The Recollections: The Works and Days (of Tayoko Shiojiri in the Shiotani Basin)

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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This dissertation contains the following elements: a 480-minute film, a forty-four-minute LP, and a supplementary text of 30,847 words.

The film, *The Works and Days (of Tayoko Shiojiri in the Shiotani Basin)*, is a fiction recorded for a total of twenty-seven weeks, over a period of fourteen months, in a farming village population forty-seven in the mountains of Kyoto Prefecture, Japan. It is a film that I wrote, directed, edited, sound recorded, and produced. The film is a geographic description of the work and non-work of a seventy/seventy-one year-old farmer named Tayoko. A georgic in five books. A portrait of a family and of a landscape.

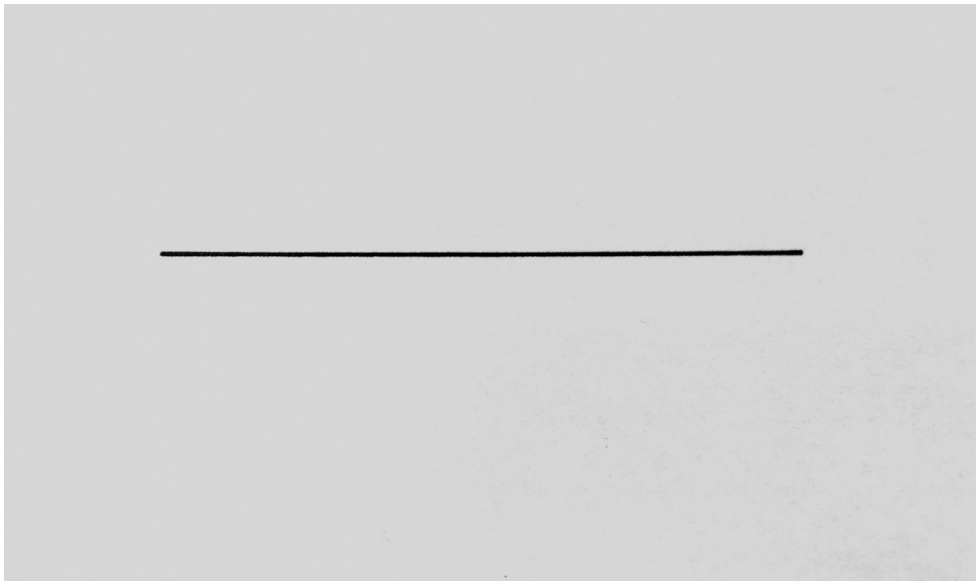
It is a film concerned with, among other things, extended duration, sustained attention, contingent forces, collective economies, market failure, oral history, the non-dramatic, the anti-fragile, plainspokenness, looking, and listening. It is a film emerging from what I see as a post-Slow Cinema moment. A film that falls outside of a Deleuzian taxonomy of the Movement-Image and the Time-Image to be what I would describe as a Terrane-Image film.

While one is free to watch the film as one would wish, I would propose that an ideal screening would take place wholly within a single day. There are intermissions built into the film roughly every two hours. I recommend a fifteen-minute first and third intermission along with a longer lunch break during the second intermission. This makes for a total experience of between nine and nine and a half hours.

The album, *The Works and Days: The Black Sections*, is something of a sound collage album. It is two sides of twenty-two minutes each. It was produced from out of the roughly five hundred hours of sound I recorded over the course of the film production combined with excerpts of musical compositions featured in the film.

The supplementary text, *The Recollections*, is primarily a set of reflections—associations, antecedents, ancillaries, etc—called up for me from the earliest stages of the film's ideation on through to my recent regarding of the completed edit. It serves as an abridged accompaniment to the film so as to make many of the film's implicit concerns explicit. As the text reveals many key moments in the *The Works and Days*, it is ideally intended to be read only after one has seen the film.

The electronic version of the dissertation is typeset to accomodate double-sided printing.



Orthography
The main body, headings, page numbers, and Bibliography are typeset in Monotype Plantin. Footnotes and illustration captions are typeset in Linotype Neue Haas Grotesk.

In all citations, in addition to the standardized information, I include original titles and original publishing dates, as I find this information useful for a reader. For reasons of utility and principle, in both the Bibliography and Footnotes, all films are cited in a format other than the conventions of Chicago, Harvard, APA, or MLA. Production companies—entities either non-existent or beside the point in my focus on films—are eliminated. Citations instead feature: Director. *Title*. (*Original title when appropriate*. Total running time. Sound format. Color or B&W. Shooting format. Nation(s) of production, Year of premiere).

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In memoriam
Junji Shiojiri, Ulla Edström.

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All images from *The Works and Days (of Tayoko Shiojiri in the Shiotani Basin)* © 2020 General Asst. and Anders Edström

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Introduction

The purpose of this text is to offer a partial and representative array of plainspoken associations related to the conception of, the execution of, and the subsequent regarding of the central practice component of my dissertation, the film *The Works and Days (of Tayoko Shiojiri in the Shiotani Basin)*.[1] This is a text intended to stand as a reargrounded accompaniment to what is a practice-forward and practice-focused DPhil—one comprised of the 480-minute film, a related 44-minute soundscape album, and this text itself.

The text does not set out to be totalizing. Nor is it intended to be read in reverse as a set of instructions via which the film was made. As this is not the case. It is written from an orientation of the end of a degree—in this case a DPhil—being a commencement as opposed to a completion. The beginning of a process of discovering just what it is that I have made. A process that begins unfolding with this writing and then with the viva. A process that will continue to come into focus as I take the film out into the world, show it to audiences, and begin to see the film emerge through their recollections, their impressions and associations. I see the film itself as its own productive landscape. An interface of carved-out fictional time, actual running time, and the imaginative time of each viewer extending indefinitely beyond the end credits.

I do not write with the intention of making meaning. Even as I acknowledge that this may inadvertently transpire. I am, however, interested in something of a nuts and bolts transferability. Writing that engages the theoretical, that acknowledges the philosophical, while being ever mindful of

1. C.W. Winter & Anders Edström, *The Works and Days (of Tayoko Shiojiri in the Shiotani Basin),* (2020, 480 min., Stereo, Color, HD, USA/Sweden/Japan/China).

the admonitions of the biologist Louis Agassiz who emphasized that knowing means confirmations on the ground, in the field (or in the studio), with one's hands, via the utter indifference of one's materials. "Go to Nature; take the facts into your own hands; look and see for yourself."[2] Such that mine is an interest a relaying of ideas communicated clearly enough, practically enough, that they might then be readily applied by other practitioners, not merely in film but across the humanities and social sciences—in any discipline where narrative, duration, tension, or other here-endemic qualities are put to work. This is making about making.

The main body of this text, a chapter called "The Recollections," is structured as something of a self-reflexive analog to the structure of the film itself. In making *The Works and Days*, I recorded roughly 400 hours of footage and 500 hours of sound. As the film was scriptless—as I was unconcerned with an unbroken arc of action begetting action—I simply waded into the footage looking for intensities falling at arrayed registers, though none straying too far from a center line equanimity. Moments that I felt might highlight certain of my concerns regarding image, sound, and their utilization. Moments that, accrued, I felt would offer a frank description of these people and this place.

In editing, I might start with an individual sound, a gesture, a light change, a turn of phrase. And from there, I will build out a sequence around it. Having gone through and edited hundreds of these sequences—the film's rough

2. These are allegedly the words of Louis Agassiz as relayed by William James in a speech at a reception of the American Society of Naturalists, December, 30, 1896.

cut was sixteen hours—I began to think of these sequences, lying discretely on my timeline, as patches. And while it is an imperfect metaphor, it was a good enough approximation to get me working at putting these discrete patches together as something of a linear quilt. And while sometimes I felt some sort of ordering was important, in most cases, at least within each individual seasonal section, the ordering, the juxtaposition, as with a quilt, was largely arbitrary. The final result is a temporality significantly disordered from real life. It was an intuitive process, one more similar to musical composition than to script-based editing. A process that, while not unheard of in more free form, non-fiction "experimental" film, is a significant departure from the dominant editing mode of feature-length cinematic fiction.[3] Such that to the degree that theory was brought to bear in the edit, it was not teleologically, but alternatingly recursively and poetically. I had a simple set of rules and operations that were applied in order to define and test the material.

The written Recollections are similarly structured. They emerge out of a flood of my own thoughts on the film. Thoughts at once salient and functional. Often discrete. Like patches. With occasional ordering. Into something of a linear quilt. Though, for the most part, ordered arbitrarily. With a sense that the total accrual in and of itself would emerge as a sufficiently representative and coherent whole.

In addition to the introduction, I have written a Prologue titled "The Terrane-

3. I feel I should note, however, that it is unimportant to me whether this one individual method, within the whole of my methodology, is unique in and of itself. It was only after having executed the film with this approach that, in the retrospective process of this writing, I was able to think of two directors/teams who perhaps might have edited vaguely along these lines: Pedro Costa with his fiction work since 2000 and António Reis & Margarida Cordeiro with their fiction film, *Trás-os-Montes* (1976). Though in neither case can I be sure.

Image." As a filmmaker who works outside of film studies departments, I am conscious of supplementing my writing with something of a film historical set-up for the non-film studies reader. This Prologue seeks to establish some shared language and shared history to better orient this project in a contemporary cinema conversation, in this historical moment, and to better facilitate a discussion of both this essay and of the essay's titular film.

The Works and Days is my second feature film. It is the follow-up to my film, *The Anchorage*,[4] which I made as my MFA thesis project at California Institute of the Arts. At the time of beginning that film—a process that lasted from 2003 to 2008—I had somewhat hypermodern interests, partially born out of 20th century literary and musical developments, in revivifying what I felt were re-urgent limit-point applications of the mundane, of the everyday, of sustained attention. *The Anchorage* is a film with an average shot length of 41 seconds, filmed prior to the invention of the term *slow cinema*. In the intervening years leading up to making *The Works and Days*—between the completion of *The Anchorage* and the release of other first wave, post-dramatic slow cinema projects by filmmakers like Pedro Costa, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and Lisandro Alonso—I felt that a sufficient enough number of second and third wave "slow" filmmakers had emerged that the resistant effects of such slowness had diffused into mere style. A kind of inefficacious *trop vu*. As with co-temporal runnings aground in noise music, this was an approach that no longer held my interest.

4. C.W. Winter & Anders Edström. *The Anchorage* (2009, 87 min, Mono, 35mm, Color, USA/Sweden).

5. As context, the average shot length of Mike Nichol's film, *The Graduate*, is 18 seconds. The ASL of Billy Wilder's comedy, *The Seven Year Itch* (1955), is 24 seconds. Jean-Luc Godard's career average is roughly 21 seconds. Werner Herzog's 22. None would be considered slow.

That said, having invested a good number of years thinking along the lines of *longue durée*, sustained attention, musical Minimalism, noise, soundscape, geography, the post-dramatic, and literary flat affect, I felt that a vital avenue forward would be post-slow cinema experiments in substantially extended duration. Not in slowness. This is a film with a comparatively brisk average shot length of just 18 seconds. But in duration itself. In the very infrequently explored and thus still rather wide open terrain of cinema designed as an experience to be had over much of a full day.

And in four separate shooting trips, totaling twenty-seven weeks, over a span of fourteen months, following a decade of intermittent field research, with a crew fluctuating between one and four people—with me writing, directing, recording sound, and operating one of two cameras—I captured what I felt would be enough footage to put together a film of many hours.

As an ancillary, I also put together a 44-minute soundscape album utilizing both my production sound and music heard in the film. In the dominant model of theatrical cinema, auxiliary elements—soundtrack albums, posters, trailers, official websites, etc—are part of a marketing and branding continuity designed to maximize recognizability and bottom lines. This is not how I work. Instead, each element of my project is considered in a manner medium specific. Self-reflexive considerations are brought to bear regarding the defaults and expectations of a given medium—be it html, offset printing, LP, etc—in order

to make individual components that don't exist in service of the film, but that stand as individual works, elements in an expansive project, conceived with affects and gestures unique to themselves.

One point of entry to the album might be a consideration of the following: in the film, music, as I will discuss more thoroughly in "The Recollections," is camouflaged, embedded down into the soundscape of the film so as to be minimally demonstrative and, on occasion, almost unnoticeable. As this is an album, however, I felt that a foregrounding of the music, given the non-existence of picture and the much shorter overall duration, brought things to more heightened intensity thresholds that I tend to prefer in recordings. And it is this very discontinuity of sound and musical use—between the film and the album—that offers a careful reader a sharper perspective on the sound in the film, a relief via which the contours of music-use in the film become more visible. This is but one mereological example of the discrete components of the project informing each other.

I feel I should also offer some personnel details to make clearer some of the social dynamics of the film production: I first visited Shiotani in 2003. The wife of my co-cinematographer, Anders Edström, is Yoshiko Shiojiri. She makes a number of brief appearances in the film, usually at family dinners. She was born in Shiotani. Her parents are Tayoko and Junji. Yoshiko did her undergraduate degree in Paris. This is where she met Anders. Their daughter, my goddaughter,

and Tayoko's granddaughter is Mai, who is one of the prominent supporting actors in the film.

While I hesitate to offer viewing prescriptives, I would strongly recommend, based on my experience with viewing the film many times under differing conditions, that the optimal viewing experience is one that takes place within a single day.

The film is broken into four sections. There are intermissions built into the edit roughly every two hours. A fifteen-minute break after Section 1. A longer lunch break after Section 2. And then another fifteen-minute break roughly two hours after lunch. This makes for an overall experience of approximately nine hours. I will encourage programmers to schedule screenings beginning at 10:30 a.m or 11 a.m and ending at 7:30 p.m or 8 p.m.

As it is my intention that one ought to have seen the film prior to reading this text, I will offer something of a spoiler that gives what I think is useful insight into Tayoko's performance. Consistent with my interests in a partially counterfactual project of re-clearing neglected pathways out of early cinema, I imagined aspects of this film as re-enactment. The re-enactment is a form that had something of a heyday in the first decade plus or so of cinema. Though given the runaway success of more properly theatrical storytelling, the re-enactment fell away as an approach. In selecting Tayoko as the film's hero, I

knew that I would be working with a performer whose metaphysics are filled out with a rather active belief in the supernatural. Her husband Junji's death was unpredicted during the pre-production phase—he had been given a life expectancy of one to two more years—so when he died four days prior to our beginning filming, I was forced into a reimagining of my approach. I knew that if we got to Japan in time to film his actual funeral, that I might be able to incorporate this event not as a dramaturgical climax but as a window into Tayoko's psychic space and into her character. So following the frantic dash to get the funeral recorded, I shut down the project for a week to give myself the opportunity to re-imagine a way forward.

And in this mourning time, in talking to Tayoko, in experiencing her grief, I encountered my solution: I decided that I would cast Junji's childhood best friend, Iwahana, to play Junji in the film. And I did so upon realizing that Tayoko would sincerely believe, by dint of the specifics of her faith, that during the entirety of the filming, the actual Junji would be watching her from beyond death. She believed that he would see her every action, hear her every word.

And so I proposed to Tayoko the idea of making a film—following what had been a year of some real life tension between her and Junji—as something of a second chance. A chance for her to perform the things she wished she had done with him. Say the things she wished she had said. Guided by selections from her actual diary of that previous year.[6] And she agreed.

So that what we are seeing onscreen as we watch her is an actor

6. The sight-unseen decision to use the previous twelve months of Tayoko's diary – whatever it were to contain – as an editoral framework is one that came during the production. It was a Structuralish conception employed to both inform re-enactment and to elevate Tayoko to a co-authorial role.

7. There are many kinds of films in the world. And certainly one is free to make any kind one would like. But for me, I want to make films that one might not find unpleasant to watch recently after having lost someone very dear.

performing an earthly fiction that, for her, in every action and with every word, is a very real communication with her deceased husband.

What follows is something of an abridged map of my thinking during and since the making of that film. A partial but representative array of the constellation of ideas and associations, of the recollections, activated by *The Works and Days*.

Prologue:
The Terrane-Image

In 1983, French philospher Gilles Deleuze, following nearly three decades of predominantly metaphysical forays into history, multiplicity, event, and virtuality, turned his focus to the moving image with a two-book, neologically-laden exercise in cinematic cladistics that would emerge as among the most influential books on artist moving image and outsider cinema in cinema history. I mention the scale of the impact for a reason. As he is one of a very short list of prominent philosophers who has embarked on a robust, sustained study of cinema, it is my view that he has cast an outsized shadow over cinema discourse. A byproduct of this is that, for rather very many in cinephilic circles, his writings have stood as some sort of firmament over the imaginable. In some small part, my work aims to poke holes in this firmament in order to reveal a vast, unmapped expanse.

In the enjambment of Deleuze's two film books, beginning in the ninth chapter of *Cinema 1* and extending into *Cinema 2*, he reveals the framework of his narrative classification system, whose two thoroughly-subdivided categories he would call: the Movement-Image and the Time-Image.[8]

For our purposes here, it will suffice to say that, with these two categories, he was referring to two variations of theatrical dramatic progression. In each case: beginning —› middle —› end. Conflict —› playing out of conflict —› resolution. Aristotelean fiction with denouement. He describes these classical cinematic narratives as chains of actions, what he called sensory

8. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (*Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement,* 1983), Minneapolis, MN: The Athlone Press, 1996. | Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (*Cinéma II: L'image-temps,* 1985), Minneapolis, MN: The Athlone Press, 1995.

motor schema: one action begetting another action begetting another action in unbroken chains. From the beginning of a film until its end.

Throughout *Cinema 2*, however, Deleuze begins to describe something different. A different kind of image. A different kind of temporality. Now, those versed in dromological and Accelerationist conversations will be familiar with a passage from *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, in which Deleuze, along with Félix Guatarri, offered up the proposition that perhaps, just maybe, the revolutionary path might be to accelerate, to speed up the processes of capitalism, ramping up the forces of the marketplace until they overheat and break down.[9] However, with eleven years to reflect, and with his focus turned to cinema—a subject more concrete—Deleuze settled on and proposed an aesthetic model for the political, at least as it related to the moving image, based not on speedings up but on slowings down. On interruptions of the flow of the dominant image economy.

In *Cinema 2*, he begins to describe what he calls a modern cinema, a cinema marked by what he calls Time-Images, and even more specifically, one type of Time Image that he placed in contrast to the sensory motor situations of cinematic classicism. He called these images pure optical and sound situations. Moments in which previously unbroken chains of action begetting action were, in fact, broken, and directors, for the first time, afforded narrative cinema audiences the opportunity to slow down. To take breaks from dramatic progression. And to experience the fullness of time in lived time.

9. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus* (*Capitalisme et Schizophrénie: L'anti-Œdipe*, 1972), Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.

In 1952, the Italian filmmaker, Vittorio De Sica, provided us with perhaps the most salient early example of a pure optical and sound situation. Roughly thirty-one and a half minutes into his film, *Umberto D.*, there unfolds a sequence eight minutes twenty-eight seconds in length in which a despairing boarding house pensioner, Umberto Domenico Ferrari, finding himself down to his last lire against a backdrop of economic austerity, calls for an ambulance and feigns illness so that he might briefly stay in a hospital in order to get a more comfortable bed, even the temporary succor of nurses, and three good meals a day.[10] Yet it is when Umberto completes his call to the hospital and hangs up the telephone that a sub-sequence begins, one that would change Western notions of cinematic time.

Now, in prior narrative films, a director, in such a situation, following this phone call, would likely cut straight to the arrival of the medics, to Umberto already in the ambulance, or to Umberto at the hospital—an ellipsis to trim away dead time so as to maintain a taut, unbroken sensory motor chain of action begetting action. But De Sica doesn't do this. Instead, he embeds into this sequence a four-minute eighteen-second sub-sequence, in which, at last, narrative cinema's sensory motor schema are broken. And what emerges is an insistent description of a duration.

As the sub-sequence opens, the boarding house *servetta*, Maria, awakened by Umberto's phone call, lies in her bed in the entry hall. She stares upward through the foyer's atrium ceiling. A cat walks across the glass roof.

10. Vittorio De Sica, *Umberto D.* (79 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Italy, 1952).



Umberto D., Vittorio De Sica (1952).

The roof is cluttered with dead leaves. Maria nonchalantly gets out of bed. She puts on her robe as she heads upstairs to the kitchen. Upon entering the kitchen, she notices a leaky faucet. With a half effort, she attempts to tighten the faucet to no avail. She then opens a box of matches, strikes a match on the wall, a wall noticeably scratched by the habit of many such previous match strikes, turns on the gas, and lights the stove. She then walks across the kitchen and looks out the kitchen window. From this new vantage, she now looks down on the glass atrium roof where the cat still walks about. Maria then walks across the kitchen and retrieves a kettle from a cupboard. She slowly returns to the sink and fills the kettle with water. She walks over to a nearby table, collects some paper, a pen, and an ink pot that had been left there, carries them over to a chest of drawers, and puts them into the top drawer. She then takes the kettle over to the stove and sets it on the flame. As the water comes to a boil,

she stares blankly while rubbing her pregnant belly. Maria then walks over to the kitchen table and sits. She grabs a handful of coffee beans from a pot, puts them in a grinder, and begins hand grinding them. After some moments, she slides down in her chair so that she can reach out and close the kitchen door with her toes. After a few more moments, she hears the doorbell ring. She stands, without urgency, and walks downstairs to the front door where she discovers the ambulance medics.

It is a four-minute eighteen-second litany of banalities in which nothing happens that advances a plot. We just wait. In dramaturgical suspension. A description of life outside the dynamics of conflict and resolution. A listening to and seeing the type of span that Deleuze refers to when he says that the "image no longer has space and movement as its primary characteristics but topology and time." It was in this moment in narrative cinema, in this waiting for an ambulance, that time emerged from submission to text to be laid bare in the foreground.[11]

Or so it was thought in the West.

1950 would see the release, in Japan, of Akira Kurosawa's *jidaigeki* film, *Rashomon*.[12] The film would win a Golden Lion at the 1951 Venice Film Festival, and, in 1952, it would win an Academy Honorary Award. It was the first Japanese film to find significant crossover success with Western audiences.

11. "When we reveal a film's world to members of an audience, they each learn to create their own world through the wealth of their own experience. As a filmmaker, I rely on this creative intervention for, otherwise, the film and the audience will die together. Faultless stories that work perfectly have one major defect: they work too well to allow the audience to intervene...It is a fact that films without a story are not very popular with audiences, yet a story also requires gaps, empty spaces like in a crossword puzzle, voids that it is up to the audience to fill in. Or, like a private detective in a thriller to discover. I believe in a type of cinema that gives greater possibilities and time to its audience. A half-created cinema, an unfinished cinema that attains completion through the creative spirit of the audience, so resulting in hundreds of films." – Abbas Kiarostami, "An Unfinished Cinema". From a text written for the Centenary of Cinema, distributed in December 1995 at the Odéon Theatre, Paris.

Soon thereafter, the films of Kenji Mizoguchi would emerge onto the Western film festival scene. His *The Life of Oharu* (1952), would win the International Award at Venice, a prize he would share with co-winners Roberto Rossellini (*Europe '51*) and John Ford (*The Quiet Man*).[13] And in 1953, his *Ugestsu* would earn him a Silver Lion for Best Direction at Venice.[14] The early 1950's would see even minor directors, Heinosuke Gosho, Ikuzo Suzuki, and Ishiro Honda, successfully release films in the United States and Europe. And, in 1954, Teinosuke Kinugasa would win the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival with his Heian samurai drama, *Gate of Hell*.[15]

However, from our historical perspective, there is one filmmaker who seems rather conspicuously absent from this first wave of Western critical frenzy around Japanese cinema. When the film *Tokyo Story* was released in 1953, film director Yasujirō Ozu had already released thirty-nine feature films in Japan.[16] Among these were such master works as *I Was Born but...* (1932), *A Story of Floating Weeds* (1934), *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947), *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), *Late Spring* (1949), *Early Summer* (1951), and *The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice* (1952).[17] None of these films saw proper theatrical release in the West. David Bordwell surmises that this was so "chiefly because decision-makers considered Ozu 'too Japanese' to be exported."[18]

Tokyo Story would be the first Ozu film to screen at a major international festival. Despite inviting the film, however, the organizers of the 4th Berlinale, as is all too typical in programming, would deem the film unworthy of a place

12. Akira Kurosawa, *Rashomon* (*Rashōmon*, 88 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Japan, 1950).

13. Kenji Mizoguchi, *The Life of Oharu* (*Saikaku ichidai onna*, 133 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Japan, 1952). | Roberto Rossellini, *Europe '51* (*Europa '51*, 118 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Italy, 1952). | John Ford, *The Quiet Man* (129 min, Mono, Color, 35mm, USA, 1952).

14. Mizoguchi, *Ugetsu* (*Ugetsu monogatari*, 96 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Japan, 1953).

15. Teinosuke Kinugasa, *Gate of Hell* (*Jigokumon*, 89 min, Mono, Color, 35mm, Japan, 1954).

16. Yasujirō Ozu, *Tokyo Story* (*Tōkyō monogatari*, 136 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Japan, 1953).

in the main competition, and *Tokyo Story* would come and go from the festival barely noticed. The film had a critically successful screening at the British Film Institute in 1958. And then it wasn't until 1972, thanks to its championing by film critics Donald Richie and Paul Schrader, that the film would have a proper run in New York. That same year, Schrader would publish *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer*, and, two years later, Richie would publish *Ozu: His Life and His Films*.[19] And only then, at last, in the 1970's, roughly a decade after his death, would the work of Ozu gain international critical traction.

With this as context, I return to Maria, the maid in De Sica's *Umberto D.*, his film from 1952, and the wait in lived time for the arrival of an ambulance. A pure optical and sound situation. Time liberated from dramatic progression. The forging of a Time-Image film. But is this where it all began? The discovery of Ozu tells us no.

Ozu came late to talkies. His first sound film, *The Only Son* (1936), would appear a full nine years after the first sound feature film, the Al Jolson vehicle, Alan Crosland's *The Jazz Singer* (1927).[20] Yet already, in his first sound outing, Ozu would begin to describe a kind of proto-pure optical and sound image. Throughout the film Ozu wove passages of insistent banality. Immersions in the everyday, narrative attenuation, fading gently in and out of this quiet family drama. With his *What Did the Lady Forget?* (1937), he would end the film with a brief passage, drained of dramatic action—just architecture, light,

17. Ozu, *I Was Born but…* (*Otona no miru ehon – Umarete wa mita keredo*, 100 min, Mono, B&W, Japan, 1932). | Ozu, *A Story of Floating Weeds* (*Ukikusa monogatari*, 86 min, Mono, B&W, Japan, 1934). | Ozu, *Record of a Tenament Gentleman* (*Nagaya shinshiroku*, 72 min, Mono, B&W, Japan, 1947). | Ozu, *A Hen in the Wind* (*Kaze no naka no mendori*, 84 min, Mono, B&W, Japan, 1948). | Ozu, *Late Spring* (*Banshun*, 108 min, Mono, B&W, Japan, 1949). | Ozu, *Early Summer* (*Bakushū*, 125 min, Mono, B&W, Japan, 1951). | Ozu, *The Flavor of Green Tea over Rice* (*Ochazuke no aji*, 116 min, Mono, B&W, Japan, 1952).

18. David Bordwell, "*Tokyo Story*: Compassionate Detachment," *The Criterion Collection*. November 18, 2013. https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/301-tokyo-story-compassionate-detachment.

and the sound of a clock making us aware of the passage of time—that stands as something of a fine, if diminutive, precursor to the virtuosic closing sequence of Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Eclisse* (1962).[21] However, its deployment as climactic punctuation, to me, lends it a dramatic effect that renders it still a proto-example of a Time-Image.

By 1941, however, with *The Brothers and Sisters of the Toda Family* and into 1942's *There Was a Father*, Ozu begins to tear at the fabric of cinematic time.[22] With sequence after sequence in these two films, Ozu wraps up dramatic scenes with something we might think of as re-establishing shots. In scenes in which performative movement through space has stolen attention away, he then leaves viewers in moments of repose, pondering spaces now emptied of bodies, with an awareness of one's attention returning from movement and back to time.

By 1949's *Late Spring*, Ozu had developed an outlier command of filmic time. And it is in this film that he executes what is my favorite pure optical and sound situation in all of cinema.[23] In a scene that, in a lesser film, would likely have been a throwaway shot, Ozu alights upon a moment in which the film's protagonist, Noriko, played by Setsuko Hara, arrives at the home of a friend for tea and cake. Her friend is in the next room, doing what we are not quite sure. So in the meantime, Noriko simply sits and waits and waits. Dramatic action has subsided. And time is foregrounded. Eventually, Noriko's friend does come to retrieve her, and they quickly repair to the next room. But even then, Ozu

19. Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer*, Oakland: CA, University of California Press, 2018. | Donald Richie, *Ozu: His Life and His Films*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974.

20. Ozu, *The Only Son* (*Hitori musuko*, 87 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Japan, 1936). | Alan Crosland, *The Jazz Singer* (88 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Japan, 1927).

21. Ozu, *What Did the Lady Forget?* (*Shukujo wa nani o wasureta ka*, 71 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Japan, 1937. | Michelangelo Antonioni, *L'Eclisse* (*L'eclisse*, 126 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Italy/France, 1962).



Late Spring, Yasujirō Ozu (1949).

doesn't cut. He holds the shot. On the empty doorway. Through which they've just exited. To the right of which is a grandfather clock. Ticking away. Making the viewer quite aware that what is being witnessed is the passing of time.

It is a now unassuming scene just over sixty seconds in length. And for today's viewers, with our acclimations and with our awareness of the durationally-intensive exercises of filmmakers like Andy Warhol, Michael Snow, James Benning, Chantal Akerman, Jean-Claude Rousseau, Heinz Emigholz, Sharon Lockhart, Lav Diaz, and Wang Bing, it is a scene that could pass and barely register as remarkable.[24] But for viewers at the time, especially viewers in the West, if they had only had a chance to see it then, it is a scene that would surely have registered as startlingly arresting.

With Ozu, the pure optical and sound situation was born. The birth of the Time-Image film.

22. Ozu, *The Brothers and Sisters of the Toda Family* (*Todake no kyōdai*, 105 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Japan, 1941). | Ozu, *There Was a Father* (*Chichi ariki*, 94 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, Japan, 1942).

23. Ozu, *Late Spring*.

24. Were I to offer here-representative films by each, I would mention: Warhol's *Sleep* (1964), Snow's *Wavelengths* (1967), Benning's *Los* (2001), Akerman's *News from Home* (1977), Rousseau's *La vallée close* (1995), Emigholz's *Schindler's Houses* (2007), Lockhart's *Lunch Break* (2008), Diaz's *Evolution of a Filipino Family* (2004), and Wang's *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks* (2003).



Vive l'amour, Tsai Ming-Liang (1994).

Moving forward, we would see the pure optical and sound situation evolve and propagate in international narrative cinema.[25] One of the most sublime examples would come out of the Iranian New Wave from the film *Close-Up* (1990), the twenty-second directorial effort of Abbas Kiarostami:[26]

In this particular scene, a cab driver has driven a journalist and two policemen to a home at the end of a quiet Tehran cul-de-sac. They have travelled there to arrest a suspected fraudster. The journalist enters the walled courtyard of the home first and is followed shortly thereafter by the two policeman leaving the cab driver alone outside.

For what seems to be no reason in particular, the cab driver circles the car around and parks it on the opposite side of the street. After a few moments of smoking his cigarette, he exits the car. He stretches a bit. He walks over to the sidewalk, and, upon hearing an airplane, looks up and, for a few moments,

25. We can find other exemplary iterations in work as diverse as Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960); Monte Hellman's *Two-Lane Blacktop* (1971); Fernand Deligny's *Le moindre geste* (1971); James Benning's *Time and a Half* (1972); Abbas Kiarostami's *The Experience* (1973); Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975); Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984); Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *A Time to Live, a Time to Die* (1985); Tsai Ming-Liang's *Vive L'Amour* (1994); Jia Zhangke's *Platform* (2000); Lisandro Alonso's *La libertad* (2001); Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Distant* (2002); Cristi Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (2005); Cristian Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (2007); Liu Jiayin's *Oxhide II* (2009); and Wang Bing's *The Ditch* (2010).

26. Abbas Kiarostami, *Close-Up* (*Nema-ye Nazdik*, 98 min, Mono, Color, Iran, 1990).



Close-Up, Abbas Kiarostami (1990).

watches the plane fly against the clear blue sky leaving four distinct white contrails in its wake. The cab driver then looks down and walks over to a rather large, raked-up pile of dead leaves. He notices some roses that have been discarded atop the leaf pile, and, as he goes to retrieve them one by one, he inadvertently dislodges an aerosol can from the leaves. It rolls down off the pile and comes to a stop on the street. He walks over to the can, gives it a good tap with his foot, and he then watches as the can slowly rolls and rolls down the gently-sloped road. Thirty-seven seconds later, the can comes to a stop against a curb. The cab driver turns back towards his car. He gives his roses a smell. And as he enters his car, the police emerge from the house with the suspect. Again, a dramaturgical suspension offering attention to non-dramatic time.

Thirty-eight years after *Umberto D*. Fifty-three years after *What Did the Lady Forget?* It is a hypermodern image, emerging out of the tailings of the

postmodern, that so arrested the dominant narrative impulse, that so disrupted re-accumulations of expectation, that it reverberated throughout international cinema. And it remains one of the defining images of the Neo-neorealist period.

It is the type of sequence that would land *Close-Up* squarely within the decretum of Deleuze's "modern cinema." Yet still, these narrative films, these modern films, these fictions that Deleuze declared radical, still all fit into subsets of his two-philaed taxonomy. Conflict —› playing out of conflict —› resolution. Narrative directed towards denouement. Yes, these films contain dramaturgical ruptures. Yes, they contain isolated passages of resistance to the dominant narrative impulse. Yet still, these passages, these pure optical and sound situations, are contained within filmic frameworks driven by dramaturgy leading to solution. Conflict leading to culmination. Formal models of Aristotelean lineage.

And I'm reminded here of a line of thought from *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction* by the Nouveau roman author Alain Robbe-Grillet, a collection of critical reflections on his own writing and the writing of others. I'm thinking of one passage in particular in which he discusses a number of the putative political novels of his day: "Whence the embarrassment we feel in the 'committed' novels which claim to be revolutionary because they treat the condition of the workers and the problems of socialism. Their literary form, which generally dates from before 1848, makes them the most backwards of bourgeois novels."[27]

27. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction* (*Pour un nouveau roman*, 1963). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996. | Even Robbe-Grillet though, of all people, with a film like *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) – a film whose synopsis seems to have been written by David Foster Wallace's fictional filmmaker, James O. Incandenza [Man attempts a seduction by appealing to the memories of a comely amnesiac.] – for all the brilliance of his and Resnais' formal and temporal invention, still adheres to a conflict-resolution structure, albeit rearranged. Arc-wise, it is *His Girl Friday* (1940) or *It Happened One Night* (1934) by other means. | David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest: A Novel*, Boston: Back Bay Books, 1997. | Alain Resnais, *Last Year at Marienbad* (*L'année dernière à Marienbad*, 1961, 94 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, France/Italy). | Howard Hawks, *His Girl Friday*, 1940, 92 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, USA). | Frank Capra, *It Happened One Night*, 1934, 105 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, USA).

And while I might not agree with the absolutism of that thought, I do find sympathy with the spirit of it. To map that notion onto this discussion: is it enough that a film features brief passages of resistance if said film is still formally structured with what amounts to the same template of dramatic progression that we can trace back to D.W. Griffith? Is that the outermost potential of cinematic fiction? Deleuze, with his cladistics, would have us think so.

In 1921, a young Jean Epstein, in his cinematic call-to-arms, *Bonjour cinéma*, weighs in: "Life is not about stories, about actions oriented towards an end, but about situations open in every direction. Life has nothing to do with dramatic progression but is instead a long and continuous movement made up of an infinity of micromovements."[28] And even as Epstein himself would never answer this call with his own films, his inclinations towards the stochastic, his inklings of the contingent, his glimmerings of some unnamed expansiveness, hinted at potentials that we can now fully wrangle with. His was a spirit not of the dramatic but perhaps of something closer to what Jean-Luc Godard was getting at when he said that "to describe is to observe mutations."[29]

It was in the wake of having made *The Anchorage* that I first encountered these ideas of the Movement-Image and the Time-Image. And it was then that I realized that, inadvertently, I had made a fiction film that falls squarely outside the definitions of either. I hadn't made a Movement-Image film of unbroken action begetting action. Nor had I made a Time-Image film that simply offers lived-time ruptures in what is otherwise a conflict-resolution arc. I had made a

28. Jean Epstein, "Bonjour cinéma," *Critical Essays and New Translations*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014. | Which recalls a passage from Hayden White, "Does the world really present itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles, and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see 'the end' in every beginning?" Surely no. | Hayden White, *The Content of the Form*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 24.

29. Jean-Luc Godard, *Godard on Godard*, New York: Da Capo, 1972, p 392.



The Anchorage, C.W. Winter & Anders Edström (2010).

distinctly third type of film. A film fully outside of Deleuzian cladistics. A film in which dramaturgy is altogether expunged. Yet which still remains fictional. Simply by its depictions being untrue. A film that took a gesture like De Sica's wait for the ambulance or Ozu's look at the grandfather clock or Kiarostami's kick of the can, and instead of merely using such a gesture as a dramaturgical rupture, expanded the gesture outwards such that the rupture itself became the entirety of the film. A move that Deleuze had failed to account for. A Cinema 3 as it were. A model I've taken to calling a Terrane-Image film.

And as I entered into the ideation of *The Works and Days*, this notion of the Terrane-Image found its way into the constellation of considerations I brought to bear. Not in a prescriptive sense. Not as an end to be attained. I have no interest in making work that simply illustrates a theory. These notions of narrative theory were just one component of a set of thoughts, a point of

view, that I had with me at the beginning of the process. An arrival vehicle of sorts. To a starting point. From which I would then allow the film to grow and accrete, in ways unforeseeable, via engagements with time and people and place. It is an approach to beginning a work that is a letting go, at least partially akin to Keats' negative capability, or Dewey's art as experience, or Heidegger's *gelassenheit*.[31] "Not everything can be resolved," said Keats. Or, "the wind bloweth where it listeth," said Robert Bresson.[32]

31. "At once it struck me, what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature...I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being content in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts... Not everything can be resolved." – John Keats (1817), *Selected Poems and Letters*, London: William Collins, p. 261. | "The destiny of a living being is bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way." – John Dewey: *Art as Experience* (1934), New York: Putnam, 1980. | "By Gelassenheit, I mean the spirit of availability before What-Is, which permits us simply to let things be in whatever may be their uncertainty and their mystery." – Martin Heidegger: *Gelassenheit* (1959), Milan: Marzorati, 1976.

32. Robert Bresson, *A Man Escaped, or The Wind Bloweth Where It Listeth* (*Un condamné à mort s'est échappé ou Le vent souffle où il veut*, 1956, 101 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, France).

The Recollections

"If I want to mix a glass of sugar and water, I must, willy nilly, wait until the sugar melts…The time I have to wait is not mathematical time…it coincides with my impatience, that is to say, with a certain portion of my own duration, which I cannot protract or contract as I like. It is no longer something thought; it is something lived. It is no longer a relation; it is an absolute."[33] These are the words of Henri Bergson who describes here a relationship to moments untethered from an internal locus of control. We could think of these as non-dramatic moments. Moments not of the agent but of the seer. Moments during which proaction has ceased. And one but waits.

Similar such waiting was mirrored both on and off-screen during the production of *The Works and Days*. It was a shooting process marked out by risings at 4:30 a.m. most days. To bed at roughly 11:30 p.m. most days. Six days a week. Blanketing Tayoko's waking hours. Much of the time spent just looking and listening. Waiting. Cameras off.[34] Following her stirrings, her habits, her work, her non-work. At the ready for moments to record. Sometimes moments left as they were. Or, in other cases, moments that I could build upon and alter, re-enact, rehearse, artificialize, hybridize, and/or corrupt.[35]

And then, once recording, I allowed myself givings over to such moments: a full bus ride taken, a New Year's bell fully pealed, a meal eaten, a

33. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution (L'Évolution créatrice*, 1907). London: Macmillan, 1964, p. 9.

34. It is a kind of relationship to patience, to allowing oneself to be guided, that causes me to recollect the title of the first novel of Nathalie Sarraute: *Tropisms* (1939). A tropism is usually thought of as botanical occurence. A growing, turning, twisting, etcetera only in response to an external stimulus. As opposed to nastic movement, which is internally-driven growth.

35. "We were announcing that the composer could sit with sound so to speak, and work with it as a plastic continuum extended in time along the same course, and at the same pace, as the listener. That is quite different from improvising on a tune, or using improvisational variation to elaborate sound patterns. The message here was not about indeterminancy, nor about immediacy, but about control of sounds right there in your own environment, and the process of composition as long-term growth of interests within that sound complex." —Tony Conrad via Anthony Elms, "A Stroll by the Shore," *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective,* London: Koenig Books, 2018. p. 276.

song performed, a cigarette smoked, a row hoed, a field harvested, and, perhaps the most Bergsonian of all, a roadside clock counted down to zero.[36]

These moments were sometimes edited down. Other times left whole. In many cases collections of the banal. Accreted into descriptions of lives. And other times there appeared the wait-earned reward of something more. "The sublime is tied to realism by an underdetermination of words."[37] In those somethings-more, in moments unexpectedly enthralling, "the vicissitudes of life [would seem] unimportant to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory."[38] Such as hearing the tymbalar call of a particular cicada, but one of a vast writhing multitude, in the cyan twilight after a swim in the Konbayashi River. Its vespertine song distinctly unlike the others. More refulgent, more infloresced. A song like Bergson's sugar cube spiralling in Proust's tea.

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The Works and Days (*of Tayoko Shiojiri in the Shiotani Basin*) describes the life of a farmer in a valley in rural Honshu, Japan. And while she is somehow valorized by the film's title, it was at the same time important to me that her life, a life

36. In Morgan Fisher's self-portrait essay film, *Picture and Sound Rushes* (1973), he describes what he calls the four cases of cinema: Sync, MOS, Wild, and the Null Case. Sync indicates the simultaneous occurance of picture and sound. MOS is picture without sound. Wild is sound without picture. And the Null Case is neither picture nor sound. The shot of the roadside clock could be seen as an instance of MOS. Each of my chapter breaks could be seen as explorations of the Wild case.

37. Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (*Le destin des images*, 2003), London: Verso, 2007, p 120.

38. Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Volume 1: Swann's Way*, (*Du côte de chez Swann*, 1913) New York: The Modern Library, 2003, p 60.

39. "Most American films are humanist. Whereas we are trying to make films where the men in the frame are no more important than a small stone, rock, or blade of grass, a breath of wind, a cicada, or a bird that passes." – Jean-Marie Straub in *Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet*, Vienna: Austrian Film Museum, 2016. p 149.

dear to me personally, be rendered for the viewer as merely one life, any life, remarkably, if beautifully, unremarkable. With this in mind, while a death occurs during the film's production, the death poems that title each of the film's five chapters, written between 1734 and 1927, final poems before death written in these cases by haiku poets with an aim of the understated, remind us that the death in the film is but one of innumerable deaths over time on this particular island. The death of my friend Junji, here fictionalized, is of the everyday.[39]

More expansively, the film's title, *The Works and Days*, recalls the aphoristic farmers manual poem of Hesiod from c. 700 BC.[40] Itself part of a tradition of farmers manual poetry that includes Marcus Terentius Varro's *Agricultural Topics in Three Books* (37 BC) and Virgil's *Georgics* (29 BC). If we can think of wisdom as a set of experience-based heuristics, the film's title is a reminder that, while I do describe the daily taskscape of a particular farmer, she is but one of untold farmers over millennia whose tasks accreted into the learnedness of habit.[42]

French novelist Maurice Leblanc, in *The Extravagent Life of Balthazar* (1925), offers, through his titular character, that everything is everyday, everything is prosaic, everything is explainable by utter normality. And while

40. Hesiod, *Theogony and Works and Days* (700 B.C.), Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, (Translator: M.L. West), 2018.

41. Marcus Terentius Varro, *The Three Books of M. Terentius Varro Concerning Agriculture*. (*Rerum rusticarum libri III*, 36 B.C.) Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2010. | Virgil, *Georgics* (c. 37 B.C.), London: Penguin Classics, 1982. | More recent lesser georgics include: John Philips' *Cyder* (1708), William Somervile's *The Chace* (1757), Christopher Smart's *The Hop-Garden* (1752), John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757), James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* (1764), Jacques Delille's *The Rural Philosopher, or, French Georgics* (1800), and Vita Sackville-West's *The Land* (1926).

42. These are references, that if only momentarily, telescope us backwards from what Fernand Braudel, would have called a short view, one attentive to isolated events; to a medium view, one focused on societies or movements; to a long view, one framed to take in epochs in whole.

I might not share this view as absolutism, the spirit of such a view certainly resonates across many of my intentions.

Deleuze claimed that Ozu had invented post-dramatic fiction because, in his films, everything is banal even death. And though it is true that Ozu did indeed offer diffusions of the dramatic, attenuations, dispersions that expanded the territory of cinematic narrative, gestures sufficient alone for his canonization, I cannot agree with the reach of Deleuze's "post-dramatic" diagnosis here, as Ozu's deaths, while delivered with a certain economy of affect, land as indispensible components of his dramaturgical structures. We could take as but one example the death of the mother in *Tokyo Story* (1953),[43] by any measure an act II climax, upon which every remaining main character in the film turns in dramatic reckoning.

Many will claim that The Stooges were punk. Or The Seeds. Or even Link Wray. Though I should think it is adequate to regard them as proto–.[44]

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On the fifty-sixth page of Douglas Huebler's 1970 book, *Durata, Duration*, one finds a largely blank white page—in my copy now somewhat yellowed—at the

43. Ozu, *Tokyo Story*.

44. The Stooges. *Funhouse*. Elektra EKS 74071, 1970. LP. | The Seeds. *The Seeds*. GNP Crescendo 2023, 1966. LP. | Link Wray. *Early Recordings* (1963–1966). Ace 6, 1993. LP.

45. Douglas Huebler, *Durata, Duration*, (Edizioni a cura di Germano Celant e Pierluigi Pero, 1970, Sperone editore, Editarte Torino).

La superficie qui rappresentata riflette un ammontare indeterminato di luce quando questo libro è aperto a queste pagine, ma è assolutamente priva di riflesso quando il libro è chiuso.

The surface above reflects an indeterminate amount of light when this book is open to these pages but is absolutely non-reflective when the book is closed.



Tony Conrad *Yellow Movie 2/16–26/73*, 1973. Emulsion: Gull white flat interior latex. Magicolor No. 3011 - 11. Base: Studio white seamless paper. 120 x 107 inches. 304.8 x 271.8 cm. Photo: Jean Vong. Image courtesy of Greene Naftali, New York.

bottom of which we find the following small-type, sans serif caption in both English and Italian:[45]

> The surface above reflects an indeterminate amount of light when this book is open to these pages but is absolutely non-reflective when the book is closed.

It is a gesture that pre-dates the now more well-known Yellow Movies by Tony Conrad made in late 1972 and early 1973, each of which is a single rectangle of cheap white flat interior latex paint inside a black matte frame on paper. And from the moment of their creation, these films—Conrad insisted that they weren't paintings—began to "screen" and each has run continually ever since, describing, with ever increasing clarity, a trajectory of yellowing and decay. As I remarked in *Cinema Scope*'s "Decade in Review," prior to encountering the Huebler:

> "Many works of this period could be seen as engagements with time, as pieces with distinctly marked points A and B. Think: [La Monte] Young's *The Black Record*, with its clean-cut time-stamping, as an especially pronounced example. And while many such works asked us to imagine engagements with duration, I'm not aware of any work that defines a true longue durée with the force and assuredness of *Yellow*

Movie 12/17/72. As a wide-open field, it is an act of supreme generosity, bestowing a trust of imagination upon its audience. And in its nod towards perpetuity, as a work that cannot be fully consumed by any individual in any single lifetime, it speaks to the humility of pondering something larger than ourselves."[46]

With such limit point projects well attended to by 20th century practioners, I feel liberated in my work to revivify duration in a manner more fully experienceable and more affectively expressivist, even if still compatriotically insistent.[47]

And in thinking about such works, I feel, for my purposes at least, it would miss the point to think in terms of movements. As movements are simply mappings of time. They define periods. But in our experience with the everyday and in our helplessness against ever-increasing encroachments on our attention, engagements with the quietude of pure time extend beyond the formal.[48] They become acts of health. And they become acts of urgency. This is a duration. And we're in it for the long haul. It will be up to each new generation, likely in

46. C.W. Winter, "The Decade in Review," *Cinema Scope*, CS 42, 2010, https://cinema-scope.com/reviews/c-w-winter/.

47. And in some of the most demanding stretches of this crafting, I found myself drawing, in spirit if not in form, upon the resolve of durational works like Loren Mazzacane Connors' defiant 4 CD *Unaccompanied Acoustic Guitar Improvisations Vol. 1–9 (1979-1980)*; Jandek's four CD *The Song of Morgan*; John McPhee's 696-page geological journal, *Annals of the Former World*; Conrad's roughly 200-hour posthumous solo piano release, *Music and the Mind of the World*; and Fernand Braudel's (varyingly and roughly) 1,375-page *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Each are works that, for me, aside from their content, stand as testaments to sustained labor.

48. As one of many related recollections coming to mind, this one will suffice as representative: "The pleasure and astonishment of looking are unnegotiable. Nothing the world can do to them will make them go away. And yes, I agree, the world does plenty to try. Pleasure and astonishment seem to me qualities that the world around us, most of the time, is conspiring to get rid of...By which I mean the full range of human possibilities and sympathies that make up the human, as far as I'm concerned. Recognitions and sympathies, but also losses and horrors and failures of understanding. Everything the present ecstasy of 'information' wants us to transfer to trash...We are accustomed from a young age to living in a constant flow of visual imagery. The imagery is designed not to be looked at closely or with sustained attention...So make time for the opportunity for sustained attention, proposing that visual images carry within them the possibility of genuine difficulty, genuine depth, genuine resistance – a way of life in which the image-life of power could at once be derided or spoken back to." – T.J. Clark, from *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War by Retort* (2005).

perpetuity, to define its own distinct relationship to the forces that intrude upon their lived time. And clear their own heterotopic spaces.

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While often used interchangeably, the stochastic differs from the random in that the former is more an emphasis on process while the latter is more an emphasis on outcome. These are differences worth parsing and running in the background as one considering the notion of the contingent.

> "As Quentin Meillassoux has explained, in his *After Finitude*, unlike the etymology of 'chance' and 'aleatory,' which relate to 'falling'—*cadentia*, *alea*, the fall of a dice, the eventuality of one number of possible outcomes (the faces of a die)—'contingency' comes from *contingere*, meaning 'to *befall*'— it is an event that happens to us, that comes

from outside, that simply 'strikes' without any possible prevision. In Meillassoux's words:

> The contingent…is something that finally happens—something other, something which, in its irreducibility to all pre-registered possibilities, puts an end to the vanity of a game wherein everything, even the improbable, is predictable.[49]

Once we understand the meaning of contingency, then, the very notion of a 'contingency plan' is revealed as a contradiction in terms."[50]

The dominant model of industrial film production is one of contingency planning. A contradiction in terms that screenwriter William Goldman likely had at least partially in mind when he famously declared of the film industry, "Nobody knows anything." While protocols vary, something like the following would be typical: a writer is solicited to author a script. This will be a writer chosen for a résumé of past work that offers imperfect assurances of a suitably engaging draft. Said draft is then run through a committee of overseers who demand changes—practical and creative—as they see fit. It is not uncommon then for further writers to be brought on board to "punch up" the script, giving producers what they feel is a sufficiently coherent arc and a sufficiently large number of scenes deemed entertaining. And so on into a templated litany of

49. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: an Essay for the Necessity of Contingency,* New York: Continuum, 2008, p. 108.

50. Robin Mackay, *The Medium of Contingency*. London: Urbanomic with Ridinghouse, 2011, p. 2.

steps from casting to rehearsals to scouting to focus grouping among others, all executed with a single purpose: limiting the likelihood of unwanted befallings. Of knowing and controlling for as much as possible going in. It is a capital-driven model with eyes ever nervously on the bottom line.

We could call up a good number of filmmakers who sought ways to resist this dominant model. Dziga Vertov with his *Kino-Pravda*, or Truth Cinema, worked from the notion that objective truth was an artistic possibility. Jean Rouch mingled chance and actuality for his cinéma vérité social experiment, *Chronicle of a Summer* (*Chronique d'un été, 1960*).[51] D.A. Pennebaker and the Brothers Maysles introduced non-fiction strategies of creative journalism. And John Cassevetes wrought deeply visceral engagements with improvisatory performance.

But contingency isn't mere chance. It isn't mere randomness. Not a fly on a wall. It isn't delivered by improvisation. Nor is it wrangleable by the mereness of postmodern calculations of meaning-making. Contingency "subtracts the historical fact of our existence from rational necessity, and introduces a new kind of precarity into our dealings with the present and the future. It reveals that we are worked from the inside and out by anonymous materials."[52] This is a notion at least partially mirrored by W.J.T. Mitchell in *Landscape and Power* where he argues that landscape is not simply a materiality worked by man but "is a medium of exchange between the human and the natural."[53] We work the land. Just as the land works us. Just as it is without us and within us.

51. Jean Rouche and Edgar Morin. *Chronicle of a Summer* [*Chronique d'un été (Paris 1960)*, 85 min, Mono, B&W, France, 1961).

52. Mackay, *Medium of Contingency*, p 3.

53. W.J.T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 5.

Bergson offered the idea of intuition as productive pathway, as a fully enumerated methodology. Not an ecstasy, a vague sense, or a capricious sympathy, but a properly elaborated philosophy. A relationship to the world that presupposes duration. "These conditions on the subject of duration were, as it seemed to me, decisive. Step by step they led me to raise intuition on the level of a philosophical method."[54] Though even the intuitive won't necessarily see the contingent fall into view. Even under a clearly defined set of rules that Bergson called "precision."[55] A type of precision not entirely dissimilar to Bruno Latour's more off-the-cuff ecological clarion call that we all need to become more precise instruments, more precise readers of nature. From a recognition "'that there is no outside anymore'…no such thing as a view from nowhere and that we are always implicated in the creation of our view."[56] A position that takes Bergson—if not also Tim Ingold and W.J.T. Mitchell—and hints at forces larger than ourselves. Even then though, we've still come up short of contingency as representation. As befallings made material as moving image.

Contingency is something closer to the befalling forces of lives and homes very literally torn down around the inhabitants of the Fontainhas quarter in Pedro Costa's *In Vanda's Room* (2001). Or around residents protesting an eviction planned to make way for the construction of Narita Airport in Shinsuke Ogawa's *Narita: Heta Village* (1973).[57] Or to forces precipitating larger-scaled events "like 9/11 or 2008 or Fukushima or Google." And Reza Negarestani, in his book *Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, in thinking of how contingency might map onto making, asks what sort of ideation, what sort of

54. Henri Bergson, "Lettre à Höffding," (1916), *Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. 3*, p. 456.

55. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 167.

56. Ava Kofman, "Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher, Mounts a Defense of Science", *The New York Times*, October 25, 2018.



In Vanda's Room, Pedro Costa (2001).

discipline, what sort of deprivation is required to make oneself a "good meal" for contingent forces.[58]

Pedro Costa often speaks of an epiphany he had during the shooting of his rather conventionally-produced film *Ossos*, a film also shot in the aforementioned Fontainhas neighborhood of his hometown, Lisbon.[59] He describes the cinematic apparatus assembled for recording the images and sound: arrays of lights and generators and electrical wires, of crates and boxes, of craft service tables and catering trucks, of surplus personnel. Such that by the time they got this ungainly apparatus fixed onto one focal point, he repeatedly found that what interested him was suddenly over off elsewhere. He realized that what was getting in the way of the cinema was all the cinema. He would never work this way again.

57. Pedro Costa, *In Vanda's Room* (*No Quarto da Vanda*). Portugal/Germany/Switzerland, 2000. | Ogawa Shinsuke. *Sanrizuka—Heta Village* (*Sanrizuka—Heta buraku*). Japan, 1973.

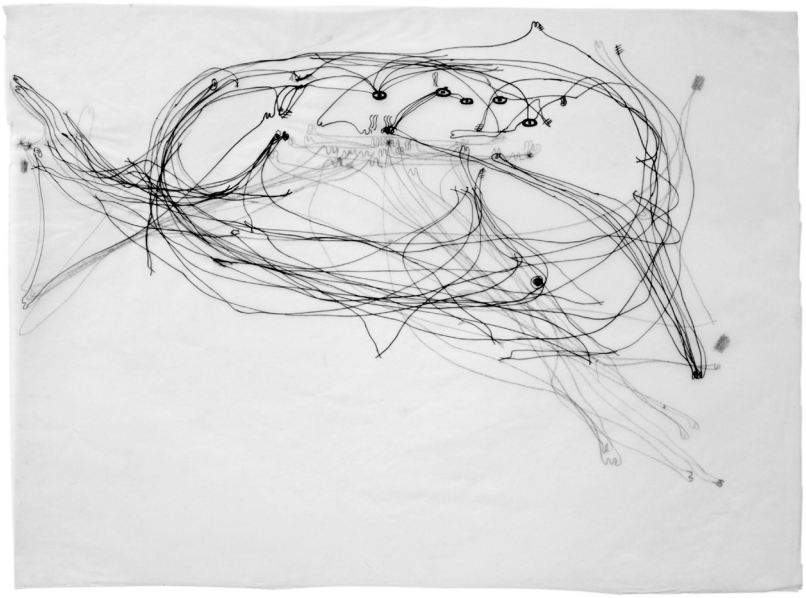
58. Negarestani, *Medium of Contingency*, p 5.

59. Costa, *Ossos*, Portugal/France/Denmark, 1997. | Pedro Costa & C.W. Winter, Barbican Centre *Craft of Film Masterclass*, 25, February, 2017.

Having worked for a number of years in commercial film production, I had had a similar such epiphany about how not to work and had been out making my first fiction efforts with a two-person crew comprised of myself and my still-collaborator, Anders Edström. In making independent films, I see many young filmmakers focused on the material lack. On the tools they can't afford. On the things they can't access. I focused instead on what the expensive productions lacked. What they couldn't access or at least couldn't access well. And I realized that my two main advantages were access to actual intimacy and access to sustained time. With the belligerence of their Observer Effect, the industrial productions leave actuality too often quashed. And with enormity of their built-in costs, they simply can't afford to film and edit for years and years. They can't allow the material to come to them. Or to befall them. But I can. And with this in mind, I set out into rural Kyoto Prefecture with only the barest of preparation. Just enough to get the people I wanted and the minimal kit I wanted to arrive in one place at the same time. And I embarked, scriptless, on the forging of a fiction.[60] With intentions defeasable.[61] Waiting not for epic

60. While novel writing sets up an imperfect analog to the shooting of a film, I am nonetheless reminded here of a passage from Nathalie Sarraute's *The Age of Suspicion*: "At the lycée I liked writing essays because the subjects were imposed from outside. It made me realize how pleasant it was writing well turned-out sentences in a classical style – one was on equal terms with the classics, safe in their company. Whereas in my own writing I jump into a void, without any protection. I stumble and stammer, without anything to reassure me." – Nathalie Sarraute, *The Age of Suspicion: Essays on the Novel*, (*L'Ère du soupçon*, 1956). New York: George Braziller, 1963.

61. This notion of defeasable intent, of Bayesian modeling, of diving in at once scriptless but with work-earned experience, I would see as sharing some inadvertent first principles commonality with the anti-psychiatric exercises of Fernand Deligny. Deligny took under his supervision groups of mute autistics who he sought to liberate from what he felt were the then-condescenions of the psychiatric community and let these children and young adults thrive in a number of rural settlements. Giving them time for work, leisure, and, most importantly, free exploration. Explorations that he would literally map via what he called Wander Lines – traces of the daily walking of each of the settlement residents, wherever that walking might lead. The side result of this was a collection of fascinating drawings. Of walking maps. He believed in the idea of proceeding with a non-plan. And, inspired by his friendships with the film theorist André Bazin and the filmmaker François Truffaut, he set to putting these social networks down on film. The results were the documentary *Ce gamin, là* (1976) – a film conceived by Deligny and directed by Renaud Victor – and the docu-fiction *Le moindre geste* (1971) – a film conceived by Deligny and made under collective direction. Neither film has been translated from the French and, despite their inimitable modeling, remain barely screened outside of France. | In thinking of the somehow-fictional quasi-documentary approach employed for *Le moindre geste*, one could also find what are almost certainly inadvertent sympathies to the films of the Portuguese directing duo, António Reis & Margarida Cordeiro – namely the films *Trás-os-Montes* (1976) and *Ana* (1982) – which also offer some sort of inimitable corruption of documentary with moments ever-so-barely fictional. In thinking further about mapping, I could bring us back to *The Works and Days*. I often speak of mapping, of literal mapping and of mapping ideas onto



A map of wander lines by Fernand Deligny c. 1969–1976.

befallings such as those described by Nassim Taleb as "black swans" or by Elie Ayache as "blank swans."[62] But for minor events emerging from the murmur of everyday durations. Perhaps we could think of them merely as grey cygnets.[63]

And, once embarked, contingency indeed began to make a meal of me. The film saw three deaths (of two actors and a producer), a real-life

realities. Though when I speak of mapping, in the background, I leave running the mental model that The Map Is Not the Territory. Out of necessity, a map abstracts. And often topologizes. A map literally faithful to a place would be so cumbersome as to be dysfunctional. And much of this notion fed into my desire to film over many stages, for durations considerably longer than is usual for a fiction feature. In order to map and re-map and re-map. Putting into the record changes and alterations – some that loop, some that run once. One example would be the soundscapes that appear, accompanied by a black screen, between each of the film's chapters. Each was recorded on a walk. A roughly three mile loop. Taken the day before the start of principle photography of each round of production. Beginning in Shiotani. Crossing southward over the Konbayashi River. Heading then roughly westward in the foothills along the river. Before crossing northward over another bridge. Returning toward the village along the rural route. With a final detour up into the hills northwest of the village and then down to the house. The first soundscape is the longest. Roughly eleven minutes. Offering a fairly rich record of representative sounds from the walk. The soundscapes become progressively shorter throughout the film, each one offering only what I felt were new audio insights not present in the previous recording(s). A document of territory as an entity not fixed. As well as a way of attuning myself, prior to filming, to these changes in the landscape. | Fernand Deligny, Jean-Pierre Daniel, & Josée Manenti, *Le moindre geste* (1971, 105 min, Mono, B&W, 16mm, France). | Renaud Victor, *Ce gamin, là* (1976, 95 min, Mono, B&W, 16mm, France). | António Reis & Margarida Cordeiro, *Trás-os-Montes* (1976, 108 min, Mono, B&W and Color, 16mm, Portugal). Reis & Cordeiro, *Ana* (1982, 115 min, Mono, Color, 16mm, Portugal). | Or, in thinking of sympathies with my employment of black screens...one could recall Italo Calvino's remark that humankind is "losing a basic human faculty: the power of bringing visions into focus with our eyes shut."

62. Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, London: Penguin, 2008. | Elie Ayache, *The Blank Swan: the End of Probability*, Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

63. Almost all cygnets are grey. Polish Mute swan cygnets would be an exception (white).

divorce that tore the fabric of this extended family, psychological breakdowns, endurance failures, skirmishes, repeated run-ins with local police, along with uncontrollable forces of weather and harvest. Forces that would have spelled the diminishment if not the doom of fiction films made in the classical production model.[64] A set of stochastic forces that, in my case, was the medium.[65]

While shooting, I was often reminded of an Afghan proverb, from the war on terror, attributed to a Taliban fighter, and directed to the coalition leadership: "You may have all the watches, but we have all the time."[66]

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Once one has consumed approximately a sixteenth of an ounce of psilocybic mushrooms, one has committed to an experience roughly eight hours in length. If one were to fight this experience, to try to resist it, one would confront an array of futilities and suboptimal outcomes. If one, in a conducive setting, were to give oneself over to the experience, to embrace it, I would propose that a yield of positive outcomes is likely.[67]

64. An amplification of: "The greater the success, the closer it verges upon failure." – Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer* (*Notes sur le cinématographe*, 1975), Los Angeles: Green Integer, 1997. p 27.

65. It was a directing situation somehow similar to broader dynamics describe by Zygmunt Bauman as liquid modernity. "The individual must act, plan actions and calculate the likely gains and losses of acting (or failing to act) under conditions of endemic uncertainty." | And it was also not unlike conditions described by Reza Negrestani in *Cyclonopedia*: "Anything can happen for some weird reason; yet also, without any reason, nothing at all can happen."* And, in editing *The Works and Days*, it was my intent to leave in instances of both such outcomes, with special empahsis on leaving in the usually-discarded latter. Or, we could additionally think of this notion of a system gaining strength under stress as antifragility. It isn't merely a robust production model that withstands stresses but is an antifragile model that strengthens due to stresses. | Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018. | Robin Mackay, "Introduction: Three Figures of Contingency," *The Medium of Contingency*, p. 9.

66. The possibly apocryphal and variably quoted declaration of a Taliban commander, early in



Location photo from *The Works and Days*, C.W. Winter (2020).

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In thinking again of befallings, one can see that this would also go a ways to describing how my subjects and protagonists are arrived at. I begin with landscape. Finding a place where I feel I can film in any direction. Without the need to be burning valuable time and energy, in spontaneous moments, on framing things out. With the case of Shiotani, it is a place that offered a panoply of natural sounds. Along with the sounds of cars disrupting the idyll

Operation Enduring Freedom, to then Canadian General Rick Hillier. Evan Solomon, "Fighting in Afghanistan: 'You have all the watches. We have all the time," *Macleans*, September 2, 2017, https://www.macleans.ca/news/fighting-in-afghanistan-you-have-the-watches-we-have-the-time/.

67. I'm reminded here of a relevant passage I enjoy from Diedrich Diederichsen's writing on Tony Conrad's Yellow Movies: "In the early psychedelic avant-garde, if one wishes to save this word for once from its present reduction to a few formal motifs in pop music and poster design, there existed thus a very specific alliance between the critique of capitalism and mysticism that had to do, among other things, with an evocation of a different temporality. The experience, or rather: the contact with unmeasured time could be understood as a contact both with a spiritual world behind the world of sensory experience and with the political real behind the culture of commodity and spectacle. The second political dimension is frequently obscured by historiographers, especially since the first variant has prevailed during the ascent of New Age culture, while political culture in turn has severed all ties with the existentialisms of the psychedelic, which it generally denounces as escapism." — Diedrich Diederichsen, "Time and Dream," *Tony Conrad: Yellow Movies*. Ed. by Jay Sanders and Christopher Muller. Köln: Galerie Daniel Buchholz, 2008.

and the soundscape. Some open terrain but not too bucolic. A fairly busy rural route running through rice fields altered from their former terracing into less visually appealing broad flat fields more suitable for mechanized farming. Some traditional architecture. But also de-exoticizing prefabs and tilt-ups.[68] Corruptions. Frictions. Something to work with and work against. And from there, it is a waiting game. Spending time. Until an individual and a tension reveals itself.

In the case of *The Anchorage*, this had meant a couple months out in the landscape. Aimlessly collecting sounds and images. Falling into the rhythms. Not looking for a subject. Just awaiting one. It was several weeks of walks in the woods. Days out at sea. Trips to nearby islands for supplies and pub visits. Chats with year-rounders—mostly farmers and fishermen. Evenings attending to our day jobs via the internet. And then one day Anders' mother, Ulla, came out to the island for a visit. And at dinner her first night there, after some whisky, she told a story from when Anders and his sister were children:

During moose hunting season—a couple weeks in late autumn—hunters are allowed anchorage at any island in the archipelago. Even ones without public docks. And one such season, a hunter arrived. One she had not seen before. And on multiple nights, she noticed him walking around the perimeter of their largely glass-walled cabin. It was enough to make her rather nervous. And this was all the information I needed. This fragment of a family folk story. This piece of tension. Here was enough, I said, from which to make an entire

68. It's not too unlike António Reis: "You have to be careful, know how to listen, know how to see, but do not be afraid to film what surrounds you. If they are cars, they are cars; if they are stones, they are stones." – Pedro Costa in *António Reis e Margarida Cordeiro. A Poesia da Terra*. Faro, PT: Cineclub de Faro, 1997. | Or, "A whole made of good images is detestable," | "Not beautiful photography, not beautiful images, but necessary images and photography." | "Defeat the false powers of photography.": Bresson, *Notes*, pp. 28, 92, and 118. | And in thinking of such images, I am of the belief that they cannot be taken straight away. It takes time. Perhaps years. In Anders' case, twenty-three years of photographing this village. In my case, thirteen. Stripping away the obvious and the clever and the most instantly striking. Working down into a knowing of a place. So as to render it plainly, straightforwardly. With a well-worn economy of affect. Each image years in the making. Yet open until the last moment to a predictive non-determinism.



The Anchorage, C.W. Winter & Anders Edström (2009).

film. And so a couple autumns later, we got to work. With Ulla in the lead role as this was her experience. She could drive the boat, tie the nautical knots, set the fishing nets, harvest the mushrooms, gather the berries, chainsaw the trees, chop the wood, build the fires, write the diary. A privileging of time-earned habituation over trained performance.

In 2010, on the tail end of touring with *The Anchorage* in Japan, I arranged a similar waiting trip to Shiotani. With a similar drill. The aimless gathering of some images and sound. Walks in the woods. Helping with the chores. Chats with the locals. Many dawns. Scouting in the Kei truck. Until one night at dinner, after some sake, Tayoko told us of something she had never told before. Sentiments bottled up for a lifetime. Perhaps only revealed due to the presence of two *gaijin*. About a lifetime of opportunities denied her because she was female. A college education never attained due to the family

belief that only boys needed an education. A career never materialized because of the family belief that only husbands need employment. A story told from the age-persective of one looking back on a lifetime of what-ifs. And this was all the information I needed. This fragment of a family folk story. This piece of tension. Here was enough, I said, from which to make an entire film. And so several autumns later, we got to work. With Tayoko in the lead role as this was her experience. She could run the rototiller, make the mochi, seasonalize the modular house, find the mushrooms, plant the seeds, pull the weeds, harvest the vegetables, prune the trees, write the diary. A privileging of time-earned habituation over trained performance.[69]

These are subjects not initially of invention. But of befalling. Of *contigere*.[70]

69. In thinking about habituation, I'm led to recalling Felix Ravaisson's 1838 essay "Of Habit." While Henri Bergson is often thought of as a forefather of thinking on duration, Ravaisson, here many decades earlier, notes that "all change is realized in time...and what brings habit into being is change occuring in time... the duration of movement gradually transforms the potentiality, the virtuality, into a tendency, and gradually the tendency is transformed into action." Such that when, in *The Anchorage*, we see a character like Ulla set the fishing nets or land the boat or gut some fish, or when we see Tayoko in *The Works and Days* plant a new row or de-weed the gutters or make the mochi, and see that each are activities replete with idiosyncracy and muscle memory and specialized knowledge, all performed without hesitation, seemingly almost without thought, a picture comes to the fore of the breadth and groundedness of actuality in the performances playing out before us. In something of a presaging of Bressonian performance, Ravaisson carries on: "From another perspective, as effort fades away in movement and as action becomes freer and swifter, the action itself becomes more of a tendency, an inclincation that no longer awaits the commandments of the will but rather anticipates them, and which even escapes entirely and irremediably both will and consciousness." From there one could be led to imagining Robert Bresson, through the command of seventy-plus takes of repetition, draining affect, building habit, in a performer tasked with something as simple as opening a door. Though as Thom Andersen said of *The Anchorage*, in this way, "it is more Bresson than Bresson." In that the habit we see onscreen is not built over a half hour of take after take, but is built over decades, over a lifetime of imperatives, such that no simulation of affectlessness need be wrought; the affect arrives on set at x approaching zero. Which leads me to thinking of Albert Lemoine, and his 1875 bridging of Ravaisson and Bergson, his concept of "real duration" in which past, present, and future are contracted: "For the living being, the intelligent, rational, and free being capable of habit, the three elements of time are fused together with each other. It is not true to say that the past is no longer, nor even that the future is not yet; if he lives in the present, he lives in it by the past and for the future." It's a conception not far off from Deleuze's notion of the Crystal Image. Of past, present, and future alive and at play in a single shot. We could imagine a moment like the closing image of Antonioni's *L'Avventura*, a dramaturgical climax, on a windy overlook, the weight of a near-past romantic betrayal hanging over the scene, the presentness of grief overflowing from the two characters, an immediacy of uncertainty, sealed by a revelation of futurity in the simple gesture of the woman's hand placed reassuringly on the man's nape. Though what of non-dramaturgical crystals? Of moments with lower amplitude. Such as Tayoko attempting to perform a scene in which she brings tea to the bedside of the actor playing Junji, an activity born from years of habit, which this time is interrupted by her memories of the actual Junji, so that she must exit the scene and walk to the next room to collect herself, cameras still rolling, lulled by the sound of a thunderstorm, crying in a lampless room, wiping tears as she had been doing then for months, a tissue ready in her pocket, which she reaches for now without affect, imagining a future, once the crew departs, of

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"Can one narrate time—time as such, in and of itself? Most certainly not. What a foolish undertaking that would be. The story would go: 'Time passed, ran on, flowed into a mighty stream,' and on and on in the same vein. No one with any common sense could call that a narrative. It would be the same as if someone took the harebrained notion of holding a single note or chord for hours on end—and called it music."

—Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain* (1924)[71]



a life in this house, alone. | Felix Ravaisson, "Of Habit" (1838), *Félix Ravaisson: Selected Essay*s, edited by Mark Sinclair, London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2016, p. 31, 44. | Mark Sinclair (2018) "Habit and Time in Nineteenth-Century French Philosophy: Albert Lemoine between Bergson and Ravaisson," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 26:1, p. 131-153.

70. In thinking about incorporating befallings, I am reminded here of the following: "Leopards break into the temple and drink all the sacrifical vessels dry; it keeps happening; in the end, it can be calculated in advance and is incorporated into the ritual." —Franz Kafka, *The Zürau Aphorisms of Franz Kafka*. New York: Schocken Books, 2006.

71. Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain* (*Der Zauberberg*, 1924), New York: George Macy, 1962. | La Monte Young, *Compositions 1960 #7*. Metallic ink on paper. Sheet: 3 1/16 x 5 1/16" (7.8 x 12.8 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In depriving myself from the start of a good many of cinema's suspense techniques, I look throughout the process for openings, however small, to introduce by other means something akin to tension. And when it came to selecting a typeface color for the film's titles, having originally defaulted to white, I realized that perhaps this choice might be something I could work with.

Having already output a set of stills of each image in the film, I ran each still through an Average blur, reducing each image to a uniform average color field. From there, each image in the film was averaged together to find the overall average color of the film: a somewhat cool greyish brown. From there, I moved 90 degrees on the color wheel, both to the left and right, to find the two solstice colors, as it were, to my average color. From there, I flipped the

K-value, the tonality of each. And the result was two colors that represented mathematically precise color dissonance to the average color of the film. A chromic tension. One a sort of faded hot pink. The other an anemic creamy orange. With self-reflexivity taking me as far as it could, I opted for the taste-based final decision of the anemic orange: CMYK: 0, 23, 42, 5. RGB: 243, 188, 141. Hex #F3BC8D.

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In 1977, the American culture program *CBS Sunday Morning* hired as its Executive Producer the ornithologist, wildlife photographer, and journalist Shad Northshield. He hailed from Croton-on-Hudson, a sleepy riverside village roughly 19.5 miles north of The Bronx with a then-population of about 7,500. And in his producing capacities, he introduced what was a rather salient interruption of the network's wall-to-wall infotainment. After the show's final journalistic block but prior to its end credits, he inserted, each week, two minutes of usually static-camera images of nature, with birds as the most common subject, accompanied by nothing more than field recordings and one small graphic off in the corner, the show's logo, an orange-yellow sun, with a human face, its rays extending outward like basalt columns. But no voice-

over. No explanatory text. Just cinematographic eclogues/epilogues. Or maybe not even quite that. Perhaps something closer to what Luc Ferrari was getting at when he titled his musique concrète collection *Presque rien*.[72] And while, as a child, I couldn't possibly have imagined these moments sticking with me, I never shook the pleasure I felt in watching them. In retrospect, they strike me as startling interruptions to the capital-oriented flow of network production. Almost too good to have been approved. Interventions that share certain sympathies with Dan Graham's trespasses into popular magazine ad space or Jeff Wall's intrusions into the ad blocks of Canadian television.

In thinking of Northshield's interruptions, one could trace outwards into the well more demanding, if somehow associative, properties of the work of the American filmmaker, James Benning, who, with his five-decade practice of looking and listening, called the bluff of Warhol's perverse experiments with cinematic boredom and emerged with a body of work that renders extended durations somehow warm, earthy, even mutedly psychedelic. Genuine pleasures.

In Reinhard Wulf's documentary, *James Benning: Circling the Image* (2003), Benning describes a significant turn in his practice from heterogeneously expressivist works like *Landscape Suicide* (1987) and into a run of eleven 16mm feature length films including *Deseret* (1995), *13 Lakes* (2004),

72. Luc Ferrari, *Presque rien* (1964-1989), INA GRM 245172, 1998. Compact disc. | Though one could think here as well of corollaries to the soundwalks of Hildegard Westerkamp, the soundscapes of Henning Christiansen, the field work of Chris Watson, or the diaristic concretes of Graham Lambkin. | Hildegard Westerkamp, *Transformations*. Empreintes Digitales IMED 9631, 1996. Compact Disc. | Henning Christiansen, *Symphony Natura*. Slowscan Vol. #21, 2006, LP. | Chris Watson, *Weather Report*, Touch TO47, 2003. Compact disc. | Graham Lambkin, *Amateur Doubles*. Kye KYE15, 2011. LP.

73. Reinhard Wulf, *James Benning: Circling the Image* (2003, 84 min, Stereo, Color, Beta, Germany | Benning, *Landscape Suicide* (1987, 95 min, Mono, Color, 16mm, USA) | Benning, *Deseret* (1995, 82 min, Mono, B&W and Color, 16mm, USA) | Benning, *13 Lakes* (2004, 135 min, Mono, Color, 16mm, USA) | Benning, *Ten Skies* (2004, 101 min, Mono, Color, 16mm, USA) | Benning, *RR* (2007, 111 min, Mono, Color, 16mm, USA/Germany).

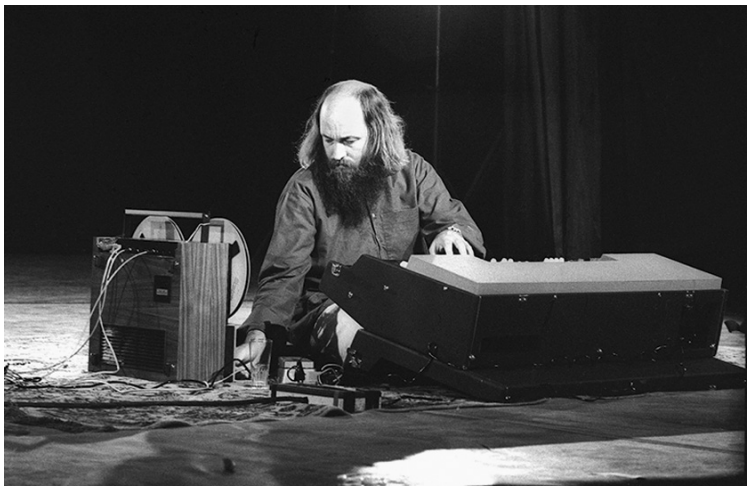
and *Ten Skies* (2004) on through to his final analog feature *RR* (2007):[73]

> "Around 1995, I decided I had only two criteria to make films from now on:
>
> - To go to a place I want to be in, to really understand place, to define place as having meaning.
> - To look at this place so that it can tell me something about my life, to put my life maybe into more focus."

I carried something of this indirect spirit with me as I committed to a knowing and a mapping of Shiotani and its surrounding geography.[74]

The Shiotani basin is located along the southeasternmost edge of the Miyafuku geological zone adjacent to the Kanbayashi fault, which forms the Kanbayashi Valley. And the more time I spent in this basin, the more the landscape opened up for me as an array of clocks. The bell of the disused village temple rung once a year at New Year midnight. The rice fields' harvest cycles of green sproutings in spring, golden yellow growth from mid to late summer, and beigish-brown stubs of rice grass from late summer to early spring. The imperfectly gauged plum bloom harkens January to early March; the peach bloom early March to mid April; the cherry bloom late March to mid

74. This spirit of learning in the field as one goes at least partially mirrors what the anthropologist Gregory Bateson called "deutero-learning" – a kind of learning "that aims not so much to provide us with facts about the world as to enable us to be taught by it." Which itself finds sympathy with what ecological psychologist James Gibson calls "an education of attention." Or, closer to my own conception of fiction, it is a matter of maximized deferral. Of placing an uncommon preonderence of the process into discovery as the game proceeds. It's a holding off on as many decisive moments as I am able to manage until as late into the process as possible – a maintainence of what Karl Friston, with his Free Energy Principle, would call a maintenance of *high free energy* and *low marginal likelihood* for as long as I am able to hold out.* | Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. London: Fontana, 1973. p. 141. | J.J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1979, p. 254. | Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art, and Architecture*. London: Routledge, 2013. | Karl J. Friston, "Free Energy Principle – Karl Friston," YouTube video, June 16, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIu_dJGyIQI. | Or, "It's like with a movie called *The Crossing* by Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Roman Goupil. They crossed all over France and did not see a red vest – a yellow vest, that was not in play at that time. But they did not see anything. They saw only what they wanted to see because they defined it beforehand by words, which is very different than text from Jean Rouch, a master companion/comrade, with his films from Africa. That's cinema." – Jean-Luc Godard. Radio France: the program *France Culture Rolle*, April 2019.



Terry Riley performing his *Persian Surgery Dervishes* in Los Angeles on April 18, 1971.

April. A chorus of frogs arrives with the flooding of the rice fields in May and dissipates with September's harvest. By July and into September, the countless cicadas have begun to sing in droning waves of tymbal scrapes, wing flicks, and stridulations, sound never fully lapsing, rolling, falling, in and out of arrayed synchronizations, leading me to recollections of the cyclical and repetitive patterning of Terry Riley or the phase experiments of Steve Reich.[75]

The birds tell the time as well. With winter the most silent season, as the passerines have departed for warmer environs to the south. This leaves behind less prolific songsmiths such as owls, geese, and swans. Crane numbers increase with the late winter snow melt. With early spring, arrayed swan migrations pass through en route north to Hokkaido. By late spring, the thrushes and flycatchers begin to fill the woods with song. And the odd group of black-tailed sea gulls might travel just inland enough to take temporary rest.

75. I might think here of Terry Riley's "Celestial Valley" or Steve Reich's "Piano Phase". | Terry Riley, "Celestial Valley", *Shri Camel* (1980) CBS Records / Columbia 35164, 1988. Compact disc. | Steve Reich, *Phase Patterns; Pendulum Music; Piano Phase; Four Organs*, Wergo WER 66302, 1999. Compact disc.

Over the years there, in my journals, and with the sometime assistance of the locals, I have logged the following birds: Ashy minivets, Asian brown flycatchers, Asian house martins, barn swallows, Bewick's swans, bitterns, black-tailed gulls, blue-and-white flycatchers, brent geese, brown dippers, carrion crows, common cuckoos, copper pheasants, crested kingfishers, daurian redstarts, dusky thrushes, Eurasian nightjars, fairy pittas, great spotted woodpeckers, hooded cranes, Japanese grosbeaks, Japanese night herons, Japanese pygmy woodpeckers, Japanese scops owls, Japanese thrushes, large-billed crows, lesser cuckoos, long-tailed tits, northern hawk-cuckoos, Oriental cuckoos, Oriental greenfinches, Oriental scops owls, Oriental storks, pale thrushes, red-crowned cranes, red-rumped swallows, red-throated loons, ruddy kingfishers, taigas, tundra bean geese, varied tits, whistling green pigeons, white-backed woodpeckers, white-naped cranes, white wagtails, and whooper swans.[76]

There is a convention in academic writing that one ought not make lists. Though I am inclined to the rhythm of such ponderings.

J.A. Baker, with the meticulous ornithology of *The Peregrine*, brings alive the deceptively mundane English landscape found within a bike ride of his home in Essex.[77] It is the work of an obsessive. Accruable only by extended duration. With a love of behavioral detail. A commitment to sustained attention that transforms what the casual viewer might regard as unspectacularly everyday into a site of rich and overlapping observations every bit as visceral as the works of Joseph Conrad or Werner Herzog. Looking. And listening.

76. This is but a partial list of the prefecture's 358 avian species.

77. J.A. Baker, *The Peregrine: With the Hill of Summer* (1967). London: HarperCollins UK, 2010.



Stemple Pass, James Benning (2012).

Apropos of the fraught pastoral of one of my favorite James Benning films, *Stemple Pass* (2012), I'm reminded here of the following:

> "The more intimate you are with nature, the more you appreciate its beauty. It's a beauty that consists not only in sights and sounds but in an appreciation of…the whole thing. I don't know how to express it. What is significant is that when you live in the woods, rather than just visiting them, the beauty becomes part of your life rather than something you just look at from the outside."[78]

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78. Theodore J. Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery: The Collected Writings of Theodore J. Kaczynski, a.k.a. "The Unabomber,"* Port Townshend, WA: Feral House, 2010. p. 394.

"No method nor discipline can supersede the necessity of being forever on the alert. What is a course of history, or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking at what is to be seen?"[79]

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The decision to make a self-produced fiction film of uncommon scale was born partially out of my interest in the evolutionary concepts of fitness landscapes and adaptive valley crossings. The notion that by setting oneself out over a rugged landscape with many peaks—in this case of extremes creative, theoretical, physical, psychic, logistical, and social—that waiting on the other side would be positive yields, byproducts, epiphenomena, capturings, evolutions. Including many that I couldn't possibly imagine before beginning. A sense that by taking on risk, taking on cost, making moves of scale that made little sense to many I consulted, that there would be sense revealed in the end. The practical as the philosophical. And it was in a moment of pre-production doubt, of self-criticism, of wranglings with whether this was all foolhardy, that I happened across a piece of advice from the American molecular biologist,

79. Henry David Thoreau, "Sounds," *Walden* (1854), London: Penguin, 2016, pp104. | In thinking about such looking, as it relates to my work, my interest is not merely in my own process of making; it is also in consideration of the audience's experience of the work. If one is to think of the action film, be it *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) or *Gone in 60 Seconds* (1974), as an outer limit genre of attention mediation – action begetting action begetting action from beginning to end – with directors taking something of an authoritarian role in dictating our thoughts and gaze, rendering us largely passive, mine is an interest in something of an inverse. Knowing that the types of films I make will largely self-select for an audience more attentively robust than average, I seek to take advantage the audience's imagination, of their creative capacities. Affording them an experience gesturally restrained enough that they can at once regard the work while simultaneously carrying on a running thought stream of their own recollections, associations, memories, examinations, wanderings. It is the creation of a filmic space constructed to amplify audience agency. | Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (*Chelovek s kino-apparatom*, 1929, 68 min, Mono, B&W, Soviet Union). | H.B. Halicki. *Gone in 60 Seconds* (1974, 105 min, Mono, Color, 35mm, USA).

James Watson: "If you are going to make a big jump in science, you will be unqualified to succeed by definition."[80]

Whether or not this necessarily applied to me, ahead I went. With intentions that I must allow were at least partially quixotic. But that, in approaching practice as a long game for a lifetime, via what behavioral economist Daniel Kahneman would call "slow thinking," I saw *The Works and Days*, ironically, as a mode of speeding up.[81] As a model for gaining four or five or six films' worth of experience, of growth, of development, with the execution of a single project. An acquisition of refinements that could be applied even within this project.[82] A practice about practice.

Whatever the limitations of the oft-cited notion of the 10,000 hours, I often find myself looking to the now-impossibly prolific career of the director I see as America's most virtuosic, John Ford. From 1917 to 1976, he notched 147 director credits working in a classical studio system so like clockwork that it facilitated his cranking out often multiple features in a single year. In the early years, these were often B films. Often with schlocky scripts. Though there he was, showing up to the office, directing, directing, and directing. Honing his craft. Such that by his sixty-eighth feature credit, the Will Rogers vehicle, *Judge Priest* (1934), he had attained what would come to be seen by many as mastery.[83] We could see a similar dynamic mapped across the body of work of the Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami, who began his career in the early 1970's

80. James Watson, "Succeeding in Science: Some Rules of Thumb," *Science* Vol. 261, September 24, 1993, p. 1813.

81. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2011.

82. For example, after two and half years of near-daily editing, it was my estimation, upon seeing my finished first cut, that my editing skills had markedly improved toward the end of the project. Such that I then was able to go back and re-edit earlier sections in accordance with my now improved ability.

83. John Ford, *Judge Priest* (1934, 80 min, Mono, B&W, USA).

making high volumes of fairly high end children's television for the state-owned Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults. Leading to what many now regard as his feature film mastery by the mid-1980s.

As someone working outside of industrial entertainment, I felt that I would be best served by devising my own strategies of experience-accumulation. And a rugged adaptive valley crossing seemed a way of engaging in high variance recording, albeit with heavy-tailed risk distribution, that could then be brought into lower variance in an extended editing process.[84]

Many films and filmmakers who I've seen fail failed not necessarily because of narrative deficiencies, but because of a failure to pre-rationalize some of the psychic trajectories that will be among the fait acomplis of large-scale and multi-project making. While the mapping of an adaptive valley crossing like *The Works and Days* might involve taking an advance on one's rationality, it was born out of a sound, if hardscrabble, development of applicability that I consider every bit as crucial as any theoretical component of the practice. A way of maximizing the capturing of increased numbers of low probability events through physical extensions of both daily labor time and total production time. A near omni-temporality with Tayoko such that, via our shared interest in work ethic, we agreed to giving her little non-production time for release. A being there by out-sustaining, out-enduring other film crews. An unrelenting distribution model for capturing intimacy. An arbitraging between the analytic

84. My interest in extended processes is born out of the mental model of compounding. We tend to think of compounding as it relates to finance, the idea of compound interest and its tendency to create significant long term yields. This is true due to its nature not as a linear effect but as an exponential one. But we can apply compounding to many things other than money. We can apply it to knowledge, relationships, reputations, skill, etc. The common scheduling template for independent cinema production sets a default editing time of ten weeks. This short-run, first-order thinking greatly minimizes compounding effects. I wanted a long-run, second-order editing model. A lot of time. Roughly 130 7-day weeks. This allowed for the animating features of compounding to come into play: incremental change, consistency, exponentialization. Hollywood is operating on a short-run model of rapid bottom line returns. I am building a practice and a life. | That said, such modeling also requires incorporating the Law of Diminishing Returns. At some point, one has to know when to wrap it up.

and the felt sense. A bit of STEM thinking put to work as an undergirding to the more intuitive and sensual aspects of the film.[86]

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There are four instances in *The Works and Days* when material and temporal realism is naturalistically interrupted. People appear. Evocations of pastness: a pair of men from the Edo Period in something of a Mannerist distance-framing walking in a Z across a pre-dawn landscape. A World War II soldier walking down a trafficless rural route. Two farmers walking between some rice terraces at dusk. And the least noticed of the four, a road worker smoking a cigarette.

What ought a viewer make of these interruptions? Should they be taken as dreams à la Ernst Lubitsch's *The Doll* (1919)? As supernaturalistic ghosts à la the Buster Keaton vehicle, *The Gold Ghost* (1934)? As naturalist ghosts à la Pedro Costa's *The Rabbit Hunters* (2007)? As the stuff of memory as in

86. This carries on from an after-the-fact realization I had several years back that a number of artists whom I had found myself most identifying with were individuals who began by studying mathematics: Tony Conrad, James Benning, Henry Flynt, Dennis Johnson, Bruce Nauman, and Hollis Frampton.

87. Ernst Lubitsch, *The Doll* (*Die Puppe*, 1919, 48 min, Silent, 35mm, B&W, Germany) | Charles Lamont, *The Gold Ghost* (1934, 20 min, Mono, 35mm, B&W, USA) | Pedro Costa, *The Rabbit Hunters* (2007, 23 min, Stereo, Digibeta, Color, South Korea/France) | Such as in Giovanni di Paulo's *Saint John the Baptist Retiring in the Desert*, C15th.

88. As Lewis Mumford clarifes, "The Medieval artist introduced other times within his own spatial world, as when he projected the events of Christ's life within a contemporary Italian city, without the slightest feeling that the passage of time has made a difference." | Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010, p. 19.

John Ford's *Judge Priest* (1934)? As something akin to very highly attenuated continuous narrative?[87] Or to Medieval disjunctions of the relations of space and time.[88] Or just as straightforward rendering disinterested to referentiality?

And whose objects are these? Are these the intentional objects of Tayoko in a film committed to her sonic monofocalization?[89] Are they authorial visions? Or are they merely Easter eggs left in the filmscape as small rewards for viewers on a long journey?

It isn't important to me that this be fully resolvable. To the contrary, it is an intentional bestowing of negative capability. What is important to me is the invitation of arrayed recollections. Of different readings. Of the potential for multiplicities emerging from single images.

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"The moment of actuality slips too fast by the slow, coarse net of our senses."

— George Kubler

89. In cinematic terms, focalization differs from narration and characterization in that it is concerned not with action-taking or communicating, but on aspects of a character tending toward engagement as a seer, experiencing events as they occur and as the audience sees them. Films can be monofocal, bifocal, or multifocal depending on the perspective afforded by the director. Focalization tends to be conceived visually: we see what the character sees or mostly so. With *The Anchorage* and *The Works and Days*, however, I have created aural focalizations. Every scene in The Anchorage is conceived as if within earshot of Ulla.* Every shot in The Works and Days is conceived as if within earshot of Tayoko. Making the films sonically monofocal. While other directors may have worked this way, I'm unaware of any examples. | *Aside: Ulla is a character who reappears in *The Works and Days*. We see a still photo of her on a visit to Shiotani in a scene where Junji looks at a family photo book. In a recreation of a shot that appears in The Anchorage, we see Ulla walking with her children and dog near her home in the Stockholm Archipelago in a scene in which her granddaughter, Mai, phones her from Shiotani. And we hear news of Ulla's real life imminent death in listening to one of Tayoko's phone calls to her daughter, Yoshiko, in Sweden. Ulla's presence in *The Works and Days* (Tayoko was the on-set cook for *The Anchorage* production) links these two films as something of a diptych – each film a portrait of women, who are each roughly 70 years of age, and who each work the land.

90. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time, Remarks on the History of Things*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

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As is not uncommon for Los Angeles artists, for a number of years, I worked in the art departments of television commercial productions. In film, nothing is more commercial than commercials.

Within this filmic category one will soon encounter its apotheosic subset: the pack shot. This is the shot, usually toward the end of an ad, when we see the product and/or its package somehow isolated so as to create a moment of maximal recognition. It is the moment when the ulteriority is revealed. It is when the pass, as it were, is made. Or, it is the sum in the arithmetic of commerce: create the sense of a void, and then, lo and behold, present something to fill it.

Formally, the pack shot could be seen as something of a lateral move from the still life—albeit it one whose concerns, while by no means less meticulous, enervate the ethical expectations of the still life in the service of more naked market values. This is a set of relations considered by Harun Farocki, with dry detached irony, in his essay film, *Still Life* (1997)—a work that documents the execution of three actual pack shots—for beer, cheese, and watches.[91] It is a work that shows reasonably bright people straining ad absurdum to pinpoint the apposite within a nebulous calculus of constraints. These are processes that induce hyper-awareness of clock time during passages

91. Harun Farocki, *Still Life* (*Stilleben*, 1997, 58 min, Stereo, Color, 16mm, Germany).



Still Life, Harun Farocki (1997).

in which one senses that everything has been said but not everyone has had a chance to say it.

With each of the three pack shots portrayed, Farocki invites comparisons to Flemish still lifes by intercutting images of 17th century paintings free of any textual elaboration. And even the most cynical viewer would be hard-pressed to deny that these three pack shots share with these still life paintings certain aspects of intelligence when it comes to light and composition. And importantly to the client, they share what is the cardinal spatial distinction of the still life: nearness.

Where for me these pack shots fall off in interest is in their priorities. For in thinking of still lifes more broadly, a here-useful point of entry would be a distinction made by Charles Sterling between what he calls "megalography" and "rhopography."[92] The former would be a centering of objects of importance or

92. Charles Sterling, *Still Life Painting: From Antinquity to the Twentieth Century* (2nd edition), New York: Harper & Row, 1981.

exclusivity or elite attainment. The megalographic is a relationship to decadence and indulgence that lacks, for example, the admonitions of the vanitas. Whereas the latter, the rhopographic, is a centering of the unimportant, the ignored. An inverse to the impulse of most advertisement. It's a sort of centering that makes up the preponderance of the history of still life painting: "the unassuming material base of life that 'importance' constantly overlooks…what 'importance' tramples underfoot."[93] Our utensils, our tools, our bric-a-brac, and so on. The rhopographic still life offers a reorientation away from selective attention and onto more focused regarding of objects which, in our daily lives, tend to escape prolonged consideration.[94] And as such it is a means of making the stone more stony, the grapes more grapey, etc.

Norman Bryson offers that "still life is in a sense the great anti-Albertian genre. What it opposes is the idea of the canvas as a window on the world leading to a distant view. Perspective's jewel, the vanishing point, is always absent."[95] But need this be true?

In thinking of classicisms and in returning to narrative cinema, one might think of high water marks of the still life in moving image. Which for my money would find us again considering Yasujirō Ozu, a director whose work is largely defined by its Modernist compositions and design. Though somehow similar to his rupturing of the fourth wall with his 180 degree shot-countershots, Ozu, with his stills lifes, ruptures the rear wall. He returns to the still life what it has

93. Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990. p. 61.

94. The concept of selective attention was, interestingly, pioneered by the psychologist Hugo Münsterburg who, as a career aside, wrote one of the earliest books of film theory, *The Photoplay: a Psychological Study*. | Hugo Münsterburg, *The Photoplay: a Psychological Study*. Hamburg: tredition, 2011.

95. Bryson, *Looking*, p. 71.



Good Morning, Yasujiro Ozu (1959).

most often been denied as far back as the Roman *xenia*, a vanishing point. With his painstaking rhopography—his focus on bottles, vases, teapots, and the like—he elevates everyday prime objects to the stature of architectural features. Placing these humble objects in rooms, on windowsills, in vista foregrounds, as if their placement weren't merely the stuff of happenstance à la Daniel Spoerri, but were some sort of deterministic arrival.[96] A sense that these objects couldn't have been elsewhere. And as a result, they maintain assertive posture and attentive power that holds the gaze fixed against the temptation to let one's eyes wander to the offered horizons. It is a certitude of execution. A lightness of grid. A seeming importation of certain tendencies of the linear economy of the International Style originally exported from Japan by architects like Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra.

96. Daniel Spoerri, *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance*. New York: Something Else Press, 1966.



Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose, Francisco de Zurburán (1633).

Bryson, in considering the absence of narrative in still life, proposes that:

> "narrative works hard to explain why any particular story is worth narrating...because the actions in the story are heroic or wonderful, frightening or ignoble, or cautionary or instructive. The whole principle of story-telling is jeopardized or paralyzed by the hearer's objection: 'so what?' But still life loves the 'so what?' It exactly breaks with narrative's scale of human importance...Still life pitches itself at a level of material existence where nothing exceptional occurs."[97]

What then can one make of a narrative film like *The Works and Days*, one that devalues story, one that operates with indifference to dramaturgical

97. Bryson, *Looking*, p. 60.

98. In Zurburan's still lifes, he frequently offered multiple views of an object – a lemon, an apple, a flower – by grouping them in multiples. In thinking of this, I recall an aphorism from Kafka: "The variety of views that one may have, say, of an apple: the view of the small boy who has to crane his neck for a glimpse of the apple on the table, and the view of the master of the house who picks up the apple and hands it to a guest." | Frank Kafka, *Aphorisms*, New York: Schocken Books, pp12.



Still Life with Thistle and Carrots, Juan Sánchez Cotán (c. 1602).

fulfillment? A film that itself loves the 'so what?' That deeply shares such sympathies. Would it not make sense then, in such a depressurized register, that gestures like still lifes would percolate to its surface? I propose that it would. Or that at least this would seem to make some retrospective sense, even as the original impulse was more of an off-handed inkling of some potential aptness. Something to shoot while there because, "Why not?" An idea that I would make a point of debating the merits of only later while editing. But then, there they are.

Though these are not merely any still lifes. They are not ones executed with the logarithmic precision of Juan Sánchez Cotán. Or the spatial vitality of Zurburán.[98] Or the delicate variation parsings of Rachel Ruysch. Or the virtuosity for virtuosity's sake of Pieter Claesz. Or the aristocratic flatterings of François Desportes.[99] They are not nods to these sorts of classicisms at all. But

99. As examples: Juan Sánchez Cotán, *Still Life with Thistle and Carrots*, c. 1602, oil on canvas, Granada: Museum of Fine Arts, Granada. | Francisco de Zurburán, *Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose*, 1633, oil on canvas, Pasadena, CA: The Norton Simon Museum. | Rachel Ruysch, *Still Life with Flowers and Plums*, 1704, oil on canvas, Brussels: Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Belgium | Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Tazza*, oil on canvas, 1636, The Hague: Mauritshuis. | François Desportes, *Still Life with Silver*, oil on canvas, c. 1715-1723, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



C.W. Winter & Ander Edström, *The Works and Days* (2020).

instead are still lifes born of Shiotani. Out of the time of the film. And out of the film's established language. At once continuities and ruptures. Harmonies and dissonances. Bathos and punctuation. Rhopographies in the sense of their mundaneness. But less transfigurations of the everyday and more mere presentations. Praesentationem. A placing before.

They are images that I prefer to refer to as pack shots rather than still lifes. But pack shots by other means. Not the pack shots of naked capital. These are failed pack shots. Not offerings to fill voids. But merely pack shots of the already there. Of objects pre-present due to function. Of needs inexcessively met. Not products per se. But the workaday byproducts of an undermediated, practical economy. Presented with a plainness. A frankness. A stripping away of fetish and allegory. "This is an object. Regard it." A certain underarticulation of purpose intended to activate a figuring out. Why these objects? What do they tell us about

this place and its people? Why the salience? Why the isolation against a shabby white cyc? It is a set of unresolved questions wherein I would hope the interest lies. Or something like the fun. Triggers for association or recollection or gleaning. Or for pondering the film's brief. A bestowing upon the audience of something they may wish to spend time on during their eight hours in this filmic world.

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Oh, time,
Oh, space.

—Jandek, "Time and Space"[100]

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Progressivism is poor model for thinking of cinema history. For a filmmaker with aspirations not of making good films but of adding to the cinematic language, it is not merely an adding on to the tail end of an ever-onward

100. Jandek. "Time and Space", *You Walk Alone*, Houston, TX: Corwood Industries, 1988. LP.

conversation about film. It is instead a recognition that, for all of cinema's advances or developments or refinements, there are at work powerful forces of reclamation, of recuperation.

> "Each age or 'spirit' of capitalism must justify its irrational compulsion for accumulation by at least partially integrating or 'recuperating' the critique of the previous era, so that the system can become tolerable again—at least for its own managers...To recuperate from the setbacks of the sixties and seventies, capitalism had to become doubly flexible, imposing casual labor contracts and 'delocalized' production sites to escape the regulation of the welfare state, and using this fragmented production apparatus to create the consumer seductions and stimulating careers that were needed to regain the loyalty of potentially revolutionary creative managers and intellectual workers."[101]

There is no shortage of examples of how such forces have played out in industrial cinema. One such example: seeing Indie film rise up in the late 1980's and early 1990's as a model that threatened the studio stranglehold, the studios descended upon festivals like Sundance; bought up successful Indie films, filmmakers, and distribution channels; housed them in faux-Indie studio lot loft offices with such amenities as ping pong tables and bean bag chairs; and used them as an underpaid R&D wing; incorporating Indie's more palatably

101. Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello. *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (*Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*). London: Verso, 2005.

successful innovations into their broader fare; rendering these innovations spent. Frogs brought to a boil by slowly turning up the heat.

The forces though aren't always so clearly institutional, aren't so clearly demarcated by concerted machinations. This can be seen in considering my interest in narratives that hew insistently to the difficulty of the everyday. Over the last nearly two centuries of Western narrative practice, from the novel and on into cinema, such recuperations have often arisen from the nebulae of fashions, of public tastes. From lay audiences naturally gravitating to forms familiar and readily understood. Flaubert and Zola brought forth writing that tacked hard, against prevailing winds, to the delimiting of the expressive, to reinings in of the psychological, to curtailings of the dramatic such that the figuration of the everyday and the form of narrative practice might be laid more bare. Only for such developments to then be unseated by the dominant culture of ready allure. Leading then, after some time, to renewed risings up, to re-engagements with the quotidian, the austere, the self-reflexive, the circadian, the market-resistant: from the Symbolists, to Raymond Roussel, to Ozu, to the Russian Formalists, to Neorealism, to the *Nouveau roman*, to *l'écriture blanche*, to Robert Bresson, to Direct Cinema, to Structuralist cinema, and to Neo-neorealism, among others.[102] In each case, attempts to reclaim abandoned territories of lived experience from the floodwaters of spectacle. In each case, concerns that at least partially resonate with my own. Including via an interdisciplinarity that is itself informative:

102. Said Robbe-Grillet in complimenting Roussel's plays, "Raymond Roussel has nothing to say and says it badly." While perhaps a bit perverse on its face, I do appreciate that it speaks to what each felt were necessary shocks in their respective times. From: Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, pp 80.

> "Q: Do you think that cinema—having co-opted the experience of classical, novelistic narration—has therefore exerted an influence, in accelerating its urgency, on the novel's necessary renewal?
>
> Jean-Marie Straub: Yes...perhaps also because it's cinema that invented the *Nouveau roman*; it clearly invented Brechtism—Chaplin, Hawks, Mizoguchi, and especially Ford, the most Brechtian—if it wasn't the Greeks and Corneille."[103]

Moreso than with contemporary art, whose trajectories are more robustly immune to lay public influence, the practice of forward-guard narrative cinema involves the fighting of battles previously fought, the re-claiming of territory previously claimed, the having of aesthetic discourse previously had. It means looping back. Eddying. To once again finding ever more disciplined ways of making the normal strange.

In thinking of such loopings and returns, one could think, for example, of the deathbed lament of D.W. Griffith, the godfather of the epic cinematic blockbuster, who, expressing regrets of his influence on film, said:

> "What the modern movie lacks is beauty—the beauty of moving wind in the trees, the little movement in a beautiful blowing on the blossoms in

103. Jean-Marie Straub from: *Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet: Writings* Ed. by Sally Shafto. New York: Sequence Press, 2018.



Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, *Too Early/Too Late* (1981).

> the trees. That they have forgotten entirely. In my arrogant belief, we have lost beauty."[104]

It was a sentiment that would lead Danièle Huillet & Jean-Marie Straub to author *Too Early/Too Late* (1981), an unremitting look at landscapes, at former sites of political resistance.[105] A politics of a people no longer there or not there yet. An exercise of dogged discipline and authorial restraint.

> "I don't think a film should impose all the ideas of a director. He should propose ideas that people can accept or refuse. He shouldn't impose them, no matter what they are. Even if he wants them to participate in his ideas, he must present them in radically different ways than in

104. Ezra Goodman, *The Fifty-Year Decline and Fall of Hollywood*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961, p. 11.

105. Jean-Marie Straub & Daniele Huillet, *Too Early/Too Late* (*Trop tôt/trop tard*, 1981, 100 min, Mono, Color and B&W, 16mm, France/Egypt).



La vallée close, Jean-Claude Rousseau (1995).

> commercial films. If he used the same selling methods to sell his so-called beautiful and good ideas, it's an absurd contradiction, because these methods only hit you on the head, and even if you are hit on the head with the best of intentions, it still hurts. If I show you an audio-visual object which deafens you or blinds you under the pretext of convincing you of a beautiful and good idea, I can't even convey the idea to you because it must be perceived by the senses I have just diminished. So I will succeed only in making you more unconscious!"[106]

As it did for Huillet & Straub, one as well could see something along the lines of Griffith's lament as having animated the whole of a career like James Benning's, with his unbroken, full-can gazes at American terrain. Or the dissensual

106. As an aside, one familiar with Straub's well-documented rants can only chuckle at the exclamation mark and the likely rolling of Danièle's eyes. As in a passage from the documentary *Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie?*:

DANIÈLE
"Are you done? (pause) Have you calmed down yet?"

STRAUB
I am always calm.



Maillart's Bridges, Heinz Emigholz (2001).

persistence of Jean-Claude Rousseau's exercise in durational diaristic geography, *La vallée close*. Or the recalcitrant simplicity of Heinz Emigholz's reductions of architectural cinema back down to the building blocks of near-static image and sound.

Nathalie Sarraute, the trailblazer of the *Nouveau roman*, speaking in contrast to the ornamentally dramaturgical and floridly psychological tendencies of the popular novelists of her day, declared:

> "Contrary to the formless, soft matter [of most current novels]…the New Novel prudently remained confined, formed a hard, compact whole that was absolutely indivisible. Its very hardness and opacity preserved its interior complexity and density and conferred upon it a



Nathalie Sarraute

> force of penetration that allowed it to attain not to the superficial, arid regions of the reader's intellect, but to those infinitely fertile, listless, and defenseless regions of the human soul."[107]

These are sentiments that would be of a piece with the straight descriptiveness and ateleological navigations of much of Allan Sekula's reportage art or Bruce Nauman's video work or of the plays of Samuel Beckett. And would certainly be in line with assertions of the politics of form of Sarraute's friend and compatriot, Robbe-Grillet.

What Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet, and Straub—each one both maker and published critic—repeatedly call for is discourse itself. A two-way street. An active, even militant role of artists pushing back against the critics and

107. Sarraute, *The Age of Suspicion*, p. 62.

against what they saw as prevailing ails. In each of their cases, a call to the discipline of the clear-eyed, the straightforward, the stripped down, the frank, the plain, the democratically made. "The ironic gesture of turning away from the world of the market-place, with all its blurred sounds and imprecise meanings and devot[ing] their entire energy to the poet's literal function as a maker of poems."[109] Of practice laid bare. Or what Sigfried Kracauer called a "redemption of physical reality."[110] It's a sentiment that Michel de Certeau would later take up and side with:

> "The more limited the discourse of a given practice, the less, in its proliferation, that it will obey the law of discourse. But rather it will follow that of production, the ultimate value of commerce…Favor is then inevitably given to two things: narrativity and 'perfection' that aims at technical optimalization."[111]

And so the recuperations go.

In thinking of loopings back, in thinking of philosophical eddying, I am frequently reminded of a counterfactual proposed by James Benning following a 2007 screening at the Los Angeles Film Forum of his 16mm feature length documentary, Sogobi:[112]

> "I was very interested in doing one-roll shots. And to go back to early cinema where, when film was just discovered, and they would do these full rolls. And, uh, do portraits of things: a kiss, or a train coming into

109. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. New York: Atheneum, 1970. p. 60.

110. Diedrich Diederichsen, "James Benning: Romanticism and Enlightenment" *James Benning: Decoding Fear*, Graz, AT: Kunsthaus Graz, 2015.

111. Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (*L'invention du quotidien. Vol. 1*, 1980). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

112. James Benning, *Sogobi* (2002, 90 min, Mono, Color, 16mm, USA).

> a station, or mount a camera onto a train and do a whole shot. And so I was very aware of that. Of course, those are all silent, so I was interested in adding sound to that. I always had this philosophy that, uh, film somewhat was snatched away by narrative filmmaking too quickly. And it became, uh, once it became a narrative tool it, uh, those kinds of experiments that were done before were kind of dropped. And we've never really continued, uh, to see what could be done with an image. And that's when I start to make, uh, decided not to do text and image films anymore and just do portrait films. I thought of myself as going back to that point in time and trying to re-establish a way of making films, of looking and listening in a much more intense way."[113]

Or switching gears back from Benning's California mountain mellowness to the more acerbic orneriness of Straub:

> "So we must come back to what Benjamin said: revolution 'is also reinstating very ancient but forgotten things.' [Péguy]. Films that make you feel this way are political films. The others are truffe, scams. Said Benjamin, 'Revolution is a tiger's leap into the past!'"[114]

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113. Radical: etymology. From French *radical*, from Late Latin *radicalis* ("of or pertaining to the root, having roots, radical"), from Latin *radix* ("root"); see *radix*.

114. This a passage from the Pedro Costa & Thierry Lounas film, *6 Bagatelles* (2001, 18 min, Stereo, B&W and Color, SD, Portugal/France). Though one could carry on with even further such recollections. I am reminded of a passage from Ursula Böser's *The Art of Seeing, the Art of Listening* in which the German director Alexander Kluge decrees that filmmakers should be out to "radically expose the root of film as long as cinema remains merely an unrealized project." Or I could even stretch things a bit and think of how someone like Tony Conrad worked with such root-oriented looping dynamics relative to his own body of work. Getting back to his own roots and creating counterfactuals within his own practice, as with his 1997 recording and release of *Early*

Some Long Films of Note†

Tony Conrad: The Yellow Movies (1972–1973), ongoing
Andy Warhol: **** (1967), 25h
Douglas Gordon: *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), 24h
Christian Marclay: *The Clock* (2010), 24h
Wang Bing: *15 Hours* (2017), 15h
Peter Watkins: *Resan* (1987), 14h 33 min
Wang Bing: *Crude Oil* (2008), 14h
Mariano Llínas: *La flor* (2018), 13h 27min
Jacques Rivette & Suzanne Schiffman: *Out 1, noli me tangere* (1971), 12h 55min
Marceline Loridan Ivens & Joris Ivens: *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* (1976), 12h 43min
Aleksandr Sokurov: *A Retrospection of Leningrad (1957–1990)* (1990), 10h 59min
Lav Diaz: *Evolution of a Filipino Family (2004)*, 9h 53min
Claude Lanzmann: *Shoah* (1985), 9h 26min
Wang Bing: *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks* (2003), 9h 11min
Lav Diaz: *Heremias: Unang aklat—Ang alamat ng princesang bayawak* (2006), 9h
Lav Diaz: *Death in the Land of Encantos* (2007), 8h 58min
Wang Bing: *Dead Souls* (2018), 8h 15min
Andy Warhol: *Empire* (1964), 8h 5min
Lav Diaz: *A Lullaby to the Sorrowful Mystery* (2016), 8h 5min
Andy Warhol: *Imitation of Christ* (1967), 8h

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Lav Diaz: Melancholia (2008), 7h 30min
Hans-Jürgen Syberberg: *Hitler: A Film from Germany* (1977), 7h 22min
Sergey Bondarchuk: *War and Peace* (1966), 7h 2min
Béla Tarr: *Sátántangó* (1994), 6h 59min
Ken Jacobs: *Star Spangled to Death* (2004), 6h 42min
Lav Diaz: *Century of Birthing* (2011), 6h
Lav Diaz: *Florentina Hubaldo CTE* (2012), 6h
Frederick Wiseman: *Near Death* (1989), 5h 58min
Xu Xin: *Karamay* (2011), 5h 56min
Peter Watkins: *La Commune (Paris, 1871)* (2000), 5h 45min
Lav Diaz: *From What Is Before* (2014), 5h 38min
Abel Gance: *Napoléon* (1927), 5h 32min
Wang Bing: *Beauty Lives in Freedom* (2018), 5h 30min
Aleksandr Sokurov: *Spiritual voices. From diaries of war. A narrative in five parts.* (1995), 5h 28min
Chantal Akerman: *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), 5h 22min
Andy Warhol: *Sleep* (1963), 5h 21min
Bernardo Bertolucci: *1900* (1976), 5h 17min
Ryūsuke Hamaguchi: *Happy Hour* (2015), 5h 17min
Lav Diaz: *West Side Avenue* (2001), 5h 15min
Ingmar Bergman: *Fanny and Alexander* (1982), 5h 12min
Jonas Mekas: *Lithuania and the Collapse of the USSR* (2008), 4h 49min
Jonas Mekas: *As I Was Moving Ahead Occassionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000), 4h 48min
Jerzy Hoffman: *The Deluge* (1974), 4h 47min
Peter Watkins: *The Freethinker* (1994), 4h 36min
Lav Diaz: *The Halt* (2019), 4h 36min
Manoel de Oliveira: *Amor de Perdição* (1979), 4h 22min
Marcel Ophüls: *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969), 4h 11min
Lav Diaz: *Norte, the End of History* (2013), 4h 10min
Frederick Wiseman: *Belfast, Maine* (1999), 4h 5min
Frederick Wiseman: *At Berkeley* (2013), 4h 4min
Fritz Lang: *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* (1922), 4h 2min
Kenji Mizoguchi: *The 47 Ronin* (1941), 4hr 1min

† the films in bold are cinematic fictions.

Something I frequently return to in conceiving and discussing my work is the notion of foregrounding and reargrounding. It is a concern engaged with expectation. Both directorial and audience expectations born of defaults, of perceived givens, of proprieties. Of "how it's done."

The dominant production model of cinema privileges, often at the expense of all else, the recording of pre-written, pre-approved dialogue read by recognizable actors. What might seem an innocuous enough construct is one that, under some examination, can be seen as unleashing myriad opportunity costs.

In thinking of sound recording, mine are films that I deprive of omnipresence. Dominant film practice, not just in industrial cinema but in "arthouse" film as well, will typically involve an array of microphones, booms, and radio mics infiltrating the filmed space, giving an immediacy to specific sounds that the director chooses to pluck and isolate from the soundscape. Such that any sound, regardless of its physical distance from the fourth wall, can be heard with closely proximate precision. With dialogue almost always given preeminence. I, on the other hand, record with the single option of a portable field recorder and single monodirectional microphone, either held in my hand with a pistol grip or placed just beside me on a tripod. The resulting effect is that of an uncompromising inspecificity. The audience hears only what one would hear by standing near to and on the same plane as the camera itself. This

Minimalism, Volume 1 (1964-1965), music that hadn't ever really existed as such but that he felt should have. Or I could think of my own first feature film, the dramatic reenactment, *The Anchorage*, a film catalyzed partly by the conceit that dramatic reenactment itself was a form that had peaked by roughly 1907 or so. | The actual Péguy quote paraphrased by Straub is: "To make a revolution also means to put back into place things that are very ancient but forgotten." As cited by Jonathan Rosenbaum in "Speaking German," *Chicago Reader*, December 2, 1988, https://www.jonathanrosenbaum.net/1988/12/the-sound-of-german/.

means that, as in life, sometimes conversation cannot be heard. Because it is too quiet or too far away. And so be it.

This is not a perverse gesture. To the contrary, it is an opening up of a sonic reorientation. It is an allowance for ambient sound, the sound usually reargrounded and barely noticed in typical film recording, to flood into the fore. Not just in occasional atmospheric moments or in establishing shots. But in every scene. In every shot. Such that this typically reargrounded ambient sound becomes the film's unbroken soundtrack. A restrained durational concrète. A means of more intimately knowing a place: its details, its patterns, its rhythms, its harmonics, its dissonance, its resonant and formant frequencies. An enrichment of result through a destitution of method.[115]

By proceeding into a fiction production scriptless, one could imagine another foreground/reargound flip: that of image emerging from its submission to text. A foregrounding of the camera. A bestowing upon the camera an authority, one wrested from the dominant model's sanctification of the pre-written word. Something along the lines of the adjuration of Jean-Luc Godard who, in *Histoire(s) du cinema*, asserts that the great power of the motion picture is not in its preconception; it is in its power of witness.[116]

Or we could think of lead actors. In my case, the casting of non-actors. In the case of *The Works and Days*, the actual farmers and villagers of Shiotani. A use of non-actors that in and of itself is not particularly notable. This is not

115. In recording both *The Works and Days* and *The Anchorage*, I gave myself the limitation of using a single monodirectional microphone for the entirety of the production. With interior recordings, situations in which a "professional" recordist would almost certainly have chosen a different microphone, this gives the viewer a greater sense of architectural resonance than we are used to hearing in commercial films. It is an informative resonance that I prefer, as it gives a more frank reproduction of having actually been there. It is somehow almost as if we are beginning already one loop into Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting in a Room*. | Alvin Lucier, *Alvin Lucier: I Am Sitting in a Room*. Lovely Music 1013, 1990. Compact disc.

116. Jean-Luc Godard, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (267 min, 1989–1999, Stereo, B&W and Color, arrayed formats, France).

uncommon practice. Though in smaller budget films it is most often assumed to be a decision born of limited means as opposed to one born of choice. Of admiration. Of valorization. So to structure my intentionality, to make it visible, I inserted the double gesture of casting two trained actors into the film. The first cast was Masahiro Motoki. Masahiro is one of the most famous celebrities in Japan. Following his rise to superstardom as a member of the boy band Shibugakitai, he turned to acting and is now a two-time winner of the Japanese Academy Award for Best Actor. He is additionally one of Japan's most highly paid commercial brand spokesmen. So I approached him with the idea of his appearing in *The Works and Days*. On the following conditions: that he not have any dialogue, that he only appear a handful of times as a background extra, and that he be financially compensated no more than a film extra. He agreed. Because he understood. And he and I both took genuine joy in having him appear as but an extra to Tayoko's lead. Though to build this structure out more visibly, I felt that the inclusion of an actor of mid-level fame would be well-placed in a mid-sized role. So having seen his acting in Abbas Kiarostami's *Like Someone in Love* and Hong Sangsoo's *Hill of Freedom*, I cast Ryo Kase to play a vaguely-defined family member.[117] One who has three somewhat substantial conversations in the film and who plays a recurring extra the remainder of the time. Giving me a three-point articulation of a foreground/reargground flip of actor fame: Tayoko, Ryo, Masahiro. A plotting of my relationship to some of cinema's more ulterior habituations. Allowing for a flooding to the fore of the

117. Abbas Karostami, *Like Someone in Love* (2012, 109 min, Stereo, Color, DCP, Japan/France). | Hong Hangsoo, *Hill of Freedom* (*Ja-yu-eui eon-deok*, 2014, 66 min, Stereo, Color, DCP, South Korea).

depth of character to be found in Tayoko Shiojiri.

This mindset of foregrounding and reargrounding is the nuts and bolts of work of philosophy. A thought experiment put to practice. The manual labor of ethics. It is an undoing of givens. A questioning of assumptions. Not for purposes contrarian. But for seeing if there aren't things that are being dammed up, or earthed over, or obscured by light. A sense of a positive project— one that can eliminate some of the noise of the dominant apparatus and methodology of dramaturgy so that we might better see and better hear more narrowbanded amplitudes of the signal of the everyday.

It was in imagining a new way forward, imagining a theater that could be a more finely tuned instrument of lived experience, that the *fin de siècle* Belgian Symbolist director Maurice Maeterlinck proposed the following:

> "The mysterious chant of the infinite, the ominous silence of the souls and of God, the murmur of eternity on the horizon, the destiny or fatality we are conscious of within us, though by what tokens none can tell—do not all of these underlie *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*? And would it not be possible, by some interchanging of the rolls, to bring them nearer to us, and send the actors further off?…I have grown to believe that an old man, seated in his armchair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him, giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws that rain about his house, interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of

> the doors and windows and the quivering voice of the light, submitting with a bent head to the presence of his soul and his density—an old man, who conceives not that all the powers of this world, like so many heedful servants, are mingling and keeping vigil in his room…or that every star in heaven and every fiber of the soul are directly concerned in the movement of an eyelid that closes, or a thought that springs to birth—I have grown to believe that he, motionless as he is, does yet live in reality a deeper, more human, and more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who conquers in battle, or the husband who avenges his honor."[118]

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In coaxing performances out of non-trained actors, I employ a number of approaches. I often tend towards the aforementioned engagements with habit—putting the performers to their actual work or placing them into re-enactments of activities deeply familiar. I will use documentary, though significantly less than most might guess. I will script naturalistic scenes, usually written the day of shooting, that I will rehearse with the actors as one would

118. Maurice Maeterlinck, "The Tragical in Daily Life," *The Treasure of the Humble* (*Le Trésor des humbles*, 1896) London: George Allen, 1911.

do with classical cinema. Just as I will create overtly unnaturalistic scenes—moments, for example, in which actors hit clearly pre-determined marks or play to camera positions. Though, out of a desire to have substantially more talking in this film than in *The Anchorage*—that film features seven minutes of dialogue over an eighty-seven-minute running time—I knew that I would have to get non-actors talking in a way that would be indistinguishable from other naturalistic and documentary material.



John Fahey

This collecting was a re-awakening of many years of interest that I had had in oral history, specifically in collectors of uniquely American stories. It was an interest that, until this pre-production, I had found no application for. Mine was an interest in Studs Terkel, the great valorizer of the American worker.[119] And in fellas like Alan and John Lomax, Harry Smith, Moses Asch, and John Fahey, each of whom set about recording and preserving aspects of Americana—folk tales as well as its folk, hillbilly, mountain, and cowboy music.[120] Lomax's efforts would be preserved unabridged by the Library of Congress. And Smith's would be catalogued and

119. Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.

120. Alan Lomax's life's work would lead to the creation of the Archive of Folk Culture, which is housed at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. An abridged collection of Harry Smith's recordings would be compiled as *The Anthology of American Folk Music* on Asch's label, Folkways Records, the whole of which was eventually donated to the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

released by the Smithsonian.

And in thinking along these archival lines, in spending time with the family prior to the filming, it became clear to me that, for them, this was more than a film. It was the making of an heirloom. A preserving of a village and of its way of life. One that is dying. A chance for future generations to be able to see what life once was like for these relatives in rural Japan. And for each of us involved, this gave the collection and recording of these stories a sense of purpose.

And, for the purposes of the film, it also gave me a mode of story incorporation. By simply putting these actors in front of audiences who had not yet heard a given story, and then by placing such scenarios into the world of the film, I was able to generate hours of conversation, all of which married seamlessly with the rest of the filmic material. This may well be an approach used by other fiction directors, though, if so, I am unaware of it.

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I tend toward the notion that the shorter the film the more that should happen; the longer the film the less that should happen.



The Algerian War!, Jean-Marie Straub (2014)

From this perspective, it is easy for me to imagine *The Works and Days* as an inadvertent companion piece to Jean-Marie Straub's two-minute epic, *The Algerian War!*[121]

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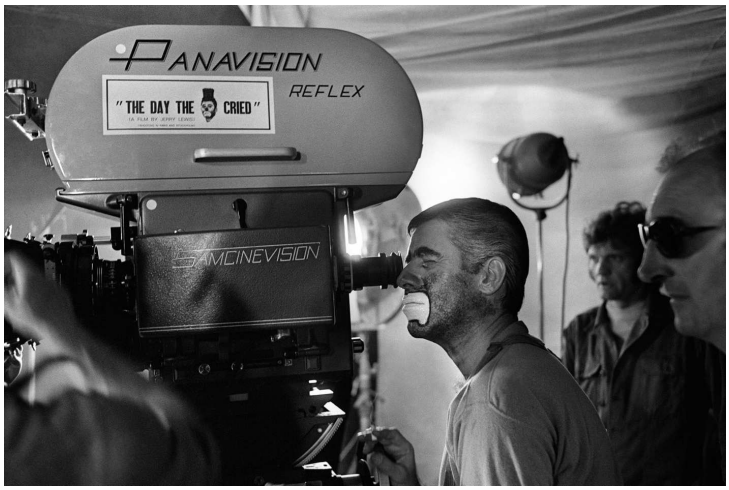
In choosing a film's central character, a primary consideration for me, along with their having a resonant personal story, is that they be able to remain unaffected in the presence of a camera. Certainly both Ulla and Tayoko shared this quality, having been photographed by Anders for decades. They were old

121. Jean-Marie Straub, *The Algerian War!* (*La guerre d'Algérie!*, 2014, 2 min, Stereo, Color, HDCAM, France/Switzerland).

pros. I would soon come up against the fact, however, that this was not a quality shared by all of my performers in Shiotani.

For a number of practical reasons, in the first of the four production rounds, I was forced to front load the filming of a number of family dinners. Dinners, that in all my previous research visits, had been rather lively affairs. However, on the evening of filming the first dinner, once I rolled, clapped, and called action, I realized straight away that everyone had gone stiff. It is my experience that such stiffness is quite normal. And that often it will go away on its own if one is patient. Though a whole dinner passed. With everyone unusually quiet and stilted. And I found none of the footage useable. So the next night, I attempted another dinner, hoping for better. Though I found the results nearly equally unusable.

The next day, however, the stakes were higher. This was the day that I was re-creating both the drive home from the funeral as well as the funeral dinner. And it would be the last night of that first round that I would be able to have all of my actors together on one day. So I needed some way to generate a breakthrough. And it was at that point that, a point at which I was still debating whether I would appear onscreen in the film, that I realized I would need to enter the frame. And it was in that day's bout of thinking through this minor patch of trouble that Jerry Lewis came to mind. Jerry Lewis the clown. The rustic fool. "My philosophy of comedy is a man in trouble. There, but



The Day the Clown Cried, Jerry Lewis (1972)

for the grace of God, go I."[122] I realized that the film required a clown. And so I volunteered myself.[123] And in my planning, I enlisted the aid of Tayoko's brother, Hiroharu.

I knew that Hiroharu quite liked some hearty whisky drinking. And I also knew that he missed the days when he could smoke at the dinner table. Each was a dinnertime vice that had recently been banned by his wife, Fumiko. So that day I went to her to request, just for the sake of the filming of course, that we be allowed to smoke and drink. Appreciating that it was for the film, she agreed. So that night Hiroharu and I hatched a plot to drink in excess ourselves and to encourage the others to join in. And after a pre-dinner toast, when the cameras began to roll, it seemed that some looseness had been achieved. Though not quite enough. So Hiroharu and I set the tone. Drinking whisky

122. Jerry Lewis in an interview during the filming of the never-released *The Day the Clown Cried*. From the BBC documentary, *The Story Of The Day The Clown Cried* (2016, 28 min, Stereo, Color, HD, UK).

123. Or, there is Marshall McLuhan's notion: "The clown is a person with a grievance. His role in Medieval society was to voice grievance. The clown's job was to tell...what was wrong with society. The clown is trying to tell us his grievance." In this case, a situational grievance with a rather Japanese sense of reserve. | Marshall McLuhan. "The Medium Is the Message," *Monday Conference*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation. 27 June 1977.

with abandon. The incorporation of a nudge. And sure enough, the others began to follow our lead. And then the conversations came. And then the laughter. A complete breakthrough. One that only built through the dinner. With a fair share of jokes. Many at my expense. The clown at the end of table. The rustic fool. Stirring the pot. Drunk to incoherence. Somehow bleeding from my left temple. Until eventually, after a couple of hours, I was passed out on the floor. As the cameras rolled. And, for the remainder of the dinner, the film made itself. And did so rather capably.

Theory has its limits. That's often when the physical can take over.

•

For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its making where executives
Would never want to tamper...[124]

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124. W.H. Auden. "In Memory of W.B. Yeats," *Another Time*. London: Random House, 1940. | Or, said Tony Conrad: "The whole idea of art, for me, was intimately bonded to the idea of an oppositional alternative to the dominant consumer culture – bonded by my family heritage, by generational identification with the '60s, and by my own deepest political sense." [a] He decided to center his practice outside the visual art world and drew a line of distinction between his work and that of other artists whose successful exhibitions left them "freighted with gallerists' expectations and careerist goals." [b] Taking full-time academic appointments freed him to make generally unmarketable work in film, performance, and music: "I worked for a living, and I thought that was righteous." He elaborated: "Having made decisions based on not being in it for the money, I recognize that there was a compensation for that, and there was also a debt to pay. I liked the benefits, and I was willing to pay the price. Ha ha ha." | Tony Conrad, statement in *Consider Alternatives: 20 Years of Contemporary Art* at Hallwalls, ed. Ronald Ehmke with Elizabeth Licata (Buffalo: Hallwall's Contemporary Arts Center), 189. | Conrad, "Retrospect I," in *Buffalo Heads: Media Study, Media Practice, Media Pioneers, 1973-1990*, eds. Woody Vasulka and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 548. Reproduced on pages 82-91. | Tony Conrad, "Artist Interview: Tony Conrad" (Interviewed by Heather Gring), The Burchfield Penney Art Center, Buffalo, NY, August 7, 2012, Audio recording, https://www.burchfieldpenney.org/artists/artist:anthony-s-conrad/.



Rock My Religion, Dan Graham (1984).

It is a common critical refrain that music, in a film, is a directorial crutch. A compensatory device. A corrective prosthetic for filmic passages that failed to withstand an edit. And while this may often be true, one could see this as something of a fuddy duddyism when presented with soundtrack-heavy films with such benchmark social graces as *Head* (1968), *Out of the Blue* (1980), *The Girl Can't Help It* (1956), *Coming Attractions* (1970), *Rock My Religion* (1984), or *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* (1973).[125]

Straub/Huillet, however, with the making of *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* (1968), saw this critique of music-use as an opportunity to see and raise.[126] Not as a play to savvy popular appeal. But as a sustained, durational intensity. An austere engagement with both Augustinianism and

125. Bob Rafelson, *Head* (1968, 86 min, Mono, B&W and Color, 35mm, USA). | Dennis Hopper, *Out of the Blue* (1980, 94 min, Mono, Color, 35mm, Canada). | Frank Tashlin, *The Girl Can't Help It* (1956, 99 min, Stereo, Color, 35mm, USA). | Tony Conrad & Beverly Grant Conrad, *Coming Attractions* (1970, 78 min, Mono, Color, 16mm, USA). | Dan Graham, *Rock My Religion* (1984, 55 min, Mono, Color, video, USA). | Sam Peckinpah, *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* (1973, 122 min, Mono, B&W and Color, 35mm, USA).

126. Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* (*Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach*, 1968, 94 min, Mono, B&W, 35mm, West Germany/Italy).



The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach, Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet (1968).

Protestantism via the atomized day-job politics of Johann Sebastian Bach's tenure as Thomaskantor at St. Thomas in Leipzig and as organist at a number of nearby Lutheran churches.[127] With this chronicling, Straub/Huillet sought to create a more unrelenting approach to music than had ever been attempted in fiction film. A nearly wall-to-wall litany of live performances, broken only by brief diaristic interludes. A stern immediacy of performances by pianists Gustav Leonhardt and Christiane Lang that were novel at the time due to the suspense of seeing compositions actually played, in full, over single cinematographic takes. One after the other after the other. An effect that lead Bernardo Bertolucci to dismiss the film as nothing more than an "audio tape on Bach."[128] It is a sustain of threshold apparently too demanding for some. Though in its virtuosically defiant insistence, I regard it as the high water mark of musical foregrounding.

127. In considering austerity, "the fact that the films of Straub/Huillet have frequently been characterized as Minimalist might suggest that this perceived austerity is the result of some self-conscious stylistic hallmark or is dictated purely by having to work within their means. Rather, it is the consequence of having to work within their ethics." Said Danièle: "If, at the aesthetic level, you practice the same inflation which fuels capitalist society as well as the world we live in, then there's no point; you're just grist for the mill." | John Gianvito, "Tough Love: Reflections on Some Ideas and Practices of Danièle Huillet & Jean-Marie Straub", *Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet*, Edited by Ted Fendt. Vienna: Synema, p146.

128. Ursula Böser. *The Art of Seeing, the Art of Listening, the Politics of Form in the Work of Jean-Marie Straub and Daniele Huillet*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2000. pp 29.

The Works and Days' score (in order of appearance):

Tony Conrad. Thursday, May 5, 1977 & Friday, May 6, 1977: Part 4, *Music and the Mind of the World* (1976-1982)
Phill Niblock. Sethwork, *Touch Three* (2006)
Keiji Haino. Even Now, Still I Think, *The 21st Century Hard-y-Guide-y Man: Even Now, Still I Think* (1998)
Mary Jane Leach. Pipe Dreams, *Pipe Dreams* (1989)
Folke Rabe. What?? (Second Version), *What??* (1967)
Tim Berne & Bill Frissell. 2011, *Theoretically* (1986)
Folke Rabe. What??, *What??* (1967)
Graham Lambkin. Ceremoniolose, *No Better No Worse, Volume 2* (2018)
Akio Suzuki. Kugiuchi, *Kugiuchi* (2015)
Alvin Lucier. Side A, *Music on a Long Thin Wire* (1980)
Éliane Radigue. Triptych: Part 1, *Triptych* (1978)
Phill Niblock. A Third Trombone, *Nothin to Look at Just a Record* (1982)

———

The Works and Days' soundtrack (in order of appearance):

Anton Webern. 5 Movements for String Quartet, Op. 5: V. In zarter Bewegung, *Works for String Quartet & String Trio Op. 20* (1909)
Kenny Wheeler. Present Past, *Angel Song* (1996)
Joe McPhee. Tenor Solo, *Zurich* (1979)
Bill Evans. B Minor Waltz (For Ellaine), *You Must Believe in Spring* (1981)
Bill Evans. Gary's Theme, *You Must Believe in Spring* (1981)
Bill Evans. We Will Meet Again (For Harry), *You Must Believe in Spring* (1981)
Bill Evans. The Peacocks, *You Must Believe in Spring* (1981)
Kenny Wheeler. Gnu High, *Gnu High* (1975)
Kenny Wheeler. Foxy Trot, *Double, Double You* (1984)

Which makes it a film that, in this regard, stands as some sort of polarity to *The Works and Days*, a film marked by an uncommonness of musical reargrounding. If we are to set aside for the time being the diegetic soundtrack music—the jazz played around the house both by Junji and in Junji's honor and the classical music played by Tayoko—and focus here on the film's score, we can start to hone in on this reargroundedness.

As is part of my selecting and directing process for almost every aspect of the film—acting, cinematography, sound mixing, title design, score, etc—I look for contributions that are of the contributor but that are at the lowest affectual end of what that contributor might see as his or her work. In deciding on a list of compositions for the score—a process heavily determined by what I deemed to be scene-by-scene aptness—I was looking for music that would be able to winnow itself down into the film. I began to imagine something like a halibut getting itself buried into the sandy ocean floor. Not a total disappearance of the music. But a continuity with the existing filmic equanimity. Or a seeming extension of the decay time of sounds already present.[129] A collection of music by musicians I have long admired, music for which I had to extend a fair amount of trouble and cost to secure the rights for, which I then buried into the filmic soundscape. In some cases so deeply that most audience members will not even recognize that music is playing. "Is that a washing machine, or is it music?" "Is that an air conditioner, or is it music?" "Is that a plane flying overhead?" etc.

129. With this in mind, it has me thinking of the film's score as something of a complementary inversion of a story often told by La Monte Young. One of a childhood memory. The child of a Mormon sheepherder in late 1930s rural Idaho. Of his enjoyment in hearing the constant drone of nearby power plant generators wafting over the open fields. A sound that would later inspire his own compositional drones. The machinic as musical. A transposition of my use of the musical as machinic. | William Duckworth, *Talking Music: Conversations with John Cage, Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, and 5 Generations of American Experimental Composers*, Boston: Da Capo Press, 1999, pp 222.

On its face, and given my admiration of the musicians, it is an absurdity of gesture akin to having an acclaimed actor like Masahiro Motoki appear only as an extra. Though thought through, it becomes yet another component in revealing the lattice, as it were, of the film. The foreground reargrounded. And vice versa. An approach to the self-reflexive, not repeatedly and overtly announced like the gestures of the *Nouvelle Vague*, but simply authored. Quietly. Unassumingly. Sometimes almost invisibly. Gestures delivered in such a way that the film does not depend on an audience grasping them; it is enough that each such gesture contributes in a small way to the whole of a film that I can only hope feels, for the audience, somehow other or uncanny.[130]

•

In considering an expansive project at the center of which is an eight-hour film, and in considering the written form of the recollection, I find myself pleased to be at the outer end of the alloted word count aware that I could have carried on writing several tens of thousands more words, on ever more and ever more parsed aspects of the project, on themes and ideas related to its execution and its consideration. Which returns me to what I have seen all along as a central animating conception as I have worked through the dissertation—not that of

130. To return to Straub momentarily, he said the following: "My biggest fear of the Bach film was precisely that the music woul"d create lofty heights in the film: the music must remain on the same level as everything else." In this way, two films that would seem musically polar, dovetail in an interest in equanimity. In their case, a sustained tension between the Baroque and the austere. In mine, a Georgic tautness of lifegiving idyll and looming death.

a work completed, neatly wrapped and bowed. But that of a body of work that spills out over the vessel of the DPhil. And of ample additional work ready and waiting to be done.[131] Of a practice ongoing. Of "a recurrent end of the unending."[132]

And with this conception in mind, I am led to recalling a fragment from Heraclitus used by T.S. Eliot as an epigraph for the explorations in his Four Quartets—the notion that the end of a road is also its beginning. *ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὠυτή*.[133] Or, the way up and the way down is one and the same:

> "What we call the beginning is often the end
> And to make an end is to make a beginning.
> The end is where we start from. And every phrase
> And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,
> Taking its place to support the others,
> The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
> An easy commerce of the old and the new,
> The common word exact without vulgarity,
> The formal word precise but not pedantic,
> The complete consort dancing together)
> Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
> Every poem an epitaph."[134]

131. I could imagine further recollections on: cinematography, allure, location photography, emergence and gestalt, exhausted forms, stochasticity, the family film, aboutness, collective economies, death, the profane, mono no aware, dissensus, attention, time, briefs, parentheticals, Georgics, the script, the scroll, brick and mortar cinemas, entertainment vs. engagement, musical Minimalism, musique concrète, landscape, aphorism, anecdote, mereology, technics, modes, in-betweenness, chronos vs. kairos, the post-Nouveau roman, a history of the Terrane Image, in-studio music, Mannerism, Breugel's *Landscape with the fall of Icarus*, Earth's *Earth 2*, and Neil Young's "Powderfinger," along with any number of other lines of elaboration.

132. T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding", Four Quartets, London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1944, pp 37.

133. Heraclitus, *The Fragments*, Fr. 60.

134. Eliot, "Gidding".

Location Photos

The following are location photos taken between 2009 and 2013 during the research phase of *The Works and Days (of Tayoko Shiojiri in the Shiotani Basin)*.



































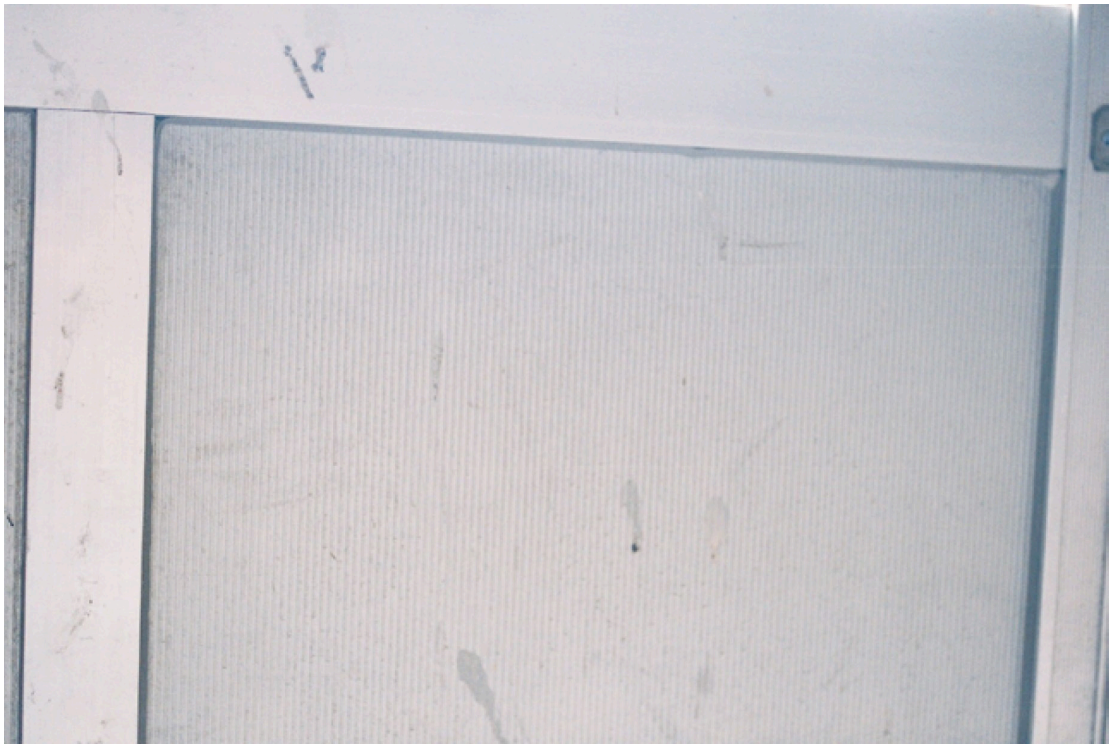


















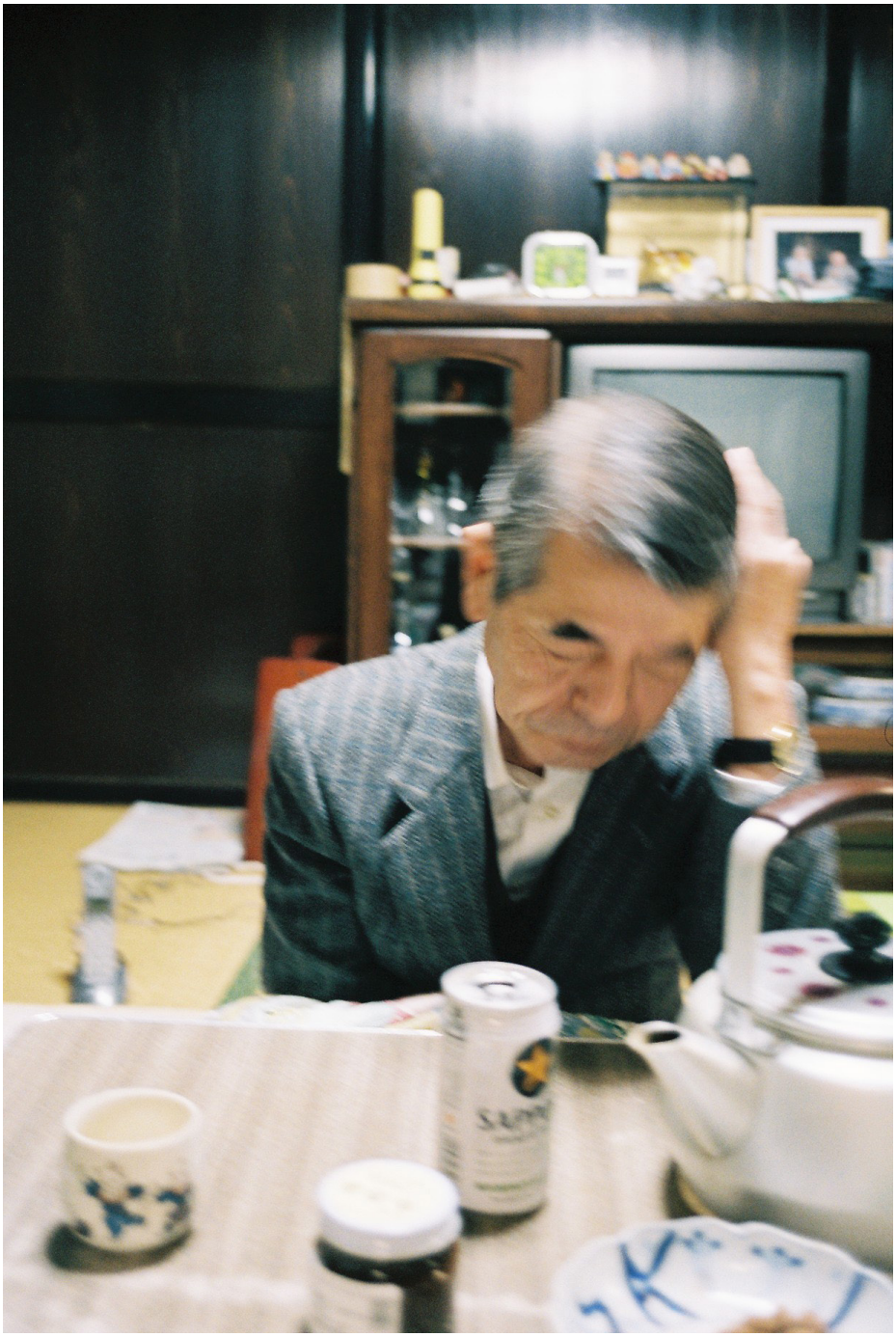




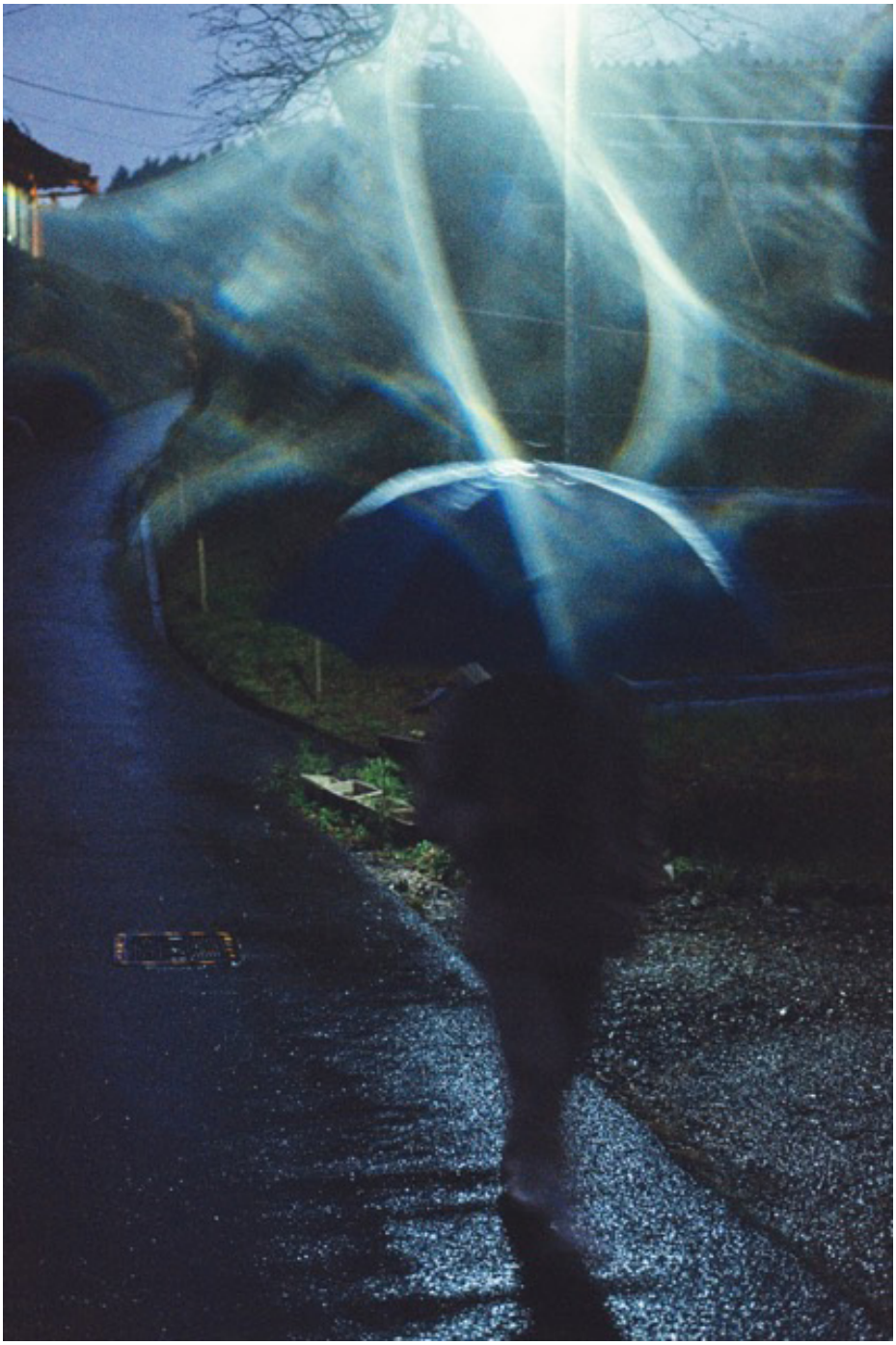




















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