garde who encapsulated John Grierson's often quoted description of documentary as being the creative treatment of actuality. Perhaps the best-known poetic films produced in this period are the City Symphonies. This sub-genre of early documentary emerged with the production of Julius Jaenzon's New York (1911), however among film critics, it is perhaps Sheeler and Strand's Manhatta that is seen as the first recognised city symphony, with Ruttman's Berlin: Symphony of a Great City (1927) providing the name for the genre. Other films of note include Vertov's Man With a Movies Camera (1929), Cavalcanti's Rien Que Les Heures (1926), Ivens' Regen (1929) and Vigo's A Propos de Nice (1930). All of these films aimed to capture the atmosphere of a city with the use of rhythmic editing becoming a significant device in their aesthetic approach. The filmmakers were not necessarily concerned with capturing the real, rather they aimed to express the rhythm, mood and atmosphere associated with the contemporary city. Footage of everyday life would be gathered and then abstracted through the editing process into dazzling creative expressions of everyday life within a city. Dawn to dusk was often the only obvious plot, with the use of montage creating symbolic associations through the juxtaposition of images. For example, Vigo's Nice, acts as a scathing critique of bourgeois culture in Southern France, realised through using images of the decadent British and Russian bourgeoisie, contrasted with images of extreme poverty in the back streets of Nice's old town, using this juxtaposition as a way of drawing attention to the social inequalities that were inherent in the modern European metropolis.

It was the potential to create novel representations of the world that attracted so many avant-garde artists to the revolutionary potential of film and the documentary image. It was artists such as Dziga Vertov who set about using film as a tool for revolution, a revolution both in terms of the political and the perceptual. For Vertov, perceptual revolution could only be achieved by a rejection of the illusionary fiction film and for it to be replaced with factual filmmaking in order to 'develop a new theoretical concept based on an aesthetic attitude totally different from that which governed the obsolete bourgeois film' (Petrić 1993: 15). Vertov's aim was to capture life unawares through the filming of everyday life and then transfigure that reality through montage in order to construct a more meaningful whole by showing life as it is. Many of the creative techniques used in Vertov's films have become staples of a more experimental approach to documentary representation: slow motion; time lapse; freeze frame; split screen; dissolves; compositing images and rapid montage often feature in experimental film works and have made an important contribution to the emergence of a documentary poetics: 'Vertov located the expressiveness of the object photographed in the expressiveness of its movement. Faces, trees, clouds, a falling drop of blood became, in the rhythm of Vertov's series of images, a metrical language of the document – became film poetry.' (Richter, 1986, 50).

Poetics in Practice

Nichols' links the emergence of a documentary poetics with the Modernist avant-garde. He states that the poetic mode of documentary is an associational form, which, 'sacrifices the conventions of continuity editing and the sense of a very specific location in time and place that follows from it to explore associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions' (Nichols, 2001, 102). Films that fall within this mode are more concerned with creating a lyrical impression rather than imparting knowledge or information about specific events, people or places. Nichols argues that these documentaries have the potential to produce 'alternative forms of knowledge', rather than simply providing a 'straightforward transfer of knowledge...or the presentation of reasoned propositions about problems in need of a solution' (Nichols, 2001, 103). Poetic films do not necessarily offer a particular discourse or perspective on the world, rather emphasis is placed upon the creation of a particular mood or atmosphere; as such, representational strategies are seen as expressive, where the spectator is being enticed into seeing and hearing the world anew. This stands in opposition to the more conventional informative approach of documentary

film, where the spectator is presented with a much more obvious discourse or perspective.

In developing my own approach to documentary filmmaking, I was initially very interested in the expressive potential of montage. Much of my early documentary work made no attempt to offer a sense of logical continuity or clear exposition. Rapid successions of largely disjunctive sounds and images became a regular structuring device for my early work. In many ways I tried to make my films difficult in their interpretation by audiences. This approach was very much influenced by the work and writings of the Russian Constructivists. Their aesthetic approach was based on 'the juxtaposition of different materials to produce a more meaningful structural whole' (Petric, 1993, 3-4). Thus, in the context of documentary film, footage is often rendered as defamiliarized via aesthetic devices, which results in the depiction of actuality in unusual ways and presents the viewer with new ways in which they can perceive the world through film. According to Petric, this process of defamiliarization is achieved through zatrudnenie (making it difficult) and oestranenie (making it strange), which closely relates to the Brechtian concept of Verfremdungseffekt: a distancing device that aims to draw attention to the formal constructed nature of the filmmaking process itself. Ultimately it is the formal experimentation of actuality footage that encourages a more expressive mode of representation in documentary film, an approach that Renov argues is often repressed in most documentary filmmaking, claiming that the 'expressive is the aesthetic function that has consistently been undervalued within the nonfiction domain' (Renov 1993: 32). This idea of making the familiar strange became the central focus of my practice led PhD thesis, The Art of Fact: An exploration of the relationship between theory and practice in documentary filmmaking (Marley 2017). One of the major aspects of my PhD was a focus on creative sound design of actuality-audio, which is an area of documentary filmmaking that is surprisingly underdeveloped. Elements of the discussion below are explored in greater detail in my PhD thesis.

Sounding the Documentary

Aesthetic innovation in sound design is much less prevalent in documentary film as opposed to fiction. According to John Corner the 'aesthetic (as distinct from the cognitive) possibilities of sound in documentary are in most cases not mobilized at all.' (Corner 2003: 98). My claim here is that the relationship between image and sound in documentary is hierarchical in that the visual tends to dominate over the aural. Of course, dialogue is a

central feature of many documentaries, with the ubiquitous use of voiceover and interviews, however in terms of aesthetics, soundtracks are often constructed according to well-established conventions and as such are not afforded the same significance as the construction of the visual track. Examples of this reductionist approach to sound design include the use of a wild track consisting of diegetic sounds, or the addition of music to certain scenes, beyond that the subtleties of sound design are often not the primary concern of most documentarians. We talk of "seeing" or "viewing" a film and we would seldom refer to "hearing" a film. As Chion claims, 'although sound has modified the nature of the image, it has left untouched the image's centrality as that which focuses the attention...[it] has not shaken the image from its pedestal. Sound still has the role of showing us what it wants us to see in the image' (Chion 1994: 144).

It is in the area of sound that myself and my production partner, Geoffrey Cox (University of Huddersfield), have tried to exploit by producing innovative representational strategies in an attempt to draw the audience's attention to the audio elements of our films. In order to hail the attention of the viewer/listener, careful attention has to be paid to the way the image track is structured and composed so that 'in order to allow the audience to concentrate more on the sonic elements of the production, I propose that the filmmaker adopts a certain kind of approach that does not draw the audience into the search for meaning via narrative development and its logical resolution' (Marley and Cox in Cooper et al. 2008: 54). In essence, I often try to "free up" the cognitive processing of the viewer/listener by reducing the complexity of the visual track in order to allow focus on the aural signifier. Chion argues that the viewer requires more time to process the visual signifier, as opposed to the aural: 'the ear analyzes, processes, and synthesizes faster than the eye...the eye perceives more slowly because it has more work to do; it must explore in space as well as follow along in time' (Chion 1994: 10-11).

An example of this approach can be seen in some of the sequences in A Film About Nice (Marley and Cox 2010). In many of the shots, especially those around the beach and sea, the shots are held for a relatively long time and there is minimal animation within the scene. These include images of waves lapping on the beach or a drifting boat glistening in the sunshine. The visual track has a degree of simplicity, which contrasts with the complexity of the composition of the audio track. Here location sounds are multi-layered in complex patterns and are occasionally processed in postproduction, using reverb, delay and equalization. Here Cox and I were attempting to limit the attention the viewer requires to process the image, in

order to allow the listener to focus their attention on the detail of the sound. Cox articulates this process by stating that our 'aim here was to encourage the listener/viewer to concentrate on the sound, even to adopt Pierre Schaeffer's concept of "reduced listening" where one listens to the sound, so as to focus on the traits of the sound itself, independent of its cause and meaning' (Cox in Cooper et al. 2008: 58).

A Film About Nice went on to win 'Best Sound Design' in The Maverick Movie Awards, Hollywood, California in 2012. This encouraged Cox and I to develop aesthetic approaches to the design of actuality sounds as a way of using audio as a poetic device. Two subsequent films of ours have further explored the intricate design of diegetic sounds: Mill Study (2017 Cox and Marley) and The Mill (2020 Cox and Marley). Mill Study acted as an initial pilot film for the longer film, The Mill. Cox and I were particularly interested in capturing the dynamic mood and atmosphere of Spa Mill in West Yorkshire, England. Situated in the Colne Valley, the mill represents one of the last working remnants of the Northern textile industry that played such an important role in the spread of industrialization across the globe. Cox and I approached the mill owner, asking if we could make a film that aimed to capture the atmosphere of the day-to-day workings of the mill.

The workings of the mill itself provided a rich landscape of interesting visual and sonic signifiers. Cox and I had to explain to the mill owner that the film we would produce would not follow in the traditional style of documentary and would therefore not go into any detail explaining the yarn making process – rather we wished to adopt a more poetic approach, which would capture the atmosphere of the workplace. The incredible complexity of the soundscape of the mill would allow Cox and I to focus on its subtleties and allow us to treat the aural signifier with as much, if not more, significance as that of the visual. The film would follow in the tradition of other industrial symphonies, which had emerged in the 1930s and were informed by the approach of the city symphonists. Notable examples of industrial symphonies include Joris Ivens' Philips Radio (1931); Bert Haanstra's Glas (1958) and Paul Dickson's Stone into Steel (1960). All of these films incorporate a rhythmic montage style of editing and the cinematography often adopts unusual compositions reminiscent of the constructivist photographer, Rodchenko. The overall aesthetic closely relates to the concept of ostranenie, which presented the everyday activity of the mill in an unfamiliar way, achieved through abstract compositional style, using extreme close up macro photography and unusual camera angles, along with a subtle treatment and layering of diegetic sounds.

The overall aim of the film is to encourage not only reduced listening, whereby the listener focuses on the sonic qualities of the audio track rather than its referential quality, but also to encourage what I call enhanced viewing. Here the viewer is encouraged to focus on the compositional, geometric and rhythmic qualities of the image, achieved through a process of defamiliarization, whereby the abstract compositional aspects of the shots distance the viewer from its referential aspects. This defamiliarizing approach also informs the way that the audio track is treated. This is achieved by using high quality microphones placed in close proximity to the machines so that sounds can be recorded in extreme close up, producing a recording of tremendous clarity and detail. As a result of this approach the listener accesses sounds that would normally be imperceptible to the human ear, adding to the "making strange" of the working environment of the mill. Here it is my claim that through the adoption of a more abstract approach to documentary filmmaking, the viewer/listener experiences an enhanced impression of a specific environment, whereby a sense of realism is achieved through the non-realist filmic techniques described above. In this instance, "enhanced" refers to the viewer/listener experiencing a sensorial rather than cognitive vignette of the everyday life of a working mill. This idea is closely related to Vertov's concept of kino pravda whereby the representational strategies Vertov deployed act as the 'elaboration of a new "vocabulary" [of film]' (Michelson 1984: xxviii).

Mill Study follows a simple narrative arc: the film begins with a fairly slow-paced montage of external shots of the mill, while interior diegetic sounds are layered over the image to give a sense of the indoor space. Each shot is of an equal length, in order to develop a measured and metronomic structure to the piece. The atmosphere in this short section is a tranquil one. This comes to an abrupt end when the image jumps to extreme close ups of heavy machinery, combined with a pounding audio track composed of mainly synchronous diegetic sounds. Here Cox and I aimed to express the intensity of the mill, through juxtaposing this sequence with that of the previous tranquil exterior sequence, rather like we did in the early stages of A Film About Nice. The editing process was particularly complex in this section, both in terms of audio and video footage. Matching the rhythms and movements of the machines was a challenge, as we wanted to create a definite 3⁄4-time signature here. This metered style of editing was used to encourage the viewer/listener to "lock into" the rhythms of the mill, as well as drawing attention to the stylistic approach of the filmmakers.

The film was divided into various movements, echoing the symphonic approach. Our production notes included:

- The geographic context of the mill (external shot sequence) – tranquil
- Interior "hectic rhythmic section" – chaotic
- Establishing the machines using medium shots of machines – calmer
- Balletic section with introduction of humans to the scene – graceful
- Surreal section with use of macro photography and high shutter speed – ethereal
- Closing sequence, minimal movement within the frame – stillness/emptiness

By dividing the film into movements, it allowed Cox and I to focus on creating specific atmospheres for each movement (such as "ethereal", "graceful", "chaotic" and so on). This is where a strict formalist approach provides the tools to convey a particular atmosphere. Here Cox and I try to show the mill to the viewer/listener, rather than tell them about the mill. Beattie's (2008) concept of documentary display, which focuses on the aesthetic functions of documentary, is of particular relevance to our approach here, in that Cox and I aimed to shift the documentary text away from the sober discourse that Nichols (1991) speaks of, toward a text that aims to entertain and provide sensuous pleasure for the viewer/listener. Beattie claims that if a documentary filmmaker focuses on display, then knowledge production becomes visceral, subjective and affective, rather than merely cognitive. It is my argument here that the avant-garde nonfiction has the ability to signify in particular ways through the use of poetic and reflexive techniques, which ultimately draw attention to the process of meaning making itself, whereas the discursive capabilities of the more conventional styles of documentary, such as what Nichols referred to as the expository, observational and interactive modes, are limited in their signifying capabilities. This deeper level of signification allows the viewer/listener to engage with documentary in a different way when compared to a more conventional approach of filmmaking, as Platinga points out:

> The avant-garde nonfiction film encourages an interplay between two ways of viewing the film. On the one hand, the spectator perceives the referent through the iconic, indexical images (and perhaps sounds); on the other hand, style makes referentiality difficult, and becomes itself the primary object of interest. When we view an avant-garde nonfiction, we constantly slide between seeing the images as either a window on the world or a sequence of non-referential images...these films are reflexive in a specific way in that they are fundamentally "about" the documentary and are "about" representation itself (Platinga 1997: 176-179).

This sliding between seeing the images as windows on the world and a sequence of non-referential images is particularly evident in the "Surreal Section" of Mill Study from 6'13" to 7'43". Here I used an 85mm macro lens so that I could achieve extreme closeup images of the detail of some of the mill's machines, and, by opening up the aperture to its widest setting, I was able to capture a very shallow depth of field, which rendered the background as a blur. I also used a very high shutter speed of 1/2000 of a second, which meant that the movement of the yarn was now visible to the camera's eye, whereas the human eye was not able to capture such high-speed movement. These cinematographic techniques, coupled with a precise, often symmetrical compositional style, gave the sequence an abstract lyrical quality, which is very much in keeping with the poetic mode of documentary. The abstract quality was augmented by the soundtrack, which adopted similar processing techniques to the image, for instance the close-up macro photography was matched with close up audio recordings. Here Cox and I were able to isolate some of the individual sounds that were imperceptible to the human ear, rather like the fast shutter speed provided images that were imperceptible to the human eye. For Cox and I this section operated as the very manifestation of Vertov's kino-eye meeting his radio-ear:

> "Film Eye" builds "film things" out of shots according to the "theory of intervals." This theory is based on the perceptual relationship of one-shot composition to another; on the transition and juxtaposition between visual impulses. This connection between shots based on "intervals" is very complex, and consists of many interactions. Among the most important are: (1) the interaction of shot scales (close-up, medium-shot etc.), (2) the interaction of angles, (3) the interaction of movements within shots, (4) the interaction of light and dark, (5) the interaction of shooting speeds. Depending on these factors, the filmmaker decides: (a) the order and (b) the duration of each separate shot (in feet or frames). In addition to the relationship between any two shots (intervals) one must also consider the relationship of a single shot to all other shots; for they all must be integrated into a "montage battle" (Vertov in Petric 1978: 36).

Mill Study addresses all of the five interactions that Vertov highlights above, with the movements of the machinery providing perfect fodder to create a montage battle. For Cox and I, to perfect this approach to filmmaking, precision and attention to detail is absolutely key in terms of: the composition of shot scale; the way that camera angles are composed; the way that the movements within the frames are captured; the exposure of the shot in order to produce particular shadows and highlights and the shutter speed and frame-rate calculations in order to produce specific visual effects.

The only way to get close to Vertov's kino-eye is through the careful consideration of all the factors he outlines in the quote above. Where Cox and I are in a privileged position, however, is that developments in contemporary sound technology have allowed us to explore the concept of Vertov's radio-ear, in a practical context, something which primitive sound technology prevented Vertov from doing:

> We are promoting propaganda using facts, not on the level of vision alone, but on that of hearing too...If, with respect to vision, our kinok-observers have recorded visible life phenomena with cameras, we must now talk about recording audible facts. We're aware of one recording device; the gramophone. But there are other's more perfect; they record every rustle, every whisper, the sound of a waterfall, a public speaker's address... Technology is moving swiftly ahead. A method for broadcasting images by radio has already been invented. In addition, a method for recording auditory phenomena on film tape has been discovered. In the near future man will be able to broadcast to the entire world the visual and auditory phenomena recorded by the radio-movie camera (Vertov in Michelson 1984: 56).

These prophetic words were penned in 1925, a full 34 years before the invention of the synch-sound radio-movie camera. Where Vertov did have a limited opportunity to explore the potential of sound design, he organized audio footage, or sound facts, much in the same way as he organized his images: 'we did not limit ourselves to the simplest concurrence of sound and image but followed the line of maximum resistance – under existing conditions – that of complex interaction of sound with image' (Vertov in Michelson 1984: 111). It is within the complex interaction of sound and image that my praxis has been realized. Some of the ideas discussed above have been explored further in an extended cut of the mill film: The Mill (Cox and Marley, 2020).

After spending many years exploring the potential of montage as poetic device, I felt that I had reached some kind of creative cul-de-sac. I still had a profound interest in making films that would capture the "essence" of a particular place, and whereas montage had been a useful creative device for capturing the dynamism of, say, a cityscape or the mechanized workings of a mill, how might one, for example, capture the essence of a more sedate, slow moving place?

In 2017, I visited the Île de Ré off the Atlantic coast of France on vacation. I was quite taken aback by the atmosphere of the island; despite it being a very popular tourist destination, there was this all-pervasive sense of

serenity and peace. The place had a deep and profound effect on me; it had a beguiling quality to it, a quality that I find difficult to describe in words. I knew immediately that I would return to the island to make, what I would call, an island symphony. I returned in the summer of 2018, with production assistant Marc Sturgess and set about filming around the island. I began to gather shots around the island that I would describe as having a minimalist compositional style. For example, many shots focused on the vast expanses of both sea and sky, with little else in the frame in terms of movement or content. The topography of the island certainly made for pleasing compositions, with little need to search for the next appropriate shot. The challenge was to find a suitable structure for the film, one that could encapsulate the serene atmosphere of the island. My preferred style of editing (montage) is one which is implicitly disruptive and distracting, whereas, in this instance, I needed to adopt a more sedate and non-distracting form of editing in order to more faithfully represent the atmosphere of the island.

It was at this point that the writings and films of Andrei Tarkovsky helped to shape and structure the overall film. Tarkovsky rejected the idea that editing is that which creates the rhythm of a film, rather he states that it is the 'distinctive time running through the shots that makes the rhythm of the picture; and rhythm is determined not by the length of the edited pieces, but by the pressure of time that runs through them' (Tarkovsky 1986: 117). Tarkovsky embraced André Bazin's belief that the long take, in terms of shot duration, allows the spectator to engage with the image in a more significant way, thus allowing the viewer to choose what they wanted to see, rather than that choice being dictated through montage. Tarkovsky was critical of the approach of montage pioneers, such as Kuleshov and Eisenstein, claiming that their films acted as an onslaught, presenting the audience with riddles and puzzles, while all the time imposing the ideas of the filmmakers on the audience. What interests me most about Tarkovsky's approach to filmmaking is the all-pervasive sense of "slowness" associated with it, which, in his own words, 'allows everyone to interpret and feel each separate moment in his own way…it separates from its author, starts to live its own life, undergoes changes of form and meaning…[allowing] the audience to bring personal experience to bear on what is in front of them' (Tarkovsky 1986: 118). His ideas connected with "time pressure" running through the shot itself, became a significant structuring device within the Île de Ré film, a film which I hope has the potential to encourage a transcendental mode of viewing.

It was Paul Schrader in the 1970s who first introduced the term transcendental style with regard to a particular aesthetic in filmmaking. For Schrader, this style of filmmaking, 'is a mile marker on the journey to stillness' (Schrader 2018: 30). The purpose of transcendental style is to encourage a meditative state in the viewer, achieved through aesthetic means that can be linked to a form of slow cinema discussed above. If transcendental style is that which encourages the viewer to experience film beyond usual sensory experience in order to induce a meditative state in the viewer, then the implicit disruptive nature of the cut in editing must not be used because distraction and disruption are not conducive to reaching a meditative state. It was at this point in my thinking that I decided to explore the potential impact of the long dissolve. I felt that this would become an obvious solution to the issues associated with a more disruptive form of editing. I also opted to use a musical score as a poetic device as a further way of producing a meditative aesthetic. Tarkovsky states that music, 'does more than intensify the impression of the visual image by providing a parallel illustration of the same idea; it opens up the possibility of a new, transfigured impression of the same material: something different in kind' (Tarkovsky 1986: 158). However, for Tarkovsky, music is not simply an appendage to images, rather it should be conceived as part of a whole, whereby music becomes, 'completely one with the image that if it were to be removed from a particular episode, the visual image would not just be weaker in its idea and impact, it would be qualitatively different' (ibid.). As such, I wanted my film to be authored not just of my own direction, but authored by another, one who is able to harness the impact of the images and creatively respond to those images, in order to invigorate the film with new life, whereby the work of the composer, 'can be like somebody breathing' (Tarkovsky 1986: 159). Ultimately, I wanted the creative process of another to breathe new life into my film.

There was to be no direction given to potential composers, apart from that they respond to the images in a way that represents how the images made them feel. Three composers responded to the call out I made: Andy Nicholson, Howard Kearey and Paul Moylan. While Nicholson and Kearey produced excellent scores, it was the subsequent conversations I had with Moylan about the image sequence that encouraged me to work more closely with him. It seemed to me that Moylan immediately grasped the idea of transcendental style. In fact, when I asked him about his initial feelings toward the film, he used terms such as "transported" and "transcendence". It was Moylan's score that I ultimately went with when distributing the film.

I was delighted with the score Moylan had produced. After he had finished the mastering of the composition, I conducted an informal interview with Moylan for the writing of this chapter. During the interview he said that he was first struck by "the trance like state" he was in once he started to watch the film unfold. He noted that the film had a cathartic effect on him, allowing him to come to terms with a recent traumatic event in his own life, saying that "it allowed his brain to stop working". He felt that the film had the potential to have a therapeutic effect on both him and the audience, especially at a time where we were all going through the trauma of living through a global pandemic. He said he approached creating the score like he would construct a DJ set, whereby the DJ blends sounds together in order to creative a narrative whole. In fact, Moylan stated that it was the visual blends that had helped "hook him into the film" and it was these visual transitions that became crucial to the way he responded musically. He began to treat the visual blends as sections where he could write discreet pieces of music for each blend, however the challenge was how to then connect all these discreet sections together to create a convincing whole. It was here, where I suspect his DJ skills in beatmatching helped him achieve that convincing whole. Moylan said he found solace in the creative process in the context of lockdown, which was something that I had also experienced when editing the film during the pandemic. He said that the creative process quickly became a positive experience and had helped him to cope with the sense of isolation that lockdown had created and helped to give him a positive focus during what was a challenging time in his own life.

It is my claim here that the poetic approach can have both a significant impact on the filmmaker as well as the audience, in that the making and the subsequent viewing becomes a pleasurable experience for all involved. If the poetic potential of documentary film can have this therapeutic effect on the very people who make them, then hopefully poetic films can also have a therapeutic effect on the audience, whereby their experience of watching and listening to such films contributes to a sense of wellbeing and ultimately becomes a pleasurable experience:

> By encouraging an audience to see and hear the lyrical potential of documentary, a film can operate more on the level of evocation via the filmmaker's focus on the aesthetic, as opposed to the expositional potential of documentary film. As such, the filmmaker can elevate the audience to a more active and informed reader of audio-visual texts. It is through the particular formal qualities of a documentary film, that one can achieve pleasurable learning (Marley 2019: 5).

On a final note, one may ask what drives the documentary filmmaker to make an attempt to represent actuality in poetic ways? What purpose does poetic documentary serve? Might one even claim that adopting a poetic approach is a form of artistic self-indulgence, as John Grierson once claimed? Is art and poetry merely a vehicle for the artist or the poet to communicate the abstract nature of their own existence and being? Is there an innate desire in all of us that simply to wants us to be understood? If understanding others is the key to civilisation, then can poetics provide the vocabulary for a language that increases a shared understanding of the world?

> To seek one's own truth (and there can be no other, no 'common' truth) is to search for one's own language, the system of expression destined to give form to one's own ideas. Only by collecting together the films of different directors do we arrive at a picture of the modern world which is more or less realistic and has some claim to be called a full account of what concerns, excites and puzzles our contemporaries: an embodiment in effect, of that generalised experience which modern man lacks and which the art of cinema lives to make incarnate (Tarkovsky 1986: 87-88).

If a documentary poetics can provide that vocabulary, then long live the art of fact.

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