The Poetics of Process: A Comparative Study of Documentary Film Editing Methodologies

A Dissertation with Creative Work

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ABSTRACT

The artistic ramifications of the digital revolution are a critically neglected area in the study of documentary film editing. The literature suggests that the implementation of digital non-linear editing systems indelibly changed the process and, in turn, the style of the art form. However, such studies remain narrow in focus and have yet to investigate the use of the analogue process in a digital context in the art of documentary film editing. This research project sheds light on the relationship between craft processes and artistic outcomes in documentary film editing by comparing and contrasting contemporary, digital-era additive (editing by assembly) and antiquated analogue-era subtractive (editing by excision) strategies using digital film editing tools. This practitioner-based enquiry collects data using a reflective practice study of the film editing of two original medium-length documentaries using the same raw materials but employing distinctly different working methods. These films are contextualised and analysed in an exegesis that also provides the theoretical foundation of the study. This investigation contends that a creative process driven by digital film editing technologies cultivates non-linear, dialogue-driven narrative structures. It further argues that an analogue process in a digital context fosters an immersive, temporally and geographically compartmentalised documentary form. Finally, this research maintains that the editorial process can be employed as an artistic tool in documentary filmmaking.

Keywords: Digital Determinism, Documentary, Film Editing, Film Production, Post-Production, Workflow

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE

I declare that, except where indicated otherwise, the submission is my own work and has not previously been submitted successfully for an award of any other degree or diploma. Parts of this work have been previously presented at *Visible Evidence XXIX* (Hector 2023a), and published as articles in *First Frame* (Hector 2023b), *POV* (Hector 2023c), and in the chapter 'The Hero Myth and the Cutting Room Floor' in *The Routledge Companion to History and the Moving Image* (Hector 2023d).

Signature…….

Date…….

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This project is dedicated to Mlinzi McMillan, a brave man who had the strength of character to survive an unspeakable catastrophe, and his two sons, Mlinzi Jr. and Jalen, who tragically died far too young.

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Is Achilles possible when powder and shot have been invented? And is the Iliad possible at all when the printing press and even printing machines exist? Is it not inevitable that with the emergence of the printer's bar, the singing and the telling and the muse cease?

- Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy* (1859)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This practitioner-based enquiry sheds light on the relationship between craft process and artistic outcome in documentary film editing by comparing and contrasting contemporary digital-era additive and antiquated analogue-era subtractive methodologies using digital film editing tools. This research project is a response to the problem of digital determinism in the art of documentary film editing. The literature suggests that the implementation of digital non-linear editing systems indelibly changed the process and, in turn, the style of the art form. However, such studies remain narrow in focus and have yet to investigate the use of the analogue editorial process in a digital context. This practice-based investigation makes an original contribution to research and professional practice by providing insight into the creative implications of workflow for practitioners (documentary filmmakers, film editors, assistants, and post-production supervisors) and scholars of documentary film production.

The spectre of digital determinism has been a recurrent theme throughout much of my professional practice. As a first-wave digital adopter in the early 1990s, I worked as a trainer, aiding senior analogue film editors in their transition to digital tools. One of these ageing practitioners, seemingly overwhelmed by the technology, asked me, *'What is the machine telling me to do now?'* At the time, the statement struck me as absurd, and I assured him that film editing technology was benign and merely served at the leisure of the filmmaker. A tool is a tool. However, this question lingered in the back of my mind for the last thirty years in my capacity as the film editor of more

than 150 subsequent films and programs. This study seeks to address this vexatious and deceptively simple question.

My introduction to a study of the implications of technological change in this arcane and 'invisible' art (Vaughan 1983) begins by contextualising the research area. In the popular imagination, documentary filmmaking is a well-orchestrated affair in which an intrepid artist ventures forth to gather a selection of cinematic elements gleaned from actuality to express a thesis. In this illusory scenario, the film editing process is simply the mechanical realisation of a preconceived notion. However, the vagaries of capturing fragments of actuality to serve as the building blocks of narrative construction belie this invention. Four decades of professional practice as a documentary film editor have taught me that life circumvents attempts to acquire the materials needed to formulate a cohesive filmic argument.

The tumult of existence, the uncontrolled events, logistical challenges, artistic opportunities and disappointments documentary filmmaking presents render film editing a process preoccupied with extracting heretofore unregarded narrative possibilities from source materials. Moreover, the documentary sub-genres of Direct Cinema and *cinéma-vérité* are unscripted explorations of theme. Lacking a thesis or an expectation of plot outcome, the film editor must find or construct narratives in these observational documentaries. Thus, the film editing room is a place where documentarians write with pictures and sounds, attempting to reverse the laws of narrative entropy on a journey from chaos to story.

The first century of cinema saw documentary film editors grappling with these artistic challenges using tools of scissors and glue. The technical skills required to edit film could be learned in a matter of minutes. Mastery of the art and craft of film editing and narratology were the sole preoccupations of practitioners. The rapid advent of digital cinema technologies at the dawn of film's second century triggered a revolution in the culture, traditions, logistics, and art of professional post-production practice. The creative flexibility, speed, efficiency, and affordability of new digital technologies were particularly attractive to documentary filmmakers, traditionally an economically challenged sector of the arts industrial complex. However, digital technologies disrupted professional practice, necessitating the development of workflows, organisational approaches, and editing methodologies focused on financial and logistical considerations rather than creative outcomes.

A stylistic shift became evident in my creative work and that of my peers during the exponential technological innovation of the early 21st century. Linear, scene-based narrative structures fell out of favour. The expositional extended montage became ascendant. Even as a first-wave adopter whose career benefited greatly from the digital revolution, I was concerned about the implications of Marx's epigraph. Was there a distinct relationship between tools and method, an interplay between the creative process and its creative artefact? Swapping scissors for a keystroke does not rewrite the foundational principles of narratology, visual language, and montage. In the form of silver halide, magnetic particles, or binary data, images and sounds, the raw narrative fodder of the documentary is fundamentally the same. Yet practitioners sensed a change in our creative output. Certainly, evolving artistic innovation, stylistic trends, audience sensibilities, and cultural,

commercial, and political contexts significantly influence our work. Still, we began to wonder: is the digital documentary film editing process simply a necessary product of the logistical, technical, and financial factors of bandwidth, minimum system requirements, line items, deliverables, and picture lock dates, or can it be a useful artistic tool?

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The central aim of this practitioner-based enquiry is to shed light on the relationship between craft processes and artistic outcomes in the professional practice of documentary film editing. It further seeks to explore the application of the analogue editorial process in digital documentary practice. This practical knowledge gap will be investigated through these research questions:

> RQ1: What are the creative implications of the editorial process in documentary filmmaking?
>
> RQ2: To what effect can the analogue approach to the digital film editing process be used as an artistic tool in documentary filmmaking?

1.3 Summary of Methodology

This investigation was conducted in the form of an analytic, auto-ethnographic practitioner-based enquiry, a methodology that explores the subjective experience of the artist-practitioner. This method is particularly useful in studying a practical knowledge gap in a small and arcane community of arts practice. The research began with the film editing of two original medium-length documentaries that formed the locus of the study. The editorial processes of these films utilised identical digital technology and raw materials but took two distinctly different film editing

methods: a contemporary, digital-era additive approach and an antiquated analogue-era subtractive strategy. Reflexive analysis of these works was collected in the form of reflection-in-practice on their creative process and reflection-on-practice that examined their creative outcomes. Validation of this reflexive analysis was collected through semi-structured qualitative interviews with expert practitioners. Taken together, these methods offer an effective way of exploring the research problem that is the focus of this investigation.

1.4 Principal Findings

The research contained in these artefacts and their critical examination in the exegesis support the thesis that the methods used in the editorial process of documentary filmmaking leave an indelible imprint on its creative outcomes. Expert practitioner analysis indicates that the contemporary digital documentary film editing process facilitates the use of logic as a narrative organisational principle, thus fostering extended montage structures that render an engineered and filtered filmic experience. In contrast, most practitioner participants indicated that the creative constraint of a traditional analogue method in a digital workflow engenders a geographically and temporally compartmentalised narrative structure that presents as an immersive and naturalistic documentary. These findings provide some support for the conceptual premise that an analogue approach to the digital film editing process can be used as an artistic tool in documentary filmmaking.

1.5 Research Significance

These outcomes promise to be of use to my community of practice. As the literature makes clear, two decades after the digital revolution, we have yet to address its artistic ramifications. Moreover,

as Sternberg and Kaufman (2010) write, we are all becoming prisoners of our own digital expertise. As alternative approaches to our art are rendered obscure by analogue's fade into film editing's rear-view mirror, we must constantly challenge digital standard practice. By exploring the pestiferous question 'What is the machine telling me to do now?', this research project posits an alternative creative method for the documentary film editing community of practice and makes clear the wisdom of a now long-retired artist. This approach will prove useful in expanding our understanding of how the documentary film editing community of practice can mitigate the problem of digital determinism.

1.6 Organisation of the Study

This exegesis consists of an introduction, four chapters, and links to two original medium-length documentaries. As per the requirements set out by the University of Hertfordshire's Doctoral College, this non-textual component of the dissertation forms 'a major part of the submission in terms of the scale of ambition of the work submitted' (Anon. 2022, p. 79). The first chapter of this exegesis is the Literature Review, which provides the theoretical foundation of the study. This section places the problem in a contextual frame and makes connections between the documentary form, analogue technology, and the art of documentary film editing. The literature review concludes by critically analysing scholarly discussions of the nature and implications of the application of digital technology to documentary film editing.

The second chapter, Methodology, states the aims and objectives of the research and describes the practitioner-based enquiry methodology chosen in light of the literature review. It goes on to

position the professional practice of the researcher, contextualise the filmic raw materials used in this research, and detail the ethical considerations of the study. This section delineates in detail the procedures used to acquire evidence and analyse it in order to answer the research questions. The artefacts produced by the practitioner-based enquiry are then presented. The third chapter, Findings, presents critical self-analysis of these artefacts and their creative process in relation to the research question. This reflexive explication is augmented by expert analysis of the creative outcomes by film editing practitioners.

The final chapter, Conclusion, discusses the implications of the study findings. Critical analysis of the artistic outcomes is interpreted, and the findings are compared to previous research to address the practical knowledge gap identified by the study. The chapter concludes by making future research suggestions that arise out of the limitations identified in the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical foundation for the study by discursively examining the literature. It begins by placing the problem in a contextual frame, summarising and synthesising evolving scholarly notions of the documentary form. The chapter then makes a connection between the nature of the documentary, its 'creative treatment of actuality' and the 'invisible art' of film editing. Literature on the origin, history, and nature of cinema's 'analogue century' and its relationship to the film editing artistic process is then summarised and evaluated. This section goes on to critically analyse scholarly discussions of the nature and implications of the application of technology, the 'digital disruption' to the art of documentary film editing. The chapter concludes by drawing inferences from the literature about the interplay of the film editing process and its ensuing artistic outcome, the implications of filmic digitality to documentary film editing and its consequences for professional practice.

2.2 The Creative Treatment of Actuality

To understand the problem of digital determinism in the field of documentary film editing, we must first explore notions of the idea of documentary. John Grierson coined the term 'documentary' in 1926, adapting the French phrase *documentaire* that had been used to describe a sophisticated form of travelogue that was popular at the time (Stollery 2017). In the following century, a considerable amount of literature has sought to define this opaque and evolving term. Grierson's seminal definition, 'the creative treatment of actuality', has a striking ambiguity at odds

with his legacy of public-purpose filmmaking (1933, p. 8). The long and widely held notion of utilitarian expositional films first proposed in the *Cinema Quarterly* salon, birthed by the Empire Marketing Board and General Post Office film units, and taken worldwide by Grierson's wartime propaganda efforts, contrasts sharply with the wide range of non-fiction modes later posited by Barsam, Barnouw, Nichols, and others. A universally accepted definition of documentary eludes the academy and remains the controversial centrepiece of non-fiction film discourse.

Increased stylistic diversity in early 20th-century expressions of documentary began a pattern of expanding and challenging the boundaries of the form. Dadaism, Surrealism, Newsreels, Travelogues, City Symphonies, Kino-Pravda, Soviet Montage, and other non-fiction approaches of the day challenged the notion of a singular praxis of style, form, evidence, narrative convention, authorship, and purpose. In his 1934 essay *'*Evasive Documentary'*,* David Schrire posits an existential need for a philosophical position for the documentary. 'The correct orientation for documentary pictures is urgently needed. That it has not already been done is an omission that may yet prove fatal to the true interests of documentary' (Schrire 1934, p. 7).

Conversely, Ivor Montagu disputed the need to categorise the non-fiction film. Montagu argues that as everything that happens in front of the lens is true, all films are documentaries. 'Why "documentary"? What is it? The thing itself is as old as cinema. Marey's falling cats and Fred Ott's sneeze in the Edison laboratory could only be categorised as documentary' (Montagu 1964, pp. 280–281). Richard Barsam builds on this in his pioneering critical history, *Non-Fiction Film*, suggesting documentary is the 'most abused and most misunderstood term in the film lexicon'

(1973, p. 1). Barsam sought clarification by bifurcating non-fiction film into two approaches: the 'factual film', journalism that 'lacks a specific message', and the documentary, an audio-visual 'special art form… [of] socio-political purpose' (1973, pp. 4-5).

The birth of the observational documentary film in the late 1950s, pioneered by the *Office national du film du Canada's* Studio B and *l'équipe française*, challenged Barsam's simplistic categorisation. Initially termed *le direct* by its practitioners, this form of documentary, inspired by Vertov, British Free Cinema, and Cartier-Bresson's concept of 'The Decisive Moment', featured artistic films of socio-political purpose that arguably lacked a specific message (Longfield 2009). R. Bruce Elder challenges reports of the simultaneous development of a homogeneous observational form in Canada, America, and France.

> The trouble with these accounts is not only that they are historically inaccurate, in as much as the developments in Canada actually anticipate those in the United States upon which they supposedly draw but also that the styles of *cinéma-vérité* developed in these countries differ radically from each other. (Elder 1977, p. 87)

Quebecois *le direct* filmmaker Michel Brault was later credited by French anthropologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch as being a pioneer of the documentary form that became known as *cinéma-vérité*. 'It must be said, all that we have done in France in the area of *cinéma-vérité* comes from Canada. It is Brault who brought a new technique of filming that we had not known and that we copied ever since' (Rohmer and Marcorelles 1963). Barsam had difficulty situating these advances in non-fiction cinema, deeming them simply 'new non-fiction'. 'The "new nonfiction" film seems to pose as many problems in terminology as it presents approaches and techniques' (Barsam 1973, p. 249).

Theorist Bill Nichols (2001) claims documentary is a term so broad as to be meaningless. Building on Barsam, Nichols sought clarification by proposing a formative taxonomy of six documentary modes: [1] Poetic, modernist reassemblage of fragments of the real world, e.g., *Regen* (1929), [2] Expository, fragments of the real world assembled into a rhetorical frame, e.g., *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936), [3] Observational, a record of spontaneous lived experience. e.g., *Les raquetteurs* (1958), [4] Participatory, filmmaker-subject engagement, e.g., *Sherman's March* (1986), [5] Reflexive, filmmaker-viewer engagement, e.g., *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989); and [6] Performative, the specificity of personal experience, e.g., *Tongues Untied* (1989). While Nichols' taxonomy gained traction in the academy, it did not anticipate the documentary's hybrid turn of the 21st century that includes the hybrid poetic-expositional-observational-reflexive-participatory-performative documentaries, *Act of Killing* (2012), *Stories We Tell* (2013), and *American Animals* (2018).

Moreover, these terms and definitions are inconsistent, varying regionally and in professional practice. In the European literature, John Corner (1996) and others argue the observational form is bifurcated into non-narrativised 'Direct Cinema' e.g., *Primary* (1960), and the participatory-reflexive *cinéma-vérité* e.g., *Chronique d'un été* (1961). In contrast, *Documentary,* Erik Barnouw's influential history of the non-fiction film, describes *cinéma-vérité* as an often 'disastrous' expositional style 'crammed with interviews' (1993, p. 261). While this may be said of the loquacious *Chronique d'un été,* the description fails to capture the spare essence of *Les raquetteurs.* Contemporary Canadian usage of the truncated term *vérité* by practitioners maintains the meaning of its Quebecois *l'équipe française* roots and is synonymous with *le direct* or Direct

Cinema (Longfield 2009). The opaque nature of the documentary form is further complicated by self-categorisation by practitioners. Canadian documentary pioneer Allan King, 'master of the art of *vérité*' (Wegenstein 2017, p. 289), cautioned emerging filmmakers about 'the tyranny of genre' (2008, p. 1) and referred to his distinct narrativised form of observational documentaries, most notably *Warrendale* (1967), *A Married Couple* (1969), and *Dying at Grace* (2003), as 'Actuality Drama' (Knelman 1977; Rosenthal 1977; Rist 2001; Druick 2010).

Contemporary discourse on the matter has failed to reach a consensus. Echoing Montagu, David LaRocca suggests that as all films are a document of what happens in front of the camera, all films are documentaries (2017). At the same time, he also argues that as all facets of filmmaking are subjective, all films are fictional. The notion of a documentary being an objective record of evidence is further challenged by Erik Knudsen, who asserts that a documentary is primarily an emotive medium. 'Emotions and feelings are the primary way in which the filmmaker engages the viewer and, in that sense, moves them. The intellect primarily reflects upon these emotions and feelings and tries to make sense of them' (Knudsen 2008, p. 113).

In my community of practice, the authoritative definition is found by returning to Grierson. 'The creative treatment of actuality' reflects the wide range of modes and styles found in the form. In this seminal denotation of the term, the artistic process, the creative treatment, is the cornerstone of the form (Kerrigan and McIntyre 2010). How films are made, the methodology of their creation, is crucial to documentary, an art defined not by 'subject or style, but approach' (Rotha 1933, p. 78). Montagu posits that the creative treatment of actuality is at the core of all art practice.

‘Actuality is the raw material that, as experience, must pass through the consciousness of the creative artist (or group) to become transformed by labour and in accordance with technical and aesthetic laws into the art product’ (Montagu 1964, p. 281).

The literature suggests that the creative possibilities of documentary are so broad, the field so vast, as to render the term meaningless. However, this enquiry seeks clarity by setting a research focus that works within a conceptual paradigm that embraces the artistically unrestricted nature of Grierson’s definition and acknowledges the authorial role of participants and our ethical responsibility to them. In this practitioner-based enquiry, a documentary is a collectively authored and ethically produced creative treatment of actuality.

2.3 The Invisible Art

As evinced by the opaque and sometimes conflicting notions of documentary, literature on documentary film editing is equally problematic. In addition to the implications of the equivocal nature of the documentary form, the artistic role of the film editor changes across professional and cultural contexts. To find clarity, it is necessary to begin within the higher taxonomic rank and the broader context of film editing. It is helpful to briefly note here the international etymological differences of the term ‘editing’. In the English language, ‘editing’ is rooted in the action of excision. In many other languages, the term for this filmic task stems from the word ‘montage’, the art of creation through assembly. These contrasting etymological definitions are a recurring theme in this research project.

Much of the literature on film production pays particular attention to the theoretical underpinnings of film editing, including key works by Pudovkin (1933, 1935), Eisenstein (1947, 1949), Tarkovsky (1986), Murch (2001), and Pearlman (2012). The first serious discussions of film editing craft began to emerge beginning in the 1950s with key texts by Reisz (1953), Crittenden (1981), and Dmytryk (1984). In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on the history of film editing, including Fairservice (2001) and Dancyger (2007). Yet, the term 'film editing' and the role of the film editor are widely misunderstood (Laurier and Brown 2014). In his preface to *Behind the Seen,* Charles Koppelman paraphrases editor Walter Murch's well-known description of the popular notion of film editing. 'If people consider film editing at all, they think of the editor as being the person who takes material selected by the director, cuts out the bad bits, and then puts everything together into a coherent whole' (2005, p. 3).

In his 15-hour documentary opus, *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* (2011), Mark Cousins asserts that one of the first film edits was made in George Albert Smith's *The Little Doctor and the Sick Kitten* (1901). By physically joining two separate and distinct shots taken from different physical positions and moments in time, Smith found that he created the illusion of a seamless unfolding action that evokes the psychological sensation of heightened interest, what Vsevolod Pudovkin would later term 'the agitated observer' (1933, p. 45). 'Editing is the basic creative force, by the power of which the soulless photographs (the separate shots) are engineered into living, cinematographic form' (Pudovkin 1933. p. xv). Within twenty years of Smith's discovery, Porter, Méliès, Chaplin, Keaton, Griffith, Lang, Murnau, and many others had worked out the principles of 'continuity cutting', the art of constructing a logical filmic narrative in which disparate shots

filmed from a carefully chosen variety of angles, positions, and sizes are selected and organised to present what appears to be an unfolding real-time event (Fairservice 2001).

The existing literature on film editing focuses particularly on the significant theoretical and artistic advances made in the Soviet Union during the 1920s (Reisz 1953; Fairservice 2001; Dancyger 2007; LoBrutto 2012; Frierson 2018). Deprived of raw film stock by post-revolutionary economic austerity, Lev Kuleshov taught his students how to edit by deconstructing and rearranging foreign commercial films expropriated from nearby movie theatres. Kuleshov (1974) writes that these arbitrary arrangements of unrelated imagery combined to create unintended abstract ideas. The associative meaning created by the juxtaposition of images, known as the 'Kuleshov Effect', was developed into the formalist film editing technique of 'Associative Montage,' advanced by Pudovkin (1933) and fellow Russian filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein (1947, 1948, 1949). 'A mouth + a bird = "to sing"; A knife + a heart = "sorrow"… This is montage!' (Eisenstein 1929a, p. 30). In his writing, Eisenstein theorised a *film syntax* in which a shot is a 'fragment of montage', liberated from 'the definition of time and space' and combined and arranged with conflicting fragments to create meaning (1929, p. 58). 'It is art's task to make manifest the contradictions of being. To form equitable views by stirring up contradictions within the spectator's mind, and to forge accurate intellectual concepts from the dynamic clash of opposing passions' (Eisenstein 1929, p. 46). Eisenstein's early masterpieces *Strike* (1924), *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), and *October: Ten Days That Shook the World* (1927) revolutionised the art of film editing with their dialectical approach. 'We have taken the first embryonic step towards a totally new form of film expression', Eisenstein declared in *A Dialectic Approach to Film Form*, 'towards a purely

intellectual film, freed from traditional limitations, achieving direct forms for ideas, systems, and concepts' (1929b, p. 63).

It is well established in the literature that the popularisation of sound in the early 1930s brought an end to the profound editorial innovation of the silent era (Salt 1992; Larkin 2019). While the art of continuity cutting continued to evolve as analogue technology improved during the Classical Hollywood period of the 1940s and 50s, notably in *Citizen Kane* (1941)*, Casablanca* (1942), and *Rear Window* (1954), subsequent significant advances in film editing were not made until the *Nouvelle Vague* began to emerge in late 1950s France (Fairservice 2001; Orpen 2003; Dancyger 2007). This new wave of filmic experimentation was a significant stylistic movement that saw a fresh generation of filmmakers, erstwhile writers, critics, and theorists draw from the corpus of historical film techniques as well as make significant innovations of their own. In a period of unbridled productivity (120 French filmmakers made their first feature film in the period 1958 to 1964), this burst of innovation merged formalist Soviet Montage with realist continuity cutting editing techniques (Neupert 2007, p. xv). Moreover, *Nouvelle Vague* filmmakers, most notably Jean-Luc Godard, experimented with the rejection of cinematic editorial traditions, leading to the development of elliptical cutting, discontinuity, and the jump cut (Dancyger 2007). The spirit of *Nouvelle Vague* inspired filmmakers around the world and across the decades, galvanising the New Hollywood, The Czech New Wave, New German Cinema, Japanese New Wave, Dogme, and other film movements (Martin 2013). Its synthesis of formalism, realism, and a repudiation of convention created the language of modern film editing.

As the literature makes clear, film editing is central to the art of filmmaking, the only creative function in cinema without an antecedent in another art form (Dmytryk 1986). In his seminal work *Film Technique,* Pudovkin enthusiastically defined film editing as 'the creative force of filmic reality, and that nature provides only the raw material with which it works' (1933, p. xvi). Karen Pearlman defines it as a 'cognitively complex artistry of shaping time, energy, and movement' (2017, p. 68). For the purposes of this study, Swenberg and Sverrisson's definition is useful: 'meaning arises (or is created) in the concatenation of components and their mutual adjustment rather than residing in each of the many image and sound sequences that make up a film' (2019, p. 30). The complexity of this audio-visual concatenation ensures its imperceptibility, a commonly expressed artistic goal of the film editor, a self-described invisible artist practising an invisible art (Vaughan 1983; Fairservice 2001; O'Steen 2009). This brief and historically situated overview of the copious research into the art of film editing helps us begin to understand its subset, documentary film editing, the locus of the problem at the core of this investigation.

2.4 Writing with Film

There is a relatively small body of literature that is concerned with documentary film editing, an abstruse field Barry Dornfeld describes as a 'neglected aspect of documentary film practice' (1989, p. 317). It was not until the 2010s that the first comprehensive study was conducted by Jacob Bricca (2017), who suggests little is known about the field outside of professional practice. However, Bricca neglects to consider the philosophy of documentary film editing, instead proffering an examination of practical technique. Much of the literature emphasises the notion of the veracity of the evidence of record and overlooks the process of editorial narrativisation. In a

widely misunderstood view articulated by Stephen Mamber, documentary film editing simply 'attempts to re-create events as the filmmaker witnessed them' (1974, p. 3). In his authoritative text, *Claiming the Real,* Brian Winston argues that Mamber and others assumed '[a] promise that the material was unmediated' (1995, p. 150). Winston attributes this misapprehension to the fact that 'the films had been so carefully structured was somehow hidden' (1995, p. 157).

In a documentary context, the invisible art of editing is rendered elusive by the presumed veracity of the filmic raw materials. An observational documentary in the style of Jean Rouch and Edgar Morins*'*s *Chronique d'un été* (1961) is a 'much more highly edited film than the popular notion of *cinéma-vérité* style would lead one to expect' (Dornfeld 1989, p. 330). 'The authenticity and realism an audience senses in *Chronique d'un été* are supported by the viewers' inability to perceive manipulation in the editing of sync sound images by the illusion of continuity' (Dornfeld 1989, p. 320). Morin himself questioned the presumed veracity of an intricately constructed film truth. 'How do we dare speak of a truth that has been chosen, edited, provoked, oriented, deformed? Where is the truth?' (Rouch and Morin 2003, p. 262). In the exhaustive *Encyclopaedia of the Documentary Film,* Ian Aitken describes the documentary film editor as 'an artist who helps endow the film with a richness and resonance that did not exist in the raw materials' (2013, p. 329). Moreover, the observational mode, to use King's definition, 'explore[s] a territory, a subject, a theme' without a script or a thesis (2006, p. 37). Thus, while the screenplay of a fiction film is written before the filming process, in documentary film editing, the reverse is true (Spence and Navarro 2011).

With few exceptions, the editorial process of narrativisation is by far the most extended phase in the documentary filmmaking schedule. At a minimum, this time-consuming and labour-intensive process requires an industry-standard 10:1 ratio of time allotted to editing in relation to its principal photography schedule. Simply put, ten or more days are needed to edit one day of the production output of a feature documentary. Using the continuity cutting and montage principles of the overarching category of film editing described earlier, narrativisation of filmic raw materials is the central responsibility of documentary film editors, characterised by Eric Laurier and Barry Brown as: '[a] practice that requires the greatest exercise of their imagination because more than for any other genre of film the documentary is created in the edit' (2014, p. 2). Frederick Wiseman describes documentary editing 'as the crucial stage when the intellectual work of filmmaking occurs' (cited in Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009, p. 46). It is 'putting together a "reality dream" because the events are all true except they have no meaning except insofar as you impose a form on them, and that form is imposed in large measure, of course, in the editing' (Wiseman cited in Graham 1976, pp. 35–36). The structural form of a documentary, an organising principle of what Vaughan describes as the 'amorphous mess' (1999, p. 23) of fragments of actuality, conjures what Nichols characterises as 'a plausible but imaginary universe' (1981, p. 218). Elder suggests that 'respect for the integrity of space and time' in observational documentary editorial structures 'were all calculated to integrate the real into the architectonic defined by the dramatic form' (1977, p. 86).

These studies indicate that film editing plays a pivotal role in the art of documentary filmmaking, the transformative labour that creates the documentary art product (Montagu 1964). Grierson

argued that its 'arrangements, rearrangements, and creative shapings' of cinematic actuality are 'the only world in which documentary can hope to achieve the ordinary virtues of an art' (1966, p. 146). In his comprehensive history of the National Film Board, *Movies and Memoranda*, David Parker Jones suggests, 'If documentary is thought of as "the creative treatment of actuality" which means giving form to disparate pieces of reality, then the importance of editorial skill in documentary is obvious' (1981, p. 75). Building on Grierson's seminal definition of the form, Barnouw asserts that documentary film editing is an exercise of the imagination that reveals the poetry in the 'prose of life' (1993, p. 57). The film editing room is a place where documentarians write with pictures and sounds, crafting narratives from fragments of actuality (Spence and Navarro 2011; Cole 2019; Andersen 2021).

The literature on documentary film editing suggests that the form of the creative outcome of non-fiction audio-visual writing is intrinsically woven with its creative process. In their writing on the 'exercise of imagination in the editing suite', Laurier and Brown remind us:

> Imagination is about toiling with tools and materials over and upon a thing that is emerging, appearing, materialising, surfacing, verging, folding, happening, clarifying, integrating and a host of other practices that run through creating a thing-to-come. (2014, p. 3)

In his influential text *The Manual of Film Editing* (1981), Roger Crittenden asserts a link between the editorial process and the very essence of cinema. 'There is no doubt in my mind that the development of the language of film editing thus far has depended as much as anything on this physical relationship with the recorded images' (1981, p. 132). Susan Kerrigan and Phillip

McIntyre expand on this, rejecting the inspirationist view of art creation in documentary, arguing that when the pre-existing is the artist's raw materials, process is central to the art form (2010).

> It should never be forgotten that film editing is a craft in which those involved have a tactile relationship with their *material*. Although the *material* is not shaped by the editor as clay is shaped by the potter, the way in which the editor relates physically to his footage will affect his sympathy and harmony with the process of shaping the cut film. (Crittenden 1981, p. 61)

This link between process and form is a central theme of this research project. Turning now to an examination of the film editing creative process, we must begin with a consideration of technology, the fulcrum of the problem of digital determinism in professional documentary practice (Amabile 1988; Petrie 1991; Eriksson and Swenberg 2012a).

2.5 The Analogue Century

Few studies have investigated the analogue film editing tools and processes that were employed by practitioners to write with pictures and sounds in cinema's first century. While Reisz (1953), Crittenden (1981, 1995), Walter (1982), and Happé (1984) provide authoritative practical manuals used by practitioners, there is little critical analysis of the analogue documentary film editing process. Film editor and scholar Michael Hoggan claims, 'the recording of the facts and values of older technology and how it influenced production and post-production practices have been rudimentary at best' (2017, p. 249). This paucity of research may be attributed to the simplicity of analogue film editing technology. Reisz maintains that unlike cinematographers or sound recordists, the analogue-era editor '[did] not require a great deal of specialised technical knowledge in order to be able to use his instruments' (1953, p. 329). The first century of cinema

saw documentary film editors crafting cinematic narratives using the simple tools of scissors and glue. Crittenden suggests that until the 1960s, editing was the least technologically advanced of all film creative departments. 'Editing technology was the poor relation, the least considered of the tools of the trade' (1981, p. 47). Thus, as the technical skills required to edit film were uncomplicated, the art and craft of film editing and narratology were the sole preoccupations of practitioners (Wiseman 1997).

Previous research has established that the film production process changed little in cinema's first century (Bordwell et al. 1985; Salt 1992). Noted film editor Walter Murch describes the early film editing room as 'a relatively tranquil tailor's shop in which time was the cloth' (2001, p. 75). The editorial process began when the 'workprint', working copies of the raw filmed materials that were the product of the production process, were delivered to the editing room in the form of 'rushes'. Film editing was, Ernest Walter writes in his definitive manual *The Technique of the Film Cutting Room,* 'basically divided into two functions, the artistic assembly of film and the physical problems of handling it. One [was] impossible without the other' (1982, p. 15). The physical problem of handling the rushes was exacerbated by the high volume typically gathered for a documentary. 'There are times when documentarians have only one opportunity for shooting', Hoggan asserts, 'requiring that they shoot as much as they can afford knowing that the content choices will be figured out later in the editing' (2017, p. 254). As Hoggan points out, the volume of rushes was constrained by economic factors, primarily the substantial costs of the celluloid raw stock and laboratory processing. In the first half of the analogue era, documentary shooting ratios, a comparative measure of raw materials in relation to finished output, were approximately 15:1.

In other words, for every 15 minutes of rushes that were shot, only one remained in the final film. For example, the editing of *Chronique d'un été* began with approximately 25 hours of rushes that were, over a period of several months, screened, reduced, organised, and edited into a 97-minute film (Rouch and Morin 2003, p. 250). The central creative task and logistical challenge of documentary film editing was, and remains, the categorisation, critical analysis, and narrativisation of this mass of unscripted rushes.

The first step in the analogue film editing process was the inspection and sound synchronisation of the rushes (Happé 1984). The process was slow and laborious, requiring the editor to manually handle the filmed materials (Crittenden 1995). The creative component of the analogue process began with a real-time screening of all filmed elements, assessing them for cinematic qualities and narrative potential (Reisz 1953; Walter 1982). Crittenden further suggests that the uninterrupted screening of synchronised rushes was 'important to get a feel of the material' (1981, p. 69). The analogue tools most commonly used for this process were the pre-war innovations of the hand-powered gang synchroniser and the mechanical Moviola, a device incapable of fast-forwarding, ensuring all rushes were screened in real-time (Burder 1975). Film editor Niels Pagh Andersen recalls, 'the slowness of the analogue editing process forced us to really think in the editing room before making our choices' (2021, p. 60).

A review of key documentary films in this period suggests a causal relationship between film editing technology and creative style. The technologically unencumbered days of early silent-era cinema are directly linked with the free-flowing and expressive editing of the Kino-Eye, City

Symphony, and Soviet Montage schools. A pair of household scissors, glue, and a magnifying glass were the simple tools behind the editing of the sophisticated visual narratives of such influential documentaries as *Nanook of the North* (1922), *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), and *Regan* (1929). The advent of synchronous single-system audio and the earliest iteration of the Moviola editing machine was coincident with the shift to the staid and comparatively unimaginative construction of the pre-war and war-era documentary film. This cumbersome and rigid manner of editing is reflected in the conservative visual narratives and voice-over dependence of *Lest We Forget* (1934), *Children from Overseas* (1940), and *Churchill's Island* (1940). The shift to double-system sound recording, hand splicers, and advances in flat-bed analogue film editing technologies coincide with the significant advances of the National Film Board's Studio B, *l'équipe française*, and the lesser-known West Coast School (Clandfield 1987).

Canadian documentarian King, along with editor Arla Saare and cinematographers William Brayne and Richard Leiterman, were key figures in the West Coast School film movement. These Vancouver-based filmmakers developed the 'lyrical and less didactic' (Rist 2001, p. 112) observational documentary style 'Actuality Drama' (Knelman 1977; Rosenthal 1977; Rist 2001; Druick 2010). Alan Rosenthal describes Actuality Drama as 'neither documentary nor fiction drama, but a curious blend of the two formed by creating fictitious emotional links in the editing of documentary footage' (1977, p. 179). In a pattern evocative of the Brault-Rouch transmission, veteran cinematographers Brayne and Leiterman exported the West Coast School ethos to the United States in the late 1960s, beginning a substantial period of collaboration with the then-emerging documentarian Frederick Wiseman. King's early Actuality Drama masterpiece

Warrendale (1967) garnered international acclaim, sharing the BAFTA Award for Best Foreign Film with Antonioni's *Blow Up* and winning the Prix d'Art et d'Essai at Cannes (Bergan 2009). Saare, 'the visionary for the West Coast School,' developed a unique and effective response to challenges and opportunities posed by advances in film technology in the 1960s (Newman 2014).

The development of comparatively inexpensive 16mm raw film stock, a gauge half the size and cost of traditional 35mm film, in concert with new lightweight cameras, enabled documentarians to shoot more material during sustained production periods (Reisz and Millar 2009). When Saare edited *A Married Couple* (1969), a key work in the documentary canon, she faced an unprecedented volume of rushes. 'Seventy hours of footage shot over ten weeks was edited down to just over ninety-six minutes, an astronomical shooting ratio of 44:1' (Druick 2010, p. 23). This represents close to a 300% increase from the 15:1 ratio faced by Rouch and Morin as they edited *Chronique d'un été*. According to King, Saare edited the film with a 'subtractive' diminution of the aggregate of the raw material.[1] The synchronised reels were edited by incrementally reducing the totality of rushes of the filmed scenes, methodically excising sections in an iterative spiral of action, real-time screening, and analysis. King later described this process as analogous to sculpture, slowly chipping away at the totality of elements to reveal its narrative form. 'Everything is in until it's out'.[2] If rushes, the filmic representation of real life, represent the subjective truth as revealed by the camera, the editor needs to consider what they choose to exclude and why. Brayne

[1] Allan King, Personal communication with the author, 1997.

[2] Allan King, Personal communication with the author, 1997.

claimed that 'material should argue its way *out* of a film'.[3] This concept of creation by editorial subtraction plays a critical role in this research project and is worthy of elaboration. Film editor Mickey Lemle likens the process to an Inuit artist carving soapstone to 'reveal the form that they believe is already inherently there' (1998, p. 366). This trope may have been derived from John Feeney's well-known Oscar-nominated documentary short *The Living Stone* (1958), in which Inuk soapstone carver Niviakse ponders, 'What lies hidden in this piece of stone?'. 'Who knows what he may find in the stone', the narrator opines, 'each chosen piece contains a story…for a carver to find within it' (*The Living Stone* 1958). Perhaps this is what Robert Bresson meant in his aphoristic *Notes on the Cinematograph* when he urged fellow filmmakers to: 'Empty the pond to get the fish' (1975, p. 87).

Taken together, the literature supports the notion that the analogue documentary film-editing process was a slow and laborious process whose technical limitations required the real-time screening of filmed materials whose volume was limited by economic constraints. Thus, narrativisation of the rushes was made in light of the observation, careful consideration and, as Crittenden argues, feel of the entirety of the raw materials. Early films from this period, *Les raquetteurs* (1958)*, The Days Before Christmas* (1959)*,* and *Warrendale* (1967)*,* feature elaborate visual narratives redolent of the silent era. The ensuing stasis of mid to late 20th-century analogue film-editing technology is contemporaneous with a period of unprecedented artistic experimentation and achievement. King, Brault, Wiseman, Brittain, Drew, Maysles, Kopple,

[3] William Brayne, Personal communication with the author, 1997.

Lanzmann, and many others produced a significant body of work that creatively narrativised fragments of actuality using this slow, laborious, yet thorough analogue film editing process.

2.6 Digital Disruption

A considerable amount of literature has investigated the film industry's late twentieth-century transition to digital technology. The use of the analogue film editing creative process came to an end at the dawn of film's second century as digital cinema technologies triggered a revolution in the culture, traditions, logistics, and arts practice of film editing (Ohanian and Phillips 1996; McKernan 2005; Dancyger 2007). David Bordwell notes that film was the last of the creative media industries to migrate to digital technology (2013). Moreover, Kenneth Dancyger (2007) argues that the digital revolution came slowly to film due to its profound reliance on technology in all phases of production and distribution. The complexity of acquiring, editing, and exhibiting audio-visual information required optical sensors, bandwidth, storage, projection, and computing power beyond what was then commercially available (Bordwell 2013; Arundale and Trieu 2014). Moreover, filmmaking is an interdisciplinary field that requires the collaboration of a broad selection of artists, craftspeople, technicians, and business and administrative workers. Digital tools would not only need to communicate across disciplines but also serve the unique needs of each of these highly specialised fields. Developing digital cameras and projectors that could film and exhibit an image qualitatively comparable to celluloid was a pivotal technical problem that was not resolved until the 2010s (Bordwell 2013). Consequently, cinema's digital revolution began in the editing room (Swartz 2005).

Murch's tranquil tailor shop was disrupted in 1990 when the revolutionary AVID non-linear digital film editing tool was introduced and quickly embraced by professional editors across the globe (Perkins and Stollery 2004; Ganz and Khatib 2006; Dancyger 2007; Arundale and Trieu 2014; Larkin 2019). While there had been several ill-fated attempts to develop a computerised film editing system in the mid to late-1980s, including the Montage Picture Processor, CMX6000, Editflex, Lightworks, and Lucas Films' EditDroid, AVID came to dominate the field and reported gross sales of $203 million by 1994 (Rubin 1995, p. 65).

Digital technology was first used as an intermediate step within the analogue editing workflow. Celluloid workprints used in the creative stage of the editing process were digitised to create low-resolution cutting copies, or 'proxy files', that could be edited with a commercially available personal computer (Ohanian and Phillips 1996). After 'locked picture', the formal stage of the completion of the editing process, a technician would conform the celluloid negative to correspond to the creative intent of the digital editor. The final film would be released, distributed, and exhibited by traditional analogue means. As technology improved, additional stages of analogue post-production would be replaced by their digital equivalents (Bordwell 2013). No longer Crittenden's poor relation, the film editing room had become the beachhead for cinema's digital invasion.

While expensive and primitive compared to contemporary tools, the AVID facilitated the editor's ability to work quickly, experiment, and save drafts (Arundale and Trieu 2014). As the cost of digital film editing technologies began to drop dramatically with the introduction of competing

tools such as Apple's Final Cut Pro in 1999 and Adobe's Premiere Pro in 2003, the analogue film editing era ended (Dancyger, 2007; Arundale and Trieu, 2014; Larkin, 2019). The literature notes that the revolution was met with tenacious but unsuccessful resistance from senior practitioners, as evidenced by Michael Kahn's use of the Moviola, an analogue film editing device invented in 1924, for his Oscar-nominated film editing of *Munich* in 2005 (Kunkes 2006). When acquisition, distribution, and exhibition, the last remaining analogue realms of filmmaking, fully embraced digital technology in the 2010s, the change was turbulent (Bordwell 2013). Kodak, the last remaining manufacturer of film stock in the United States, declared bankruptcy in 2012 (Alexander and Blakely, 2014). By 2014, the multinational corporation Technicolor, winner of a technical Oscar for advances in colour film and a post-production facility of 23 Oscar-winning films, had closed its last analogue laboratory. Several studies suggest that the speed and scale of this revolution hindered a necessary philosophical assessment of filmic digitality (Friedberg 2010; Knowles 2011). As Neil Postman cautioned, 'When we admit a new technology to the culture, we must do so with our eyes wide open' (1992, p. 7).

The transition to digital tools provided a creative flexibility, speed, efficiency, and affordability that was particularly attractive to documentary filmmakers, traditionally an economically challenged sector of the arts industrial complex. However, digital technology fundamentally changed the workflow, personnel, and the 'very essence of filmic creation' in post-production (Larkin 2019, p. 183). 'Of all the various elements of the cinematic apparatus that have been affected as a result of the incorporation of digital or computer technologies, it is arguably editing that has changed the most' (Furstenau 2018, p. 29). While the creative and economic efficiencies

of new digital tools were attractive, the limitations of these technologies dismantled standard documentary film editing practice (Garcia 2012). Digital film technologist Sean Cullen suggests that, in this context, artistic compromise is a technological imperative. Cullen describes the nature of the transition of century-old film editing processes to digital tools as 'dancing with a gorilla, and the gorilla always leads' (cited in Koppelman 2005, p. 61).

Several studies suggest that in the capital-intensive commercial art form that is cinema, the ability of digital technology to increase the speed of production and, in turn, profits were the central driver of its success (Crofts 2008; Bordwell 2013). However, Murch cautions that 'its greatest strength is also its greatest weakness…. It gives you what you say you want, but that may not be what you need' (cited in Koppelman 2005, p. 325). Film editors lamented the decline of the slow, analogue process. In Perkins and Stollery's study *British Film Editors* (2004), Lesley Walker is critical of the immediacy of digital technology. 'You sort of rush at it like some lunatic, instead of slowly going through it. It takes your thinking time away and I find that annoying.... I like to look at it and sit and think about it' (2004, p. 158). Moreover, the speed and creative flexibility of these tools removed the creative constraint associated with analogue technology. Veteran editor Terry Rawlins observes, 'It's got built-in indecision…it gets to the point where you don't know whether you're coming or going because you have so many choices. You've got to be strict with yourself' (cited in Perkins and Stollery, 2004, p. 160). Alexander and Blakely (2014) recorded a Hollywood film editing facilities administrator observing: 'Changing your mind every five seconds doesn't necessarily get you better results'.

For the documentary film editor, the primary digital advantage is the ability to superficially preview vast volumes of footage at high speed. Freed from purchasing expensive analogue film stock, the lower cost of digital acquisition led to exponentially increasing production output volumes (Alexander and Blakely 2014). Documentary shooting ratios had increased from an industry standard of approximately 25:1 in traditional analogue film-based production to 250:1 or more in contemporary digitally acquired production. For example, while the editor of a two-hour analogue feature documentary would shape a narrative out of approximately 50 hours of raw materials, her digital counterpart may attempt to do the same task with 500 hours of raw material. Compared to the 'astronomical' shooting ratio of 44:1 that Druick describes (2010, p. 23) in Saare's editing of *A Married Couple,* Steven James faced a shooting ratio of approximately 600:1 when he edited the more than 1,000 hours of digitally acquired rushes gathered for *The War Tapes* (Boruszkowski 2011, p. 48). However, as the financial resources allocated to the film editing process (salaries, office rental, and expenses) have not concomitantly increased tenfold or more in the digital era, the time allotted to the editing process remains the same. Thus, documentary film editors developed workflows, organisational approaches, and editing methodologies that prioritise financial and logistical considerations rather than creative outcomes.

The literature has established that digital systems facilitate organisation and qualitative assessment without a comprehensive examination of the content by the editor (Boruszkowski 2011; Spohr et al. 2019; Andersen 2021). Cursory screening and analysis of the materials are performed using a system capable of random-access playback. Digital technology allows the film editor to 'scrub' the materials, superficially previewing more than one hour of raw material in as little as two

seconds (Ohanian and Phillips 1996). In Lilly Boruszkowski's study of the documentary *The War Tapes,* film editor Steven James describes the task of narrativising 1,000 hours of rushes as 'overwhelming' (2011, p. 48). Boruszkowski writes that James outsourced part of his creative responsibilities to unnamed 'loggers' who made initial qualitative selections before he worked with the material. 'The loggers let us know what was worth looking at and not' (James cited in Boruszkowski 2011, p. 48). Surrendering a key part of the editorial decision-making process to a third party with limited experience is troubling. In their analysis of BBC digital film editing workflows, Attila Marton and Jose-Carlos Mariátegui (2015) were further concerned by the ethical implications of high-speed random-access examination of decontextualised narrative source elements. They argue that the non-linear selection of source filmic materials without consideration of their temporal, geographical, and narrative frame of reference distorts the meaning of the footage. Moreover, recent advances in AI transcription software allow an editor to read rather than watch the rushes (Anon. 2023). This has led to the accepted practice of designing and executing an editing approach *without screening the rushes* (Andersen 2021). Thus, documentary filmmakers have come to rely on preconceived notions, production notes, and computer-generated transcripts to make qualitative selections from the rushes to prepare a 'paper edit' (Bricca 2017). This planning document dictates the content and structure of a documentary with little direct assessment of the cinematic qualities of its raw materials.

In the wake of the digital filmmaking revolution, researchers began to consider the artistic implications of these new tools and methods. The artist's 'technological base', Malcolm Le Grice argued, is 'integral to the construction of meaning' (2001, p. 236).

> Consistent with a fundamental 'tenet' of twentieth-century art, evident in the plastic arts and music but rarely in mainstream film, is the concept that there can be no convenient separation between the material 'means' of a work and its meaning – that meanings derive from the working of the material. This is a concept similar to that of semiologists, that there can be no separation between the production of a thought and the operations of language. In other words, ideas do not pre-exist the form of their expression but derive from the interplay between motive and various forms of conception and modes of expression/production. (Le Grice 2001a, p. 235)

Craig Hight (2019) argues that documentary has traditionally been invigorated by technological change and links the adaptation of high-speed film and lightweight cameras to the development of observational films in the 1960s. However, he cautions that the impact of non-linear digital technology on documentary film editing poses a challenge to notions of how documentaries are made and, in turn, their form and style. The relationship between documentary and digital technologies 'offers the potential for a far more extensive and permanent transformation of fundamental aspects of documentary culture' (Hight 2019, p.19). Thorbjörg Swenberg and Àrni Sverrisson build on this and argue that this digital transformation will pose artistic challenges that are 'complex to the degree that they are even manifest in the end products' (2019, p. 29).

An alternative perspective has been provided by John Berton. In his 1990 study, *Film Theory for the Digital World,* Berton predicts a digital future in which technology takes away the drudgery of filmmaking and 'free[s] the artist' (p. 9). Building on Berton in their 2006 study, *Digital Cinema: The transformation of film practice and aesthetics,* Adam Ganz and Lina Khatib reject technological determinism and assert the new possibilities of digital tools. 'Digital filmmaking, in conjoining the traditional methods and rituals of filmmaking with the different traditions of the

electronic media, is creating a new kind of practice associated with the purely digital image' (Ganz and Khatib 2006, p. 22). However, Ganz and Khatib focus on imagery and representation and fail to consider the impact of digital technology on editorial narrativisation.

In contrast, John Belton denies cinema's sea change of tools and methods, declaring it '[a] "false revolution" whose sole drawback is a lack of novelty' (2002, p. 114). Swenberg (2012) also rejects technological determinism, asserting that digital-based problems can and must be addressed with digital solutions. Writing with Eriksson (2012), they further argue that workflow management tools can improve film editing processes. Eriksson (2013) builds on this argument and posits the need for a universal digital language to facilitate data transmission. However, the development of increased computer processing speeds, data transmission rates, and standardised transportable codecs has failed to ameliorate the impact of digital technology on the form of documentary films.

A growing body of literature views the relationship between digital cinema technology and creative outcomes with concern. At the dawn of the digital era, Crittenden feared the impact of what he described as 'video' technology would have on cinematic form. 'So many areas of creativity have succumbed to the criterion of immediacy and to concepts divorced from the experience that the artefacts represent, that it is hard to believe that video can be used in a way that is as disciplined and creative as film' (Crittenden 1981, p. 133). Le Grice cautioned that 'random' or 'arbitrary access' to digital media storage and retrieval 'has radical implications for art, structures of aesthetic expression and representation' (2001b, pp. 315–316). Studies in the wake of the digital revolution note the profound impact of non-linear digital technology on the creative outcomes of documentary

film editing (Hight 2019). Swenberg and Sverrisson's (2019) research reveals that two decades after the digital revolution began, practitioners still feel the influence of technology on their creative works. Expanding on Crittenden's (1981) theory that the tempo of the editor's work rate manifests itself in filmic pacing, Dancyger (2007) argues that digital non-linear editing machinery has led to a rise in non-linear narrative structures. Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz observed the increased use of asynchronous dialogue in combination with temporal or geographically disassociated imagery 'input[s] certain thoughts and feelings…that the visual evidence does not necessarily support' (2009, p. 40). Andersen echoes Crittenden's concerns by linking digital methods to artificial narrative forms. 'Documentary has moved closer to fiction', Andersen asserts, '[films] are character-driven, where the individual is at the centre of things' (2021, p. 174).

If process is at the heart of the art of the documentary, as Kerrigan and McIntyre (2010) maintain, the creative implications of the technological revolution could have profound implications for my community of practice. An examination of the key filmic works suggests a link between the onset of digital technologies and the decline of observational documentary approaches, structural experimentation, and sophisticated visual narratives. The digital era has seen a shift toward journalistic and formulaic dialogue-driven approaches to documentary. Cinematic narratives of such highly regarded documentaries as *Stories We Tell* (2013), *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch* (2018), and *Inconvenient Indian* (2020) are only accomplished with the rare support of institutional largess. In my own body of work, the lengthy 24-week early digital-era editing schedules necessary to construct the actuality dramas *Dying at Grace* (2003) and *Memory for Max, Claire, Ida, and Company* (2005) are bygone phenomena. Further, my growth as a filmmaker has occurred in

collaborations with filmmakers whose careers have straddled analogue and digital eras. Projects such as the Studio B-styled works of Sturla Gunnarsson, such as *Force of Nature* (2010) and *Monsoon* (2014), and the hybrid expositional-observational works of Matt Gallagher, including *How to Prepare for Prison* (2016) and *Prey* (2019), successfully entwined legacy analogue working methods with digital tools. Murch sees merit in this approach, advocating a reintroduction of legacy analogue methods to navigate the Amazonian jungle of narrative possibilities.

> All of us who have grown up as editors of sprocketed film were privileged to develop our own strategies for dealing with our own Amazons, and many of these strategies should not now be thoughtlessly discarded, but rather adapted to the digital age that is upon us. (Murch 2001, p. 124)

The evidence presented in this section suggests that the late 20th-century revolutionary shift to digital technology fundamentally changed the process and, in turn, the creative outcomes of documentary film editing. This problem in professional practice was identified by Vaughan in the earliest years of the digital revolution as a potential area of scholarly research. 'The convergence between methods of procedure evolved to suit new equipment and insights into human communication gained from the subject matter of these films would almost merit a study in itself' (Vaughan 1999, p. 24). Nine years later, Hight identified 'multiple opportunities' for documentary researchers within 'a wider spectrum of continuities and transformation' of evolving digital practice (2019, p. 20). Moreover, while techno-enthusiasts Swenberg and Sverreisson seek a technological solution to what they deem a technological problem, they acknowledge the need for researchers with 'experiential knowledge of established practice' (2019, p. 33).

2.7 Conclusion

Taken together, these studies indicate that documentary filmmaking is a broad cinematic art form whose raw materials are gleaned from actuality. Thus, documentary film editing, the narrativisation or 'creative treatment' of these materials, is central to the art form. Several studies suggest that the speed and scale of the digital revolution in film editing hindered a necessary philosophical reassessment of filmic digitality. Collectively, this evidence recognises that the introduction of digital technologies radically changed film editing methods. While there is unanimity in the literature regarding the speed and utility of these tools, there has been much less discussion about accompanying artistic compromise. Researchers have begun to examine a connection between this revolution in filmmaking methods and changes in the documentary art form. This study builds on this research and answers Murch, Swenberg, and Sverrisson's call for a practitioner-based enquiry into the artistic implications of the use of the analogue film editing process in a digital context. Having described the context and history of this problem in professional documentary film editing practice, this study now turns to the practice-based experiment at the centre of this project.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study seeks to address the problem of digital disruption in the professional practice of documentary film editing by investigating the creative implications of the editorial process. It further aims to explore the extent to which the analogue approach to the digital film editing process can be used as an artistic tool in this context. The methodology employed in this research project was twofold; firstly, the editing of two original medium-length documentaries using the same raw materials but employing distinctly different working methods and secondly, reflexive analysis of the process and outcome. The data was further evaluated, and the findings were validated through semi-structured qualitative interviews with expert film editing practitioners.

The documentary films at the heart of this project were edited using outtakes from Matt Gallagher's feature documentary *How to Prepare for Prison* (2016). These filmic materials were chosen as a vehicle for this research project due to their professional standards and artistic qualities. Filmed in a hybrid observational-expositional style by Gallagher, a leading documentary director-cinematographer with whom I have had a longstanding and productive creative relationship, these rushes were reasonably assumed to be of sound artistic and technical quality, representative of the highest standards of contemporary practice. In past collaborations, particularly *How to Prepare for Prison,* I have found Gallagher's cinematography to be comprehensive and editorially neutral, providing a malleability essential for this investigation. The stylistic form of his rushes does not dictate an editorial course of action. The editor of a documentary filmed by Gallagher has the

freedom to construct any class or hybrid permutation of Nichol's taxonomy with his filmic raw materials.

These outtakes document the criminal trial of Mlinzi McMillan, a Black Detroiter charged with the vehicular manslaughter of his two sons, twelve-year-old Mlinzi Jr. and fourteen-year-old Jalen, seeking justice in an underfunded and systemically racist U.S. Court. The editing processes of these films utilised identical raw materials and digital editing technology but took two distinctly different film editing approaches.

1) *The Way Back #1, Additive* employed a contemporary digital-era additive film editing process. This unbridled painterly montage approach starts with an empty canvas and constructs the filmic narrative one shot at a time.

2) *The Way Back #2, Subtractive* utilised an analogue-era subtractive film editing process using the same raw materials. This creatively constrained approach assiduously sculpts the totality of the raw materials, revealing the narrative through incremental shot-by-shot, segment-by-segment, removal and rearrangement of footage.

3.2 Practitioner-Based Enquiry

The methodology employed in this research project is the Practitioner Based Enquiry (PBE), an emerging 'evocative or analytic auto-ethnograph[ic]' (McIntyre 2018, p. 90) approach to practice-based research. Phillip McIntyre posits PBE as an alternative to researching from 'outside' using

textual analysis or case studies by taking an 'inside' approach, 'simply doing it—that is, by undertaking a creative practice research process while producing audio-visual material for the screen' (2018, p. 86). In the screen production research context, PBE conducts research through the lens of the practitioner-researcher, encompassing 'a work being produced for the screen, [and] the keeping of a creative journal while being involved in making the object' (McIntyre 2018, p. 94). Desmond Bell (2018) builds on McIntyre by suggesting that critical contextualisation is essential in this contribution of new knowledge to practice. As an extension of the much-discussed practice-based research, the emergence of PBE signals the 'mature phase' of this debate (Readman 2018, p. 224). Building on reflective practice, PBE expands practice-based ethnographic methods by contributing a methodology that explores the subjective experience of the artist-practitioner, 'a very specific sort of knowing, a knowing that arises through handling materials in practice' (Bolt 2007, p. 29). The reflexive creative act is an investigation 'designed to answer a directed research question about art and the practice of it, which could not otherwise be explored by other methods' (Skains 2018, p. 86).

PBE grew out of late 20th-century practice-led research in pedagogy, stemming from educators' frustration with the often disconnected and abstruse analysis of researchers outside of their field and a desire for research relevant to everyday needs. 'It is postulated that by engaging in systematic enquiries into one's own practices, the possibilities for improvements in practice are made real' (Murray and Lawrence 2000, p. 6). The central aspect of nascent PBE was 'structured reflection on or about educational practices, the deliberate and systematic focusing of a research technique on a recurrent instructional or administrative problem' (Murray 1992, p. 191). After being

successfully implemented in practitioner-led research fields of education and nursing, PBE found support among screen production researchers (Paltridge et al. 2011). While critics such as Michael Lynch (2000) argue that self-reflexivity does not guarantee insight, Bell counters 'there is little doubt that the artist/researcher, if they commit themselves to the task of documentation and critical contextualisation and reflection on their work, can, in collaboration with like-minded others, produce an inter-subjective framework for understanding the work they produce' (2006, pp. 98–99). Thus, making the implicit more explicit is central to practice-based research. As Knudsen reminds us, 'it is incumbent on the creative practice researcher to develop a confidence to articulate the tacit as equally valuable knowledge as the explicitly codified' (2018, p. 124).

This study incorporates creative constraint as a central part of its research design. Constraint is an inherent part of the structure of the screen production process, particularly in the documentary sector. Creative ideas in filmmaking must meet their financial, technical, and logistical limitations (Kerrigan and McIntyre 2010; John and Joyce 2020). However, 'constraints do not necessarily harm creative potential - indeed they are built into the construct of creativity itself' (Sternberg and Kaufman 2010, pp. 479–480). Patricia Stokes has written extensively about the purposeful application of creative constraint in fine arts. She sees creative constraints as '*barriers that lead to breakthroughs*. One constraint *precludes* (or limits search among) low-variability, tried-and-true responses' (Stokes 2005, p. 7, emphasis in original). Heidi Philipsen investigated the application of Stoke's work in the context of filmmaking. Philipsen found that purposeful creative constraint produces a 'positive stress feeling or simplification [that] can be a very useful and inspirational dimension of the filmmaking process' (2009, p. 1). This research project's methodology builds on

this by employing what Stokes describes as a 'task constraint' that restricts methods and ways of manipulating and combining materials (2013).

The editing of the McMillan story's raw materials was accompanied by in-process critical analysis of the additive and subtractive film editing approaches, employing a practitioner process journal that documents all aspects of the creative activity, including screening notes, diagrams, flowcharts, paper edits, and sequence timelines. This reflective writing on process problem-solving and experimentation has been described by Bell as a 'virtuous hermeneutical circle' of critically informed practice (2008, p. 177). The completed documentaries are included as research along with reflection-on-action analysis that compares and contrasts the interplay of technology, process, and the resulting creative outcomes (Schön 1983). This self-reflection is augmented by qualitative interviews with expert film editing practitioners, who reflect on the editorial process and its artistic outcomes. This data is critically discussed and synthesised to provide a broader context to the research and address the research questions.

This methodology stems from my constructionist theoretical perspective and is appropriately grounded in 'my own manner of working' (Milech and Schilo 2013, p. 253) by my thirty-nine years of creative practice as a documentary filmmaker and my prolific and critically acclaimed body of work. PBE is a natural extension of my lived experience of what R. Lyle Skains (2018) describes as a 'critical practitioner'. 'We experiment with our art in order to push boundaries, to ask questions, to learn more about our art and our role within it' (Skains 2018, p. 86). Moreover, this methodology draws on a career path that straddles the final days of analogue film, the first

wave of digital non-linear editing, and the emergence of artificial intelligence. This unique trajectory, including collaborations with world-renowned analogue-era observational documentary pioneers, Beta testing the world's first digital non-linear film editing systems, designing my community of practice's first post-production workflows, and training first and second-generation digital artists, is useful in identifying, contextualising, and decoding revealing 'insights into the creative practices employed by "insiders"' (McIntyre 2018, p. 90). This methodology provides a meaningful self-reflexivity of the iterative spiral of creation, constraint, analysis, and revision that is film editing. The dissemination of the completed films will also serve as a 'performative research paradigm' in which 'the symbolic data expressed through performance is the research itself' (Haseman 2011, p. 148).

3.3 Researcher's Practice

In order to contextualise this practitioner-based enquiry, it is necessary here to briefly summarise and historically situate the researcher's practice. I am a British-Canadian filmmaker who has edited more than 160 observational and hybrid documentary films primarily focused on the theme of social justice. While my professional experience includes working within communities of practice in Europe, Asia, Africa, Central America, and the United States, my work is rooted in and profoundly shaped by both the Anglo and French-Canadian documentary filmmaking traditions. My earliest substantial creative work was in the context of the *Office national du film du Canada* and the independent Quebecois film movement of the mid-1980s. In this socio-political and creative context, my foundational output was shaped by the works and methods of *l'équipe française*. The cinema of 'The French Team' was indelibly shaped by the Quiet Revolution, and

their antagonistic relationship with the Anglophone artistic establishment fomented a wide range of artistic styles and documentary forms (Euvard and Véronneau 1980; Jones 1981; Monk 2001; Melnyk 2004; Marshall 2005). Under the tutelage of social justice documentarians Yvan Patry and Danièle Lacourse, I developed as a filmmaker in the long shadow of the tradition of Brault, Perrault, and Groulx, using analogue technologies.

These formative experiences were followed by a late 1990s move to the Anglophone documentary film community, most notably working with the West Coast School direct cinema pioneers, pre-eminent director Allan King and cinematographer-editor William Brayne. My significant ongoing creative collaboration with King began when he returned to the documentary form in 1997 after a twenty-three-year hiatus. In this professional context, I was presented with the opportunity to merge the seminal working methods of the early observational documentary with emerging digital film-editing technologies. As a young film editor with little emotional investment in legacy technology, I was among the world's first filmmakers to transition to digital tools and methods. This was followed by a substantial series of mid-career collaborations with noted directors Sturla Gunnarsson and Matt Gallagher, filmmakers in the hybrid 'Candid Eye' mould of the National Film Board of Canada's Studio B.

As this trajectory makes clear, I am one of a limited number of artists in my documentary film-editing community of practice whose career spanned the transition from the century-old analogue film era technologies to the capital-intensive emergent digital technology of the 1990s through to contemporary democratised and ubiquitous digital media making tools. My career narrative

reveals that technology and the logistics of new and evolving tools drive the change in how we edit documentary films. It is from this vantage that I investigate the nexus of craft, technology, tradition, and art.[4]

3.4 Context of the Materials

Any investigation into the creative treatment of actuality must first and foremost be ethically responsible to the subjects of the film who so generously contribute to this research as well as the communities in which they live. Consequently, it is necessary here to outline the actuality of Mlizni McMillan's community and personal tragedy, the context of the two films that form the basis of this study.

Once a prosperous, vibrant, and ethnically diverse American city enriched by a thriving automotive industry, Detroit fell into decline in the mid-20th century as approximately half of all its manufacturing jobs were lost due to permanent closures and relocations to suburban Michigan and beyond (Albrecht 2009). While many White workers could relocate to retain their jobs, Black workers were shut out by a discriminatory suburban housing market. The historically racist police department rigorously and violently enforced this de facto segregation policy (Boyd 1981; McDonald 2014; Farley 2018). Fuelled by the ensuing localised economic downturn triggered by what became known as 'White flight', racial tensions rose (Jay and Leavell 2017). On 23 July 1967, Detroit police arrested 82 people in a Black neighbourhood who were celebrating the safe

[4] For the author's practitioner filmography, see Appendix I.

return of Vietnam War veterans at an illegal after-hours bar (Farley 2018). Perceived as another in a series of racist injustices carried out by the Detroit Police Department, protests to the arrests quickly escalated. Three days of rioting led to approximately 2,500 looted or burned businesses, 7,300 arrests, and the death of 43 people (Jay and Leavell 2017).

Over the next three decades, the city's economy began to collapse. In 2007, the US Census Bureau pronounced Detroit the poorest urban centre in America, and six years later, the city declared bankruptcy (McDonald 2014). In the aftermath remained 90,000 vacant buildings and approximately 700,000 citizens, 80% of whom identify as Black, and 40% living below the poverty line (Doucet 2017). Systemic intolerance and a declining tax base led to a Detroit criminal justice system that is both absentee and racist.

It is within this socio-political and historical frame that, in 2014, Gallagher began to film the project that eventually became known as *How to Prepare for Prison* (2016). This documentary was initially conceived as an exploration of the American 'rocket docket', an expedited and cursory judicial process adopted by under-resourced and over-capacity authorities. Gallagher filmed five disjunct narrative streams for an ensemble documentary tapestry shot in a neo-observational style. During the production phase of these unfolding stories, it became clear that most narratives had developed cinematically useful intersecting themes of contrition and incarceration. These materials formed the basis of Gallagher's feature documentary. However, the story of Mlinzi McMillan was a narrative outlier, featuring themes of injustice and resilience, and its materials were excluded.

On the way back home from an after-school football practice in inner-city Detroit, McMillan and his children were involved in a horrific traffic accident. Physical and emotional trauma erased his memory of the incident that killed his two sons. When the Detroit Police Department arrived on the scene, they charged McMillan with the vehicular manslaughter of his children. What remained of his family was torn apart by a systemically racist judicial system and exploitative and sensationalist local media. As he dealt with the pain of losing his beloved sons, McMillan was found innocent in a heart-wrenching trial. As his formal innocence precluded him from *How to Prepare for Prison*'s narrative paradigm, his story was omitted before it entered the editing process. This decision weighed heavily on the filmmakers. McMillan had generously opened his life to the camera, providing intimate access to his thoughts and feelings as he struggled to cope with the death of his children while facing as many as 15 years of imprisonment. He expressed a strong desire to share the story of his vindication.

The production process context of McMillan's story provides noteworthy self-reflexivity. At the time of his trial, McMillan described being vilified in the local television news. Facing the curt production schedule of the daily local news cycle, their perfunctory and thus necessarily agendised filmic expression of this story clarified the link between process and form for both McMillan and the researcher. McMillan claims, 'They had to have made up their mind on what my story was before they even started filming'.[5] The link between production realities and creative outcomes

[5] In conversation with the author, 3 December 2021.

was made clear in his eyes. Thus, an exploration of this material promised the potential to serve the needs of participant and researcher alike.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to the ethical standards of research set by the University of Hertfordshire. The media elements that form the artistic fodder for this practitioner-based inquiry are the property of Border City Pictures Ltd. and have been used with their permission. These extant media elements feature human participants who had previously granted Border City permission for the use of their likenesses. Permission to contact the participants to seek consent to use this material in the context of academic research was granted by the University of Hertfordshire's ethics clearance protocol CTA PGR UH 05203. The human participants gave their express informed consent on 4 December 2021. Permission to interview documentary film practitioners was granted by the University of Hertfordshire's ethics clearance protocol CTA PGR UH 05969. Explicit informed consent was obtained from all participants, and interviews were conducted virtually in Canada during the summer of 2023[6]. This study received financial support from the University of Windsor. The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

[6] For ethics clearance forms, see Appendix II.

3.6 Research Procedures

3.6.1 Introduction

A thick description of the editing processes at the heart of this practitioner-based enquiry, to use Clifford Geertz's (1973) notion of the term, must begin with a detailed and meaningfully contextualised account of the acquisition and handling of its raw filmic materials. Gallagher began filming in Detroit, Michigan, on 15 February 2015, eight months after the tragic car accident that is at the centre of these documentaries. Formal interviews with McMillan and his defence attorney, Michael Sharpe, were filmed along with McMillan's emotional visit to the site of the tragedy. Two more days of filming occurred later that year, capturing McMillan formally being charged by the state with reckless driving causing death and his plea of innocence. A short 'B-Roll' scene, a series of generic, non-narrative visuals typically used to freight voice-over, was also shot. Filming resumed in June 2016 as Gallagher followed the five-day trial to its conclusion. In total, approximately 17 hours of original unscripted footage was shot over eight days.[7]

A veteran documentary cinematographer-director, Gallagher has an elegant visual signature that favours static and sustained wide to medium shots in the classic style of Michel Brault. This footage was shot on a single Canon C300 camera with 17-55mm, 18-80mm, and 20-200mm zoom lenses in a 1920x1080p24 50Mbps MPEG-2 8-bit 4:2:2 codec format. Gallagher favoured

[7] See Figure 1.

22 Feb 15	10:30 am **Roadside Memorial** 18 shots 11m51s
	12:00 pm **Mlinzi INTV** 2 shots 44m18s
	3:00 pm **Michael Sharpe INTV** 4 shots 31m07s
25 Apr 15	9:00 am **Detroit Prison** 18 shots 18m16s
	10:31 am **Mlinzi Booking** 18 Shots 5m58s
	3:17 pm **Mlinzi Initial Appearance** 4 shots 44m9s
18 Oct 15	11:49 am **Mlinzi plays basketball** 38m37s
	1:36 pm **Mlinzi at the accident scene** 36m45s
14 Jun 16	9:11 am **Sharpe Arrival** 2m7s
	2:22 pm **Prosecution Opening Argument** 1 shot 12m05s
	2:34 pm **Defence Opening Argument** 2 shots 18m14s
	2:48 pm **Prosecution Witness: Truck Driver** 1 shot 16m45s
	3:12 pm **Mlinzi Leaves** 1 shot 22s
15 Jun 16	9:54 am **Truck Driver Cross-Examination** 4 shots 31m01s
	11:04 am **Prosecution Witness: Bystander** 3 shots 24m04s
	11:31 am **Bystander Cross-Examination** 1 shot 19m25s
	11:50 am **Prosecution Witness: Police Officer** 1 shot 7m04s
	11:57 am **Police Officer Cross-Examination** 1 shot 9m26s
	12:07 pm **Prosecution Witness: Paramedic** 1 shot 7m07s
	12:14 pm **Paramedic Cross-Examination** 1 shot 5m43s
	2:43 pm **Prosecution Witness: Accident Investigator** 6 shots 38m 37s
16 Jun 16	9:53 am **Accident Investigator Cross-Examination** 5 shots 1h46m27s
	12:06 am **Defence Witness: Academic** 10 shots 45m 29s
	12:53 pm **Academic Cross-Examination** 9 shots 53m 27s
17 Jun 16	9:32 am **Prosecution Closing Argument** 1 Shot 20m41s
	9:54 am **Defence Closing Argument** 1 Shot 35m36s
	10:28 am **Jury Instruction and Waiting** 14 Shots 35m04s
18 Jun 16	10:58 am **Verdict** 8 shots 41m16s
	1:56 pm **Exit** 3 shots 6m19s

Figure 1. Chronology of Filmed Events.

shooting long uninterrupted takes and captured the 17 hours of principal photography in a modest 405 extended takes with a combined media size of 861GB.

Filming in a US Court is logistically, and thus artistically, severely constrained. An American courtroom is considered a public space, and filming may be conducted with the permission of the presiding State Magistrate. Gallagher received consent with the stipulations that: (1) all filming-related activity must not be a distraction to the proceedings, (2) members of the jury may not be identified, and (3) the camera must remain in a single fixed position when the court is in session. Consequently, Gallagher was restricted to filming from one of two physical locations in the courtroom and could only reposition during rare breaks in official proceedings.[8] The artistic implications of these restrictions posed a significant challenge to the film editing process. Unscripted footage captured by a single static camera in a fixed position typically lacks the volume and variety of camera angles and shot sizes necessary to edit in a convincing, continuity-cutting editorial style.

Having received the generous permission of the subjects and Border City Productions Ltd., the copyright holders of the raw materials, the footage was delivered to my studio. Before the editing of this large volume of high-ratio, unscripted raw materials could begin in earnest, I undertook a formal process of media management. The raw media materials were assessed for technical

[8] See Figure 2.

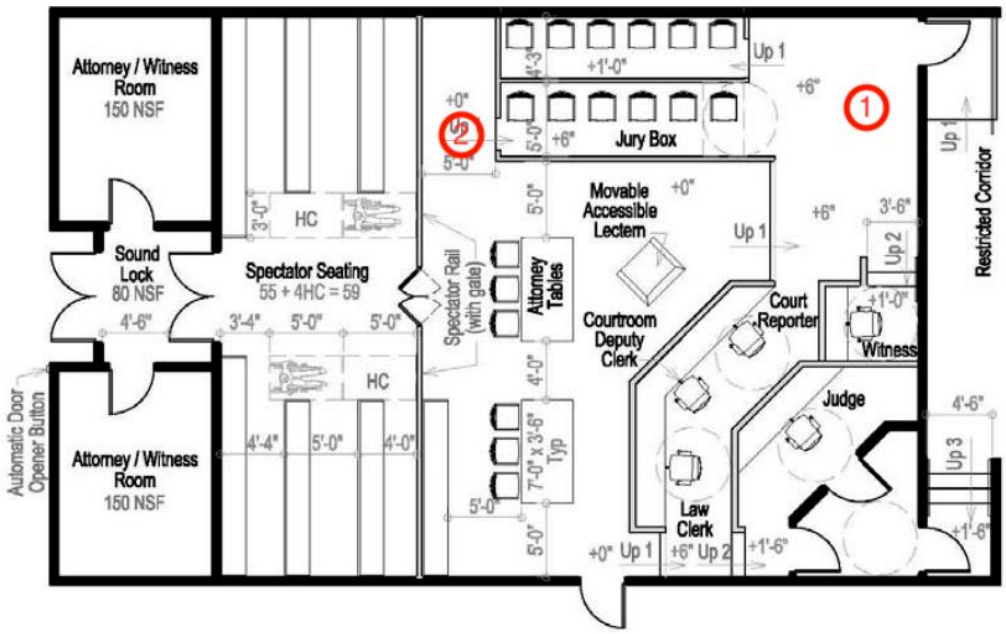

Figure 2. Courtroom Layout (Anon. 2007)

standards and playability, backed up, and organised. In accordance with the editing practitioner's adage, 'you can't wrestle entropy into order in an environment of chaos', [9] the media drives were organised by placing files into discrete folders determined by shooting day. Folders were labelled with unique lexicographic identifiers that followed the strict naming protocol within the file path. The 'Elements' folder contained all filmic raw materials, including all original audio-visual materials acquired during the production phase, sound effects, music, and visual effects elements. Rushes were organised by date in a numerical year, month, and day format to ensure logical sorting, e.g., Elements>Rushes>YYMMDD. The media was mirrored on a redundant array of hard drives and stored in separate physical locations for safety and insurance reasons. Self-powered

[9] Studio B producer-editor John Kramer in conversation with the author, 1999.

high-speed USB-C drives were used to facilitate remote editing with a maximum capacity set at 90%.

The final stage of preparation involved the selection of system hardware and application software and concluded with the setting up of the base project file and importing the media. As with many documentary film editing practitioners, I am platform agnostic. However, I decided to conduct this research using the widespread film editing application Adobe Premiere Pro software on the Apple computer system for ease of replicability. Per standard practice, a base master project file was created into which the organised rushes were imported as media pointers. Having tested, organised, and imported the media into an Adobe Premiere Pro project, the editing phase began.

3.6.2 The Way Back #1, Additive

Introduction

The creation research phase of the study began by implementing a contemporary digital-era 'additive' post-production strategy in the film editing of an original medium-length documentary. In layperson's terms, the film began with an empty canvas upon which shots were added, combined, and organised. Starting with a blank canvas, the use of high-speed, random-access digital technology and the absence of external geographic and temporal considerations means the editor can explore all possible permutations of the material.

It must be noted here that the number of possible configurations is immense. For example, at 24 frames per second, even just three one-second shots can be edited in an almost limitless number of combinations. The possibilities of reducing, reordering, combining, reversing, or cross-cutting could be expressed, at minimum, as the factorial of 24 cubed ($24!^3$) or an extraordinary $620,448,401,733,239,439,360,000^3$ alternatives[10]. Consequently, a sizeable team of editors could spend their entire working lives exploring all the possible arrangements of just three seconds of film. In this study, I must select, truncate, and arrange hundreds of shots with a combined duration of more than 61,000 seconds in duration, the kind of massive collection of narrative fodder described by Murch as a jungle of possibility: 'Who would go in there without a map and adequate supplies?' (2001, p. 124). In contemporary digital practice, this task is approached through meticulous planning, a process that begins by analysing the content of the raw materials in a formal screening stage.

Screening

In a view commonly held by practitioners, I find screening the most laborious part of the process. While I am intellectually engaged as I view the material, the artist's instinct to make, to cut and to create must be overcome. Moreover, being a passive observer sitting for hours at a time, analysing and reflecting on the form and substance of the materials is exhausting. Anecdotally, editors suggest that while the standard working day for 'cutting', actively editing the material, is approximately 10 hours long, screening days are often half this duration. Consequently, this

[10] 24! = 1 x 2 x 3 x 4 x 5 x 6 x 7 x 8 x 9 x 10 x 11 x 12 x 13 x 14 x 15 x 16 x 17 x 18 x 19 x 20 x 21 x 22 x 23 x 24

process would take editor Steve James approximately 40 weeks to screen the raw materials gathered for *The War Tapes* (2006). This protracted duration makes the qualitative comparison of intangible cinematic qualities of tone and emotion of material screened in week one to that screened in week forty challenging. Moreover, a lengthy screening period is expensive. Contemporary budget models for feature documentaries rarely extend beyond 40 weeks. Thus, in a case such as James's, the film editing budget would be exhausted simply by viewing the material. Consequently, standard practice supplants a real-time review of raw materials with a reading and/or word search of the transcriptions of the dialogue recorded by the camera.

In the manner of contemporary professional practice, this project's analysis process was expedited by using artificial intelligence (AI) to create automated transcriptions of the dialogue found in the raw material. Low-resolution copies of the rushes were uploaded to Trint.com, a commercial AI transcription service used by *The Washington Post*, *The Associated Press* and other reputable sources of journalism.[11] This digital tool provides readable and searchable transcriptions of time-stamped source materials that can be reviewed *without screening the material*. Based on word searches and readings of these documents, I identified 'selects', key moments in the raw footage, that would be considered for inclusion in the film.[12]

[11] See Figure 3.
[12] See Appendix III for an example.

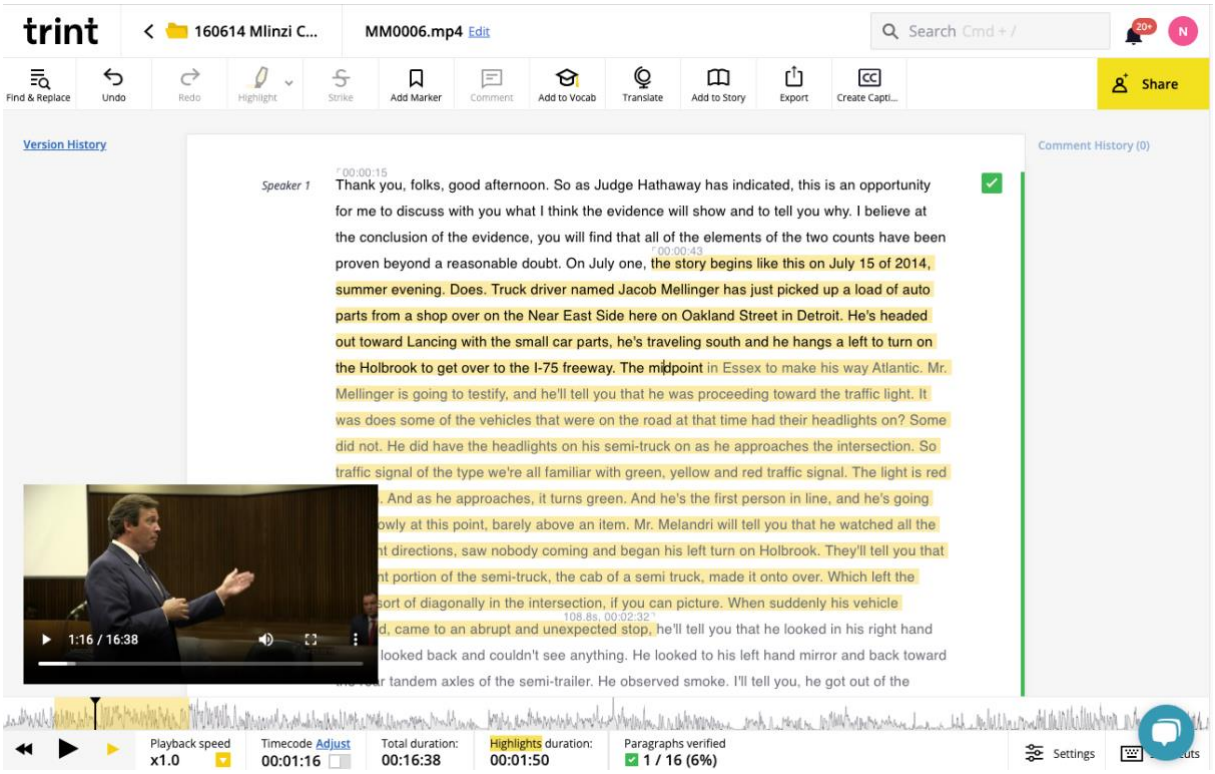

Figure 3. AI Transcription Interface

A review of the transcripts revealed that the trial lacked an apparent narrative shape. After opening statements, a seemingly disjointed series of witnesses presented testimony before the court. Each witness was questioned by the Prosecuting Attorney, followed by a cross-examination by the Defence Attorney. None of the witnesses provided an overarching contextual frame, attesting only to a circumscribed narrative fragment of the alleged crime based on their lived experience. Moreover, each attestant repeated and contradicted themselves as their memory was diminished by time and, in some cases, trauma. Thus, the story naturally unfolded in a seemingly amorphous fashion, burdened with repetition, contradiction, and narrative cul-de-sacs. This was further

complicated by the absence of testimony from McMillan, who suffered memory loss due to the brain injury he received in the accident.

The review of the AI-generated transcripts was accompanied by 'scrubbing', a cursory high-speed overview of the audiovisual elements. Scrubbing revealed several artistic challenges. Dialogue, particularly that of Defence Attorney Michael Sharpe, often appeared to have an irregular rhythm featuring many awkward pauses. Moreover, the court-mandated use of a single, fixed-position camera to capture unscripted actuality meant that 'retakes', staged filmed actions, would not be possible. Consequently, the rushes appeared to lack 'coverage', the variety of camera angles, shot sizes and positions necessary to edit in a realist continuity cutting style. During the scrubbing process, I took notes about the substance, tone, and editorial considerations of the material, noting temporal and geographical divisions of the footage.[13] These notes, along with the selects, served as the foundation of the editorial planning document, the 'paper edit'.

Paper Editing

In order to structure the staggering number of possible permutations of these selects into a filmic form, an organisational principle was necessary. Finding what Kurt Vonnegut (2005) famously describes as 'story shape' in this opaque and repetitive material began with a consideration of the three-act narrative model of Greek tragedy that dominates mainstream Western cinema. This conventional narrative structure is propelled by the transformative nature of dramatic conflict. The

[13] See Appendix IV.

protasis would introduce the protagonist, contextualising him in his pre-conflict state. The protagonist would then engage with the dramatic conflict of the *epitasis* of the trial, which would unfold as a series of escalating incidents. The final act *catastrophe* would present the resolution of the dramatic conflict, the outcome of the trial, and a denouement that would posit the protagonist's transformation.

This conventional organising principle was challenged by several limitations of the raw materials. Analysis of the selects suggested that clarity and emotional engagement would be primary organisational determinants. The *protasis* of this narrative occurred off-screen and could not be conveyed through active present tense materials. This was further complicated by a two-tiered and repetitive *epitasis*: 1) the active present tense of the filmed events and 2) the retrospective account of the events of the tragedy. Moreover, as McMillan could not remember the accident due to his brain injury, he was not an active participant in his own defence. The dramatic question inherent in this approach, that of the protagonist's innocence, was unknowable and thus unsatisfying.

Consequently, the paper edit of the additive iteration of this practice-based component of this study was conceived as a variation of the conventional three-act model. The story would be a parallel construction of alternating blocks of protagonist interview-based reflection and unfolding active present-tense events. Moreover, while the overarching organisational principle of the active present-tense narrative arc would be linear, the intra-scene organisation of the retrospective accounts of the accident would be ordered to correspond to the timeline of events rather than to their telling. Succinctly, the film would be constructed as an extended non-linear montage that

deceivingly presents as linear.[14] The ensuing dramatic question posed by this approach shifts from a question of innocence to one of knowledge and acceptance: Will Mlinzi McMillan learn and come to terms with what happened on that fateful day? A 22-page paper edit constructed using the AI transcripts laid out the basis for the editing of *The Way Back #1, Additive.*[15]

Cutting

A detailed account of the cutting phase of the additive editing process must begin by orienting the reader with a brief description of the empty canvas of the Adobe Premiere Pro platform's graphical user interface (GUI). First released by Adobe Systems in 2002, Premiere Pro and its precursor, the AVID Media Composer, feature GUIs modelled on the appearance of the Steenbeck flatbed editing system, once the pinnacle of analogue editing technology. In contemporary digital practice, incoming raw materials are reviewed in the source monitor pane on the left side of the GUI. The editor marks the section of the shot to be added to the film and inserts it into the empty canvas or 'timeline'. The program monitor pane on the right side of the GUI displays the film in progress. The pane below the source and record monitors is a graphic representation of the audiovisual elements in the timeline.[16] The timeline begins as an empty industry-standard template used to organise the selected and arranged media pointers into a filmic sequence ready for virtual playback.

[14] See Figure 4.
[15] See Appendix V.
[16] See Figure 5.

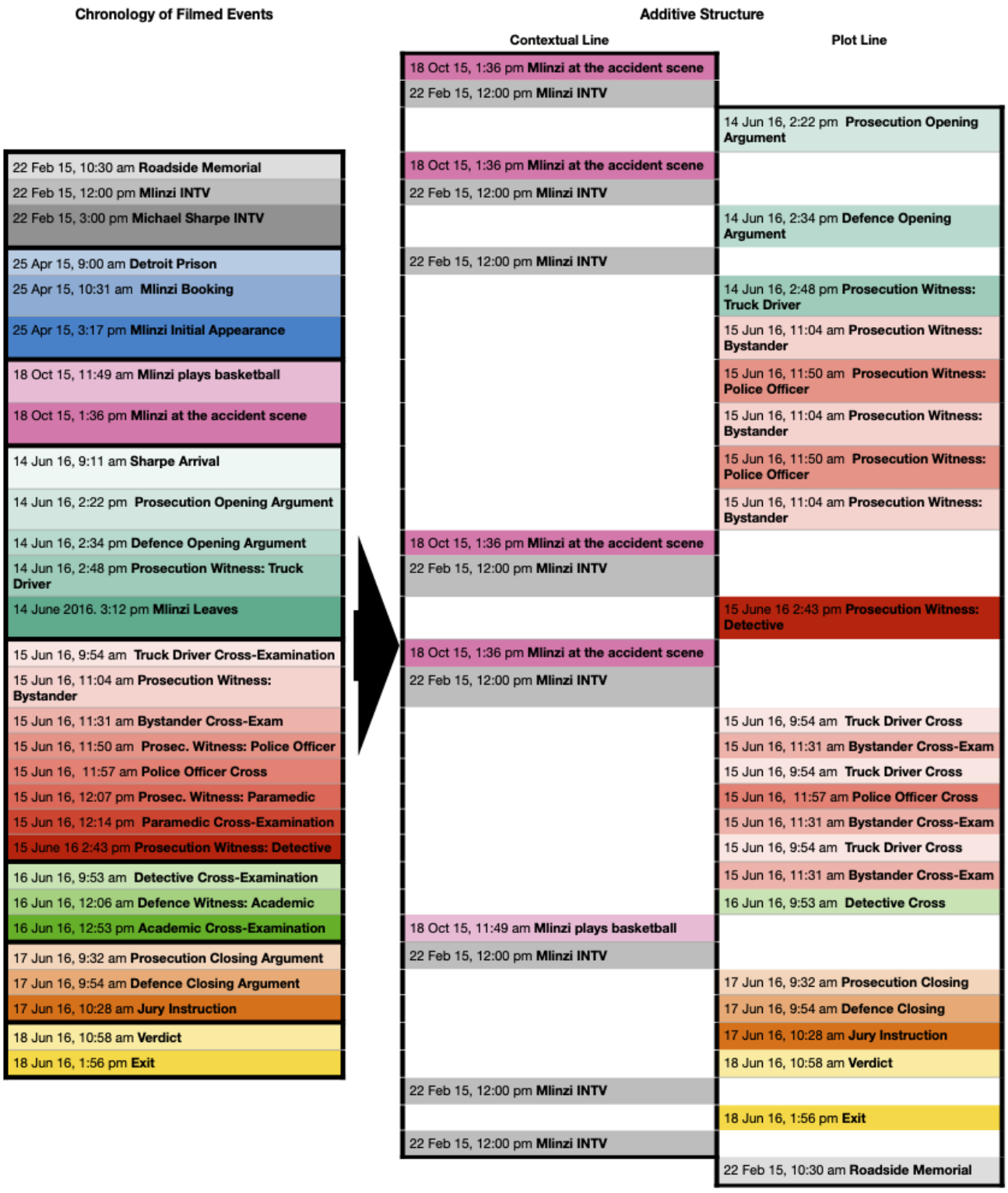

Figure 4. Narrative Structure of 'The Way Back #1, Additive'.

The technical specifications of the timeline are set to match those of the source material to facilitate an efficient digital native data pipeline of 1920x1080p24 ProRes Proxy with a 48khz sampling rate and a 16-bit depth.

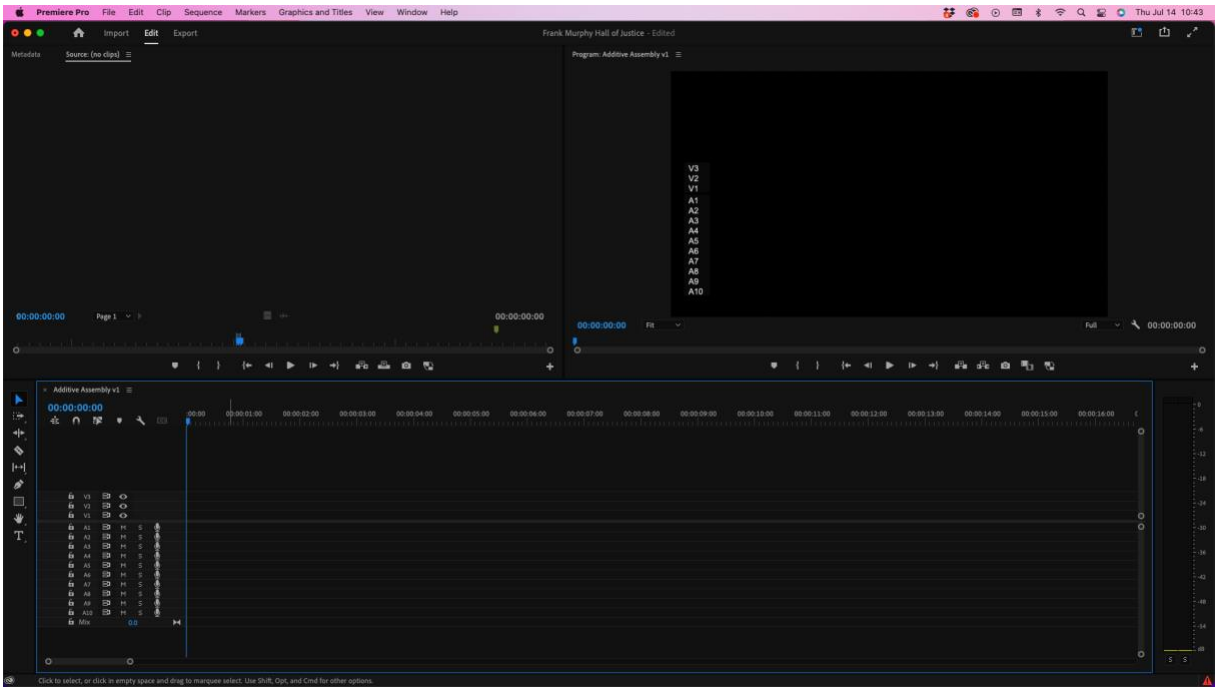

Figure 5. The Film Editing Software 'Empty Canvas'.

Audio tracks were organised from sonic foreground to background (i.e., subject narration, diegetic synchronous dialogue, diegetic synchronous direct sound, SFX specifics, SFX atmospheres, and non-diegetic music). Video tracks are organised according to the acquisition source.

V4 = On-screen text
V3 = On-screen text
V2 = Archival imagery
V1 = Camera original
A1 = Interview A
A2 = Interview B
A3 = Dialogue A

A4 = Dialogue B
A5 = PFX A
A6 = PFX B
A7 = SFX A (Stereo)
A8 = SFX B (Stereo)
A9 = SFX C (Stereo)
A10 = SFX D (Stereo)
A11 = Music A (Stereo)
A12 = Music B (Stereo)

This timeline organisation facilitates finding and modifying specific media elements in what will become a complex tapestry of pictures and sounds. The editor can selectively monitor elements by isolating or muting a type or types of images and sounds. Moreover, the combination of colour coding and track placement will assist the editor in assessing the weight, pacing, and rhythm of elements and groups.

The cutting of *The Way Back #1, Additive* began with the selection of the first shot and its addition to the empty canvas.[17] A contextual vista that evokes a sense of place, socio-economic conditions, and the themes of journey and loss was selected, truncated, and added to the timeline. A superficial reading of the task suggests that this simple creative act is free from external considerations. The choice of an isolated single shot need not consider the implications of juxtaposition. Editorial determinants of associative meaning, semiotics, and principles of continuity cutting, including screen direction, scale of shots, continuity, matching action, overlapping action, eye trace, etc., are not yet in play.

[17] See Figure 6.

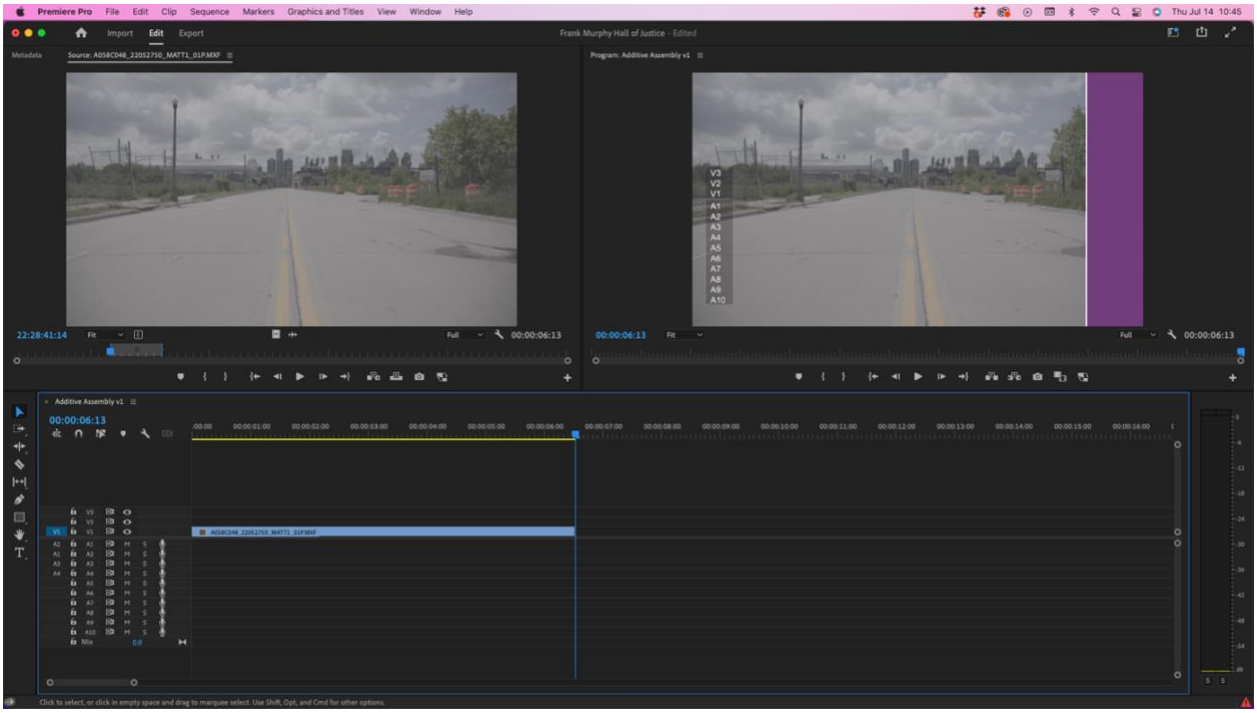

Figure 6. The first shot of 'The Way Back #1, Additive'.

However, external factors are present. As Metz (1974) reminds us, the content of the first image becomes the cornerstone to which all subsequent images are seen in relief. In addition to its narrative implications, the duration of this first shot must be carefully considered. Its length is determined, in part, by an assessment of visual reading time, the time necessary for the audience to apprehend the image. Reading time varies within cultural and technological contexts. A Detroiter screening this view of the locally iconic 'RenCen' on a small iPhone screen will need much less time to read the image than a non-resident viewing this unfamiliar site as a detailed 4K image projected on a 280m^2 cinema screen. Moreover, the duration of the first image sets the tempo of the film's editorial metronome. Thus, the timing and order of subsequent shots were dictated by the content, size, duration, and graphic composition of that first shot.

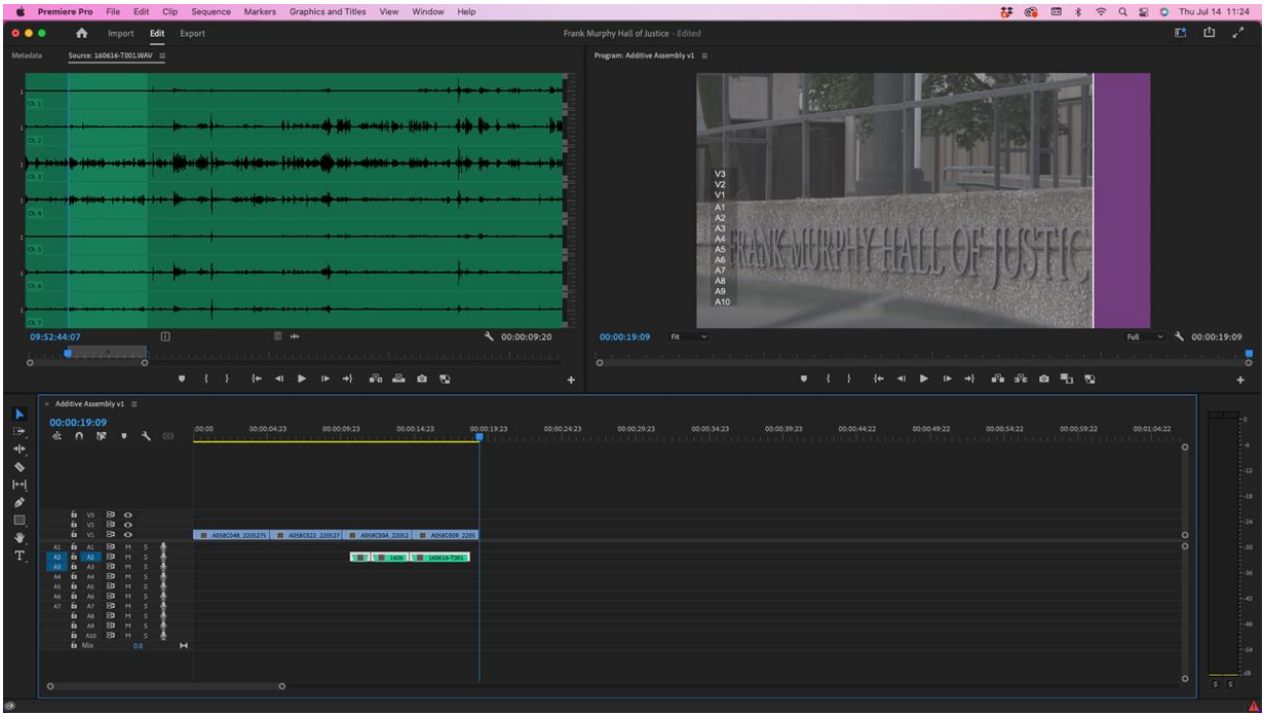

Figure 7. Shots 1-4 of 'The Way Back #1, Additive'.

As previously established, the overwhelming task of narrativising the rushes, to use James' description (cited in Boruszkowski 2011), was delegated to the paper edit stage. I fulfilled its design by incrementally adding shots to the timeline.[18] The artistic task was, in my professional experience, a relatively simple one. Adhering to standard digital practice, the cutting was, henceforth, a process familiar to even the casual filmmaking hobbyist. Free of temporal and geographic compartmentalisation and, in turn, the rigorous mechanics of continuity cutting, the edit took the form of an extended montage. The restrictions posed by the limited coverage afforded

[18] See Figure 7.

by a static single camera and the paucity of angles, sizes, and positions were assuaged by the freedom of non-linear construction. The overarching structural approach of alternating blocks of context and plot facilitated narrative efficiency. Free of intra-scene restrictions of continuity and guided by an AI-assisted paper edit, I was able to telescope the narrative content into a streamlined 33-minute film.[19]

Final Post

After 'locking picture', the formal stage of finalising the narrative content and structure, the film entered 'final post'. This concluding phase of the film editing process focuses on the detailed work of sound design, mixing, colour correction, and visual effects. A non-narrative stage of post-production that is customarily undertaken by teams of specialised artists, final post was initially deemed to be outside of the focus of this research study. However, the modest financial resources of this project ensured that the editor-researcher had to take on artistic duties usually outside of his purview. What is relevant to the study are the ramifications of the additive editorial process to other areas of documentary film post-production.

Noted musicians Ohad Benchetrit and Justin Small generously agreed to allow me to repurpose the score they wrote for the film *Prey* (2019). This latter-day Gallagher feature documentary chronicles a sexual abuse survivor's legal action against the Catholic Church. As the films shared similar themes of tragedy, loss, and justice, the score promised to serve the needs of *The Way Back*

[19] See Figure 8.

Figure 8. The completed film, 'The Way Back #1, Additive'.

#1, Additive. Working with the Benchetrit-Small soundtrack revealed an unforeseen ramification of the additive editorial process. In addition to the traditional core function of underscoring emotion, the music served an architectural role. That is to say, the musical score strengthened the structural conceit of an outwardly linear, non-linear montage. A disjointed series of events were given the illusion of order by a unifying score. Thus, the artistic focus of the music editing phase centred on alleviating incongruous artefacts of the additive process. This became a recurrent theme in the additive final post process.

The artistic focus of the sound design process centred on coalescing disjointed material. Extensive use of lengthy atmospheric and/or non-diegetic sound effects was used to create the illusion of cohesion and temporal unity. The colour grading process similarly grappled with the challenge of

aesthetic consistency. Images shot hours or days apart were colour-graded to appear as consecutive events. Moreover, the visual effects process (VFX) used motion stabilisation, digital cropping, and axis rotation to blend disparate events and locations. The final version of *The Way Back #1, Additive* is 33 minutes 24 seconds in duration and is remarkably faithful to its paper edit.

3.6.3 The Way Back #2, Subtractive

Introduction

The creation research phase of the study went on to create an alternative version of the documentary using the same raw materials. This second film, *The Way Back #2, Subtractive,* employed Arla Saare's West Coast School analogue-era subtractive film editing process in a digital context. This creatively constrained approach systematically sculpted the totality of the raw materials, revealing the narrative through incremental removal and rearrangement of footage.

The simplicity of the subtractive process is noteworthy. It began with a technical setup identical to the additive version, employing the same computer platform and editing software application. However, all forms of AI technology or digital creative assistance were eschewed. Transcripts were not employed, nor were any notes taken. Digital technology was used simply to access, select, and cut the raw materials. The artistic process was faithful to Saare's analogue method. Rushes were organised to analogue era standards that grouped the material chronologically by date of acquisition and subdivided by location. In this context, these organisational divisions will be

referred to and artistically considered as ‘scenes’. Editing began without a preconceived organisational principle, structural template, paper edit, or planning document.

Screening and Cutting

The editing process of *The Way Back #2, Subtractive* employed an iterative spiral of screening and incremental extraction of filmed elements, in whole or in part, on a scene-by-scene basis. Scenes were tackled individually in chronological shooting order. After an initial real-time screening of a scene ‘string-out’, an unabridged chronological assembly of all scene elements, an initial cull of manifestly technical errors and artistic deficiencies in the material was made. Camera repositions, reframing, iris adjustments, and other faults were removed. Further iterative reduction phases sublimated the scene to its quintessence. By working with the material, repeatedly screening, and extracting sections from as little as 1/24 of a second or as much as five or more minutes at a time, I developed what I perceived to be a deeper understanding of the material. Subtextual narrative elements and the nuance of the content, timing and tone of dialogue began to emerge. In essence, I developed what Crittenden (1981) describes as a feel for the material and, to use practitioner parlance, boiled each scene down to its essence.

The subtractive approach exhorts the editor to consider the pro-filmic materials, not just in light of the holistic meaning of the overarching narrative but also of the scene itself. Thus, a significant artistic and logistical challenge is presented that will test the skills of even the most experienced documentary editor. Any construction of filmic materials constrained by chronology and geography will, due to the continuity of space, time, and narrative, present as an unfolding real-

time event (Pudovkin 1929). Consequently, the editor must consider the mechanics of continuity cutting. Conventional continuity editing technique requires the editor to visually establish the venue and the cast of the scene, maintaining spatial and temporal relationships of pro-filmic elements.

Moreover, as Murch (2001) writes, the editor must also consider continuity of action, two-dimensional place of screen, eye-trace, and scale of shots. As the materials filmed for this project were captured on a single camera, without retakes or interruption, and constrained to one of two physical positions in the courtroom, creating an aesthetically pleasing illusion of an unfolding event was a time-consuming and challenging task. In other words, the subtractive analogue editing process asks the editor to cut drama out of the stuff of real life with little of the rigorous coverage and variety of angles and sizes necessary to do so.

By King's maxim, 'It's in until it's out', this iterative process was used to distil each scene in shooting order. A notable exception was the formal interview of the central character, Mlinzi McMillan. Following the self-imposed creative constraint of the subtractive analogue method, this material, considered on its own as a temporal and geographically delimited unit, did not qualify as a scene. Lacking either plot or dynamic action, the formal interview played as a recounting of past events rather than an unfolding active present-tense narrative. Moreover, as it was filmed before the trial and subsequently documented by Gallagher's camera, it became clear that the trial discussed in these interview materials was not the one captured on film. McMillan had been interviewed after an earlier and undocumented trial for impaired driving. While an argument could

be made for the inclusion of these repurposed, and thus ethically problematic materials, my feel for the material, to use Crittenden's term, impelled me to reject this material outright.

After the subtractive diminution of each scene, they were compiled into a single linear chronological assembly. An additional subtractive iteration of the totality of assembled scenes addressed the overarching consideration of pacing, continuity, and filmic rhythm. Having taken the form of a linear series of unfolding active present-tense events, no further structural changes to the film were made. [20]

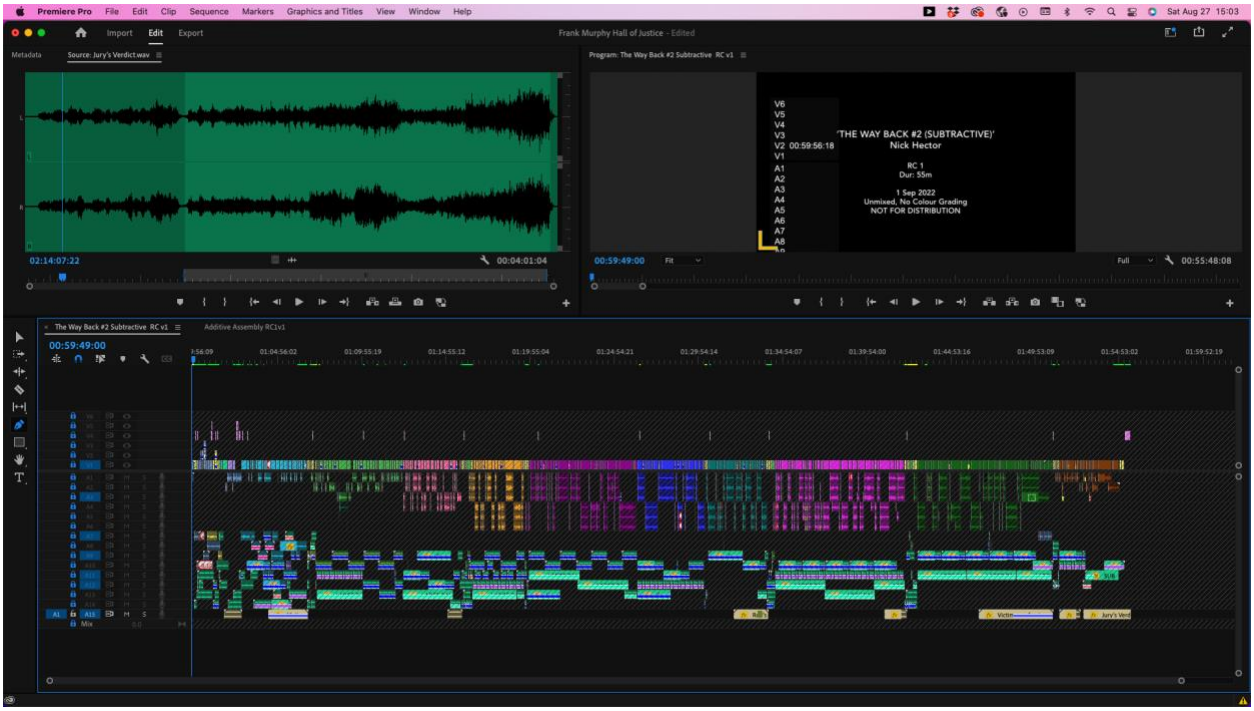

Figure 9: The completed film, 'The Way Back #2, Subtractive'.

[20] See Figure 9.

Final Post

In contrast to the final post-production of *The Way Back #1, Additive*, the technical finishing of *The Way Back #2, Subtractive* was notable for its simplicity. As the film was structured along temporally and geographically delimited scenes, the final post process did not require the balancing or blending of disjointed elements to create the illusion of homogeneity. Thus, the subtractive iteration favoured the use of direct sound. Sound effects and music were only used to heighten the drama or underscore the narrative.

The additive process grouped together material filmed in the same place and at the same time. Accordingly, colour-grading decisions were based on aesthetic factors rather than masking discontinuity. Consequently, this pattern of realist artistic decision-making continued into the visual effects stage. Techniques of image stabilisation, rotation, over-cranking, and artificial depth of field, essential for harmonising disparate materials, were unnecessary and, accordingly, unexploited.

The final version of *The Way Back #2, Subtractive* is 55 minutes 44 seconds in duration and is remarkably faithful to the sequencing of the events as they unfolded in real life.[21] While cut using digital tools, the artistic aspects of its editorial process are faithful to the subtractive method used by Arla Saare, the West Coast School, and other analogue film editors before the digital revolution.

[21] See figure 10.

Figure 10: Narrative Structure of 'The Way Back #2, Subtractive'.

3.7 Artefacts and Conclusion

This practitioner-based research project is a response to the digital disruption of documentary film editing in professional practice. The central aim of this enquiry is to re-energise digital craft by reintroducing analogue workflows and shed light on the relationship between craft processes and artistic outcomes in the professional practice of documentary film editing. The methodology of this comparative study of analogue and digital-era editorial working methods entailed the editing of two documentaries from the same raw materials but using distinctly different analogue and digital working methods, along with reflexive practitioner analysis of the process and outcome.

The creative artefacts produced by the methodology described in this chapter are presented here as links to playable online media files. These artefacts are an integral and substantial part of this enquiry, serving concurrently as a research method that provided the basis for reflexive and qualitative expert analysis found in the following section, as well as contributing to the communication of the study's findings (Candy 2006). The reader is encouraged to screen these films before proceeding to the next chapter.

The Way Back #1, Additive (2023, 33m24s)
Primary link: https://vimeo.com/nickhector/thewayback1additive
Alternative link: The Way Back #1 Additive FINAL 4K.mp4

The Way Back #2, Subtractive (2023, 55m42s)
Primary link: https://vimeo.com/nickhector/thewayback2subtractive
Alternative link: The Way Back #2 Subtractive FINAL 4K.mp4

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This section presents a reflexive analysis of the artefacts and their creative process in relation to the research questions. This reflection-in-action and on-action is augmented by expert analysis of the creative outcomes by leading Canadian film editing practitioners. The chapter concludes by briefly summarising the chapter and outlining the structure of chapter five.

4.2 Analysis

4.2.1 Reflexive Analysis

This study set out to investigate the application of the purposeful creative constraint of an analogue editing process in a digital context as an artistic tool in documentary filmmaking. My reflexive analysis identifies a link between the documentary film editing process and its creative outcome. It goes on to argue that the use of an analogue editorial process in a digital context is a useful artistic tool in documentary filmmaking and posits creative consequences of an analogue-era additive construction approach to documentary film editing.

Textual analysis of both *Way Back* artefacts reveals films that fall within the expressive tendency of Renov's modalities of desire. That is to say, the films neither attempt to preserve, persuade, nor analyse but rather to express (1993). They are united in their 'hunger for reality' (Wegenstein 2017,

p. 290). However, despite unanimity of purpose, raw materials, and plot, each film is distinct in its approach, narrative structure, pacing, and immersive qualities.

The first documentary, *The Way Back #1, Additive,* employed the digital-era film editing process of standard practice. Contemporary non-linear digital film editing tools offer the promise of unshackled artistic expression. The film editor has the freedom of instant random-access, analysis, and malleability of materials. However, my creative process diary reveals how limiting having no limits is.

> A tabula rasa should be liberating. I can use any style or mode of construction. However, the overwhelming challenge of trying to construct an artwork from a large volume of thematically and chronologically linked but largely amorphous material pressures me to self-impose restrictions. In this context, just working the material would be fruitless. An organising principle is necessary. (Hector 2023e, p. 40)

This notion is central to the study. Writing with pictures and sounds, finding meaning within the sea of possibilities a selection and arrangement of fragments of actuality provides, requires constraint. The constraint precipitated by the additive process is self-imposed. It derives from a maker some distance from the materials, not the materials themselves. Moreover, the imposition of externalised meaning on actuality is directly shaped through the prism of the editor's sensibilities.

> This is a man's life I'm dealing with here…Is it true to his lived experience? Does it give the viewer a sense of what happened? The pain he endured and the hollow victory of vindication? Perhaps. Certainly, it is true to my interpretation of what was captured on film. It was edited without judgement and with a great deal of compassion. Yet, this method dangerously relies on subjective decision-making. (Hector 2023e, p. 41)

The structure I imposed on this additive iteration is non-linear. Still, as it is organised around the timeline of the accident and hinges on the construct of a dramatic question, it presents as a conventional linear narrative. However, the structure is essentially an extended montage that takes liberties with time and space. The structure exemplifies Montagu's editor's 'wizard's wand' that can 'make credible in appearance, spatial relations, temporal relations, feelings, people, movements that have no existence in reality' (1964, pp. 115–116). Real-life causal chronological events have been reorganised and presented in a simplified and logical fashion to create the illusion of order, comprehensiveness, and depth. For example, Mlinzi's formal interview was filmed before the trial and has been used as commentary on events *that had not yet occurred at the time of the interview*. His emotional reaction to the court's verdict of not guilty, while consistent with the facts, was expressed in relation to an earlier unfilmed trial in which Mlinzi was tried for a lesser charge.

This recontextualisation falls within the bounds of accepted ethics of professional practice. In industry parlance, it is described as 'lying the truth'. While I am ethically comfortable with the use of this technique in this context, it contributes to what I perceive as a veneer of artificiality. Moreover, the use of non-diegetic dialogue creates a barrier to immersion. When I screen this version, to return to Crittenden (1981), I do not *feel* that I am entering the scene. I understand the story, but I do not *feel* it. This dramatic construct, the editorial organising principle, is predicated on using this recontextualised character-based narration. Thus, the inorganic dramatic question posed by the structure, its organisation, and construction, 'Will Mlinzi learn what happened on that tragic day?', is simplistic and artificial, undermining the nuance and dramatic tension of the trial. Corner argues that increased use of this narrative technique has had implications on documentary

pacing and undermines visual narrative. ‘This merely pushed the conventional use of observational scenes in such documentaries a little further in the direction of durational values’ (Corner 1996, p. 51).

Evidence of this is found in this iteration in which time has become, to use Pudovkin’s memorable description, ‘tractable and obedient’ (1933, p. 62). Mlinzi’s trial is presented as a single, compact synthetic ‘day’ rather than a process that spanned months. Dictated by non-diegetic character narration, the film's pacing has accelerated wildly beyond the tempo of actual events. MacDougall links this kind of increased documentary editorial tempo to the suppression of nuanced subtext.

> Throughout the editing process, there is a constant tension between maintaining the forward impetus of the film and providing enough contextual information so that the central narrative or argument continues to make sense. As the film becomes shorter, the analysis becomes cruder. Filmmakers continually sacrifice footage which they know would permit a more complex understanding of the subject but which, for reasons of length, the film cannot afford. (MacDougall 1992, p. 42)

The development of digital documentary practice is concurrent with the rise of what both Nichols (1991) and MacDougall (1992) describe as argument-based documentary structures. MacDougall goes on to connect argumentation’s economy of signification with the loss of immersive cinematic qualities.

> [There is] a loss of interpretive space, a closing-off of the legitimate areas in which the viewer is invited to supply meaning… [and] a loss of the sense of encounter. As the film becomes a polished, professional work, its connections with the historical act of filming, which were so evident in the rushes, gradually disappear. (1992, p. 41)

Certainly, in the case of *The Way Back #1, Additive*, the brisk pace and compact structure leave little room for subtext. In this iteration, filmic time reflects the creative hand of the editor rather than real-world temporality. As Corner has argued, hastened editorial tempo in concert with non-diegetic narration has contributed to the rise of the illustrative evidential mode. 'The visualisation is subordinate to verbal discourses, acting in support of their propositions or arguments, which they can frequently only partially confirm' (Corner 1996, p. 29). In this iteration, the use of B-Roll, non-narrative visual wallpaper, to freight character narration rather than express story is found in the less-than-cinematic utilitarian scenes of Mlinzi practising basketball.

Taken together, my reflexive analysis suggests that the additive process facilitates the creation of a cogent, temporally efficient, and logical documentary. However, the artefact presents as a mediated experience. The artefact gives the impression of 'proactive observationalism', containing vérité elements 'but with management of the pro-filmic allowing increased scopic mobility (including continuities of depicted movement), a more discursive use of mise-en-scène and smoother time compressions' (Corner 1996, p. 28). The film bears the attributes of Corner's *neo-vérité*, 'a primarily vérité approach with elements drawn from other areas of programming' (1996, p. 50). The ensuing and associated qualities of accelerated tempo, simplistic analysis, suppressed subtext, illustrative evidence, and the economy of signification found in neo-vérité documentaries can be linked to the process of contemporary practice. My creative process journal noted what I observed to be 'the bottom line'.

> The film works. I'm pleased with the outcome. However, I'm dissatisfied with the predictable metre and the illusion of veracity and comprehensiveness. It feels false, engineered rather than organic. (Hector 2023e, p. 41)

The Way Back #2, Subtractive, is distinctly different to its predecessor. Saare's subtractive analogue approach to digital film editing forces the editor to consider the material within its temporal or geographic context. Thus, abstract arrangements are discouraged. The formal constraint of limiting editorial possibilities to scenes delineated by time and place compels the editor to employ continuity-cutting techniques in a constructive approach. As the practitioner's adage goes, 'You can only cut what is in front of you'. Rather than an extended montage, this 55m 44s film has taken the form of a narrativised human story constructed from real-life events, what King called Actuality Drama. The linear, temporally, and geographically compartmentalised structure presents a series of clearly defined active present-tense causal-chronological scenes. On-screen events determine the time base and structure of the documentary, not the editor's planning document. In contrast to the desultory additive process analysis, distillation of the rushes in the subtractive approach revealed that the order of witnesses was far from disjointed. The attorneys had called their witnesses in an escalating order of testimony impact.

This artefact presents, to use Corner's term, as 'American *cinema vérité'*, '[the] principle of "following" ongoing action through a method which worked, precisely, to render the filmmaking itself invisible and to give viewers the sense of unmediated access to the contingencies of an actuality uncompromised by the camera' (1996, p. 44). Scenes are internally organised to provide 'a compulsory and deliberate guidance of the thoughts and associations' of Pudovkin's 'agitated observer' (1933, p. 193). This realist style of continuity cutting extends 'more widely and deeply than the mere establishment of a hard and fast editing scheme of representation. The separate

pieces must be brought into organic relation with each other' (Pudovkin 1933, p. 73). The linear structure presents a series of causal-chronological active present-tense incidents, an observational style described by MacDougall as 'the view of someone present, witnessing events, rather than a collage of fragments assembled to make a point' (2019, pp. 126–127).

The editorial tempo of this iteration is consistent with that of the pro-filmic events it contains. The editorial metre is derived from the footage, not imposed upon it. This nuanced approach to cinematic time makes meaning. For example, the timing of defence attorney Michael Sharpe's responses is loaded with significance. He uses pauses for emphasis or to let a statement resonate. Sharpe's use of a dramatic pause followed by a request for clarification signals disbelief. The ponderous pacing of the depiction of the trial, while heavily mitigated, removing repetition and pauses, is representative of the actuality of the judicial process. This pacing is rarely seen in contemporary cinema and may seem tedious when considered within genre expectations.

However, the pacing produced by the subtractive process provides a sense of immersion, of having been there. The length of the judicial process - months rather than days - is made clear. This slow-documentary approach that defies the predictable metre of the contemporary documentary is, to use MacDougall's description, 'terra incognita of the modern documentary film' (1992, p. 36). It suggests a path forward for Sarah Hamblin's call to 'shift away from a notion of participation as direct political action to participation as slow contemplation' (2019, p. 229). The increased screen time of the subtractive iteration has created room for narrative subtext, supporting MacDougall's (1992) link between tempo and narrative complexity. For example, the judge's concern about the

duration of the trial subtly reminds us of its socio-economic context. A subtle tension between the judge and the defence attorney suggests systemic bias against the defendant.

My creative process journal entries related to the subtractive iteration are notable in their recurrent detailing of the emotional content of the rushes. The repetitive tactile process of screening and reduction, unmediated or diminished by transcripts, notes, or preconceived ideas, enjoined the editor to connect with the film's emotional core.

> [This] is very strong material. We get a sense of Mlinzi, his pain is palpable. While a man of few words, he is eloquent. While there is some information (and could be used as such), it's a moment. This is the first time he's been to the site since the accident. I strip away everything that is unrelated to the immersive 'in the now'. A visit to the crash site brings back memories. He reflects on his feelings about past, present, and future. Most shots are used. They are reduced to the essential and reordered. The scene is anchored in the here and now, and then asynchronously reflects on the events that lead to this moment. (Hector 2023e, pp. 44–45)

My reflexive analysis of this iteration suggests that the subtractive process facilitates the creation of an immersive and naturalistic documentary. The realist approach to narrative structure and pacing observed in *The Way Back #2, Subtractive,* combine to create the cinematic sensation of immersion, the paradox in which rather than documenting the past, documentaries liberate it and place it in a perceived present (Day, 2017). As subtractive constraint facilitated the consideration of temporally and geographically linked elements, abstract arrangements were precluded. Constrained by the externalities of time and place, the editor reveals rather than authors the film narrative. The selection, structure, pacing and rhythm of the content are derived from the tone and substance of the material, not imposed on it. With the constraint producing 'a more sustained focus

on events', to borrow MacDougall's description, 'the film is no longer a set of propositions about a subject constructed as a lesson, but a more modest view of the filmmaking encounter (2019, p. 128). However, within the context of contemporary practice, this method arguably produces an open text 'which creates audience distance and critical reflection, committing the spectator to a (not Puritanical) work of co-producing meaning' (Armstrong 1983, p. 2).

> The bottom line: The analogue-era subtractive approach fosters an immersive, organic experience that focuses on story rather than information. The editor reveals the story within the material. (Hector 2023e, p. 50)

4.2.2 Practitioner Analysis

The research artefacts were subsequently screened by ten full members of the Canadian Cinema Editors (CCE), a peer-adjudicated national honours society.[22] In individual semi-structured interviews, I asked them to reflect on the artefacts and what they reveal about the relationship between the editorial process and creative outcome.[23] In addition to full CCE membership, an index of excellence in professional practice, selection criteria for interview subjects included: full editing credit on 20 or more films, ten years or more years of practice as an editor, and one or more national or international awards granted by Canadian Academy of Cinema and Television sanctioned festivals. The editors who participated practice a broad spectrum of documentary styles, including expositional, observational, poetic, and hybrid modes. They also possess varying degrees of digitality with careers that were predominately analogue, experienced digital disruption, or are exclusively digital. These expert practitioners reviewed the films in uninterrupted individual

[22] For practitioner biographies, see Appendix VI.
[23] For a list of the questions that provided the basis of the semi-structured interviews, see Appendix VII.

screenings with a short intermission between films. The screening order of the films was randomised in order to minimise temporal bias. The interview subjects then discussed their thoughts in a semi-structured interview of 40 to 90 minutes.

The digital-era additive iteration was widely characterised by these practitioners as commercially formalist, evincing the authorial signature of the film editor. The interviewees described the additive film as ‘simple’ (Kazala), ‘constructed’ (Palloway), ‘information[al]’ (Hawkes), and ‘slick’ (Mutton), with Acosta expressing concern that it was ‘editorialise[d]’. Several practitioners deemed the approach ‘stereotypical documentary’ (Jacobson) and reminiscent of contemporary ‘television’ (Kazala, Mutton, and Palloway). ‘[It] was more television oriented… kind of trying to move the information along quicker, to fit into a shorter time frame’ (Munn). The ‘mainstream’ (Jacobson) television-styled narrative structure was characterised as cogent and ‘efficient’ (Mattiussi). ‘It was very clearly laid out… there's this beginning, middle and end that goes along with how things unfolded’ (Gulkin). Many respondents observed the non-linear nature of the structure, with one describing this approach as disorienting. ‘At first, my reaction was confusion’ (Palloway). The use of this technique did not undermine most interviewees’ perception of the veracity of the film. However, some noted the artificiality of the dramatic question posed by the additive iteration’s narrative structure. ‘I didn't quite buy his personal stakes’ (Jacobson). ‘I thought the not guilty verdict was a little more inevitable in the [additive version]… it kind of robbed me’ (Kazala).

The ensuing editorial pace of the additive artefact, determined by both process and structure, was pleasing to several participants. ‘It was distilled down in the [additive] version to, I suppose, the essentials’ (Mutton). However, interviewees most experienced in the editing of feature documentaries described it as ‘rushed’ (Jacobson), ‘compressed’ (Munn), and ‘[lacked] nuance’(Kazala). ‘[It] goes far away from those pivotal moments that you need for the story’ (Acosta). Kazala felt that the ‘inorganic’ additive structure was rooted in fiction rather than reality. ‘Rather than using the chronology of a trial as your template, you're using what others do in courtroom dramas’ (Kazala).

Participants were also divided on the emotional qualities of the additive film. Some found the iteration ‘engaging’ (Palloway), ‘empathetic’ (Mutton), and poignant. ‘Well, you can see [wiping away tears], I was certainly moved’ (Gulkin). However, others described it as ‘very calm’ (Weslak) and ‘manipulative’ (Kazala). Hawkes interpreted the additive version as ‘pushing the emotion… almost leading a little bit in terms of emotional response’. ‘The filmmaker, you, in this case, tipped your hand a little bit’ (Kazala).

In contrast, the analogue-era subtractive iteration was situated by participants in the ‘vérité’ mode (Jacobson, Mattiussi, Mutton) and described as ‘filmic’ (Kazala), ‘expressionistic’ (Hawkes), and ‘impressionistic’ (Acosta).

> I felt like I was immersed in the world of the courtroom. I think the editing felt visually impressive… Everything felt rougher and more impressionistic… This is messy. This is Detroit. Nothing is clean-cut. (Mutton)

This sense of immersion was linked to the languid pace and absence of subject narration in the subtractive version. ‘I had breathing room to just be in the moment’ (Jacobson). ‘In the [subtractive] version, even a small thing like each day, you really had a sense of, of the length of the trial…you had a sense more of chapters, but also length of time, something that subtle’ (Kazala).

Notably, this ‘cinematic’ (Munn) approach enhanced the visceral filmic experience for some respondents. ‘It kind of gets you into the headspace of that character and then walks you through as if it's going through his own experience. So, it's very experiential in that sense’ (Hawkes). Moreover, the subtractive approach was described as ‘veracious’ (Munn), informationally ‘true’ (Mattiussi), and ‘[an] authentic representation’ (Acosta). Practitioners observed in the subtractive iteration what they described as a heightened ‘emotional truth’ (Hawkes). ‘It's so dramatic, but it felt it was it felt truer to what a courtroom procedure would be’ (Munn).

> The character that was first on scene, when he breaks down, you're really with him, right? You're feeling it because it's not coming off someone else who has just talked about that moment. It's his own moment and it's allowed to play out. (Hawkes)

Several interviewees described the subtractive iteration as layered and ‘nuanced’ (Jacobson). ‘You have more voices. I suppose in a different way, you allow people to get more involved in this story. The scenes are more rounded in a sense’ (Acosta). The minutiae of pro-filmic actuality were a recurrent theme in the interviews. ‘There was a lot more detail than I would normally expect in most contemporary docs. It's very unusual’ (Gulkin). For several editors, this intricacy enhanced the narrative.

> The impression that it was giving you was this is a very complex system of rules. And the person at the centre whose life is about to be changed, seems to have the least control. It's like a circus that's happening all around him. (Mutton)

For many interviewees, the subtractive iteration gave room for viewers to concurrently reflect on the unfolding narrative. 'You get to engage…When it opens, you're really wondering, "What's going on? What's going to happen in the story? Where am I going?"' (Palloway). Kazala described it as a classically open dramatic structure: 'In the [subtractive] version, when you are drawing it out like that, it just allows me to start asking my own questions, "What did happen?"'. 'You just have to make up your own mind what you think actually happened…Like all good dramas, you have to fill in the blanks' (Mattiussi).

For several practitioners, the structure and pacing of the subtractive iteration were naturalistic. '[It] felt way more linear in its telling…more true to the rhythms of what a courtroom procedure might be like' (Munn). Notably, the subtractive iteration's qualities were likened to the legacy documentary editorial style. '[The subtractive version] is very much more "old school", the way we used to put something together…we have things much longer and we're letting things play out' (Palloway).

> I really liked the way we were eased in, like very slowly, almost like a timid fawn being coaxed to water or something…I did feel like I was being drawn into something. And in the best way, where you don't want to lead everybody by the nose, which I did feel the shorter version was doing. (Kazala)

In concert with the detail allowed by increased screentime, the 'lingering' (Palloway) and 'real' (Kazala) pacing produced by the subtractive iteration produced a strong emotional response in

some practitioners. ‘[It] is more emotional…[due] to the detail of their actual trial process…It makes a difference, the tempo’ (Acosta). However, others felt disconnected by the level of detail produced by the subtractive approach. ‘It felt too much. It didn't have the personal connection, didn't have the emotional feel that the first one did’ (Gulkin). ‘It's very dry, very dry…more like looking at rushes’ (Weslak).

The artistic merits or shortcomings of the editorial techniques provoked responses as individual as the artist practitioners and their works. ‘It’s a matter of taste’ (Hawkes). Editors well-versed in the expositional genre tended to prefer the additive digital-era iteration. ‘Ultimately, I liked the shorter version more than the longer version because it just played out a bit more rapidly’ (Palloway). In addition to the editorial tempo, its dramatic construction was appealing. ‘I sort of see it as a whole piece that kept me very engaged for the 32 minutes and made me feel very deeply for the main subject’ (Gulkin). ‘I like the [additive] one stylistically…it felt cleaner’ (Mattiussi). However, editors known for their work in poetic, observational, or hybrid modes were less enthusiastic. They described the additive version as superficial and formulaic. ‘[It] was kind of missing some of what often felt like authentic procedure’ (Munn). ‘There is less development, less time to present the problem to expose it and to solve it’ (Acosta). These practitioners described favouring the ‘expressive’ (Hawkes), ‘open’ (Acosta), ‘cinematic’ (Munn), and ‘impressionistic’ (Mutton) qualities of a subtractive iteration crafted by an editor with a feel for the material. ‘Poetry exists when you surrender to the footage’ (Acosta). ‘I much preferred [the subtractive version] just in general… it just felt like because it did feel a little more organic to the actual process’ (Kazala).

While the interviewees did not reach a consensus on the merits of the films, they all identified a distinct stylistic difference that they directly attributed to the editorial process. There was a correlation between the depth of industry experience of the respondents and their prior consideration of the artistic ramifications of the editorial process. Several veteran practitioners with extensive experience in both digital and analogue technology had previously sensed a relationship between their editorial process and its outcome. 'I find this whole exercise fascinating because this is something at the back of my mind' (Kazala). However, for editors whose careers were predominantly in the digital era, the concept was revelatory. 'The difference in the two pieces was amazing' (Hawkes). 'They almost couldn't be more different. I was actually very surprised at just how divergent the two viewings were' (Mutton).

4.3 Conclusion

This section presented the artefacts produced by the methodology described in chapter three. It went on to present the findings of both the reflexive and expert practitioner analysis of the artefacts. A key finding was that all of the expert assessors discerned a discrete filmic style in the creative works that they directly attributed to the editorial process. Moreover, the study provides support for the idea that an analogue approach to the digital film editing process can be used as an artistic tool. The final chapter discusses the implications of the study findings. Critical analysis of the artistic outcomes is interpreted, and the findings are compared to previous research to address the practical knowledge gap identified by the study.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This practitioner-based research project is a response to the problem of digital determinism in the art of documentary film editing. Collectively, the literature suggests that the early 21st-century transition to digital tools disrupted the methodology and, consequently, the style of documentary film editing. This study set out to address this problem in professional practice by investigating the creative implications of the editorial process in documentary filmmaking. It further examined the extent to which an analogue approach to the digital film editing process can be used as an artistic tool. This practical knowledge gap was investigated by comparing and contrasting contemporary, digital-era additive (editing by assembly) and antiquated analogue-era subtractive (editing by excision) strategies using digital film editing tools. The resulting artefacts were the subject of both reflexive and expert practitioner critical analysis that contends that a creative process driven by digital film editing technologies fosters non-linear, dialogue-driven narrative structures. The study further argues that an analogue process in a digital context fosters an immersive, temporally and geographically compartmentalised documentary form. Finally, this research maintains that the analogue editorial process can be employed as an artistic tool in digital documentary filmmaking.

5.2 Discussion

This study makes an original contribution to research and professional practice by providing the first comprehensive assessment of digital determinism in the art of documentary film editing.

Before this study, evidence of a link between the editorial process and its creative outcome was purely anecdotal. A key finding of this research is that the methods used in the editorial process of documentary filmmaking leave an indelible imprint on documentary form.

The contemporary digital documentary film editing process uses pre-existing and externally sourced structural paradigms as organisational principles, thus fostering extended montage structures that render an engineered and filtered filmic experience. Logic is the prevailing driver of narrative structures in which visual actuality is subordinate to dialogue recorded post-factum. The viewer comprehends rather than experiences content. Moreover, as the narrative structure is imposed on the material rather than derived from it, this approach is highly vulnerable to subjective decision-making. The contemporary process produces an efficient, rational, informative, and simplistic treatment of actuality.

In contrast, the creative constraint of a traditional analogue method in a digital workflow facilitates narrative derived from the source materials, engendering a geographically and temporally compartmentalised structure that presents as an immersive and naturalistic documentary. The viewer feels the moment rather than consumes information. The substance and pacing of the original source materials dictate the content, shape, and pacing of the resulting documentary. Thus, the analogue editorial process used in a digital context produces a compelling**,** nuanced, and, at times, opaque and ponderous treatment of actuality. Taken together, these findings suggest that the creative constraint of an analogue approach to the digital film editing process can be effectively used as an artistic tool in the art of documentary film editing.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

This project was limited by a small sample size characteristic of autoethnographic practitioner-based research and a necessary product of its significant financial and logistical challenges. Additionally, while this academic research did not enjoy the considerable financial resources typically associated with my professional practice, it operated free of the commercial imperative. As a filmmaker who owns the means of production, liberated from financial accountability and the tight deadlines typically associated with commercial production schedules, this methodology was arguably less reliant on technological shortcuts than what is commonly seen in professional practice.

Moreover, as this enquiry addressed, in part, the ramifications of subjective decision-making in the documentary editorial process, the study was limited by the sympathetic bias of the researcher toward the subject of the documentary film. The researcher contends that an editor with a negative bias would have produced an additive construction manifestly different from the subtractive iteration. However, I believe that this scenario would only amplify the results of this study. It is reasonable to assume that an unsympathetic practitioner facing a tight production deadline would utilise AI to achieve the most efficient means possible to achieve a cynically preconceived end.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this work offers valuable insights into the documentary post-production process. A natural progression of this work is to analyse the creative implications of

emergent text-based film editing software including, but not limited to, Trint's StoryBuilder and Adobe Premiere's Text-Based Editing. These AI technologies promise the possibility of editing documentary films exclusively based on the content of the written word and without the consideration of any audio-visual elements. Further research should also be carried out to explore the use of other analogue techniques in a digital context. While this study examined Saare's subtractive method, practitioners interviewed in this study identified other analogue approaches worthy of exploration.

5.4 Conclusion

These findings will be of interest to the documentary community of practice, particularly filmmakers, film editors, assistants, and post-production supervisors. They make clear post-production workflows must no longer be determined by codecs, bandwidth, and delivery schedules. We must recognise the implications of the editorial process to our creative work. While it seems absurd to state the obvious, film editors must watch in real-time the entirety of the raw materials gathered for their projects. Outsourcing the analysis of rushes to AI technologies or subordinates creates a lacuna between the artist and their medium. The use of legacy working methods provides a necessary reminder to the artist of the need for unhurried reflection and hard graft, as well as the dangers of easy automated solutions.

While this study confirms the link between the editorial process and documentary form and makes clear that the analogue process may be used as an artistic tool, it does not argue for a preferred method. While the subtractive method meets my creative needs, it is, as Hawkes reminds us, 'a

matter of taste'. This research project asserts there is a relationship between the editing process and documentary style. As the literature suggests, two decades after the digital revolution, we have not addressed its artistic ramifications. Moreover, as Sternberg and Kaufman write, we are all becoming prisoners of our own digital expertise (2010). As alternative approaches to our art are rendered obscure by analogue's fade into film editing's rear-view mirror, we must constantly challenge standard practice.

This research promises to have a significant impact on my artistry. As a prolific documentary film editor with more than three decades of experience, I have long suspected that a general relationship existed between method and outcome. However, the efficacy of purposeful creative constraint as an artistic tool was unexpected. Moreover, while I have implemented a designed set of efficient working methods at the overarching project level in the past, there is merit in considering the artistic implications of my working method at the act, scene, and sequence levels.

This enquiry has helped me find a better answer to the basal question of the study, 'What is the machine telling me to do now?'. It is not really telling us to do anything. But it makes strong recommendations. Life can be tedious, illogical, and messy. Thus, an authentic representation of life must embody, in some way, these qualities. Documentarians must resist blindly following the lead of digital tools that deny the untidiness of human existence, encouraging users to mirror their logical and mechanical nature. As filmmakers contend with the onslaught of emerging artificial intelligence technologies in a second wave of digital disruption, we must, to borrow Thoreau's (1917) phrase, withstand becoming tools of our tools.

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APPENDIX

Appendix I – Practitioner Filmography

Returnados (Yvan Patry, 1987). Editor. Documentary short. CBC.

Carmen Gloria Quintana (Yvan Patry, 1987). Editor. Documentary short. CBC.

Le pays interdit (Danièle Lacourse, Yvan Patry, 1989). Editor, Sound Editor. 56m. Canada.

Toivo, enfant de l'espoir (Magnus Isacsson, 1990). Editor. 30m. NFB.

Aguacate (Yvan Patry, 1990). Editor. Documentary short. CBC.

*Koevoet*s (Ole Gjerstad, 1990). Editor. Documentary short. CBC.

Famine dans la Corne de l'Afrique (Yvan Patry, 1991). Editor. Documentary short. CBC.

Sorti des cendres (Magnus Isacsson, 1991) Editor. 50m. NFB.

Nuit et silence (Yvan Patry, 1991). Editor, Sound Editor. 58m. Channel 4 (UK).

Memorias del viento (Felix Zurita, 1992). Editor. 52m. Channel 4 (UK).

Denial (Yvan Patry, 1994) Editor. 90m. NFB.

Little Heroes (Ole Gjerstad, 1990). Editor. 50m. CBC.

Hearts of Hate (Peter Raymont, 1995) Editor. 90m. CTV.

La part de dieu, la part du diable (Yvan Patry, 1995). Editor. 58m. NFB.

Chronique d'un genocide annoncé (Yvan Patry, 1996). Editor. 141m. NFB.

The Bribe or the Bullet (Brian Mckenna, 1996) Editor. 60m. CBC.

Invisible Nation (Linda-Lee Tracey, 1996) Editor. 90m. TVO.

The Sceptic's Journey (Peter Raymont, 1996) Editor. 90m. CBC.

Le sang coulait comme une rivière (Yvan Patry, 1996) Editor. 60m. NFB.

Nous étions des lâches (Daniele Lacourse, 1996) Editor. 60m. NFB.

Nous nous sentons trahis (Yvan Patry, 1996) Editor. 60m. NFB.

Assis sur un volcan (Yvan Patry, 1996) Editor. 90m. NFB.

Nica-Libre (Felix Zurita, 1997) Editor. 90m. Alba Films (Switzerland).

Drowning in Dreams (Tim Southam, 1997). Editor. 72m. NFB.

The Danger Tree (John McGreevy, 1997). Editor. 90m. NFB.

My Feminism (Dominique Cardona, Laurie Colbert, 1997) Editor. 55m. Women Make Movies.

Some Kind of Arrangement (Ali Kazimi, 1997) Editor. 45m. NFB.

It Takes a Child (Judy Jackson, 1998) Editor. 90m. TVO.

Chasing The Dream (Peter Raymont, 1998) Editor. 90m. CBC.

Hand of Fate (Scott Morgan, 1999) Editor. 90m. USA.

The Dragon's Egg (Allan King, 1999). Editor. 110m. TVO.

Western Eyes (Ann Shin, 2000) Editor. 60m. NFB.

Divorce What I See (Sun-Kyung-Yi, 2001) Editor. 60m. CBC.

Vanishing Acts (Sun-Kyung-Yi, 2001) Editor. 60m. CBC.

El Chogui (Felix Zurita, 2001). Producer, Editor. 58m. Alba Films (Switzerland).

Inside Information (Steven Silver, 2002). Editor. 52m. CBC.

Soul of India (Steven Silver, 2002). Editor. 52m. PBS (USA).

Woman Rebel (Leslie Fruman, 2002) Editor. 60m. History TV.

Reed's Revolution (Leslie Fruman, 2002) Editor. 60m. History TV.

War Surgeon (Judy Jackson, 2003) Producer, Editor. 90m. TVO.

Crimes of The Heart (John Haslett Cuff, 2003) Editor. 90m. TVO.

Comrade Bethune (Leslie Fruman, 2003) Editor, 60m. History TV.

Made in Hong Kong (Sun-Kyung Yi, 2003). Editor. 60m. AMC (USA).

Dying At Grace (Allan King, 2003). Editor. 148m. TVO.

Hogtown: The Politics of Policing (Min-Sook Lee, 2004). Editor. 96m. ESL Pictures.

The Hermit Kingdom (Sun-Kyung Yi, 2004). Editor. 70m. CBC.

Rumours of War (Karen Shopsowitz, 2005). Editor. 60m. CBC.

Call to Duty (Karen Shopsowitz, 2005). Editor. 60m. CBC.

Victory and Beyond (Karen Shopsowitz, 2005). Editor. 60m. CBC.

War Hospital (David Christensen, 2005). Consultant. 90m. NFB.

Memory for Max, Claire, Ida & Co. (Allan King, 2005) Editor. 112m. TVO.

Rocketman (Christine Nielson, 2006). Editor. 60m. Discovery.

Actuality: The Art and Life of Allan King (John Haslett Cuff, 2006). Producer, Editor. 60m. TVO.

Huracán Chavez (Felix Zurita, 2006). Editor. 60m. Alba Films (Switzerland).

EMPz 4 Life (Allan King, 2006). Editor. 113m. TVO.

Turning Pages (Joel Gordon, 2007). Writer, Editor. 55m. Bravo.

The Dark Years (Steven Silver, 2007). Editor. Documentary Series. NFB.

Sweetest Embrace (Najeeb Mirza, 2008). Editor. 74m. NFB.

Air India 182 (Sturla Gunnarsson, 2008). Editor. 97m. CBC.

Thay: The Teacher (Leslie Wiener, 2009). Producer, Editor. 52m. PBS (USA).

Experimental Eskimos (Barry Greenwald, 2010). Editor. 70m. APTN.

Badge of Pride (Min-Sook Lee, 2010). Editor. 50m. CBC.

Force of Nature: The David Suzuki Movie (Sturla Gunnarsson, 2010). Editor. 93m. NFB/CBC.

Grinders (Matt Gallagher, 2011). Editor. 52m. TVO.

Wiebo's War (David York, 2011). Producer, Editor. 93m. NFB.

Kap'yong (Barry Stevens, 2012) Editor. 30m. History TV.

Bomb Girls Remembered (Barry Stevens, 2012) Editor. 30m. History TV.

Sicily: The First Campaign (Barry Stevens, 2012) Editor. 30m. History TV.

Ortona: The War Inside (Barry Stevens, 2012) Editor. 30m. History TV.

The Road to Rome (Barry Stevens, 2012) Editor. 30m. History TV.

Vengeance: The Jewish Partisans' War (Barry Stevens, 2012) Editor. 30m. History TV.

Buchenwald Airmen (Barry Stevens, 2013) Editor. 30m. History TV.

Behind Enemy Lines (Barry Stevens, 2013) Editor. 30m. History TV.

Prisoners of the Sun (Barry Stevens, 2013) Editor. 30m. History TV.

Not One Step Back (Barry Stevens, 2013) Editor. 30m. History TV.

The Last Ship: The Sinking of the Esquimalt (Barry Stevens, 2013) Editor. 30m. History TV.

Peril on the Sea (Barry Stevens, 2013) Editor. 30m. History TV.

Whistle for a Tiffy (Barry Stevens & Nick Hector, 2014) Director, Editor. 30m. History TV.

D-Day + One (Barry Stevens & Nick Hector, 2014) Director, Editor. 30m. History TV.

Falaise (Barry Stevens & Nick Hector, 2014) Director, Editor. 30m. History TV.

Where Hell Is (Barry Stevens & Nick Hector, 2014) Director, Editor. 30m. History TV.

Liberation (Barry Stevens & Nick Hector, 2014) Director, Editor. 30m. History TV.

Going to War (Barry Stevens & Nick Hector, 2015) Director, Editor. 30m. History TV.

Cradle of The Taliban (Barry Stevens & Nick Hector, 2015) Director, Editor. 30m. History TV.

The White School (Barry Stevens & Nick Hector, 2015) Director, Editor. 30m. History TV.

Operation Medusa (Barry Stevens & Nick Hector, 2015) Director, Editor. 30m. History TV.

Hearts and Minds (Barry Stevens & Nick Hector, 2015) Director, Editor. 30m. History TV.

Damage Done (Barry Stevens & Nick Hector, 2016) Director, Editor. 30m. History TV.

Echoes (Sun-Kyung Yi, 2012). Editor. 56m. TVO.

Payback (Jennifer Baichwal, 2012). Editor. 93m. NFB.

Sector Sarajevo (Barry Stevens, 2013). Editor. 60m. History TV.

Monsoon (Sturla Gunnarsson, 2015). Editor. 108m. CBC/ARTE (France).

This Changes Everything (Avi Lewis, 2016). Editor. 89m. Louverture Films (USA).

How to Prepare for Prison (Matt Gallagher, 2016). Editor. 84m. TVO.

Happy Birthday Tammy Moone (Judy Ruzylo, 2017). Editor. 70m. Canada.

Frontline: The Fish on My Plate (Neil Docherty, 2017). Editor. 91m. PBS (USA).

Unfractured (Chanda Chevannes, 2017). Editor. 91m. Canada/USA.

The Way Out (Michelle Shephard, 2018). Editor. Television Documentary. 60m. CBC.

Canada in a Day (Trish Dolman, 2018). Editor. 90m. CTV/Bell Media.

Sharkwater Extinction (Rob Stewart, 2018). Producer, Editor. 88m. Canada/USA.

Love And Legacy (Nick Hector, Chad Derrick, 2018). Producer. 60m. CTV/Bell Media.

Prey (Matt Gallagher, 2019). Co-Producer, Editor. 83m. TVO.

The Fight to the Finish (Barry Stevens, 2020). Co-Producer, Editor. 70m. History TV.

Dispatches from a Field Hospital (Matt Gallagher, 2021). Story Editor. 90m. TVO.

The Perfect Story (Michelle Shephard, 2022). Co-Producer, Editor. 90m. TVO/NFB.

The Man Who Stole Einstein's Brain (Michelle Shephard, 2023). Editor. 90m. Frequent Flyer.

Appendix II – Ethics Clearances

University of Hertfordshire UH

SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS AND HUMANITIES ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO	**Nicholas Hector**
CC	**Dr Sam Jury / Laura Mee**
FROM	**Dr Brendan Larvor, Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities ECDA Vice Chairman**
DATE	**30/07/2021**

Protocol number: cCTA/PGR/UH/05203

Title of study: Meaning in order, the poetics of documentary film-editing

Your application for ethics approval has been accepted and approved with the following conditions by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

no additional workers named

Conditions of approval specific to your study:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the following conditions being seen and approved as addressed by the supervisor prior to recruitment and data collection:

- EC6 Q5 normally asks how much of the participants' time will be taken—so in this case, zero.
- Given the nature of the project, it would make more sense to seek participants' permission after they've seen what the applicant has done with the material filmed in 2016. 'You have the right to withdraw at any time' must mean a right to be edited out of the final work.

General conditions of approval:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

Permissions: Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

External communications: Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Invasive procedures: If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

Submission: Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Validity:

This approval is valid:

From: n/a (extant materials)

To: n/a (extant materials)

Please note:

Failure to comply with the conditions of approval will be considered a breach of protocol and may result in disciplinary action which could include academic penalties.
Additional documentation requested as a condition of this approval protocol may be submitted via your supervisor to the Ethics Clerks as it becomes available. All documentation relating to this study, including the information/documents noted in the conditions above, must be available for your supervisor at the time of submitting your work so that they are able to confirm that you have complied with this protocol.

Should you amend any aspect of your research or wish to apply for an extension to your study you will need your supervisor's approval (if you are a student) and must complete and submit form EC2.
Approval applies specifically to the research study/methodology and timings as detailed in your Form EC1A. In cases where the amendments to the original study are deemed to be substantial, a new Form EC1A may need to be completed prior to the study being undertaken.

Failure to report adverse circumstance/s may be considered misconduct.
Should adverse circumstances arise during this study such as physical reaction/harm, mental/emotional harm, intrusion of privacy or breach of confidentiality this must be reported to the approving Committee immediately.

University of Hertfordshire UH

SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS AND HUMANITIES ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO	**Nicholas Hector**
CC	**Samantha Jury**
FROM	**Dr Brendan Larvor, Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities ECDA Vice Chair**
DATE	**20/06/2023**

Protocol number: CTA/PGR/UH/05969

Title of study: Meaning in order, the poetics of documentary film-editing

Your application for ethics approval has been accepted and approved with the following conditions by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

No additional workers named

Vice Chairman's Note:

Required edit: On EC6, for Q.9, The Vice Chair suggests that the amount of time stated on EC1A (six years) is included here.

General conditions of approval:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

Permissions: Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

External communications: Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Invasive procedures: If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

Submission: Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Validity:

This approval is valid:

From: 20/06/2023

To: 01/10/2023

Please note:

Failure to comply with the conditions of approval will be considered a breach of protocol and may result in disciplinary action which could include academic penalties.
Additional documentation requested as a condition of this approval protocol may be submitted via your supervisor to the Ethics Clerks as it becomes available. All documentation relating to this study, including the information/documents noted in the conditions above, must be available for your supervisor at the time of submitting your work so that they are able to confirm that you have complied with this protocol.

Should you amend any aspect of your research or wish to apply for an extension to your study you will need your supervisor's approval (if you are a student) and must complete and submit form EC2.
Approval applies specifically to the research study/methodology and timings as detailed in your Form EC1A. In cases where the amendments to the original study are deemed to be substantial, a new Form EC1A may need to be completed prior to the study being undertaken.

Failure to report adverse circumstance/s may be considered misconduct.
Should adverse circumstances arise during this study such as physical reaction/harm, mental/emotional harm, intrusion of privacy or breach of confidentiality this must be reported to the approving Committee immediately.

Appendix III – *The Way Back #1, Additive* Mlinzi Interview Selects

Note to reader: This document is derived from an AI-generated transcript.

Mlinzi 1.01: [Start Location: 01:12:10] I had a pretty decent childhood. [End Location: 01:12:12][Duration: 2.4 seconds]

Mlinzi 1.02: [01:12:13] Mother and father were separated, but my father was very much a big part of my life. I was go to stay with him. [01:12:18][5.5]

Mlinzi 1.03: [01:12:19] he taught me a lot [01:12:21][1.0]

Mlinzi 1.04: [01:13:32] The city sharpened me a very quick, [01:13:33][1.7]

Mlinzi 1.05: [01:13:13] The city was a cold reality that anything can happen at any given moment, you know, so you have to always be prepared and just be ready for whatever could come. [01:13:22][4.6] [8.5]

Mlinzi 1.06: [01:13:44] I'm thankful to survive it, and I'm thankful for what it instilled in me. [01:13:48][4.7]

Mlinzi 1.07: [01:14:31] Very positive family, very strong knit [01:14:35][3.4]

Mlinzi 1.08: [01:15:05] This whole ordeal has kind of like made me look at my life. [01:15:11][5.8]

Mlinzi 1.09: [01:15:45] I know a lot of people might smile and tell me that is, you know, it's not my fault, but [01:15:49][4.1]

Mlinzi 1.10 : [01:16:13] It bothers me more than anything else. [01:16:14][1.5]

Mlinzi 1.11: [01:16:18] I know I can't be punished no more, you know [01:16:25][6.8]

Mlinzi 1.12: [01:16:40] I / pride myself on being a family man [01:16:45][4.3]

Mlinzi 1.13: [01:18:08] My son was my life. He came into my life at a time when I was giving up. [01:18:13][4.9]

Mlinzi 1.14: [01:18:16] I was / trying to be somebody that I thought I wanted to be and making a lot of mistakes and the mistakes of weighing heavy on me. [01:18:27][11.0]

Mlinzi 1.15: [01:18:47] When I was in prison, I had a call back one day and ([01:18:34] his mother [01:18:35]) told me she was pregnant. / and from that point. I knew my son was meant to change my life. [01:18:59][11.3]

Mlinzi 1.16: [01:19:10] I came out with a new vigor. He came in and was my best friend. He was my purpose. [01:19:17][6.7]

Mlinzi 1.17: [01:19:42] And the other young man, Jalen Jamison. He was very special. He had a light in him. [01:19:53][10.9]

Mlinzi 1.18: [01:21:26] they were headed to be good men. You know, they were on their way to be good men. [01:21:30][4.0]

Mlinzi 1.19: [01:21:51] they're gone before their time. [01:21:53][1.5]

Mlinzi 1.20: [01:23:29] I miss the boys [01:23:34][4.6]

Mlinzi 1.21: [01:23:34] I just wait for the meaning to all of this to come and show shown itself to me and help me understand a little bit better because I [01:23:42][7.9]

Mlinzi 1.22: [01:25:02] my father gave me what I needed to make it so I can get to the blessings to learn. / and I try to do the same for my son. [01:25:11][8.9]

Mlinzi 1.23: [01:30:08] Today is the first day. [01:30:12][3.9]

Mlinzi 1.24: [01:30:21] Today is the first day of the rest of my life [01:30:25][3.7]

Mlinzi 1.25: [01:30:54] I didn't remember. So, to find out facts, you know, I'm just as surprised and I'm just as eager to find out as anyone in the audience or as anybody in the courtroom, I'm just as eager to find out what happened. What did the results say or what is the verdict? I'm eager. I'm not scared. I'm eager because I want to know the truth. [01:31:15][21.6]

Mlinzi 1.26: [01:32:45] I'm just happy to be right now free of any charges or, you know, not guilty on the charges that were brought to me. And I'm just going to take that. One day at a time. Yeah. [01:33:00][14.9]

Mlinzi 2.01: [01:33:24] What's next? What do I do with my life? How do I make amends with my heart? [01:33:32][8.1]

Mlinzi 2.02: [01:39:15] After the verdict, / I cried. You know, it wasn't a cry of joy. It was it was tears of pain because my reality was, this is just another step. But I'm happy to be past it, but this was just another step of me, making the means finding the answer. Healing, accepting, growing all these things that I must do, I must overcome this is just another step in the process. [01:39:48][33.4]

Mlinzi 2.03: [01:38:23] I was very confused, not knowing what happened and why. [01:38:30][7.0]

Mlinzi 2.04: [01:42:48] (They) took me in and kept me for a night. At the time, I was really messed up. I had a hip replacement from the accident and this was probably two months. So I was still in pretty bad shape. [01:43:02][14.2]

Mlinzi 2.05: [01:43:21] One night in jail. It kind of it kind of tightened up my mind up to the fact that I had a real issue going on. [01:43:30][9.1]

Mlinzi 2.06: [01:46:30] They put a tether on my ankle and they they they came at me with all these charges [01:46:36][5.5]

Mlinzi 2.07: [01:49:25] this was my toughest moment of my life, I hope to never have to deal with nothing as tough again ever, [01:49:31][3.5]

Mlinzi 2.08: [01:52:36] Life itself is beautiful as precious. [01:52:39][3.4]

Mlinzi 2.09: [01:53:05] And maybe that's the message. Maybe that's the message. [01:53:11][6.1]

Appendix IV – *The Way Back #1, Additive* Screening Notes

141202_A Frank Murphy
141202_B Detroit EXT Day Driving
141202_C Detroit EXT Twilight
141220_A Detroit Downtown
141220_B Detroit Innercity
150130_A Detroit vistas
150130_B Ford Theatre

Approx. 61m shot in December and January of vistas and urban colour. Screening and further organization was needed. Struck by how my relationship with this kind of material has changed. Screening similar visuals of Detroit during the editing of *How to Prepare for Prison* provoked a 'poverty porn' response. There was something visually striking about the collapse of a once-great city. I've lived in Windsor, referred to as 'South Detroit' by some residents, for four years now and Detroit has become a second home. Now, I see images of resilience and community. The Ford Theatre feels particularly clichéd. These images can provide geography, time, season, and socio-economic indicators. There are challenges regarding seasonal continuity as the story takes place in June.

150222_A Roadside Memorial
This impromptu memorial to Mlinzi's children was found at the site of the accident. It's touching. However, it's snowing. Again, seasonal continuity rules out this being integrated into a June timeline. It's immediately clear that I'll need to make a decision about the story timeline.

150222_B Mlinzi INTV
A 44m formal sit-down pre-trial interview. Mlinzi is articulate and resilient. He provides some context and thoughts about his future. However, as this is shot before the actuality that follows, it would need to be used as a contextual layer or element. The visualisation could be challenging. It has the merit of personalising him (ie we see him up close and directly address the camera).

Mlinzi speaks with such emotion, this transcript does not do his words justice. It has made me acutely aware that the use of AI transcripts changes how I work with this material. There is a tendency to base decisions on the written word / memory rather than the stringent screenings of the media. It is possible that this is not his best material. Other problems emerge. There is a discrepancy in the timeline of the story of his childhood. His father is described as a pillar of Mlinzi's childhood and a strong positive role model. Mlinzi also mentions that his father was absent as he was incarcerated for 15 years. Clearly, these are not mutually exclusive ideas.

However, this nuanced detail is beyond the reach of the materials. Narration would be needed to clarify. This requires the introduction of a new technique and a new voice: the omniscient narrator. To what end? It is a distinction without a difference. Further details pose challenges. Mlinzi McMillan and Jalen Jamison were the two people killed that day. Mlinzi is Mlinzi's biological son. Jalen is his stepson. The patronym is a bit confusing as is Mlinzi (Sr.)'s use of the term "son" for Mlinzi and "Jalen" for his stepson. Used improperly, this could come across as callous. Finally, Mlinzi Jr (my term. Used for clarity) and Jalen's ages straddled childhood and adolescence. Out of great respect, they are referred to as men. Again, this challenges the clarity of the storytelling.

Selecting and organizing sections of dialogue makes this filmmaker acutely aware that the spoken word (in interview or casual conversation) is unrestrained by time, space, or theme. It is often repetitive and circular. The documentary editing process seeks to impose structure on this material in order to integrate it into a logical framework of ideas and events that is a film.

150222_C Sharpe INTV
A 31m formal sit-down pre-trial interview. The camera loves Michael Sharp. He is as charming as he is brilliant. It's a mixed blessing as the audience would prefer to see Mr Sharp rather than use his voice as a form of narration. As with Mlinzi, Mr. Sharpe provides context on himself and the case. Again, visualisation could be challenging. I can imagine weaving Mr. Sharpe interview with actuality.

NOTE: It seems that the case was split into two parts. The first half happened before the camera started to roll in February. This is not clearly articulated by our characters nor covered by the camera. Moreover, it does not serve the narrative. Avoid. (This decision clearly illustrates Grierson's definition and sets this work apart from journalism.)

150227 Detroit Downtown
150307 Detroit Winter Sunset
150314_A Detroit Belle Isle VIZ
150314_B Detroit Inner-city
Not much to work with here due to season and light continuity. Skip.

150425_A Mlinzi Video Appearance
A short scene. Mlinzi hears the charges and makes a plea via video. Poor audio. Michael Sharpe is late. This is a minor detail that neither serves the story (it tells us nothing about the case or quality of representation. Sharpe was late. Sometimes people are late). Skip.

150425_B Detroit Prison
Some useful images here that could combine well with character narration. They freight the idea of a possible future/stakes.

150425_C Mlinzi Court Appearance
There is a discovery issue re: the chain of custody of evidence (Mlinzi blood samples). Sharpe argues for and receives a continuance. The case is postponed until the next summer. Some visuals may be useful in another context. However, it is likely the difference of a year will create continuity issues.

151018_A Windsor Exteriors
Useless.

151018_B Mlinzi plays basketball
Visually interesting but does not drive the story unless – possibly – combined with interview dialogue,

151018_C Mlinzi at the accident scene
Disappointing in a way. Lacks emotional punch. Perhaps could be combined with interview.

151018_D Frank Murphy Courthouse
Very useful images. It feels like a day/event is beginning. Light and season are pretty close to core narrative.

160614_A Mlinzi Court Appearance - Arrival
160614_B Mlinzi Court Appearance - Opening Arguments & P Witness 1 (Truck Driver)
Opening arguments from both prosecution and defence. The first witness is called by the prosecution. He is the truck driver whose vehicle collided with Mlinzi's car. The cross-examination ends shortly after it begins.

As the content is detail oriented, it lacks drama.

This material is shot single camera from one of two fixed physical locations (abreast of the jury for eyelines and to protect identity of jurors). The camera is not allowed to reposition during proceedings. Matt appears to be shooting with fixed-length prime lenses. He changes lenses infrequently as he will be asked to leave if he becomes a distraction. This will be difficult to assemble. Coverage (what is on camera) will play a strong role in determining content.

Initial thoughts:

- No need to stick with chronology of the trial (ie reorder or cross cut witness will heighten drama).
- Not all witnesses are interesting or useful
- Less is more
- the lack of visual variety and the closed location is a substantial challenge

160615_A Court - P Witness 1 (Truck Driver) cont'd
The cross examination of the truck driver continues. Would it be interesting to crosscut examination and cross? Mlinzi gets lost in this. It's his story but the camera focuses on the unfolding action. Reactions of Mlinzi are key. The dialogue is difficult to understand, and the AI transcription is struggling.

160615_B Court - P Witness 2 (Bystander)
160615_C Court - P Witness 3 (Police Officer)
160615_D Court - P Witness 4 (Paramedic)
160615_E Court - Visuals
160615_F Court - P Witness 4 (Detective)
A number of artistic challenges are immediately revealed. The fixed position single camera, the repetition of testimony (exam, cross, and clarification) and the closed physical space suggest that the structure be constructed on a non-linear presentation of actuality in a linear presentation *of described events.* That is to say, start with the opening arguments, then organize the material based on the events of the tragedy. (Don't rigidly adhere to the exam and then cross). It's basically how the prosecution presents their case. Find the key moments (especially emotionally engaging ones). Repeat characters only if needed. Then weave in a contextual line (Mlinzi outside of the courtroom) and / or Mlinzi and Michael giving a play by play of events.

160616_A Court - P Witness 5 (Detective) cont'd
160616_B Court - D Witness 1 (Private Investigator)
160616_C Court EXT - Mlinzi and Michael
The second day of testimony is slow and detail oriented. There's an interesting subtext of the systemic need for efficiency. The judge is very concerned about finishing quickly. She thought it would finish in one day. It takes six. There is only one defence witness, a former cop who works as a PI accident trial expert. The prosecutor subtly tries to undermine his expertise by confusing him, thus suggesting that he is suffering from ageing-related cognition issues. Mlinzi does not testify.

160617 Trial Day 4 Closing Arguments & Instructions
The closing arguments are strong (in comparison to the witness testimony). In terms of working with the trial material, it would be wise to cut opening and closing arguments first to ensure that the trial scenes support the framing.

160618 Mlinzi Court Appearance
The verdict is delivered. Mlinzi is innocent.

PickUps
It was clear that establishing shots of the courthouse and the city were needed. Matching exteriors were shot in May 2022.

Reflection
This is a heart-wrenching story of a man on trial for the vehicular manslaughter of his two children in a tragic car accident. The active present tense of the film is – at its core – five days in a courtroom. A small amount of contextual material (interviews, generic visuals) has been provided. The footage is expertly shot and both artistically and technically first class. There are serious limitations, as to what and how the trial could be filmed. A single camera observed events from a fixed position within a singular venue. The jury could not be filmed. Characters are seen in profile. One end of each conversation can be captured at a time.

The undisputed facts of the event are limited and tragic. A large commercial vehicle transporting approximately 30,000 lbs of metal car parts was making a tight left-hand turn on a residential street in inner-city Detroit. It struck - or was struck by – a sports car carrying Mlinzi McMillan and his two sons. No one knows what happened. Mlinzi does not recall the event. The physical impact and shock of the event has wiped his memory. The only other living person there – the truck driver – claims he was unaware that he was hit. Prompted by the sight of smoke, he got out to inspect his vehicle. He found the victims but did not help them. A passer-by stopped to assist.

One son was dead at the scene. Mlinzi and his other son were taken to hospital. The young man died in hospital. Mlinzi was charged with vehicular manslaughter.

The clearest and most malleable elements are retrospective. That is to say that the pro-filmic events are a mechanism to tell a retrospective story: what happened on the fateful day of the accident. The narrative is delivered by courtroom testimony and contextualized by formal interviews.

The structure of the unfolding events of the trial is familiar. The state has accused a citizen of breaking a law. They present a precis of their case. The defence attorney disputes this and presents a summary of their counterargument.

The 'people' (the prosecution) then calls witnesses. In this case, there are four. The first bystander on the scene, a police officer who responded to the accident, a paramedic, and a detective who deals specializes in accident investigations. One by one each testifies about what they saw or, in the case of the detective, the data he gathered. After each prosecution witness, the defence lawyer cross-examines, clarifying or challenging the testimony. After the prosecution presents its case, the defence presents its witnesses. In this case, a single defence witness is an 'expert' in vehicular accident investigations. After the prosecution cross-examination of this last witness, the defence rests. Finally, closing arguments are made. The prosecution summarises the peoples' case. The defence lawyer challenges the prosecution's argument and presents his own. It is slow-going and complicated.

Appendix V – *The Way Back #1, Additive,* Paper Edit

Note to reader: This document is derived from an AI-generated transcript.

1. EVOCATIVE OPENING

Pickups: Establish Detroit (June)
Establish geography, season, time, and socio-political context.

151018_C Mlinzi at the accident scene (Driving to site)

150222_B Mlinzi INTV PR2562.mp4
Mlinzi 2: [01:38:23] I was very confused, not knowing what happened and why. [01:38:30][7.0]

150222_B Mlinzi INTV PR2561.mp4
Mlinzi 1: [01:30:54] I didn't remember. ~~So, to find out facts, you know,~~ I'm just as surprised and I'm just as eager to find out as anyone in the audience or as anybody in the courtroom, I'm just as eager to find out what happened. What did the results say or what is the verdict? I'm eager. I'm not scared. I'm eager because I want to know the truth. [01:31:15][21.6]

Text on Screen
Setup Trial

2. OPENING STATEMENT - PROSECUTION

151018_D Frank Murphy Courthouse
Overlapping dialogue 'call the case' etc.

160614_B Mlinzi Court Appearance – MM0006 - Opening Arguments
Prosecuting Attorney: [00:00:43] The story begins like this on July 15 of 2014, summer evening. Does. Truck driver named Jacob Mellinger has just picked up a load of auto parts from a shop over on the Near East Side here on Oakland Street in Detroit. He's headed out toward Lancing with the small car parts, he's traveling south and he hangs a left to turn on the Holbrook to get over to the I-75 freeway. [00:01:16][33.0]

Prosecuting Attorney: [00:02:27] When suddenly his vehicle stopped, came to an abrupt and unexpected stop, he'll tell you that he looked in his right hand mirror, looked back and couldn't see anything. He looked to his left hand mirror and back toward the rear tandem axles of the semi-

trailer. He observed smoke. I'll tell you, he got out of the driver's seat, walked around toward the left hand side of the vehicle, didn't see anything, and as he came around the rear of the vehicle. [00:02:56][29.9]

Prosecuting Attorney: [00:03:47] You'll hear test testimony from a man named Montgomery McCants, Mr. McCants was the first person who arrived at the scene. And I'll tell you that he was driving along and he heard a loud boom and he looked up and he saw this vehicle [00:04:04][17.0]

Unidentified: [00:04:06] smashed into the back of the assembly, and he went up [00:04:10][4.0]

Prosecuting Attorney: [00:04:11] and observed three people in the car, child in the passenger front seat, who Mr. McCants will tell you was essentially embedded in the dashboard. Another child in the center, who was also essentially embedded in the dashboard and an adult male African-American appearing to be about six feet tall and slender build smash up against the steering. All three were obviously grievously injured. Mr. McCants helped to remove the two children from the vehicle, and he'll tell you that in his observations, at least one of them was fatally injured at that moment. [00:04:54][43.0]

Prosecuting Attorney: [00:09:49] o if we could turn off the lights and you can see some of the pictures of the vehicle [00:09:53][3.7]/ [00:09:54] at the time of the crash. [00:09:54][0.6] [4.3]

Prosecuting Attorney: [00:11:09] And that's all that remained of the Cheval after the car crash that claimed the lives of two boys, and we think that when you considered all of the evidence and and weighed that evidence in accordance with the law the court will give you. We believe your conclusion that the reason that John Johnson and Lindsey McMillan died is because they were in that vehicle that was being operated recklessly. Without care for the safety of people are protected by the defendant. And I think that once you've considered all of it, you'll determine that indeed those two charges have been proven and you'll have a guilty verdict of guilty. [00:11:56][46.1]

3. MLINZI CONTEXT “MY KIDS WERE MY LIFE”

151018_C Mlinzi at the accident scene (Driving to site)

150222_B Mlinzi INTV PR2561.mp4
Mlinzi 1: [01:16:40] I / pride myself on being a family man [01:16:45][4.3]
Mlinzi 1: [01:18:08] My son was my life. He came into my life at a time when I was giving up. [01:18:13][4.9]

Mlinzi 1: [01:18:16] I was / trying to be somebody that I thought I wanted to be and making a lot of mistakes and the mistakes of weighing heavy on me. [01:18:27][11.0]

Archival Images? Home Movies?
Mlinzi 1: [01:18:47] When I was in prison, I had a call back one day and ([01:18:34] his mother [01:18:35]) told me she was pregnant. / and from that point. I knew my son was meant to change my life. [01:18:59][11.3]

Mlinzi 1: [01:19:10] I came out with a new vigor. He came in and was my best friend. He was my purpose. [01:19:17][6.7]

Mlinzi 1: [01:19:42] And the other young man, Jalen Jamison. He was very special. He had a light in him. [01:19:53][10.9]

Mlinzi 1: [01:21:26] they were headed to be good men. You know, they were on their way to be good men. [01:21:30][4.0]

Mlinzi 1: [01:21:51] they're gone before their time. [01:21:53][1.5]

4. OPENING ARGUMENT - DEFENCE

160614_B Mlinzi Court Appearance – MM0006 - Opening Arguments
Defence Attorney: [00:16:03] The verdict that the people want you to come up with. We'll have two words at the end of this trial. No one, no guilt. [00:16:17][14.0]

Defence Attorney: [00:13:04] There's two sides to every story. I don't know how good a sign you're going to get from the prosecution's case, but they'll give you some. And you have sworn to listen to the evidence. Keep an open mind and cities judges, if the case was open as sure as what you just heard, we wouldn't be sitting. [00:13:51][46.8]

Defence Attorney: [00:07:21] 35 to 40 people. That was at the scene of this horrific accident. The people were not produced one. One. Witness one office spoke to a witness to find out what had happened. There was no investigation is what you're going to hear and what you're going. At the close of this case, what you're going to hear is is that a horrific accident and the operative phrase is accident occurred. Period. I'm asking you or I should say, at the conclusion of this case. [00:08:22][61.4]

Defence Attorney: [00:08:24] That there'll be one verdict. Not guilty. [00:08:28][4.6]

[66.0]

5. MLINZI CONTEXT “THE DAY OF THE ACCIDENT”

Archival Images? Home Movies?

150222_B Mlinzi INTV PR2561.mp4
Mlinzi 1: *[00:05:46]* I just think about all the good intentions that was in me that day. I think back to me going to pick him up from football practice. You know, we everybody loved the car and they used to pick us up and practice in the car because I had parties in the car and me, me and the kind of guy was they were doing great. *[00:06:06][19.6]*

Mlinzi 1: *[00:06:06]* You know, they would follow instructions. They were staying out of trouble. So I figured I surprise them and pull it up. You know, any young kid, you know, the old man pull up in a nice car, you know, look, you know, did to your friend. So I wanted to make them feel good. *[00:06:22][15.8]*

6. CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION PART ONE

160614_B Mlinzi Court Appearance - Opening Arguments & P Witness 1 (Truck Driver)
Driver: Background, the day of the accident (up to impact)

Prosecutor: [00:00:06] Will you tell the folks here in the jury box what your name is? Jacob Mellinger? OK. And Mr. Mellinger, hold are you today? [00:00:14][7.6]

Mellinger: [00:00:15] 26. [00:00:15][0.0]

Prosecutor: [00:00:16] I'm going to ask you some questions about something that happened back in the summer of 2014. In July 2014. OK. OK. Can you tell the jury, please? What were you doing for a living? What kind of work were you engaged in? In July of 2014, [00:00:30][13.6]
Mellinger**:** [00:00:32] I had a CDL and I gave so much OK, [00:00:34][2.7]/

Prosecutor: [00:02:52] So let's talk about the date of July 15th of 2014. The evening hours of that day. Were you working? I'm sorry. July 15th, 2014, the evening hours of that day. Yes. Yes. OK. And were you working as a truck driver, much as you've just described to the jury? Yes. OK. Do you remember that day as you sit here now? Do you remember that day? Yes. OK. Tell the jury please what your duties were or what you were doing at that point in time, say, around the evening hours. [00:03:29][36.9]

Mellinger: [00:03:31] Well, I did my preacher, so I tell my dispatch to go to think of. [00:03:41][9.5]

Unidentified: [00:03:42] And stamping plant on. Oh, lane road, OK. [00:03:47][5.1]

Prosecutor: [00:03:48] What city was that in nature? OK? Did you go there? Yes. Had you been there before that day? No. How did you know where to go? [00:03:56][8.4]

Mellinger: [00:03:57] I got the address and I found my gps looked down at a map. [00:04:01][4.0] [63.9]

Prosecutor: [00:07:23] OK. All right. Tell the jury, please. What happened next? [00:07:27][3.4]

Mellinger: [00:07:28] As I became as I came up to the intersection of Oakland and Holbrook, so I was right up. When I came up to the light, it turned green law states, any vehicle coming up to a light like that, you're supposed to stop as this ban is a stop sign. So I came up to the intersection, I stopped collect all directions and I proceeded to take my left hand turn when everything went there, OK? [00:07:57][29.5]

Prosecutor: [00:08:24] OK, so you are motoring through your car on? Holbrook headed back toward I-75. Tell us what happened. [00:08:29][5.6]

Mellinger: [00:08:30] As I proceeded to take my left turn. Basically, I was just struck or stopped abruptly. [00:08:40][10.3]

Prosecutor: [00:08:42] OK. [00:08:42][0.0]

Mellinger: [00:08:43] I wasn't exactly sure what had happened at that point in time. I can't see anything on my right here near [00:08:47][4.9]

Unidentified: [00:08:48] as in the way that the vehicle has turned. [00:08:51][3.2]

Mellinger: [00:08:54] I looked in my left mirror, my tires were smoking, [00:08:57][2.9]

Prosecutor: [00:08:58] which tires [00:08:58][0.3]

Mellinger: [00:08:59] my rear attendants. [00:09:00][0.4]

Prosecutor: [00:09:01] OK. [00:09:01][0.0]

Mellinger: [00:09:04] As I saw, that still wasn't exactly sure what was going on, so I got out of my truck and I started walking [00:09:11][7.0]

Prosecutor: [00:09:11] around the back side of the truck. Mr. Malir, you testified that you were stopped abruptly. Did that abrupt stop? Was it accompanied by the sound that you remember, if you remember? [00:09:21][9.6]

Mellinger: [00:09:22] Not that I can remember. There's a lot going on all at once and I had so OK. [00:09:27][5.4]

Prosecutor: [00:09:28] All right. So you jump down. Well, tell us what you were doing it. [00:09:31][3.4]

Mellinger: [00:09:32] As I got out of the truck, I proceeded to walk towards the back of the trailer looking in my trailer. I wasn't sure how exactly it happened. All I can see is a bunch of smoke coming out of my tires as I look at my tires and facing a different direction on my trailer. So I proceed to walk around the back of the trailer [00:09:53][21.7]

Prosecutor: [00:09:54] and interrupt you with a question. Any question I ask if it sounds dumb and not intended to be done? You said the tires are facing a different direction. Is that the way they're supposed to kiss? [00:10:02][8.4]

Mellinger: [00:10:03] No. The tires are facing southbound on. My trailer was facing as kitty corner to Holbrook and everybody's OK and they go on. So as I come around the backside of the trailer, I hear people yelling that there's babies in there. [00:10:24][21.5][104.4]

160615_B Court - P Witness 2 (Bystander) MM0016.mp.4
Bystander: notices the impact

McCants: [00:03:55] a semi was the band was over here in the back of it was like, like this out of Oakland. This was like on Oprah. [00:04:03][7.8]

Prosecutor: [00:04:04] And you say this mean what the front or the back of the truck in [00:04:07][2.6]

McCants: [00:04:07] the back of the truck? This was back here, open in the front of the business here, like turned into a overlook going toward the Chrysler Freeway, which is east. OK. And it was a car that was like under these the two wheels in the back. [00:04:23][15.7] [26.1]

160615_C Court - P Witness 3 (Police Officer) MM0018.mp4
Police officer: arrives on the scene

Prosecutor: [00:02:31] as you sit here today, your testimony is that it was opened and over. OK. As you sit here. Officer Ward, do you remember rolling up to the scene of an accident? Yes. Tell the jury what you saw. [00:02:42][11.7]

Ward: [00:02:43] I saw a semi trailer with a car looked like. It was like embedded into the rear of the trailer and I saw was saying estimated 50 to 60 civilians out there. And I also saw two kids being rendered aid by civilians out there. [00:03:05][21.8] [33.5]

160615_B Court - P Witness 2 (Bystander) MM0016.mp.4
Bystander: tries to save one child

McCants: [00:06:50] What did you do then, sir? Well, I initially approached this car and then I didn't understand the dynamics. And then I looked again, and I'm trying to see if someone standing. It wasn't like it wasn't the top of his car [00:07:06][15.5]

Prosecutor: [00:07:06] standing up where [00:07:07][0.5]

McCants: [00:07:08] on the passenger side, inside the vehicle, inside the vehicle, I'm thinking this was was a man, OK? And I prayed and I approached. This was a child. OK? What did you do that? [00:07:21][13.1]

Unidentified: [00:07:30] I want to. [00:07:30][0.4]

McCants: [00:07:34] But the child was stuck in forward. I tried to pull the kid but I couldn’t get him. [00:07:42][7.2]

160615_C Court - P Witness 3 (Police Officer) MM0018.mp4
Police officer: witnesses the futile attempt

Ward: [00:03:36] remember seeing blood. I remember one child not being exposed properly while civilians were rendering aid. OK, now their child was, I would say, had some life OK to him [00:03:51][15.3]

160615_B Court - P Witness 2 (Bystander) MM0016.mp4
Bystander: a child dies

Prosecutor: [00:09:59] OK. When you say you tried to resuscitate a Mr. Dickens, can you tell the jury what it is that you did? [00:10:04][5.5]

McCants: [00:10:05] I tried to give her mouth to mouth and wrestled his chest. [00:10:08][2.5]

Prosecutor: [00:10:09] And did you do that after you removed [00:10:10][1.1]

McCants: [00:10:10] him from the vehicle? You know, [00:10:12][1.4]/

Prosecutor: [00:08:45] You know, we were able to actually free him from the wreckage. [00:08:47][2.0]

McCants: [00:08:48] I couldn't free him. The lure of free the little shoes. Little kid. [00:08:55][6.8] [100.3]

7. MLINZI CONTEXT “THE ACCIDENT SITE”

151018_C Mlinzi at the accident scene
Mlinzi: *[00:11:06]* We're at the corner of Holbrook from where the accident took place. We're actually facing the opposite direction that I was driving at the night of the accident. And it's very quiet and peaceful at the moment. *[00:11:36][30.1]*

Mlinzi: *[00:11:36]* was kind of scared of this place. Because it was like the last time I really came out to get out of the hospital and feeling a little bit and coming here and trying to have reflection and think about the accident. And it was just scary. I was I was very weak, cried on the corner, looked around and just tried to ask a lot of questions and I couldn't answer. I can't really remember as accident happened or right after the accident. You know what happened with the circus after the accident? *[00:12:13][36.3]*

8. CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION PART TWO

160615_F Court - P Witness 4 (Detective) MM0039.mp4
Investigator: estimated speed

Prosecutor: *[00:00:19]* Detective Weitzel, in terms of what we're here for today, were you involved in the investigation into the crash that occurred on July 15th, 2014, and resulted in the death of the two boys, Jaylin and Lindsey? *[00:00:33][14.1]*

Prosecution: *[00:00:47]* Can you tell the jury, please, as you begin the process now of of analyzing this crash of investigating this crash? From a from your perspective, what is the thing that most keenly captures your attention? What aspect of the evidence *[00:01:02][14.8]*

Weitzel*: [00:01:03]* from these skid mark that is present? I know. *[00:01:05][2.0]*

Prosecution: *[00:01:05]* But OK? And why is that? *[00:01:07][1.6]*

Weitzel: *[00:01:09]* Because it's an extreme evidentiary value in determining the speed of the collision could have occurred at. OK. *[00:01:17][8.1]*

Prosecution: *[00:01:18]* OK. And why? How is it of some evidentiary value? How is a skid mark of some evidentiary value? *[00:01:24][6.2]*

Weitzel: *[00:01:25]* Because with skid marks, you can determine how much speed was necessary in order to make that skid mark, which is transferred into what we call speed loss. OK, when you can determine the length of a skid mark where it began and where ended and then your total measurements of the skid mark, you can then come up to a determination of how much speed was lost during the duration of the skid. *[00:01:54][28.9]* [61.7]

Prosecution: [00:27:08] We just do the math. Now we do the math. Let's make up for that. Where is it? You can't do that in your head. No, that's not my point. We're. [00:27:16][7.9]

Weitzel: [00:27:23] I might get a special one, so. [00:27:25][1.5]

Prosecution: [00:27:48] So now you're just multiplying 30 times, one, fifty six point three, nine times 4.5 five. [00:27:52][4.5]

Weitzel: [00:27:53] That's correct. OK. We're going to calculate these two first, then I've calculated Drag Factor and [00:27:59][5.7]

Prosecution: [00:27:59] then we'll square root. OK, very good. Very good. [00:28:01][1.9]

Weitzel: [00:28:37] Calculation is going to be with the drag factor. OK. And I'm simply going to take the square root of this number, [00:29:15][38.1]

Prosecution: [00:29:16] which is two thousand five hundred and eighty point four three. Is that correct? [00:29:19][3.0]

Weitzel: [00:29:19] That's correct. [00:29:19][0.2]

Prosecution: [00:29:20] All right. OK. [00:29:39][19.2] [82.0] //

Prosecution: *[00:33:24]* Detective White, so what's your conclusion from this mathematica*l* exercise *[00:33:30][0.8]* [4.6]

Weitzel: *[00:29:49]* at the conclusion of this, this gives us a speed loss of fifty point seventy seven nine. Miles per hour, what that indicates is that that's not the speed of the vehicle, that is the speed that was lost while making that skid mark. *[00:30:09][19.9]*

Prosecution: *[00:38:18]* Thank you, detective *[00:38:18][0.8]*

9. MLINZI CONTEXT “VISITING THE MEMORIAL”

150222_B Mlinzi INTV PR2562.mp4

Mlinzi 1: *[01:15:05]* this whole ordeal has kind of like made me look at my *life [01:15:11][5.8]*

Mlinzi 1: *[01:15:45*] I know a lot of people might smile and tell me that is, you know, it's not my fault, but I know that they still have their views and opinions and they're entitled to them. But the fact that it was a children involved in and it does affect families. Yeah, yeah. I, uh, the family aspect bothers me a lot about it because I really love my family and that's something I've always reinvested it and proud of myself for myself to do this to my own family and to other families...It bothers me more than anything else. *[01:16:14][29.2]*

Mlinzi 1: *[01:16:16]* It's kind of like the part of me that I know I can't be punished no more, you know, because I already have to deal with that. *[01:16:27][11.1]*

10. CASE FOR THE DEFENCE

160615_A Court - P Witness 1 (Truck Driver) MM0011.mp4
Driver: Inexperience (age, education, unfamiliar with the vehicle) residential area

Sharpe: *[00:00:33]* Yesterday, the prosecutor asked you your your age, and I assume that was your current 26. What is your current age?

Mellinger**:** Yes, sir.

Sharpe: OK. And on the on July 15, 2014, was your age 24.

Mellinger**:** Yes, sir.

Sharpe: OK. I think you mentioned yesterday at some point your testimony about truck driving school. Did you not?

Mellinger**:** Yes.

Sharpe: OK. When did you when did you go and when did you? What did you enter? And when did you complete truck driving school?

Mellinger**:** I answered every worry of two thousand. 14. And I did the March 14. *[00:01:28][55.2]//*

Sharpe: *[00:02:07]* March of 2014, you graduated from what school?

Millinger: Suburban truck driver training school.

Sharpe: How long did that course or that situation last?

Millinger: About 30 days.

Sharpe: So within four months of you graduating from truck driving school, this accident occurred. *[00:02:38][31.6]*

Millinger: *[00:02:40]* Yes. *[00:02:43][2.6]* [34.2]

160615_B Court - P Witness 2 (Bystander) MM0016.mp4
Bystander: did not see accident, time was wrong, trucks drive in a poor neighbourhood

Sharpe: *[00:18:45]* when you heard your sister say, Oh my God. And you look up? Yes. And now if I were to to indicate to you that the police department has this incident occurring in 1920 in the evening, *[00:19:06][20.2]*

McCants: *[00:19:06]* would you argue with that? No. *[00:19:08][2.2]*

Sharpe: *[00:19:27]* you may have made a mistake about the time. Right? *[00:19:31][3.8]*

McCants: *[00:19:33]* Are you asking me the question? Yes. Maybe I did *[00:19:35][2.1]*
[5.9]

160615_A Court - P Witness 1 (Truck Driver) MM0012.mp4

Sharpe: *[00:06:19]* clearly the turn you made was a tight turn, right? I mean, yeah, and it a fact. OK, now you have a 53 foot trailer, don't you?

Millinger: Yeah.

Sharpe: And you have at least a 20 foot care, don't you know, how long is a kid? *[00:06:43][23.3]*

Speaker 2: *[00:06:44]* Honestly, I could *[00:06:44][0.6]*

Millinger: *[00:06:45]* not tell you that, *[00:06:45][0.8]* [24.7]//

Sharpe: *[00:08:26]* you were not familiar with this term, right? I had not *[00:08:28][2.6]*

Millinger:**:** *[00:08:28]* been to that section prior to that. *[00:08:30][1.5]*[4.1]//

Sharpe: *[00:06:19]* clearly the turn you made was a tight turn, right? I mean, yeah, and it a fact. OK, now you have a 53 foot trailer, don't you? Yeah. And you have at least a 20 foot care, don't you know, how long is a kid? *[00:06:43][23.3]*

Speaker 2: *[00:06:44]* Honestly, I could *[00:06:44][0.6]*

Millinger: *[00:06:45]* not tell you that, but I'm also 20 feet. OK. *[00:06:46][1.9]*. //

Sharpe: *[00:07:44]* Is it dark when you're making this turn as dusk? You are making the turn, and you've never been in this area before have. *[00:07:55][10.5]*

Millinger: *[00:07:57]* Prior to that night, no *[00:07:58][0.6]*

160615_C Court - P Witness 3 (Police Officer) MM018.mp4

Police officer: no statements taken, no SM footage

Defence: *[00:09:38]* Your duties that day of the accident had nothing to do with taking any statements, correct?

Ward: That's correct.

Defence: OK. And so did you see any statements being taken of any of the people that were there or were you too busy with the crowd? *[00:09:55][16.6]*

Ward: *[00:10:25]*. I guess I don't have any written statements.

Defence: So are you aware of any that exists that were taken that evening? That's my question. *[00:10:35][9.4]*

Ward: *[00:10:37]* I am not aware of that. OK. *[00:10:40][3.0]* [58.3]

Defence: *[00:11:21]* Now, sometimes I've noticed there's an accident when there's 50 or 60 people or however many people, there are people with cell phones videotaping things. Did you happen to notice whether that occurred?

Ward: No, I didn't. *[00:11:52][1.3]* [30.9]

160615_B Court - P Witness 2 (Bystander) MM0016.mp4

Sharpe: *[00:21:16]* you didn't actually see the accident occurred, did you?

McCants: No,

Sharpe: and the position that the car and the truck were in when you looked up from the point that you first saw the truck in the car, you never saw that even either one of the truck or the car moved. Did you know the impact had already happened? *[00:21:42][3.6]*

McCants: *[00:21:42]* That was right in front of my eyes,

Sharpe: if we could just. Did you see the cars move? That's my question.

McCants: No. //

Sharpe: *[00:36:30]* Would you ask you whether it was normal for 18 wheelers to travel in the area of Holbrook? And in Oakland Street, you said there was no right. *[00:36:45][14.8]*

McCants: *[00:36:46]* It seemed like that. *[00:36:46][0.7]*

Sharpe: *[00:36:47]* OK, you see them all the time. But you're not making a call about whether it's legal in that order. *[00:36:51][4.2]*

McCants: *[00:36:53]* Oh no, I'm not a police officer, right? *[00:36:55][1.8]*

Sharpe: *[00:36:57]* And you describe this area as being poor, right? *[00:37:01][4.2]*

McCants: *[00:37:03]* It's a low tax base income. Yeah. Yes. No further questions. Would be direct. *[00:37:08][4.7]*

Sharpe: *[00:37:09]* No, I have nothing further from Mr. McCants. *[00:37:10][1.8]*[32.2]

160616_A Court - P Witness 5 (Detective) MM0039.mp4
Investigator: brief investigation, no follow up, did not test brakes on either vehicle

Sharpe: *[00:40:43]* You were at the scene on July 15th, 2014, which was the night of the accident. Correct?

Weitzel: Yes, sir. *[00:40:54][10.8] //*

Sharpe: *[00:41:22]* give us your best estimate how long you were there when you first arrived on the 15th. *[00:41:28][5.8]*

Weitzel: *[00:41:32]* Estimation, yes, maybe an hour. *[00:41:36][3.6]* [9.5]

Sharpe: *[00:42:34]* and you observed what you thought was skid mark on July 15, 2000 14. Correct? Yes. Didn't go back any other day up through today to do any further observation for fog photography or analysis on what you said. Skid marks. Right? *[00:42:54][20.3]*

Weitzel**:** *[00:42:55]* That's correct. *[00:42:56][0.3]*[20.6] //

Sharpe: *[00:50:16]* I think I got it my discovery packet. Some notation from you about the 1972 Civil Division that we link those sorts of things. *[00:50:38][22.1]*

Weitzel**:** *[00:50:39]* Yes, sir. As auto expert, I don't stand up for statistics of the vehicle. Sure. Yes. *[00:50:44][4.5]*

Sharpe: *[00:50:45]* Yes. Did you prepare one for the truck? *[00:50:47][1.9]*

Weitzel**:** *[00:50:48]* No, sir. Well, there was no evidentiary issues that were related to emotion that I needed to know those items for the truck market to leave skid marks due to due to speed. *[00:51:06][18.3]*

Sharpe: *[00:51:08]* So it wouldn't have been you weren't concerned about the truck at all and being at fault, that wouldn't be. *[00:51:14][6.2]*

Weitzel**:** *[00:51:16]* I wasn't concerned about the truck. As far as skid marks were concerned, OK, *[00:51:19][3.7]*[56.7] //

Sharpe: *[01:14:55]* his was a 1972 car. Oh, correct. Yes. Did you inspect the brakes on this 1972 old car? No. Did you ask anybody to inspect the brakes? The 1972 old car? *[01:15:07][12.3]*

Weitzel**:** *[01:15:08]* No, it wasn't inspected. *[01:15:09][0.7]* [13.0]

11. MLINZI CONTEXT “CARDS I WAS DEALT”

150222_B Mlinzi INTV PR2562.mp4
Mlinzi: *[01:49:24]* And this was my toughest moment of my life, and I hope to never have to deal with nothing as tough again ever, and I would never want nobody else to ever had to be there, have to have the cards that I had to be dealt in this situation. *[01:49:40][16.6]*

Mlinzi: *[01:50:01]* I was told that I tried to avoid the accident, and I was told that I braked a hundred feet fast, and so it lets me know that I was aware that I was trying not to be in an accident. That doesn't that makes me feel like I was not oblivious to what I was doing, it makes me believe that I was aware of what I was doing. *[01:50:26][24.9]*

Mlinzi: *[01:50:25]* And and I'm not blaming anyone because to blame someone would not help me because I've been blamed enough, so I'm not going to start blaming. *[01:50:36][11.3]*

12. CLOSING STATEMENTS

160617 Trial Day 4 Closing Arguments & Instructions – Prosecution MM0063.mp4
Judge: *[00:00:59]* All right. Are we ready for closing arguments? *[00:01:01][1.4]*

Prosecution: *[00:01:01]* Yes. Right. *[00:01:02][0.2]*

Judge: *[00:01:03]* You may proceed. *[00:01:03][0.3]*

Prosecution: *[00:01:04]* Thank you, Judge. Good morning, folks. So I think what we all know, kind of based upon our common experience and understanding and general knowledge, is people who live in society is two things. One is that accidents have causes, and the other is that actions have consequences. This is an opportunity for me to summarize the evidence that you've seen and to suggest to you why I believe it shows beyond a reasonable doubt that. Mr. Mullins you McMillen operated that 1972 Chevelle in a reckless manner on July 15th, and his operation of that vehicle in a reckless manner caused the deaths of Jim Jamieson and Lindsey McMillan. *[00:01:59][55.1]* [57.0]

Prosecution: *[00:02:52]* So let's think for a moment about what the testimony showed as it relates to what happened that particular evening. *[00:03:07][15.1]*

Prosecution: *[00:10:36]* Mr. Mellinger said that he was in the left lane on southbound open. The light was red. He was the first person in line as he approached light turn green and he began to roll slowly through that turn. He said there was someone on his left and that person backed up for him to give him room to come around. And as he's negotiating that turn, his his truck is abruptly stopped for a reason he doesn't understand. He looks he sees the smoke on the left side. He comes back around and he sees this car smashed into his hand and axes. *[00:11:15][38.4]*

Prosecution: *[00:15:44]* Detective White's testimony is that, in his opinion, based upon the evidence, the car was going between 50 and 57 miles an hour faster at the beginning of the skid than it was going at the end of the skid. *[00:16:04][19.8]*

Prosecution: *[00:17:30]* All the evidence, I think, compels the conclusion. Your conclusion that he was. Dramatically exceeding the speed. And as he came up that road, he saw the semi and he tried to go to the left. He slammed the brakes, the right side locked up. And again, get the truck and two little boys died. *[00:18:03][32.9]*

Prosecution: *[00:19:01]* There's no question that Mr. Macmillan operated this Cheval in a reckless manner, and it was that operation that caused the deaths. Lindsey Macmillan and Jason Johnson. And I would ask you, when you deliberate that, you conclude that and that you find that we've proven our case beyond a reasonable doubt and you return words of guilty on both counts. Thank you. *[00:19:26][24.2]*

160617 Trial Day 4 Closing Arguments & Instructions – Defense MM0063.mp4

Sharpe: *[00:21:22]* First off, I want to thank every one of you to be good, attentive, serious minded jurors doing this for 32 years. See, a lot of people fall asleep and not paying attention. There hasn't been any of that. And I think you and my client think that that lets us know that you're taking your duty seriously and lets us know that you're taking this case seriously. I only wish that the Detroit Police Department had taken this case seriously. *[00:22:09][46.7]*

Sharpe: *[00:23:14]* The Detroit Police Department is a fine, hardworking. Police agency, obviously you heard. Detective Weitzel, I may be slightly misquoting the numbers, but 900 fatalities in eight years. Obviously, he's a busy guy. Too busy to spend any more than 6 hours on a real serious case. *[00:24:38][83.9]*

Sharpe: *[00:22:34]* This is a case where two children died and the father is being accused of killing. And whether or not the Wayne County prosecutor has met his burden and proving that he recklessly drove his car and caused their deaths. It's not a science lesson, a mathematical lesson. This is not. This is. This is serious business. *[00:23:14][40.0]*

Sharpe: *[00:26:15]* Virtually all of the witnesses, with the exception of Mr. Nodar, made his efforts to tell the truth as they knew it to be, even if it wasn't always accurate, like 730 as opposed to 930. Bruce McKenzie. I would submit to you that the lies that came out of Mr. Dillinger's mouth. *[00:26:45][30.8]*

Sharpe: *[00:26:56]* he lied to you. He was lost and he couldn't admit it. Why? Because, as he already said, I'm concerned about my own liability, period. *[00:27:10][14.6]*

Sharpe: *[00:31:46]* I'm not suggesting that anybody intensely tried to frame my client or anything like that at all. But it was shoddy. You just don't do work like that. The operative phrase is accident and counsels use the word himself. *[00:32:03][17.3]*

Sharpe: *[00:32:16]* they're trying to criminalize an accident. They're trying to blame this guy and nobody else is involved or should take any of the blame. Not guilty. That would be the only appropriate verdict in this particular case. I thank you for that. *[00:32:42][26.3]*

13. VERDICT

160618 Mlinzi Court Appearance MM0085.mp4

Judge: *[00:06:05]* All right. I received a note from the jurors indicating that they have reached a verdict. Are we ready to receive the verdict? Yes. *[00:06:12][7.1]*

Judge *[00:07:02]* All right. They have a stipulation of 12 jurors that presently, specifically members of the jury, have received another note from you. And this note indicates that you have reached the verdict. *[00:07:16][13.5]* [13.5]

Judge *[00:07:30]* Okay. How do you find the defendant, Lindsay McMillan, as the count one? Reckless driving causing death, not guilty after count two, reckless driving causing death. *[00:07:46][15.1]*

Juror: *[00:07:46]* Not guilty. *[00:07:46][0.2]* [15.4]

14. MLINZI "REACTION TO VERDICT"

150222_B Mlinzi INTV PR2562.mp4
Mlinzi: *[01:39:15]* After the verdict, the throwing dismissing the case, I cried. You know, it wasn't a cry of joy. It was it was tears of pain because my reality was, this is just another step. But I'm happy to be past it, but this was just another step of me, making the means finding the answer. Healing, accepting, growing all these things that I must do, I must overcome this is just another step in the process.

15. EXIT
160618 Mlinzi Court Appearance
Sharpe: *[00:00:25]* Not guilty on both counts. *[00:00:32][6.6]//*
150222_B Mlinzi INTV PR2562.mp4
Mlinzi: And while I'm very, I'm very happy to be past it, you know, I don't, I don't. I don't want to say there's no big deal. I'm very happy to be past it because it weighed heavy on me as far as what was next in my life. But I look forward to put my energy and time to other things now and growing and trying to fulfill some of my dreams of my son's as well. I really want to try to. Be honest, make amends. *[01:40:14][59.2]*

Appendix VI – Practitioner Biographies

An alumnus of the world-renowned Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos, **Ricardo Acosta,** CCE was formally trained in analogue film editing. However, he subsequently entered professional practice as a first-wave digital adopter. Acosta is a fellow of the Sundance Institute, a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and a Canadian Cinema Editors Award-winning film editor. His works include the Cannes Golden Camera nominee *Sembene!* (2015), the Emmy Award-winning *Herman's House* (2014) and the Berlinale Audience Award-winning *The Silence of Others* (2018).

The career of veteran filmmaker **Cathy Gulkin,** CCE spans the analogue and digital eras. She is best known for her editing of the GLAAD award-winning *Forbidden Love* (1992) and the Donald Brittain Award-winning *Guantanamo's Child* (2015). Gulkin is a Gemini, Directors Guild of Canada, Canadian Screen, and Canadian Cinema Editors Award-winning film editor of more than 50 documentary features and programmes.

Dan Hawkes, CCE is a Canadian Screen Award-winning film editor of more than 30 films and programmes. He has edited solely with digital technology, and his filmography includes the Canadian Screen Award-winning *Semisweet* (2012) and *Fear of Dancing* (2020).

One of the youngest editors to be recognised by the honours society, **Avrïl Jacobson, CCE** is a Canadian Screen Award-winning editor of more than 20 digitally edited documentary features and programmes. Jacobson is best known for her work on the HotDocs Jury Prize-winning *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes* (2015) and *BLK: An Origin Story* (2022).

Dave Kazala, CCE is a protégé of Oscar-nominated National Film Board Studio B luminary, producer-editor John Kramer. Much like Acosta, Kazala transitioned to digital technology early in his career. He is a Canadian Screen and Canadian Cinema Editors Award-winning film editor of more than 30 documentary features and programmes. Kazala is best known for his work on the Emmy-winning *The World Before Her* (2012) and the Oscar nominated and Toronto International Film Festival Top Ten Canadian film *To Kill a Tiger* (2023).

While best known for his work in the field of drama editing, **Roger Mattiussi, CCE** began his career as one of Canada's preeminent documentary film editors. In the analogue era, he edited the Oscar-nominated documentary *After the Axe* (1981) and *Man Overboard* (1996). Mattiussi is enjoying a late-career digital-era return to documentary that includes *After Munich* (2019).

A senior and leading figure in contemporary practice, **Mike Munn, CCE** is a Directors Guild of Canada, Canadian Screen, and Canadian Cinema Editors Award-winning editor of more than 50 films. Munn is best known for the analogue-era classic *Pictures of Light* (1994) and the digital-era *Stories We Tell* (2012). Both films have been declared to be among the best films ever made in Canada by the Toronto International Film Festival.

Best known for his work on *Porcupine Lake* (2017), *Luba* (218), and *Essex County* (2023), **Chris Mutton,** CCE is a Canada Shorts Film Festival Award-winning and Canadian Screen Award-nominated film editor whose career has been entirely within the digital era. At the time of his interview, Mutton was the President of Canadian Cinema Editors.

While having trained in analogue film, **Deb Palloway**, CCE has worked exclusively in the digital realm. She is a Gemini Award-winning film editor of more than 40 documentary films and programmes, including *Shipbreakers* (2004) and *Lowdown Tracks* (2015).

Editor emeritus **Steve Weslak**, CCE is a Canadian Screen Award-winning film editor with over 50 years of experience and a recipient of the Canadian Cinema Editors Lifetime Achievement Award. Works from Weslak's prolific, analogue dominant filmography include *Deadly Currents* (1991), *Narmada: A Valley Rises* (1994), and *Tales from the Organ Trade* (2013).

Appendix VII – Practitioner Interview Questions

The semi-structured interviews with practitioners were based on the following questions:

1. Are the films stylistically different? If so, how?
2. Are there stylistic differences between the films that you attribute to editing or its process? If so, what are they?
3. What are the structural differences between the films? What are their organisational principles?
4. Please compare and contrast your perception of the veracity of the films.
5. Please compare and contrast your perception of the clarity of the films.
6. Please compare and contrast your perception of the emotional engagement of the films.
7. Please compare and contrast your perception of the immersive nature of the films.
8. What is your impression of the filmic time of the documentaries? How much time elapses in each story?
9. How do you approach your films? What is your process?
10. Are there artistic implications to the editorial processes you choose? If so, how, and why?