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by

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‘WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU LOST THE PAST?’
AGENCY, EXPRESSION AND SPECTACLE IN
AMATEUR FILMMAKING

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis presents an examination of privately produced amateur films taken from the Amateur Film Archive in the Centre National d'Audiovisuel in Luxembourg. It analyzes how amateur films present a filmic world and examines specific notions of meaning generation without meta-data and original context. Rather than take amateur film as a homogenous genre or practice, this study concentrates on film language. The first part of the following two-fold engagement with these filmic worlds thus identifies the highly differentiated filmic modes that can be read from the images. A filmic mode is related to as a concomitance of style and choice in subject matter. Without original context, these films lose their most important means of meaning generation, namely the recollective narratives that are constructed by the intended audience in the viewing situation. This work operates from a basis of analysis that takes these images as remnants of a visual narration rather than in terms of recollective narratives. It operates from the very simple basis that what was filmed had significance for these filmmakers and how the camera was used can serve as illustration of underlying intentions and motivations—both intended and inadvertent. The first part of this study then focuses on the diversification within the images and reads concomitant cultural codifications that structure representational productions in the private and also analyzes film language as means of self-inscription and self-narration. The second part of this two-fold engagement explores filmic language in terms of a visualization of primordial signifying expression coming-into-being. It relates to amateur film and practice from a basis of primary Becoming rather than a fixed Being. This engagement extends to include the researcher and his/her own background as co-constitutive part of this process of primordial meaning coming-into-being. Film is related to as the opening of a filmic universe that presents its own structures and engagements and not as visualization of a profilmic world from the past.

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1	Q.M.	1929	9,5 mm black and white	AV009596_m.wmv / IA_AMA_004418	D&a f.c
2	S.-W. A.	1945-1958	8mm, color and b&w	AV011520 /IA_AMA_005245	f.c.
3	H.G.	Ca. 1950	8mm, color	AV009649 / IA_AMA_002220	D&a
4	K.C.	1950 (?)	8mm, b&w, color	AV033117 / IA_AMA_003005	f.c. d&a ad
5	B.J.	1951-1952	No info on material, B&w	VII2034/000013	D&a f.c.
6	W.G.	1951-1954	No info on material, B&w	AV032407	D&a f.c. ad
7	A.F.	Ca. 1957, ca. 1989	8mm, colour and b&w	AV010425 / IA_AMA_00571	D&a f.c.
8	M.R.	1957 ff.	8mm, b&w, color sound track	AV036448	f.c. d&a
9	H.G.	1957-1958	8mm, colour	AV031295 / IA_AMA002316	D&a f.c. ad
10	H.E.	1958	8mm, b&w, color	AV035958 / IA_AMA_001888	D&a f.c.
11	H.E.	1958	8mm, colour	AV035945 / IA_AMA_001907	D&a
12	A.E.	1958-1960	8mm, color	AV010034 / IA_AMA_00508	D&a f.c.
13	H.G.	1959	8mm, b&w, color	AV031296 / IA_AMA002317	f.c. ad
14	J.A.	1959	8mm, b&w	AV026665 / IA_AMA_002640	D&a f.c.
15	S.R.	1959	No info on material B&w, color	AV013104	f.c. d&a ad
16	B.J.	1959	No info on material, color	VII2075/000029	f.c. d&a
17	L.-B. M.	Ca. 1959	No info on material B&w, color	AV 010309	f.c. d&a
18	W.E.	1960, 1963, 1964	8mm, b&w and color	IA0000S7_m.wmv / IA_AMA_008068	D&a f.c.
19	W.E.	1960-1961	8mm, color	IA0000S6_m.wmvIA_AM A_008062	f.c.
20	H.E.	1960; 1968	8mm, color	AV035667 / IA_AMA001916	D&a ad

21	K. J.-P.	1960-1962	8mm, b&w and color	AV035027 / IA_AMA_002880	f.c. d&a
22	H.	1962	8 mm, color	IA 00007L / IA_AMA_001847	D&a f.c.
23	K.L.	1962	8mm, colour	AV026322 / IA_AMA_002770	f.c.
24	O-M. P.	1962	No info on material, color	AV011107	f.c. d&a
25	M. F.	1962-1963	8mm, color, b+w	AV034421 IA_AMA_003280	D&a f.c.
26	K. N.	19631964 19651966 ?	No info on material, color	AV036206_m.wmv / IA_AMA_002917	f.c.
27	O.-M. P.	1963	No info on material, color	AV011111	f.c. ad
28	J. M.	1963	No info on material, Color, b&w	VII318/000582	f.c. ad
29	H. R.	1964, 1967	8mm, color	AV024889 / IA_AMA_002239	f.c. d&a
30	K.L.	1964-1965	8mm, color	AV026326 / IA_AMA_002773	f.c. d&a
31	J. M.	1964	No info on material, color	VII316/00578	f.c. ad
32	J. J.	1965	16mm, color	AV026660 / IA_AMA_002552	D&a (cine club)
33	K. N.	1965	8mm, color	AV036201 / IA_AMA_002913	D&a f.c. ad
34	K. N.	19671971 19741976 ?	8mm, color	AV036207_m.wmv / IA_AMA_002918	f.c.
35	H.	ca. 1967	8mm, color	AV034542 / IA_AMA_002379	f.c. d&a
36	S. E.	1967-68	No info on material, color	AV033141	D&a
37	M. C.	1967-1970	No info on material, color	VII1683/004313	f.c.
38	L.-B. M.	1968	No info on material, color	AV010317	f.c. ad
39	K. E.	1969	No info on material, color	AV014738	f.c.

40	W. T.	1970 (?)	No info on material, color	AV009822	D&a ad
41	S. E.	1971-1973	No info on material, B&w, color	AV033165	D&a
42	W. G.	1972	No info on material, Color, partial sound track	AV032445	D&a f.c.
43	G. L.	1973	Super 8, color	AV032948 / IA_AMA_001816	D&a f.c.
44	A. P.	1974, 1982	Super 8, color, sound	AV034902_m.wmv / IA_AMA_000512	D&a f.c.
45	D. A.	1975	Super 8, color	AV035249 / IA_AMA_001051	ad
46	F. R.	1975	Super 8, color	AV026506 / IA_AMA_001397	f.c.
47	G. J.	Ca. 1975	Super 8, color	AV032920 / IA_AMA_001674	D&a ad
48	P. R.	1976	Super 8, color	AV034867	f.c. d&a
49	K. L.	1979	Super 8, color	AV026335 / IA_AMA002782	D&a ad
50	D. Y.	1979	No info on material, color	VII1900/004784	f.c. d&a
51	K. J.	1983	No info on material, color	VII2140/005342	D&a
52	B. W.	No date	Super 8, color	AV034168_m.wmv / IA_AMA_00379	ad
53	B. W.	No date	9.5 mm, b&w	AV034525 / IA_AMA000350	D&a ad
54	D. J.	No date	8mm, b&w, color	AV032795 / IA_AMA001326	D&a
55	D. J.	No date	8mm, color	AV032665 / IA_AMA_001330	f.c.
56	F. J.	No date	8mm, couleur	AV011296/IA_AMA_001689	f.c.
57	M. R.	No date	No info on material, Color and b&w	AV036447	f.c. d&a
58	W. G.	No date	No info on material, color and b&w	AV032446	D&a f.c.
59	J. M.	No date	No info on material, Color and b&w	VII317/	f.c.
60	C. J.	No date	Super 8, color	AV022985_m-1.wmv /	f.c.

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PART I.

INTRODUCTION

Every researcher or scholar who deals with the privately produced film is confronted with one simple observation: the private film in the public archive speaks to us, but what is it trying to tell us?

Home movies populate and resurrect our childhood; they are as much part of the fabric of our personal past as the stories passed on from generation to generation. Picture the following scenes:

A non-distinct living room: the grey light of a murky, rainy afternoon barely lights up the room, as three children run around the furniture in the near dark. A boy, around eight years old, jumps up and down on a velvet couch that has seen better days. A five-year-old girl plays with a plastic miniature garage that has been set up on the small table in front of the TV. She makes toy cars flit down the garishly yellow, plastic slide that runs down along the side of it. The smallest, a two-year-old, excitedly dashes around the living room, alternately running up to her sister and her brother. The girl playing with the plastic toy garage spares no glance for the camera; she is completely engrossed in making the cars flit down the slide with as much force as possible. The camera lingers on her face and pajama-clad figure for a few seconds, only to focus on the youngest child in the next sequence. The little girl—with that typical eighties haircut that looks as if the mother had used a bowl as guideline while cutting—runs up to her sister and tries to get her attention. She wants to play with the toy garage as well. The elder, while at first sparing her no glance, all of a sudden pushes the little girl, not with quite enough force to be termed violent, but with enough strength that the little one falls down. The brother, having witnessed the scene, comes over, takes the smallest girl by the hand and tells her: ‘I’ll play with you.’ Unfazed, the middle girl directs her attention back to the toy on the TV table, while the eldest and the youngest go off to play in a corner of the living room.

All of this is presented in different angles with that VHS aesthetic that sees the image interspersed with blurred, snowy lines that always look like one is about to fast

forward. The image presents the cheap aesthetic of a medium that opposes the red-tinted warm imagery caught on Super 8 to the green-yellow-bluish harshness of the VHS format. Years later, the images unfold on a TV in that same living room. The TV display cabinet is the same one that can be seen within the image in the background. The TV table is also the same, while the couch, that scratchy monstrosity, has been relegated to the happy hunting ground of the local recycling center and has been replaced with a more sophisticated leather one. Most importantly, the family that sits in front of the TV and looks at the images with a mixture of awe, hilarity, and bemused wonderment is also the same. The family looks at a mirror image of itself through time. These people are my family.

My parents look on with a fond and slightly nostalgic expression in their face. My sister, my brother, and I have a slightly more complicated reaction. At first, we excitedly shout as we see the old couch again: ‘Do you remember that horrible couch?’ we scream, as my parents, with a slightly embarrassed exclamation, justify their taste in living room furniture. I remember the TV table—trying to build a fort out of the couch cushions—I fell off and chipped a tooth on it. I remember the hippos and toothbrushes that were printed on my sister’s pajamas, though oddly enough, not my own, which are decorated with teddy bears. I remember the smell of that TV display cabinet, a present from a well-meaning acquaintance of my parents who bought it for himself in a mock-oriental shop, decided he didn’t like it, and gave it to my parents. The cabinet smelled of incense for decades and is inextricably meshed with my childhood memories.

My siblings and I look at these younger versions of us with a bemused and only partial recognition; after all, these depictions were taken in a phase in our lives characterized by an uncaring ignorance of one’s own facial features. My parents try to fill in the gaps as they tell us what year the video was taken, which events preceded it, and that, yes indeed, my mother used a bowl to cut my sister’s hair. This viewing is fraught with meaning, told and untold, with memories that rise individually, and stories that we tell each other. As that younger version of me on screen pushes my sister, a brief silence descends in the living room. My own feelings are complicated: I am embarrassed and worried. How could I have pushed my sister? Why did I do so? My parents laugh, my sister’s facial expression shifts between hilarity and a newly

emergent grudge. My brother has turned his attention to the sandwich he has brought to this Sunday home movie screening.

These images have meaning for us. They are suffused with significance, some of it very clear. We reminisce about our own past, some of it more complicated, as familial relations are reevaluated, have changed, or still coincide with these onscreen events. The film gives no clear indication about the date on which it was shot. I know it was taken in Gonderange (my home village), but there is no discernible marker that identifies the location. No titles identify the persons onscreen, but I know them as my siblings. This is what makes the images meaningful for me. What is to happen, however, if I take away the complexities of my family's narratives and interactional meaning generation? Can imagery that is detached from its private significance still reveal and be suffused with meaning?

Fast-forward more than two decades as I sit in the archive. Before me, another set of images unspools. I do not know the living room, I do not know the family, and I have no idea where they might be located. Nevertheless, I open their filmic world. Thinking about our own home movie screenings, I am at once aware of their once-meaningful significance, and their status as lost object. These amateur images are *not* made for me. I was never the intended audience but somehow they ended up in my possession and provided me with intimate and highly personal glimpses into a universe of private spaces, holiday activities, and cherished portraits of family members.

What are we to do with these remnants of a past that are as much a wishful dreamscape than an actualization of a lived reality? My own engagement with these films was as much defined by surprise and joyful recognition as it was by complete and utter frustration. These films prove as much generalized as specific and particular. Once I would get the sense of having pinned down not only the images themselves, but also a distinct motivation suffusing the imagery, certain moments arose that again evaded all hypothetical imposition. They reinforce and evade standardization. They prove slippery, to say the least. At the same time, viewing films that were never initially intended for me also raises ethical concerns. After all, naked children, the private sanctuary of the home, and filmic slips that always reveal something likely

meant to be kept hidden populate the amateur image. There is a primordial feel of exploiting these private visualizations and of embedding them in a generalized and broader socio-cultural framework that also always partly undermines the status of the filmmaker as agent.

Amateur films as visualizations of the private life of a filmmaker are inherently defined by vulnerability. A research corpus consisting of amateur films always predisposes the researcher to feelings of voyeurism. After all, the sense of good-natured and joyful expression of the home movie is now put under scrutiny and—after all is said and done—judgment. These concerns more often than not give rise to a feeling of uncomfortable inspection. My decision to use only the initials of a filmmaker's name is influenced by these concerns of imposing interpretation and judgment (even though never intentionally so) on these private images. This decision also stems from an attempt to give these filmmakers some anonymity from the researching gaze, even if, of course, they have donated their images and thus surrendered their privacy (copyrights) to the institutional archive. I am, however, not certain in how far filmmakers realized the concrete implications involved in the relegation of their privacy rights. The archive can potentially give out these films to researchers, as was the case here, but they can also provide professional documentary filmmakers with these images. There is a potential possibility of seeing one's own family and private celebrations in the cinema and thus exposed to the scrutiny of a national audience, or the potential threat of having one's images embedded as footage within a context that exceeds and perhaps changes the intentional motivation of their production in the first place. These amateur images are always, at the most basic level, an expression of these filmmakers' selves, their lifeworld, and their loved ones. A viewing of amateur film material should never be conducted lightly and should always be effectuated with an awareness of their nature as intimate and private self-expression into which I always intrude.

Amateur film has no easy standing within institutional cultural studies. It is often defined more by what it is not than by what it is. As Patricia R. Zimmermann notes: 'In the popular imaginary, home movies are often defined by negation:

noncommercial, nonprofessional, unnecessary.’¹ If, however, we define the home movie foremost by what it is not, we inherently identify an essential absence at the heart of this practice of self-expression. At the same time, it proves almost impossible to identify the amateur film as a homogenous genre. This study then engages ‘in some of the core questions that have dominated the field of home movies studies since the early 1980s: Why do we make home movies? What purpose do they serve? How might these records of “ordinary lives” offer glimpses into a nation’s socioeconomic fabric, its self-representations, its cultural anchoring? More broadly, how do home movies “speak” to us and what are they trying to say?’²

These films offer multi-layered engagements that also display a variety of different motivations and intentions, sometimes not only within the same film collection, but within the same filmic sequence. Again, notions of respect and concern arise in identifying and thus inscribing these images with an interpretative imposition of motivations. Quite simply: who am I to inscribe these films with intentional behavior and motivational desires? Here my own background in film studies proved advantageous. I realized one crucial aspect within the amateur films analyzed: people film different motifs differently. All motivational behavior and intentions have thus not been directly attributed to the filmmakers, but are read in concomitance with filmic focus and film language. What I analyze in the following is the filmic universe of the amateur film, never the lifeworld of the filmmaker. My own engagement with these films and the thought process that accompanied my viewing heavily influenced the structure of the following study.

This project started out with an intended focus on the family film in Luxembourg. The Centre National d’Audiovisuel had by the starting date of this project already collected amateur films for over fifteen years. My own background in film studies and later film reviewing had never led me to amateur films, and I was curious and a little wary as to what these ‘unprofessional’ films were to reveal. My perhaps naïve focus

¹ Zimmermann, Patricia R. “The Home Movie Movement Excavations, Artifacts, Minings”. *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 1.

² Young, Gwenda. “Glimpses of a Hidden History: Exploring Irish Amateur Collections, 1930-70”. *Ibid.*, 82.

on the family film soon proved its own futility. Quite simply, there were just too many of them. I realized very quickly that there was no such one thing as a family film collection, as very early on I noticed that filmmakers never exclusively focus on the family, even if the predominant and favored topic lies in the private family realm.

I decided to narrow the focus of my research topic. Together with Dr. Sonja Kmec I realized that most of these family film collections included one sequence taken at the Schobermesse, the main fair in Luxembourg City. Also, I very rapidly noticed that these filmic sequences of the fairground provided a distinct manner of engagement. This got me curious as to why people film at the fairground and also provided me with a much needed narrower focus that would delineate the filmic corpus. This corpus, then, consists of film collections that include at least one sequence taken at the fairground. The fairground thus potentially provided the thematic *Leitfaden*. I contacted the CNA, whose archivists sent me most of these films by digital link; I also consulted material in the archive on VHS. One crucial aspect that defines these films is their embedment by default in a larger collection that is preserved in the archive. The CNA keeps these donated films within a collection as originally handed in by a filmmaker or their family. However, some filmmakers have more than one collection within the archive. Thus it is not the case that every filmmaker has only one large collection of films in the archive. The fairground sequences are included within a collection of films that last between a few minutes to up to an hour or more. The number of different sequences within one film collection is also highly varied. Some film collections present up to ten different filmic motifs, while others last over thirty minutes and include but one sequence. While initially I was most interested in the sequences taken at the fairground, I still watched the entire collections.

I realized that the film language of sequences taken at the fairground revealed a three-fold engagement. These engagements are identified as film language and are constituted by the adoption of a specific filmic style and choice of subject matter. I have identified three predominant modes of engagement. The first I termed the family chronicle style. The second is a manner of engagement I identify as the motivation to document a filmmaker's lifeworld. The third, taken exclusively at the fairground, I term films of an attractional display. The distinction in style and its concomitant focus on different subject matters extends my interest to include the remaining film

sequences in the collection. The style I identified within the fairground sequences suffuses the entire film collections, and thus I decided to focus on film language rather than a thematic emphasis on the fairground. The film corpus that is used here was then provided by the CNA and was initially demarcated by an interest in fairground films. I later extended my focus to include all films even if the original corpus of sixty film collections remained unchanged.

1. The Amateur Film

Amateur films, as stated above, never present a homogenous genre or movement. Generally, amateur films are bundled under an overall definition as being non-professional and not produced with an intention of financial remuneration. Within this overall definition, however, the amateur film comprises multi-varied inflections that defy easy classification. For example, in Luxembourg of the 1950s, so-called amateur ciné-clubs sprang up. These clubs gave filmmakers the opportunity to meet like-minded ciné-enthusiasts and to make films collectively and with a much higher standard in terms of proficiency and material. While this study does not specifically focus on ciné-club productions, some filmmakers display their affiliations to such clubs in titles at the beginning of their films. These productions blur the lines between professional and amateur and reveal this distinction as having little or no meaning. As Susan Sontag states with regards to the distinction between amateur and professional photographers: ‘the line between amateur and professional, primitive and sophisticated is not just harder to draw with photography than it is with painting—it has little meaning. Naïve or commercial or merely utilitarian photography is no different in kind from photography as practiced by the most gifted professionals’.³ Also, within the movement of filmmaking in the private, numerous different motivations, styles, and levels of proficiency render a generalized characterization of these films as simply ‘unprofessional’ futile. There simply is no one such thing as an amateur film as demarcated by stylistic standards and thematic choice.

Concomitant to this awareness of the impossibility to standardize these multi-leveled filmic engagements, the term ‘home movie’ is often used to differentiate further

³ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London; New York: Penguin, 2008), 103.

within filmmaking in the private sphere. Within popular understanding, the home movie is often equated with the family film. In a first instance, such an equalizing seems a common-sense approach. After all, most of these film productions in the private sphere focus on the family as filmic motif. Still, the equalization of the amateur film as family film collapses within a first viewing. The family, while the predominant incentive for filmmaking in the private realm, almost never proves the exclusive focus of the amateur film. The filmic focus, the manner of style adopted, and the general motivation and focus on a profilmic world changes in inflection constantly, not only within a film collection, but also often within the same filmic sequence. While this study occasionally uses the term home movie, it is here not equaled with the family film, but relates more to the place of viewing, the home. The amateur films analyzed here were viewed in the private of the home in their original context.

In the following I will adopt the term 'amateur film' in concurrence with the definition provided by Inédits. Inédits is 'a European not-for-profit with the aim to encourage the collection, the conservation, the study and the valorization of amateur films. Inédits is various associations, institutes and individuals.'⁴ They bundle the complexity of the amateur film in the following statement: 'By the term 'amateur film' we mean images in movement that have associations with any aspect of our daily life in society. This can be from past or present, and made on any format. When originally made they were never intended to be broadcast professionally within the audio visual medium.'⁵ I decided early on to concentrate on analog film material and exclude video and digital material for several reasons. First of all, I wanted to view as many film collections as possible in order to examine whether filmic patterns could be identified. The main interest of this study lies in motivation and intention underlying filmic language and focus. I realized quickly after viewing a few films that were shot with video technologies that filmic foci and general style remained unchanged. With video material, however, the distinction lay in length. Filmmakers chose the same manner of engagement and the same filmic motifs, but with much cheaper video technologies, filmed for much longer. The issue was one of time. If I decided to include video material, I would have to make time concessions and concentrate on fewer

⁴ <http://en.inedits-europe.org/> (accessed 11.12.2016)

⁵ <http://en.inedits-europe.org/> (accessed 11.12.2016)

collections, since most of the film collections on video extended beyond the duration of an hour and a half. These time concerns are of course greatly amplified with regards to digital recordings. The main reason for my focus on analog film material thus lies in the imposition of selectivity that accompanied the cost of film equipment. As Heather Norris Nicholson states: ‘Far from simply recording the routines of daily life, the selective nature of past cine use appears striking when set alongside the infinite nature of today’s digital self-recording pursuits.’⁶ I wanted to view as many film collections as possible, and the financial restraint that accompanied analog film material greatly reduced the duration of these film collections.

Secondly, this financial imposition also has consequences in terms of intention. I operated from the very simple assumption that because film was never as affordable as video or digital material, filmmakers chose carefully what to include and what to exclude. This allowed for a more forceful sedimentation in terms of what was deemed significant enough to warrant its filmic capture. As Nicholson observes: ‘The resultant visual record may seem trivial in some of what it shows, but what promoted the moments of shooting had significance.’⁷ If we operate from a basis of affordance, we can also assume that what was filmed, no matter how seemingly trivial, had significance for these filmmakers. This foundation makes the identification of underlying motivation and intention more powerful and also adheres the filmmaker with the status of an intentionally producing agent. As Patricia R. Zimmermann notes, amateur film ‘includes any work that operates outside of exchange values and is not produced to function as an exchange commodity.’⁸

Lastly, the term ‘amateur’ is often seen as negatively connoted. It seems to derogate the amateur filmmaker in terms of proficiency and knowledge to his/her professional counterpart. I never considered the term amateur a derogative term, even if I do understand the concerns when naming the private filmmaker amateur. As Françoise Poos so rightly notes: ‘Revealingly also, the CNA continues to refer to its archive of

⁶ Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film: Meaning and Practice, 1927-77*, Studies in Popular Culture (Manchester ; New York : New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 246.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Zimmermann, Patricia R. “The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings”. *Mining the Home Movie*, 9.

privately produced filmic objects as Amateur Film Collection, thus defining the gathered material according to standards of production. Here the term amateur is clearly used in opposition to the professional filmmaker, and thus implies a notion of hierarchical ranking.’⁹ The division of an archive in terms of amateur and professional most certainly hierarchizes the material itself. It serves to establish a demarcation that has less to do with skill and proficiency than with the original context of production. The fact of the matter is, however, that in popular understanding it also defines the amateur film as ‘something less’. This demarcation reduces the inherent value and significance of film productions in the private as a by-product of consumerist behavior, rather than affording it a status of value-laden and significant practice of intentional and deliberate self-expression. I approach the denomination of these films as amateur from a different, if more naïve, perspective. In concurrence with Péter Forgacs I take the term amateur ‘from [the] Latin amator, lover, from amare, to love’.¹⁰

Perhaps stemming from my own prejudices, what surprised me in my initial viewing of these films was the consideration and care that went into their production. These filmmakers not only display a clear love for their filmic subjects, predominantly their families, but also a passion for the filmic medium itself. The term amateur is thus engaged from a very primordial base that recognizes the care and enthusiasm that goes into the productions of these ‘privately produced filmic objects’.¹¹ Amateurs were never constricted nor influenced by purposes and goals of economic remuneration. They engage in the filmmaking practice with a freedom of expression and enthusiasm that is rarely afforded in professional productions subject to certain standardization. The following study thus adopts the term amateur as an agent of a practice that ‘indicates doing something for pleasure, for the sheer love of it, as its

⁹ Poos, Françoise, *The Making of a National Audio-Visual Archive : The CNA and the Hidden Images Exhibition*. Dissertation thesis (De Montfort University, Leicester) May 2016, publication forthcoming, pp. 136-137

¹⁰ Forgacs, Péter. “Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies”. *Mining the Home Movie*, 47.

¹¹ Poos, Françoise, *The Making of a National Audio-Visual Archive : The CNA and the Hidden Images Exhibition*. Dissertation thesis (De Montfort University, Leicester) May 2016, publication forthcoming. P. 130

Latin root-*amare*-denotes.’¹² The negative connotation that underlies the term amateur is thus not so much a result of incompetence or lack of skill as a consequence of ‘the power relations marginalizing amateur film as an insignificant media discourse and practice during its first sixty-five years’.¹³

2. Material

Most of the films in this corpus are shot on 8mm or Super 8 materials. The earliest film in this corpus, from 1929, is shot on 9.5mm with a Pathé Baby camera. By the 1920s, two main film gauges predominated the amateur market: 16mm and 9.5mm, while professional institutional cinema used mostly 35mm gauges. The first companies distributing film equipment with a focus on private filmmakers stressed 16mm equipment as it was marketed as paralleling the capacities of the standardized professional 35mm film material.¹⁴ This marketing thus also reinforced the amateur-professional division in that it posited professional productions as an ideal to which amateurs should aspire to. In Europe, however, 9.5mm film proved equally popular, especially since it came with the Pathé Baby camera and the Pathé Vox projector, which was light-weight, easy to handle, and could be used with a tripod.¹⁵ After the Second World War, 16mm became standardized as the professional stock of newsreels and predominantly withdrew from the amateur market, while cinematic productions continued to use 35mm. Within this corpus, only one amateur shot on 16mm.¹⁶ His filming on 16mm in 1965 proves surprising as by this date 8mm had firmly replaced earlier gauges as favored film material. Most of the pre-and postwar material produced by RTL¹⁷ was shot on 16mm, while some amateurs that produced semi-professional newsreels also shot on 35mm.¹⁸

¹² Patricia Rodden Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film, Arts and Politics of the Everyday* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 1.

¹³ Ibid., xv.

¹⁴ for further information, please refer to: Ibid., 58.

¹⁵ ‘[I]n 1937 Pathé launched its Pathé Vox, a sound projector system for 9.5mm film.’ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 8.

¹⁶ J.J. AV026660 / IA_AMA_002552, 16mm, color, mute, 1965

¹⁷ Examples of RTL newsreels on 16mm: Herber, Lucien, ‘Ouverture de la Schobermesse’ AV015942_m.wmv / IA_REP_016769, 16mm, b&w, mute, Diffusion RTL: 25/08/1958.

The early years of amateur filmmaking thus also reveal how the standardization of film material according to a private-professional divide had not yet been effectively imposed, since both used 16mm equipment, at least in the pre–World War II years. While 8mm material (camera and gauge) had been introduced in the early 1930s, the 1950s saw an incredible expansion of the amateur mass market. Also, as Zimmermann notes, ‘[d]ouble-8 film ran through the camera on two passes. It could be processed on regular 16mm finishing equipment and therefore did not require further capitalization or equipment.’¹⁹ 8mm cameras ‘were simpler to operate and much cheaper.’²⁰ Manufacturers designed the 8mm camera with the private filmmaker in mind. It specifically targeted the middle-class family with a disposable income. The economic boom of the postwar years in Luxembourg saw a fruitful ground for the emergence of an amateur cinematography market on a broader mass scale. At the same time, the introduction of easy-to-handle 8mm cameras furthered the professional-amateur divide as the 8mm equipment also presented a bottom-of-the-line camera. As Zimmermann states: ‘The cheaper the camera, the less control over image production. The top-of-the-line camera simulated professionalism—they required technical control. The bottom-of-the-line cameras were consummately amateur—they were technically simple.’²¹ 8mm cameras were deemed sufficient for the production of private films. However, because the filmmaker had less control over the images, amateurs that aspired to professional standards still preferred 16mm equipment. The inherent power relations that saw amateurs as dabbling in filmmaking as a leisure pastime also infused the 16mm equipment with a certain status that was exploited by manufacturers, who used professionalism as marketing ploy to attract private filmmakers. Still, as this corpus illustrates, 8mm equipment—and its facility and affordance—was favored by the amateur from the 1950s onwards.

Bestgen, Roger. ‘SCHOBERMESSE’, AV024824_m.wmv / IA_REP_007310, 16mm, color, mute, Diffusion RTL: 18/09/1959.

¹⁸ Pierre Bertogne and Alfred Heinen—who owned a Kodak shop in Luxembourg City—produced short films on 35mm gauge. See : ‘DWésekanner op der Schueberfo’er 4 September 1936’, AV000314_m.wmv / IA_Doc_000753, 35mm, b&w, mute, 1936.

¹⁹ Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 63.

²⁰ Ibid., 117.

²¹ Ibid., 118.

The introduction of zoom technologies in the 1950s furthered this attraction. Now, ‘the amateur could re-create television aesthetics at home with zoom lenses’.²² The Super 8 film camera was presented as an enhanced version of the standard 8mm camera. It was introduced by Eastman Kodak in 1965 and presented an enhancement of image size in that a larger portion of the film gauge could be exposed.²³ Super 8 presented a technological advancement to the 8mm material hitherto used by private filmmakers. Within this film corpus, the super 8 material makes its appearance but almost a decade later, and the films produced in the 1970s alternate equally between Super 8 material and the more traditional 8mm. By 1980, Super 8, and with it analog filmmaking in the private, had been ‘declared dead’²⁴ with the advent of video technologies.

3. Archive

All film collections were taken from the Centre National d’Audiovisuel (CNA). The CNA is a cultural institute founded in 1989 and placed under the authority of the Luxembourgian Ministry of Culture. In 2007, the CNA moved to new localities in Dudelange, in the South of Luxembourg. It houses a small cinema, several exhibitions spaces, and a mediatheque, but first and foremost it operates an institutional archive responsible for the collection of local photographs, films, and documents considered significant for national audiovisual heritage. One of its main collections, the Amateur Film Archive, represents the largest of its kind in the country. It defines its mission as the ‘preservation, development and promotion of audiovisual and photographic patrimony of Luxembourg’.²⁵ The CNA is broadly divided into three departments: film, photography, and sound. Its tasks include the conservation, restoration, production, and distribution of film, sound carriers, and photographs, as well as the giving of support to the creation of further audiovisual productions or projects following educative and pedagogic purposes.²⁶

²² Ibid., 119.

²³ Peter Thomas, “Anywhere But the Home: The Promiscuous Afterlife of Super 8”. *M/C Journal*; Vol 12, No 3 (2009): *Obsolete*, 2009.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ <http://www.cna.public.lu/fr/cna/index.html>

²⁶ for a more detailed statement of intent and purposes please refer to : <http://www.cna.public.lu/fr/cna/missions-activites/index.html> (accessed 12.12.2016).

The CNA to date houses more than ten thousand amateur films.²⁷ The film collections broadly stretch from the 1920s to the late 1970s and early 1980s. Most of the film material in the archive takes the form of analog material, while some VHS tapes are taken in if considered especially significant in a national heritage context by the archivists. As stated before, most of the film collections accessed in this study were sent to me by digital link, while I also consulted a few film collections in the screening room of the archive on VHS tape. Amateur filmmakers can donate their films to the CNA after signing a standard two-page contract relegating the copyrights of their films to the archive. The archive can thus lend films to professional documentary filmmakers, use them in their in-house audiovisual productions, and make these films accessible to researchers or anyone interested in local history.

4. Luxembourg

The filmmakers of this corpus are foremost Luxembourgian citizens who chose to donate their material to an archive whose principal intention is the preservation of national heritage. While some sequences are shot abroad, the homes depicted in these films are clearly situated in the Grand Duchy. While I will elaborate on the national context in a more detailed manner with regards to the different themes presented by the films, the following serves to set an initial brief contextualization of the country. I will give a brief outlook on the main structural changes that were effectuated in the country since the Second World War, seeing as most of the films from this corpus were produced between the 1950s and the late 1970s.

Luxembourg is a predominantly white and Catholic country with a strong, financially secure middle class that shared in the prosperity characterizing the postwar boom in Europe. Everyday life in this postwar boom set an increasing focus on an *American way of life*, in which the desired accumulation of material goods such as

²⁷ Poos, Françoise, *The Making of a National Audio-Visual Archive : The CNA and the Hidden Images Exhibition*. Dissertation thesis (De Montfort University, Leicester) May 2016, publication forthcoming, 2.

‘Konservendosen, Waschmaschine, Kühlschrank, Auto, Fernsehen, Eigenheim’²⁸ went hand in hand with an ideology of individualism. As we will see, the influence and impact of this ideology of individualism was mostly focused on the accumulation of material goods and an ideology of consumerist behavior.

The process of prosperity that defined the boom of the national economy is closely linked to the strong steel industry that saw its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s. The 1970s witnessed the slow denouement of the steel industry, a reinforced presence of the so-called new industries such as metal and chemical production,²⁹ and the expansion of international industries settling in Luxembourg. While Goodyear had already provided jobs from 1949,³⁰ the passing of a new skeleton law in 1962 provided favorable conditions for the further settlement of predominantly American companies. The 1960s were also impacted by the expansion of the banking sector that still forms one of the main cornerstones of the country’s prosperity and shapes the economic climate. As a reaction to the steel crisis in 1975, the economic-political apparatus was increased and a further ‘10,400 industrial jobs’³¹ created. Thus we can observe a drastic structural change regarding the economy from the postwar era to the late 1970s: the former agricultural society shifted to a society that was mostly defined by labor in the service industries. Apart from brief phases of recession, the national income was defined by steady growth. The infrastructure of the country was also fundamentally ameliorated with a special emphasis on high mobility. As such, the building of the port in Mertert, the canalization of the river Moselle, and the newly constructed national airport Findel³² all contributed to an entry into the competitive European market and the mobile distribution of goods with a high liquidity.

Politically, the country remains predominantly conservative, with the national CSV (Christian-social people’s party) remaining in government with but two exceptions

²⁸ ‘canned goods, washing machines, refrigerators, cars, television, the home’ in Pauly, *Geschichte Luxemburgs*, 109–10.

²⁹ Christian Calmes and Danielle Bossaert, *Geschichte des Großherzogtums Luxemburg: von 1815 bis heute* (Luxemburg: Ed. Saint-Paul, 1996), 485.

³⁰ Michel Pauly, *Geschichte Luxemburgs*, 2., überarb. Aufl., Orig.-Ausg., Beck’sche Reihe, 2732 : C. H. Beck Wissen (München: Beck, 2013), 107.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Calmes and Bossaert, *Geschichte des Großherzogtums Luxemburg*, 461–62.

throughout the years.³³ The Grand Duchy was heavily involved in the European integration processes that characterized the postwar years: In 1950, the signing of the Robert Schuman plan rung in the foundation of the ‘European Steel and Coal Community’ of which Luxembourg was a member. The 1950s and 1960s saw a further reinforcement of the power of decision of the European communities, (the European Union since the treaty of Maastricht in 1992), and the establishment of several institutional headquarters of the European Union at the newly constructed Kirchberg that annexed Luxembourg City.³⁴ Importantly, the treaty of Rome in 1957, which gave birth to the European Economic Community (EEC), postulated the free movement of goods, people, and ideas within European borders. Higher mobility within Europe, but mainly the need for industrial workers, resulted in an increase in migration, mostly by Italian and Portuguese³⁵ that were hired by the government as a labor force in the 1970s and 1980s.

Luxembourg, as opposed to other European states, does not have an exclusive use of one maternal language. While a generally spoken Germanic dialect was recognized as the official national language in 1984,³⁶ the use of French and German is equally part of the linguistic everyday. This multilingualism stems from the territorial history of the period before 1839 that saw the settlement of both a Germanic and Roman populace³⁷ within the parameters that would after 1839 be recognized as the independent Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Chapter two will deal more specifically with questions of national parameters and the process of nation-becoming.

In terms of a socio-cultural climate, in the 1970s a nationalistic tendency arose that can be seen as a reaction to the economic crisis (denouement of the steel industry and oil crisis in 1973 and again in 1979) that also had an effect on the Luxembourgian economy, a more general implementation of globalized forces, and the increase in immigration.³⁸ The granting of legal status to the language of Luxembourgish also

³³ Calmes and Bossaert, *Geschichte des Großherzogtums Luxemburg*, 572.

³⁴ Ibid., 562.

³⁵ Ibid., 459.

³⁶ Pauly, *Geschichte Luxemburgs*, 111.

³⁷ Calmes and Bossaert, *Geschichte des Großherzogtums Luxemburg*, 540.

³⁸ Pauly, *Geschichte Luxemburgs*, 111.

served as a countermeasure proposed by the government to these nationalist tendencies.

5. Schobermesse

The fairground that is examined in this study relates exclusively to the largest fair held in Luxembourg City—the Schobermesse, or Schueberfouer in Luxembourgish. John of Bohemia (colloquially referred to as ‘John the Blind’) founded the Schobermesse on October 20, 1340.³⁹ Henceforth it was traditionally held for eight days before St. Bartholomew’s Day and a further eight days after. During the traditional agricultural and artisanal fair, all merchants, the general populace, and traveling marketers were exempt from all local taxes and duties. The Schobermesse takes its name from its original location on Schadeburg⁴⁰ that is today known as plateau St. Esprit. In 1893, the Schobermesse moved to its present location on the Glacis. The first day of the Schobermesse is rung in by a procession of traditionally garbed shepherds and their rams, accompanied by a brass band. The so-called *Hämmelsmarsch* originated as a moving advertisement for the prize rams that could be won in a shooting competition at the fair. The shooting association of Luxembourg City, the St. Sebastian fraternity, originally founded the procession, and it remains to this day a staple of every fair held in the country.

In the mid-19th century the fairground changes its essential character as agricultural fair. The second half of the 19th century saw the introduction of innovative steam-powered machinery, and later on electricity induced a shift from an agricultural and commercial fair to a modern and mechanized fairground with an emphasis on entertainment and thrill.⁴¹ The second half of the 19th century also saw the introduction and attraction of show booths, magic shows, illusionists, and general curio exhibitions. The cinematograph, of course, presented one of the most popular attractions at the fairground. As Paul Lesch notes:

³⁹ van Werveke, Nicolas. “Die Schobermesse”. Norbert Etringer, *Die Schobermesse: so war sie früher* (Luxembourg: Editions Emile Borchette, 1992), 3.

⁴⁰ van Werveke, Nicolas. “Die Schobermesse”. Ibid., 3.

⁴¹ Steve Kayser, *Schueberfouer déi Lëtzebuurger Traditioun zënter 1340* (Esch-sur-Alzette: Schortgen Ed., 2007), 27.

‘From 1897 onwards, the Schuberfouer played host annually to one or two travelling cinemas’⁴² and ‘[t]he most regular and frequent guest during the first ten years was the German Theodor Bläser from Worms with his sumptuous cinema tent. From 1898 to 1900, his brilliantly decorated and lit-up cinema tent was called *The Bioscope*. From 1901 onwards, he set up an even more extravagant cinema venue [...] on the field of the Schuberfouer, the *Biograph*. [...] Other cinema tent owners present at the Schuberfouer prior to the First World War included establishments by Phillip Leilich from Pirmasens, Wilhelm Kling Junior from Mainz and a certain Jean Weber.’⁴³

With the cinematograph, modernity had arrived at the fairground. In 1910 the first mechanical thrill ride is established at the fairground, namely Hugo Haase’s ‘Figur 8 Bahn’.⁴⁴ The period between the world wars especially saw a complete restructuring of the fairground. The fairground fundamentally shifted from an agricultural fair with a market character to a space of modernist entertainment and thrill.

The period throughout the Second World War saw the almost complete shutdown of the fairground as only a few showmen traveled to Luxembourg and barely anyone chose to visit the fairground. Steve Kayser sees this lull in visitor numbers as related to the German Wehrmacht that showed its presence and sought to Germanize the Schueberfouer.⁴⁵ Still, this decline in visitor numbers was surely also related to the relative poverty that characterized the war years. The visitor letup that characterized the wartime period partially continued in the early postwar period. Only in the second half of the 1950s were German showmen and exhibitors allowed back to the Schuberfouer.

While the mechanical carousel is a staple at the fairground, more extreme thrill rides proved slow to arrive in Luxembourg. Kayser notes that it is only in the early 1960s that the Lapp family brings the first monorail rollercoaster to the fairground, the very

⁴² Lesch, Paul. “Travelling Cinematograph Shows in Luxembourg”. Martin Loiperdinger, ed., *Travelling Cinema in Europe* (Frankfurt am Main, Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 2008), 105.

⁴³ Lesch, Paul. “Travelling Cinematograph Shows in Luxembourg”. *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴⁴ Kayser, *Schueberfouer déi Lëtzebuurger Traditioun zënter 1340*, 26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

popular 'Super Railway'. The early 1970s saw the formation of 'Comité des Festivités de la Schueberfouer,'⁴⁶ a committee charged with the incentive to beautify the fairground. In 1975, the space of the Glacis, so far a freshly harvested field, was modernized with the laying of cobblestones, a new canalization system, and an electro central.⁴⁷ The mechanical thrill ride was enhanced in terms of speed and motion in the 1970s, even if its structuring principles did not change. The newest additions included the 'Sprungschanze,' the 'Calypso,' the plane rides, and the 'Bayern Kurve'.⁴⁸ The 1980s and 1990s saw further enhanced thrill rides, such as the 'Top Spin' or the 'Break Dance'.

The thrill ride, while picking up in speed and velocity throughout the decades, never fundamentally changes. Today, the cinematograph and the traveling shows have somewhat vanished, apart from their resuscitation in the form of the *Crazy Cinématographe* in 2007.⁴⁹ However, the fairground from the 1950s to the present day does not present fundamental changes. The traditional carousel is still present, as are the plane rides and octopus rides. The mechanical thrill rides, while somewhat accelerated and enhanced, still rely on traditional circular mechanical motion to induce sensations of kinesthetic thrill. The cacophony from the loudspeakers still suffuses the fairground space, even if the pop songs change. The olfactory and culinary excesses of fried foods, sweets sweating in the summer sun, and the free flow of beer and wine remain a staple of the fairground experience.

6. Corpus

The film corpus that is analyzed in the following study consists of sixty different film collections. The earliest film collection in the corpus is dated from 1929; one film sequence is taken in 1945, while the latest film collection dates from 1983. Fifteen collections are clearly labeled as being shot in the 1950s, twenty-two were produced in the 1960s, and eleven were shot in the 1970s. Nine film collections were not

⁴⁶ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Bertemes, Claude. "Cinématographe Reloaded Notes on the Fairground Cinema Project Crazy Cinématographe". Loiperdinger, *Travelling Cinema in Europe*, 194.

attributed a date at all. An information sheet, generally referred to as ‘fiche’, accompanies every film collection.

Lieu	
Descripteur géographique	
<i>Candidat descripteur géographique</i>	Mondorf, Luxembourg; Grosbous, Luxembourg;
Description	
<i>HTML</i>	- Promenade au Parc de Mondorf, les floralies. - Messe de Pentecôte en plein air à Grosbous. - Foire (Schueberfouer) (ROUGE). - La petite Michèle bébé à Grosbous. - Fête entre amis. - Notre mariage, sortie de l'église.
<i>Durée originale (mmm'ss")</i>	16' 41"
<i>Longueur</i>	70m
<i>Format original</i>	8 mm
<i>Couleur originale</i>	En couleur
<i>Son original</i>	Muet
<i>Nationalité</i>	Luxembourg;

Extracts taken from information sheet on AV011296⁵⁰

The fiche ideally includes the following information: the name of the filmmaker, the date of production, the material and equipment used, the duration of the film collection, information on color and sound (or lack thereof), the locations of shooting, and a brief description of the images. The person handing in the film collection to the archive is generally asked to fill out this information sheet. This description varies greatly in length and detail. This has to do with who is handing in the film material. Filmmakers naturally can provide more information on the different scenes and events than, for example, a second generation of family members that simply does not possess the same knowledge and information on the events depicted.

Sometimes the fiche frames the film collection in very specific terms and provides a great many details on the events depicted, the location, and the season, while also occasionally providing the names of the individuals depicted onscreen. At other times, however, the information provided is more basic, for example: ‘baby in garden, at home’. One crucial aspect that influenced the development of this study is the ever-present potential of errors concerning the information provided. Occasionally, the date of the films is not included on the fiche. While a researcher can get a general idea

⁵⁰ F.J., AV011296/IA_AMA_001689, 8mm, color, mute, no date

about what period is depicted by way of fashions and motifs, missing information gives rise to a sense of uncertainty concerning all information provided. Occasionally, the fiche provided did not match the film or the sequence. For example, the fiche would identify the fairground depicted as the Schobermesse. I would notice, however, that the children in the frame are wearing winter jackets and that the trees are bare. Knowing that the Schobermesse always takes place in late summer, I would realize that this could simply not be the Schobermesse. Here I was faced with the issues and concerns that underlie all research depending on metadata. These are archival issues that can never be avoided altogether. I needed to make a major decision concerning the further direction of my study: I could either reduce the number of film collections in my corpus and attempt to contact the particular filmmakers and thus try to re-establish as much meta-contextual information as possible, or I could take the missing meta-context as an inherent part of my analysis. Both approaches present equal merits and values.

7. Lack of meta-context

I became increasingly interested in the lack of meta-information. What interested me was whether amateur films could indeed display notions of meaning and value by considering only their images as self-contained universe. Michael S. Roth makes the following observation: ‘As soon as the home movie is taken out of its native environment, it has the capacity to become either senseless or *unheimlich*.’⁵¹ This potential of meaninglessness is conjoined to the very purpose of the amateur film that relies mostly on meta-comments in the viewing situation for meaning generation. It furthermore relates to the inherent nature of all images and image production. Images operate in terms of ‘significance [as] relation, their meanings are always partly determined by context, or rather, by the intersection of multiple contexts [...] which is another way of saying that images have no essential meaning.’⁵²

⁵¹ Roth, Michael S. “Ordinary Film Péter Forgacs”s The Maelstrom’. *Mining the Home Movie*, 66.

⁵² Scott McQuire, *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 1998), 61.

Amateur films are never a self-enclosed system of communication for the very simple reason that they are rarely edited. As opposed to the fiction film, they do not create a sealed diegetic universe. Amateur films are always open systems of communication. In fact, amateur films present visual snippets that serve as basis from which to effectuate verbal narratives as recollection. They come to visualize a process of narration rather than the construction of narratives. The amateur film becomes a visual means of support in a process of meaning generation that needs both the visual base of the process of narration (i.e. film) and the imposition and conjoint construction of verbal narratives in the viewing situation. Only thus can amateur film be termed performative. Zimmermann alludes to the performativity of the amateur film practice and screening in the following: ‘a useful construct for a theorization of amateur film as a form of auto-ethnography, because it is a form of cinema in which, typically, both sides agree to participate in an act of performativity to make a collaborative history.’⁵³ The performativity effectuated in the original viewing context of (foremost) the family is of course lost in the transferal of these films from the private of the home to the public of the institutional archive.

As Nicholson notes: ‘As more visual data becomes available without details of context and provenance via YouTube and other hosting systems, the importance of understanding the respective challenges of working with and without metadata require urgent attention.’⁵⁴ While the digital is eclipsed in this work, Nicholson’s statement equally relates to the collecting and preservation of visual objects produced in the private sphere that lose their original purpose and function, namely the meta-data and context provided by its originally intended audience. This study, then, took the conscious decision to engage with these concerns that accompany all archival processes. It thus hopes to contribute to the field of amateur film studies by offering alternative reflections on film language as adopted by private filmmakers, an appeal for a deeper engagement with these films as means of self-expression going beyond the consumerist implications of a pastime or hobby, and finally, elaborating on the future of amateur film. This study presents a path to an alternative engagement with amateur film without meta-context.

⁵³ Zimmermann, Patricia R. “The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings”. *Mining the Home Movie*, 21.

⁵⁴ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 21.

The remaining significance of these films lies in a visual narration that was effectuated in the past. Their main purpose as a basis for recollective narrative construction is lost. The cultural codification that underlies all representation in the private also determines the aesthetic of the amateur film. As will be elaborated in chapter one, the family film especially needs the stereotypical and cliché sameness of images of the family in order to function. Still, the following study also analyses how ‘[d]espite the apparatus of culture which inevitably pulls the unique happening towards a common ground of meaning, a residue of singularity remains.’⁵⁵ This study, then, concentrates on the visual remainder of an original context. It focuses exclusively on the visual narration that survives in my own contemporary viewing. Here the visualization of film language as process of narration becomes crucial. The following study thus not only focuses on the diverse subject matters that filmmakers engaged, but conclusively engages their filmic style.

I went through these films shot-by-shot. Within each shot, I noted down the position of the filmmaker, the angle, and the framing of the view (example: ‘minute 1:20-1:23, medium shot, two boys on carousel-sons? filmed from the left, slight pan to the right, diagonal angle’). I take a filmic shot as the sequence between two cuts. A filmic sequence is here taken as the duration that is attributed to one subject matter. It is delineated by the event depicted. For example, a sequence would be demarcated as the filming of the festivities at Christmas; the next sequence might depict an Easter egg hunt. As stated before, the film collections are highly varied in terms of how many sequences are included and the duration that filmmakers attribute to each sequence. I identified three main filmic engagements in terms of style and choice of subject matter. I then analyzed these visual narrations through my own background in film studies. While amateurs are generally not ascribed a distinct filmic style as would be attributed to different genre categorizations in professional cinema, their film collections display differently inflected modes of filmic engagement. As Vivian Sobchack notes: ‘Signs of the filmmaker’s situation and stance (quite literally, “attitude”) are, for example, inscribed in and visibly represented by the camera’s stability or movement in relation to the situation that it perceives, in the framing of

⁵⁵ McQuire, *Visions of Modernity*, 143.

the object of its vision, [and] in the distance that separates it from the event'.⁵⁶ The following work identifies filmic patterns within the diverse film collection and within the entire corpus. While it engages with specific examples that serve illustrative purposes, the filmic engagements displayed are identified as collective patterns within the overall film corpus.

8. Structure

The structure of this thesis, in fact, mirrors the thought process that accompanied the viewing of these films. I imagined the amateur film as phenomenon. I kept visualizing it as multi-layered *Gebilde* that was constructed by diverse *Sinnschichten* (layers of meaning and sense). As Heather Norris Nicholson so rightly states: 'As film enters an archive, it undergoes acts of relocation and reallocation.'⁵⁷ Not only do these films lose their original meaning and context, they also become embedded in a larger film collection in the institutional Amateur Archive. Particular narrations give way to generality, i.e. *this* particular family narration gives way to *a* generic family representation. Thousands of film collections lie within the archive. They more or less come to constitute lost objects that are collected and preserved, but their future remains uncertain since their meaning lies in its purpose of particular self-expression.

While these films are used in national audiovisual productions and furthermore give insight into situated knowledge production and more general visualizations of how people lived at a certain time, their visual narration remains fragmentary, open, and often variegated and heterogeneous in terms of intention and motivation. This work, then, offers reflections on how meaning is reallocated, shifts, and is materialized within these visual snippets of the past filmic lifeworld. What these films offer is a rich and multi-layered language of self-expression that relies on one crucial aspect: they need to be viewed. The collection and preservation of these films is taken as naturally imperative by this work. However, the main argumentation is as simple as

⁵⁶ Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 243.

⁵⁷ Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film: Meaning and Practice, 1927-77*, Studies in Popular Culture (Manchester ; New York : New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 21.

evident: in order for these films to have meaning and reveal their potential not only in the present but in the future, they need to be screened.

The very thought process of the following study began with an assumption as arrogant as it was wrong. Before going to the archive I had a vague and unformed idea of the home movie aesthetic and its emphasis on the family as its main focus. The image I had was, I am almost ashamed to admit, not far removed from the nostalgic images of the popular TV Show *The Wonder Years* (1988-1993) that I used to watch on Saturdays at my grandmothers'.⁵⁸ The show's opening was presented in an 8mm aesthetic and adopted a nostalgic sentimental attitude in its depiction of wonderful times in the 1960s when everything was still innocent and full of potential (as depicted in the show). As soon as I opened the first film collection, however, I was immediately proven wrong and drawn in by the complexities of these films. The amateur film is humble and modest in terms of imagery; it is complex and multi-layered in terms of motivation and intention.

Gaston Bachelard examines images of intimacy in and through the poetic imaginary. He compares these images of intimacy to the very image of the home. He furthers these images by a metaphorical comparison with the experiential status of chests of drawers. He notes: 'an empty drawer is *unimaginable*. It can only be *thought of*.'⁵⁹ They thus 'bear within themselves a kind of esthetics of hidden things.'⁶⁰ I came to think of opening these films in terms of Bachelard's house and the multifarious nooks and crannies that open up. After all, these visualizations also relate to notions of the home as the site of imaginary narration. Viewing these films we enter into an imaginary of images that presents multifarious engagements with a past present that is as much about the visualization of the present lifeworld as it is about the wishful construction of a future looking back. The opening of these films is always also an opening of a multitude of filmic worlds. This study then examines these worlds as posited between situated knowledge production and visual imaginaries. Bachelard states, with regards to his topographical analysis of the house as home: 'Now my aim

⁵⁸ Black Karen, Neil Marlens, *The Wonder Years*, 1988-1993

⁵⁹ Gaston Bachelard and M. Jolas, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994). Xxxvii

⁶⁰ Ibid., Xxxvii.

is clear: I must show that the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration is the daydream. Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, stimulating one another.’⁶¹ Amateur filmmakers present such visualizations of the imaginary in imagery.

The opening of a filmic world through viewing illustrates the restrictions of considering these films as purely from a standpoint of consumerist leisure-time activity (even if they, of course, are produced in a filmmaker’s downtime). ‘Home movies constitute an imaginary archive that is never completed, always fragmentary, vat [sic], infinite.’⁶² As will be shown over the course of the following study, it is always also inherently open towards the future, either considered as (my own) present, a future looking back (filmmakers’) or the future reallocation in an always fluctuating changing of context and meaning. The visual narrations of these films, once engaged, give rise to ‘an imaginary process of signification that is always forming, changing, rather than inert and mythologized.’⁶³

Furthermore, within this imaginary that is visualized in the filmic world, the amateur film proves its alterity rather than selfsameness. The manner in which amateurs chose to express themselves, their families, and their lifeworld comes to illustrate the futility of treating amateur film as a homogeneous genre (often equated with the family film). As Zimmermann concludes: ‘I would argue that this alterity of amateur film instead forces us to analyze these films not as artistic inventions (although that strategy certainly erupts from time to time), but as a series of active relationships between the maker and subject, between film and history, between representation and history, between the international and the local, between reality and fantasy, between the real and the imaginary.’⁶⁴ Engaging amateur films, opening and entering their filmic

⁶¹ Ibid., 6.

⁶² Zimmermann, Patricia R. “The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings”. *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 18.

⁶³ Patricia R. Zimmermann, “MORPHING HISTORY INTO HISTORIES From Amateur Film to the Archive of the Future”. *The Moving Image* 1, no. 1 (2001): 112.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 113.

universe, does not so much ‘tell it like it is’ as it leads to the deconstruction of the ‘very idea of the visual as empirical.’⁶⁵

9. Opening amateur film: A Phenomenological Approach

Bachelard’s notion of opening applied to film viewing and the opening of filmic objects from the archive already invites comparison to the amateur film as multi-layered phenomenon. The amateur film collected, preserved, and sitting in the archive has no meaning. It is but a material object, either a film reel in its grey dull encasing or a VHS tape in all its plastic glory. As such, ‘[w]ithout projection, all this film footage is inanimate, a mass of junk lacking any value.’⁶⁶ Opening these films however, means to enter a filmic world presenting its own alterities in terms of film language and cultural codifications that position representation as much in the imaginary as in the family’s past. This opening also always inherently implicates the researcher in a primordial, embodied engagement. I thus decided to approach the engagement with these filmic worlds phenomenologically. Phenomenology comes to relate to a specific manner of engagement, rather than the imposition of a theoretical framework.

A phenomenological approach takes a phenomenon as it is given in experience. It effectuates an engagement by what is generally called an eidetic reduction or *epochē*. This reduction or ‘bracketing’ involves the stripping away of sedimented knowledge layers that constitute how we engage the phenomenon. Phenomenology is, initially, concerned with a regressive movement towards a pre-theoretical experience. Over the course of my research, I have come to imagine the process of *epochē* in terms of the peeling of an onion. Layer after layer of presuppositions are peeled back in order

‘to remove the secondary or tertiary series of presuppositions or beliefs which cover or distort the original phenomena of pre-theoretical experience. The suspension of the “natural attitude,” the overcoming of abstractions and constructionist reifications, etc., all fall in this process of removal which successively reveals

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Abraham, Ayisha. “Deteriorating Memories Blurring Fact and Fiction in Home Movies in India”. *Mining the Home Movie*, 170.

the naivetés and errors involved in taking theoretical constructs for experience itself. If experience is to be described in its richness, such a reduction of presuppositions, but not of experience, is necessary.’⁶⁷

This epoché finally is nothing more than the doing away with assumptions we might have when looking at a phenomenon and of which we are often not aware. The different stages of stepping back are also referred to as phenomenological reductions within the language of the tribe (as Ihde refers to the phenomenological community). ‘Epoché and *phenomenological reductions* may also be called *hermeneutic rules*, since they provide the shape or focus of the inquiry. Hermeneutic in its broadest sense means interpretation, and rules give shape to an interpretation.’⁶⁸

This work takes the practice of amateur filmmaking as phenomenon in and of the world. I will thus engage with the phenomenon of amateur film through a reduction of different layers of meaning in order to arrive at its essential core as self-expression in the world. Most works examining amateur film take them as case studies. Often amateur films are taken as visual evidence supporting a macro-historical or macro-social phenomenon. A simple example of such a methodology would be the supporting evidence the films of a missionary might provide for an examination of the effects of a colonialist gaze upon a native population. For example, Paul Lesch conducts a detailed analysis of the 1933 amateur film taken by the white missionary Félix Dufays.⁶⁹ He thus analyzes specific implications of the colonial gaze that is here effectuated through the camera.

A second example would be a feminist approach in which the camera gaze is evaluated in terms of visual appropriation of a female subject by a male gaze. Michelle Citron’s work, for example, presents numerous such engagements.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁷ William Rosensohn et al., “Sense and Significance,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 36, no. 2 (December 1975).

⁶⁸ Don Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology: An Introduction* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), 32.

⁶⁹ Lesch, Paul. “Sahara, terre féconde (1933) A Missionary Film Directed by White Father Félix Dufays”. *Tourists & Nomads: Amateur Images of Migration* (Marburg: Jonas, 2012).

⁷⁰ Michelle Citron, *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions*, Visible Evidence, v. 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

usage of amateur films as visual support is a useful and valid approach that furthered the understanding of the field of amateur film considerably. I wanted, however, to widen the focus on these films and also concomitantly examine the relational patterns that underlie the practice. If I narrowed my focus to the family film, I would ignore other sequences in the same collection that visualize a different manner of narration or a self-inscription in a cultural subjectform that extends beyond the private as sole meaningful space of social interaction. As stated before, this also led to my abandonment of the fairground sequences as sole object of study. I did not want to have a metaphorical ‘beam of light’ falling upon one sequence of these film collections to the detriment of their remaining visual narrations and engagements.

I decided to include the distinct phenomenon of fairground films within a larger incorporation of all visualizations presented by the corpus. I was interested in the entirety of the images as they introduced a multiplicity of perspectival views that a narrow focus on one thematic element, here the fairground, would leave aside. As mentioned before, my own particular thought process structures this work. As such, operating in accordance with phenomenological principles of reductive analysis, the following work is organized in two major, if related, parts. The first part will engage with the amateur film as visual narration. It will analyze how amateurs not only choose highly varied subject matters as filmic motifs, but also how these subject matters are actualized through different manners of filmic engagement or modes. The films are thus examined in terms of filmic language. I will *not* adopt a phenomenological stance in the first three chapters. Instead, I will distinctly identify three manners of style and subject matter that have crystallized over the viewing of this corpus.

10. Study

Chapter one deals with the family film. Said filmic engagements of course present a focus on the family. This mode, however, is also identified by a certain style. The family filmmaker is more concerned with participation than clarity. These films also often present as the least proficient in terms of framing and the general understandability or clarity of images. The main evaluation of this chapter concerns

the cultural codification underlying representation in the family. What is shown in the family film is as important as what is not. The cultural codes will be related to an ideology of familialism emerging in the post–World War II society. The ideology of familialism is here most closely adopted from Patricia R. Zimmermann’s work on the family film; most notably her excellent study *Reel Families*.⁷¹ The arguments and examinations effectuated in this chapter bear a strong debt to the work of Heather Norris Nicholson, Karen L. Ishizuka, Roger Odin, Richard Chalfen, Ian Craven, Michelle Citron, James M. Moran, and Péter Forgacs, as well as the work of Sonja Kmec and Viviane Thill that specifically targets amateur films in Luxembourg. The family film is here linked as much to notions of display and status, general consumerist behavior in the private, but also with visual taboos concerning the representation of the family. These films will then be treated as visualizations of a transferal of the family into the familial. Naturally, these visual narrations are also always subject to power relations underlying the filmic gaze depending on who the narrator is. This first chapter will also show how private films function as a visual basis for the later construction of verbal recollective narratives. While these narratives are inherently lost in the transferal to the archive, I will show how the construction of verbal narratives always leaves spaces of resistance. The family chronicle, as it will be termed from hereon out, represents the predominant style and focus of the amateur film. It does, however, not present the only manner of filmic engagement.

Chapter two will identify a second major filmic style that bundles highly diversified subject matters and filmic engagements. This chapter presents the most diversified manner of engagement. The common denominator of these films lies in their documenting of the everyday. Filmmakers here enact the archival logic that accompanied the very birth of the camera. The filmic language that is displayed reveals a willingness to produce images that become universally understandable through the adoption of a style that translates as documentation. The visual narrations effectuated by this documenting drive are highly complex. I will loosely engage Andreas Reckwitz’s elaboration of subjectform as cultural offers and show how these amateurs take up these offers as distinct forms of self-inscription. Within the overall

⁷¹ Patricia Rodden Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film, Arts and Politics of the Everyday* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

documenting drive that characterizes these films, three subcategories will be examined in terms of the materialization of self-inscription.

The first category relates to a filming of parades, public displays, and processions. Here filmmakers display a willingness to inscribe the self-narration (film) in the collective. They take up a cultural offer of a subjectform in sociality. The second category deals with subjectforms that are offered by cultural memory artifacts such as memorials and commemorative sites, but also more loose engagements with the city as historical trail. Here filmmakers inscribe and anchor the self by a narration that inscribes the self in institutional and historical narratives. As will be shown, these historical narratives also serve as means of valorization and legitimation of personal experience as situated within larger historical and socio-cultural frames. The last category identified takes up the archival and documenting promise that accompanied the beginning of imaging technologies and the guarantees of camera capacities and applies it to the private space. Here filmmakers narrate the self in accordance to promises of legitimation and valorization provided by the camera itself. This chapter then deepens the diversifications that underlie filmmaking in the private. I will show how filmmakers producing in the private sphere never restrict the latter to the home, but come to filmically engage a lifeworld that always concomitantly takes in and reversibly inscribes the self in the public, the collective, and the historical.

Chapter three presents a different structure and manner of engagement. It identifies distinct views that are presented as visual outbursts within filmic sequences that either adopt a family chronicle style or a documenting drive. These views intersperse the filmic sequences. These moments present images of an attractional display and are *exclusively* produced at the fairground. They also display no immediate purpose as either visual narration for the construction of a recollective narrative in the familial, nor do they attempt to document the everyday through the construction of a coherent and stable visual narration. They also offer no direct space for self-inscription. They present baffling and surprisingly aesthetic foci on technology in motion, electrified lighted displays, and a general engagement with the sensory hyperstimulation of the fairground.

This chapter thus analyzes these views in terms of their visualized fascinations and a more general examination of how the fairground becomes a space of modernist attractions. I have again identified three distinct motifs that function as attractional display at the fairground. First of all, hydraulics and gears in motion draw the filmic focus surprisingly often, given that they were never intended to function as attraction. Second, filmmakers deliberate further the attraction of the fairground within their imagery in that they create close-up visual cutouts of lights in motion. Here filmmakers often add on to the attraction of the display within the image in that they induce a further layer of motion by moving the camera by hand and using the zoom function excessively. Third, filmmakers at the fair emulate the views presented by early cinema phantom rides. These phantom rides represent films shot from a moving train. Filmmakers here choose to film either while seated on a thrill ride in motion or they engage in more leisurely views shot from the Ferris wheel.

Before examining these specific three motifs and their engagement with attraction, I will first summarize how the innovations of modernity led to a modernist restructuration of perception. Here I will show how vision was partially detached from lived experience and a corporeal centering of perception. The restructuration of perception led from an interiority of visibility as centered in the body to an externalization of visibility in which attractional impetuses draw attention from the outside. The fairground will thus be engaged as a distinct space of modernist restructuration that, through sensory overstimulation, transposed the anxieties that accompanied these modernist restructurations into thrill and commodified them further as attraction. I will also show in this chapter how image production in the private presents isomorphic structures and fascinations that accompanied and constituted an early cinema of attractions.

Amateurs engage the sensory hyperstimulation in a two-fold manner. Their filmic language here illustrates two reactions to the fairground as populated by visual and attractional stimuli that represent a distinctly modernist effect. First, amateurs seek to harness the attraction through the promise of fixing that underlies the beliefs of the camera as device of documentation. Second, amateurs use the camera to deliberately create and further these attractions in their imagery and thus revel in the sensory excess provided by the technologized and electrified fairground. This chapter will

thus link the attractional qualities of moving images to the dispositif adopted at the fairground. It will relate to notions of spectacle as a distinctly modernist architecture of vision and it will identify the attractional impetus that restructures perception at the fairground as a distinctly modernist effect. This chapter concludes the first part of the thesis that examines and engages the films as visual narration. I thus identify three distinct major categories in terms of filmic language and filmic focus. This basis allows for a differentiated approach to amateur film as different manners of engagement identified by filmic language and thus the illustration of more diversified motivations and intentions that underlie the practice of filmmaking.

By this point I will have mostly connected the underlying motivations of these films to socio-culturally inflected and historical sedimented layers of meaning that can now be treated within a larger experiential framework. From hereon out, I will engage with these films through a phenomenology of perception. These presuppositions form an inherent part of the experiential structures of perception in the world. A modernist context is useful in explaining the belief system that underlies the *manner* in which amateurs engage in the practice. Or, the ideology of familialism certainly helps to understand the larger societal implications of how the practice is introduced into the micro-entities of individual households. I have peeled back the sedimented layers of the phenomenon of amateur filmmaking. Nevertheless, a methodology that takes amateur filmmaking as a given appearance (phenomenon) in experience cannot stop there.

Amateur filmmaking is here not treated as an exclusive by-product of consumerist behavior in the private but as visualizing the very process of meaning-making structures. The visualizations in the films come to materialize the very immateriality of meaning generation. A phenomenological inquiry into the practice of amateur filmmaking proves as such fruitful, as phenomenology ‘seeks to identify the underlying structures of the phenomenon at hand by studying its intimate entailment with the intentional act of perception to which the phenomenon is present.’⁷² Expression, perception, and experience are the axes points around which a phenomenological inquiry bases itself.

⁷² Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 11.

Chapter four will deal with film production and take a phenomenological approach not only to filmmaking as existential expressions of a lifeworld, but more concretely with notions of technological mediation. It allows me to take these films as visualizations of coming-into-being of expressive signification rather than as incomplete records of a profilmic real. As such it engages these visualizations of expression that is always a becoming in the films. It allows for a positioning of filmmaking as expressive directionality towards the world and an engagement of these films as existential correlation between filmmaker and world. Notions of focus and attention will be elaborated from a primordial basis of embodied perception.

Concomitantly, these visualizations of an expressive coming-into-being will be examined as technologically mediated and thus transformed. Filmmaking will here be elaborated as a visualization of a Heideggerian process of *technē*. A conjoint working together of an intentional relation and a technological mediation forms this process. From hereon out, the camera will be elaborated in regards to a device that functions as sensual expansion of the corporeal positioning of the filmmaker. Here, Don Ihde's re-evaluation of Merleau-Ponty's instrument as sensual expansion in an intentional project becomes most useful and serves as the basis for the analysis of a technologically mediated process of signifying expression. This examination of the production process as a coming-into-being of a signifying expression allows me to engage the amateur filmmaking process with a phenomenological approach that has, to my knowledge, not been effectuated to this day.

The final chapter presents a more personal and particular account of my own experience of viewing these films. It represents the most informal in tone and analysis. I adopt a phenomenological approach to film viewership as embodied. I furthermore identify the sensual relationality that always underlies film viewing with a specific focus on amateur productions. I thus engage with questions of material being and perceptive relationality that underlie the engagement with moving images. My examination is presented as two-fold. First, I relate to how these private films can still be meaningful without meta-context. This leads me to existential structures of primordial meaning generation. As such, I operate from a very basic position that, as Sobchack notes: 'a body [...] makes meaning before it makes conscious, reflective

thought.’⁷³ I first single out certain moments that moved me extraordinarily. These moments are related to as Barthesian *punctum*. I show how these moments that ‘prick’ present moments in which my own positioning in the common materiality of the flesh rises to the fore.

Second, I engage my own socio-cultural background as constitutive element of this process of meaning generation. These socio-cultural inflections are not treated as separate from film viewership in the flesh but come to form a constitutive part of it. I bring to the film viewing my own body, not only as site for primordial and sensual meaning generation, but also as positioned within a socio-cultural background as, for example, a female, Luxembourgian, non-practicing Catholic. I bring to the film viewing my own interior memorial processes that not only rise to the fore but also become an enriching constituent of my particular viewing. I show how these films serve as trigger of my own particular memorial process and how my sensual engagement with these films led to a fleshed-out process of meaning generation that rises to the fore in the *relationality* between film and viewer. These contemplations lead me to a few concluding reflections on potential uses for these rich visualizations of a past lifeworld.

The researcher and archivist must tread lightly, with respect to these past expressions. We must operate in constant awareness that, even if the metadata is lost, these films were once visual narrations bound to real, lived, and particular existences. After all, ‘watching such films raises ethical issues in relation to the public use of material that sometimes was intended only for the intimacy of family and friends.’⁷⁴ Still, as will be shown, they are never completely senseless, and come to serve further processes of meaning generation that always inherently include the researcher him/herself. By the end of this thesis it will hopefully have been shown that an engagement with amateur film as visualizations of a process of expressive signification as effectuated in the past leads to an enrichment of our own situated and embodied present. Initially amateur films without meta-context can seem like endings—obtuse, stubborn, and refusing conclusive meaning. This work will conclude with the amateur film as beginning. The

⁷³ Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 59.

⁷⁴ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 21.

amateur film shows its potential as always opening towards the future, an imaginary landscape that draws us in and reminds us that we have never truly lost the past.

I. THE FAMILY CHRONICLE

1. Introduction

The introduction of imaging technologies into the private realm immediately cemented the camera as staple in family social celebrations. In fact, no other subject matter offered itself as readily to the promises of imaging media as the family. It comes as no surprise, then, that the predominant focus of amateur productions relates to aspects of family life. As such, '[c]ameras and film have been developed with the family in mind.'¹ As a matter of fact, '[c]ameras go with family life. According to a sociological study done in France, most households have a camera, but a household with children is twice as likely to have at least once camera as a household in which there are no children.'² This study takes examination of the family film beyond its focus on members of the family. It elaborates the family film in terms of filmic language that also inherently displays concomitant forms of filmic behaviour. The family film, here, will be analyzed in terms of a filmic mode that is revealed by the general filmic behaviour adopted by the filmmaker. These elements will thus be brought together with an elaboration on the family as subject matter and its transposal into the familial.

The term mode will be adopted throughout this work and serves as the basis from which to elaborate on the images, filmed subjects, and main motivations pertaining to amateur filmmaking. It also bundles notions of style, filmic focus, and codes of representation that structure the practice and imagery of the home movie. The term home movie will here occasionally be used; however, in this context it relates more to the home of the viewing situation. This work adopts the term family chronicling as a distinct mode of engagement. It allows us to directly identify the filmic subject, here generally the family, but more specifically children. Chronicling relates both to the

¹ Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, eds., *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago, 1991), 4.

² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London; New York: Penguin, 2008), 176.

sequencing of family events that are organized by default and to a wider implication of children growing up and thus following in intergenerational linkage. The notion of chronicling is used in relation to its emplotting function and familial emplacement. The family chronicle identifies the idea of recording a sequence of events by which a visual base is created. This base serves as a visual trigger that induces processes of collective recollection and the subsequent construction of a family narrative. The family chronicle is thus a template that serves as means of emplacement and identity construction within the private. What the family chronicle visualizes is how the filmmaker narrates the family. The films present visual narrations, never finished narratives. The films are used as the visual basis for the construction of verbal recollective narratives in the viewing situation.

At the same time, the mode of family chronicle will be examined in terms of filmic style or language. What is striking within these films is not only their sedimented imagery, which function as a sort of visual generality, but the fact that almost all of these films present the same mode of visual narration. The mode of family chronicling as visual narration comes to serve as an umbrella term that allows us to make several layers, such as motivation, focus, filmic language, and visual content, cohere.

The inquiry conducted here follows the recurrence of certain visual patterns presented within the entire corpus. Underlying motivations and intentions are thus also read from the filmic narration amateurs adopt while filming. The filmic engagement is read concomitantly to a socio-cultural structuring of film images by an ideology of familialism. Simply put the inquiry presented here not only focuses on the depiction of the family, it also examines *how* filmmaker, film, and camera present and reproduce the family in the visual.

In this chapter, I will first elaborate the general terminology in terms of practice, narrative, and identity constructions of the family within the familial in general. I will then identify the ideological codification that underlies the practice as familialism. Next I will briefly illustrate the general pattern that structures the filmic content of the family chronicle. The main part of this chapter examines the films as visual narration and engages more deeply with the notions of socio-cultural codification that underlie

the representation in the familial. This part will not only examine what is shown, but will also relate to visual taboos and prohibitions (what is not shown). Finally, I will show how visual narration functions as a basis from which verbal narratives are constructed in family viewing. The family chronicle, as will be shown, can only become a meaningful space of interaction in the conjunction of visual narration and verbal narrative.

2. The Family Film

In the following, I will briefly elaborate how the family film needs the stereotype and cliché instrumentality to function. At the same time, the structure of the family film will be compared to the medium of snapshot photography. I will then examine the distinct filmic motifs that recur in the family film and are organized by their seasonal reoccurrence.

2.1. The family chronicle image: standardization and cliché

The inquiry conducted here is based on the pattern of stereotypical images and aesthetics that is presented throughout the entire periodization of the film corpus. It operates from recognition of the underlying commonalities of the family film from the 1950s through the 1970s. The family film presents imagery that is highly generalized and standardized. It needs this standardization for its very functioning. Throughout the decades, the family film aesthetic and content remains more or less unchanged. We are presented with a sedimented collection of images that remain unaltered. The family film and its aesthetics thus follow no developmental logic. The family chronicle follows specific patterns and its imagery inherently functions as template. The family needs this visual shift from particularity to generality since it is always exteriorly structured by cultural codes of representation. As we will see, the representation of the family is structured by an ideological codification of familialism.

The family is thus never neutrally presented in imagery; it re-presents itself according to cultural codes that need the standardization of general imagery to function. The films analyzed here were filmed between 1929 and the late 1970s. Between 1929 and 1945, a revealing absence of films presents itself that will also be elaborated later on. This filmic absence certainly pertains to the price of film equipment, which dropped severely in the 1950s, but is also related to the wartime years in which families, generally, did not film. Throughout these four decades, the imagery and style never change fundamentally. I would propose to conduct an initial examination of what the family film shows in order to illustrate how the sequencing adopted conforms into what becomes the typical family film. The family film follows a sequential pattern that orders events by their yearly occurrence. This of course presents an ordering by default; Christmas is followed by carnival, for example. It allows us, however, to identify the visual basis of the family film as the very foundation from which it can reproduce its own emplacement as a necessary condition for the construction of an identity in the familial.

The family film demonstrates a close affinity with earlier media such as the family snapshot. It functions by a concomitance of a belief in the neutral recording by a camera and a restructuring of the family through the visual. As Marianne Hirsch notes: 'Because the photograph gives the illusion of being a simple transcription of the real, a trace touched directly by the event it records, it is the effect of naturalizing cultural practices and of disguising their stereotyped and coded characteristics.'³ This naturalization of cultural codes lies neither exclusively in the image nor in the family but emerges in their conjunction. Again Hirsch is adamant in her elaboration on the cultural codification that constitutes the subject through the look that occurs in representation: '[T]he structure of looking is reciprocal: photographer and viewer collaborate on the reproduction of ideology.'⁴ The family film needs standardized images in order to function as a template for the construction of a family identity that follows the invisible codes of an ideology of familialism. It represents a double circumnavigation of looking, and a look that is always also a looking back. It thus

³ Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), 7.

⁴ Ibid.

needs imagery that not so much reproduces an event as it was, but instead restructures the present as a past that will be worth looking back upon. As Karl Sierek so aptly puts it:

'Was nun das reflexive Sehen von Bildern seiner selbst, urlaubend, weihnachtfeiernd oder was immer, betrifft, so gestaltet sich dieses-soweit man darüber als Eindringling überhaupt Aussagen zu treffen vermag-als schwankende Bewegung zwischen einem „Schau, da ist“ und einem „Das ist schön“. Es fördert also einerseits eine Haltung, die man gemeinhin *deiktischen* Zeichen gegenüber einnimmt, transponiert diese allerdings sofort in einen normativen und *imaginären* Bereich. Denn schön ist, was den Vorstellungen entspricht, wie etwas zu sein habe.'⁵

The family chronicle not only produces standardized imagery, it needs this standardization to function. It comes to illustrate not only how one celebrates Christmas, but also shows that one celebrates Christmas in the 'right' manner. The representation of the family in the filmic universe thus functions according to aesthetic principles that follow normalizing conditions of how an event will have *had* to be. It creates a visual basis that the family will want to look back upon. It recreates a version of the family's past not as it was, but as it is deemed appropriate.

The family film presents an archive of stock images. These images come to function as stereotypes that reveal their clichéd character. The family film needs the standardization of its imagery. Family filmmaking and family films are instrumental. They serve as foundation or visual basis. The practice of family filmmaking is transposed in terms of productivity. The image is, as such, reified as generalization since it functions according to a codification that reproduces the family as familial. The family film adopts the cliché as function in that 'it is really the cliché that is

⁵ 'Reflexive viewing of images of oneself, on holiday, celebrating Christmas or whatever (insofar as one, as an intruder, is capable of making a statement about such images), fluctuates back and forth between "look at that" and "that's nice". This on the one hand promotes an attitude adopted towards generally *deictic* symbols, but also immediately transposes it into a normative and *imaginary* sphere. For beauty lies in that which meets expectations of how things should be.'

Sierek, Karl. "Hier ist es schön " Sich sehen im Familienkino"". Christa Blümlinger, ed., *Sprung Im Spiegel: Filmisches Wahrnehmen Zwischen Fiktion Und Wirklichkeit* (Wien: Sonderzahl, 1990), 164.

abstract: it uses from the image only what makes sense in the terms of causal connections, instrumentally; and this exists on a conceptual level.’⁶ Laura U. Marks elaborates upon the cliché as produced by Hollywood cinema. What interests me here and what is taken from this elaboration is the notion of instrumentality. The visual sedimentation into clichéd images that the entire collection examined here presents also relates to its instrumental function. As such, not only is family imagery always stereotypical according to cultural codes of representation, it also needs these stereotypes to function.

As Sierek notes, with the family film we enter a logic in which the real is reproduced as image of the real. According to Sierek, we live in an age in which we need to resemble our passport image rather than the image resembling us. This logic also structures the family film. What is desired is the transposal of the family into a culturally codified image. Within the practice of family filmmaking, the camera is not a neutral tool of representation, even though the belief in the indexicality of the image underlies the practice. It becomes a means to induce a transformative imaging of the family into the familial.

The examination of the general pattern revealed by the family films analyzed here, rather than the focus upon one particular family, allows us to operate from a base of inquiry in which ‘[i]t depends, as always, on the way concrete practices are implemented in concrete historical conditions, the effectivity with which certain codes are constituted as ‘in dominance’, the struggle within the social relations of representation, at a particular conjuncture’.⁷

In the following section, I will identify the typical pattern of the family film in terms of content. Later, specific examples will serve as illustrations.

⁶ Laura U. Marks. “A Deleuzian Politics of Hybrid Cinema”. *Screen* 35, no. 3 (1994): 254.

⁷ Hall, Stuart. “Reconstruction Work Images of Post-War Black Settlement”. Spence and Holland, *Family Snaps*, 160.

2.2. The Imagery of the Family Film: a year in the filmic family

Children mostly populate the family chronicle universe. Two notions of space can be identified: one pertains to the space of the everyday. Here the focus lies on children at home. A second space pertains to the extraordinary: here the filmmaker focuses on events that are clearly not part of their everyday lives.

The everyday is visualized in the form of rites that structure the life of the child within the family home. The focus lies on activity. Children are shown playing in the garden, running in the street with neighboring children, or proudly displaying their toys in the living room. They are often filmed while ‘helping’ their parents or grandparents in, for example, picking fruit in the orchard or weeding in the garden. They are depicted on summer days frolicking in the paddling pool and on winter days enjoying the first snow in the village. Each activity is ritualized by the very fact that it is filmed. For example, children playing are often presented only once in the film collection. These activities will not be filmed again and again, but each of the activities deemed typical will be included once in the visual archive of the family. The feeding of a baby presents another everyday rite that is captured for an inclusion into the visual archive. A further predominant motif is the filming of the bedtime ritual. Here the child is often bathed first. The frequency of these scenes is astonishing. First, the child will be seen enjoying a bath and grinning at the camera. The mother is often partially visible, and the next scene shows the toweling off. Then the child is neatly tucked into bed. These rituals are pictured as a template of the activities deemed typical of the everyday. These moments of the everyday intersperse the filmmaker’s collection in no particular order but are filmed as they arise. They are inserted within a broader pattern of events that are deemed extraordinary.

The extraordinary pertains to events that are not part of the everyday. These events follow a cyclical structure. This cyclical structure comes to constitute the template of standardized family imagery. Starting with a typical visit to the fairground, I will describe a standardized version of how the filmic year is constructed as pattern. We need this description of the standardized pattern of the family chronicle in order to gain an understanding of how the filmic universe serves as foundation for further processes of identity formations and familial narrative construction.

2.2.1. Summer

Starting with the visit to the fairground in summer, the seasonal pattern of the family chronicle is constituted as follows: at the fairground, children present the main focus. They are filmed on carousels, thrill rides, and generally enjoying the attractions of the fairground. The imagery is one of joyful experience on the rides, cotton-candy smeared faces, excited fishing of plastic ducks, the proud display of cheap plastic toys that were won, and the general leisurely pace of a family day out. The next sequence generally relates to the family holidays. Most of the time they are either taken on a beach or in the Alps. The imagery includes outings to the beach, bathing suits, ice cream, outings to a nearby town, leisurely lunches, and long walks in the baking sun. Quite often these holidays are taken in a mobile home and spent on a camping site. Here, the imagery includes the extraordinary, almost playful rendition of the preparation of food on rudimentary equipment, the display of commodities from home, and long lunches with friends under the canopy of a tent. Here the home is emulated on holiday and thus deemed extraordinary yet familiar. While sightseeing plays an inherent part of every holiday depiction, the focus lies distinctly on family, friends, and, of course, especially on children. The local sights are, if at all, depicted as a secondary visual feature.

2.2.2. Autumn

The following season of autumn does not present event-based depictions. The only holiday in autumn is All Saints, and notions of taboo prevent filming on this day, as we will see later on. Autumn is generally included for its occasion of long walks in the forest or by a riverside. The color scheme of the autumn landscape provides the main impetus for filming.

2.2.3. Winter

Wintertime again provides numerous occasions for the construction of a filmic and idealized family universe. First of all, the first snow of the year is almost always included in the family chronicle. Often in combination with an emphasis on the child playing, sledging or ice skating, the first snow presents an attraction in itself and

furthermore functions as a 'setting the scene' for St Nicholas day and Christmas. Footage taken on St Nicholas day is often astonishing in terms of its sheer length. Filmmakers go all out. The event is also carefully sequenced, as often the living room table with the gifts is proudly displayed. Next, the children are seen coming through the door, and their reaction to the gifts is recorded. Then we witness the children unwrapping presents, displaying them to the parents, and most of the time, the film ends with a sequence of children playing with the newly received gifts. Occasionally, a hired St. Nicholas will be present, and children are filmed as they stand shyly behind their mothers in front of St Nicholas.

The next yearly event is, of course, Christmas. It brings with it numerous occasions for display. These sequences often focus on children's reactions to the Christmas tree. The tree becomes an attraction in itself, as the filmmaker carefully focuses on shiny ornaments and the nativity scene placed under the tree. The next sequence might show a further scene of gifting, quite often with extended relatives present. Christmas dinner is also occasionally included, as filmmakers show the festive table and the display of rich foods.

The next event captured, though not as frequently as the Christmas footage, pertains to carnival in February. Here children are filmed while taking part in or watching the carnival parade. The focus lies on the fancy dress of the children. The footage is generally quite short, and once the costumes have been documented, filming often stops. Carnival also brings the filmic winter season to an end.

2.2.4. Spring

Springtime brings with it a focus on nature in full bloom. Flowers especially provide a favorable motif demarcating winter from spring in the family film collection. Spring also marks the beginning of gardening season, and here lies another occasion to film the child in activity. Children are seen helping out in the garden, walking amongst the cemented garden paths, or picking flowers with the grandparents. Another popular occasion for filming the coming of spring lies in family walks that are taken as Sunday outing. For example, the vallée de Pétrusse in Luxembourg presents a popular

walking destination, as its park-like structure allows for the capturing of flora in full bloom. Springtime is thus visualized as the beginning of the season of outdoor activities. Children are taken to the local amusement park, the Parc des Merveilles, or on boat rides along the river Moselle, often in combination with lunch or ice cream taken in the village of Remich.

Another important social event is the Holy Communion of a child. Of course, this event is not a yearly occurrence, as children take their communion but once. Within the entirety of the family collection, however, this event conveys an extreme social importance, and long sequences of film are devoted to the occasion. The focus is directed towards the child in her dress or his suit. Filmmakers capture the parade and the child's place within it, but also film Communion lunches and the visit of the extended family in their best Sunday dress.

A late springtime event deemed worthy of documentation, especially in a family with younger children, is Easter. Easter is filmed more casually than Christmas. There is no emphasis on special meals or the giving of gifts. Easter is mostly visualized through the Easter egg hunt. Often part of a visit to the grandparents, the Easter egg hunt sees toddlers with little baskets that they fill with chocolates and colored eggs.

The cyclical nature of the event patterns that are followed in the filmic year also relate to a structuring in accordance with Catholic festivities. They are structured around and often coincide with religious high points of the year, from Christmas to Easter. Whether people imbue these events with a religious or social significance would be a question too presumptuous to answer here. Nevertheless, some of the filmmakers are more attuned to religious life than others, as can be read from their choice of subject matter. Some of these filmmakers include lengthy sequences of religious processions, outdoor masses, or even religious paraphernalia in the home. The differences in these visual patterns pertain to slight alterations in particular leisure activities or interests that are specific to each particular family. In other words, the family footage presents different hobbies. Apart from the commonality of recording the traditional events enumerated above, filmmakers might choose to include cycling races, motor races, religious processions, gardening activities, country fairs, outside masses, picnics and the like. The common focus of the films, however,

lies in the depiction of the family transposed as leisure time activity in itself, a notion that will be developed in what follows.

The above-illustrated standardized pattern serves as the basis for the further examination of how the representation of the family in the familial becomes instrumental. The sedimented image pattern serves as basis for an analysis of the representational tropes within the ideological space of the familial. Filmmakers are not consciously setting out to produce records of their family adhering to certain ideological structures. Rather, we can analyze the sedimented image patterns as invisibly structured by the cultural codes that underlie familial representation. The invisibility of these codifications thus naturalizes them. The visualizations within the family film reveal the cultural codification of images in the familial. They do not transpose the life of a particular family as neutral record. While chapter four will elaborate on the further implications of filming in the family, most notable its expression of a relationality that leads to the rise of highly positive emotions of love, care, and concern, what interests me are the representational tropes the image pattern reveals.

2.3. Style

A further sedimentation into cliché pertains to the manner of filmic engagement in terms of *mise-en-scène*, style, and framing that the family filmmaker adopts. Family chronicling displays a visual language that gives insights into its underlying intentions. I will briefly elaborate the stylistic feature of the family chronicle, while the cultural implications of the specific aesthetics adopted by the family chronicle will be elaborated later on.

The family filmmaker has a tendency to move the camera frequently and hectically. As the filmic focus clearly lies on children, filmmakers pan frequently since the filmmaker often has trouble following the direction and movement of the child. This inclination to move the camera extensively goes hand in hand with the propensity to zoom often and rapidly. Filmmakers tend to zoom in too closely and too hurriedly resulting in almost indiscernible images. Despite the inclination for zooms and close-

ups, the family chronicle also relates an affinity for medium or long shots if the filmmaker wants to create a filmic portrait of the family. Within these portraits the emphasis lies on frontality. While the earliest film, from 1929, presents an extreme accumulation of visual portraits, it also hints at the not-yet-completed acclimatization of early filmmakers to the media-specific qualities of the film camera. M.Q.s⁸ film focuses on the family in moving portraits because, in the 1920s, his affinity presumably lay closer to photography than film. Simply put, filmmakers in the 1920s were not used to producing moving images and thus transposed their photographic knowledge and skill to the filmic medium. In the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, the portrait sequence while less popular, never vanishes completely from the family film.

The duration of the shots tends to vary greatly from a few seconds to up to a minute or two. Content, length, and ordering in the family archive are characterized by inconsistency. In most cases, no clear markers between subject matters are introduced. Consequentially, a child may be filmed at Christmas dinner, while the subsequent sequence depicts an Easter egg hunt. Due to lack of editing,⁹ filmic sequences follow a chronological order by default. The cameras are carefully put away after each recording and retrieved once more when an event is again deemed worthy of capture. The temporal sequencing within the film collection is thus ordered by chronologic default rather than intentionally constructed.

The style of the family chronicle is one of discordance. As such, jump cuts populate the family image. Quite often filmmakers will lose control while filming. For example, if a child moves too quickly, the filmmaker that has focused the child in a medium close-up proves to slow to react. As filmmakers lose their intended focal point, they often stop filming mid-close-up. As they resume filming, they zoom out, a move that results in a jump cut within the sequences of the image.

The family chronicler is the least proficient filmmaker of the three modes identified within this study. Their camera handling proves hectic and always engages the filmic

⁸ AV009596_m.wmv / IA_AMA_004418, 9.5 mm, black and white, mute, 1929

⁹ I could not conclusively identify the edited nature of any film in the corpus, even though amateurs did occasionally use postproduction processes.

focus too closely. The framing translates as intended focus, mostly on the child, rather than in terms of clear understandability. The family filmmaker is not interested in a proficient construction of a comprehensible *mise-en-scène*. The filmmaker relates more to participation in the event than to the adoption of an observatory position. The filmmakers follow their children running around the garden; they will attempt to zoom in on the children on a carousel; they will attempt to capture the facial reaction of children unwrapping gifts. Stylistically, the family filmmaker displays an intention to get as close as possible to the family. Location proves secondary. They rarely use establishing shots, as they are not interested in visual contextualization. As such, their manner of engagement is hectic, erratic, and characterized by mistakes, but also joyful, participatory, and firmly focused on the familial offspring.

2.4. Familialism

What is the primary function of the family film? Two concomitant elements structure the family film as instrument: the placement of an individual in the familial and the conclusive construction of a coherent and happy family narrative. Both are structured by an ideology of familialism. The sedimented stock of images visualizes representational templates of the familial into which the family inscribes itself. The cultural codification that structures representation in the family adheres to values and ideals that are imposed by an ideology of familialism.

Familialism presents the promotion of family life with an exclusive emphasis on the private as domestic space and the focus on children as currency of social value. Familialism as structure positions the family as a primary social cell. It posits the familial as sole space of meaningful social interaction. It furthermore asserts the familial space as the foundation of broader social living conditions. It celebrates motherhood as social duty and firmly places the father at the head of the family. It also pertains to notions of consumption, display, and exhibition of these familial values as valorization through exteriorization.

The familial restructures the post–World War II family as the nuclear family. While

Rémi Lenoir's¹⁰ elaboration of the familial is most known for its direct implication on the larger political reframing that favored the family structure in terms of motherhood and the *croissance* of the population, I link the familial to the representational tropes that Patricia R. Zimmermann defines in *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film*. Familialism is defined as 'an ideology and social practice that emphasized family relations above other kinds of social or political interactions.'¹¹ Zimmermann stresses the formation of the bourgeois nuclear family as the idealized version of family life and the predominant cultural offer for self-inscription.

The rise of the ideological restructuring of living conditions and meaningful existence in the family space is linked to the expansion of leisure time after the Second World War. It promoted values of togetherness, family unity, and meaningful social interaction within the private space of the micro-unity of the family. Through the promotion of familial values the subjectform offered was presented as stable, coherent, and meaningful. These implications of self-inscription and the cultural offer of a certain subjectform will be examined shortly. Familialism furthermore carries distinctly antifeminist overtones in that it identifies women through their roles as mothers and firmly positions them in the domestic. These values are situated in a larger framework that takes consumption as its primary activity. The valorization and celebration of the familial thus transposes agency as consumption.

In fact, the emergent rise of familialism presents the perfect structuring for amateur filmmaking. According to Zimmermann, the 1950s especially saw the flourishing of 'the idea that "home movies" implied family activity':

'Children replaced nature as the prime subjects of amateur film, at least in popular discussions. The home-movie style zeroed in on and celebrated the family. Narrative codes negotiated universal audience comprehension, translating the extremely isolated, idiosyncratic activities of the nuclear family to a wider audience. [...] Within leisure-time expansion, the nuclear family's most

¹⁰ Lenoir, Rémi. 1985a. "L'Effondrement des bases sociales du familialisme". *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*. 57-58: 69-88

¹¹ Patricia Rodden Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film*, Arts and Politics of the Everyday (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 132.

important recreation was itself. Home movies conscripted "togetherness," family harmony, children, and travel into a performance of familialism.¹²

The rise of familialism emerged and was reinforced by diversified media outputs: 'Discussed in women's magazines, sociological studies, and the mainstream press, togetherness promoted the bourgeois nuclear family as the only social structure available for the expression of common, shared experiences that could shore one up against alienation and isolation.'¹³ Furthermore, the rise of familialism transposed parenthood as leisure-time activity. This transposal saw parenthood as a new cultural practice. It positioned filming as 'a kind of sacred duty.'¹⁴ Susan Aasman concurring with Patricia R. Zimmermann, states: 'The rapid transformations that took place in many domains evoked the loss of the traditional sense of continuity.'¹⁵ She relates this to the restructuration that took place in a newly industrialized society. Chapter three will examine these restructurations in more detail; suffice to say here that it pertains to a relegation of agency, autonomy, and meaning to the private by a capitalist restructuration of lived experience into labor and leisure and a temporal demarcation into objective and subjectively lived time. Children come to function as "economically useless, emotionally priceless"¹⁶. Aasman sees this relegation as concomitant to an emergence of a new practice of fatherhood in which the father could film 'his children and wife is his attempt at seeking their presence.'¹⁷

The restructuring of the family as ideological space of the sole meaningful social interaction also relates to the effects of an increasingly alienating experience in industrialized society. In fact, '[t]he popularized notion of togetherness epitomized this ideology of the family as an emotional lifeboat in an automated, efficient, and

¹² Ibid., 132–33.

¹³ Ibid., 133.

¹⁴ Aasman, Susan. "Home movies: A New Technology, a New Duty, a New Cultural Practice". Sonja Kmec and Viviane Thill, eds., *Private Eyes and the Public Gaze: The Manipulation and Valorisation of Amateur Images* (Trier: Kliomedia, 2009), 48.

¹⁵ Aasman, Susan. "Home Movies: A New Technology, a New Duty, a New Cultural Practice". Ibid.

¹⁶ Aasman, Susan. "Home Movies: A New Technology, a New Duty, a New Cultural Practice". Ibid.

¹⁷ Aasman, Susan. "Home Movies: A New Technology, a New Duty, a New Cultural Practice". Ibid., 47.

distant society.’¹⁸ The camera was thus recruited into a practice that visually celebrates and creates the family as a symbol of togetherness. The materialization of the familial as representation also pertains to film viewings in which the family could consume its own representation of togetherness anew. It thus presented a practice of materialization that actualized the immateriality of the family as familial on the filmstrip. Filmmaking as leisure activity and film viewing as visual re-consumption thus function according to distinct consumerist principles: ‘The movie camera and projector, as yet a few more indispensable recreational devices, facilitated and produced family happiness through consumption.’¹⁹

2.5. Filmmaking as practice: Identity construction in the familial

What is revealed by the stereotypical imagery of the family film that adopts a cliché function as instrumentality is an activity of ‘doing subjects’. Here family filmmaking becomes instrumental as social practice. This inquiry follows Andreas Reckwitz’s question of ‘wie Subjekte im Zuge bestimmter sozialer Praktiken >>fabriziert<< werden und sich zugleich selbst fabrizieren.’²⁰ While Reckwitz elaborates on how researchers can gain insights into social practices in general, the practice of filmmaking comes to represent such an engagement. The family chronicle represents a social practice that produces or fabricates the subject as individual in the familial. Reckwitz adopts Theodore R. Schatzki’s definition of social practice as ‘a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings.’²¹ The analysis of how subjects fabricate and are fabricated through an examination of social practices thus always inherently includes the heuristic interpretation of its material manifestations, here film. The camera comes to serve the subject with what Reckwitz calls ‘technologies of the self.’ The film camera serves as tool in a practice that ‘die textuell oder visuell Darstellungen von Entitäten liefern, unter anderem auch von

¹⁸ Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 133.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ ‘how subjects are fabricated and at the same time fabricate themselves in the course of certain social practices.’

Andreas Reckwitz, *Kreativität und soziale Praxis: Studien zur Sozial- und Gesellschaftstheorie*, Sozialtheorie (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016), 67.

²¹ Schatzki, Theodore R. quote in *ibid.*, 72.

Subjekten.’²² What will be analyzed in the following are thus fabrications of what subjectform is offered by the familial and how these forms are revealed through the visual narration of the family film.

Again, Reckwitz is most illustrative here: technologies of representation become means in a process of

‘narrativen Selbstbeschreibungen, wie sie die soziologische Biografieforschung im Detail rekonstruiert. Auch wenn sich die Selbstnarrationen wiederum der kulturellen Muster bedienen, die gesellschaftlich zur Verfügung gestellt werden: gerade diese narrative Gestaltungen der Biografie kann sich als ein Ort idiosynkratischer Sinnstrukturierung erweisen.’²³

As I will show, the representational fabrication of the self through social practices such as filmmaking also always leaves spaces of resistance for an individual in later recollection. In the following, I will examine how the family is inscribed in the familial through representational means.

The family as meaningful social and interactional space also emplaces an individual. A meaningful identity is constructed through the familial. Naturally, the notion of identity construction in the familial is only one offer an individual can take up. Individuals never adopt one coherent identity. They self-interpret and self-reference in accordance with multiple offers of subjectform and identity construction, as will be elaborated in the following chapter. What is analyzed here is the specific subjectform that is offered by an inscription in the familial that is not so much a lived actuality as a representational trope. Identity here is defined as ‘the structure of the specific self-understanding in which the individual defined her/himself as part of a greater whole

²² ‘textually or visually providing representations of entities, including of subjects.’ Ibid., 73.

²³ ‘narrative self-descriptions of how it reconstructs sociological biographical research in detail. Even if self-narratives in turn make use of cultural patterns which are made socially available, these very narrative presentations of biography can prove to be a space for idiosyncratic structuring of meaning.’ Ibid., 81.

or a collective.’²⁴ It needs to be noted that the inscription of the self in the familial is but one offer of subjectform an individual takes up. It is important to note that it is only the subjectform of the familial that is analyzed here. Identity as structural process is never fixed. It presents a constant fluctuation of simultaneous identitary emplacements and represents a constant development throughout time. An individual can conduct identity-work in relation to different emplacements: for example, in the family, the workspace, leisure time, the communal, and the national. As such, ‘[i]ndividuals are obliged to make a significant personal effort during this process of constructive self-placement. They need to put fragments of experiences into a context that makes sense to them. We call this individual joining work ‘identity work.’²⁵ The practice of filmmaking in the familial represents one partial strand of the multi-complexities of identity work.

The family chronicle is never a finished story; it tells a story. The family’s construction of a familial visual archive serves as base from which individuals can emplace themselves in the familial. This private visual collection also narrates its own coherence, offering a sense of intergenerational belonging. In the words of Roger Odin, the family chronicle practice functions as ‘the operation of intergenerational communication in the family [that] seems to have, above all else, an ideological function: it favors the cohesion of the family unit in order to reinforce familialism and to preserve the institution in its traditional formation.’²⁶

The story a family chronicle collection presents becomes an inherent element of the identity work conducted by its individual members. The cultural codification that underlies the representation of the family adheres to certain predominant ideas as to what constitutes a meaningful and appropriate family life. Again, ‘popular ideology

²⁴ Reckwitz, Andreas. quoted in Université de Luxembourg and Unité de recherche IPSE, *Doing Identity in Luxembourg: Subjective Appropriations, Institutional Attributions, Socio-Cultural Milieus* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), 18.

²⁵ Keupp et al. 2006: 9-10. Ibid., 19.

²⁶ Odin, Roger. “The Home Movie and Space of Communication”. Laura Rascaroli, Barry Monahan, and Gwenda Young, eds., *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 18.

resurrected the family as an invention signifying the quest for fulfilment of subjective needs and the satisfaction of desires for meaningful social interactions.’²⁷

In the following section I elaborate on visual narration within the films that also serves as self-narration of the family as familial. Visual narration here pertains to everything that can be seen in the image: from its basic structuring, to implicit understandings that arise between the frames, to the cultural codification that underlies the aesthetics of the family chronicle. The second part of this chapter will then show how the visual narration of these films is used as a base for the construction of verbal narratives in the viewing situation. The films serve as the basis for narrative recollection that is achieved by vernacular consensus in the family circle. The visualization of the family as familial potentially offers coherent individual self-emplacement and self-emplotment.

3. Visual Narration

Most amateur filmmakers do not edit. This might seem like a simple statement, but in fact this aspect of amateur film productions leads to wider implications concerning its very status. A family film does not present narratives. It is not a self-contained or enclosed communicative system, as is the case with the fiction film. While some amateurs use a rudimentary narrative structure of beginning, middle, and end, a family film or a family film collection never presents a homogenous narrative that could be adopted by its different members. What then is visualized in the family film? The family chronicle is a visualization of narration. It materializes the process of a filmmaker narrating the self, the family, and the private as domestic. The visual narration of these films presents at once a situated knowledge production—they are after all produced by a specific filmmaker who is always temporally and spatially located—while it also narrates the family as familially codified.

A highly complex structure organizes filming in the family. First of all, the films come to visualize and materially inscribe a visual narration. These narrations are later

²⁷ Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 133.

used within family film viewing and serve as a basis for the construction of recollective narratives. How then can we imagine this transformation of family into familial? The familial here stands for a cultural offer proposed by the ideology of familialism. It arises as offer of subjectform against the socio-cultural backdrop of a postwar society. The next chapter will deal more specifically with the implications of filmmaking as memorial practice and the offers of stability, coherence, and order that emerge in concomitance with the film camera in the private. Suffice to say, the cultural offer provided by familialism allows a self-inscription into a private space that promises coherence, order, and stability through the meaningful space of the family. Familialism thus stands at once as a cultural codification that underlies representation in the family and as a cultural offer for self-inscription in recollection narratives that are based upon this codified representation. The filmmaking practice, the narration of the family and the self, is already structured by familial taboos and restrictions.

Not everything can be shown in the family film. The events that are shown adhere to a specific manner of representation of family life as familial life. Thus narration is already codified by familialism's emphasis on what is deemed appropriate and, more importantly, what is not. In the viewing situation, family members use these visual narrations as the basis for the construction of individual narratives in which resistance and discord can play a part, but most of the time the individual members agree on an overall family narrative that is achieved by consensus. Familialism's impact on the practice of filmmaking in the family presents itself as two-fold: it provides the cultural codes, restrictions, and taboos that structure representation. Here the values that are transposed by the ideology of familialism function as organizing principle underlying the practice of filmmaking. Second, it functions in terms of socio-cultural offer of a subjectform that can be adopted by individuals in identity-work. The subjectform that is provided as ideological offer proposes the family as space of meaningful interaction, coherence in the linearity of intergenerational roots, and the stability of the family as primary social cell.

How, then, is visual narration differentiated from narrative? This pertains to the two-fold status of narrative: for once it provides a basic structure humans apply to

experience in order to gain understanding. This work operates from a basic understanding that, as Peter Brooks has written,

‘[o]ur very definition as human beings is very much bound up with the stories we tell about our own lives and the world in which we live. We cannot, in our dreams, our daydreams, our ambitious fantasies, avoid the imaginative imposition of form on life.’²⁸ Furthermore, narrative as structure pertains to ‘the principal way in which our species organizes its understanding of time.’²⁹

In the words of Donald E. Polkinghorne: ‘[N]arrative is a kind of cognitive structuring that uses the configural properties of emplotment to organize actions and happenings into temporal wholes.’³⁰ At the same time, narrative structuring does not passively regurgitate or order events, it also actively influences experiences ‘by the focus of attention on those aspects of the world that are of interest to the person’s needs and desires.’³¹ Narrative gives meaning to lived temporal experience as it orders the latter retrospectively and thus, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty states in regard to the retrospective nature of knowledge, ‘[I understand my past] by following it up with a future which will be seen after the event as foreshadowed by it, thus introducing historicity into my life.’³² This is the narrative structure that underlies how human beings order experience.

This is also the organizational principle that underlies filmic narration. It can lead to an easy misrecognition between film as structured by narrative means and film visualizing a narrative. As we have seen above, filmmakers use a sequencing by default. Because they do not edit, temporal synthesis into a narrative whole is not

²⁸ H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2nd ed, Cambridge Introductions to Literature (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Polkinghorne, Donald. E. “Narrative Psychology and Historical Consciousness Relationships and Perspectives”. Jürgen Straub, ed., *NARRATION, IDENTITY, AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), 5.

³¹ Polkinhorne, Donald E. “Narrative Psychology and Historical Consciousness Relationships and Perspectives”. *ibid.*, 6.

³² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 346.

observed. Still, what we can read from the filmic behavior adopted is *how* the filmmaker narrates the family. It is the process of storytelling that is visualized in film. The narration is thus already influenced by an awareness of a later narrative construction that adheres to a familial subjectform. Because filmmakers are implicitly aware of the construction of coherent narratives in the viewing situation, they already adhere to its codification in the visual narration. The visual narration that is effectuated by the practice of filmmaking becomes a means for later meaning-generation in the family narrative. It presents a visual basis, a materialization, and a reinforcement that generates meaning in the viewing. The family film has no meaning in itself. It is used as a tool for later meaning-generation. It becomes, simply put, a means to an end. This is the basic structure that underlies the family film.

Second, the narrative is thus presented as the end result of the process of narration; here, narrative is transposed with story. As such, amateurs do structure their visual narration by rudimentary narrative means of beginning and middle, though as will be elaborated later, endings prove more problematic. The films themselves, however, never present the end product of the family story. They show the process of storytelling that is then used as a basis from which to construct a coherent and stable vernacular narrative. The family narrative as a linear, stable, and homogenously happy narrative is sedimented in the viewing on the basis of the visual narrations that are transposed by the films. If the visual narration is accepted in the viewing situation it leads to the sedimentation of a consensual family narrative. This is the primary function of the family film done well.

Familialism imposes upon both in that it organizes the structure and aesthetics of the visual narration, and proposes an offer of subjectform that can be taken up in the viewing by the construction of a happy family narrative. The process that underlies the coherence of proposed subjectform in the familial and the vernacular consensus reached in the viewing situation also explains the performative relation between film and family. If a consensus is reached between the telling of the family story and the proposed subjectform of a self-inscription in the familial, the films come to serve in a performative relation. This relation is, of course, lost in the relegation of the family film to the institutional archive. However, the performativity that underlies film and family is one crucial aspect of its functions and primary impulses. It allows a family

to re-transpose itself as familial and thus to construe the family's personal story as coherent and stable.

While the last part of this chapter deals with narrative construction as recollection in family viewing, what needs to be noted is that the researcher never has access to these narratives unless one were to visit each and every filmmaker and their families. Still, these films were not necessarily viewed only once, and the narrative construction of the family story is a fluctuating and ever-changing construction. As children grow older, their contributions to the family narrative change, the family story as homogenous and happy narrative can be contested by individual members of the family, the loss of a family member can lead to the re-evaluation of personal family history, etc. In their transferal from the private home to the public archive, the performativity of the films and narratives of the family are quite simply lost.

Still, the visual narration can give us important insights into the motivations, imaginary construction, and socio-cultural codifications that underlie the practice of narrating the self and the family. This chapter, then, mostly concentrates on how the family is transferred as familial in filmic representation. After a brief elaboration of how amateurs use specific narrative structures within the image, I will engage more deeply with the general cultural codification of familialism that underlies representation in the family.

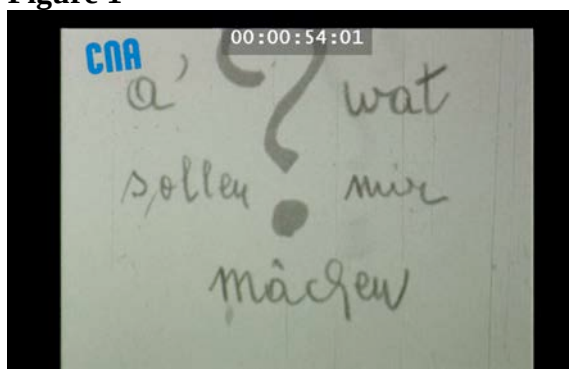
First, narrative pertains to a basic and rudimentary structuring of the visuals serving to render them understandable. Narrative here functions as sequencing. As we will see later on, these structures mimic the basic structures of simple storytelling and represent culturally acquired temporal and spatial requirements for basic understanding. An initial example concerns the very popular motif of St. Nicholas day in the Luxembourgian family chronicle. People often choose to film their children peeping through the door of the living room. This is then followed by a shot of the children seeing their presents on the table, followed by a sequence of children unwrapping their gifts, and, finally, showing their gifts to their father/camera. Parents thus adopt certain temporal principles of beginning, middle, and end. Equally, spatial markers relate this crude narrative structuring. For example, fairground visitors first film the gate of the fair as a visual beginning of this particular leisure activity. The

spatial marker of the gate is inscribed as temporal beginning. Filmmakers thus already adopt rudimentary narrative structures that partially go against Roger Odin's claim that 'the home movie should be made like a *random* succession of scenes offering only snippets of family life.'³³ First I will show how amateurs structure their imagery successively as rudimentary beginning and middle, while the final installment of an ending is included more rarely. Then I will proceed to analyse how the formalistic characteristics that amateurs adopt are always also socio-culturally inflected.

The ordering of an event into a visual sequencing shows a basic understanding of the filmic medium. While amateurs generally do not possess the same knowledge in terms of framing and mise-en-scène as professional filmmakers, they instinctively adopt visual codes to help them frame or render their rudimentary visual narrative understandable. They use basic narrative structures in their visual narrations

As such, they often begin with simple 'introductory' scenes to the main event. This might take the form of hand-made intertitles announcing what event will follow or will be hinted at by visual indications. J.A.³⁴ presents such an ordering within the image. He creates a title card at the very beginning of a film sequence reading: 'A wat sollen mer mâchen?' ('and what shall we do?').

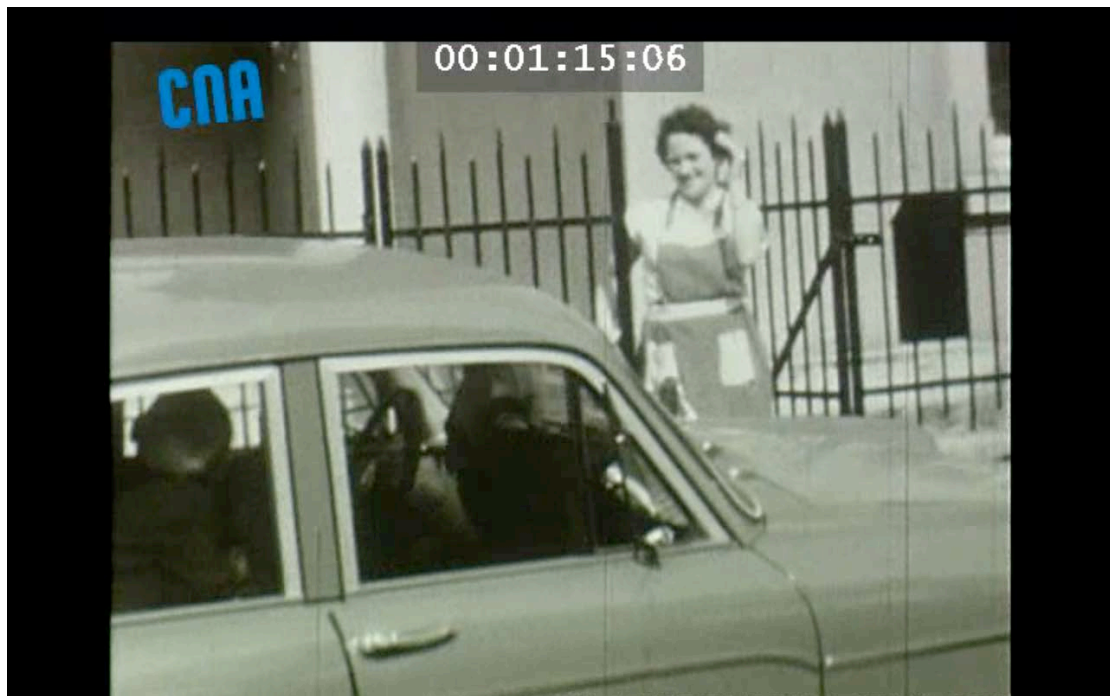
Figure 1



³³ Odin, Roger. "The Home Movie and Space of Communication". Rascaroli, Monahan, and Young, *Amateur Filmmaking*, 17 my emphasis.

³⁴ AV026665 / IA_AMA_002640, 8mm, black and white, mute, 1959

He then proceeds to frame his wife in a window while he films from a high angle in the street. She is waving goodbye and the viewer immediately understands that a) they are departing, and b) she will not come with them. The next shot shows his toddler son in the car waving back through the window. In the following shot, his wife has come down and waves at their son from the entrance gate to their house.



The following sequence shows a visit to the airport. He is with a friend who brought along his children, and they enjoy their day out. What interests me here is the basic temporal narrative he constructs. He clearly chooses the sequencing of images. He creates a title that sets the scene and proceeds to ‘stage’ a departure. The image of the wife waving is directly followed by an image of the child in the car. While we have no eye-line match, the indications are very clear. He creates a clear visual demarcation and establishes the event as a departure from the home.

Other examples of such codified introductory scenes might be found in the filming of a departure preceding a holiday, such as leaving the house or getting into a car or airplane. St Nicholas is often framed by a shot of the children coming into the living room, the showing of the table with the gifts, and the children unwrapping their gifts. Dinner tables are often filmed prior to the arrival of guests, elegantly set and ready. Such shots serve as establishing shots for the event to follow, a dinner party.

Filmmakers thus often choose to tell a visual story *within images* and instinctively adopt the narrative structure of beginning and main event. Endings are less frequently included. The family chronicle, and its deep commitment to pleasure, happiness, and joy, refuses visual inclusions of endings or ‘last times’ which would ultimately convey notions of death and finitude and are thus deemed undesirable.

In summary, the cultural codification of familialism influences visual narration. Concomitantly, it offers a subjectform that in itself is but an abstraction and not livable. It can however be taken up as template or offer in individual identity-work as self-identification. If this process presents no resistances or disaccord, the familially structured visual narration becomes performative and aids the construction of a family narrative into which an individual can inscribe him/herself.

In the following section I will analyze how filmmakers construct a meaningful existence in the familial through a re-telling of the family in representation. These stories are fabricated through the practice of filming and filmmaking. The images are constructed through cultural codes of representation that impose certain restrictions of acceptability on how the family can and should re-tell itself, but also contain vernacular slips that inadvertently hint at more complex and problematic relations in the family.

3.1. Visual clues in vernacular narrative

Amateur images offer visual clues to underlying relations in the family. These clues are often inadvertent and give insights into the private history of the family. Péter Forgacs, a filmmaker who uses home movies for feature-length documentaries, observes the following: ‘In home movies we observe a rite of visual narration, which can also be called a kind of “vernacular narrative imaginary.”’³⁵ The visual clues present indicators of a visual narration out of which narrative emerges. The family chronicle is a visualization of narration as process. What images show us is not a

³⁵ Forgacs, Péter. “Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies”. *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 49.

visual narrative. They furthermore present indicators that function as ‘slips’ within narration: ‘Similar to everyday expressions and/or language, these movies are full of “mistakes” and even Freudian slips.’³⁶ I will look at these visual slips and concomitantly examine gaps and fissures that hint at private stories that come to the fore in this vernacular narrative imaginary that lies within the image. At the same time, this imaginary is also in concurrence with cultural codes that structure representation in the familial.

Visual clues gain their validity through the notion of choice. The filmmakers deliberately choose where, what, and whom to film. This in itself can already convey a visual organization that helps map the micro-politics of the familial. Following Nicholson, it can be said that ‘as filmmakers chose particular places, moments, and family members, their footage mapped out the spatial geometries and micro-politics of family life.’³⁷ First of all, visual slips or clues show how people choose to tell stories visually (representation) and, secondly, they convey a fragmentary indication to a story the images inadvertently tell, often unbeknownst to the filmmaker. The researcher needs to account for these vernacular narrative snippets or clues, quite simply because the re-telling of the family in the viewing situation is lost in the transferal of images to an institutional archive. A missing context makes the distinction between verbal narratives and vernacular narration extremely important, since rudimentary meaning emerges through the image even if the private context disappears over time.

‘Private film’, says Forgacs, ‘equals private history.’³⁸ It presents a re-telling of the family in representation. It visualizes the *process* of narration. This narration is rooted both in particularity and generality. It is also fabricated self-reflectively *and* subconsciously. It becomes the role of the viewer that was never intended, the researcher, to unravel the different strands that run through the visual narration and to

³⁶ Forgacs, Péter. “Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies”.
Ibid.

³⁷ Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film: Meaning and Practice, 1927-77*, Studies in Popular Culture (Manchester ; New York : New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 108.

³⁸ Forgacs, Péter. “Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies”.
Mining the Home Movie, 53.

pay close attention to the slips and gaps that inhabit the image. The following elaborations pertain to questions of '[w]hat has been revealed by making visible that which had remained imperceptible before?' I will analyze the visual narration as it becomes a vernacular imaginary in which the filmmaker both consciously and subconsciously tells the family story. I will examine the cultural codification that underlies the production of the images, but I will also relate to relationality within the image that often inadvertently speaks to conflict and tension but also careful concern in the family. Family-chronicles images come to present 'an imprint of culture rewritten by a motion picture that has a certain self-reflective impact on the overall face of culture.'³⁹ Family images thus never present a constructed visual narrative. They do however present these visual indicators from which a further construction of a familial narrative becomes possible, even if the family context is lost in the transferal to the archive. The following section thus looks *within* the image exclusively in order to unravel how films are narrated visually, what they show, what they fabricate, and what they reveal unintentionally.

3.2. Fragment and selectivity

Visually, home movies present fragments of stories, never complete stories in themselves. They present visual offerings that offer templates for later narrative constructions. While it is true that the most important space for the construction of meaning lies in the verbal narrative (as commentary during the viewing), a visual narration is never completely without meaning without verbal context. Such meaninglessness would render their preservation futile. What needs to be accepted, however, is the incompleteness of the home movie as visual re-telling. The collection of family chronicles establishes a visual family-archive. Archive here pertains to the stock of images produced in the familial. The production of a visual base reinforces a family's own sense of centrality in the world. At the same time, the visual base of this family history needs to be constructed in a way that *all* members will want to look back upon. The family chronicle collection needs fragmentation to function because it

³⁹ Forgacs, Péter. "Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies". *Ibid.*, 48.

needs gaps around which each member can weave their own centrality. Zimmermann alludes to this notion of creative gaps: 'Home movies constitute an imaginary archive that is never completed, always fragmentary, vat [sic], infinite.'⁴⁰ It is essential that the representation of the family be fragmentary in order to leave gaps within which different members can weave their own memories and narratives in the viewing situation.

The concept of fragmentation is also linked to selectivity. First of all, every film is by default fragmentary, since it is impossible to film a life in its entirety. People must *choose* what to include in the image. As a consequence '[t]he selective process of recording for subsequent shared recollection creates particular versions of events'⁴¹ and '[w]hat we later evaluate as a film-statement is only a reflection in the moment of filming.'⁴² After all, as Forgacs comments, the introduction of a camera into a situation has an influence on the nature of the event.

Visual narration is thus selective insofar as the filmmaker deliberately chooses whom or what to include and—perhaps more importantly—exclude. Fragmentation and selectivity thus embed the home movie within an imaginary terrain, closer to a dream than a record: 'Rather than only reading amateur film as visual evidence and clues that 'tell it like it is' (or was), some cine practice may be understood as intentional memory-making that, in psychological terms, also involves "telling it as it might be"'.⁴³ Images produced by the family are thus constructive. One of the main differences that can be highlighted between visual narration and verbal narrative lies in the film's material singularity as 'moving images became the collective family memory, selectively shaping processes of remembering and forgetting.'⁴⁴ In the viewing situation, the verbal narratives imposed upon images are highly differentiated and present the potential of resistance and contestation. Still, the visual narration, once created, remains unalterable. After all, only one film exists.

⁴⁰ Zimmermann, Patricia R. "Introduction The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings". *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴¹ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 19.

⁴² Forgacs, Péter. "Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies". *Mining the Home Movie*, 54.

⁴³ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 20.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

The focus on a specific time period from 1929 to the late 1970s that is adopted in this work also brings with it certain economic implications in that the films are analog *film* productions. The price of material (film) and equipment (camera) reinforces this notion of selectivity and fragmentation, as '[f]ar from simply recording the routines of daily life, the selective nature of past cine use appears striking when set alongside the infinite nature of today's digital self-recording pursuits.'⁴⁵ Simply put: film was expensive, and choices had to be made in terms of what was worth recording. We can thus operate from a basis that recognizes the significance of image-construction, since filmmakers inherently imposed worth on what was filmed—it would have been too expensive to film something of no significance. At the same time, the absence of certain images also conveys notions of socio-cultural taboos as will be elaborated later on.

3.4. The Narrator: The male gaze and control over visual narration

Before examining more closely how the visual narration in the image is structured, we need to take into account *who* does the narrating. The narrator of the home movie is predominantly the father. 'Home movie productions are a festival of Oedipal relations: the person behind the camera is not just any operator but, in general, the father.'⁴⁶ The vernacular narration that is materialized in the image is also a visualization of inherent power relations since it positions the father in the charge of visibility and the family as situated in visibility. The manner of engagement (the narratives that emerge from narration) is thus differentiated. The ideological imposition of the familial again positions the father at the head of the family (he creates and tells the family visually) while it positions the rest of the family in visibility (they are visibly re-told).

The father chooses which images enter the family archive and he narrates the private history. Selectivity mostly pertains to choice: how to shoot, where to shoot, and what

⁴⁵ Ibid., 246.

⁴⁶ Odin, Roger. "Reflection on the Family Home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach". *Mining the Home Movie*, 258.

to shoot. The filmmaker in charge of the camera thus controls the construction of the visual narration that later makes up the family narrative. Visual narration is constituted by filmic expression. The person in charge of the camera is the person in charge of the visual family-archive. The unity of the look positions the family in visibility. Camera movement, framing, and choice of subject matter all come to communicate an ideologically coded look: the gaze. While women produce a small number of films within this corpus, men produce most of the family chronicles. The gaze thus functions as ideologically coded look that structures woman as passive as she is positioned in visibility. For Laura Mulvey, the male gaze functions according to an ideology of patriarchal social order that positions the man as active and woman as passive. Here the gaze of the camera, and thus of the look of the filmmaker, is transposed as male and thus constructs woman and children as 'to-be-looked-at-ness'⁴⁷. This of course, ties in with familialism's emphasis on the father figure as the head of the family. The filmic gaze that is familially coded positions the woman not only in visibility, but also in the domestic as supposedly natural female space. The imposition of the male gaze as filmic gaze is here not related as conscious activity. Concomitant to familialism's emphasis on the father as head of the family, it functions as invisibly codified representation.

The ideological implications of the male gaze become especially illustrative in cases in which the women in front of the camera are unwilling to be filmed. M.B-L.⁴⁸ loves filming his family. While he concentrates mostly on their three children, the mother is often present in the frame. While rarely addressed directly, the viewer already has an impression that she does not enjoy being filmed. If she notices the camera pointed at her, she often looks away discretely. During a Sunday outing with the family to a playground, M. B-L. concentrates on the children playing. Towards the end of this sequence in which he has filmed the children on the slide, they arrive back at the family car. He decides to frame his wife from the left. She directly looks at the camera. She does not smile, and she keeps addressing the camera with a direct look.

⁴⁷ Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures, Language, Discourse, Society* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989), 25.

⁴⁸ AV010317, no info on material, color, mute, 1968

A clear unwillingness to be looked at lies in her facial expression. We are presented with a situation of stalemate. He does not stop filming; she does not smile.

Figure 2



After five seconds, she looks away and gives a quick unwilling smile. He then stops filming.



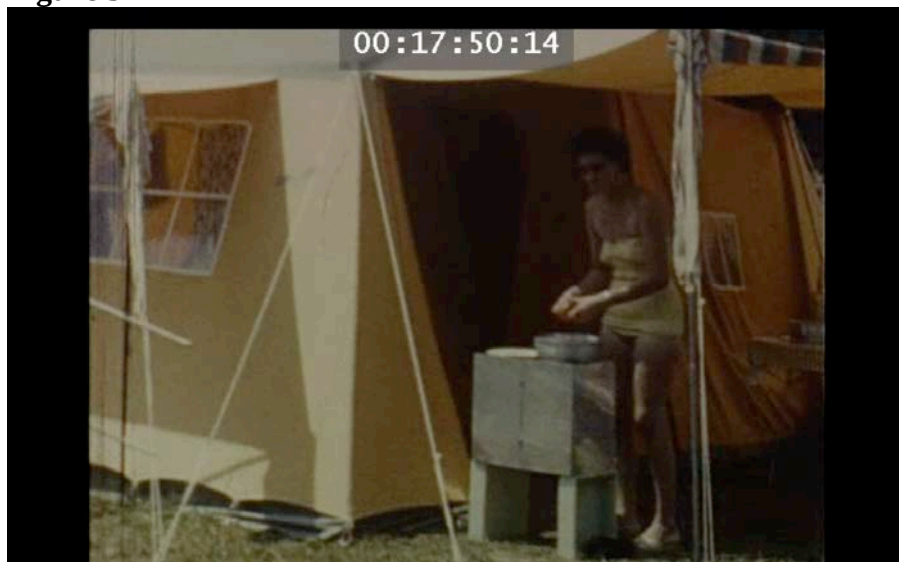
As the filmed subject is unwilling, the ideological imposition that constitutes the camera gaze comes to the fore. Here we are presented with a clear unwillingness to be positioned in visibility. Nevertheless, the cultural codes underlying representation in the family need and expect the willingness of the filmed subjects. In the end she succumbs; gives a quick visual approval, and filming stops.

This ties in with the familially inspired construction of the domestic as leisure time. This construction shows the inherent gender-specific codification of the familial look as gaze. We have seen how the 1950s saw a relegation of meaningful activity and social cohesion to the private sphere. The restructuring into leisure and labor furthermore structured the private as a space of meaningful self-expression.

Consequently the space of the domestic as leisure space is patriarchally structured as well. Leisure is constituted as counterpart to the space of labor. Familialism's emphasis on the father as provider also results in the construction of leisure time as male. This is especially poignant in filmed events that involve food and drink. While visually defined as 'leisurely activity', a dinner or festivity held at home, for example, comes to represent a professional activity for the woman in the film. She is often seen serving plates of food or filling up glasses, while smiling at the camera, thus giving the impression of enjoyment and leisure. One could even go as far as stating that leisure time is more restrictive for women, in that the celebrated and idealised domestic space includes related social pressures for women.

Holidays of course present the epitome of leisure time. R.S.⁴⁹ films the family holiday in the South of France. The family has driven to the South of France with their three boys and has taken all the amenities needed. They have even brought a rudimentary kitchen facility. Again, leisure activity is coded as male here. The mother is filmed while preparing breakfast, doing the dishes, and cooking dinner.

Figure 3



While she is wearing the 'holiday uniform' of a bathing suit, she is nevertheless standing in front of a makeshift stove. Her holiday activities are not structured as

⁴⁹ AV013104, no info on material, black and white and color, mute, 1959

leisure but pertain to her role within the domestic realm. She is visually emplaced within the domestic, even on holiday. At the same time, the intrusion of other people into the domestic space, normally inhabited by the mother and children, can be seen as an assessment of sorts in which the professional abilities of mother and housewife are ‘tested’ und ultimately judged by the circle of friends and extended family.

R.H.⁵⁰ films one of the most important social events within the family. He films his daughter’s Holy Communion. The extended family is present in the family home. The highpoint of a Holy Communion lunch is always dessert. Here, they have ordered a luscious, three-tiered dessert topped by the traditional cake in the form of a lamb. The extended family is seated around the large dining room table and looks on as the father takes over the cutting of the cake. Because this is a ritualistic activity, he takes the role of cutting. The cutting of the cake reinforces his position as head of the family. The serving, however, is left to the mother. She is wearing a fancy white dress, and her hair is professionally done up, which already hints at the importance of this event. The extended family looks on as she serves the cake on plates to one member of the family after another.

Figure 4



⁵⁰ AV024889 / IA_AMA_002239, 8mm, color, mute, 1964, 1967

The mother is professionally judged by her abilities as hostess. She is standing up and thus providing the visual focal point for the rest of the family, who are sitting down. The gaze of the camera positions her in a space of visibility that is qualified as domestic.

As a consequence, ‘family home movies are filled with images of the girls—the mother, wife or daughters—parading as objects in front of the father’s gaze through the camera’s eye.’⁵¹ Michelle Citron’s reading of the home movie as *purely* constructed by a male gaze and the notion of daughters and wives parading as visible objects seems somewhat extreme. After all, sons ‘parade’ the same space in front of the camera. Still, wives and daughters are often filmed slightly differently, and the handling of the camera puts the filmmaker in a position of power. His gaze that constructs the visual archive of the family and emplaces the mother in the domestic. The male gaze of the camera visualizes the inherently patriarchal structure of the familial representation. At the same time, it constructs the female as to-be-looked-at-ness. This becomes especially illustrative in scenes in which the father frames the mother as spectacle.

L.K.⁵² films his daughter playing in the family garden. The garden is a small backyard that is divided in two. A garden path runs in the middle and is flanked by two patches of vegetable garden. L.K. presumably directed his wife to walk down the garden path while he films her from the end. The garden path here becomes a catwalk. She is walking slowly, and her mannerism indicates that while she takes it good-humoredly, she feels slightly self-conscious. She often does not know where to look and alternately shifts her gaze from filmmaker to garden.

⁵¹ Michelle Citron, *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions*, Visible Evidence, v. 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 13.

⁵² AV026326 / IA_AMA_002773, 8mm, color, mute, 1964-1965

Figure 5



The length of the sequence portrays her walk and figure as spectacle. She is uncomfortable with the look of the camera, and while she complies, her hesitancy becomes telling. Here the mother literally parades through the filmic space.

A second example shows a striking similarity to these images, only here, the daughter parades in the garden path, and the images carry slightly uncomfortable connotations. R.M.⁵³ films his little daughter, around four-years-old, walking down the garden path. Her behavior is curious, as she emulates a slightly sexualized walk. She even awkwardly sways her hips.

Figure 6



⁵³ AV036447, no info on material, black and white, mute, no date



She clearly took directions from the filmmaking father. Here, at ca. four-years-old, she already learns to put herself in scene as spectacle. One cannot imagine a young boy being directed and narrated in the same manner. The garden path as catwalk is reserved for female members of the family. She seems to enjoy being filmed as she joyfully partakes in the representational codification of the patriarchal gaze that narrates her as spectacle. As Zimmermann notes: ‘The woman and her children are immobilized by the camera, yet blissfully and almost self-reflectively participate in its representation.’⁵⁴

The male gaze in the home movie is also a by-product of the larger ideological structuring of familialism. What subjects are subordinated to in the family chronicle is a familial gaze: ‘by providing the “good” memory, home movies show us an ideal image of the family with everyone in his or her proper place: parents in charge, men in control, families together.’⁵⁵ The familial gaze thus combines the male and the parental gaze into one familially coded look.

The family chronicle visualizes a narration in which ‘[t]he angle of the camera, its mobility, and its control over representation unfurl patriarchal prerogative.’⁵⁶ While structured by these codifications, the family chronicle concomitantly renders them visible and thus legible. In the following section I will examine how images make

⁵⁴ Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 112.

⁵⁵ Citron, *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions*, 13–15.

⁵⁶ Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 112.

cultural impositions legible not only by what they show but also specifically by what they do not.

3.5. Aesthetics and style: cultural codes of representation

The family chronicle positions the *family* in the *familial*. This transfiguration is effected by its conversion into representation. The visual narration that emerges through the images is thus always also socio-culturally codified. Again, as Forgacs remarks: ‘The private film is an imprint of culture rewritten by a motion picture that has a certain self-reflective impact on the overall face of culture.’⁵⁷ The visual narration of the family chronicle not only re-tells the family story; it also renders legible the cultural codification of its status as situated knowledge production. It visualizes the socio-cultural background of its production and time.

As Roger Odin states: ‘the familial institution’s prohibitions and impositions on representation’⁵⁸ co-construct visual narration. Familialism’s emphasis on values of togetherness, family harmony, and a relegation of meaningful social interaction to the private sphere translates visually as a focus on children, family activities, and festive events. It also translates foremost in impositions upon the image. The codification imposed upon representation relates to *how* something can be shown and *what* cannot be shown at all. In the following I will focus specifically on the images that reoccur as pattern. These patterns are conscripted and transcribe the cultural codification of the family in representation.

The film as a means of individual and familial self-expression coincides with codes of social acceptability. My examination of the social acceptability imposed upon representation is indebted to Richard Chalfen’s *Snapshots VERSIONS OF LIFE*.⁵⁹ While Chalfen focuses mostly on the medium of snapshot photography, his

⁵⁷ Forgacs, Péter. “Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies”. *Mining the Home Movie*, 48.

⁵⁸ Odin, Roger. “Reflection on the Family Home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach”. *Ibid.*, 262.

⁵⁹ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987).

observations are equally valid for the familially inspired *practice and motivation* of filmmaking. Medium-specific differences, most notably elements of movement as opposed to the ‘stillness’ of photography, will be engaged foremost in chapter four and five. What interests me here is the familial norms behind the practice of filming that are structured similarly to the production of snapshot photography. Chalfen defines a social norm as ‘a rule or standard of behavior defined by the shared expectations of two or more people regarding what behavior is to be considered socially acceptable. Social norms provide guidelines to the range of behavior appropriate and applicable to particular social situations.’⁶⁰ Seemingly individual choices concerning camera work and mise-en-scène also link back to prevailing social attitudes and socially constructed conventions. The imagery of the family film—showing what is acceptable—also reinforces what is not. The sedimentation of the family chronicle imagery as well as its function as cliché instrumentality offer a vision in which ‘we all appear to share the same visual codes, have led fairly universalised and patterned lives, had similar childhoods, similar holidays, shared similar rites of passage with our babies and weddings’.⁶¹

As we have seen above, the representation of the family relegates it to the familial. However, it is not the case that the ideological codification of familialism is exclusively related to the representational practices. Rather, representation *visualizes* the wider implications of familialism that structure the living conditions of the family. As Sol Worth notes:

‘It has become apparent that we live and function within a fourth major environment—the symbolic. This environment is composed of the symbolic modes, media, codes, and structures within which we communicate, create cultures, and become socialized. The most pervasive of these modes, and the least understood, is the visual-pictorial.’⁶²

⁶⁰ Ibid., 44.

⁶¹ Williams, Val. “Carefully Creating an Idyll Vanessa Bell and Snapshot Photography 1907–46”. Spence and Holland, *Family Snaps*, 203–4.

⁶² Worth, Sol quoted in. Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 5.

The mode of the family chronicle thus visually makes its ideological structuring legible. It is constructed by, and at the same time reveals, the restrictions, prohibition, but also positive constitution within communicative re-tellings.

The visual narration of the home movie relates to the construction of narrative that can help order the world as meaningful. Chalfen refers to this meaningful ordering of experience in his referral to Nancy Munn and James Kaufman:

‘The process of making and organizing sets of personal images may also be understood as a way of ordering the world. As anthropologist Nancy Munn suggests, “Culturally standardized systems of visual representations, like other sorts of cultural codes, function as mechanisms for ordering experience and segmenting it into manageable categories ...” [...] Ordinary people are afforded a chance to order past experiences, making their travels, past adventures, and segments of life into a coherent order of events. As James Kaufmann notes: “[T]he ritual making of family photographs—like most strategies for ordering experience—[...] offer(s) soothing evidence that our lives are better and sometimes more coherent than we sometimes believe.’⁶³

Concretely, the visual narration as foundation of narratives that emplace and emplot the individual also help create a livable and coherent experience that is transposed as imaginary and dream rather than actuality and neutral recording.

3.5.1. Childhood as ideal space

The family chronicle’s preferred focus lies, of course, on children. Their emphasis on centre framing, zooms, and the close-up all place the emotional stress on children. The family chronicle visually narrates childhood as an idealized universe in which a child, for example, is never ill. It is never hurt, unhappy, or angry. Family problems in the marriage, parenthood, or rivalries between siblings are eclipsed. Children became an inherent constituent of familialism’s emphasis on meaningful existence in

⁶³ Munn, Nancy and James Kaufman quoted in. Ibid., 141.

the private. In fact, 'children [become] a visual homage to familialism.'⁶⁴ A meaningful existence and significant expression of the self was embodied by the child. Children came to represent 'crucial components of family togetherness. The ideology of excessive child nurturance as the ultimate goal in life and in recreation infused amateur film.'⁶⁵

The happy child not only presents the main focus, it comes to stand as a prerequisite for filming in the first place. The construction of the visual family archive comes to represent the fetishized memories of parents, not children. A deep sense of nostalgic longing for and construction of a supposedly idyllic childhood underlies the imagery. "If only they wouldn't grow up so fast," that's a common complaint. [...] But you can make a permanent record of their childhood—an investment of time that will pay dividends in pleasure for decades to come.'⁶⁶ 'If only they didn't grow up so fast,' inherently presents the counterpart of 'if only we didn't grow old so fast.' At the same time it presents an idealized narration not only of childhood, but also of parenthood done well and with success.

Childhood is here presented as occurring in an eternally sunny universe. The activities that are filmed are always happy, joyful, and exhilarating. We are presented with a filmic past that visualizes eternal summer outings, afternoons on the beach, the playful activities in the garden, the exhilaration of Christmas, the joyful experience of sledging, and the cozy stability of bedtime rituals. This idealized space shows a distinct iconography constituted by bathing suits, colorful toys, and special foods. N.K.⁶⁷ films his sons in the garden. They have erected a tipi tent, and one of the boys is dressed as a Native American chief. He films the tipi in close-up and then focuses on his boys. The youngest is but a toddler, and while he tries to keep up, the elder boys outrun him. The atmosphere is one of adventure and joyful abandon. What is shown is an idyllic space of childhood, the adventures that can be had in a garden, the playful activity of dressing up, and the general sense of an endless summer.

⁶⁴ Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 123.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 134.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ AV036201 / IA_AMA_002913, 8mm, color, mute, 1965

Figure 7



The next sequence shows the bedtime ritual of bath time and prayer.



The boys are freshly bathed and clad in stiffly ironed pajamas. The wallpaper depicts child-friendly figures engaged in different activities and showing children at play. The boys are praying before bedtime, and the next sequence shows them firmly tucked into bed.



The sequencing of the film collection constructs the space of childhood as ideal space of adventure, fun, and the stability of the cohesive family unit. The visual space of the familial is a happy one. The childhood that is visualized is a utopic space of family harmony.

As mentioned above, parents construct a visual archive that narrates the family as happy. Idyllic childhood experience bespeaks the parents' successes in terms of parenthood. Home movies serve as evidence of parenthood done well faced by an assumed societal judgment. The home movie presents a view not only of 'we-did-this' but also of 'look-how-well-we-did-this'. Tears and tantrums are often 'edited out' in that the camera stops. Filming only resumes once the child is happy again. This pertains to the social pressures of a familial ideology in which there is something not quite right about an unhappy child. 'As everyone knows, a 'serious' child is an unhappy child, a child who will reflect badly on his or her parents' duty to keep them happy as nature (or photography) intended. Besides, there's something 'funny' about a serious child, something not quite right.'⁶⁸

P. O-M.⁶⁹ films his daughter in the garden. She is but a toddler and is seated in front of a little table. She has her toys in front of her, a brightly colored collection of little

⁶⁸ Watney, Simon. "Ordinary Boys". Spence and Holland, *Family Snaps*, 27.

⁶⁹ AV011107, no info on material, color, mute, 1962

tubs that can be stacked. The next sequence shows her ‘helping out’ her mother in the garden. She has her own little watering can and enthusiastically waters the flowers. Mother and father alternately take the next few shots. The father can be seen in the frame occasionally. At one point, he films his daughter having a crying fit.

Figure 8



Immediately the filmic language displays certain hesitancy as the camera tilts up and down, and very quickly, filming stops. The next sequence shows his daughter laughing again. This is a happy child, and the images that find their way into the family archive present a child that is eternally happy. While the image of her crying remains present in the visual family-archive, it lasts but a second and can easily be overlooked.

Children are presented in clean clothes and as well groomed. Dirtiness must be justified by specific activities: only playtime in sand, forest, or garden, for example, warrants a dirty child. Richard Chalfen thus states that ‘there are social pressures for people to make snapshots of their children when they are smiling rather than crying, when they are healthy rather than hurt or ill, or when they are dressed in clean clothes rather than in torn or dirty ones.’⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 8.

H.'s⁷¹ films all focus on his toddler son. He films the son and mother walking in a little stream in the countryside; the mother is marginalized in the frame as the filmic focus remains on the son in a high angle. The next sequence shows the boy's first birthday. The first image we see is one of a cream-based cake with one candle lit. In the next shot, the mother places the cake in front of the son who looks slightly overwhelmed. Things quickly deteriorate from here on out. The equation of toddler and cream cake can only result in mayhem. As the parents surely know what will happen, we can assume that the scene here is introduced for its comical worth and value of cuteness.

Figure 9



The mess the boy makes and his cream-smeared delight are here acceptable because the occasion allows for it. Dirtiness in general is undesired since it also gives a visual indication of parenthood done badly or a lack of concern.

While familialism promotes an emphasis on togetherness and harmony, children provide the glue that holds the family together, even at the expense of the parents themselves. The partner is never visualized with the same centrality as children. Parents instinctively position their children centre frame, relating to the ideological structure of familialism that also organizes the situated positions of different family members. For example, visually the mother is often marginalized within the frame, as she might frequently solely be visible holding the hand of a younger child or walking

⁷¹ IA00007L / IA_AMA_001847, 8mm, color, mute, 1962

into frame ‘by accident’. She is thus positioned in relation to the child rather than on her own. Her presence in the image is earned by her relationality to the child and her function as mother. It is her role that is highlighted here rather than her presence.

J.-P. K.⁷² films his three children leaving the house by the front door. He films as they descend the stair holding hands. Behind them the mother can be seen, however only partly, as her head remains off-frame. He focuses on the youngest daughter walking between her elder sister and brother. The next sequence shows the children walking down the street without their mother. The next shot presents the youngest daughter in a stroller. The mother is pushing her, and she is in frame by default though never intentionally focused on. His filmic gaze remains clearly on the daughter in the stroller. The next shot shows his elder daughter walking while holding hands with a second woman. Again the woman is not the focus but is marginalized in the frame.

Figure 10



The familial gaze that structures the images of the family chronicle thus presents a combination of patriarchal structuring (the male gaze), parental control, and the creation of an idyllic space of childhood. It combines notions of social judgment, awareness of a future looking back, and of parenthood done well. The familial gaze thus presents its inherent valorization of standards of togetherness, family harmony, and the family as space of meaningful interaction: ‘[F]amilies and children, like hobbies, were ends in themselves.’⁷³

These films give the impetus for narrative meaning-generation in the private. The filmic gaze narrates childhood as eternal leisure time, and filmmaking invisibly inscribes the significance of the parental role *into* the image.

⁷² AV035027 / IA_AMA_002880, 8mm, black and white and color, mute, 1960–1962

⁷³ Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 123.

3.5.2. Visual taboos

The codification of representational narrations has until now mostly been conducted from the point of view of inclusion. Just as important, however, and in some regards even more telling, is the notion of exclusion or absence. The economic cost of film renders the inclusion and selectivity of images meaningful. However, as Péter Forgacs notes: ‘It is not necessarily the costs of filming that account for the “missing images,” but most probably what is considered taboo.’⁷⁴ Naturally, filmmakers choose what to spend money on. They include events that are deemed significant. Still, the absence of images is not a question of expense, but is itself conditioned by the codes imposed by familialism.

Absence here relates to missing images, for example: ‘[p]eople who are ill and bedridden with a communicable disease or a broken limb are generally not included. One does not see a person vomiting in home movies.’⁷⁵ People in home movies are alive and well. This pertains to a taboo posited upon finitude and the inclusion of death in experience. Western social mores do not allow for filming at funerals, for example. In Luxembourg, funerals have no open caskets, exemplifying the social prohibition placed upon death. This representational prohibition also functions by proxy: images taken in cemeteries remain missing as well. Even All Saints, a national holiday, is excluded from the family chronicle. Other locations are included in this visual taboo. These prohibitions that are imposed upon representation have to do with social values of piety, reverence, and respect. For example, churches, while popular motifs filmed from the outside, are rarely filmed from the inside. In fact, only one filmmaker films the Holy Communion ceremony from the inside. Because he is the only filmmaker filming in church, the images stand out and render the absence of similar images in the rest of the corpus significant.

⁷⁴ Forgacs, Péter. “Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies”. *Mining the Home Movie*, 51.

⁷⁵ Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 59.

G.W.⁷⁶ first films the priest giving first communion to the children. He leisurely pans to the right. The festively decorated altar comes into frame.

Figure 11



I will not go as far as describing the general absence of images taken inside churches as representational aniconism. Rather, they come to relate to notions of social acceptability that bind the camera to the space of leisure and joyful frivolity, rather than respectful reverence or worship. The visual taboo of filming in the church relates to notions of piety and respect.

People—at least adults—are not filmed in bed, unless shooting occurs after the birth of a child, in which case the mother depicted in the hospital bed is seen overtly happy, healthy, ‘and participating in a new personal and social relationship of extreme significance’⁷⁷. Apart from scenes of monumental familial significance, such as the arrival of a new member of the family, hospitals are generally not considered appropriate shooting locations.

⁷⁶ AV032407, no info on material, black and white, mute, 1951-1954

⁷⁷ Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 77.

Again, one filmmaker included imagery that made their absence from other films stand out. M. L.-B.⁷⁸ films his wife in the hospital after an operation on her eye. At first she smiles at the camera, but the next shot shows how tired she is, and she seems groggy.

Figure 12



He then films her neighbor in her room. The woman engages the camera with a smile, but seems embarrassed.



Her husband is visiting, and they stage an awkward entertainment for the camera in which he exaggeratedly pulls the lever to put her bed in mid-position while she laughs. The next sequence shows relatives visiting, the mother combing her hair, and the men smoking on the little balcony attached to the hospital room. Throughout the entire sequence, the mother is wearing her nightgown. This is unusual, but the setting of the hospital makes her clothing acceptable. Clearly, the operation was not life-threatening and the mother is on the mend. Still, generally, images of this nature are

⁷⁸ AV010309, no info on material, black and white, mute, ca. 1959

excluded from the film collection as hospital beds, rooms, and people with bandages bring to mind connotations of illness, discomfort, and death. Their intrusion in the vernacular imaginary of the family archive would counteract its emphasis on an idealized narration of the familial past.

Additionally, bodily fluids such as blood, feces, and vomit are never visualized in the home movie, and nakedness is not considered appropriate. Also, while feeding the baby by bottle is often considered appropriate, even desired, as an idealized visualization of motherhood, breastfeeding could be considered as pushing certain appropriate boundaries. In the same vein, bathtubs are fine—toilets are not.

The visual focus that structures the framing of the image thus also prioritizes children in terms of emotional valorization. First and foremost, however, children serve as visual markers of familial ideals. As Zimmermann notes: ‘As the family shed its productivity in the industrial economy and was retooled as a consumption unit, the role of the family increasingly concentrated on “production” (and re-production) of children.’⁷⁹ The central position in the image through framing and focus cements the central position of children in the familial. The familial is here visualized as emplacement in the frame. Zimmermann summarizes: ‘Movies chronicled children as a visual homage to familialism.’⁸⁰ The images of the home movie and the manner in which filmmakers reproduce their family are not only internally structured by an ideological codification of the familial, they come to serve as visual reinforcement for the self-perpetuation of the familial.

Events of familial importance fall under the same representational restrictions. While joyful events such as Christmas, birthdays, Holy Communions, weddings, and anniversaries are visually celebrated, depictions of divorce, spousal or parental abuse, or general aggressions are prohibited. These events are consciously omitted. On a more innocuous level, facial expressions and behaviour falling on the negative side of the emotional spectrum are undesired.

⁷⁹ Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 123.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

As such, the family chronicle adheres to further prohibitions such as the depiction of divorce, spousal or parental abuse, aggression, or notions of incest. While children crying generally (though not always) provoke a stoppage, adults are even more affected by social rules of acceptable behaviour. As we have seen above, the unwillingness of M.B-L.'s⁸¹ wife to be filmed results in a sort of stalemate situation until the wife gives in and smiles.

Familial issues, intergenerational secrets, and parental aggressions that form the underside to every family history are considered unacceptable and remain visually unexpressed. Family issues in representation are disguised, ignored, and omitted. Such issues need not necessarily be as serious as abuse or aggression, but can simply relate to conflicts between family members, old animosities, or the shunning or exclusion of unpopular relatives (everyone's got that one aunt). As we will see in the following, while they are not explicitly expressed, they can nevertheless rise *within* the image. They often emerge in mannerisms, unintentional body language, and the looks that are exchanged within the filmic space.

3.5.3. First times

The prohibition of events that can be included extends to the considered appropriateness of first times and the general omitting of last times. While the family chronicle focuses on first times, such as a first birthday, a first Christmas, or the first time a newborn sleeps at home, as Chalfen remarks:

'there is a lengthy list of "important" first-times that are *never* recorded in snapshot form which includes a child's first medical check-up or trip to the dentist or hospital, a daughter's first menstrual period, a child's first masturbation, a wife's first days of pregnancy or first moments of labor pains, and the like. While snapshots of new places of residence are common, the admittance to a nursing home in later life is not.'⁸²

⁸¹ AV010317, no info on material, color, mute, 1968

⁸² Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 94.

Relatives on their deathbeds or in the hospital and the ultimate visual taboo of funerals represent events that have no place in the visual archive of the family narrative. Finitude and death as ultimate marker thereof have no place in the circularity that underlies the family chronicle. The intergenerational emphasis perpetuates a continual ongoing of the familial.

All in all, people in familial visual productions are happy, clean, healthy, and loving. In order for the individual to form a stable and livable identity within the family, the film's narrative must be affirmative. The visuals that constitute the family archive must be constructed by a visual narration that forms a version of familial life that people will *want* to look back upon. To sum up, one can say that the family narrative provides the means for individual identity construction within the private of the social micro-unit of the familial. A visual family archive, first of all, visualizes the desired stability through an idealized narration and later helps valorize the familial narrative.

Concurrently, it can be argued that the notions of taboo, lack, fissures, and gaps in familial narrative still form part of the visual archive, albeit by their conspicuous absence within the visual. The invisible, the unmentionable, and the unexpressed form inherent parts of the visual archive of the family film. They rise to the fore through stories people *inadvertently* tell by leaving out certain images or through their choice of framing and subject matter. Visual choice also relates to visual exclusion. Framing translates as control over the visual archive of the family. Nonetheless, the vernacular imaginary of the family chronicle also makes legible unintended implications that rise from filmic absence and unintentional behavior. Distress and conflict in the narrative manifest as 'revealing' absences in the visuals. These absences become an inherent part of the researcher's examination as they become telling by their omission.

3.5.4. Favoritism

The prioritizing of one subject over another, for example, can imply a statement or favoritism within the family. It must be noted here that such interpretations can never be conclusively 'proven'. Nevertheless, a researcher spends numerous hours with the

filmic material of one family and cannot help but notice certain absences or observe certain behaviors ‘between’ the frames, so to speak. Such assumptions play an important part in the interpretation of the films without meta-data and cannot be ignored. Interpretation thus forms an inherent part of the research, and while interpretation can easily be misconstrued as imposition, certain visual clues lie within the image.

A predominant focus on one child over a sibling provides visual clues in terms of parental favoring. For example, the emphasis of visual narration often lies on the youngest. While older siblings remain present in the image, they are often included because they prove in the immediate vicinity of the youngest. R.M. has given two film collections to the archive. While one has no date,⁸³ the second is from 1957.⁸⁴ In the first, undated film collection he has a small daughter approximately four years old. In the second, he has a second child, a son. The daughter is around ten years old in the second film. One can assume the undated film to be from the early 1950s then. While in the first film collection, the daughter is predominantly focused; in the second the son takes centre stage.

Figure 13



AV036447

⁸³ AV036447, no info on material, black and white and color, mute, date unknown

⁸⁴ AV036448, 8 mm, black and white and color, mute, 1957 ff.

Figure 14



AV036448

Babies and toddlers present the spectacle of a new beginning. The novelty of the youngest child is a typical example of such parental visual selectivity, as the youngest are filmed more frequently while older siblings are often in frame but are not the camera's focus. The filmic narration privileges the youngest child as a marker of the familial stress on a developmental logic and intergenerational linkage. This focus ties in with the familial emphasis on first times.

3.5.5. Interpretation

Naturally, visual narration leaves a lot of space for assumption and interpretation. Often certain atmospheres arise from the images. They come about through the relationality between facial expressions, mannerisms, and interpretations on the part of the researcher. J.C.⁸⁵ has one son. The family goes on holiday, and he films his son at the playground where the boy plays with a swing. The next sequence is taken on the beach. The boy has a bright yellow inflatable ball with him and starts playing with it. He tosses it away from him and runs to pick it back up. He tosses it in the sea and again retrieves it. He then starts drawing outlines in the sand with his foot.

Figure 15



⁸⁵ AV022985_m-1.wmv / IA_AMA_00780, super 8, color, mute, date unknown

The son, being an only child, is predominantly alone in the images. While without meta-data and commentary we should not speculate about the familial situation, it proves hard to be completely disconnected. One reads loneliness in the image. Naturally, the assumptions of a presumed loneliness can never take the status of visual evidence for a perceived unhappiness. Still, visual clues such as a drooped head and the fact that a ball game needs at least two players can relate an atmosphere of solitude that rises from this visual narration.

These visual clues become more concrete with the facial expressions or general mannerisms filmed subjects display. C.K.⁸⁶ visits his in-laws with his wife. The men are standing in the front yard and he tries to film them portrait-style. The subjects however do not comply. This is in itself not unusual in a larger group of people, but what becomes significant here is the fact that no one smiles at the filmmaker. They are seen laughing and joking with each other but as soon as they address the camera, the smile vanishes.

Figure 16



A viewer without context can never know whether the family does not like the husband, generally does not like being filmed, or whether something happened that made the atmosphere one of tension. The fact of the matter is, however, that the family here presents affective relations that exclude the filmmaker. With each other they are smiling and talking. Only in addressing the filmmaker and camera do they present unwilling, even hostile facial expressions. Towards the end of the sequence, an elder man makes a comment to the filmmaker; his face and body language are relatively aggressive and filming stops.

⁸⁶ AV033117 / IA_AMA_003005, 8mm, black and white and color, mute, presumed date: 1950s

Visual clues such as body language, facial expressions, framing choices, and mannerisms lead to atmospheres that arise from the image. These are rudimentary visual indications that tensions, problems, and negative emotions are a counterpart to familialism's emphasis on happiness, togetherness, and harmony. They nevertheless form an inherent part of the image and thus of the visual archive of the family.

In the same vein, visual absence in the frame, for example, can be interpreted in numerous ways. For instance, the frequent visual absence of a mother in the frame can either pertain to an exclusive and joyful focus on the children, or it could hint at the conflicted nature of a marriage in which two people avoid each other. Conflict and taboos inhabit the family film through their revealing absence. They come into being between the frames, but nevertheless form an inherent part of the visual archive. Absence becomes powerful in that family members are excluded from the visual archive of the family and thus form no part of its coherent narrative and legacy. Representation thus not only includes, it can exclude as well.

The visual narration thus positions the family in an imaginary in that 'rather than only reading amateur film as visual evidence and clues that 'tell it like it is' (or was), some cine practice may be understood as intentional memory-making that, in psychological terms, also involves 'telling it as it might be'.⁸⁷ The visual narration of the family chronicle predominantly affords an affirmative base from which coherent narratives can be constructed that emplace and emplot the individual in meaningful linearity. At the same time, the gaps, fissures, and underlying tensions also catapult 'image interpretation from the chronicling of seemingly happy families, communities and national well-being into psychically more unsettling worlds of imaginary construct, fictive belonging and uncertainty.'⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 20.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

3.5.6. Consumption in and of the family: display

Imaging technologies prove a perfect match for the construction of a visual foundation of a familial ideology. The post-war rise of familial emphasis on continuity, coherence, and stability also functions according to principles of consumption and consumerism. Familialism arises in a post-industrial society and proves a reaction to and emulations of industrial restructurations of experience in terms of productivity and efficacy. Again, Chapter three will examine these restructurations of living conditions more closely. As Zimmermann notes: 'As the family shed its productivity in the industrial economy and was retooled as a consumption unit, the role of the family increasingly concentrated on "production" (and reproduction) of children. A tertiary ideology sprung forth: families and children, like hobbies, were ends in themselves.'⁸⁹ Imaging technologies provided a logical furthering of these principles of consumption in that they could be visually consumed again and again in film viewing. Within the family, the child was valorized as emotional currency while the filmic reproduction of children entered into a capitalist logic of display and consumption.

The decades from the 1950s to the 1970s saw an age of economic growth in Luxembourg. The extreme success of the steel industry that lasted into the late 1960s, early 1970s was superseded by the emerging bank sector that proves the corner stone of the country's economic growth until today (even though in recession now). In regards to the socio-cultural values that emerged in post-war Luxembourg, the cultural impact of an 'American way of life' needs emphasis. As Michel Pauly notes, the everyday was imprinted by an American way of life 'mit der Verallgemeinerung von Haushaltsgütern wie Konservendosen, Waschmaschinen, Kühlschrank, Auto, Fernsehen, Eigenheim und vielem mehr'.⁹⁰ In the late 1960s, Luxembourgian students needed to study abroad since at the time a local university did not exist. They were influenced the student revolution that upheaved 1950s norms, especially in

⁸⁹ Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 123.

⁹⁰ 'with the generalisation of household goods such as tin cans, washing machines, refrigerators, cars, TVs, homes and much more.'

Michel Pauly, *Geschichte Luxemburgs*, 2., überarb. Aufl., Orig.-Ausg, Beck'sche Reihe, 2732 : C. H. Beck Wissen (München: Beck, 2013), 109–10.

France. These societal upheavals are completely omitted in Luxembourgian amateur films in the corpus analyzed, which continued to engage a contented relation with economic convenience and material status. Similar to the experience of other European states, the decades between the 1950s and 1970s saw the national economy refocused from more traditional industries such as the steel industry and chemical and metal industries to a new emphasis on the service industry. Christian Calmes and Danielle Bossaert state that the economic growth of the country's financial resources brought with it a series of socio-cultural changes, not all of which are positive. They note:

‘Die erste Kategorie der Herausforderungen umfaßt die allgemeinen Gesellschaftsprobleme, die mit der hochgetriebenen materiellen Wohlfahrt sowie der gleichzeitigen Infragestellung der traditionellen Werte zusammenhängen. In dieser Sparte gehören zum Beispile: der überzogene Hand zum Konsum-der sich bereits auf den kulturellen und politischen Bereich erstreckt, die starke Betonung der materiellen Werte, die geistige Desorientierung sowie die ökologischen Probleme.’⁹¹

The Americanization of a way of life was of course but a culturally superficial imposition. It relegated notions of glamorized consumer goods, commodification, and material convenience. The introduction of cheaper imaging equipment suited the newly emergent socio-cultural equation perfectly, since it is also always a technology of display. The success of the steel industry and the emerging emphasis on the bank sector also brought with it capitalist aspirations that translated as desired progress. This emphasis on progress was translated to the family, as the nodal points of family life became a visual marker for a successful, prosperous, and socially ascending family story. The filmic narration serves as primary means for the display of social and economic status.

⁹¹ ‘The first category of challenges covers general social problems related to increased material well-being and the simultaneous questioning of traditional values. This segment for example includes the excessive reach of consumption (which already extends to the cultural and political arenas), strong focus on material values, intellectual disorientation, and environmental issues.’

Christian Calmes and Danielle Bossaert, *Geschichte des Großherzogtums Luxemburg: von 1815 bis heute* (Luxemburg: Ed. Saint-Paul, 1996), 573.

While the family serves as main focal point of the visual narration, other foci lie on the display of material goods such as houses, cars, holidays, and toys. Gifts at Christmas and St. Nicolas present an overabundance of material goods, and plastic proves the main material trend. J.D.⁹² has bought a new car. He either gets his wife or a friend to film him as he slowly drives towards the camera. As he moves closer and passes the camera, he smiles and waves proudly.

Figure 17



Male filmmakers especially focus on material possessions such as cars. Another emphasis lies on the status inherent in being a homeowner. Later on, the same filmmaker displays the same sort of pride when he films their house. First he has moved across a field to capture the house in its entirety. The next sequence presents a slow pan and tilt to film the forefront at the house, and later he even takes the trouble to film the garden shed.

⁹² AV032795 / IA_AMA001326, 8mm, black and white and color, mute, no date



These visual narrations follow an aspiration to a capitalist reimagining in which the film collection, just like the family album, ‘echo[es] that ideology as childhood and leisure times are obsessively recorded. The camera is part of a lifestyle based on house, garden and car which moulds the aspirations of the suburban nations of the prosperous West.’⁹³

Children became a main impetus for spending money and displaying economic prosperity. St Nicolas day becomes not only an occasion to film the living room table almost collapsing under the weight of plastic toy gifts; it also translates as a commodified spectacle, or rather, a spectacle of commodification. P. O.-M.⁹⁴ even sets out to capture his Christmas shopping. A St. Nicolas parade has been organized in his town. This film epitomizes the spectacle of commodification that rose as concomitance to the ideological structuring of the family as familial. To set the scene he provides an establishing shot of the department store and its Christmas

⁹³ Spence and Holland, *Family Snaps*, 5.

⁹⁴ AV011111, no info on material, color, mute, 1963

decorations. He zooms in off-camera and films the store from several angles and positions.

Figure 18



He then focuses intensely on the window display of the store and its rendition of a winter wonderland complete with elves or elf-penguin hybrids (I cannot be certain).



He films a few more window displays, including a florist whose window display he films for some time and in different angles and foci. Then he moves back to the department store and films its front again. This sequence is incredibly long given its focus on an immobile subject. He moves in closer again. The picture in front of the store shows the Americanization that took over cultural objects, since it is very clearly a picture of Santa Claus rather than St Nicolas. St Nicolas is often depicted as gangly, old, and tall with a green garment, whereas the pictures that we witness in the family chronicle always depict a jovial, red-clad, and corpulent Santa Claus. A crowd has congregated in front of the store, and the next sequence show police escorts on motorbikes. At first I assumed that the film showed the eminent arrival of a statesman, but soon it becomes clear that it is Santa Claus himself being driven down the street. Then a marching band parades down the street. A car comes into view. It is

covered with fake snow. Behind it children carry a giant gingerbread man. Finally, the man himself arrives on a wagon that is adorned with two figures of reindeer jumping up as if towards the sky. On the wagon, St Nicolas is sitting on a throne and is flanked with little girls dressed as angels.



As the parade has passed, he returns to his initial focus on window displays.

The commodification of the very figure of St Nicolas as Santa Claus, the rendition of urban public space into a spatiality of spectacularized visual consumption, and the window displays as a general marker of a newly emergent neo-liberal consumer society are all combined in the furthermore consumable visibility of the family chronicle.

The favoritism that was attached to all things American also pertained to the perception of the Allied forces as liberating the country. This favoritism had important cultural connotations. As Lucien Blau states:

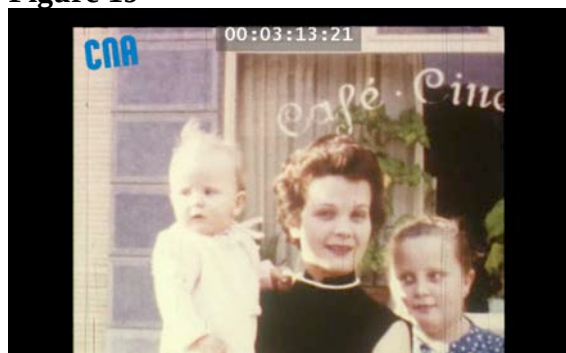
‘Pendant les années 50, la société luxembourgeoise se met tout doucement à l’école de ses libérateurs en imitant, dans la mesure où son pouvoir d’achat le lui permet, l’américain way of life qui a tout pour fasciner les Luxembourgeois qui aspirant, après un decennia de crise économique, à l’amélioration de leur niveau de

vie et qui veulent goûter pleinement aux premiers fruits de la croissance.⁹⁵

Blau furthermore writes of the ‘cocacolonization’ that swept Luxembourg, and indeed, the family chronicle displays numerous visual inclusions of Coke bottles, of the glamor and novelty of plastic toys, and the display of material amenities. The platinum blondes of the silver screen influenced Luxembourgian female fashion, especially in the 1950s, as women flocked to the hair salon in droves to bleach their hair within an inch of its life.

R.M.’s⁹⁶ wife undergoes such a transformation. Here the later image is in black and white. Its later date can be derived from the fact that the son is older than in the earlier picture.

Figure 19



Before

⁹⁵ ‘During the 1950s, Luxembourg society slowly began to learn from its liberators by imitating the American way of life (to the extent permitted by their purchasing power), which fascinated people from Luxembourg who aspired to improve their standard of living after a decade of economic crisis and abundantly enjoy their first taste of growth.’

Blau, Lucien. “Américanisme et Antiaméricanisme dans les années 50”. Claude Wey, *Le Luxembourg des années 50: une société de petite dimension entre tradition et modernité = Luxemburg in den 50er Jahren : eine kleine Gesellschaft im Spannungsfeld von Tradition und Modernität* (Luxembourg: Musée d’histoire de la ville de Luxembourg, 1999), 259.

⁹⁶ AV036448, 8mm, black and white and color, mute, ca. 1957



After

While, as Blau notes, the enthusiasm for the American liberation soon decreased with the American invasion of Vietnam, the societal norms that celebrated a neo-liberalist and consumerist culture of commodification as well as the notion of personal valorization through material goods was firmly established in Luxembourg and kept its hold. As mentioned before, further examples include the over-abundance of shiny, brightly colorful plastic toys often including imagery or figurines of American Disney figures. The iconography of the family chronicle is one of consumerist display.

Figure 20



Disney figures and Coke bottles as staples of family consumption⁹⁷

⁹⁷ AV036207_m.wmv / IA_AMA_002918, 8mm, colour, mute, Uncertain: 1967/1971/1974/1976

Figure 21



Toys on display; toys as display⁹⁸

Other displays reveal not so much a desire to show what one possesses in terms of material possessions, as much as they reveal a fascination that has to do with social status. One such example is the inherent glamor of air travel. Plane rides are relatively rare in the corpus. Only one filmmaker includes travel by plane, and he visually documents the entire process. He lets his son pose with the flight attendant, whose glamour forms part of the spectacular appeal of these images. Two factors structure the appeal of air travel: the scarce affordability and the exoticism of far-away holiday destinations. J.C.⁹⁹ not only slowly pans to include the plane in its entirety, he films the female flight attendant descending from the plane and then includes a portrait of her with his son.

⁹⁸ AV026326 / IA_AMA_002773, 8mm, color, mute, 1964-1965

⁹⁹ AV022985_m-1.wmv / IA_AMA_00780, super 8, color, mute, no date

Figure 22



Again the glamour of air travel and the sexualized appeal of air hostesses relate to a glamorized view of an American way of life with its 1960s obsession in terms of Pan Am hostesses, exotic locations, and a newly globalized consumption of worldly spatiality. The social status is here translated in the clear pride of these carefully produced images that also prove that one was part of this fashionable experience.

What the family chronicle with its emphasis on material goods and consumerist experience shows is a visualization that '[through the] celebrating [of] new material acquisitions, [calls] attention to the fact that life is progressing along a successful path.'¹⁰⁰ The family story is told as capitalist progression. The narrative that can be constructed is one of wishful actualization. As Marianne Hirsch states: 'The family romance is primarily a narrative structure, making narrative space for the ways in which the family becomes the locus for intersecting dreams of sexual fulfillment, property, and social status.'¹⁰¹

As such the family chronicle visually narrates 'a social formation constructed out of consumerism, leisure time, aesthetic norms, bourgeois family life, the utopianism of new technologies, and corporate capitalism.'¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 89.

¹⁰¹ Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 52.

¹⁰² Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 153.

4. The function and structure of the family chronicle

The following will deal more specifically with how the structure of the family film also relates to its functioning. At the same time, the cultural codifications of the family film will be read in terms of gaps and spaces of resistance that not only resist the narrative consensus of the family story, but can also find a positive affectivity within it.

4.1. Authenticity

The family chronicle functions according to a paradox that structures its very core. While the family chronicle never sets out to capture reality, it needs a belief in its authenticity to function. The visual narration of the family can only be validated by its emphasis on emotional authenticity. This emotional validity relates to the aesthetic of the family chronicle. The lack of proficiency of the family aesthetic comes to reinforce a belief in the authenticity of the events depicted. Loss of camera control and the typical point-and-shoot attitude adopted by the family filmmaker reinforce the *belief* that no manipulation of image or event has taken place. The fact that most films in this corpus have not been edited emphasizes such an emotionally authentic belief. Authenticity here equals emotional authenticity, not indexical referentiality: ‘The form of the home movie—long shots, canted framing, jump cuts, full frontal subjects, direct address,’ as Zimmermann notes, ‘link the image to affective authenticity.’¹⁰³

The belief in authenticity of the image is part of every viewing situation. Naturally, as we have stressed again and again, the amateur image is not a neutral rendition of a reality. However, for the family chronicle to function as affective base, it needs to eclipse the cultural codes of representation that structure it. This is, of course, achieved by the leniency of its audience. After all, most of the members of the audience have lived the events depicted. The audience does not interrogate images in terms of a valorization of objective truth. As a matter of fact, ‘the so-called failings

¹⁰³ Zimmermann, Patricia R. “Speculations on Home Movies: Thirty Axioms for Navigating Historiography and Psychic Vectors”. Kmec and Thill, *Private Eyes and the Public Gaze*, 15.

function in this mode of reception as a means to create family history collectively, and to reinforce a sense of the family as a group.’¹⁰⁴ Family chronicle filmmakers have no artistic intentions. While some filmmaker present filmic affinities and display unusual framing choices, these creative impulses are never the main prerogative of the family chronicle.

The aesthetic conventions that govern the practice of family chronicle filming follow a principle of modesty and humbleness, both technical and expressionistic. The family chronicle is suffused by a desire to preserve a view of ‘how things were’. This desire is of course never actualized, but pertains to the belief underlying camera-use. Gisele Freund alludes to this perspective in her book *Photography and Society*:

‘Millions of amateurs, both consumers and producers of photography, who imagine they have captured reality by snapping the shutter and rediscovering it in their negatives do not doubt the truth of the photograph. For them, the photograph is irrefutable evidence. Tacitly agreed to values and acknowledged belief in the *evidentiary quality* of photographic imagery underlie and strengthen these reasons. [They] want to document what went on; no artistic impulse [underlies the practice].’¹⁰⁵

Artistic creation is relegated in favor of a perceived realism. Realism in the home movie denotes a cultural logic that fortifies the authenticity of the affiliate bonds in the family unit. Mistakes in mise-en-scène and framing translate into a sense of ‘having-been-in-the-midst’ of things—involved rather than purely observant. The lack of skills often observed in the home movie conveys a belief that the filmmaker also lacks the skill to manipulate the event and imagery. The typical aesthetics of the home movie, with its acceptance and expectancy of mistakes, failures, and errors, assures an emotional authenticity and belief in the realistic nature of the past event as well as its functioning in the social unit of the family structured by familialism.

Naturally, filmmakers are never completely conscious of creating according to ideological codes of representation that transpose the family as familial. In fact, for

¹⁰⁴ Bluher, Dominique. “Necessity Is the Mother of Invention, or Morder”’s Amateur Toolkit”. Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 210.

¹⁰⁵ Freund, Gisele quoted in Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 133.

the family narration to function as the basis of identity-work, it needs its socio-cultural codification to remain invisible.

The viewer must be taken in by a 'belief in the authenticity of these images, or at least a belief that what we see in the photograph must exist, or have existed, in order to be photographed.'¹⁰⁶ While Marianne Hirsch examines the underlying belief in photographs, the function of the filmic image follows the same principle in the family circle. Thus a situation is created in which the belief in the authenticity of the profilmic also renders its socio-cultural codification invisible. Family images are never 'unmediated representations of our past.'¹⁰⁷ However, as Hirsch notes in regards to family photographs, these images function as illusions of neutral transcriptions. The image comes to seemingly represent 'a trace touched directly by the event it records [and consequently] it has the effect of naturalizing cultural practices and of disguising their stereotyped and coded characteristics.'¹⁰⁸ As such, the family chronicle follows a familial structuring, however, for this structure to unfold its efficacy, it needs to become naturalized. The function of the familial codification only functions through invisibility. The invisibility is itself transposed by a belief in authenticity that is adopted in the viewing of these images. The visibility of the family in images naturalizes the cultural codification that transposes it to the familial. The visibility of mistakes and errors furthermore emphasizes its affective authenticity. The home movie presents a paradox at heart, in that it is at once constructed and confirmatory, invisibly structured and visibly valorizing, fictional yet emotionally authentic. In the family chronicle, '[a]s Roland Barthes has written, with the photograph, "the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation".'¹⁰⁹ Yet it is founded on a belief in authenticity lying at the base of its own representation.

¹⁰⁶ Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 15.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁹ Citron, *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions*, 15.

4.2. Loss, pain, and suffering in the visual

I would like to offer some further reflection on absence within the visual narration of the family film. Filmic absence can relate to conflict, tension, and the desire to exclude a specific person from the visual archive. It can, however, also convey notions of pain and loss. The earliest film from this corpus is from 1929. The years between 1929 and the early 1950s are characterized by a filmic absence in the archive. The wartime years thus saw a general stoppage of family chronicle production. The practice of filmmaking presents the overshadowing presence of the wartime years in its fundamental motivation to return to stable and coherent family unit. The uncertainty and upheaval of the war also play an inherent part in the rise of familial values with their emphasis on stability, coherence, and togetherness. The rise in popularity (and affordability) of the practice of filmmaking after the war combined 'its novelty [...] with the desire to establish or return to family life.'¹¹⁰ The motivation that underlies the practice of filmmaking is thus not only a socio-culturally constructed desire to idealize the family as familial; it is also concomitantly born out of anxiety. Films from the 1950s especially present the overshadowing presence of the preceding wartime experience. The strong emphasis on material consumer goods also relates an inherent awareness of the preceding decades of want and need. The absence of a family member from its visual archive can thus also pertain to the loss of a family member during the war. We need to tread carefully here, since I cannot conclusively evidence the loss of a family member without meta-context. However, films from the 1950s inherently convey an awareness of its preceding decades.

The awareness of the post-war years that overshadow the filmic images, always rise from the post-hoc knowledge the researcher brings to the viewing situation. This becomes especially pertinent when viewing a film from 1929. M.Q.¹¹¹ is a typical family chronicler. He loves filming his family on Sunday outings, but also in the everyday. The family is quite well off, if their townhouse is any indication. He starts off by filming his wife and son taking a dip in the river. While the wife is slightly self-conscious in her bathing suit, she nevertheless complies and laughs. The son

¹¹⁰ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 10.

¹¹¹ AV009596_m.wmv / IA_AMA_004418, 9.5 mm, black and white, mute, 1929

loves playing in the shallow water. They seem happy. Other sequences show a visit to extended family on their farm and a visit to the fairground. He also captures an outdoor lunch where he includes several shots of other people enjoying the sunny weather on an outdoor terrace. The imagery is one of stereotypical family pictures. The images convey stability in the family unit, and the predominant atmosphere is one of happiness.

Figure 23



It is impossible to view them without a post-hoc knowledge of what is to follow. During German occupation of Luxembourg, the birth years from 1920 to 1927¹¹² were forcibly recruited into the German Wehrmacht, and we can thus assume that the little boy in the image fell within the envisaged age group for forced recruitment. The happiness and stability of these images are tainted by the retrospective knowledge the viewer brings to the image. This makes the viewing an uncanny experience:

‘These evocations elicit a meditative, contemplative response from the viewer rather than rosy-hued nostalgia. We may share in the carefree cavorting and celebrations of families and of couples, but at the same time we are made painfully aware that many of these individuals will soon be caught up in the terrifying maelstrom of deportation and extermination. Above all, this is a form of filmmaking in which the filmic text—for all its gaps, inconsistencies and ellipses—still has the capacity to evoke both an imaginative and a thoughtful response from its audience.’¹¹³

¹¹² Eva Maria Klos. “Erinnerungen an Die Zwangsrekrutierung Im Großherzogtum Luxemburg”. in *DIE ZWANGSREKRUTIERUNG IN DEN VOM DRITTEN REICH ANNEKTIERTEN GEBIETEN 1939-1945* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, n.d.), 133–44.

¹¹³ Kilborn, Richard. ““I am a time archeologist”: Some Reflections on the Filmmaking Practice of Péter Forgacs”. *Mining the Home Movie*, 190.

Knowledge of what is to ensue on a national level is imposed upon the private happiness of the images. Péter Forgacs further elaborates the uncanny experience of watching these films:

‘For us today, here and now, with our historical knowledge, we add an unforgettable and unforgiving dramatic perspective; *the invisible shadows over [their] happy moments*. This happy moment conjures in our mind other constructions *as deep undercurrents of unconscious expectations*—tortuous death in a gas chamber—an undercurrent hidden at this film moment to the future victims. It is therefore never realised, made visible...’¹¹⁴

The visual narration of the family film is thus introduced into a further vernacular narrative that is synthesized in the mind of the contemporary viewer. Chapter five will deal more extensively with the reception situation in contemporaneity. What is important to note here is that the absence in the family image also always translates as notions of loss, anxiety, and finitude.

Again, absences in visual narration can be interpreted differently. The absence of grandfathers, brothers, or uncles might be interpreted as being the result of unpopularity within the family circle; still another explanation could pertain to the death of absent family members. Absence can further signify illness, as sick relatives are rarely filmed.

In the family archive, absence can thus pertain to loss as much as to conscious exclusion. As we have seen, the absence of the mother in the frame can relate to an intended focus on the child, or it can visually allude to divorce or marital tension. Absence in the family chronicle is thus as important as presence in the construction of the family archive. Images become currency in a process of recollection. The notion of visual absence also creates an awareness of the family film as a practice that disguises as much as it reveals.

¹¹⁴ Forgacs, Péter quoted in. Kilborn, Richard. ““I am a time archeologist”: Some Reflections on the Filmmaking Practice of Péter Forgacs”. *Ibid.*, 186.

4.3. Melancholy in the family film

The practice familial filmmaking is a melancholic one in many ways. The very incentive to film is a form of pre-emptive nostalgia: ‘The movie camera comes out for the vacation, for the new baby, for the first snow of the winter [...] as if the ephemerality of those moments commanded us to record them, to capture them.’¹¹⁵ The inherent desire to capture the ephemerality of these moments coincides with an awareness of finitude. As Susan Sontag notes with regards to the nature of the photographic image: ‘All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt.’¹¹⁶ The practice of filmmaking is thus linked to a desire to fix time *and* an awareness of the impossibility thereof. This structures the practice as a melancholic and nostalgic rendition.

Family chronicles first of all represent ‘acts of mourning for those who have passed,’¹¹⁷ or even acts of pre-emptive mourning for those who will pass. Filmmakers capture their families in both an awareness of the ephemerality of the present *and* as a counteractive practice to fix a moment, as family members long gone can still be present in the family archive. They will forever move, laugh, and talk in the filmic universe.

The practice of filmmaking postpones its main function, which becomes instrumental (though not exclusively so) in the family viewing. The images are thus produced for both an immediate and later posterity. This also includes an awareness that a time will come when especially older members of the family are no longer present. Filmmaking functions as confirmation of and counteracting to the finitude of all things.

¹¹⁵ Roth, Michael S. “Ordinary Film Péter Forgacs's "The Maelstrom"”. Ibid., 67.

¹¹⁶ Sontag, *On Photography*, 15.

¹¹⁷ Zimmermann, Patricia R. “The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings”. *Mining the Home Movie*, 24.

The ephemerality of the moment and awareness of finitude extends to the viewer in the present. Watching these films one cannot evade awareness ‘that the person who appears on screen may well be dead even as he/she seems to be alive on the screen. [...] It is as if they have sent a message with skeletal traces for today’s viewers.’¹¹⁸ At the same time, in viewing these films, as Forgacs notes, another significant quality comes to the fore, namely ‘the comprehension of death.’¹¹⁹ This comprehension carries the uncanny certitude of one’s own finitude. The endless summer days, the joyful events, the long years of childhood—they have all passed in the blink of an eye and here the awareness rises of one’s own lifespan as limited and, ultimately, short.

Family films thus present a complex visual tapestry. Their images interweave notions of presence and absence, visibility and invisibility. They constitute a visual narration in which happiness is inherently linked to loss, acceptability related to taboo, and affirmative, intergenerational development joined to an inherent awareness of human finitude.

4.4. Resistance and Relationality

Up until now the visual narration of the family film seems a rather depressing and controlled affair. We have identified notions of the gaze as an imposed control, the socio-cultural codification of representation that includes notions of taboo and prohibition, and, finally, the inherent rise of melancholia, nostalgic longing, and the awareness of finitude that is a co-constituent of the practice of filmmaking. Is the family film, when all is said and done, but a narration that comes to serve as an illusionary memento mori that furthermore visualizes events according to a patriarchal, parental, and consumerist codification?

The gaps and fissures that were examined above are not only fundamental for the functioning of the familial construction of narratives; they can serve as potential

¹¹⁸ Forgacs, Péter. “Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies”. *Ibid.*, 49.

¹¹⁹ Forgacs, Péter. “Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies”. *Ibid.*

spaces of resistance in the image. Within the image, these spaces pertain to a refusal of the filmed subject to cooperate or a direct acknowledgment of the filmmaking conventions that underlie representation in the familial. Children prove the most resistant to the parental gaze that underlies the look of the camera. They often resist the filmmaking parents' directions and run away from the camera; they hide under tables, and they prove more interested in their direct and immediate vicinity than the camera that is pointed at them. The female members of the family display other mild forms of potential resistance. Wives often stick out their tongues at the camera and the filmmaking husband.

Figure 24



Wife playfully sticking out her tongue¹²⁰

Figure 25



Daughter pulling faces¹²¹

¹²⁰ IA0000S7_m.wmv / IA_AMA_008068, 8mm, black and white and color, mute, 1960, 1963, 1964

¹²¹ AV026322 / IA_AMA_002770, 8mm, color, 1962

This gesture can alternately be interpreted as good-humored resistance, flirtation, or a mild form of sabotage of the intended image. The resistance, while tame and feeble in certain regards, lies in the acknowledgment of the camera gaze and the reversal of the inherent power relation in the filmic space. Here the filmed subject does not accept the filmic gaze as imposition as they reaffirm their agency by a look-back. Her behavior is characterized by agency rather than passivity. Also this gesture of sticking out the tongue relates a clear understanding of the social rules of acceptability that govern representation. The gesture skirts around the edges of acceptability whether it represents a flirtatious engagement with the camera or a hinted order for filming to stop. All done in good fun, this gesture nevertheless reverses inherent representational power relation in a relegation of agency to the filmic space in front of the camera.

As we have seen, an unwilling facial expression often serves as means of resistance as well. Confronted with a scowl or unwillingness to smile, filming often stops. A few women self-reflectively and openly engage with the codification of the camera look as male gaze. They come to implicate themselves and resume a position of agency within an equation of patriarchal imposition. Again Zimmermann sums up this paradoxical situation in which '[t]he woman and her children are immobilized by the camera, yet blissfully and almost self-reflectively participate in its representation.'¹²²

I came across one of the most complex and telling scenes of representational control and social conventions in one of R.M.'s¹²³ film collections. The setting is a Sunday outing with his wife, their daughter, and a set of grandparents. The daughter is about four years old and in a very innocent manner playfully lifts up her skirt. She is laughing as her mother smiles. After a while, the mother emulates the skirt lifting of her daughter, albeit in a slightly sexualized and teasing manner. The grandfather notices the mother lifting her skirt and smiling at the camera. He frowns and looks disapproving. After a short while, filming stops.

¹²² Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 112.

¹²³ AV036447, no info on material, black and white and color, mute, no date

Figure 26



The scene proves interesting, as the mother clearly enjoys and reinforces her status as visualized spectacle. She even furthers it through her teasingly sexual lifting of the skirt. At the same time, the look of the grandfather is telling in its disapproval, and the stopping of filming seems to be a direct result of this disapproval. Here lies the paradox of the male gaze. The camera constructs the wife as spectacle. In collaborating with the sexualized gaze of the camera, indeed her very enjoyment of it, she provokes a further social disapproval. While she is constructed as to-be-looked-at-ness, a woman could however not participate in its enjoyment since that would relegate her to the space of agency rather than her status a passive projection surface.

Still, this scene shows how the filmic space leaves possibilities of engagement and agency that are not restricted to the filmmaker. The camera functions as tool for self-expression. Such a notion is however not exclusively limited to the space behind the camera, but becomes a potentiality for the space in front of the camera. While representation in the familial adheres to 'strict gender divisions into male instrumentality and female expressiveness',¹²⁴ the filmic space presents a more complex interweaving of looks and familial relationalities that will be briefly examined in the following section.

4.5. Relationality in the filmic space

The familial look is also an affective one. It not only relegates the member of the family to notions of acceptability, it comes to constitute the subject in a complex network of looks. The interactive look that is shared between filmmaker, filmed subject, and camera is also always an interactive look that is highly constitutive. The filmic space is rather more complex than an exclusively restrictive imposition of the filmmaking gaze upon the filmed subject.

The filmic space represents a constitutive interweaving of look and looking. Marianne Hirsch elaborates on the positively constitutive look in the familial and filmic space. She uses Jacques Lacan's concept of false identification to examine how the subject

¹²⁴ Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 51.

achieves a jubilant belief in bodily plenitude and self-identity through the construction of an allo-portrait (portrait of an Other) in the mirror. While this work does not take a psychoanalytic stance on subjective construction, these principles can help understand how the look in the filmic space also functions according to a mirror-stage identification that orders the self as stable.¹²⁵ While chapters four and five will deal more extensively with the constitutive properties of a look back, here I am foremost interested in how the filmic space is also positively constitutive rather than restrictively imposing. The familial look opens a space in which ‘the individual subject is constituted in the space of the family through looking.’¹²⁶

The familial look is also always but ‘a mutual look of a subject looking at an object who is a subject looking (back) at an object. Within the family, as I look I am always also looked at, seen, scrutinized, surveyed, monitored. Familial subjectivity is constructed relationally, and in these relations I am always both self and other[ed], both speaking and looking subject and spoken and looked at object: I am subjected and objectified.’¹²⁷ Identity-work in the familial thus not only relates to the look, but also to being seen. The filmic space represents a visualization, and thus externalization, of intersubjectivity that is constituted by looking. The filmed subjects are not only looked at, they are being seen and they are looking back. A subject here constructs a sense of self in a visual relationality between camera, family, and self:

‘The moment of seeing, which is also the moment of being seen, is a moment of interconnection between exteriority and interiority, and between self and other. Through the look of the camera, filmmaker, and other filmed subjects, an individual can construct his/her own self-image as allo-portrait. As Hirsch states: ‘Looking is thus inherently relational.’¹²⁸

¹²⁵ '[T]he subject constitute[s] himself visually by way of a false identification with the misapprehended imaginary ‘other’ of Jacques Lacan's mirror stage—the mistaken jubilant belief in the bodily wholeness and self-identity apprehended in the mirror.'

Ibid, 89 ff.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 9.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 102.

The subject is thus constructed by a network of relations constituted by different looks that are interwoven *within* the space of the filmic familial. This notion of looking and being looked at helps construct a positive notion of selfhood placed within the relational network of the family. Intersubjectivity and relationality, as opposed to exclusive notions of domination and control, are more positive structures that concomitantly organize the familial. The images of the family chronicle always fluctuate between these complex networks of control, imposition, intersubjectivity, and relational constitution that make up filmic space. The filmic space thus is not formed within a binary of control and relationality (either/or), but comes into being in a reversible and fluctuating equation between the two. The intersubjective look that constitutes the individual as self-portrait in the familial is construed by the relationality that underlies the familial space.

4.6. Relationality in the familial space

The focus on children, the emphasis on the togetherness of the family, and the chronicling of the family story through images is constituted by relationality. Simply put, the emphasis of the family chronicle lies not on an exclusive focus on children, but on children *in relation* to their parents, grandparents, and the familial world in general.

The familial space that is visually narrated by the family chronicle is also a space of close physical ties. These ties help function as bonding mechanism. While the socio-cultural codification of the familial presents visual taboos and restrictions imposed upon behaviour, such prohibitions do not negate the inherently positive relationality that underlies the familial. The affective look and physical contact that is narrated by the family chronicle positions the individual within a close and personal interactional space. People put their arms around each other to pose for the camera, they hold up a baby for the camera, they kiss their wives and say ‘Cheers’ to their friends not only in front of but also *for* the camera. While the display of material possessions, such as houses, cars, and clothes, and more abstract symbols of financial status, such as holidays, day trips, and restaurant outings, play an important role in familial representation, the predominant visual theme running through the home movie is the

display of affective relationships *between* the subjects on film and the filmmaker with camera. While for the most part, the filmmaking parent, generally the father, remains physically absent from the affective physical bonding in front of the camera, he is not completely left out. Often the wife or children blow kisses at the camera and thus draw him in the affective relationality of the familial.

Figure 27



Son kissing mother good night¹²⁹

Figure 28



Rare display of fatherhood in the frame¹³⁰



Blowing kisses at the filmmaking husband¹³¹

¹²⁹ AV011520 /IA_AMA_005245, 8mm, black and white and color, mute, between 1945 and 1958

¹³⁰ AV026665 / IA_AMA_002640, 8mm, black and white, mute, 1959

¹³¹ idem

Filmed subjects use the social space of the filmic as a means of bonding. The question of control and power can thus not be assumed as one-sidedly weighted. While it is certainly true that the filmmaker is responsible for the imagery; he/she chooses the setting, location, and composition; *within* the filmic space, people are more or less left to express themselves freely. Self-expression is naturally still conducted within the constraints of socially acceptable behaviour.

Filmed subjects thus self-reflectively engage within the filmic space. They are furthermore constituted within the relationality of the looks that are exchanged. While notions of control and imposition are inherent parts of any representational relation and practice, these notions need not be completely restrictive. Family chronicles, as Chalfen notes with regards to snapshots,

‘acknowledge a conformity to certain cultural ideals such as living a comfortable life, maintaining a happy growing family, and living in social contexts where people get along with one another. Illness, depression, painful experiences, interpersonal conflicts, personal disappointments, social failures and dreary settings have no place in this construction of life. In this way, snapshots propose answers to such questions as: “*What is good in life and human existence?*”’¹³²

The visual narrations of the family chronicle become testaments of a multi-layered universe of familial relations, affective bonding, imaginary constructions, resistances, and a fluctuating relationality between self and other. The practice of filmmaking here comes to stand for a highly personalized means of self-expression *and* a socio-culturally inflected means of familial representation. We will come back to the implications of the visual trajectories that underlie practice and camera mediation in chapter four. Suffice to say here that family chronicle images are personalized and socialized. They are real and constructed. They come to stand for a highly selective manufacture and a lived reality. In the words of Michelle Citron: ‘Herein lies a paradox: spontaneous *and* directed, authentic *and* constructed, documentary *and*

¹³² Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 99. My emphasis.

fiction.¹³³ These statuses are co-constructed within the family chronicle as visual narration.

The visual narration that proves the main focus of this chapter presents but one side to the meaningful dynamic of the familial film experience. While illustrative, without meta-commentary these films can but give us a highly selective and thus fragmented indication to the family story. The visual narration of the family chronicle unfolds its true function in the family-viewing situation. It can only be completed in concomitance to the verbal narrative that the different members impose *upon* the visual narration in film reception. The verbal narrative is lost with the relegation of the family chronicle to the institutional archive. In the following section the examination of what constitutes a verbal narrative will thus remain relatively abstract and brief. Still, it presents a fundamental element of how the visual narration comes to serve as basis from which the members of a family construct different narrative strands.

5. Verbal Narrative—Viewing in the Family Circle

While of course this study takes the filmic world of the amateur film without meta-data, I would like to propose a brief examination of how the family film fulfills its function as visual basis in the family circle and how it needs consensus within the verbal narratives constructed in order to function. At the same time, I will show how the construction of verbal recollections in the familial always leaves spaces of resistance.

5.1. Fragment and selectivity: the structures of film collection as family photo album

Before examining the reception situation, in which verbal narratives are imposed upon the films, I would like to briefly analyze the organizing structure of the film collection. The organization that underlies a film collection as visual family-archive

¹³³ Citron, *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions*, 19.

presents a structure that is photographic rather than filmic. It comes to resemble the arrangement of a photo album. I will loosely follow Roger Odin's¹³⁴ characteristics of the family film collection. First, the home movie presents a very similar aesthetic to so-called snapshot photography. Both share the characteristics of portraiture. There is the direct look into the camera lens, the frontal positioning of the subject, and even the occasional group 'photo' (portrait) taken by the film camera, often on the front steps of the home. The tendency to center-frame children, and the family more generally, clearly conveys a 'photographic hangover' in that filmmakers often choose to shoot the family in an official 'formation' in a fixed position for a certain length of time. Pierre Bourdieu considers frontality as

'linked to the most deep-rooted cultural values. Honour demands that one poses for the photograph as one would stand before a man whom one respects and from whom one expects respect, face on, one's forehead held high and one's head straight [...] The sitter addresses the viewer as an act of reverence, of courtesy, according to conventional rules, and demands that the viewer obey the same norms.'¹³⁵

Even though this statement relates mostly to the static nature of portrait photography, a similar deep-rooted cultural tendency can be observed with regards to the family chronicle. It is considered bad manners not to face the camera, to frown or display any symptom of bad humor or bad faith. The tone of these portraits is often defined by a notion of awkwardness, as people in front of the camera remain uncertain as to what to do and how long to do it for. A lot of blinking occurs while uncertain smiles vanish only to appear again a second later when the subjects realize that the camera is still running.

M.Q.¹³⁶ loves to create portraits of his family. His son especially draws his filmic focus. During an outing to the countryside, he lines up his family. The mother and grandmother are looking after the children. He pans along his family and takes care to

¹³⁴ Odin, Roger. "The Home Movie and Space of Communication". Rascaroli, Monahan, and Young, *Amateur Filmmaking*.

¹³⁵ Leenarts, Danielle. "The Valorisation of Amateur Photography with regard to Intimate Photography". Kmec and Thill, *Private Eyes and the Public Gaze*, 27.

¹³⁶ AV009596_m.wmv / IA_AMA_004418, 9.5 mm, black and white, mute, 1929

include a brief static shot of each member. The next sequence is constructed in a similar fashion. Here we are presented with a view of the extended family, presumably during a Sunday visit. The men are wearing Sunday suits and the women are wearing black dresses. One woman wears a typically 1920s dress in a shimmering light fabric. She stands out in the image. The atmosphere is one of joviality as they drink wine and laugh. Every once in a while someone includes the filmmaker and addresses him with a smile or comment. As he has established the family in its entirety, he then proceeds to focus on individual members that he positions centre-frame. First he films the grandmother.

Figure 29



He continues to focus on her without changing camera position for a few seconds. He then focuses on the grandfather and keeps the camera running for a few further seconds. He then focuses on his wife with their baby. After a few seconds, he focuses on the baby alone and creates the longest portrait of this sequence.



The next sequence again shows the family in its entirety. M.Q.'s entire film collection presents these filmic portraits. It presents a very similar aesthetic to so-called

snapshot photography. As such, the amateur filmmaker might consider him-/herself not so much filmmaker as snapshot producer. ‘In the case of the home movie, we are in the photographic strip, not in the cinematic strip. A strip is here defined as: “an activity happening [...] seen from the perspective of those who are subjectively tied up in it.”¹³⁷ Odin names the structure of the home movie as a succession of chronological, albeit non-narrative, events. He compares this structuring of ‘random’ recordings as separated by differently timed gaps (the temporal gaps between one sequence and the next might contain days, months, or even years).

Even if I do not necessarily agree with the claim of the family film as non-narrative in terms of its imagery, the connection between the home movie collection and the photo album proves helpful in examining how the family constructs verbal narratives in the reception situation. Like the snapshot in the family album, the home movie collection presents snippets of family life. Notions of linearity within a happy family history and legacy are woven around these visual snippets. These snippets then serve as memorial triggers and a visual basis from which to construct verbal narratives. ‘Analyzed in this way, the operation of intergenerational communication in the family seems to have, above all else, an ideological function: it favors the cohesion of the family unit in order to reinforce familialism and to preserve the institution in its traditional formation.’¹³⁸ In the following I will illustrate how these fragments of visual narration help construct familial narratives that adhere to one dominant requirement: they must be stable, coherent, and above all, happy.

5.2. Happy family narratives

As I have elaborated, the family chronicle presents a visual narration. Here I would like to briefly explain how familial values play an inherent part in the construction of the family’s history. The cliché function of the family archive as instrumentality presents the familial image as stereotype. The visual narration’s primary function is to emplot and emplace the individual in a meaningful existence. The manner in which

¹³⁷ Odin, Roger. “The Home Movie and Space of Communication”. Rascaroli, Monahan, and Young, *Amateur Filmmaking*, 19.

¹³⁸ Odin, Roger. “The Home Movie and Space of Communication”. *Ibid.*, 18.

such an identity can be achieved is through the construction of a coherent narrative. A visual family-archive thus serves as foundation for a coherent family narrative. It helps re-tell a past that is inherently conditioned by a familial emphasis on happiness, stability, harmony, and meaningful relationality. Emplacement through the means of narrative follows a formal organization in terms of linearity *and* circularity.

What the visual pattern of the family chronicle shows is how a ‘small fraction of everyday-life-at-home is combined with a lot of unusual-life-away-from-home.’¹³⁹ The filmic narration becomes instrumental in the construction of a coherent life and family narrative. It represents a desired past in which ‘happy moments abound, more frequently than happens in life.’¹⁴⁰ The stringing together of joyful events, leisurely holidays, and general harmony within the family creates a basis that makes the construction of a happy narrative possible. It serves as reinforcement and visualization of familial values. As will be seen shortly, the creation of meaningful narratives always presents a potential of resistance or contestation in the viewing situation. The vernacular imaginary of the family chronicle creates versions of a past that members of a family will *want* to look back upon. The filmic narration represents the dream of a past that was wished for.

The creation of a coherent narrative in the familial presents a formal paradox in its emphasis on linear and circular emplacement. The family chronicle presents a circular movement in its following of seasonal events. The reoccurrence of similar events that structure the familial year from one season to the next help provide a visual basis that inspires stability through reoccurrence. While the *nature* of the events depicted assures a happy narrative, the emplacement in structures of linearity and circularity guarantee the coherence of the same.

This insistence on perpetual beginnings and middle parts betrays an underlying awareness of finitude and an illusory reassurance of an eternally open-ended future. The same applies to the seasonal structuring of the events depicted. The practice of

¹³⁹ Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 61.

¹⁴⁰ Forgacs, Péter. “Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies”. *Mining the Home Movie*, 51.

family filmmaking and the ideological reconditioning of the family as familial developed against the background of a post–World War Two society. It brought with it an atmosphere of social alienation, the disassembling of a traditional rural tradition, and the awareness of socio-political potential for instability. The construction of a family archive as a visual foundation for narrative emplacement helps relegate a sense of personal control over the existential contingencies that form the background of a post-war society. The circularity that constructs the familial story as a reoccurrence of the same events, happenings, and experiences helps establish a sense of stability in the aftermath of an experience that previously disrupted familial existence. It also stresses continuity following a period that was marked by personal loss in the family. The practice of filmmaking in the family can theoretically be endless, even if individual protagonists change. This also conveys a notion of inter-generational linearity as circular perpetuation. In this sense, the practice of filmmaking is not so very different from other folklore activities in that it is passed down from generation to generation and establishes a link that ties the family through time and space. Naturally, personal tragedy cannot be controlled, so in case of misfortune, filming often stops. This sense of control over personal fate and narrative, while illusionary, nevertheless proves one of the main motivations underlying the practice of filmmaking.

At the same time, the circular structure of reoccurring events is nevertheless embedded in an important conveyance of linear structuring. The upbringing of children is visually chronicled and leads to a reassurance of emplacement within a familial linearity. This linear development pertains to intergenerational linkage as quite often, three generations populate the imagery. Children grow up, parents grow older, and grandparents eventually disappear. Later on, children often pick up the filmmaking habits of their parents and a further generation is visually captured. One can say that linearity in intergenerational linkage includes the circularity of the familial that positions the family narrative as self-perpetuating. Grandparents vanish from the filmic narration while parents capture their children. Later, as they become grandparents themselves, they focus on grandchildren. Young parents pick up a camera and emplace their own family within the intergenerational linkage in that they visit their own parents and film them playing with their respective children and so on and so forth. The familial narratives that are constructed from visual narration thus

stress notions of stability and coherence. Emplacement and emplotment follow circular and linear trajectories. The narratives constructed emplace the individual in a lineage within the familial. At the same time, the individual is emplotted within a familial spatiality that becomes reassuring through its sense of circularity that also goes directly against threatening notions of finitude and death. He/she can construct a meaningful narrative in the circularity of familial self-perpetuation. Narrative structures and produces emplacement and emplotment that lead to a sense of certainty and belonging.

Linearity is lived and produced through the developmental logic of children's first steps, first birthdays, the first Holy Communion, Christmases, Easter egg hunts, etc. These nodal points of family life are reasserted through practice and viewing alike. The practice of shooting an event bestows significance upon it, while the collective activity of viewing authenticates the familial. The myth underlying both production and reception construct the family as social unit of coherence and plenitude. The nodal points of the family's history provide a visual scaffold around which narratives are woven. They provide the visual basis as origin of the familial narrative. The temporal structure that is provided by visual narration thus can be imagined as an emphasis on change *within* selfsameness. So while the collection of visual records pertains to a sense of organizing linearity and stability within the circularity of reoccurring events, the notion of positive '*change*' is very important. Moments of positively valued change, marked by parties, official recognition, or public celebration, "punctuate" the collection's view of life.'¹⁴¹ As such, as Pierre Bourdieu notes, filmic and

'photographic practice only exists and subsists for most of the time by virtue of its *family function* or rather by the function conferred upon it by the family group, namely that of solemnizing and immortalizing the high points of family life [...] of reinforcing the integration of the family group by reasserting the sense that it has both of itself and of its unity.'¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 96.

¹⁴² Bourdieu, Pierre. *Photography, a Middle-Brow Art* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 19.

The visual high points that are captured in the family chronicle string together moments in the family at its strongest and most positive. Hirsch states that ‘photography quickly became the family’s primary instrument of self-knowledge and representation—the means by which family memory would be continued and perpetuated, by which the family’s story would henceforth be told.’¹⁴³ The basis of a strongly positive visual narration thus makes for a narrative that re-strengthens the family as unit.

Ayisha Abraham notes: ‘Instead of providing information about a society, home movies function as filters masking reality.’¹⁴⁴ The family chronicle never narrates reality, it narrates a wishful dream of an idealized past. The family chronicle never sets out to capture reality. As we have seen, the image needs its instrumental function as cliché. It serves as the basis for construction, rather than as an end in itself. The visual narration of the family-archive stands as visual marker for an authentication of meaningful experience. In order for the familial to be constructed as meaningful space, the family must celebrate itself as happy and positively constructive. Everyone likes a happy ending.

5.3. The Viewing Situation

The family chronicle is made for viewing. Abraham is most adamant: ‘Without projection, all this film footage is inanimate, a mass of junk lacking any value.’¹⁴⁵ While the practice of filmmaking itself has important ideological implications and cohesive social functions, ‘the production of the film is not a primary goal.’¹⁴⁶ The visual narration serves as basis for further narrative construction. The family chronicle represents an *aide-mémoire*. First of all, the projection of the family chronicle in itself constitutes an event. The event of projection presents a celebratory

¹⁴³ Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 6–7.

¹⁴⁴ Abraham, Ayisha. "Deteriorating Memories Blurring Fact and Fiction in Home Movies in India". *Mining the Home Movie*, 262.

¹⁴⁵ Abraham, Ayisha. "Deteriorating Memories Blurring Fact and Fiction in Home Movies in India". *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁴⁶ Odin, Roger. "Reflection on the Family Home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach". *Ibid.*, 256.

notion of the extraordinary. As Nicholson states: 'Family film shows were a ritual [and] brought people physically together.'¹⁴⁷

Generally, the family film was projected in the family circle on Sundays, birthdays, after Christmas dinner, in short, on special occasions. Commonly, they elicited laughter or feelings of wonder and awkwardness, especially in earlier years, as 'viewers subverted, laughed at or cringed at the novelty of, as one filmmaker's elderly daughter recalled, "being able to see oneself up with the stars".'¹⁴⁸ There is a sense of awe in seeing oneself in movement in a medium normally reserved for and associated with Hollywood stars. This sense of wonder goes hand in hand with an initial respect in regards to the novelty of filmic technology, a notion that will be further elaborated in chapter three. Suffice to say here that the silver screen carried connotations of glamor and spectacle that rendered the projection of moving imagery attractional.

What renders the home movie meaningful, however, is not the projection itself, but the second track, or verbal commentary provided by the family. The family commentary not only complements the image, it completes it. Family members construct a sense of cohesive social identity in the familial space in narrativizing the imagery and emplotting the past in a linear emplacement. As Chalfen observes:

'Visual renditions of life experiences that appear in family albums, slide shows, or home movies are inevitably accompanied by parallel verbal accounts. Comments, in the form of storytelling and various recountings, serve to expand and complement minimal identifications common to other kinds of written captions. Complete silence during a home mode exhibition event is socially inappropriate behavior—viewers and exhibitors are expected and conditioned to say something. These accompanying remarks appear to be as conventionalized as the imagery itself.'¹⁴⁹

Verbal narrative impositions in the form of meta-commentary are governed by the same rules of social acceptability that inflect its representation. Still, verbal

¹⁴⁷ Nicholson, Heather Norris. "Moving Pictures, Moving Memories, Framing the Interpretative Gaze?". Kmec and Thill, *Private Eyes and the Public Gaze*, 73.

¹⁴⁸ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 94.

¹⁴⁹ Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 129.

commentary relegates the image from generality to particularity. While visual narration presents stereotypical images, the construction of verbal narrative introduces difference in the image. It is within the family viewing that *a* family holiday becomes *our* family holiday; a Christmas celebration becomes *our* Christmas celebration and so on.

J.¹⁵⁰ (no first name given) films her festively set Christmas dinner table. She furthermore films the empty chairs, probably captured in a moment before her guests arrive. One sequence stands out. She films a framed picture of a boy for quite a while. The picture is positioned on the mantelpiece under the Christmas tree. The other films from her collection show a daughter and sometimes a congregation of different children that I could not identify. In the family viewing the significance of the framed photograph and the missing boy is probably known. Does she film the boy because he has grown up and moved away? Is this the reason the boy is absent from the Christmas imagery? Or does the filming of the photograph hint at a more traumatic absence? The contemporary viewer can never understand the significance of this particular visual narration. Only in the viewing situation within the particularity of the family can the image be completed. Only the family can provide background information, anecdotes, and re-tellings of an event that render the visual narration truly meaningful. Without meta-commentary and meta-contextual knowledge, the family chronicle is relegated to generality. The affective bonds and tensions, while somewhat conveyed in visual narration, nevertheless lose their particularity.

Take for example, the images analyzed above in which the stares that meet the filmmaker convey an atmosphere of hostility. Perhaps the man that provoked the filmmaker to stop shooting through an aggressive comment did not in fact directly address the filmmaker. Perhaps this man, let's say, had a particularly bad toothache. Perhaps the man is a very agreeable fellow, but hates being filmed. Perhaps, however, the man is in fact the father-in-law that never accepted his daughter's husband. This infra-knowledge can only be provided and completed in the family viewing.

¹⁵⁰ VII317, no info on material, black and white and color, mute, no date

This does not mean that everything can be said in the commentary. In fact, the socio-cultural rules of acceptability govern the meta-narrative as well. In case the scowling man displaying an aggressive behaviour had in fact only had a bad toothache or hates being filmed, the verbal narrative of the family might comment on it good-humoredly. If, however, the familial situation is fraught with tensions, the situation is related as unmentionable and generally omitted from verbal commentary. As Jane Simon notes ‘the commentaries reflect the singular and particular experience of subjects in specific places at specific times.’¹⁵¹ As Roger Odin notes:

‘Here, the communication is exteriorized and this falls directly under the constraints (the censorships) of the family structures. The effect of this is that the screenings presented within this mode are strongly normalized (every home movie seems identical to ever other home movie ever made), and, for the most part, these utterances have a euphoric tone. Another effect is that what is said (the film as textual production) is often less important than the very fact of its being said: the importance lies in the exchange between the actants who participate in the communication.’¹⁵²

In what Odin terms the private mode of family communication in film reception, the ideological structuring of the representational codes also govern the meta-commentary imposed since ‘it favors the cohesion of the family unit in order to reinforce familialism and to preserve the institution in its traditional formation.’¹⁵³

Still, the space of the familial is also highly constitutive. Seeing oneself onscreen, a process of self-identification takes place. The individual sutures him/herself into the image by identifying with the self onscreen as one-self, as allo-portrait. The gap between the viewing self and the viewed self is closed in an identification process that promises subjective plenitude and wholeness. At the same time, the self is emplaced and emplotted in the familial as space of cohesion and stability.

¹⁵¹ Simon, Jane. ““Recycling Home Movies””. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 20, no. 2 (2006): 193.

¹⁵² Odin, Roger. “The Home Movie and Space of Communication”. Rascaroli, Monahan, and Young, *Amateur Filmmaking*, 17.

¹⁵³ Odin, Roger. “The Home Movie and Space of Communication”. *Ibid.*, 18.

At the same time, notions of misrecognition also characterize this process of suture. The self as allo-portrait in the family film is never differentiated from its ideological mask that defines it not only in terms of gender, race, and age, but also in regards to the role that different members are accorded in the familial space. These ideological masks screen subjectivity, quite literally in filmic representation.

While an individual sutures him/herself into the screened image as allo-portrait, he/she is also always visually narrated as ideologically masked. In order for the family chronicle process to function, this gap must be bridged. The individual must recognize him/herself in the familial in order for the familial space to function as stable and cohesive. In fact, the individual in the familial must also always adopt what Hirsch calls an affiliative look. The process of narrative construction that serves as emplacing and emplotting structure for the construction of a coherent identity functions as a process in which 'recognizing an image as *familial* elicits [...] a specific kind of readerly or spectatorial look, an *affiliative* look through which we are sutured into the image and through which we adopt the image into our own familial narrative.'¹⁵⁴ The individual thus not only constructs an identity as individual by suturing him/herself into the image projected on screen, at the same time, he/she constructs that identity within the familial through an emplotment by the familial narrative.

The self is, of course, always differently situated in time and place to the 'one on screen' and yet the narratives that are constructed with help of the visual narration serve to emplace the subject in a homogenous linearity within the familial story. Family viewings serve to strengthen 'group membership, to provide a continuity through time and space, and to revive and pass on personal histories.'¹⁵⁵ They serve as means of familial and affective bonding and provide ties between generations that include those between living and dead. In some cases, relatives in the family film have since passed on and are only known by their filmic presence to younger members of the family.

¹⁵⁴ Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 93 my emphasis.

¹⁵⁵ Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 141.

In the film viewing, time folds back on itself.¹⁵⁶ The present of projection is fused to the past of recording. The means of verbal meta-narrative binds this temporal disjunction. While it is true that the same stories might be told again and again, the meaning of the home movie fluctuates 'due, in part to the fact that we provide a second track, either stories or memories, *at the moment* of viewing.'¹⁵⁷ Things might be forgotten and recollected, and a new generation demands explanations or provides its own verbal versions of a past they might have been too young to narrativize before.

The filmic world presented in the family film is characterized by high selectivity: it presents an isolated sequence or sample of a lived existence from the past, and it is only in the posterior familial commentary that the selective visuals are embedded in events and familial background stories that were never visualized (filmed). The films thus become visual triggers for an unfolding of verbal commentary that contextualizes the image. An entire unrecorded world from the past is unleashed as the visual narration is activated in the viewing. The *visual* narration thus triggers *verbal* narratives. Nevertheless, recollection in the collective of the familial is never fixed, but always fluctuating.

As we have seen, the behavioural codes of the familial structuring also govern the family narrative. Still, the verbal space of narrativization presents a more equalized platform, since not one person proves in exclusive charge (unless projection is stopped in a huff). The person in charge of the camera predominantly controls the visual narration. This is the person that narrates the family. This is not so in the viewing situation. People contest the image, they talk over each other, they complete each other's memories of an event, they agree and they disagree. Throughout film projections, resistances can be voiced, names of localities and far removed relatives contested, anecdotes discussed. Individual members of the family can construct their own narrative, contribute to the construction of the family history or contest the dominant view on the family provided by the camera and filmmaker. Resistance to the family narrative might also take the form of a flat-out refusal to participate in the

¹⁵⁶ Citron, *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions*, see 25.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 23 my emphasis.

narrativizing of the family or the viewing situation altogether. In the viewing situation ‘amateur film performs a dialogue with one’s image.’¹⁵⁸ The projection of the family home movie becomes a ritualistic event in which visual and verbal narrative become inherently intertwined.

A further track of commentary lies within the silent monologue that each member conducts internally and which is not shared with the family. This interior thought process presents a further effect of the visual narration and can add to the construction of a personal narrative in the familial. However, as Roger Odin notes: ‘It is pointless to insist upon the force of effects that motivates this internal projection and upon the role that it plays in the construction of the individual’s identity; a construction that comes into being because of a differentiation from other individuals.’¹⁵⁹

5.3.1. Recollection in the familial

Donald E. Polkinghorne states: ‘Narrative structuring operates dialectically with memory to re-create past occurrences in light of the emplotting task to produce coherence and closure.’¹⁶⁰ The family film is often defined as ‘*aide-mémoire*’, as trigger for recollection. The family not only re-tells itself, it recollects itself in the viewing of the family chronicle. The filmic narration becomes meaningful in that it ‘chronicle[s] moments of personal and domestic significance for subsequent shared recollection.’¹⁶¹ The family not only experiences the event collectively, they furthermore share its recollection in the ritual of the viewing.

However, recollection is itself again structured by familialism’s restriction in that it emphasizes the ‘good times’. Shared recollection translates as celebration and

¹⁵⁸ Abraham, Ayisha. “Deteriorating Memories Blurring Fact and Fiction in Home Movies in India”. *Mining the Home Movie*, 183.

¹⁵⁹ Odin, Roger. “The Home Movie and Space of Communication”. Rascaroli, Monahan, and Young, *Amateur Filmmaking*, 17.

¹⁶⁰ Polkinghorne, Donald E. “Narrative Psychology and Historical Consciousness Relationships and Perspectives”. Straub, *NARRATION, IDENTITY, AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS*, 9.

¹⁶¹ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 96.

idealization of the familial space. The family chronicle is not bound to principles of realism in representation. The recollection it helps shape is used for emotional and aesthetic valorization. Not only will an event 'have-been', it will have been beautiful. The collective recollection in the family viewing is of primary importance. In fact, as Odin states: 'The collective interactions at the moment of their shooting or viewing or in the individual interior discourses aroused are more important than the images.'¹⁶²

'Home movie images function less as representatives than as *index* inviting the family to *return to a past already lived*.'¹⁶³ They reconstitute themselves in a past that is always an idealized celebration of the family as familial. This includes the question as to whose memory is recollected in the viewing. I will make the following contrary statement: the main function of the family chronicle is not to trigger personal memories, even though it is an inherent part of each individual member's viewing experience. Collectively, it serves as visual base for a practice of recollection that produces a collective narrative in the familial. This narrative serves as structure for individual emplacement and emplotment in the familial. Recollection is here related as practice that uses narrative structures as means.

For example, the images of an idealized idyllic childhood represent nostalgic views on parenthood rather than being directed at children, especially younger ones. Within the corpus examined here, older children or teenagers are rarely included. Recollection is thus relegated to parental control. Produced by the parents, the films represent a nostalgic view of the past. Most of the filmed children are too young to have coherent *memories* of the events depicted—toddlers being the preferred filmic subjects. While parents recollect the childhood of their offspring as an idealized version of an idyllic past, they simultaneously construe a linear familial narrative in which their children can emplot themselves. In some case, this linear familial narrative also stretches beyond parents to include family members that have passed

¹⁶² Odin, Roger. "Reflection on the Family Home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach". *Mining the Home Movie*, 261.

¹⁶³ Odin, Roger. "Reflection on the Family Home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach". *Ibid.*, 259.

away. The visualizations of the ‘many successive rites of passage’¹⁶⁴ in the family film help emplace parents and children in a linear familial narrative that is construed through the practice of recollection. In the family viewing, recollection trumps memory. This equation involves the notion of forgetting as individual memories are often interred by the imposition of collective familial narratives.

5.3.2. Forgetting

The family chronicle as visual narration serves not only as basis for recollection. It also presents a contrary status as counter-document. The model of counter-document helps illustrate ‘how completely banal images can refer to representations far removed from what is represented.’¹⁶⁵ The home movie, in fact, can promote forgetting in that, after repeated viewing and re-telling, the selective visuals of the home movie substitute individual memories of a collective experience. Forgetting here relates to a submission of individual memory under a construction of collective narrative. A version of the past as shared experience is agreed upon within the collective circle. Naturally not all members of the family and all acts of recollection coincide consistently. In fact, a home-movie viewing might ‘force [...] us to negotiate with our personal memories and offers an unpleasant jolt when memory does not correspond with image. “We were not happy then,” we cry. “Oh, yes,” others respond, “you were. And here is a picture of you to prove it.”’¹⁶⁶ Family members may feel themselves to have been on display, shown rather than showing, told rather than telling. Images can conceal their ‘real’ experience or experienced ‘real’. Only if the agreed upon version of the collective narrative instigates extreme discomfort or discord are collective narratives questioned. Such discord might be provoked by parental abuse or extreme tensions in the family’s past. Only then does a potential disjunction between personal memory and collective recollection rise to the fore.

¹⁶⁴ Nicholson, Heather Norris. "Moving Pictures, Moving Memories, Framing the Interpretative Gaze?". Kmec and Thill, *Private Eyes and the Public Gaze*, 73.

¹⁶⁵ Odin, Roger. "Reflection on the Family Home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach". *Mining the Home Movie*, 260.

¹⁶⁶ Spence and Holland, *Family Snaps*, 9.

Roger Odin identifies two main modes of recollection as occurring within the viewing situation. He terms this a '*double process of remembering*'.¹⁶⁷ First he identifies a notion of collective recollection that actively promotes interaction and commentary during the projection of the film, unlike the silence promoted by the viewing of fictional films. For Odin, '[t]o watch a home movie with the family is to collaborate in the reconstruction of a (mythical) family history.'¹⁶⁸ Recollection becomes the process by which the family constructs its history as means for individual emplotment.

Simultaneously a second process of remembering occurs individually and mostly silently within each individual member. If differing views are offered within the family circle, a dialogue ensues and a shared recollection is agreed upon. The family thus reaches a verbalized consensus as to what will be accepted as collective recollection of the family history. If individual memory is suppressed by collective recollection: 'Moving images [become] the collective family memory, selectively shaping processes of remembering and forgetting.'¹⁶⁹ In an idealized process of recollection, the visual narration of the family chronicle 'helped to suggest the family was a unit and possibly conferred individual and collective identities.'¹⁷⁰

Shared recollections created collectively within the viewing situation thus help proliferate a belief in the family unit as stable and cohesive. Collective remembering reinforces familial myths of linearity and plenitude. It is thus in the collaboration of filmic narration and verbal recollection that the family film finds its functional and primary source of meaning.

¹⁶⁷ Odin, Roger. "Reflection on the Family Home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach". *Mining the Home Movie*, see 259.

¹⁶⁸ Odin, Roger. "Reflection on the Family Home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach". *Ibid*, 260.

¹⁶⁹ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 96.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 73.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated the family film as visual narration. It has attempted to show but not restrict the family chronicle to its socio-cultural codification. When dealing with these visual narrations we move closer to the imaginary of the dream. We are presented with what families wished for, rather than their lived realities. While the representation of the family relegates the latter to the familial, this move is not necessarily exclusively restrictive but also highly constitutive. At its most positive, the visual narration of the family chronicle helps emplace and emplot the individual in a meaningful social interaction. This is the taking up of the familial as cultural offer of subjectform. At its worst, the relegation of individual memory to collective recollection opens a gulf that makes identification impossible. In this case the performative relation between offer and individual self-interpretation breaks down.

The family chronicle is thus a complex phenomenon. In the following chapters I will further deal with the multitude of significant layers of meaning it presents. What has been left out here are crucial notions of affect and emotional inflection of the visual language construed by the filmmaking individual. The love and care that underlie the family film are palpable within the imagery and come to present a major motivation for the filmmaker. These emotional components will further be elaborated in chapter four, which deals with the practice of filmmaking as self-expression from a phenomenological point of view.

A further aspect that has here been bracketed is the experience of the researcher, i.e. myself, in the viewing of these films. While I have hinted at the ethical problematic of viewing films that are not meant for me in the introduction, there is a further relational engagement that must be taken into account. Watching these films, certain moments arise in which my own background and social upbringing rise to the fore in an almost affective manner. For example, at times, witnessing certain gestural behaviour of the filmed subjects, these moments triggered a certain sense of embodied recognition that cannot simply be explained by a similar social background, even though this plays into it as well. For example, sometimes while watching a

woman drying dishes in one of these films, I got a sense of recognition that pertained to my own grandmother, mother, and ultimately myself drying dishes. The gestures employed, while trivial, still affected me deeply and tore me out of the distracted state that is inevitably part of watching filmic material for hours. In the same vein, some of the films present moments of rare beauty and an engagement with the world that happens on a more fundamental and embodied level and that has here not been treated. Chapter five deals with the phenomenological implications of film viewership and will engage more extensively with such notions of embodied response to these films.

What underlies all chapters of this work is a willingness to re-attribute a sense of agency to the filmmaking subject. While, naturally, representation is always governed by rules of acceptability, amateurs are not passive or unconscious producers of images, but engage their world filmically through interactivity in the filmic space.

An important element that might be contested in this chapter is the fact that the family film here is not differentiated in terms of production date. However, the experience I had while watching these films ranging from 1929 to the late 1970s was that their visual narrations did not change. It would be interesting to view these films in terms of a historical engagement with changing fashion, furniture, architectural style, home interiors, toys, cars, and holiday destinations. With this work, however, I have made a conscious decision to focus on filmic narration and a pattern of reoccurring images, and thus chose to bracket such shifts in visual upholstery that is manifested throughout the decades.

Finally, this chapter also functions in terms of literary review in that the arguments brought forth here are the culmination of a long engagement with the family film by different theoreticians. Because amateur films are mostly equated with the family film, different modes of filmic engagement tend to fall between the cracks. The next chapter will engage with amateur films that display a different visual focus in terms of narration that is conducted away from the familial, while three will deal with a very specific manner of filmic engagement in films that are exclusively produced at the fairground in Luxembourg.

This first engagement with the family chronicle is thus *initial* rather than exhaustive, and we will meet it again in images of beach frolicking, family dinners, gift displays at Christmas, autumn walks in the forest, summer days on the riverside, and in an iconography of toys, bathtubs, pets, cars, lovingly prepared food, beachwear, heavy coats in snowy landscapes, and freshly pressed Sunday suits.

II. THE DOCUMENTING AND ARCHIVING DRIVE

1. Introduction

The amateur film is often equated with the family film. While the family represents the predominant focus and motivation of amateur filmmaking, it is far from the only impetus for amateur filmmaking. The preceding chapter dealt with the language of the family film and the concomitant cultural codification that underlies filmmaking as inscription in the familial. Also, the production of images by amateurs has been likened to a visualization of vernacular narration. This chapter takes up the approach to filmic images as narration, rather than narratives, and will proceed to examine the motivations and self-inscriptions that underlie filmmaking as practice. If the family film presents a more or less coherent narration in terms of its inscription within the familial, the style and approach identified here is far more complex. The overall commonality of films described in the following lies in their adoption of a style or film language that translates as documentation. Visual narration is taken as conjunction of style and choice in terms of subject matter. The narration that can be read from the images is highly diversified within this category, since the images here present engagements that extend beyond the private and can be seen as multi-faceted inscriptions and assignments with larger socio-cultural and historical formations.

The first differentiation that gained my attention and led to the establishment of this overall category was the high proficiency filmmakers displayed. They clearly know how to engage the camera, and, perhaps more importantly, they realize the limitations of filmic perception. As will be elaborated in the following, the framing, structuring, and angles that are presented here carry the proof of these filmmakers' cinematic eyes. The typical family chronicler uses the medium in a more haphazard manner. They emulate an approach similar to that of snapshot photography. This is not so with the filmic sequences that are here termed films of a documenting and archiving drive. Filmmakers producing in this mode not only understand but also enjoy the filmic medium. Some of these filmmakers were clearly part of amateur ciné clubs, as their

films introduce titles that display their affiliation with such clubs. These loose formations of ciné enthusiasts exchanged tips and made films together.

These clubs proved especially popular before the advent of video technologies. Their productions often display a skill set that is only demarcated from that of a professional in terms of a lack of financial retribution for their work. While naturally the camera is here also used as means for self-narration, and the documenting of aspects of the everyday is deemed important, what the images also show is a clear emphasis on the filmic medium itself. Their careful framing and sometimes astonishing views, as well as the lengthy shots that exceed the duration of a family chronicle sequence, also illustrate the pure enjoyment these filmmakers take in their work. What differentiates filmmakers adopting a d&a style is their status as cine enthusiasts. As Heather Norris Nicholson notes: ‘Many film enthusiasts were self-taught and they learned from each other, encountering tips and warnings as they pursued their hobby.’¹ They display clear authorial intentions in that they occasionally ‘sign’ their films in intertitles that they introduce at the beginning of a filmic sequence. They display pride in their work, and they also further their knowledge of the filmic medium. This can be seen in a few examples in which filmmakers donate more than one collection to the archive. A clear progression in terms of skill and style is effectuated over the decades. Nevertheless, there is no such thing as a d&a filmmaker; there are only filmmakers adopting this specific mode in filmic sequences. Within the same film collection, a filmmaker might switch between a family chronicle mode and a d&a style. These modes often exist conjointly within the same film collection. For example, a filmmaker might adopt the more participatory engagement of the family chronicle style and later display a d&a style while filming in public or deeming an event worthy of documentation. Still, if the d&a mode is adopted by a filmmaker, their family chronicle sequences also display a more proficient filmic approach. These filmmakers, then, are no novices.

First of all, I will identify the archival logic that underlies the beliefs and cultural discourses that accompanied the birth of the camera in general. As will be shown, the

¹ Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film: Meaning and Practice, 1927–77*. Studies in Popular Culture (New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 19.

same beliefs and assumptions accompany the birth of amateur filmmaking as mass movement some fifty years later. While this archival logic is identified as underlying all film production, what becomes significant within this category is the fact that it construes a visual archive as directed towards the communal. Heather Norris Nicholson asks: 'Since the study of emerging national cinema remains an important element of twentieth century film history, where amateur activity predates production at a national level, might amateur film be considered as an underacknowledged fledgling step in the development of a country's cinema?'² The d&a film, while not considered a national cinema here, displays an archiving impulse that illustrates how private filmmakers create filmic renditions of the public space and a willingness to create a private visual archive of local memories. They see themselves as record keepers of communal memories. The creation of a private repository of moving images opens towards the future in an awareness of impending significance. They also produce films that open towards the communal in that their language is consciously created as universally understandable and they document events that might be ignored by official or institutional history. The private creation of publicly inflected events, sights, and spaces embeds private and personal records in larger socio-cultural and historical formations.

The style of documenting is seen as a natural progression from an archival logic to the usage of the camera as a tool of documentation. The archival promise that underlies the filmic medium is thus temporally evidenced as opening towards the future and translates as willingness and perceived need to document local, communal, and personal histories that might be neglected by sanctioned cultural discourses. Differently said, the archival logic that pertains to the willingness to create a private repository of images is consequentially transposed into a style of documentation. As such, the documenting style translates as approach, while the archival logic and promise relate to motivation and impulse that underlie the practice. The visual narrations that are presented within this category are termed a mode of documenting and archiving drive. Quite cumbersome as expression, it nevertheless comes to represent the overall connections and relations that underlie the practice and visualizations within the images.

² Ibid., 242.

Furthermore, while the self-inscriptions narrated by the family film were quite clear in terms of their inscription within the culturally codified space of the familial, the narrations in a d&a mode are differentiated in terms of how filmmaking individuals narrate the self and embed self-narrations within larger social, communal, local, and historical formations. Filmmakers that adopt a documenting style also reveal a predominant, if not exclusive, directionality towards the public. They do not exclusively inscribe the self within the private or the familial. The adoption of a documenting style primarily reveals a willingness to produce a filmic language that is universally understandable. They thus create imagery can potentially be viewed beyond the space of the immediate family. They also engage with subject matter that is not related to the private realm of the familial. One significant aspect of the d&a mode adopted is that it is often part of a larger collection that includes family films. This gives important insights into how filmmaking as private practice is never exclusively restricted to the familial. It comes to show how filmmaking as self-expression also relates to inscriptions that extend beyond and engage with the communal and public. A work that focuses exclusively on the family within a complete film collection would ignore important impulses of self-inscriptions effectuated by individuals through the self-expressing means of the filmmaking practice. The visual narration of these films comes to show how filmmakers engaged their lifeworld in a much more versatile manner and how their self-inscriptions extend beyond the focus on family and the private that the family film suggests.

Within the overall style of documentation, I have identified three loose types in terms of subject matter. As stated before, these choices of subject matter are examined in conjunction with the overall style and will be analyzed as visual narration that gives insights into how an individual self-interprets. The types that have been identified are loose categories that are by no means presented as structured by strict parameters. They identify similarly structured subject matters. In order to unravel the complexities that underlie visual narration as self-inscription I will loosely adopt Andreas Reckwitz's conception of subjectforms. These forms are here treated as cultural offers. I will also follow his methodology of analyzing a social practice (in this case filmmaking) in order to identify what subjectforms are taken up by an individual, to what extent they are adopted, and what different interpretations are revealed in terms

of how individuals inscribe themselves, re-allocate, and, even further, the subjectforms that are offered. The conceptualization of subjectforms becomes extremely helpful in that it identifies the cultural offers that are presented to individuals by the social and the communal, but also by historical narratives in the form of cultural memory artifacts and place as affectively charged emplacement. At the same time, as will be stressed again and again in the following, we can imagine the different inflections between self-inscription and cultural offers as pendulum movement. For example, filmmakers might take up a cultural offer for self-inscription that is provided by, say, a text panel in a museum. What is offered here is an institutionally sanctioned historical narrative in which an individual can also emplot the self. At the same time, however, in a metaphorical pendulum movement, individuals also re-appropriate these subjectforms and narratives in their own privately produced visual narration. They might interpret it in a different manner or they might further the cultural narrative as they include it in their private visual archive.

As such, the practice of filmmaking, and more specifically the adoption of a documenting style, will here be elaborated as form of self-inscription and self-narration. The practice is here defined as ‘sozial geregelte, typisierte, toutinisierte oder gewohnheitsmässige Form des körperlichen Verhaltens (einschließlich des *zeichenverwendenden Verhaltens*) und umfasst darin Formen des impliziten Wissens, des *know how*, des Interpretierens, der Motivation und der Emotion.’³ A subject can thus inscribe him/herself in subject forms offered by different domains such as work, consumption, private exchanges, verbal communication, political activism, etc. Most importantly, a subject can inscribe him/herself and take up a multitude of subjectforms. They can also choose to only take up part of a cultural offer provided. The subjectforms that are identified in the following thus constitute abstract and cultural offers for self-inscription. The notion of identities is seen as personal and consequential to the offers provided.

³ ‘socially regulated, standardised, routinized or habitual form of physical behaviour (including *behaviour using symbols*) and includes forms of tacit knowledge, *know how*, interpretation, motivation and emotion.’

Andreas Reckwitz, *Kreativität und soziale Praxis: Studien zur Sozial- und Gesellschaftstheorie*, Sozialtheorie (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016), 72.

It needs to be noted that filming here presents a subjectifying activity. What the films reveal is a process of narration, not the construction of narratives. As such, the films, similar to the process effectuated in the familial, serve as visual base for the later construction of narratives as recollection. Filmmaking is here taken as simultaneously a self-narration and a memorial practice. What is visualized is the process that underlies self-narration. The later purpose relates to the construction of coherent narratives that also serve as recollection. If the subjectforms that are taken up here as cultural offers and the recollective narratives that are constructed coincide and work together in a coherent manner, the film viewing becomes performative. Reckwitz elaborates:

‘Zentral für eine sozialwissenschaftliche und historische Subjektanalyse ist damit, gerade nicht bei den Subjekten zu beginnen, sondern bei einer Rekonstruktion sozialer Praktiken und Praktikenkomplexe. In diesen wird ein *doing subject* betrieben. Sie setzen ihnen entsprechende Subjektformen voraus, adressieren sie und bringen sie-jedenfalls im Idealfall der kompletten Passung und reibungslosen Reproduktion-hervor.’⁴

Without meta-context (verbal narratives in the viewing) the performativity of the films is lost. The frictionless fit that Reckwitz mentions here becomes performativity. These films become a performative means in the film viewing. The visualization in the film comes to illustrate the *process* of such an engagement; the desired *result* or outcome is lost in their transferal to the institutional archive. What we can analyze here through film language, and thus through the manner in which filmmakers choose to narrate themselves, is what subjectforms are engaged with and how they are engaged.

What then are the different types of films identified in terms of their subject matter? A first overall category pertains to subject matter that relates to the filming of public events such as parades, processions, or the filming of local customs and displays.

⁴ ‘A central part of sociological and historic subject analysis is thus to begin not with subjects, but by reconstructing social practices and complexes of practices, therefore pursuing a “doing subject”. This postulates corresponding subject forms for them, addresses them and spawns them – at least in the ideal situation of a complete fit and seamless reproduction.’

Ibid, 73.

Filmmakers here are free to roam the public space but are constricted to the temporal and spatial limits of the event. The significance that is instilled in the event pertains to an inscription of the self in the communal as cultural offer. Filmmakers display a willingness to document the local everyday for future reference. The pendulum movement is thus presented as two-folded inflection: first, filmmakers inscribe the self in larger formations of the communal that extends beyond the private, and concomitantly they also further this engagement by their willingness to serve as record-keepers of local memories. The present of the filmmaking is thus also an activity of autobiographical inscription in the communal, while the future directionality that underlies the archiving impulse is also a private archiving of the communal. Type A films can thus be seen as ‘creative acts of cultural curation by self-appointed keepers of local memories.’⁵

The second category, or Type B, presents two different, if thematically related, subject matters. First, these films present walks that are taken in the capital of Luxembourg, and they follow historical trails. Filmmakers here freely walk the city and include visual markers in the form of statues, recognizable edifices and buildings, and even historical narratives in the form of cultural memory artifacts. These artifacts pertain to text panels in museums, commemorative plaques, or statues. The visual narration so the films will here be identified as an inscription in the communal as extending beyond the local realm. Furthermore, the selectivity underlying the imaged city will be examined as a transmutation of place to emplacement. I will thus analyze how this conversion also serves as emplacement for the self through the private practice of filmmaking, and how the filmmaker furthermore valorizes personal history through an inscription in larger historical narratives. The second kind of subject matter found within Type B films relates to the filming at commemorative sites and memorials. Here filmmakers do not emplace, but rather emplot themselves into larger historical narratives. The inclusion of these memorials also functions in terms of an embedment of culturally sanctioned artifacts into the private autobiographical narration of the filmmaker. The narration that is presented here, however, is more

⁵ Nicholson, Heather Norris. "Cinemas of Catastrophe and Continuity: Mapping Out Twentieth-Century Amateur Practices of International History-Making in Northern England". Laura Rascaroli, Barry Monahan, and Gwenda Young, eds., *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 79.

particularized than in the films shot in the city. What becomes interesting is that these films were shot mostly in the 1950s and 1960s. The viewer can thus assume the filmmaker to have had a particular experience of the wartime years. This experience is embedded and articulated through an inscription in historical narratives that are materialized in the form of cultural memory artifacts. Filmmakers further the cultural memorial narratives offered by institutional discourse and re-appropriate these cultural offers in the private.

The final category identified, Type C, presents a rather differently, or reversely, inflected documentation. The style of documentation is here applied to the private space of the home or the semi-private workspace, either the filmmaker's workspace or that of traditional craftspeople. Filmmakers here use the culturally sanctioned belief of camera as tool of documentation and apply it to the personal. The directionality towards the private reveals how these filmmakers adhere to principles of progression and linearity. They thus engage in a stylistic construction that already reflects the future recollective narratives as stable and meaningful. Furthermore, the style adopted also valorizes and legitimizes personal history, since it is accompanied by the very positivist values that were promised by cultural discourses underlying the birth of the camera. At the same time, these filmmakers adopt a style that allows them to visualize the ideal of progression as success. The visual documentation of progression as forward movement is here also translated as successful self-narration. Rather than inscribing the self in institutional or cultural narratives, these filmmakers adopt a form of filmmaking that they perceive to warrant legitimation and authenticity to their personal history.

What underlies all films identified as d&a mode is a dissolution of a clear divide between public and private space. Overall they contest the notion of the home movie as family film. They extend beyond the private as sole space of meaningful social interaction. What these films display is the multifarious ways in which individuals take up cultural offers of subjectforms, how they narrate the self within the public, how they inscribe and thus also participate in cultural and historical narratives, and how they re-appropriate larger formations of the social, communal, and the historical through the private practice of filmmaking.

Another important aspect that motivates the documentation of the everyday has so far been left out, namely the fact that filmmaking provides a means for the materialization of values, experiences, and inscriptions that are normally defined as immaterial. The relations between self and other, personal and public, autobiographical and socio-cultural, can be materially inscribed in the filmstrip and visually consumed in the viewing. The materialization in a literal inscription upon the filmstrip thus provides a further incentive for individuals to actualize the immateriality of relations, narratives, and cultural offers of subjecthood in material form.

In order to understand why filmmakers choose the style of documentation, I would propose to first identify the archival promise that is presented as adjunct to the camera. I will then proceed to engage more closely with the style of the d&a mode and position the latter in close affinity to early cinema actualités. The characteristics that the d&a mode reveals, adheres to, and adopts demand ‘a rigorous engagement with the itinerary of desire that invested the camera with the potential to reproduce absolute truth in the first place.’⁶ The first part of this chapter thus links the impulse of documentation to the origin of imaging technologies in general and establishes a concrete link to the similar structuring and tendencies that accompanied the emergence of amateur filmmaking as mass movement some fifty years later. The second part will engage concretely with these images and use specific examples to illustrate different self-inscription effectuated. At the same time, these examples also reveal how specific films always also problematize the cultural offer of subjectforms in that self-narrations never fit within homogenous and clear-cut categorizations.

2. Filmmaking as memorial practice

Filmmaking is always a privately positioned memorial practice. It presents a visual fixing of the memorial processes that represent its impulse and execution. We need to immediately introduce a distinction between memorial practice and the practice of

⁶ Scott McQuire, *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 1998), 148.

recollection. Filmmaking as memorial practice represents a visualization of *how* individuals create an archive of visual information for later recollection. Recollection can only be effectuated in the viewing situation and is communicated by the specific group of individuals that use the images as a base for recollection. This process is lost in the transferal of the films from the private space of the home to the public archive. The age-old metaphor of memory as archive, while presenting its own intrinsic difficulties, becomes useful in that it imagines memory as a store or repository for information and constructions of the past that can be resuscitated in later recollection. The archiving impulse that underlies film as storage device is thus already attuned to it as tool for memorial practice.

What generally constitutes memory? Memory is here taken as a system for storage and retrieval of any type of information. It represents: 'Das System zur Aufnahme, zur Aufbewahrung und zum Abruf jeder Art von Informationen (z.B. Daten, Fähigkeiten, Emotionen)'.⁷ Film, taken on a most general level, represents such a system, as a storage of information for later recollective purposes. Furthermore, memorial practices and recollective activities represent a past presencing that becomes purposeful for orientation both in the present and the future. 'Eine Vergegenwärtigung des Vergangenen für eine Orientierung in der Gegenwart und eine Gestaltung der Zukunft, wäre ohne Gedächtnis und Erinnerung nicht möglich.'⁸

To be clear: film has no memory, nor does it produce or create memory. Film is a system for storing memorial content. It presents a visual repository for later recollection *and* it visualizes how a memorial practice is effectuated by an individual. In fact, the medium presents a system of storage for memories, but through its visual narration as opposed to finished narratives, here defined as self-contained communications presenting a coherent beginning, middle, and end. Film visualizes the very process of memory gathering. The memorial practice that is visualized as

⁷ 'The system for recording, storing and retrieving information of all kinds (e.g. data, abilities, emotions).' Christian Gudehus, Ariane Eichenberg, and Harald Welzer, eds., *Gedächtnis Und Erinnerung: Ein Interdisziplinäres Handbuch* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2010), VII.

⁸ 'A visualisation of the past to orient the present and shape the future would not be possible without memory and remembrance.
Ibid.

process in the films takes the form of visual narration. Visual narration is here taken as a concomitance of illustrated motivation (archiving), the style implemented (documentation), and the visual motifs chosen (giving insights into different cultural offers for inscription). The amateur film is thus a system or means of repository for memories and because amateur filmmakers rarely edit, what we are presented with in the image is concomitantly the process of memory generation visualized. This allows us to read *how* individuals engage in a process of memorial practice, since it can be partly read from visual narration.

The amateur film visualizes how an individual narrates the self and how memorial practice forms an inherent part of self-narration. Film comes to represent at once a storage for memorial content used in later recollection *and* a system of transferal. The use of the filmic medium as system of transmission also transforms the memorial content. As such, media: 'Sie sind nicht Abbild der Wirklichkeit sondern sie strukturieren durch ihre spezifischen und unterschiedlichen Repräsentations- und Narrationsverfahren unser Denken, Fühlen und Handeln und somit das Erinnern. So schreibt das jeweilige Gedächtnismedium sich durch seine Form den Gedächtnisinhalten ein.'⁹

The archiving promise that is underwritten within the filmic medium concomitantly offers itself up as near-perfect system for memorial transposal. The process of memorial production or generation is here effectuated by visual narration in the filmic medium. Visual narration pertains to the conjunction of subject matter and style. The main purpose of visual narration is a self-referential formation of notions of identities. Visual narration is not only a narration of the self; it pertains to a notion of the self as inscription in different cultural subjectforms that are available to an individual. As we will see, these subject forms can take manifold forms: the inscription of an individual in the social, an engagement with cultural memory artifacts that allow an inscription of the autobiographical in larger historical formations, and the adoption of a documenting style to the private in an inscription in values of progress and linearity.

⁹ 'They do not reflect reality, but rather provide structure through their specific and varying representation and narration processes of how we think, feel and act, and thus remember. The relevant medium of remembrance therefore registers its remembrance content via its form.'

Ibid, 127.

What an analysis of the visual narrations can show us is how an individual narrates the self. Later, in recollection, narration gives rise to narratives of the self. What we can see in the films are visualizations of the *process* of self-narration. We witness the process of this self-narration, rather than a visualization that could be read in terms of fixed identities. Narration relates to self-interpretation, self-identification, and self-referentiality. These notions are not only crucial to a meaningful construction of self-identity; they are indispensable. As Kenneth J. Gergen so aptly states: 'In this context, it is useful to consider the process of personal memory—one's means of identifying oneself through reports of personal history.'¹⁰ An individual identifies him/herself through stories, and what film as medium visualizes is how the story is told.

Filmmaking as memorial practice will from here on be referred to as communicative actualization. Films do not present communicative memories. These memorial forms are exclusively related to the telling of verbal narratives in a micro-unity, such as the family. Normally, communicative memory is generally deemed to have a lifespan of three generations. It refers to the stories people tell each other in order to construct recollective narratives. It also serves to reinforce narratives in the familial. However, films visualize a communicative means of a memory practice in the private. They capture and fix this communicative means on film. This is why the film's visual narration is here referred to a communicative actualization, since it captures the immateriality of the memorial process through communicative means and materializes it on film. It refers to the visualization of the process and the means used, rather than transposing film as communicative memory. Film has no memory; it visualizes the process involved in memory making. Communicative actualization is here used as description of the move from the immateriality of memory making into the material actualizations in film. Still this materialization on film does not refer to an materializing in terms of making the immateriality of these relationalities tangible. After all, a moving image is not a material object (even if the film reel is). Materialization here refers to a transferal of an experiential immateriality into a filmic image that renders it visible and legible.

¹⁰ Gergen, Kenneth J. "Narrative, Moral Identity, and Historical Consciousness A Social Constructionist Account". Jürgen Straub, ed., *NARRATION, IDENTITY, AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), 111.

Nevertheless, what needs to be noted is that media never neutrally inscribe memorial practices; they also serve as transformers and inscribe the memorial practice they serve: ‘Medien sind allerdings nicht nur als reine Vermittlungssysteme zu betrachten, sondern auch als Transformatoren. Sie bilden und prägen den Inhalt, den sie transportieren, entscheiden mit. Sie sind nicht Abbild der Wirklichkeit sondern sie strukturieren durch ihre spezifischen und unterschiedlichen Repräsentations—und Narrationsverfahren unser Denken, Fühlen und Handeln und somit das Erinnern. So schreibt das jeweilige Gedächtnismedium sich durch seine Form den Gedächtnisinhalten ein.’¹¹

The style and motivation underlying the d&a mode come to illustrate how the filmic medium is used as means for self-inscription, but also how the style is inherently influenced by the capacities of the medium itself. As such, film as archival repository already concomitantly influences the practice of memory making, and its capabilities translate in the style that is adopted and at the same time construed by imaging technologies. Differently put, the emergence and availability of imaging technologies already deeply influenced the shape the memorial process takes. A constant seesaw of mutual influence and motivation underlies the memorial practices effectuated with and captured by imaging technologies. The emergence of memorial practice and content in this shape and form would not have been possible before the introduction of the lightweight camera into the amateur’s world. What is analyzed in the following is how the style of documenting can be seen as inherently emerging out of the archival logic that provided the backdrop of film’s emergence and how amateurs use the camera as self-narration and means in memorial practices. A memorial practice is here defined as the process and system of transferal of memorial content.

¹¹ ‘However, media should not be viewed as pure relay systems, but rather as transformers. They form and shape the content which they transport, they are involved in decisions. They do not reflect reality, but rather provide structure through their specific and varying representation and narration processes of how we think, feel and act, and thus remember. The relevant medium of remembrance therefore registers its remembrance content via its form.

Gudehus, Eichenberg, and Welzer, *Gedächtnis Und Erinnerung*, 127.

While the family film pertains to the same archival logic, the films they produce are closer to snapshot photography. The family only needs snippets to construe verbal recollections and familial narratives in the viewing situation, for the mere fact that most of the audience members were also present at the event that is filmed. This is not so with filmmakers who adopt a d&a style. Most of the time, these filmmakers go out alone. They pick up the camera and venture into public spaces. As such, one of the main motivations of the filmmaker is communicative actualization, i.e. the transferal of immaterial historical, communal, and regional narratives into the materialized form of film. Thus the practice of filmmaking becomes just as important as the films that serve as basis for recollective narratives. While filmmakers adhere to the archival promise that underlies the film, the practice of filming is here conceived as equally significant. Filmmakers materialize the immateriality of their particular living conditions, relationalities between self and other, embedment into the communal or the historical. Film thus also helps materialize the general structuring of their lifeworld. The inscription of relationalities that are lived and perceived as immaterial can be inscribed onto the material filmstrip and thus actualized. This motivation conjoins the archival logic in equal terms with the d&a mode.

3. The Archival Promise

Susan Sontag notes: 'From the start, photographers [...] set themselves the task of recording a disappearing world.'¹² The expression of a documenting and archiving drive underlying these images is admittedly a clumsy one. It is quite cumbersome to begin with. The manner of engagement that is analyzed here, however, is a complex phenomenon of different motivations. The images, their style, and their underlying motivations are the most multifaceted of the three categories identified in this work. The practice of d&a filmmaking represents a practice of documentation. Here amateurs follow the concomitant promise that accompanies filmmaking technologies in the first place, namely a dream of totalizing records of the everyday. First, however, I would like to examine the second term of this bilateral expression, namely the concept of archiving.

¹² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London; New York: Penguin, 2008), 76.

Archiving is a loaded term whose detailed elaboration exceeds the scope of this chapter. In the following, I will come to show how amateur films are by default motivated by an archiving drive. In fact, imaging technologies were born from a climate of frenzied archiving that characterized the 19th century. The archive in the basic sense is the physical repository of stored documents from the past that are deemed potentially significant. In this sense, the archive represents the institutional archive. In the following, however, I will relate to an archiving impulse that underlies film as medium.

Paula Amad sees the archive as layered by four instantiations:

‘as a storehouse for records of historical importance; as a metaphor to describe memory, and by extension film’s unprecedented mnemonic capacities; as a category crucial to determining the production and parameters of history (in this case, both the history of film in general and film’s claim to an alternative historicity); and as an institution and concept theorized by diverse poststructuralist thinkers as a central epistemological technology for the regulation *and* undoing of modern discourse and memory.’¹³

An exhaustive study of the archiving impulse that emerged in the early 19th century exceeds the scope of this chapter. The institutional archive is the *physical manifestation* of an archival logic that suffused the long nineteenth century. In Luxembourg the national archive was established as early as 1840, as the provincial archives are conjoined in a grand-ducal archive. This archive was however geographically dispersed and was housed in different governmental buildings until 1968, when the archive was physically bundled in one repository.¹⁴ The 19th century saw a veritable upsurge in archiving activities that succeeded the 18th century and ‘Denis Diderot’s dream for a totalizing compendium of knowledge.’¹⁵ This totalizing conception of knowledge was joined to a further dream that is intimately linked with chronicling and the writing of history.

¹³ Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn’s Archives de La Planète*, Film & Culture Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 8.

¹⁴ Archives Nationales de Luxembourg, <http://www.anlux.public.lu/fr/nous-connaître/historique.html>. (accessed November 29th 2016)

¹⁵ Amad, *Counter-Archive*, 18.

It presented a promise of an inexhaustible storage of documents that could be organized, ordered, and stabilized. These are the dreams of a positivist historicist reaction against the experiential contingencies of the age of modernity. The next chapter will deal more extensively with the modernist restructuring of living conditions. Here, however, the predominant high-cultural concerns of the 19th century allow us to determine the climate in which imaging technologies emerged. Film illustrates an inherent paradox at the heart of the archival logic. It emerges as tool for the application of and a means to undermining the historicist dream of totalizing knowledge production. The archival logic that suffused the 19th century thus emerged out of the ‘positivist conception of the archive as a source for history based in linear time.’¹⁶

What interests me here is how amateurs in general use the recording capabilities of the camera in line with a positivist emphasis on order, stability, and a perceived infinite capacity for resuscitating the past present in the future. This is the belief system under which amateurs operate. At the same time, as Amad notes, film and its concomitant archival promise also functions as counter-archival in that it undermines exactly those positivist notions of stability it so adamantly promised.

What exactly entails the archival promise that was offered and inhabited the medium of film by default? First of all, film promises the harnessing and storage of time. It captures a view of the everyday in movement for future resuscitation. It allows a belief in the potential to store the past visually and thus inherently offers a tool against finitude and dissolution (forgetting). The archival dream positions the archive as ‘a *space in which time is stored and retrieved*.’¹⁷ This is the very logic that underlies the medium of moving images. Very simply put, as opposed to the photograph, the movement of filmic images translates as the temporal fixation in duration. Not only could a scene be visually fixed, it could be fixed in duration. Film also comes to represent a perceived space where time can be stored and later resuscitated.

¹⁶ Ibid, 22.

¹⁷ Ibid., 17.

At the same time, film's inherent capacity to produce an inexhaustible mass of records also destabilizes the very dream it so potentially fulfilled. In the early days, the filmic medium was not so much linked to artistic creation as it was closely tied to the non-aesthetic and the non-narrative. It was film's inherent capability to capture the everyday that proved its main fascination. Film was able to elevate the everyday from something noticed to something seen. Fernand Léger postulates the inherent fascination for imaging media in 1922:

‘Here it is: 80 percent of the clients and objects that help us to live are only noticed by us in our everyday lives, while 20 percent are seen. From this, I deduce the cinematographic revolution is *to make us see everything that has been merely noticed*. [...] The dog that goes by in the street is only noticed. Projected on the screen, it is seen, so much so that the whole audience reacts as if it discovered the dog.’¹⁸

From the very start, film aligned itself with the non-eventful nature of the everyday. Again, the interest in the everyday is by no means joined to the emergence of film as medium. Rather, film emerges in a climate that saw a rediscovery and re-appropriation of everyday life as object of high cultural interest.

The interest in the everyday emerged from the naturalist movement in literature—for example, the work of Emile Zola in France and Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf in Germany—a Marxist revelation of the commodity as structuring principle, and the Freudian examination of experiential behavior as the language of the unconscious. As Amad postulates:

‘Meanwhile, in the juridico-medical domain, we see the proliferation of vast textual and photographic archives intended for the social disciplining of ordinary individuality. Regardless of the extent to which this everyday was radically new, one thing is certain: by the end of the nineteenth century the seemingly insignificant moments of day-to-day existence (culled from the margins of both material and mental life) had lost their innocence, inconsequentiality, and invisibility forever.’¹⁹

¹⁸ Léger, Fernand. quoted in *ibid.*, 195.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

Film presented the perfect means to visually appropriate the everyday. 'With their capacity to record and disseminate the minute details and rhythms of ordinary perception and daily experience with unparalleled accuracy, economy, and speed, photography and film played a special role in this multifaceted rediscovery and appropriation of everyday life.'²⁰ The camera was perceived as the most apt tool to archive the everyday. It elevated it from the noticed to the seen and concomitantly infused the everyday with a new mysterious quality. It elevated the everyday from an almost unconscious habit to consciously seen. It thus also defamiliarized the everyday in transferring it into visibility. Here, the everyday is not internally lived, but externally perceived. It becomes porous and fragile, recordable but not livable. Archiving the everyday presents a paradox in that the archival storage of the everyday becomes the condition of its impossibility.

Moreover, the camera-eye presents itself as eyewitness and storage unit for the minutest details of everyday life. Its status as eyewitness thus fitted perfectly within a positivist emphasis on objective neutrality and ordering classifications. Positivism is here defined as 'a diffuse set of tendencies related to a belief in rational progress, empirical realism, causal determinism, objective truth, and an overarching faith in applying the model of the natural sciences to understanding human behavior'²¹. As a movement, positivism had been on the defensive since the late 1890s. Its residual tendencies, however, echoed into the 20th century. While positivism's belief in the totalizing incorruptibility of the seen was concomitantly undermined and reinforced by the emergence of imaging technologies, its emphasis on order and certifying rationalism remained attractive in times of upheaval and uncertainty.

Concurrently, the sheer boundlessness of potential record storage and production aligned the camera record with the contingent. Here film becomes counter-archival:

'Film's mechanical-based nature as an automatic, arbitrary, and anonymous record of contingent information on everyday life meant that, in addition to having the potential to be an exhaustive, visual storehouse, it also displayed a tendency, as Kracauer

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 16.

understood, for a level of “endlessness” and “indeterminacy” that unsettled the finite needs of historicist evidence.’²²

This, of course, had important repercussions for positivist historicism’s need for coherence, synthesis, and totalizing evidence. It quite simply revealed the internal contradictions of the archival promise and desire in its alignment with the inexhaustibility of record production in and of the everyday; its affinity with the non-narrative; and its illustration of fragmentation, disorder, and the contingent that always form a concomitant part of the ordering classificatory logic of the archive.

This is the general logic into which amateur filmmaking is born, albeit fifty years later. Amateur filmmaking, if we consider it as genre, never conducted a shift from the non-narrative and non-aesthetic documentation in early cinema to an embedment of cinematic productions into ‘a narrative-based entertainment context.’²³ It never partook in the development from the fascination and archival logic that was implicated in early cinema to the construction of a fictionalized, self-enclosed communicative system that harnessed the inherent contingency of the cinematic through narrative. All amateur film productions, in their very essence, engage the camera as archival means. They film because they want to ‘show it like it was’. They adopt the archival logic in that they produce visual evidence of their everyday. They furthermore display an inherent desire to resuscitate the seen in the future in which it will have become the past. They chronicle their everyday, and these records become ‘a method of rendering the past and of looking back from the future.’²⁴

The archival logic that underlies the amateur film practice as essential motivation thus also affiliates itself with the historicist dream of totalizing evidence in that ‘[p]rivate film equals private history.’²⁵ As we have seen in chapter one, the family chronicle adheres to this principle of ordering stability that inherently lies within the archival promise of imaging technologies. Here the archival promise is afforded and directed

²² Ibid., 21.

²³ Ibid., 22.

²⁴ Forgacs, Péter. "Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies". *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 53.

²⁵ Forgacs, Péter. "Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies". Ibid.

towards the familial, hence the private that becomes a self-enclosed space of meaningful interaction. The films of a documenting and archiving drive display the same adherence to the archival logic, albeit differently inflected. Here, the archival capabilities of the camera are directed towards the communal rather than the private.

We can now further our analysis of this specific mode adopted since we have identified the following: an archival logic structures all filmmaking impulses. In fact, the archival logic is built-in as an inherent medium-specific capacity. What distinguishes this logic in the d&a mode, as opposed to the family film, is the translation of the archival logic into a style of visual documentation. The impulse to adopt a documenting drive positions the potential audience in the communal. Differently put, the style translates as the creation of filmic images that should be understood universally. Here lies the inherent difference between the family chronicle and an adoption of a d&a mode. The documenting style adheres to a production of images that is visually presented as more complete than the fragmentary snippets that the family film provides.

4. Documentation

The documenting and archiving drive here underlies style as filmic language. The style hints at the underlying overall motivation to document a scene and store it in a visual archive, two concepts we will engage in more depth in this chapter since they present inherent distinctions in form and approach. Amateurs here, as this chapter will show, embed themselves as emplaced and emplotted in a larger societal formation. Because they do not exclusively produce in the familial and for the family, the filmic language adopted is clearly demarcated from the point-and-shoot attitude of the family chronicle. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the filmic language of the family chronicle is normatively codified, but also emotionally inflected. Simply put, the mistakes of the family chronicle validate its authenticity and leave visual gaps in which to construe meaningful verbal narratives that are imposed in the viewing situation.

This is not so with the d&a style. Here, the language needs clarity and understandability to transfer images in a universally understandable filmic language. Filmmakers need to visually contextualize the images, since they need to be understood in the communal rather than in the familial. Because amateurs here display a desire to archive a scene that becomes significant on a communal level, they need to make sure that the filmic language is understandable without further explanation. In fact, the filmic language, in a manner of speaking, presupposes the absence of the filmmaker in rendering the image understandable in every viewing context, as revealed by their introduction of intertitles, pamphlets, museum panels, flyers, posters, etc., as well as clear visual contextualization in the image. Again, it needs to be noted that what is examined here is a filmic mode, not a specific group of filmmakers. The d&a mode can be part of a film collection that presents sequences in which the filmmaker adopts the family chronicle mode. Or filmmakers choose to film their entire collection within the d&a mode. Indeed, the filmmaker adopting the d&a mode clearly inscribes him/herself in different subjectforms than that proposed by the familial.

What then constitutes the filmic style that led to the identification of this filmic mode? First of all, in the d&a mode the filmmaker handles the camera differently. The camera in the family chronicle is used predominantly in snapshot mode. The family chronicle style does not display proficiency in terms of media affinity. However, the d&a mode reveals a clear understanding of the filmic medium and, even more importantly, its limitations. Here the eye becomes a cinematic eye. Filmmakers reveal a clear understanding of the spatiality that is restricted by the filmic frame. Their 'eye' is a cinematic one in that they understand processes of image production. As such, these filmmakers remain mindful of the difference between a recorded image and everyday perception while they are filming. They take media-related limitations into account. The d&a films present imagery that is clearly infused with an understanding of cinematic devices such as camera position and framing, camera movement, and scope of image. The understanding of cinematic devices and filmic mannerisms serve several goals that underlies all d&a productions, namely, to be as informative, illustrative, and visually comprehensible as possible.

In the following I will identify the stylistic features that make up the d&a mode. These features have been identified through their reoccurrence in the images that have sedimented into a pattern of filmic behaviour. The formal characteristics that are described forthwith identify as behavioral patterns rather than qualify as a rigid set of visual parameters.

The d&a mode favors open and informative shots. Here filmmakers are partial to long shots and medium shots over close-ups. The long and medium shots provide more filmic space and come to cover an optimized view on the surroundings. If close-ups are included, they are preceded or succeeded by an establishing shot in the form of a long or medium shot. The introduction of contextualizing or establishing shots is a reoccurring feature. Long shots are followed by medium shots taken from the same position. They thus establish an eye-line match that renders the image clearly understandable for the viewer. The filmmaker follows a logic of visual sequencing.

Again, seeing as the d&a style presents a mode, the filmic focus can be directed towards the family, even though such an approach is rare. As such, d&a filmmakers are not as 'zoom-obsessed' as the family chronicler. If they focus on the family, they still adhere to principles of visual understandability. Erratic zooming and panning in order to frame children is avoided. Their zooms and pans, if used, are taken slowly and deliberately. If they decide to get closer to a view, they often zoom in while the camera is turned off. This manoeuver then results in a cut from long to medium take. The filmmaker thus uses these means as an editing device within the camera. For example, in the family chronicle shot at the fairground, filmmakers will try to follow the child on the carousel in an uninterrupted sequence with a zoom. The images are consequentially chaotic, erratic, and often indiscernible. Not so with the d&a filmmaker. They will film the child on the carousel in a medium shot, wait until the child has passed through the frame, stop filming, and resume again once the child passes back into frame. This operation clearly reveals a medium-specific understanding on the part of the producer. The camera is handled with the later film image in mind.

Additionally, the filmmaker is careful to create wide shots rather than adopt narrow framing. This again ties in with a motivation that displays an interest in the capturing

of a lifeworld rather than an exclusive focus on the activity of children. For example, at the fairground, a film shot in d&a mode would include a medium shot of the carousel, ideally with an inclusive shot of the sign displaying the name of the ride, rather than solely focus on the child in the carriage.

A further stylistic specificity underlies the d&a style, namely its unique favoring of aslant or diagonal filming positions or angles. Again, this favoring displays a desire to provide as much visual information as possible and a stock of comprehensible imagery. A diagonal position allows for the filming of an object in all its length complete with vanishing point as well as providing a broader filmic space to display visual information. For example, at the fairground, the size and angle of a roller coaster presents filmic challenges that are here solved by adopting an oblique angle from which to position the camera.

The images composed in a d&a style thus emphasize expansive background over narrow focus. The filmmaker also searches for the optimum point from which to position the camera. He/she often choses a higher vantage point in order to best encapsulate the desired motif and its surroundings. This preference of presenting visuals from a higher vantage point can, for example, be observed in films shot at the market on Place Guillaume II—a very popular motive. Here, most of the images are taken from the slightly higher vantage point on the stairs of the town hall. Another favored use of elevated or high structures is in their capacity as landmarks. For example, the ‘Gëlle Fra’, a popular memorial, serves as a visual marker or orientation point that spatially maps the city. Here the filmmakers demarcate and visually organize the space by their deliberate positioning of the camera. At the fairground, such spatial demarcation would be presented by a sequence filmed at the very top of the Ferris wheel. Here filmmakers not only capture the fairground in a panoramic view, they also visually position the fair within the city. The filmmaker resists the sensual overflow and onslaught of the fairground in clearly placing it in an urban context: the fair as spatially and visually demarcated within the parameters of the city. The high vantage point also reveals the original purpose of the ‘place Glacis’ where the annual Schobermesse takes place. Filmed from above, the lines of parking spaces can be seen between thrill rides, food booths and fairground visitors, thus visually

revealing the temporal limits of the fairground that takes place for three weeks each year, while the rest the location serves as parking space.

The d&a filmmaking mode is not an adventurous or experimental mode. When filmmakers adopt this mode, they prefer conservative visuals: simple, well executed shots that provide as much visual information as possible. They prefer filming during the day, seeing as it provides the ideal lighting conditions for the mostly super 8 or 8mm material: the brighter the day, the more discernible the image. While, in the family film, the preference for sunshine also ties in with certain ideological implications of the familial in a mythical construction of a past that is always sunny (happy), in the d&a style the sunny weather seems to be linked more to filmic reasons than ideological ones. The d&a filmmaker will film an event in bad weather only if the former outdoes the latter in importance. Throughout the corpus, only one of the films is shot in rainy weather, namely a film depicting a professional bicycle race. Due to the annually singular occurrence of the event, the filmmaker presumably deemed the event worthy of documentation *in spite* of the weather. Maximum visibility remains one of the highest values of the d&a mode.

Equally, the filmmaker will favor center-framing rather than experimental or skewed angles. The inclusion of diagonal angles here does not represent an experimental motivation, but is clearly restricted to the best filmic vantage point. Usually, the filmmaker will prefer to 'stage' the object of his/her interest in center frame and quite often pays attention to include the object in its entirety. People do feature in films structured by this drive, however, mostly in the form of crowds. While some also adopt the documenting and archiving drive on family outings and thus by default, so to speak, include some images of the latter, on the whole the images promote anonymous crowds rather than familiar people. The crowd here becomes part of the event or, very simply put, a world to be documented.

Certain characteristics distinguish the d&a filmmaker: an orderly spirit infusing the image and the handling of the camera; the patience to wait for an ideal shot while also taking the time to pan and zoom; the understanding of medium-specific characteristics and their limits; and the consciously construed clarity of the image. As will be shown in greater detail later on, films structured by this specific visual drive present a wealth

of visual information and use several different procedures to ‘name’ and identify events. Simply put, they contextualize their views within the image. As such, signs, landmarks, maps, museum panels, posters, flyers, brochures, and ultimately hand-made intertitles are used to elucidate the event depicted.

The fair again serves as prime example of this willingness to contextualize an event, here a visit to the fairground. Filmmakers adhering to a documenting visual style often include the gate of the fairground as an entry point to the event and as framing device of the outing. As the design of the gate changes every few years, it can also serve to set a temporal frame. At the same time, the gate identifies the Schobermesse and differentiates it from, say, a village or county fair. A rudimentary visual sequencing is effectuated in that, for example, people are filmed getting on a ride, enjoying a ride, and getting off a ride. Even if such simple construction of visual sequencing is not the norm, it nevertheless pertains to the well-ordered and systematic nature underlying films produced by a d&a drive.

Filmmakers adopting a d&a drive thus visualize events, visits, and locations that they deem significant on a larger communal level. It is thus that they choose to expand their filmic focus. In fact, the filmic interest presents itself as diffused and general. Simply put, filmmakers adopt a filmic mode that is interested in capturing all aspects of their intended focus. Again, at the fairground, filmmakers will not exclusively frame the fair as backdrop to a family visit. All aspects of the fairground are concisely captured. Foreground and background are treated as visual equals. In fact, the filmic view is here presented as grazing gaze, rather than focused look. At the fairground, the filmmaker will incorporate the crowd, the fairground attractions, the food booths, and the different stalls displaying their goods. Here filmmakers display a willingness to capture the fair in its entirety. They seek to provide a totalizing compendium of all the aspects that make up the event. They also do not greatly hierarchize the filmic focus. In fact, the imagery documents all aspects of an event in order to provide a clear and understandable documentation that will be understood later on by any viewer.

What can we gain from an examination of this filmic mode of engagement? Through the filmic language adopted here we can come to initial observations. Firstly,

filmmakers do not solely produce for the family. In fact, the family chronicle, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, does neither need nor want imagery that contextualizes the seen and presents a style of understandability. The family film will provide the particularizing contextualization through verbal narratives imposed in the viewing situation. The d&a style includes contextualization in the filmic style that is produced in a desire to create a universal visual language understood by any one viewer.

Films produced in the family chronicle mode present moving snapshots. This is their primary function in terms of instrumentality and visual template. Most of the time, the family chronicle mode does not display a medium affinity for film. The d&a mode, however, reveals a clear understanding for moving image production. Because filmmakers so clearly display a willingness to visually contextualize, to render their filmic language universally understandable, and to capture an event in its entirety, the mode translates as a production of visual evidence. The mode conveys a motivation to document. Consequentially, because their images mostly pertain to a filming in the public space (one exception will be evaluated later) they furthermore exhibit a desire to document the communal.

As we have seen, all film production adheres to the archival promise. D&a-produced images, however, more so than the family chronicle, reveal a willingness to produce a store of visual evidence that is deemed significant on a national level. Their filmic style adheres to the positivist dream of totalizing visual records and the imposition of order, control, and objective neutrality. In a manner of speaking, the archival desire that underlies all film production is here actualized and concretized as deliberate willingness to produce a store of images that is deemed significant on a macro-level of societal formations. The d&a mode translates as mode of documentation rather than a narrow focus on private interest. Because d&a films display a willingness to produce a filmic record in public, they concomitantly reveal their affinity with the positivist conception of an archival dream as total repository. In the following I will briefly further the examination of the archival logic that is here inherently linked to certain beliefs, values, and assumptions that underlie the capacities of the camera as recording device.

4.1. The camera as eyewitness

The archival impulse that lay within the emergence of filmmaking technologies brought with it a positivist remnant of a dream of order, homogeneity, and objective neutrality. This was the backdrop into which the camera was introduced. This positivist dream was presented as promise if not actuality. It came with the camera, so to speak. Inherent within the archival promise lies the manner in which the camera's capabilities were perceived, namely as documenting device. The belief in the archival logic of the camera stems from its inherent promise of indexicality. Mary Ann Doane establishes the inseparability of the archival promise and the believed indexical fidelity of imaging technologies in the following: 'This archival desire is intimately linked to the technological assurance of indexicality. The fidelity of the image to its referent was no longer dependent upon the skill or honesty of a particular artist. The imprint of the real was automatically guaranteed by the known capability of the machine.'²⁶ The archival promise and the known capabilities of this new machine as objective vision go hand in hand. They cannot be treated as distinct.

The underlying motivation and the belief in the recording neutrality of the camera consequentially led to early cinema's fascination of documenting the everyday. The very first films produced by the brothers Lumière attest to this desire and style of documentation. The early *actualités*, short films that either showed everyday scenes like the feeding of a baby or the arrival of a train at the station, in fact constituted imagery that we later on find in home movies. Amateur filmmaking operates in close affinity to early cinema *actualités* that formed the prenatal basis for documentary filmmaking, even if they are situated in different periods. The archival promise emerges conjointly with the perceived belief in the indexicality of the recording machine. Because the indexicality of imaging technologies promised a neutral recording of a scene it was soon employed in the service of documentation. It represents the first commission that was posed to the camera. The camera was initially not intended for artistic creation. It was perceived as a scientific and archiving tool that promised visual support and evidence production for documenting the everyday. As we have seen with the archival logic that underlies the camera, the

²⁶ Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 22.

archival dream also subjected the everyday to a new scrutiny. The camera was recruited in service of a newly emergent, frenzied interest in the everyday, the unconscious workings of the mind, and the positivist desire for objective linearity. It was thus introduced as a tool for the production of visual evidence that could then be classified and ordered in a visual archive. Archive here pertains to the notion of a general store of image-production in the world, not to an institutional site.

To sum up, archival logic positioned the camera as means for documentation. The documentation of the world was guaranteed and stabilized by the recording capabilities, and the consequential belief in the indexicality of the camera followed. The archival promise underlies all image production and was furthered by the capability of the camera to produce moving images and to store time in the visual. The archival logic was actualized in the style of documentation. This constitutes what I have termed the documenting and archiving mode. Documenting and archiving represent two sides of the same coin. They emerge with and set the scene for the introduction of the camera in the everyday. The archiving logic incites and valorizes documentation as filmic engagement.

4.2. The forefather of the d&a drive: actualités

Early cinema's emphasis on the actualité and its concomitant desire to archive the present stems from a deep-seated insecurity in which '[i]t is not only the past which seems "lost" and in dire need of reconstitution, but the present as well, a present that is the victim of rationalization and estrangement.'²⁷ Amateur films adopting a d&a mode visualize the inherent belief and desire that structures moving images in its nascence in that, as Bill Nichols observes, 'since 1895 the capacity of cinema to record visible phenomena with great fidelity'²⁸ proved the main incentive for the production of images in the first place. The forefather of the d&a mode is the actualité. The d&a image follows in the Lumière's footsteps, as 'Louis Lumière's first

²⁷ Ibid., 221.

²⁸ Bill Nichols, "Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde". *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 586.

films of 1895 demonstrated film's capacity to *document* the world around us.²⁹ The belief in the indexical capabilities of the camera also revealed its concomitant love for the surface of things and 'its uncanny ability to capture life as it is.'³⁰ At the same time, it adopts the positivist formulation of standardization in that it transfers the everyday and the communal locality into an 'immense catalog of people, places, and things.'³¹ The present could thus be documented and thus fixed in an awareness in its immanent change in status as future past. The camera in its early instances was born as tool for documentation. The moving image promised a faithful representation of the profilmic. Recording translated as documentation in the *actualité* rather than the creative imaginary related by, say, a Georges Méliès film a few years later.

4.3. The positivist dream

The emergence of the camera into a newly emergent interest in the everyday as object of scrutiny lends it a status of evidence production. The camera did not emerge in a socio-cultural vacuum. A positivist inspired dream of total record production quickly recruited the camera. It came to guarantee the generation of incorruptible visual evidence. Amateur filmmakers adopting a d&a drive thus engage with and further a filmic impulse that finds its origin in early cinema *actualités* in that both use the camera as documenting device. This translates in the style that underlies the d&a mode. Its open and informative shots, its willingness to contextualize within the image, and, as we will see later on, its engagement with public events all trace back to the camera's first function, namely the documenting of the everyday and the production of stable and visual evidence that functions in accordance to positivist ideals of homogeneity. Amateurs do not engage with positivism as historicist movement. The tendencies and impulses that underlie the practice of documentation present isomorphic functions to those related by a positivist belief system.

As such, the indexical promise of the camera as recording machine lends itself to an archival desire was also born out of a positivist dream of order, stability, and

²⁹ Ibid., 581. My emphasis

³⁰ Ibid., 583.

³¹ Ibid.

neutrality. The camera was perceived ‘as the guarantee of the representability of the manifold contingencies that seem to specify modernity.’³² The inherent capabilities of representability also translate as positivist desire of ordering classification. This is the purported context in which amateur films must be situated. They buy into the inherent capabilities of the camera to serve as faithful eyewitness to the everyday. Faced with the inherent contingencies of an increasingly rationalized lifeworld, as will be elaborated in the next chapter, the camera was sold as tool to counteract contingency with order. Amateur films that use the camera as documenting tool ‘helped to validate aspects of local experience at a time when more and more aspects of life were being shaped by events, processes and individuals elsewhere.’³³ The validation that underlies not only the viewing of amateur imagery, but also the production thereof, validated local life and the everyday by a transferal into representability. This again inherently ties in with a positivist belief in ‘the old matrix of ‘seeing is believing’’,³⁴ as the rendition of everyday life in the local and communal became visible and thus re-constituted its own valorizing truth. This is the status of the camera as eyewitness.

In contrast to the family film, the d&a mode is not content with the production of visual fragments used to valorize a familially constructed meta-narrative. The open shots and their emphasis on visibility translate as willingness to document the visual phenomenon in toto (as far as possible). Documentation is not exclusively valorized by verbal narrative but comes to be authenticated by the universal language underlying its imagery. Amateurs here emulate the beliefs and principles of objective neutrality that serve as main condition of positivist foundations. Why then did amateurs emulate the beliefs and manners of engagement that characterized early cinema actualités? Especially since individuals were already well honed in fictionalized cinematic productions and a cinema of narrative inclusion? As we will see in the next chapter, the initial fascination for moving images soon disappeared as people became habituated to seeing them. Two levels structure the affinity between early actualités and amateur films adopting a d&a mode: a sort of myth of origin that conjoins the birth of amateur filmmaking to the very origin of cinema. Second, the

³² Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 16.

³³ Heather Norris Nicholson. "Picturing the Past: Archival Film and Historical Landscape Change". *Landscapes* 3, no. 1 (April 2002): 83, doi:10.1179/lan.2002.3.1.81.

³⁴ McQuire, *Visions of Modernity*, 135.

atmosphere that was conveyed by the socio-cultural and historical backdrop that accompanied the origin of amateur filmmaking on a mass mobilized level.

What needs to be remembered is that while lightweight film cameras were introduced before the Second World War, they were mostly used by the upper classes. Amateur filmmaking emerged on a mass level in the early 1950s, after the introduction of imaging technologies that became affordable for the middle classes. If we think about amateur filmmaking as a movement, we can say that its birth lay in the postwar years. Thus it comes as no surprise that the birth of amateur cinema mirrored the birth of cinema in general. The fascination and archival promise, as well as the belief in the indexicality of the camera as recording device, conjointly accompanied the birth of amateur cinema in general.

Similar to the tendencies that structured the form of *actualité*, the birth of amateur filmmaking on a mass level found its validation in the same beliefs underlying the camera as tool or representation. While by the 1950s cinematic audiences had become sophisticated, they were not habituated to being image producers. The 1950s mass mobilized filmmaking in the private. The camera technology could now be directed towards the private and local lifeworld. While the appeal or novelty of *actualités* was more or less lost as initial attraction that would bring a film audience to the theater, once amateurs could use the camera as tool for documenting their own world and situated positionality, the initial fascination of the *actualité* resurfaced in the private. This renders the affinity of amateur filmmaking with the promise and dream of the *actualité* less surprising, even if more than fifty years lie between the birth of the camera and the introduction of imaging technologies in the private. In fact, the private practice of amateur filmmaking emulates the very birth of cinema itself in terms of its fascinations, capabilities, and desires that underlie the recording of moving images.

While the positivist beliefs in homogeneity, record-ability, and order was undermined by the inherently filmic capability to produce endless records, these beliefs resurfaced with the birth of the amateur film movement. We need to take the backdrop of this origin into account. The heyday of positivism stems from ideas of rationalization that emerged in the Enlightenment period. It was later fuelled by a new urgency in an age of modernist restructurations. While the next chapter will deal more extensively with

notions of restructuration, especially the restructuration of perception and general living conditions, what interests me here is the period of upheaval that infused the positivist ideals with a new intensity. The wish for objective neutrality that could be expressed and transposed by representability, the desire for order and stability and thus a meaningful narrative of linearity, and the wish for a homogenously lived objective time of course emerged against the backdrop of an age that refused its subjects exactly these ideals.

As we will see in the next chapter, the fascination that underlies image production in general can be identified as structured by modernist impetuses. The positivist emphasis on order and stability emerged as reactionary stance to lived restructurations. In the 1950s, modern restructurations were no longer perceived as trenchant to experiential conditions. Still, the ideals resurfaced against a background of historical and socio-cultural upheaval that preceded the decade. As Heather Norris Nicholson states: ‘Amateur film, and its video and digital successors, evolved against decades that witnessed total war, prospects of annihilation and the powerful role of human agency in creating landscapes of dereliction and ruin.’³⁵ It comes as no surprise that amateurs resuscitated positivist beliefs that first accompanied the birth of the camera in their own imaging practice. The introduction of the camera in the private was thus accompanied by the same ideals that escorted the very myth of origin of the cinema.

As we have seen in chapter one, the family film transposed order and stability as meaningful interaction in the privacy of the familial. The d&a mode comes to illustrate a social practice that produced different offers of subjectforms. What combines all different approaches of visual narrations that are produced in a d&a mode is a blurring of the public-private divide. While the emergence of the ideology of familialism in the postwar period relegated significance to an enclosed space of the familial, the d&a mode opens that divide. Both underline stability and order as high principles of meaning making, even if differently inflected. Here, amateurs engage with larger societal, cultural, communal, and historical formations. They inscribe different notions of the self. They construct subject forms in the public and thus use

³⁵ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 243.

the camera as means of inscription that allows them a partial re-appropriation of the public in the private. Even though amateur filmmaking is always a private practice, this does not prevent an engagement with the public as space for meaningful inscription.

For a long time the inscription of the autobiographical in the historical and communal that became an actualized possibility with the introduction of the recording machine of the camera into the private has been neglected. Too often the amateur film has been restricted to its use and codification in the family film or home movie. However, as Heather Norris Nicholson postulates:

‘The amateur documentary and news-gathering imperative was very strong and spanned many decades. It linked different media practices as it negotiated its own role in people’s mid-century understandings of the everyday and adjusted to changing cine opportunities. As one strand within a rapidly evolving twentieth-century media landscape, recreational cine use was itself generating material that, from the outset, had historical significance. Some filmmakers were clearly aware of the visual history-making capacities of their hobby, as seen by those opportunists who chronicled familiar and more unexpected moments in local life.’³⁶

Let me be clear: amateurs do not produce historical documents. Their lack of narrative structures prevents such a conceptualization. Neither are they produced from an institutional site, as they are firmly situated in the private. However, imaging technologies were used in the service of a new historical consciousness. In fact, the introduction of a camera into the private initiated a new sense of historical positionality. What the d&a style reveals is ‘[a]mateur film’s evocation of ordinariness and everyday lives [that] has a recognizable immediacy rooted in contemporary witness and the compelling process of “being there.”’³⁷ This ‘being there’ becomes an awareness of being in history.

³⁶ Ibid., 72.

³⁷ Nicholson, Heather Norris. "Cinemas of Catastrophe and Continuity: Mapping Out Twentieth-Century Amateur Practices of International History-Making in Northern England". Rascaroli, Monahan, and Young, *Amateur Filmmaking*, 78.

Through the private practice of filmmaking, amateurs use the opportunity to inscribe the autobiographical in larger societal formations of which historical situatedness forms one particular aspect. Here the documenting capabilities of the camera were coupled with a new awareness of being able to produce visual history. The documentation of the local and communal lifeworld afforded a new sense of being able to produce visual evidence and, if we take this further, the construction of a visual archive in the private. Adopting a d&a style, amateurs display a clear desire to produce a visual and visible archive not only of their everyday private lives, but also in the embedment of their own existence within larger societal formations. They furthermore clearly adhere to the affinity between the archival desire and the practice of history writing.

Here we need to tread carefully, but the implication is that amateurs align with an impulse to inscribe themselves and their everyday lives in larger formations that extend beyond the private. Let us again note Amad's third instantiation of the archive as logic, namely 'as a category crucial to determining the production and parameters of history (in this case, both the history of film in general and film's claim to an alternative historicity)'.³⁸ Amateurs do not self-reflectively produce historical records. What they do, however, is display a self-reflexive positioning in a historical here and now. They display a historical consciousness that is divulged through the filmic language they adopt. As Vivian Sobchack so aptly elaborates on the self-reflexive stance that is adopted by people in the everyday: 'That is, people seem to carry themselves with a certain reflexive phenomenological comportment toward their "immediate" immersion in the present, self-consciously grasping their own objective posture with an eye to its imminent future possibilities for representation (and commodification) as the historical past.'³⁹ The temporal inflection here also translates as primary motif for image production, namely the opening of the visual archive towards the future.

³⁸ Amad, *Counter-Archive*, 8.

³⁹ Sobchack, Vivian Carol, *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*, AFI Film Readers (New York: Routledge, 1996), 4.

4.4. Visual Narration as Self-Narration

The style of documentation and the impulse of archiving reveal important insights into how people visually narrate themselves and their place of situated knowledge production. Amateurs do not construct narratives so much as offer a visualization of how they narrate. *Amateur films offer communicative actualizations of the process of narration.* These processes of narration present themselves as more complex than an exclusive inscription of the self in the familial. They offer visualized communications of how individuals embed themselves in the public from a private point of view. They are also structured by an awareness of these films as significant on a regional, local, and communal level. Finally, they also come to actualize notions of temporal synthesis. In the following I will analyze the different types that have been established above in terms of their visualizations of emplacement and emplotment of the self. Amateurs do not construct historical narratives, but their films provide visual actualizations of how they are also inevitably placed in and engage with history as lived and emplaced. Furthermore, the d&a mode comes to visualize an awareness of the sociality of all situated knowledge production. The visual narration emulates principles that are linked to desires of order and stability. They present communicative actualizations of how individuals archive the past from a present position. What we can gain from the films is not a recollection of the past, but a communicative actualization of how people narrate the past through the recording device of the camera. Simply put: what amateur films in the d&a mode reveal is a communicative actualization of how people narrate. What they do not offer is a historical narrative construction. An amateur film is always a visualized engagement with a lifeworld and its language shows how people also narrate, i.e. inscribe themselves in the world.

In the following I will relate to the different types of visualizations within the films in terms of emplotment and emplacement. Identity formation as self-narrations also always partially appropriates cultural subjectforms that are posed to the individual. In a first instance, type A motifs represent the taking up of proposed subjectforms in the social and a re-appropriation of public and communal spaces. Type B motifs visualize an appropriation of subjectforms that allow for an engagement with historical narratives through the visualization of cultural memory artifacts. Type C motifs

represent an inverted movement in adopting the documenting style as valorizing narration to the private. D&a films thus visualized (communicatively actualize) how proposed cultural subjectforms are appropriated in the service of identity self-interpretation.

5. Films of a documenting and archiving drive—A Typology

Within the stylistic parameters of the d&a drive and its visuals, three more distinctions can be established in terms of recurring content. I will henceforth describe three different thematic subcategories that are all governed by the d&a drive. This means that the overall style or visual behaviour that is here termed d&a style is again internally differentiated by the subject matter filmmakers choose. I will treat these subcategories as types within the overall style governed by the impulses established above.

The archival logic that underlies the overall practice of amateur filmmaking relates to the desire to establish a visual store of *images*. The style that has been identified as documentation then pertains to the *practice of image production*. The drives that underlie both image and practice determine the overall filmic language adopted. As we have seen, Reckwitz postulates an analysis of social practices in order to identify different subjectforms that are presented as cultural offers for self-interpretation and identification. What is not said here is that the d&a style represents a homogenous practice from which we can identify a general subjectform. Such a form does not exist and would certainly not be homogeneously livable. Within the d&a style different inflections and desires postulate different affirmations and engagement with proposed offers of subjectforms, and these will be examined forthwith. The different subjectforms an individual adopts conjointly sum up how a subject self-interprets him/herself. They make up fluctuating and always changing adoptions of identities. In the following I will evaluate self-interpretation through the visual nexus of narration. I will analyze how, through different filmic approaches and a choice of subject matter, an individual narrates him/herself differently and how such an analysis can give insights into the cultural subjectforms that are taken up and engaged with. I have

identified three different forms of subject matter. The overall style remains the same, but the subject matters give different implications of how an individual narrates him/herself.

5.1. Type A: Narrating the self in sociality

In the following I adopt a structure in which I first identify the different subject matters bundled within the typology identified. Later I examine in more depth how these choices in terms of subject matter always also stand for notions of self-inscription in larger socio-cultural formations.

5.1.1. Parades, processions, public displays

The first type of visual content represents a category of 'semi-official' events frequented by the private filmmaker. For example, processions of any kind prove popular opportunities for shooting. Most of the processions are of a religious nature. It should be noted that sometimes processions are also shot in the filmic style of the family chronicle if children take part. The official beginning of the Holy Communion ceremony, for example, is often initiated by a procession to church, complete with children and brass band. The filmmaker often focuses on his/her child. Here, an alternation between familial and d&a style can be observed: if children are present in the procession, the style coincides with the filmic mode typically associated with the family chronicle. Once the children have passed out of frame or are not featured at all, however, most of the footage on processions is presented in the typical d&a style. The filmmakers attempt to include as much information as possible in the frame. They choose elevated positions from which to shoot if at all possible, since the a procession proves difficult to film in its entirety. In a similar vein, the filmmakers will choose long or medium shots and preferably shoot from a diagonal positioning, since a frontal view would severely limit their view.

Other religious processions recorded are the many processions honoring the Virgin Mary (patron saint of Luxembourg), in which children are often dressed as angels and accompany the statue of the Virgin Mary and the priest through the village or town.

Parades present a further and similarly popular motive for the d&a filmmaker. Parades either present a historical theme (with medieval parades being all the rage, especially in the 1970s); a local thematic thread, such as a viticulturally themed parade that fits local customs; or a seasonal event, such as the St. Nicholas parade in December or the carnival parade in February. The latter proves a loosely organized affair, often chaotic and not as structured as other parades, especially since children are involved.

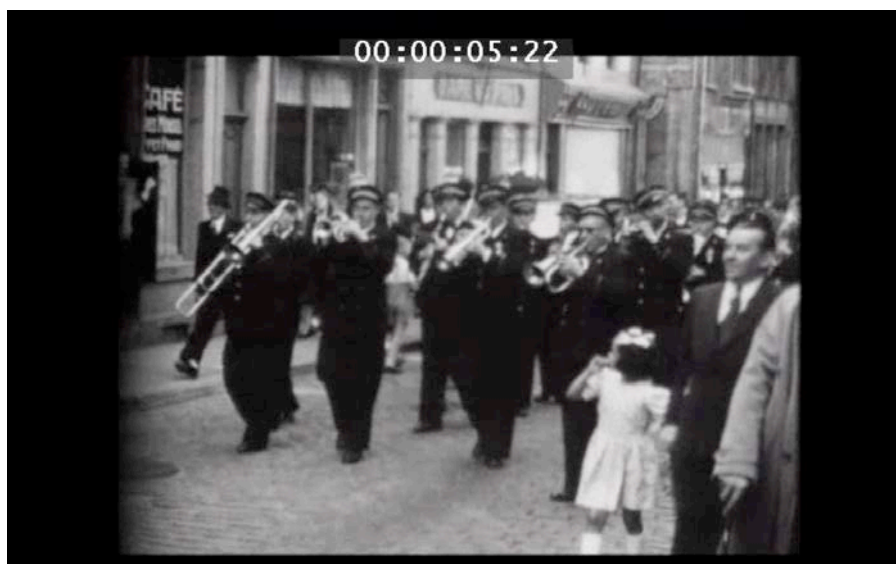
W.B.⁴⁰ films the highly popular parade of the ‘Hämmelsmarsch’ that represents the opening of the fair in Luxembourg. County fairs take place on different dates, each specific to their local village or town. The Hämmelsmarsch always rings in the first day of the fair. This loose parade presents a custom that originated in a display of the price ram that could be won at the shooting booth later on. D&a filmmakers favor the Hämmelsmarsch as motif since it allows them to set the scene for the fairground visit. Every Luxembourger will know this parade and its leading up to the event of the fair. The filming of this parade thus already presents a visual and temporal contextualization. W.B. films from one position in a steady medium long shot. He has taken up a position that allows him to film the street from a slightly diagonal angle. The framing is open, concise, and neat. He starts with an establishing shot in which men drive the rams through the street. They are dressed in the traditional garments of Luxembourgian farmers. These garments are only donned for the parade. Luxembourgian farmers do not wear the dark blue shard and red and white neck cloth in the everyday.

⁴⁰ AV034525 / IA_AMA000350, 9,5 mm, black and white, mute, no date

Figure 1



The next sequence shows the brass band that traditionally accompanies the Hämmelsmarch and the people that run alongside the parade. Again, the framing is open and universally understandable. He does not zoom in or try to select one specific person in the frame. He lets the brass band pass in the frame.



After the parade with the rams has passed, and the brass band has left the frame, he films the aftermath of the crowd in the street. The atmosphere is one of celebratory joyfulness, and children are running around. People have congregated in smaller groups and are talking.



In the next sequence he has changed position. He has moved further along the street to again capture parade and brass band in medium long shots. The images here present an almost one-to-one rendition of the first images. He then proceeds to focus on the individual members of the brass band that are collecting small donations for the fund of the brass band from the people.



He does not zoom in, but keeps the member of the brass band in center frame and medium long shot. He visually centers the man with the collection box within the general setting. Towards the end of the sequence, he concentrates on the rams, crowd, and members of the brass band and creates a filmic portrait. The parade has ended and they pose for the camera.



While the camera setting remains unaltered (medium long shot), he slowly pans to the left to include the rest of the crowd and brass band. A final short sequence focuses on the rams and their shepherd, who has trouble keeping them in check as they try to eat the stray leaves in the street. The next sequence is taken at the fair, and he documents his visit in a clear and concise manner.

The parade or procession provides the perfect occasion for filmmaking: it already presents a structured organization, a linear spatiality, and is conducted within temporal and spatial limits. The filmmaker also has sufficient time to film the different floats, members of the procession or parade, and the general developmental logic of the event. It remains to be noted, that the parade is as such not dependent on weather as the relevance of the event often surpasses suitable weather conditions (it might drizzle, but it never pours).

Markets and fairs provide other opportunities to make filmic records that are identified as type A. As mentioned, the market on the Place Guillaume II features prominently in the filmic records of a d&a drive, and the visuals are mostly taken from an elevated vantage point on the stairs in front of the town hall. At the market, the various goods and services are documented in surprising duration and detail considering the economic value of film material. Transactions, the exchange of money and goods, are another popular visual theme found in these records, as the

purpose of the market is visually expressed in the transaction between buyer and seller. Again, as in the family chronicle, the market is mostly filmed in sunny weather. This could pertain to the fact that the market is a weekly occurrence and the time of filming can thus be freely chosen.

G.W.⁴¹ films a typical market day in Luxembourg City. Not only does he clearly contextualize the setting of the market that takes place on place Guillaume II, called Knuedler colloquially, by framing the two brass lions that flank the doors to the town house that is situated on the edge of the square, he visually launches the filmic rendition of the event by the introduction of an establishing title.

Figure 2



These titles are produced with the camera, not retrospectively introduced within the film. As numerous filmmakers do, he has used the little plastic letters children often use to learn the alphabet to write out ‘on the market’ on a leather background. From the very start, the viewer knows what is to follow without having to be verbally told in the viewing situation. The next title names the filmmaker, it writes out ‘a film by G.W.’ He not only identifies the event but also signs his film by name. Again, we witness a willingness to address a potential viewer that might not know him. The very

⁴¹ AV035667 / IA_AMA001916, 8mm, color, mute, 1962; 1968

first shot of the market is taken from the elevated position of the stairs in front of the town hall. On place Guillaume II, this is by far the most advantageous position from which to film.



He films the market from a few different angles and then moves downwards to frame the different vendors and their produce.



He focuses on the different stalls, but also on the people that wander across the market in a leisurely pace. He keeps the camera running in a medium shot. Most of the people are women with baskets come to do their weekly shopping at the market.



He also focuses on visual markers that clearly identify the location within the city, such as the statue of the Renert, a fox from a local fairy tale, the equestrian statue of Grand Duke William the second, and the abovementioned brass lions that flank the stairs of the town hall. There is no mistaking the location. He takes a conscious effort to visually contextualize the market and its location.



A further favored motif of his is the depiction of the transaction between buyer and seller. He includes numerous examples of money or produce changing hands.



He thus also establishes context as purpose. After all, a market lives by its transactions. At the same time, he loves to film women in conversation, and often focuses on two people engaging in conversation. He highlights the social nature of the market as meeting place.



People do not solely visit the market to do their shopping. They take the opportunity to share the latest gossip, to enjoy a sunny day, and to inspect the produce on display. The market is here also visualized as a communal meeting place. He does even allow himself a brief inclusion of an assumed personal interest. He keeps filming a dog on a leash for a rather lengthy shot of a few seconds.



For the first time he displays a personal interest in his focus on the dog; the panning shot that follows indicates this interest as he refuses to let the dog pass out of frame. He also films the toddlers who accompany their mother and are too young to be in school. He has already established the context, purpose, and location of the market, and he now focuses on specific members of the crowd. He resumes his filmic rendition of the market with a few more shots taken from the elevated vantage point of the town hall steps, and finishes his film with a further title simply stating 'End'. G.W.'s film is an example of careful framing and the clear willingness to document the bi-weekly market as an event of everyday life. He contextualizes within the image and roams the space of the market freely.

A further example that fits the parameters of this type is the focus on local traditions, such as the filming of traditional dance or local customs. E.H.⁴² is most adamant in his documentation of local customs, such as the filming of the dancing procession in

⁴² AV035667 / IA_AMA001916, 8mm, color, mute, 1960; 1968

Echternach. The dancing procession presents an inherent part of the local and religious tradition. While the procession is always held in Echternach, the groups of dancers (or jumpers, as they are called colloquially) and the brass bands that accompany them represent different localities. The procession is thus made up of different local groups and affiliations. For example, alumni that either dance or play in the brass band represent almost every high school in the country. Pilgrims that travel from Germany, France, or Belgium to take part in the procession form further groups. The procession itself is held in honor of St. Willibrord, the patron saint of the town. The dancing or jumping is believed to emulate the movements of people with epilepsy who made a pilgrimage to St. Willibrord to be healed. E.H. focuses on different groups. He films from within the crowd lining the street.

Figure 3



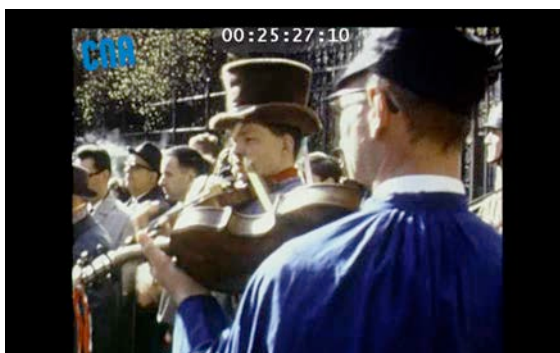
He takes care to include the dancers in a long shot, films the brass band that follows them, and even focuses on the different steps that make up the dance (two steps to the front, one step back).



He also takes care to film the clergy in the procession, with a special focus on bishops as the highest authority present.



Later on, he also films a traditional dancing display. The dancers are dressed in traditional garments, as are the musicians who wear the traditional garments also worn during the Hämmelesmarsch. Again he films from the crowd that watches the display. While the display is here more generalized, it can still be perceived as inscription in the communality of the local, rather than an inscription in cultural memory, as is the case with type B films.

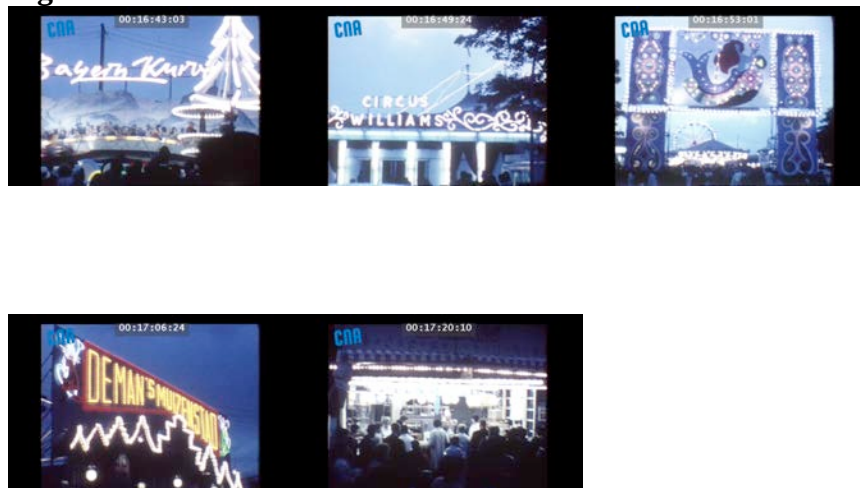


While the depiction of dancing displays is taken as type A subject matter, it presents an embedment that is more generalized than that of the local of the jumping procession in Echternach. Still, the display presents a public event that is attended by the filmmaker who is also bound by the spatial and temporal parameters of the event.

A further example of a type A subject matter can be found in depictions taken at the Schobermesse. The fairground is included here as type A since it also represents an official event attended by the private filmmaker. Here, similar to G.W.'s depiction of the market, filmmakers are careful to document the fairground. Often starting with a depiction of the traditional parade of the Hämmelesmarsch, they furthermore frame the fair by an inclusion of its gate. They then proceed to film all the attractions offered at the fairground, be it thrill rides, food or goods on offer, activities, attractions, or the visiting crowds.

A quick example here stands in for how filmmakers adopting a d&a mode come to visually contextualize the fairground. J.G.⁴³ introduces every ride and booth with a preceding shot on its lighted sign. A viewer is thus immediately aware of what ride or booth is depicted. His framing indicates his desire to render the signs understandable and legible. Mostly framed in medium or medium long shots, his visual documentation of the fairground is well ordered and does not reveal an experience of sensual onslaught.

Figure 4



The type of image identified here thus bundles films that represent events of an official nature in that they are organized publicly and occur in public space but, at the same time, they remain loosely structured in regards to spatiality. While the structural

⁴³ AV032920 / IA_AMA_001674, super 8, color, mute, ca. 1975

frame of the event might be publicly organized, the individual is still free to choose his/her personal degree of involvement and movement within the public space. That is to say, the basic logistics are provided, but the individual either inhabits the passive status of spectator, as with parades and processions, or is qualified by individual mobility through space, as is the case with the market or fair. These events are organized within public space by the Catholic church (religious processions), the government (parades and markets), or people themselves. They are characterized by their status as leisure activity while allowing for personal mobility and the freedom to roam in space with the camera in hand. Also, the focus here lies on crowds rather than individual people populating public space.

To sum up: type A visualizations represent a depiction of a public event or collective activity within a communal space. Type A events or activities allow for high mobility within its spatial constraints, they are peopled by crowds—strangers rather than friends or family—and they are documented by the individual filmmaker willing to act as private record-maker, whose practice is constructed by an archiving motivation and documentary style.

5.1.2. Communality and sociality

What then can these films show us concretely in terms of impulses that underlie the practice and self-inscriptions through subject matter and motif? Here the filmmaking individual is at once an observer and a participant. In fact, the combination of style and content that makes up visual narration is very similar to an ethnographic impulse. The filmmaker documents the communal event for future reference. Ethnographers attempt the ‘reconstruction of the qualities of human experience’⁴⁴ through a participation in the sensorium of the subject’s experience. The filmmaker adopts an attitude of observational participation in order to narrate the social frame. The ethnographic impulse is foremost governed by ‘involvement and “doing-it-yourself,” derived from immediate experience that can contribute to the reconstruction of the

⁴⁴ M. Pfadenhauer and T. Grenz, “Uncovering the Essence: The Why and How of Supplementing Observation with Participation in Phenomenology-Based Ethnography”. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 44, no. 5 (October 1, 2015): 1.

internal viewpoint.’⁴⁵ This impulse of ‘doing-it-yourself’ reveals a self-reflexive awareness on the part of the filmmaking agent of being emplotted in a temporal and experiential spread that extends beyond the private. They engage in a participatory relation with larger societal formations. The production or documentation in films adopting the d&a drive can thus be seen as an auto-ethnographically structured practice that displays an awareness of being embedded in larger temporal and social spreads. Because the communal event here illustrates by a characteristic of spatial freedom within its parameters, the filmmaker participates in the event. He/she is involved, albeit from an observatory position.

Type A films as we have seen visualize an activity of documentation that is directed towards the communal. Public space is here visually re-appropriated as social space. The filming of shared experiences such as parades and processions give us insights into how the filmmakers visually materialize the immateriality of social experiences. The very experience of the social interactive character is materialized (actualized) through the camera and inscribed on film. It can be re-appropriated visually and taken home materially. It also adds to the social experience in reinforcing the cultural offers for social identity through the private memorial practice of filmmaking. Type A subject matter comes to represent a visualization of a social self-inscription. Filmmaking taken as private practice narrates and inscribes the self in the social and public. Filmmakers that consciously document parades not only display an awareness of a potential significance on the communal level later on, they also inscribe their own autobiographical self in the larger formation of the social. In fact, these films come to visualize a process of autobiographical memory practice that is embedded in the cultural offer provided by the social we-group.

What filmmakers reveal when they film public events as shared communal experience is an inscription in what Harald Welzer calls the ‘we-group’. However, these films are neither a visualization of social nor of collective memory practice. For that to be the case, they need a common imprint that is only provided in a viewing situation in which a shared community uses the film as social memory artifacts in order to construct narratives of recollection. This, of course, is lost by a transferal to an

⁴⁵ Ibid.

institutional archive. They are communicative actualizations of autobiographical memory processes. Still the sociality that is engaged here shows how autobiographical memory processes are influenced by social frames that propose a certain subjectform to the filmmaking individual. These inscriptions of the self in the collective serve to reinforce the former as well as the latter.

The social nature of these events, such as parades, processions, markets, and fairs come to reveal a clear intention on the part of the filmmaker that is structured as two-fold: through the visual narration of the films they materialize the cultural offer of a social self and embed the autobiographical in the social while the cultural offer is re-appropriated and reinforced by its embedment in autobiographical narration. Here we witness a conceptual pendulum movement that cannot be conclusively unraveled. What is illustrated is how the individual always narrates him/herself by their experience in the social. They take up cultural offers of subjecthood in sociality and materialize the immateriality of the experience on film. They narrate the sociality of the experience in their own autobiographical practice.

At the same time, they also position their notion of self in the social by partaking in the event in the first place. The event thus comes to constitute a space for the construction of a social subjectform that the filmmaker clearly takes up. The filmic depiction of the social event allows the filmmaker not only to materialize the experience, but again, in a pendulum movement between autobiographical and sociality, allows the filmmaker to capture the social experience through an autobiographical self-narration. Through the practice of filmmaking, the filmmaker inscribes the self in the social, while in the filmic images the social is also inscribed in autobiographical narration. Furthermore, capturing these events, the filmmaker inscribes them on film and can take them into the private space of his own home. The visual narration is thus at once self-referential (the filmmaker narrates him/herself into the sociality of the space) and directed towards a sociality that exceeds the self (he/she documents an event gaining its significance from the shared spatiality of the space). The crux of the matter lies in the deemed significance of the event. Why would a filmmaker film a parade or market if he/she does not deem the communality of the experience an intrinsic part of a personal history?

The formation of personal identities, as I have stressed, is never effected in a socio-cultural vacuum. In fact, identity-formation as self-narration includes the taking up of cultural offers for subjectforms. Here the subjectform refers to a self-inscription in sociality as personal experience and communality in terms of shared space. As Odin states: 'Family productions are deployed for a local or identity claim context.'⁴⁶ What is analyzed here is not the communality of the market or parade as self-contained even, but rather what the visual narration can tell us in terms of self-inscription. Following Jürgen Straub's approach to historical narratives as construction of meaning, what we aim to 'determine and understand what speakers say *about themselves and about their world*, even when they are speaking about others.'⁴⁷

Type A films are taken in a communally shared space and take up cultural offers of subjectforms that can embed personal identities in sociality. Sociality here relates to the experience of an individual in a we-society. What then is the cultural form that is offered to an individual? This cultural offer pertains to an embedment in a we-identity. Jürgen Straub defines collective identity as follows:

'By a collective or we-identity, we understand the *image* which a given group builds of itself and with which its members identify. Collective identity is a question of identification on the part of the individuals involved; it does not exist 'in itself' but only to the extent that specific individuals profess their affiliation. [...] According to this concept, collective identities are constructs that merely denote a shared communality, to be specified in greater detail, in terms of an individual's practical relationship with and image of her/himself and the world around.'⁴⁸

What is visualized in these films is the degree in which the individual takes up the subjectform of collective identities. We can never be sure which concrete subjectform an individual adopts in the images. For example, a subject might inscribe him/herself in closer affinity to the musicians if they themselves play in a brass band, or they

⁴⁶ Odin, Roger. "Reflection on the Family Home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach". *Mining the Home Movie*, 267.

⁴⁷ Straub, Jürgen. "Telling Stories, Making History Toward a Narrative Psychology of the Historical Construction of Meaning". Straub, *NARRATION, IDENTITY, AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS*, 67.

⁴⁸ Straub, Jürgen quoted in. Université de Luxembourg and Unité de recherche IPSE, *Doing Identity in Luxembourg: Subjective Appropriations, Institutional Attributions, Socio-Cultural Milieus* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), 18. My emphasis

might affiliate closely with the clergy if they are profoundly religious. For example, E.H., filming the dancing procession in Echternach, might inscribe himself in the locality of the procession (Echternach), or in wider frames of communality, he might take up an offer as part of the religious community. These distinctions regarding which cultural offers are adopted are hard to identify. Still, the visual narration gives us an indication of their inscription in the communal and social. The filmmaker here professes an affiliation with shared communality, albeit from a private and individual point of view. What is visualized in type A motifs is how the filmmaking individual narrates an image of him/herself and the social world around. The subjectform that is partially assumed in the private is an embedment in collectivity. The collective identity as cultural offer (subjectform) in itself is but an abstraction; it cannot be lived by an individual but represents an abstraction of a cultural offer that the individual can take up in personal narration. It is here materialized, engaged, and narrated *within* the personal history of the individual. The immateriality of the collective identity is materialized in the private practice of filmmaking.

The visual narrations of the films can give us insights into how the narration of the self is at once turned inwards, in a self-referential appropriation of a social subjectform, and outwards, in a clear intention to capture the sociality for future reference. Differently put, the films visualize the process of self-narration in the act of filming. They also display an intention to serve as private archive of local memories. Picking up a camera and choosing a subject matter denotes a clear decision and choice. The conscious creation of films made in public space illustrates the willingness of narrating the self in the social. Filmmaking is always a visualization of autobiographical storytelling. People tell their stories visually and thus narrate their own personal history. It is the choice of subject matter that gives us insights into how an individual narrates the self and which cultural subject forms he/she takes up. The style that is here concomitant to visual documentation, however, also points to an authorial intention to use film as a form of cultural transmission that exceeds the self in the private. This is the archival logic of film that gives rise to the documenting

impulse. These concomitant elements identify d&a films as 'creative acts of cultural curation by self-appointed keepers of local memories.'⁴⁹

As we have seen in the tendencies that accompany the birth of the amateur filmmaker in postwar society, the inherent emphasis on order and stability also plays an important role in the filmmaking impulse and self-narration. Amateur filmmaking emerges against a backdrop of a postwar society and thus operates under an awareness of the fragility of societal stability. During this period, it also reacted to and engaged with newly globalized tendencies that saw the potential dismantlement of local and regional identities. Heather Norris Nicholson relates to the acceleration and facilitation of the mobility and transferal of ideas, goods, and narratives that swept communities from the outside. 'For some cine users, being there, witnessing and personal filmmaking was an antidote to the tide of visual factual and fictive narratives now washing through many people's lives and localities.'⁵⁰ Documenting local events reveals an intention that presents two related emotions: for one, it allows individuals to re-appropriate locality and communality in the creation of local memories and thus helps them to amplify and reinforce these identities through the materialization of film. At the same time, this impulse also reveals a sense of loss in that it is produced by an awareness of the potential of future loss of local identities and traditions. Amateur filmmaking, after all, emerged in a backdrop that revealed the omnipresent potential of uncertainty and instability.

Naturally, the filming of local customs and traditions also presents a commodification of heritage appropriated as visual display. Still, what cannot be ignored is the participatory relation of these events. As Sharon MacDonald observes: 'Typically, participating in heritage requires effort. [...] [E]ven making a day trip to a former battlefield or a performance of traditional dance requires effort of organisation and a full-body presence.'⁵¹ As a matter of fact, '[t]he act of witnessing, via heritage, makes

⁴⁹ Nicholson, Heather Norris. "Cinemas of Catastrophe and Continuity: Mapping Out Twentieth-Century Amateur Practices of International History-Making in Northern England". Rascaroli, Monahan, and Young, *Amateur Filmmaking*, 79.

⁵⁰ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 8.

⁵¹ Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2013), 234.

it part of our lived experience.’⁵² While filmmaking is here constituted as memorial practice, it also comes to involve a participation in the present of these events. It involves a sensory notion that extends beyond filmmaking. Filmmakers were present at the event: they shared in the smells and tastes of local food offered, they were physically present in the crowd, and they heard the music of the brass bands. The sensory inflection of the participatory event is of course weakened in the filmic representation. Still, sensory participation underlies all image-production as awareness of the filmmakers’ presence at these events. Tradition, while inflected by a concomitant awareness of potential loss, is here also reallocated as living custom. The filmmakers take part and thus reinforce the tradition that is threatened by potential extinction.

Again, the camera functions as a tool. According to Heather Norris Nicholson, amateur filmmakers’ ‘self-expression using available picture-making techniques mediated wider processes of identity formation, memory-shaping and social transformation.’⁵³ I would propose to go one step further and state that said picture-making techniques and the practice of filmmaking itself in fact *visualize* the complicated interactional relations (or pendulum movements) between these formations. Self-narration is recruited in the service of identity formation as personal history. Part of this relation is the taking up of cultural offers of subjectforms that are here provided by the collective frame of the communal. The individual models his own personal self-understanding into culturally available subjectforms. And the different inflections between self and social offer are here identified and revealed through visual narration.

In the following I would further this basis of filmmaking as self-narration adopted from the communal subjectform in elaborating how these films are not only self-referential but also operate in a clear awareness that is directed outwards. Here I would like to examine notions of spatiality and temporality that reveal this outward direction.

⁵² Ibid., 235.

⁵³ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 18.

Type A motifs of parades, markets, and fairs extend the spatiality of home to the local. Self-narration is always also self-emplacement. Here local memories are embedded in notions of local heritage. In order to fully understand the impact that a concept of home has on the production of personal identities, we need to first examine the temporal inflections that the visual narration of type A motifs entails. The documentation of communal events in local space follows an ethnographic impulse. The images are produced in a temporal inflection of the documenting of the present. At the same time, the archival logic that underlies the practice also reveals a temporal inflection towards the future. After all, an archive is not solely a repository for records of the past; it fundamentally understands this record as directed towards the future.

Type A films visualize an impulse to document the present in awareness of it soon becoming the past. The documentation of the present is inhabited by a direction of future looking back. Here, the filmmakers record an event in the present in an awareness of its status of future past. These are the temporal inflections that underlie the visual narration of type A films. The ethnographic impulse relates to a participatory observation of the present in order to gain greater understanding of an internal viewpoint (here the process of self-narration). The practice of filmmaking thus also presents a participatory engagement with the present. The motivation that underlies it, however, is also directed as future looking back. It is inflected by an awareness of a future significance on a communal level. Film as visual narration thus illustrates how individuals constitute 'subjective identity in a contentual-qualitative as well as in a formal-structural sense insofar as subjects "situate" themselves in the temporal coherence presented by narrative.'⁵⁴ While the narratives are later created through recollection, the visual narration already gives insights into the temporal synthesis that underlies its main motivations of present documentation for future reference; self-emplacement in the communal; and self-emplacement in local space.

The *practice* of making films relates to a participatory engagement with the present. The awareness that underlies the practice opens to the future and relates the *film* as an object for future looking back. Filmmaking is temporally inflected by an engagement

⁵⁴ Straub, Jürgen. "Telling Stories, Making History Toward a Narrative Psychology of the Historical Construction of Meaning. Straub". *NARRATION, IDENTITY, AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS*, 64.

with the present, and the film pertains to its purpose for future uses. Both motivations underlie the visual narration. One motivation relates the style of documentation to the present, while the archival promise pertains to the future.

Type A film motifs document the local (as communal space) because filmmakers deem their documentation as significant for the future. This is the double inflection of d&a filmmaking: the engagement with the local as cultural offer for self-narration in the present and the intrinsic awareness of these local memories as significant in the future on a communal level. These filmmakers operate in a spirit of documenting local history that is neglected or ignored in larger, institutionalized narratives. They do not produce historical narratives, but they operate in a spirit of wanting to materialize aspects of locally lived micro-histories that are always potentially at risk in the future. The production of a record of these events is deemed significant because they emerge in a postwar background of an awareness of potential social and local instability.

Furthermore, the wider socio-cultural tendencies that have been elaborated above as the modernist restructurations that reinforced positivist ideals of order and control also play a part in the motivation and the practice of creating visual records. The willingness to document the local event as emplacement is illustrated by the inclusion of visual markers. This pertains to the fair and market more than parades, for example. At the market, filmmakers will include the brass lions flanking the town hall and the statue of the 'Renert' in order to visually manifest locality through physical markers. They embed their visual narrations consciously in public space. Thus they extend notions of home as local belonging that takes its physical manifestation in the visual markers they include in their personal narration. MacDonald emphasizes the notion of place as self-emplacement: 'Place is bound up with a wide range of affects, not only nostalgia; and it is central to heritage—which is always emplaced.'⁵⁵ Here, filmmakers situate their self-narration locally. This is the process of situated knowledge production visualized in type A films. As Nicholson states: 'Amateur film productions, whether made by one person, a couple or a group of enthusiasts, disclose

⁵⁵ Macdonald, *Memorylands*, 94.

what might be called the situatedness of knowledge production.’⁵⁶ These films furthermore give rise to ‘questions of knowledge formations, memory gathering, story-telling and self-reflexivity.’⁵⁷ The visual narration as style and choice of subject matter thus visualizes the process that is formed in the nexus of memory gathering, self-reflexivity and the inherent interrelational engagement between self and others.

5.2. Type B: Inscribing the self in socio-historical narratives

As proposed with type A subject matter, in the following I will first identify two differently inflected foci, namely the depiction of Luxembourg city within amateur film and, second, the filming at World War II memorials and commemorative sites. I will then proceed to examine more deeply how these visual inclusions also reveal a motivation to narrate the self in referentiality to cultural memory artifacts.

5.2.1. Historical sights—historical sites

The second type here, termed type B, represents a rather more open manner of engagement with events of films adopting the drive. The events depicted here are personal and not restricted to a temporally fixed date or time as is the case with markets, fairs, parades, and processions. Type B visualizations refer to events that are filmed with a sense of historical self-reflexivity or emplotment characterized by physical and spatial mobility. In type B visualizations, semi-official historical trails through the city prove very popular. Most of the time, these walks follow the confines of the fortress masonry or present a ‘checking off’ of different visual and historical landmarks in the cityscape, such as ‘Dräi Eeschelen’, the ‘Gëlle Fra’, the ‘Bock’, etc. The visual focus lies not only on these landmarks but also on the surrounding cityscapes. The films present panoramic views linked visually identifying the location. The panorama shot proves extremely popular in these images. The long shot rules the imagery.

⁵⁶ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 19.

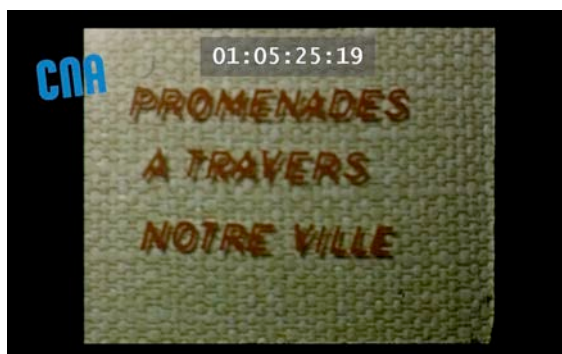
⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

E.H.⁵⁸ adopts the documenting style most proficiently. He starts his film with a clear indication of authorship. ('E.H. films presents').

Figure 5



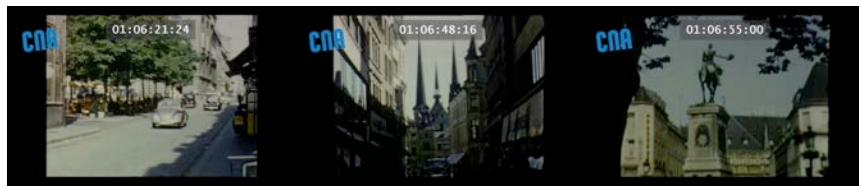
He then proceeds to a title indicating the activity to follow. He is about to walk through the capital. The title states clearly: 'walks through *our* city', not walks through the city. He already reconstitutes the city as communal and establishes a sense of shared belonging.



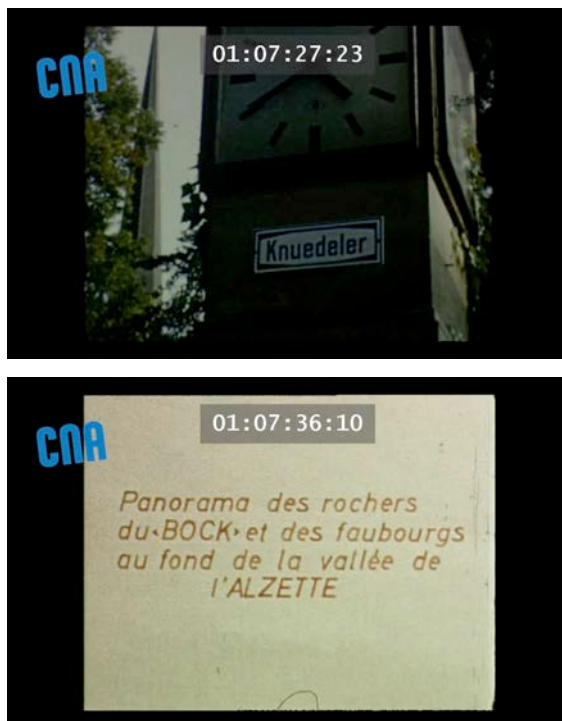
The next title reads 'Luxembourg 1958'. It gives the viewer a temporal and spatial frame for what is to follow. The first shot shows his wife pushing their child in a stroller. The focus does not remain on her, however, as the camera immediately pans to include the park they are in. They are taking a walk through Luxembourg City, and he clearly demarcates their different stops through the introduction of visual markers. They start on the Places d'Armes in the city center and move towards the place Guillaume II via a street from which the cathedral can be seen. If knowledgeable

⁵⁸ AV035945 / IA_AMA_001907, 8mm, color, mute, 1958

about the geography of the city, the viewer is left in no doubt as to the very route they are taking. He clearly documents the route through navigational markers.



He films not only street signs visually positioning the viewer and himself, but also provides titles in between the sequences that clearly describe what is to follow.



(Panorama of the rocks 'BOCK' and the outskirts underneath in the valley of the Alzette)

The next few shots provide exactly what he has promised the viewer, as he shows the 'BOCK' and the outskirts in the valley in long shots.



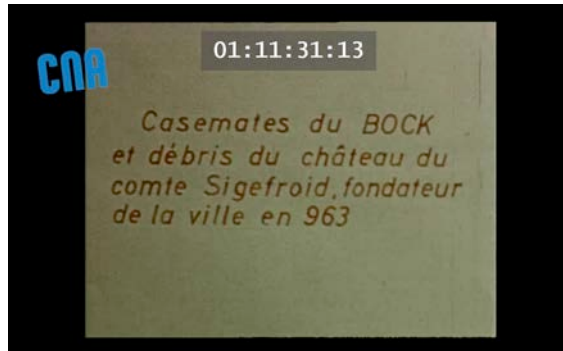
The valley of the Alzette



The rock formation with ruins of the former fortress called 'BOCK'

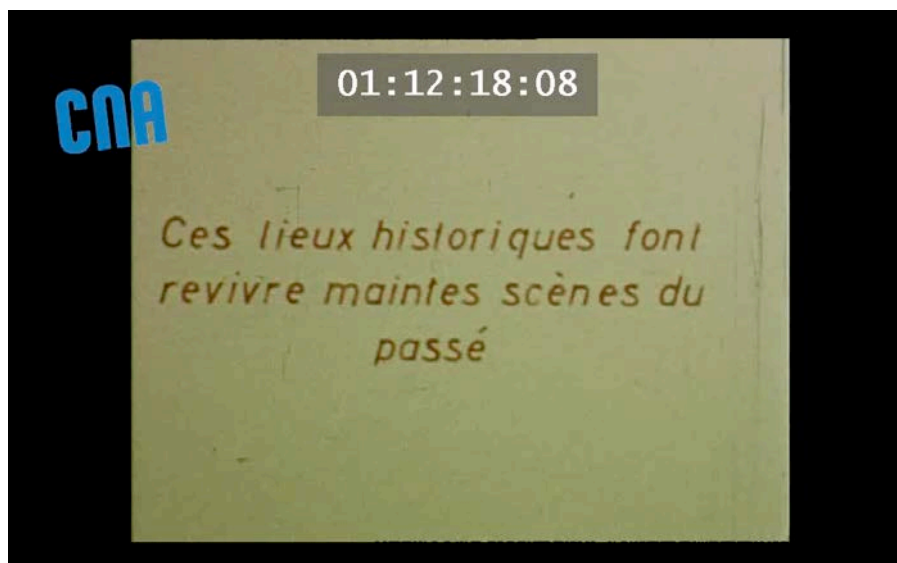
He mostly films from an elevated position of a platform showing the panorama of the city outskirts underneath. He also pans to include the remnants of the fortress' outer walls as a geographical and visual demarcation. Occasionally his wife is filmed; however, she never provides a major focal point apart from a brief sequence in which she feeds their baby. As she does not show up in the remainder of the films, we can assume that their visit to the city ends at this point. In the following sequence, he walks the city with two friends carrying cameras.

The next title not only provides the viewer with information of where he is filming, but also provides historical information on the founder of the city and its founding date.



(Casemates 'BOCK' And ruins of the castle of count Sigefroid, founder of the city in 963)

The next title proves illustrative in terms of filmmaking motivation.

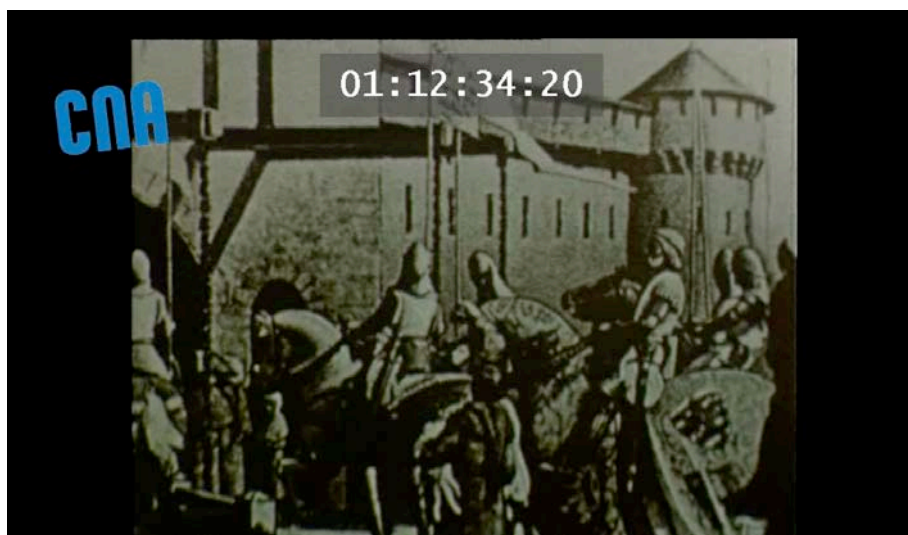


(These historical locations revive many scenes from the past)

E.H. displays one of the main motivations in that he indicates a clear desire to embed his self-narration in larger historical strata.

The next few shots are confusing in terms of their origin. He either films the panels and illustrations in a museum exhibition or he provides images of illustrations taken

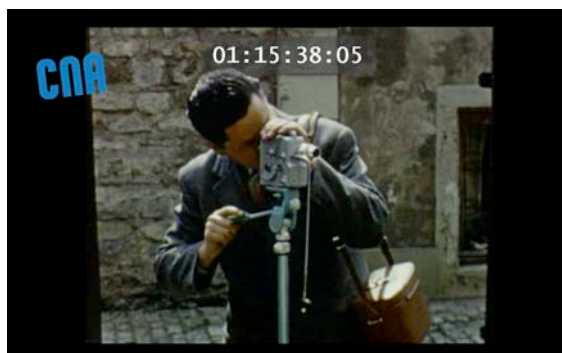
from a book. What we can see are illustrations of Luxembourg City throughout different historical periods.





What is clear, however, is that the images here are not privately produced but are either situated within an institutional site such as a museum or taken from an official book on the city and its history. Either way, these images are taken from an exterior and institutionalized source. They come to represent a visual inclusion of a historical document in the private practice of filmmaking.

In the next sequence he has moved downwards towards the valley of Clausen (a fact which he clearly states in a preceding title) and films different streets and buildings, including the old prison that was situated in the valley. Again he takes ample opportunity to film the surroundings and the outer structure of the fortress ruins that flank the valley, albeit this time from below. He films his two friends walking through the street and carrying their camera. The next shot shows one of his friends setting up his camera for filming.



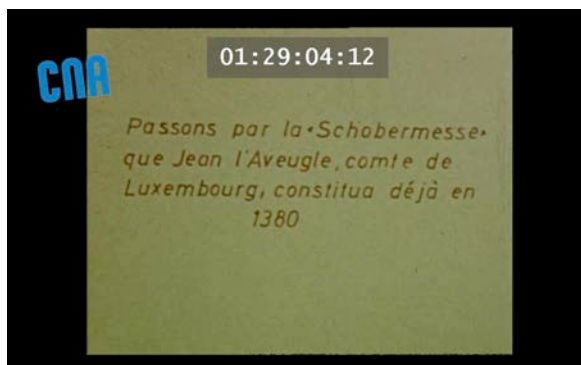
E.H. even documents the documentation. He includes the activity of filming and thus documenting within his own visual record. He then goes on to inform the viewer of his intention to document streets and squares of the city rather than historical sights via a title card. He introduces themes throughout his film. He has clearly moved from the depiction of historical sights to the everyday streets and squares that are bustling with people. As he walks by the cathedral a wedding takes place, and he includes the wedding in his filmic documentation. He keeps his distance and films the arrival of the bride in a long shot from the opposite side of the street.



Every aspect of his day, the city, and the activities of people are deemed worthy of documentation. We can assume from the preceding sequences that he does not know the bride. His positional distance furthermore reinforces this assumption. Nevertheless, the wedding becomes part of the visual documentation. The main filmic impulse lies not in the depiction of familiar people and personal significance. The significance lies in the filmic impulse to document. He again focuses on different squares and streets of the city and furthermore includes the railway station, by which point a knowledgeable viewer realizes that he has moved to the edges of the city. He not only films the outer building of the railway station that is aesthetically pleasing, he is also careful to include shots of the rails, a train passing into the station, and people waiting for their train on the platforms.



I could carry on shot by shot: he films the coat of arms on the grand-ducal palace, he films the changing of the guards in front of the palace, he includes multiple shots of different parks and squares, he keeps contextualizing the images with titles, he films a military parade in the streets, he films the pont Adolphe, and finally, he films the fairground, which he visually contextualizes with the following information:



(Let us pass through the 'Schobermesse' that John the Blind, count of Luxembourg, established as early as 1380 [sic])

Here, we will leave E.H. as he passes from images of a type B subject matter into type A content. Needless to say, he frames the fairground in an open and concise manner and starts the visit with an establishing shot of the front gate.

I have taken a rather lengthy turn through E.H.'s film collection, which comprises more or less thirty minutes of screen time. He leaves the spectator with a title stating 'End'. E.H. has left further film collections to the archive in which he focuses on his wife and daughter. He is highly proficient as a filmmaker, and as we can see from the starting title, also considers himself as such. He becomes one of the prime examples of how filmmakers use the d&a style, as he displays a clear desire to document the everyday, the city and its historical sites, and the public space through the private practice of filmmaking.

Another motif is presented by the visual recording of trips or outings taken to World War II memorials—here the American cemetery in Luxembourg and the wartime memorial in Bastogne prove the most popular locations. Quite often, the family accompanies the filmmaker, even though there is seldom a shift in style from d&a to family chronicle, as if the somber atmosphere prevents the essentially frolicking and idealized tone of the family chronicle style. The filmmaker frequently includes shots of text panels while visiting memorials.

J.-P. K.⁵⁹ has left a film collection to the archive that mostly depicts private family life. One sequence stands out, however. He films a visit with his family to Mauthausen. Mauthausen was a concentration camp operated from the time of the annexation of Austria to the Third Reich in 1938. The footage that is nestled within the family films of the rest of the collection provides a stark contrast to the breezy and happy focus on children and family life. He films the family in front of their house, he focuses on his children at the fair, and he films their family holiday in the South of France. The last film in his collection documents the visit to the concentration camp that has been converted into a commemorative site. The first shot shows part of the roof gables of a house. The viewer is not quite certain what he/she is looking at. The very next shot shows a stone panel attached to the outside wall of a building stating 'storeroom'. A viewer can thus assume that we are on a public site. The next shot shows the commemorative panel dedicated to a Soviet soldier that dies in that

⁵⁹ AV035027 / IA_AMA_002880, 8mm, black and white and color, mute, 1960-1962

location. Even if we do not necessarily know where exactly we are situated, we now know that we are located on a commemorative site.

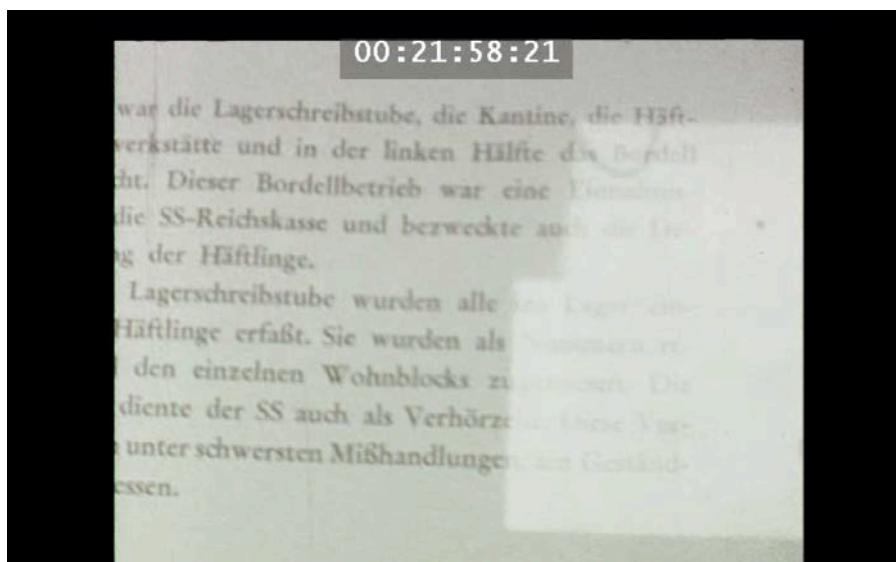
Figure 6



The next shot shows the watchtowers of a concentration camp. The filmmaker walks through the site and carefully includes panels that are attached to the walls in order to name the functions of each building, such as storeroom, Arrest building, the crematorium, the dissection room, and the gallows. He films within the rooms themselves, but they often do not provide the lighting conditions that are needed and the images are dark and not always discernible. He films the ovens and even the rope of the gallows that is attached to the ceiling of one of the rooms. Later he is standing in the middle of the rectangular structure that shapes the camp and in a 180° angle pans alongside the buildings that flank the middle square until the focus comes to rest on the entrance gate to the camp, here filmed from the inside.



Type B records convey an impulse to create a meaningful context to the experience or event presented on film. Again intertitles might be used in case no text panel, sign or recognizable landmarks are available for visual contextualization. No other people are seen on site, and the atmosphere is eerily still. He then films inside one of the buildings and focuses on the glass panels that offer descriptions and information on the site.



(This specific panel describes how the SS set up a brothel to gain funds.)

He slowly pans over the panel giving the reader time to take in the text. Next he films a sign: 'Todesstiege'. There is no direct translation, but a 'Stiege' represents a narrow flight of stairs and the term 'Todes' terms a function of bringing death. We can

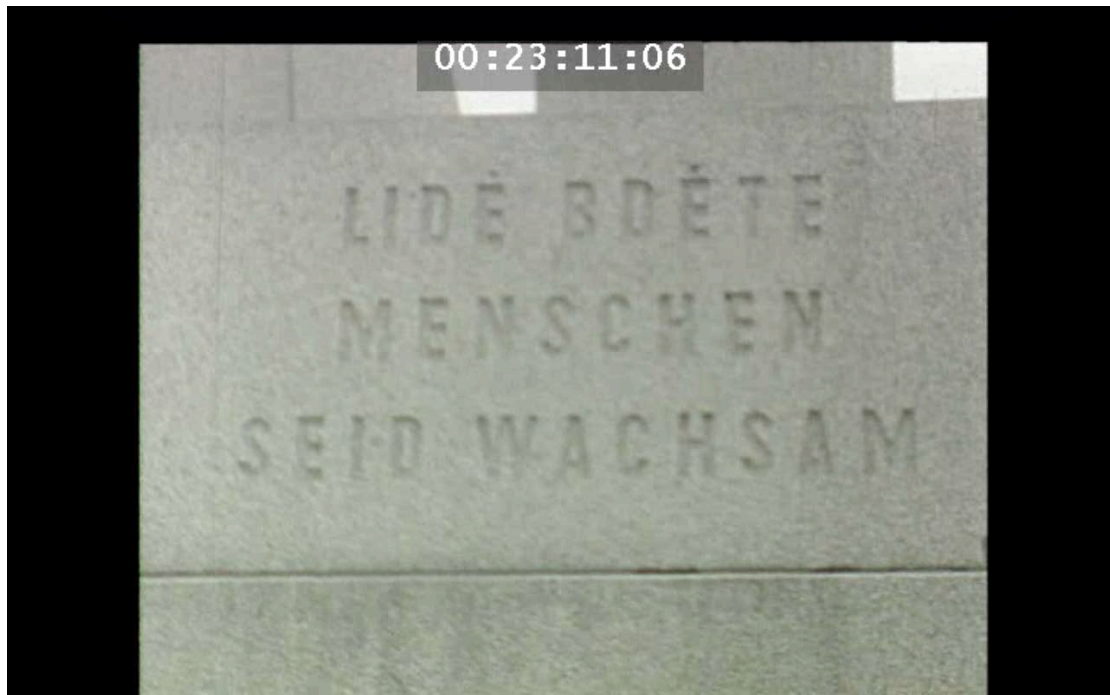
assume that people would have been flung to their deaths from the cliffs, the location of which he also films.



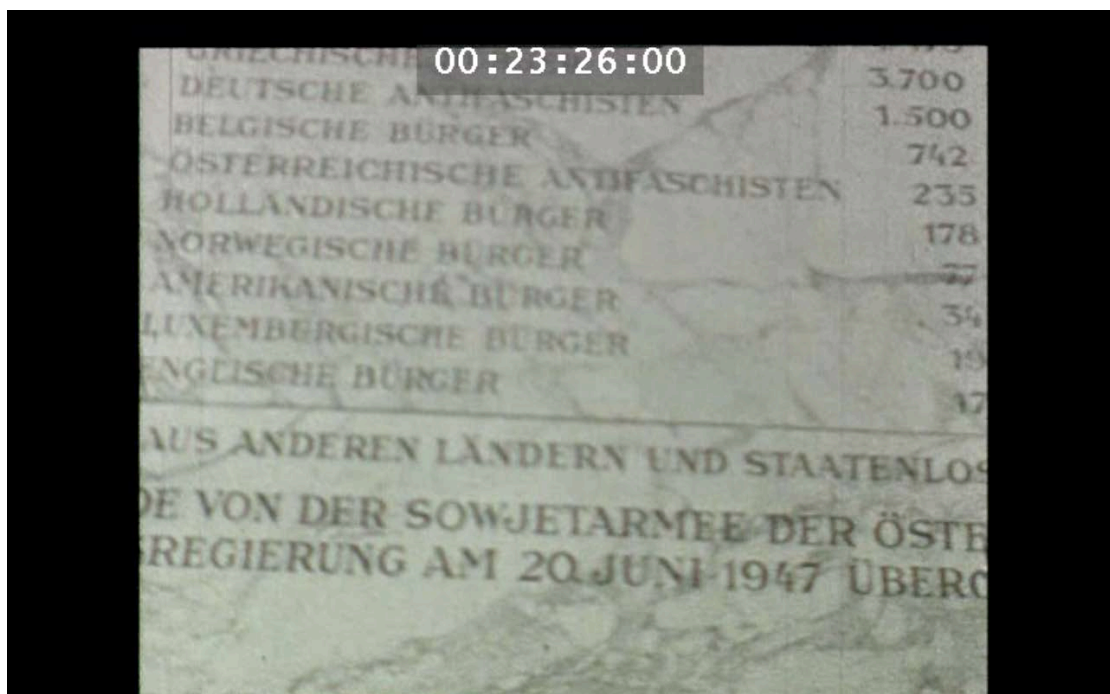
He also films several memorials and takes care to pan across their commemorative inscriptions.



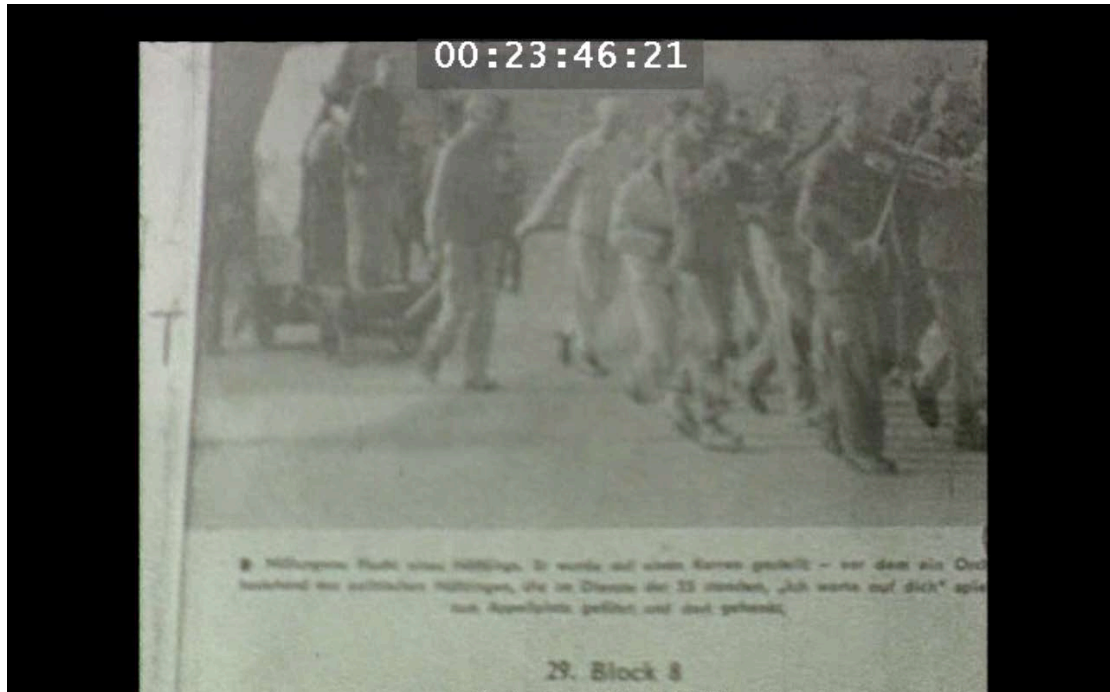
He films a further memorial depicting an emaciated prisoner. On the bottom of the memorial, he films an inscription for a rather lengthy duration. It states: 'Men, be watchful' (Menschen seid wachsam).



He then films a panel listing the deaths according to the nationalities of the prisoners. He pans over the entire panel, but then takes care to focus closely on the inscription stating that nineteen Luxembourgian men died in Mauthausen.



In the next sequence he pans over the outside structure of the concentration camp. He films descriptive panels that we can assume are situated in a museum as part of the commemorative site.



Leaving the site, he stops outside the camp to take some shots that include the camp embedded in the wider landscape. As if by afterthought, he finally includes a sign stating 'Mauthausen', which is how the viewer finally comes to learn which specific concentration camp is featured in the film.



He takes care to film the camp in one last panning shot, and filming stops. Other examples of filming memorials as mentioned above would include the American cemetery in Luxembourg and the World War II memorial in Bastogne. These motifs

are structured similarly to the example above in that they focus on visual contextualization through the inclusion of text panels, inscriptions, and signs. They provide careful and open medium to long shots and generally are characterized by a patient behavior. Filmmakers do not rush and often keep the camera running for several seconds a take.

The films depicting type B motifs follow no strict or fixed structural agenda. The filmed motifs are characterized by an open space with fluid parameters. Filmmaking individuals and their cameras are free to roam the space. Events, sites, or activities filmed are not temporally limited, but remain a constant spatial fixture and can be visited all year round. The fixtures themselves are nevertheless ‘official’ institutionalized or public structures that are, in this case, visually appropriated by the filmmaking individual who, more often than not, wanders the sites alone and at his/her own leisure. Again, it needs to be noted that if the family is present, the focus does not lie on them but on the visuals produced by a filmmaker who supposedly traverses the sites alone.

So while the physical boundaries of the material sites are fixed, the parameters of the space are fluid and allow for a great mobility. However, mobility is here related to the filmmaker, not the camera. The d&a filmmaker remains stylistically conservative: Filmmakers will stop to shoot an object of interest for a certain length of time, stop filming, move on and start afresh. The shots taken are mostly medium shots and static in nature; the camera mimics a ‘reading’ or observational gaze. The only filmic movement that is relayed here pertains to pans used in order to visually graze an object in an establishing shot to position it within its location.

The filmmakers take their time while, for example, filming text panels, and thus they act in an awareness of a future spectator who will need time to read the inscriptions on panels and memorials. Films depicting city promenades adopt the same style in that they often take the position of a strolling pedestrian needing time to enjoy the sights, and thus they film the cityscape from an advantageous vantage and observation point. Panoramic platforms provide the perfect conditions for filming. The focus lies on observation rather than active participation, on the production of a record in an

awareness that includes future spectators, while clearly inflected by the motivation to bring a shared past to the present.

5.2.2. Emplacement and emplotment through cultural memory artifacts

The visual narration of type B subject matter presents different temporal inflections and a concomitant difference in self-narration. The inclusion of walks through the city that are carefully documented and the depiction of memorials still present further distinctions. Both, however, pertain to a self-inscription in cultural offers of subjecthood that extend beyond the self in the private and even beyond the self in the local. As we have seen with the family chronicle, the cultural offer of familialism suggests the private space as exclusive space of meaningful interaction. The d&a mode, which is often part of a filmmaker's collection conjointly to the family chronicle, extends these notions of meaningful selfhood to the public realm. They reveal a taking up of the self in subjectforms that are offered as inclusion in history and different larger formations of the social beyond the local.

The first subject matter that proves popular within a type B imagery is the walk through the capital of Luxembourg. While occasionally filmmakers are with their families or friends, more often than not and from what we can read from the images, they are alone. The walks are carefully documented through visual markers. They include informative titles, but also street signs, inscriptions of buildings, and institutional texts, either in the form of images taken from books or text panels in museums. The visual narration here embeds the historical strata (the inclusion of buildings, edifices, and statues from different historical periods) of the City in the private practice of filmmaking. In fact, the different periods and historical strata of the city are here compressed in the filmmaking present and thus materialized on film. The present is visually represented as the end point of the historical strata in the actualizations of the films. Again, the positivist promise that underlies film as medial offer is visualized by type B motifs as a linear ordering of temporal strata that are caught and visually end in the filmmaking present.

Still, the intention underlying the construction of the film also points towards the future. For example, E.H. includes titles stating the founding year of the City of Luxembourg. He clearly demarcates what he perceives as the very beginning of the spatiality of the city. He carefully documents the spatial parameters of the city and films different depictions of the city from different periods. These temporal and historical strata culminate in his documentation of the present. He synthesizes the temporal layers of the city in his communicative actualization that is film. He materializes the immateriality of a historical consciousness, i.e. the awareness and reinforcement of being in history. The temporal synthesis that is effectuated here is differently inflected from that of the ethnographic impulse of type A subject matter. Here, amateurs turn towards the past and embed it in the present. Naturally, the titles also open the temporal inflection of the film towards the future since they anticipate a future spectator. Still, the inflection is different in that it displays a clear willingness to draw the past into the present. The form this past takes, however, is already a reconstruction. The past is here taken into the present in the form of an inclusion of cultural memory artifacts.

A cultural memory artifact represents a particular form ‘in der die Erinnerung durch eine organisierte und zeremonialisierte Kommunikation über die Vergangenheit dauerhaft fixiert und wach gehalten wird, etwa durch Texte, Riten oder Denkmäler.’⁶⁰ The visual markers that are included in the form of text panels, book excerpts, statues, and museum illustrations present such fixed and institutionally organized reconstructions of cultural memories that serve as institutionalized forms of a collective sense of a shared past. Naturally, these forms of memories always present an abstraction in that they are not and never will be lived by an individual. They are purely discursive. However, they also provide a materialization from which a subjectform is offered to an individual. Cultural memory artifacts come to materially represent a medium by which subjectforms are offered. Filmmakers take up positions towards these offers in that they can be, but need not be, appropriated. The

⁶⁰ ‘in which memory is permanently embedded and kept active by organised and ceremonialised communication about the past, for example texts, rituals or memorials.’

Christoph Dejung, “Oral History Und Kollektives Gedächtnis. Für Einen Sozialhistorische Erweiterung Der Erinnerungsgeschichte”. *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 34 (2008): 101.

subjectforms that are offered here are widely differentiated and do as such not represent one subjectform that can be unproblematically taken up, as we will see in the following. However, the materiality of the cultural memory artifacts and their inscriptions offer one common denominator: the perceived authenticity of historical narratives in the form of cultural memory artifacts, since they are never contested by the visual narration of the films and the inscription in larger formations of the communal.

Again we witness a conceptual pendulum movement. The cultural memory artifacts that are included here already pertain to an institutionalized materialization of historical narratives. In a double inflection, these narratives are inscribed in the autobiographical through the communicative actualization of filmmaking. They are also presented as cultural offers into which the individual filmmaker can inscribe him/herself. This is the pendulum movement between proposed subjectforms of self-inscription within the historical strata of the city and autobiographical self-narration that reversibly inscribes said narrative in the autobiographical. They also self-inscribe historical narratives into their visual narration in the form of titles stating historical details and significant dates and thus privately re-appropriate said narratives in their own private self-narration.

The inscription of the self in cultural offers provided by historical reconstruction or objectifications of the past (cultural memory artifacts) serves a further purpose. This has to do with the main purpose of cultural memory artifacts that pertain to a construction of a collective past or a collective version of the past. A cultural memory artifact functions as official imaging of a historical narrative. It provides conceptual offers for the construction of self-interpretation in larger collectivities that are construed through the perceived belief in a shared past. It becomes a crucial element in the interpretive repertoire of a social group. Here this social group pertains to a larger communality that extends beyond the local. It represents not one inscription however, as we will see in the following. Rather their commonality pertains to an inscription in larger communal and social formations. The visual narration in type B films comes to materialize the 'die Versuche von Menschen [...] sich in eine bestimmte Erinnerungskultur einzuschreiben und ihre individuellen Erinnerungen in

Einklang mit kollektiven Erinnerungsmustern zu bringen.’⁶¹ The self is inscribed in collective memorial patterns through the inclusion of cultural memory artifacts as materialized historical narratives.

I would propose to briefly elaborate, or rather problematize, the subjectform that functions as cultural offer provided by the historical narratives materialized in cultural memory artifacts and the shared spatiality of the city. On first glance it would seem natural to see the inscription that is narrated here as positioned in the national. Two problems emerge with such a cultural inscription however: first of all, the national here presents but one of the possible social groups in which individuals can inscribe themselves through the construction of a shared past, and second, the national as cultural offer itself is highly diversified.

What we can say without a doubt is that the filmmaker here inscribes and narrates himself/herself in a social group that extends beyond the local. The shared reconstruction of the past here pertains to a sense of belonging in a broader social group. As Dejung states:

‘Ein zentrales Merkmal solcher vorgestellter nationaler Gemeinschaften ist die Konstruktion einer gemeinsamen Vergangenheit. Gemäß Maurice Halbwachs ist die Nation aber nur eine von vielen möglichen sozialen Gruppen innerhalb eines Staates, in deren Rahmen sich ein kollektives Gedächtnis ausbilden kann. Weitere Gruppen wären beispielsweise soziale Klassen, religiöse Gruppen, Familien oder regionale Gemeinschaften, die jeweils unterschiedliche Erinnerungsformen entwickeln und tradieren können.’⁶²

⁶¹ the ‘human attempt [...] to subscribe to a particular culture of remembrance and reconcile their own memories with collective remembrance patterns.’
Ibid., 107.

⁶² ‘A central feature of presented national communities such as these is the construction of a common past. However, according to Maurice Halbwachs, the nation is just one of many possible social groups within a state where collective memory can develop. Other examples of groups include social classes, religious groups, families or regional communities, which can each develop and pass on different forms of remembrance.’
Ibid., 103.

The national as cultural offer is thus also a purely discursive subjectform that cannot be lived conclusively. Furthermore, the national is only one of numerous abstract offers for inscription that an individual can use. Also, the national already presents a multifaceted diversity in terms of its inflections that conclusively show that an embedment in the national is never a homogenous inscription. In the following, I will show the different inflections the national can take within the films and thus conclude with how such an inscription is never a homogeneously constructed offer that is unquestionably taken up by an individual.

Within type B actualizations of walks taken in the city, there is no clear consensus as to what constitutes an inscription in the larger communalities that share a version of the past. Simply put, every filmmaker interprets the community and inscription in the city differently. These differences are revealed through the selectivity that underlies the choice of what is included and excluded in the image. What the filmmakers show us is a different self-narration that is effectuated by how they inscribe the cultural memory artifacts in their narration. They interpret the cultural offer that is provided in a diversified and highly varied manner. These films thus illustrate how the homogeneity of the subjectforms as offered by cultural memory artifacts is not an actuality and cannot be homogeneously lived. These micro-histories of personal narration thus show us a differentiated multi-layered view of how individuals take position towards an institutionalized cultural offer.

This differentiation in part pertains to the multi-layered complexities that already underlie what Michel Pauly calls the ‘Nationwerden,’⁶³ the process of becoming a nation. The d&a films that are analyzed here were mostly shot during the 1950s and 1960s. They were produced in a period that saw a multi-layered and highly pertinent cultural discourse on the nation. Four dates were offered for the constitution of a sense of national belonging. First of all, as we have seen with E.H.s inclusion of intertitles, the date of 963 was generally conceived as date for the birth or origin of national parameters, when the city (Lucilinburhuc) was founded with the construction of an abbey in the valley of the Alzette. E.H. thus narrates the construction of the city as far back as 963. He materializes a shared past that extends into the medieval

⁶³ Michel Pauly, *Geschichte Luxemburgs*, 2., überarb. Aufl., Orig.-Ausg, Beck'sche Reihe, 2732 : C. H. Beck Wissen (München: Beck, 2013), 7.

period. This, however, is not the case with all filmmakers. The popularity and impulse to document the city and its cultural memory artifacts also stems from wider discussions that shaped the 1950s and 1960s.

For example, the date of 1839 became infused with a new urgency in the postwar years, even though inclusion in a shared collective memory took place in 1939. The celebration of the centenary anniversary of the nation-state in 1939 became part of the collective memory as shared sense of belonging:

‘Das Datum ging ins kollektive Gedächtnis ein, weil die Regierung 1939 den 100. Jahrestag des Londoner Vertrags von 1839 mit einigem Aufwand begangen hatten, um angesichts des drohenden Überfalls durch Nazi-Deutschland den Unabhängigkeitswillen der Luxemburger Nation für alle sichtbar zu unterstreichen. [...] Da Wilhelm das Großherzogtum behandelte, als sei es die 18. Provinz seines Königreich, kam er erst nach 1839, nach der Trennung von den 1830 unter dem Namen Belgien unabhängig gewordenen Südprowinzen, zur allmählichen Ausbildung eines luxemburgischen Nationalstaats und eines Nationalbewusstseins.’⁶⁴

The narrative of the nation also emerged with the imminent threat of invasion. In like manner, a third, more unofficial periodization fixed the emergence of a narrativization of the national as reaction against the invasion of NS forces during World War II. The speeches that were given by the exiled Grand Duchess Charlotte in London, broadcasted by the BBC and secretly listened to by Luxembourgers during the war, certainly helped manifest and reinforce a sense of nationality that articulated an intensity hitherto unknown. As Michel Pauly observes: ‘Die traditionelle Meistererzählung (d.h. historische Großdeutung) zur Luxemburger Geschichte datiert

⁶⁴ ‘The date entered collective memory because the 1939 government put considerable effort into celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of London in 1839, in order to visibly highlight the nation of Luxembourg’s desire for independence in light of the threat of attack by Nazi Germany.’ ‘Since Wilhelm treated the Grand Duchy as the 18th province of his kingdom, it was not until 1839 – after the separation from the southern provinces which became independent under the name of Belgium in 1830 – that the gradual emergence of a Luxemburg national state and national consciousness began.’

Ibid.

den Abschluss der Nationenwerdung in den Zweiten Weltkrieg.’⁶⁵ He furthermore states that the construction of such a narrativization of the nation emerges in concomitance and in resistance to the invasion of NS forces. The sense of belonging that was fixed by the official institutionalized commemorative dating is thus infused with a new urgency as reaction against the German invasion.

The 1950s and 1960s saw a further embedment of the national with the beginning of the European integration process. The signing of the Robert Schuman plan in 1950 to unite the steel and coal industries of the six founding countries comprising Luxembourg under common management found an extension in 1957 with the treaty of Rome, which postulated the free movement of goods, people, and ideas across European borders. Without going into too much detail, what becomes significant here is the extension of the sense of belonging from the national as bound by geographical parameters to a wider embedment in the European Union. One of the reasons why this embedment in the European as common ideal had such a high impact on the sense of belonging in larger social formations beyond the borders of the country was the fact that some of the new European institutions were situated on the newly constructed platform of the Kirchberg that annexed the older part of Luxembourg city. As such:

‘Da die sechs Regierungen sich auf keine gemeinsame europäische Hauptstadt einigen konnten, blieb es bis heute bei der örtlichen Aufsplitterung der Institutionen. In Luxemburg sind seit dem Fusionsvertrag von 1965 der Gerichtshof, das Sekretariat des Parlaments, die Investitionsbank, das Rechenzentrum, das Statistische Amt und das Amt für Veröffentlichungen angesiedelt; 1977 kam der Rechnungshof hinzu, Drei Monate im Jahr tagt der Ministerrat in Luxemburg, wo seit 1963 auf Kirchberg ein neues Stadtviertel mit neuen Gebäuden für die meisten EU-Institutionen entstanden ist.’⁶⁶

⁶⁵ ‘The traditional master narrative (i.e. the general historical interpretation) of Luxembourg’s history places the end of the nation-building process in the Second World War.’

Ibid., 7–8.

⁶⁶ ‘since the six governments were unable to agree on a common European capital, local fragmentation of institutions remains until this day. Since the Merger Treaty of 1965, Luxembourg has been home to the Court of Justice, Secretariat of Parliament, Investment Bank, computer centre, Statistical Office and Publications Office; these were joined in 1977 by the Court of Auditors, and for three months a year the Council of Ministers meets in Luxembourg, where a new district developed in Kirchberg from 1963 onwards with new buildings for the majority of the EU’s institutions.’

The epochal framework that serves as temporal embedment of a national consciousness thus already presented inherent diversities.

Filmmakers visualize different interpretations of spatially demarcated communality. For example, filming the construction sites at the Kirchberg and the new bridge that linked the old town to the Kirchberg proved a popular motif and represented a different inflection from films exclusively following views that focus on the fortress. The 1950s and 1960s thus already saw the narrativization of a cultural memory on a European level, while the sense of a shared past and belonging was also fixed by the recurrent emphasis on the 1839 date. The inscription in larger societal formations thus saw an extension of communality to a European level.

For example, F.M.⁶⁷ films the construction of the bridge that links the city to the Kirchberg.

Figure 7



Ibid., 116.

⁶⁷ AV034421 IA_AMA_003280, 8mm, color and black and white, mute, 1962-1963



What is significant here is that he starts by embedding the construction of the bridge from the side of the Limpertsberg, thus the older part of town (which we can see by the inclusion of the National Theatre in the background). He then focuses on the construction of the bridge itself, and finally provides a long shot to the other end positioned at the Kirchberg. The documentation of the construction first of all adheres to principles of progress. It also pertains to an inscription in the progressive construction of the new centre for European institutions that are situated at the Kirchberg. Clearly, F.M. perceives the construction as significant. He also produces between 1962 and 1963 and thus within an age that was suffused with differently inflected discourses of the nation and the national. The preceding sequence shows a detailed documentation of the abbey in Echternach. He thus also documents the local. As most of his films are taken in Echternach we can assume the town to be part of his conception of the local. The images of the bridge are not focused on the local, but its significance is perceived within a wider communal framework that includes the Kirchberg as a newly constructed center of diverse European institutions. What his films and the different inflections in other films documenting the city show is the impossibility for a homogenous cultural subjectform as national.

How filmmakers take up these cultural offers is thus never clear-cut. The only conclusive indication that can be taken from the visual narration of type B subject matter is a willingness to inscribe the self in a social formation that extends beyond the local. The communality and sense of belonging that is offered is taken up by these filmmakers through their engagement with what they perceive as a shared past, i.e. their filming of the spatiality of the city and their inclusion of cultural memory artifacts. What is taken up is the offer to inscribe the self in larger collective frameworks.

The inclusion of titles, text panels, memorials, statues, and concrete visual markers that identify the city thus comes to produce a communicative actualization that emplots the self in the historical. The films visualize a private memorial practice that is materialized in film. The inclusion of cultural memory artifacts serves as an inscription of the self in institutional historical narratives and an extended social group constituted by a shared construction of the past. The filmmakers at once share this reconstructed past and further it by the production of their own films. The visual narration pertains to an inscription in larger collective frames and also visualizes a re-appropriation of cultural memory in the private memorial practice of an individual. Filmmakers take up offers provided by the reconstructions of a shared past, and at the same time, re-appropriate these reconstructions visually in their materialization of the immateriality that constitutes the purely discursive offer of a cultural memory. Not only do individuals inscribe themselves into the cultural offers of subjectform that are provided here, they also re-appropriate these cultural offers in their own self-narration. This is the pendulum movement as visualized in the communicative actualization of the films.

However, these films are not purely constructed as communicative actualization of cultural memory artifacts. Cultural memory artifacts are but one visual element. They intersperse the filmic space. However, the main motif of type B films (representing walks) is the city. They also document place as emplacement, here comprising the spatial parameters of the capital of Luxembourg. While their style pertains to a perceived neutrality of objective recording, the choice of subject matter includes a transformation of place and transposes it as emplacement. Emplacement represents the isomorphic equivalent to emplotment as seen above. Whereas filmmakers emplot themselves in the social and the communal and the historical strata of the city, these narrations are furthered by the transformative rendition of place as emplacement.

The city is filmed and thus construed selectively. Back alleys, dirty bins, ugly tower blocks, etc. are consciously left out in the amateur film. Filmmakers construct a version of the city that allows for a self-emplacement in the historical and the communal. Here the city itself is concerned as a physical manifestation of heritage. This pertains to the spatiality of type B films. The city itself is documented, and the

self-narration that is displayed functions as emplacement in heritage. Heritage is here taken as affectively charged awareness of a shared historical reconstruction of the past. It pertains to this sense of shared spatiality and shared reconstructions of the past. Sharon MacDonald relates to the emplacement in heritage as follows: ‘In heritage it is through place—and its specific physical elements, such as buildings or natural feature—that the past is made present.’⁶⁸ This past is furthermore materialized on film. Filmmakers take the opportunity to actualize the immateriality of their relation to the past and thus are able to inscribe themselves in a shared sense of emplacement. Historical narratives are materialized in cultural memory artifacts. In these films they are furthermore emplaced in the city. The city, in all its facets, itself pertains to place. The city as reconstructed by the selective views chosen by the filmmaker transposes it as emplacement that frames the self-narration.

The city is transformed as place and at the same time delivers visual and spatial demarcations of emplacement. MacDonald defines this sense of transformation from place to emplacement: ‘Places are publicly imbued with time-depth through reference to historical narratives, and their historical content legitimated through institutions such as exhibitions, local history books and memorial plaques.’⁶⁹ The transformation the city undergoes in the film and the interspersed of filmed cultural memory artifacts concomitantly construe the city as emplacement suffused with time-depth.

A quick detour can help us understand the time-depth that transfers place as emplacement. The experience of place as emplacement is the result of a process that experiences a place as temporally layered. The pathological form of such an experience is officially termed the Stendhal syndrome. Vivian Sobchack illustrates what this syndrome entails most pertinently in the following: it relates to ‘a temporary set of symptoms that feature disorientation, panic, heart palpitations, loss of identity, fear and dizziness, and beset certain foreign tourists in cities like Florence and Venice, where centuries of intensely vivid art and architecture overwhelm them and destabilize both the grounded space on which they stand and their temporal mooring

⁶⁸ Macdonald, *Memorylands*, 94.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

in the present.’⁷⁰ It presents an experience of ‘losing one’s orientational moorings in a vertically elongated and polyphonic space-time that collapses and conflates past and future in and with what becomes a vertiginous and all-consuming present.’⁷¹ This experience thus recognizes the time-depth of place as layering induced by material structures from different time periods in which an individual is potentially lost. It can help explain how a city as emplacement presents different layers of different periodic past layers that are conflated in the present.

Type B filmmakers, however, do not have an uncanny experience, but use this layering as self-emplacement in the different strata. In fact, they use the time-depth of a place to construe this sense of emplacement in a community that shares place as emplacement. While the Stendhal syndrome results in a loss of identity, the filmmaking practice communicatively actualizes place as emplacement and thus inscribes the self at the endpoint of these layers. This allows for a secure positioning in which the temporal layers are not perceived as overwhelming but are synthesized from the end position in the filmmaking present. The organization and selectivity of filmmaking practice is used as an activity of materializing the layers in a concise and coherent manner, ending in the filmmaking present and thus construing the city as emplacement serving the formation coherent of identities.

Furthermore, not only does the inclusion of cultural memory artifacts legitimate historical content, their inclusion in the filmic city also serves to legitimate the historical emplacement of the self in larger historical narratives and shared space. Filmmakers valorize not only the cultural memory of a collective reconstruction of the past as shared; they also valorize their own narration through this embedment. Cultural memory artifacts as institutionalized objectifications are not contested in these films. Self-narration in the filmmaking practice here offers no contestation of cultural memories that are imposed from above—far from it. In fact, the films reinforce and thus add to the validity and perceived authenticity of cultural memory impositions. These artifacts construe the past as ordered space of shared sociality. They also narrate the nation as shared space of stability and security. The cultural

⁷⁰ Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 25.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

subjectforms that are offered here are taken up, not contested by the filmmaker. They offer emplacement in a larger community and emplotment in the historical, and they also legitimate the self-narration that inscribes them. What cannot be specifically read from the images is whether filmmakers narrate emplacement as positioned in the capital as national emplacement, the city as local space, or perhaps the city as part of the European centre. This is the diversification that makes a homogenous reading of subjectforms impossible.

What can be read from the visualization of the city is the notion of place transferred as emplacement. When people film the city they also re-appropriate, materialize, and ultimately transform place as emplacement. The city offers an emplacement that goes beyond the discursive nature provided by cultural memory artifacts as materializations of historical narratives. Emplacement as physical elements of “heritage [directs] attention to materiality, durability over time and value.”⁷² It provides an antidote to the immateriality that underlies the construction of historical narratives as cultural offers of subjecthood. Film materializes the latter. In visual narration individuals move through the city as emplacement as cultural offer for self-narration through memorial practice. As MacDonald notes: ‘If “memory” is understood as not only cognitive but as embodied or emplaced, such traces may be transmitted through, say, sedimented bodily movements or sculptural and architectural forms.’⁷³

Here both bodily movements (the roaming of the space of the city with camera in hand) and sculptural and architectural forms (the filming of specific buildings and visual markers) are communicatively actualized in film. ‘[T]he affective resonance of history presented as heritage’⁷⁴ emulates the memorial relation to historical narrative. The visualization of the process of memory-making as means for self-narration is also affectively infused by the search for stability and duration in shared communality. The materiality of buildings and streets provides a sense of durability and security (the belief and value that they have been there for centuries and hopefully will be for many more). The sense of being emplaced also relates to a sense of being emplotted

⁷² Macdonald, *Memorylands*, 17.

⁷³ Ibid., 94.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

in the community. This is the time-depth MacDonald sees as inherent to place. Emplacement and emplotment come to serve as two functions for the embedment of self-narration. These films that visualize the roaming of the city and the inclusion of cultural memory artifacts capture the material dimensions of belonging through a shared reconstruction of the past. The use of intertitles furthermore visually inscribes historical narratives in visualized self-narration.

The filming of memorial sites shares the same structures of emplotment—albeit not emplacement—as the depictions of walks taken through the city. Correspondingly, the memorial sites that are visited by the filmmaker present spatial parameters that can be freely wandered. This becomes important as it grants a filmmaker the freedom to selectively shape his/her visualization of the site. The images that are produced are thus a highly selective visualization of the memorial site as commemorative cultural artifact. Simply put, these sites offer the filmmaker the possibility to visually include and exclude according to personal choice. This would, for example, not be the case with type A visualizations that follow clearly demarcated stages. The engagement with cultural memory artifacts, here the site itself, but also the text panels, signs, and general illustrations that are provided onsite in museums, relate a similar engagement to the renditions of the city in which filmmakers include text panels, museum visits, and visual landmarks. The visual narration pertains to a comparable sense of self-inscription as emplotment in larger historical narratives.

However, it is also highly charged in a particular sense. The city presents a generalized inscription in the historical layering through a shared sense of past. Here this inscription becomes more particular, as filmmakers inscribe themselves into commemorative narratives of the Second World War. As these films were shot in the 1950s and 1960s, we can assume the filmmaker to have his own particular experience of the war,⁷⁵ whether that experience was military or not. Filmmakers here take the commemorative constructions of the memorial site as a larger frame in which to inscribe their own experience. Rather than a generalized sense of belonging through emplotment and emplacement, filmmakers take in the past as institutionalized historical narrative that helps emplot their own autobiographical experience in larger

⁷⁵ Note from the author : within this corpus the films depicting commemorative sites and memorial artifacts were exclusively shot by male filmmakers

narrative formation. This allows an inclusion of their particularity in a larger historical framework. Self-narration and self-inscription serves a valorizing meaning-generation. The visual narration that is displayed in these films also introduces an awareness of the inexpressibility of the particularity of individual war experience.

We need to tread carefully here, however. The depiction of war memorials, commemorative sites, and the American cemetery can be seen to include the impossibility to narrate a particular wartime experience. These filmmakers seek to reconstruct a past that was largely inexpressible on film in its own time. During the war cameras and film equipment were generally not as available, even if photographic equipment was certainly used by forced recruits, for example.⁷⁶ This corpus, however, does not include films taken during the wartime years. Second, the inclusion of commemorative sites offers valorizing and authenticating (because officially sanctioned) narratives that can be taken up and re-appropriated by these filmmakers. The interpretation of these narrations without meta-context can result in an interpretative imposition upon the self-narration of each particular filmmaker. Nevertheless, the inclusion of these sites, and their predominant existence within films that were shot in the 1950s and 1960s, give an indication of their significance for each filmmaker. What is revealed through the inclusion of commemorative sites is a taking up of cultural offers provided by institutional narratives within the autobiographical narration of the films.

Whether an inclusion of these commemorative artifacts and sites leads to a successful meaning generation and whether the visual narration can lead to a meaningful recollective narrative, is questionable. Nevertheless, the filmic engagement seeks personal validation and understanding in larger offers of narrativization. It reveals an embedment in the cultural sedimentation of historical narrative. Again, visual narrations give indications of a desire for further recollective narratives. At the most basic level, filmmaking is a medium of self-expression that mirrors the processes of meaning-making in general and in the everyday. While the medium always induces a

⁷⁶ For examples, please see : Fédération des Enrôlés de force, Archives. <http://www.ons-jongen-a-meedercher.lu/archives/personnes/vuillermoz-georges/documents>. (accessed November 30th 2016).

transformation of said process, its visual narration follows basic structures of how individuals self-emplot and express their life, their place, and their others. The manner in which an individual understand him/herself is thus always also ‘against the horizon of the history in which they find themselves involved.’⁷⁷ As Jürgen Straub notes: ‘We understand both what happens to us and the attitude we assume toward it *historically*; we understand our present situation, our present activity or inactivity, and finally our plans for the future, in part *historically*.’⁷⁸ This is basic emplotment and emplacement as self-inscription in narratives that are also offered historically.

Nevertheless, ‘the destabilising effects of death, injury, separation and other problems of readjustment’⁷⁹ can lead to a discord or even impossibility of particular knowledge and meaning-generation. The visual narration and inclusion of commemorative sites can also hint at darker backdrops of an experience that is perceived as inexpressible and thus to the desire to embed said particular experience in larger historical narratives. As stated again and again, the visual narration here pertains to personal storytelling. Nicholson relates to the visual narration revealed by amateur films in the following: ‘Approaching amateur film involves questions of knowledge formations, memory gathering, story-telling and self-reflexivity.’ She also alludes to the more unsettling sides that underlie narration: ‘This catapults image interpretation from the chronicling of seemingly happy families, communities and national well-being into psychically more unsettling worlds of imaginary construct, fictive belonging and uncertainty.’⁸⁰ The narration and inclusion of cultural memory artifacts can thus also come to represent an uncertainty and imaginary construct of an inexpressible particular experience in an inscription in officially sanctioned narratives.

Again, we witness a pendulum movement in which the visual narration can serve as self-inscription in larger historical narratives and at the same time, draws legitimation and valorization from the embedment in private. Amateur filmmakers filming

⁷⁷ Straub, Jürgen. ‘Telling Stories, Making History Toward a Narrative Psychology of the Historical Construction of Meaning’. Straub, *NARRATION, IDENTITY, AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS*, 44.

⁷⁸ Straub, Jürgen. ‘Telling Stories, Making History Toward a Narrative Psychology of the Historical Construction of Meaning’. *Ibid.*, 44–45.

⁷⁹ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 10.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

memorial sites and cultural memory artifacts thus proliferate and reinforce the perceived authenticity and authority of said discursive and institutional knowledge production, while also using the narratives provided as cultural offers of subjectforms that allow for emplacement and emplotment in a larger historical frame from a private point of view. However the films that do include memorial sites and artifacts focus mostly on sites that commemorate the dead of the allied forces (such as the American cemetery in Luxembourg or the site in Bastogne) and the victims that were interned in the concentration camp in Mauthausen as shown in the example above. What is left out, for example, are monuments and memorials that relate to forced recruitment. What proves interesting here, at least in the corpus that was analyzed, is the fact that the selectivity of subject matter excludes the commemoration of forced recruits, given the struggle for recognition of forced recruits that shaped the public discourse and that accompanied the question of retribution in the 1960s and 1970s.⁸¹ If such memorial sites would have been included, the camera could have functioned in terms of political tool. This is, however, not the case here. Here filmmakers inscribe their narration in the visualization of cultural memory artifacts that pertain to the past, not a struggle for recognition in the present, for example.

The construction of a private visual archive—in spite of its private existence—still adds to the proliferation of cultural memory articulations. Dejung explains: ‘Denn nur wenn Geschichtsbilder öffentlich verbreitet werden, können sie zu einem relevanten Bestandteil des Deutungsrepertoires einer sozialen Gruppe werden.’⁸² Nevertheless, ‘individuelle Erinnerungen beruhen in der Regel *auch* auf persönlichen Erlebnissen und verweisen damit auf die Erfahrung einer historischen Realität.’⁸³ The wartime

⁸¹ for further information please see: Schoentgen, Marc. "Zwischen Erinnern und Vergessen. "Das Gedenken an den Zweiten Weltkrieg in den 1950er Jahren"". Claude Wey, *Le Luxembourg des années 50: une société de petite dimension entre tradition et modernité = Luxemburg in den 50er Jahren : eine kleine Gesellschaft im Spannungsfeld von Tradition und Modernität* (Luxembourg: Musée d'histoire de la ville de Luxembourg, 1999), 265–95.

⁸² ‘For a view of history must be publically distributed if it is to become a relevant component of a social group’s repertoire of interpretation.’ Dejung, “Oral History Und Kollektives Gedächtnis. Für Einen Sozialhistorische Erweiterung Der Erinnerungsgeschichte”. 102–3.

⁸³ ‘individual memories are generally *also* based on personal experiences, and thus refer to the experience of a historic reality.’ Ibid., 105.

experience and the filming of commemorative sites thus also always illustrate ‘den Stellenwert von bestimmten Erfahrungen für die biographische Identität.’⁸⁴ The experience of the war, without a doubt, represents an incisive and trenchant biographical experience. Here it is articulated with the help of cultural offers of subjectforms that offer an emplotment in the larger historical narrative, one materialized through cultural memory artifacts. The notion of emplacement is eclipsed. After all, it is uncertain whether these filmmakers were ever in a concentration camp, fought at Bastogne, or knew someone that is now laid to rest at the American cemetery, even though the possibility exists. What the inclusion of the memorial site in Bastogne reveals is how the memorial practice extends beyond the geographical parameters of Luxembourg. Filmmakers consciously travel to these commemorative sites and thus display a transnational movement that positions the victims of the war as emplotted rather than emplaced. Here, the shared reconstruction of a past experience narrates an emplotment in the historical narratives that is however not bound to emplacement within the country.

As we have seen, the temporal incentive here is strongly inflected by the reconstruction of a past in the present. The archival impulse, while somewhat weakened in contrast to type A and C motifs, still opens towards the future. What becomes significant here, however, is the fact that filmmakers do not offer their own intertitles. They do not inscribe historical narratives in their own filmic language, but they exclusively use the historical narratives that are presented as text panels in museums. They communicatively actualize the cultural offers of narratives provided. Whether the wartime experience can ever be infused with a recollective narrative that allows for complete inscription is questionable. Still, the films imply significance from their communicative actualization. First of all, they materialize the incomprehensible, and second, they display a clear incentive to archive the seen and thus counteract forgetting. The inclusion of these memorial sites can also refer to a desire to inform future generations. Filmmakers do take their children to the American cemetery and to Bastogne. This can also relate to a wish to actualize the experience of the war in an instilment of awareness in future generations.

⁸⁴ ‘the importance of certain experiences for biographical identity.’
Ibid., 106.

Films depicting visits to memorial sites thus reconstruct a reconstruction of the past. They use filmmaking as communicative actualizations of their self-inscription in history. The main incentive with these particular images seems to lie in self-inscription in order to infuse the particular biographical experience with a legitimized offer of meaning through the cultural offers of memorial sites and cultural memory artifacts.

Type A and B films thus display an inherent extension beyond the private as sole meaningful space of social interaction. They visualize the inscription of the self into larger societal and historical formations and present a dissolution of clearly demarcated public and private spaces. They come to show how individuals self-narrate and also engage with cultural offers of historical narratives. This makes the visual space of the amateur filmic world a fluctuating and ever open engagement. It presents itself as much more complex than a definition of the nostalgic resuscitation of the happy family in the home movie. The willingness that underlies these films is the production of images that re-appropriate cultural memory artifacts in order to serve as foundation for recollective narratives that embed the self in history and the communal. The mode that is displayed here, without forgetting its inclusion within film collections that *also* use the family chronicle mode, comes to reveal familialism's separation of the public and the private as artificial construction. Here filmmakers open towards the public. They further the cultural memorial narratives offered by institutional discourse and re-appropriate these cultural offers in the private.

5.3. Type C: Narrating the private through documentation

Type C contents present yet another differentiated variety of motifs that are depicted as documentation. Here, the images are not produced in either public (institutional) spaces nor do they include cultural edifices, buildings, sites, or artifacts.

In fact, type C visuals and content adopt the stylistic features of the d&a drive and apply them to the private space. Still, we need to further distinguish between two varieties of type C in terms of content. In order to clarify these distinctions in terms of

images, I propose yet a further division of the type C visual content into two subcategories, type C-1 and type C-2.

5.3.1. The home

This type of record-production pertains to different acts of chronicling of the domestic even if it only indirectly relates to family and children. Certain filmmakers will chronicle or document the construction of their home, house, or garden and will produce a visualized developmental record of the progress. They will follow principles of linear progression by trailing a material advancement from, for example, a hole in the ground, to basic structures of the outer walls, to the finished building of the family home. In some cases, filmmakers will visually follow the construction of an entire suburb being built.

R.M.⁸⁵ mostly films in a family chronicle style. He loves to focus on his toddler daughter and keeps zooming and panning to follow her. Most of the time he focuses on his daughter's face in a medium close-up and displays a filmic interest in all her activities. The surrounding location is not as important as the narrow focus on his daughter. One sequence is shot in a different mode however. He documents their house being built. He includes the construction site with a half-finished house onto which their house will presumably be attached. He also includes the workers hired to do the construction and films them engaged in different activities, from shoveling sand to mixing concrete.

Figure 8



⁸⁵ AV036447, no info on material, black and white, mute, no date



His daughter is present at the construction site, and he takes care to include her as well. She is seen helping the men building a wall.



We must assume the filming took place over several different occasions, since we can discern a clear progress in terms of construction. He focuses on the men working on stone and filling the base of the house. In one sequence we can already discern progress. They are no longer working on the base, but have moved on to the walls.



From thereon the shots depict the men moving on to the woodwork and beams that provide the structure for the roof.



We then see men working on the steel construction of the house, and in a further sequence we can see gravel being delivered, presumably in order to line the front driveway to the house. Then we see the men laying the very foundations of the inside flooring.



Next, the inside walls are constructed from brick and mortar. After the construction of the ground floor, he documents the progress made with the second story. Alas, it starts to snow heavily and work comes to a halt, a fact he documents as well in filming the construction site covered in snow.



Work soon resumes, and he films the fine grinding work of cutting the timber beams for the rooftop. As the roof is being built, he films from the very top of the house and thus positions their houses' locality within the village. This is an important contextualization of the documentation of their family home being built. Finally, the last shingles are laid on the rooftop and the construction of their house is complete and the documentation ceases. The next films in the collection again focus on his daughter.



He has clearly and consecutively documented the building of their family home. He has started with the laying of the foundations and documented every stage until completion.

The documentation of economic ascendancy in the form of material objects such as new cars also marginally falls into this category as they also come to reinforce notions of progression or linearity in autobiographical narrative. In rare cases, the d&a filmmaker will select the family as visual motif while adopting a d&a style. One of the most avid d&a filmmakers in the corpus chronicles the upbringing of his daughter by introducing intertitles stating the exact age (down to the month) of the child throughout his film collection.

E.H.⁸⁶ starts the film collection with several shots taken from a panoramic platform in Luxembourg City. In a clear d&a style he frames the city in open long shots and slowly pans to include the railway bridge that crosses from the north to the city centre. As such, he presents images that show type A motifs. What becomes surprising is that when he films his daughter he contextualizes her in the same

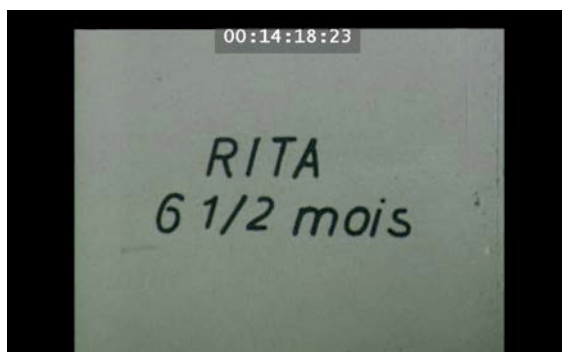
⁸⁶ AV035958 / IA_AMA_001888, 8mm, black and white and color, mute, 1958

manner. She is always filmed in centre frame. While the surround is not important here, the images are nevertheless clear and concise. He does not move the camera a great deal, and he does not zoom erratically. He documents his daughter's growing up and intersperses the images with titles stating the precise age of the baby.

Figure 9

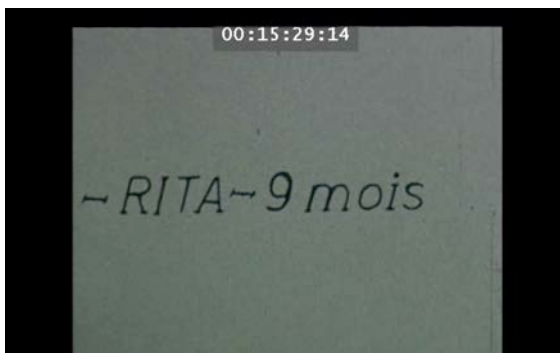


In between he films visits to the park and to the fairground, always keeping the focus clearly on their daughter, even if the mother is in frame.





The viewer gets a real sense of the baby growing up. This, of course, to a certain degree is also true of every family chronicle. The introduction of the titles stating the age of the child, however, adds to the sense of documentation of the latter's growing up.



Here home life is chronicled by filmic means following a d&a drive. This style is at once more proficient or medium-affine than that of the family chronicle filmmakers. At the same time, it introduces a certain distance between filmmaker and subject as the motivational impulses underlying the aesthetics of the film follow a documentary,

observational, or archiving function rather than proceeding along an interactional or participatory logic that is always also highly emotionally invested.

Type C-1 visuals thus adopt a d&a style while producing visual narratives that are mostly characterized by a progressive or developmental structure. The visual content here is emplaced in the domestic and the autobiographical. It needs to be added that type C-1 visuals are relatively rare within the corpus, as most people use a family chronicle style as identified in chapter one to filmically relate to the domestic and familial.

5.3.2. The workspace

The second type, or type C-2, adopts the same style as type C-1, but instead of focusing on domestic space, these visual contents focus on work or communal life. The sites documented here are collective and communal spaces, but visualized from an individual and autobiographical perspective that uses the d&a style as manner of engagement. The popularity of documenting the workspace seems especially popular in the 1960s and 1970s. D&a filmmakers specifically filmed the ‘Schmelz’ as the steel industry in the South of Luxembourg proved one of the major employers in the country.

G.J.⁸⁷ provides us with wonderful imagery taken within the blast furnaces of the Schmelz. I need to confess my complete ignorance as to the process depicted here. The only thing I could discern were the transpiration of coal to fuel the blast furnace and the melting of the cast iron for further steel construction. He starts by filming the steel workers throwing scrap metal into the blast in order to melt it. He then films the blast coming out of the furnace.

⁸⁷ AV032920 / IA_AMA_001674, super 8, color, mute, ca. 1975

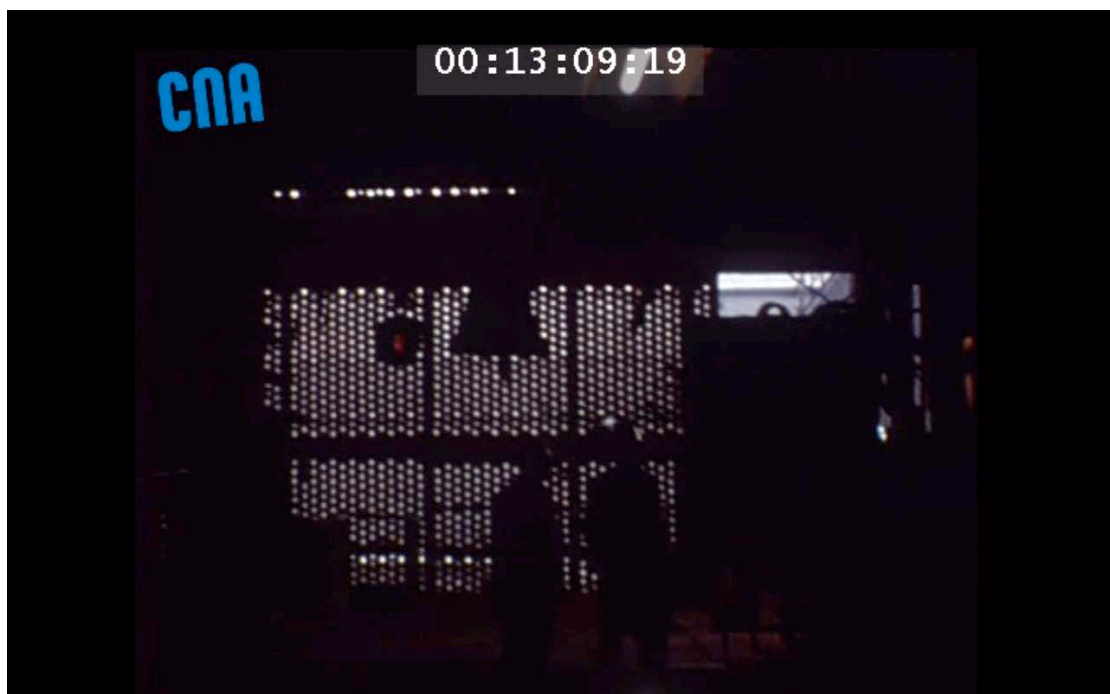
Figure 10



He stays clear of the blast and keeps the camera running in a medium shot. One of the men is casually smoking a cigarette. As the cast iron has melted, he films the men scraping out every last bit out of the melting crucible.



He also films the gate to the furnace hall complete with a red light that presumably prohibits entrance.



He furthermore films the delivery of coal in a massive spade-shaped vessel.



J.G. takes care to clearly and understandably document every stage of the steel manufacturing. He also includes the safety precautions in the form of the red light, and he films his (presumed) colleagues engaging in their work activity.

Type C-2 motifs also include unnamed construction sites, which remain unknown in terms of location since metadata or verbal context provided by the filmmaker rarely survives. Without metadata or context it proves impossible to state whether the construction sites visualized represent the workplace of the filmmaker or simply a place of interest. The sole thing that survives in these images is the willingness to document them in a careful and understandable manner in the first place. While we can discern what construction site is depicted and probably what is produced on site, we can no longer see where they are located if the filmmaker does not include a name or street sign, which they rarely do.

N.K.⁸⁸ films a construction site at the banks of the riverside. From the surrounding landscape we can discern that he is most probably located in the East of Luxembourg with its hilly vineyards, which would make the river depicted the Moselle. As the filmmaker here does not give us a street or village sign, we cannot be sure, however.

⁸⁸ AV036201 / IA_AMA_002913, 8mm, color, 1965

Still, he displays a clear willingness to document a site of construction that is deemed significant.

Figure 11



The construction site fits the documenting style perfectly, since it follows a progressive and developmental order and the end result is often deemed significant for the community or the family. Here filmmakers clearly film in order to construe a notion of general visual archive as the progressive construction becomes significant as piece of local or personal history.

These motifs clearly relate to the workspace as an interesting intersection between public and private space. The filmic view translates a private view on the public aspect of work, a space that is furthermore shared collectively by colleagues. Boundaries between public and private are most discernibly blurred.

5.3.3. The private space as progressive

Type C subject matter becomes interesting in that it documents the private or semi-private. The subject matter here shows a willingness to inscribe the private space but combines it with the offer of documentation that the camera provides. Here filmmakers document and thus inscribe their own everyday with the valorization that is offered by the documentation of the film camera. Family chronicles use the camera in a similar manner to snapshot photography. They produce snippets of visuality that is deemed significant in later viewing. They participate in family life through the camera even though, as we have seen, the inherent power relations that underlie the cultural codification of the family film still influence said participation. However, the motivation of the family film does not lie in documentation. The family film produces visual fragments that serve as interpretative base for later recollection. The choice of applying the documenting style to the private is differently inflected. As type A does,

it displays an ethnographic impulse that captures the private in documenting the present for future reference. It seeks to imbue the visual with significance from a position of future looking back.

For example, filmmakers documenting the progressive linear development of house constructions, suburbs, or construction sites in their village adhere to the representational promises that underlie the filmic medium, rather than use the medium as extension of the photographic impulse. Filmmakers here use and reinforce the positivist values of ordering classification and progressive linearity that were so adamantly expected of the film medium. Naturally the documenting impulse was already inherently present in the photographic medium. However, in documenting the construction of a house, for example, the inherent capacity for producing moving imagery reinforces the notions of ordering classification and progressive linearity. A promise enters the equation in which time (here as progressive move) can be archived through the filmic medium. Naturally, the images here follow the same sequential logic that a photographic rendition would present. They show different stages one after the other in the awareness that retrospectively, the notion of linear progression leads to a future stability when the family can look back upon these images and inscribe themselves in a stable and coherent personal history. Film adds to the progressive logic of sequential images in a further documentation of progression *within* the filmic sequences. Filmmakers could capture the *movement* of progression, rather than the stages of progression.

The second subject matter pertains to the capturing of the workspace. What becomes significant here is the fact that filmmakers seem to film their workspace predominantly if they are employed in professions that involve manual labor. Filmmakers in the service industry do not film in the office. Filmmakers working at a construction site in whatever capacity or, especially, filmmakers working at the Schmelz, document the everyday activity that offers itself more favorably to film. This again pertains to the inherent capacity of film to capture movement as sequencing. The process involved in the production of a physical product lends itself perfectly to a medium that promises the archiving of sequencing and thus the larger implications of progress that underlies industrializing production processes. Filmmakers could capture the progressive movement involved in the production

process. This, of course, is not possible to visualize in more abstract conceptions of office work. The visualization of progress in movement is thus an inherent aspect of filmmakers who document their workspace.

In a double inflection they capture what they deem significant, such as the construction of the family home, but the filming of an event also imposes significance upon it. As Heather Norris Nicholson states: ‘The transformative power of cinematic intervention means that even ordinary occasions gain significance when captured on film.’⁸⁹ The event is deemed significant enough to warrant filming. At the same time, the filming imbues the event with further valorization. This is the double inflection that underlies all filmmaking. Here, however, the adherence to the beliefs of authenticity that underlie the documenting style furthermore valorize the private by an adoption of a style that is perceived as more official and in fact mimics the adoption of an institutionalized approach. The filmic medium can visualize and thus actualize the values of progressive development. The visual narration that is adopted pertains to visualization of values of progressive development in order for a future construction of narrative recollections that promise stability through linearity. Here stability as one of the main motivations underlying all private imaging production is not inferred by the construction of a common verbal metanarrative that reinforces and re-constructs the individual in the familial. Rather, the filmmakers adopting a d&a style in the private allows the construction of stabile recollection as premeditatively produced within the image and through the style of documentation. The progressive movement as valorization is constructed within the selectivity that underlies the images. The construction of a visual narration that stresses progressive movement and developmental linearity allows for the construction of a visual template that already inflects the later recollective narrative as stable, ordered, and thus meaningful.

Naturally, the later construction of recollective narratives also imbues the images with significance in the viewing situation. Still, the adoption of a documenting style also translates as the adoption of an officially sanctioned approach of linearity, stability, and homogeneity that is offered by the filmic medium, itself influenced by a positivist inflection. Amateurs do not produce narratives that engage self-reflectively with

⁸⁹ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 108.

positivism as historiographic movement. They only adopt the intrinsic promise that underlies film as archival storage and documenting device. The emergence of amateur filmmaking against a postwar backdrop resuscitates the positivist offer of homogenous linearity that also accompanied the very birth of the filmic medium against a backdrop of modernist instabilities and restructurations. Applied to the private space, filmmakers here adopt the cultural offer that was provided by and accompanied the emergence of the medium of film. The visualization of progression as movement thus structures the adoption of the d&a style to the private. The concept of progression as overall structure functions according to different self-inscriptions that can be partially, if never conclusively, read from the image.

The notion of progression can pertain to the self-inscription in a movement of economic ascendancy. As we have seen in chapter one, the postwar years saw a nation-wide ascendancy in terms of economic growth. The newly emergent steel industry and the establishment of the international banking system in the 1960s brought prosperity on a national level. Concomitantly, in the private space ‘cine-cameras became an affordable accessory to record and memorialise early years of national peace and economic reconstruction.’⁹⁰ Filmmakers materialize the immateriality of an inscription in economic and social changes on film. ‘Cameras monitored other shifts in family and economic status, including the move to a new house, buying a car and the first (and subsequent) holiday abroad.’⁹¹ The visualization of house construction; the development of new suburbs; the general growth of consumption in the private with the introduction of household conveniences; cars; and the distinctly middle-class leisure time activities of holidays and outings here translate as self-inscription into economic and social growth. Nicholson concurs: ‘These intimate family scenes reveal the textures of everyday living amidst inherited hierarchies of social order, cohesion and respectability even as new housing schemes, household gadgets and cars seem like visible harbingers of domestic, economic and ideological change.’⁹²

⁹⁰ Ibid., 10–11.

⁹¹ Ibid., 11.

⁹² Ibid., 107.

While Nicholson talks about the family film specifically, the d&a mode displays a furthering of this visualization in that it *intends* its visualization. It materializes the immateriality of values and ideals of progression as stability. The documentation of houses, suburbs, and construction sites does not produce imagery as concomitant by-product to the depiction of the family. Here, filmmakers deliberately set out to narrate progress as a self-inscription in economic growth that is always also a narration of success and financial stability. This can alternately be interpreted as a visualization of a personal success story that is documented for future reference. It can also hint at a deeper insecurity born out of an awareness of former instability and want that characterized preceding decades. The visualization of personal economic growth and success valorizes and legitimates the self as socially successful and is thus always also codified by a middle-class status quo. Concomitant to social status, the filmic narration here is also gender-specific. Within the corpus analyzed here, only men produce films shot in the workspace. The workspace becomes a significant part of male self-narration.

Adhering to ideological codifications of progression as success that is suggested by the inscription in consumption, filmmakers can validate and legitimate as well as reinforce their personal story as self-narration sanctioned by the media offers underlying the camera. The autobiographical narrative is here narrated as a twofold inflection of an inscription in material, social, and economic status, but also pertains to a desired ‘guarantee’ of retrospective stability. When filmmakers document the private, they relate to their material progression predominantly. The documenting of the family is more rare, even though it does exist, as we have seen above. If children are filmed in a documenting style, they are presented as part of the successful self-narration. Such documentation does not exclude an emotional motivation. It is however differently inflected in that it embeds children in visual progression. It reveals a willingness to produce a documentation of the progressive stages of family life in a visual archive. While the family film also presents an adherence to linearity in the familial; here, the images are also universally understandable and reflectively ordered according to ideologically sanctioned principles of homogeneity, linearity, consumption, and promises of stability and meaning.

The documentation of the workspace relates to an inscription, first of all, in a progression that follows the production of a physical object or material, and secondly, functions to inscribe the self in a larger formation of the work community. Here, however, the meta-context of biographical information presents a crucial difference in the self-inscriptions that are displaced. While it is certainly true that the lower cost of imaging technologies rendered them affordable for a new class market, they were far from affordable to everyone. When filmmakers film construction sites, for example, their gaze is inflected differently depending on whether they film from a position of worker or foreman. The power relations are quite simply differently dispersed. If filmmakers are part of the construction team, they film from an equalizing position in that they film their colleagues and inscribe themselves in the space that becomes communal through their shared laboring activities. Without the biographical background of the filmmaker, we can never conclusively unravel which specific offer of inscription the filmmaker actualizes through the visual narration. However, if filmmakers provide intertitles, their self-inscription (apart from representing a literal inscription in the visual through the title) becomes clearer.

J.B.⁹³ has donated numerous film collections from his private archive to the CNA. From his film collections we gain implicit knowledge of his biography, because he provides us with said information. Naturally, we are only provided with biographical markers that he deems suitable for inclusion. He displays a conclusive pride in filming his house, a mansion with a park surrounding it. From his films we also learn that he owns a company manufacturing heavy machinery. He films a steamroller that was constructed by his company. He films the machinery being operated by workers of his company and introduces the following intertitles: ‘*Cette élégante machine demande des soins tous spéciaux*’ (‘this elegant machine needs its own special care’). What J.B. displays is the pride he takes in his machinery, which he terms elegant. The elegance of a steamroller being contestable, what proves interesting here is the inclusion of, but not focus on, his workers. What becomes part of the image is an inscription of power in the gaze of the camera as directed towards subordinates that have no say in whether they want to be filmed. He includes them as part of his self-narration, but within the filmic universe, he denies them their own. A further notion of

⁹³ VII2034/000013, no info on material, black and white, mute, 1951-1952

interest lies in the sales lingo he adopts. In fact, his intertitles often read as self-marketing practice. 'Cine equipment offered a new democratic means of participating in everyday life as amateur filmmakers found themselves in the role of commentators, journalists, record-makers and chroniclers at local and civic level.'⁹⁴ J.B. produces imagery that sells his product. His images resemble catalogue images advertising his product. J.B. does not inscribe himself in the communality of the work experience. He imposes a managerial gaze upon his company of which his workers are part. As Nicholson observes: 'Shooting scenes of working practices as part of self-marketing [...] readily appealed to amateur cine users within the region's managerial and professional classes.'⁹⁵

The inscription here presents itself differently from that of a worker filming the production process at the Schmelz, even though we can again not be certain from what position the gaze is directed in that particular case either. Nevertheless, what can be read from the visual narration that these filmmakers provide is a self-inscription in the workspace as space of meaningful interaction and self-narration. Filmmakers narrate themselves as in a progressive movement that is first of all linked to the construction and thus developmental logic of a production process, and second, to a larger formation of progress as value of success. Here notions of being a valuable member through labor and economic contributions to their society certainly play a part as well. They display a willingness to inscribe their particularity into the generality of the societal and the workforce.

A further motivation also pertains to the construction of a general visual archive in the private of work practices, activities, and craftsmanship that are infused with an awareness of their potential disappearance. J.C.,⁹⁶ for example, films a pottery demonstration.

⁹⁴ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 7.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ AV022985_m-1.wmv / IA_AMA_00780, super 8, color, mute, no date

Figure 12



F.M.⁹⁷ also focuses on the documentation of pottery craft as part of his self-narration in tradition.

Figure 13



⁹⁷ AV034421 IA_AMA_003280, 8mm, b&w and color, mute, Entre 1962-1963



Other popular motifs engage with local traditions, such as the traditional manufacturing of lace by hand, filmed while on holiday. The impulse to document tradition thus extends beyond the local and is included in the tourist gaze that also commodifies heritage.

For example, G.H.⁹⁸ avidly documents the local tradition and heritage during his family visit to Scotland. He films the traditional display of bagpipes and the players adorned in traditional garments that are already reconstructions of a local past that is commodified for the tourist gaze.

Figure 14



He then takes ample time to film the local fishermen as an exotic and nostalgic display of a local custom (at least in his narration, if, of course not the fishermen's). Here the power relation that lies within the tourist gaze commodifies the handiwork of the fishermen as touristic display of a local tradition.

⁹⁸ AV031296 / IA_AMA002317, 8mm, color, mute, 1959





They also visit a kirk in the Scottish countryside and film a woman selling traditional lace products in the car park of the kirk. A visual marker such as a sign or title is not included. The kirk is never specifically identified. It functions as generalized symbol of any one kirk as part of local heritage sites. He films a woman in traditional garment, selling lace products.



Here we witness what Sharon Macdonald identifies as the heritage industry, the commodification of a reconstructed version of local tradition for tourist enjoyment. The visualization is not as much a depiction of local customs as an illustration of how heritage becomes a touristic industry. The woman is not embedded in locality. She is standing in a car park and sells to tourists about to leave the site that in itself is already commodified as local heritage.

Nevertheless, what filmmakers display is an awareness of the potential loss of these crafts that are relegated more and more to the periphery of the artisanal, as machinist mass production becomes the predominant mode of production. The images here are also infused with nostalgic conceptions of traditional handiwork. The archiving impulse is thus strongly present in these images. The filmmaker visualizes a nostalgic

longing for a rootedness in tradition. The film materializes a situated rootedness in the visualizations of traditional handiwork. Through the documentation that follows progression as structural organization, the filmmaker is able to visually inscribe linearity to tradition always potentially marginalized in the everyday. Here the films present a fictional sense of linkage to a traditional past (or at least the idea[l] of said past). They can thus reaffirm the self-narration of the filmmaker in a sense of reallocation in the traditional.

The visualization of traditional craftsmanship extends beyond industrialization as principal mode of production. However, it is always also a fictional construction, as said traditional craftsmanship no longer exists in the filmmaking present. The documenting style retroactively actualizes progression as linearity that in this case originates in a pre-industrial past. Here filmmakers engage with what Sharon MacDonald terms ‘the nostalgia-entangled notions of tradition, heritage and authenticity.’⁹⁹ In fact, what the films visualize is the reification of tradition as lived linkage between people, places, materialities, and past and present. Because filmmakers film traditional crafts that have already mostly disappeared from the modern lifeworld, they construe a fictional inclusion of the self in lived tradition. The erosion of tradition relegates the latter to a fictional construct affectively charged by nostalgia (as sense of longing for a fictionalized past). The *impulse* that underlies what MacDonald terms ‘musealisation’ also underlies the willingness to fix visuality in a private archive: ‘Musealisation, thus, can be seen as a form of temporal anchoring in the face of loss of tradition and unsettlement brought about by the increased tempo of technological and related change.’¹⁰⁰ Here filmmakers infuse their own present with an authenticity they refer back to tradition. Within the same vein, however, the willingness to archive the traditional crafts again makes it part of what constitutes the filmmaker’s lifeworld. It provides the material and visual link from ‘theirs then’ to ‘ours now’.

⁹⁹ Macdonald, *Memorylands*, 90.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

6. Conclusion

The d&a mode as identified throughout this chapter is thus the most versatile of the filmic engagements that are identified throughout this work. The next chapter will examine attractional views taken at the fairground in Luxembourg City. These views come to represent a different engagement, however; their inflections are less versatile since they all pertain to the same subject matter, i.e. the fairground. The d&a mode, however, presents one of the most rewarding engagements since it comes to illustrate conclusively how the filmmaking practice reveals the multifarious ways of self-expression. On one level, its visual narrations reveal how filmmakers always engage with larger formations, how they narrate the self, their others, and their multi-complex relationalities of their lifeworld.

On another level, in their transferal from the private archive as repository of local memories to the institutional archive, these films become extremely valuable in terms of their private gaze on public spaces. While the relegation of films to the archive does not transform their status from that of communicative actualization to collective memories, since the performativity of the viewing situation is always lost, they nevertheless become a regional compendium of collected memories. These carefully constructed filmic renditions that document the filmmaker's present becomes documents illustrating not only how people lived at a certain time; they furthermore give important indications to how people narrate the self. The filmic visualizations thus also fill a gap of micro-historical engagements that are absent from institutionalized knowledge productions. They provide what Nico DeKlerk calls 'the upholstery for these disciplines.'¹⁰¹ These collected memories engaged in contemporaneity thus always and irreducibly open towards the future rather than the past. 'As Astrid Erll has recently pointed out: "[m]emories do not hold still—on the contrary, they seem to be constituted first of all through movement.'"¹⁰² These collected memories are always furthered either from an institutional site through their status as research object, or from a more informal side of people consulting these

¹⁰¹ DeKlerk, Nico. "Home Away from Home Private Films from the Dutch East Indies". *Mining the Home Movie*, 151.

¹⁰² Gregor Feindt et al., "ENTANGLED MEMORY: TOWARD A THIRD WAVE IN MEMORY STUDIES". *History and Theory*, Wesleyan University, 53 (February 2014): 33.

views from the past to further their own local memories and connect to these filmmaking presents from a point of view as shared past. As Nicholson states: 'Its visual associations trigger memories and ascribe meanings that extend far beyond those recorded on screen.'¹⁰³ Chapter five will provide a closer and more exhaustive examination of how the meaning that is imbued in visual narration here is engaged and furthered in the contemporaneous viewing situation.

What renders these images so valuable is their clear commitment to local record-productions and their inflection towards the future. These filmmakers take up the medial offers provided by the camera. The most surprising aspect of this engagement is how far it comes to mirror tendencies, beliefs, and values that underlie the very birth of the camera. The fluctuating movement between the public and the private and the introduction of the d&a mode within the collection, which also uses a family chronicle mode, comes to show how amateurs use the camera as means of self-expression extending beyond the familial as sole space of meaningful interaction. They provide the contemporaneous viewer with a window upon the past as shared social experiences. They visualize self-referential attitudes, bodily behaviour, and even humorous engagements with a past and particular lifeworld.

Filmmakers who feel compelled to document their everyday in the local, communal, and historical also display 'a strong sense of public duty.'¹⁰⁴ The multi-complexities in terms of self-inscriptions and narrations, as well as their emphasis on sociality and communality, present and highlight individual difference rather than homogenous inscriptions. Nicholson sees the transferal of the amateur film to the institutional archive as a movement in which '[p]articularities give way to generalities'¹⁰⁵. While this statement can refer to the sedimented cliché instrumentality of the family film, the d&a mode presents a different case. The multi-complexities in terms of inflections, self-inscriptions, and individual interpretations of cultural offers of subjectforms in fact reinforce the particularities of each personal self-narration. Ironically, then, filmmakers setting out to document and inscribe themselves in communality end up producing visual records that illustrate more about their specific

¹⁰³ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 107.

¹⁰⁴ Nicholson, "Picturing the Past". 83.

¹⁰⁵ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 110.

position from which they construct situated knowledge than the family film that positions the self in the familial. Films displaying a d&a mode come to map out and ultimately transform communal, local, and historical landscapes from particular and private point of views. In the end, the documenting and archiving impulse that underlies the production of these images serves us well and proves them right.

III. VIEWS OF AN ATTRACTIVE DISPLAY

1. Introduction

Chapters one and two have identified two main filmic modes within amateur filmmaking. These modes predominantly govern the practice. There is, however, a third manner of filmic engagement I have identified. This mode neither fits completely within a family chronicle style nor does it attempt to document the everyday. Furthermore, the films in this mode are exclusively taken at the Schobermesse in Luxembourg City. While most of the films taken at the fairground display the same filmic modes that have been identified as family chronicle style or documentation, certain moments stand out. These moments present images that are included for their pure attractional qualities. They present distinct engagements with attractional views exclusively found at the fairground.

These distinct views come to stand not so much for a filmic mode or coherent style as they come to stand as visual outbursts within the remainder of the film collection. These visual outbursts present images that function as attractional display and will from hereon out be termed ‘ad’ views. Within these views I have furthermore delineated three different types of engagement with the offered attractions of the fairground. First, filmmakers capture gears and levers in motion. The inclusion of such views proves as surprising as they were never intended to function as an attraction at the fairground. Second, filmmakers construe images of an abstract nature pertaining to lights in motion. I will engage with these moments last within this chapter, as they come to symbolize the epitome of attractional displays in terms of their electrified spectacle of surface and their deliberate creation. And third, some filmmakers create images that carry distinct similarities to early cinema phantom rides as they film on thrill rides and from the Ferris wheel.

What makes these images stand out is that they seem to serve no further purpose. Neither can they be used to retrospectively construct a coherent narrative within the

familial, nor do they display a concrete willingness to archive aspects of public life. These moments do not adhere to processes of self-narration or self-inscription. They come to present moments of pure aesthetic pleasure. In the following I will relate to these images not so much in terms of narration as I will examine the question of what constitutes an attractional view in the first place. What interests me here is how amateurs constitute the fair as filmic universe and how they engage the fairground as spectacle. Their images both show how attention (as filmic focus) can be inadvertently drawn at the fairground and also deliberately further the attraction of the fairground in their creation of attractional images. What these views visualize is how vision itself is reorganized at the fairground. I will come to relate to this reorganization in terms of a modernist restructuring of perception.

The attractional views of the fairground constitute the latter as a visual universe that emulates and functions as architecture of vision that finds its origin in modernist restructurations. As we will come to see, the cultural movement of modernism, as consequential effect of the innovations of modernity, saw a direct restructuring of visibility as interior and autonomous capacity to visibility as exterior imposition. The fairground functions according to a modernist architecture of vision that restructures perception according to spectacle in that it uses attractional views as exterior impetuses. These impetuses function as indexes that draw attention. The functioning of attractional impetuses as exterior stimulant comes to function according to a modernist restructuring that relegated vision as autonomously and interiorly centered in the body to the guiding of focus from the outside.

In the following I will examine how the filmic universe of the fairground visualizes the very restructuring of perception as a distinctly modernist *effect*. Attraction is here taken as an impetus to attention. It furthermore carries a concomitant affective charge in terms of fascination and thrill. Attractions are thus taken as an incentive impetus; they come to stand for the action of drawing attention while also representing an affective charge of wonderment. Attraction is taken as threefold in the following: it represents the action of drawing in, it represents the affective impact as consequential to this draw, and it stands for the more conventional use in describing the entertainments of the fairground. As Wanda Strauven notes: ‘The first definition

of attraction given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is ‘the action of drawing or sucking in’,¹ while

‘[t]he second sense of attraction, on the other hand, is the most common one in our field: it concerns the attraction value of different forms of entertainment. Very generally, attraction stands for “center of interest,” for that which attracts people (e.g. tourist attraction); more specifically, it can refer to a spectacle, a (variety, circus, cinema, etc.) show, or—in Eisenstein’s theory—to one of the “peak moments” of a (variety, circus, cinema, etc.) show.’²

Attraction is here also presented as the sense of wonderment that accompanies the experience of being drawn in. The fairground presents a contained and enhanced space in which ‘an attentive subject could be produced and managed through the knowledge and control of external procedures of stimulation as well as a wide-ranging technology of “attraction.”’³ Attention is here *rationalized* by a capitalist-industrial ideology that packages spectacle and attraction as visual consumption. Intentional focus is replaced by the attractional qualities of spectacle as distraction and consumption. At the fairground, the subject is exposed to ‘machine-produced stimuli, often electrical in nature and abstract in content’.⁴ Here perception is drawn in, guided, and governed by the multifarious levels of attractional display. Perceptive focus is externalized, as it no longer finds its origin in subjective interiority. The perceptual focus is drawn out towards the attractional space of the fairground. It is guided by an exteriorized architecture of spectacle that is actualized at the fairground.

The fairground as visualized in these amateur films envisions a manner of spectacle-seeing as direct effect of modernist restructurations. In the words of Jonathan Crary: ‘Spectacle is not primarily concerned with a *looking* at images but rather with the construction of conditions that individuate, immobilize, and separate subjects, even

¹ Strauven, Wanda. “Introduction to an Attractive Concept”. Wanda Strauven, ed., *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Film Culture in Transition (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 17.

² Strauven, Wanda. “Introduction to an Attractive Concept”. Ibid., 18.

³ Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 25.

⁴ Ibid, 27.

within a world in which mobility and circulation are ubiquitous.’⁵ The fairground provides that space of conditional possibilities. This spectacular experience caters to and reconditions attention exteriorly. According to Crary: ‘attention, as an indispensable part of an expanding terrain of modern spectacle, becomes both a simulation of and compensation for a chimerical “real” experience.’¹ This shift has consequences in terms of sensory knowledge production. Rabinovitz’s statement concerning modern amusement parks and cinema can thus without difficulty be applied to the fairground: ‘The overarching issue was that movies and amusement parks were a technologically driven playground for audiovisual effects and virtual realities, and their significance was their sociological impact when they substituted sham spectacle for natural beauty and sensation for aesthetic contemplation.’⁶ At the fairground attention is not conjoined with contemplation. The attractions at the fair build an architecture of spectacle. Its space represents ‘an organization of appearances that are simultaneously enticing, deceptive, distracting and superficial.’⁷ I will examine the relations between filmic focus and attractional impetus as visualized in the *filmic representation of the fairground*.

What renders these images so astounding is the fact that the attractional draw they visualize comes to distinctly articulate fascinations that underlie cultural modernist discourses concerning technologization, imaging technologies, and electrified spectacle. Amateurs display this attractional draw well into the 1970s and thus beyond what is generally considered a modernist lifeworld. They display a furthering of these modernist fascinations well into a post-industrial age. In the preceding chapter, I have identified the documenting style as emerging with the birth of amateur imaging practice in an isomorphic structure to that structuring the emergence of the cinematic apparatus itself. The attractional qualities that draw amateurs not only to the fairground but also to the moving image medium present similar fascinations to that underlying early cinema and, more specifically, emulate a manner of spectatorial address common to a cinema of attractions.

⁵ Ibid., 75.

⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁷ Tony Bennett et al., eds., *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2005), 335.

This chapter thus presents a different engagement to that of the preceding ones. It embeds these views presented by amateurs within a context of perceptual restructurations that will be identified by a distinctly modernist effect. First I will summarize what constitutes this modernist restructuration of perception in order to show how this reconditioning transforms the fairground as distinctly modernist space of spectacle. I will then proceed to analyze the views of attractional display that amateurs produce at the fairground. Finally, I will show what attracts amateurs to imaging technologies in general and how their image-production presents a distinct affinity with an early cinema of attractions.

1.1. Ad Views: visual outbursts throughout the film corpus

These images that intersperse the film collections represent specific foci on technology in motion, electrified displays of blinking lights, and a more general fascination with the sensory excess presented by the fairground. These views constitute visual outbursts within film collections either produced in a family chronicle style or with a documenting drive. They come to present perspectives that are first of all characterized by the extraordinary. They are thus exclusively produced at the fairground and capture the extraordinary perspective presented by electrified displays, technological motions, and novel positions. No other locations within these film collections present the same imagery, not only in terms of image content, but also in how they are framed. Only at the fairground do filmmakers prove continuously distracted; they abandon their intended focus, and they also create images that become abstract aestheticized lighted displays that stand on their own within the preceding or subsequent ordering of images. They come to present views that are alternately hectic and dizzying, but can also potentially embed the sensory hyperstimulation of the fairground in an orderly sequencing. Before analyzing these highly differentiated views more closely, I will examine how the innovations of an age of modernity impacted a modernist restructuration of perception and came to reorganize everyday life. These reorganizations are repackaged as entertainment and thrill at the fairground. Ad images produced by amateurs still carry proof of the attractional qualities and fascinations that were effectuated by this modernist restructuration.

2. From Modernity to Modernism

Modernity is identified foremost as an age of restructuration. Modernity introduced socio-cultural, political, industrial, and technological structural changes (Strukturwandel):

‘Als erstes muss betont werden, dass die übliche Annahme des langen 19. Jahrhunderts, das von den 1780er Jahren bis zum ersten Weltkrieg reicht, zwar eine nützliche Annahme und Hilfskonstruktion bleibt, aber nicht als gleichsam natürlich gegebene und weltweit gültige Form der Vergangenheit vorausgesetzt werden sollte. Selbst wenn man nicht kleinlich auf den europäischen Randdaten 1789 und 1914 besteht, so entziehen sich doch ganze National- und Regionalgeschichten diesem Raster.’⁸

Still, for our purposes, the periodization from the French Revolution to the First World War can serve as a time frame for what is called modernity. Naturally, modernity serves as an umbrella term for a long period that is generally fixed by the long 19th century. Modernism is taken as the cultural effect of the highly diversified notions of Strukturwandel, characterizing the age of modernity and serving as impetus for the cultural movement of modernism. Generally the periodization of modernity follows Eric Hobsbawm’s conceptualization of ‘doppelte Revolution’.⁹, meaning the political revolution that restructured France from 1789 onwards, and the Industrial Revolution that originated in 19th-century Britain but very quickly swept the rest of Western Europe. Still, while it proves sufficient here, the periodization presents unsatisfactory parameters since this process of double revolution was separated by a century. Also, modernity as it is periodically fixed presents by no means a globalized phenomenon. It relates mostly to Western Europe and the United States. Modernity as

⁸ ‘First of all it is important to emphasise that although the usual assumption of the extended 19th century – lasting from the 1780s to the First World War – remains a useful adoption and auxiliary structure, it should not be taken to be a virtually naturally occurring, globally applicable form of the past. Even if we do not pedantically insist on the European framing dates of 1789 and 1914, this grid leaves out entire national and regional histories.’

Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Lizenzausg, Schriftenreihe / Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung 1044 (Bonn: bpb, 2010), 1284–85.

⁹ for further information, see: Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Europäische Revolution: [1789 bis 1848]*, Kindlers Kulturgeschichte (Köln: Parkland-Verl, 2004).

historical period is thus generally seen as ending with the negotiations and peace treaties succeeding the end of the First World War.

Modernity is mostly anchored thematically. The restructurations that originated in what is termed modernity cannot be universally or globally defined as a concise period. For example the socio-cultural changes that brought a restructuration of society from a feudal to a class system are greatly differentiated in terms of different nation-states. As well, the architectural changes that were termed ‘modern’ retrospectively can be tied to innovations that extend as far back as the Renaissance period. As such, modernist restructurations follow a thematic anchoring rather than temporal or spatial parameters.

Generally, the modern period was structured by five major characteristics that Jürgen Osterhammel identifies: 1) the long 19th century was an age of “asymmetrischer Effizienzsteigerung”¹⁰ (asymmetrical increase of efficiency), meaning that the productivity in terms of material goods incessantly increased in comparison to the previous century. This of course was a direct effect of the industrialization of production processes, the introduction of coal-fuelled machinery, and the newly emergent concept of division of labor. The increase in efficiency included the intensification of governmental control in terms of regulatory management. 2) Modernity is characterized as an age of high mobility. It saw the introduction of the steamship, railway, general public transport, and eventually, the automobile. Persons and material goods entered an equation of liquidity—they were no longer bound by geographical parameters. Mobility here also pertains to the increase in flow as ideas and concepts were no longer restricted to their national frame but became highly mobilized. Information, ideas, and goods were circulated with a pace hitherto impossible. As Osterhammel notes, the beginning of globalization also saw its origin in the ubiquitous concept of circulation in modernity. The next characteristic is closely bound to high mobility. 3) Modernity saw a “asymmetrische Referenzverdichtung”¹¹ (an asymmetric compaction of references). Here the circulation proves cultural. It includes an increase in translations that saw a productive exchange of literary works between different nations, as maternal language no longer

¹⁰ Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 1286.

¹¹ Ibid., 1292.

conclusively prevented the diffusion of literature, goods, and ideas. It also saw the introduction of certain cities as cultural reference points that invited imitation. France in the eighteenth century proved such a locality. Furthermore, modernity saw the hardening of a Western model as an ideal of a civilization standard. This included cultural imperialism as the power imposed by European imperialist forces on their colonies. 4) The age of modernity saw the introduction of an idealized model of equality, though it can be argued, not necessarily its implementation. The thinking of a universal model of unity sparked a long struggle and disaccord between modernist thinkers and traditionalists who sought to defend a former model of elitist control. This struggle was mostly fought on the platform challenging the cultural elite. The struggle included the beginning of the feminist movement, which sought the abolition or loosening of patriarchal control and requested political agency for women, most importantly in the form of the right to vote. The U.S. saw the abolition of slavery, and the West in general started to question the monopoly of church and religion in general. 5) Finally, from a macro-relational point of view, the age of modernity is considered as age of emancipation and participation. This, as Osterhammel notes, is not surprising giving its characterization as an age of revolutions, from political ones such as the French Revolution, to industrial ones such as the industrialization in Great Britain, that effectuated socio-cultural restructurations. Modernity saw the emergence of the idea of equality, while its definitive implementation remains contestable. Still, the abolition of slavery in the U.S., the relieving of feudal impositions on European farmers, and the obtainment of the right to vote for the working class presented an actualization of this thought of furthering equality. Nevertheless, the question of equal rights for women, for example, was not successfully solved in the 19th century.

Modernity as an age is thus characterized by socio-cultural, political, technological and industrial changes that saw their impact extending long into the 20th century. In fact, as Osterhammel so rightly remarks, one can see the age of modernity as the age that brought up questions that showed their full impact but in the 20th century. Osterhammel writes: 'Viele Fragen die im 19. Jahrhundert aufgekommen waren, behielten auch nach 1945 ihre Virulenz. Tendenzen verlängerten sich langfristig vom

späten 19. ins späte 20. Jahrhundert.’¹² The following will thus deal with a restructuration of perception that saw its origin in the innovations of the 19th century, but saw its full impact as extended into the late 20th century.

The following reflections on how amateurs use imaging technologies will thus be conducted in a context in which, as Miriam Bratu Hansen summarizes:

‘the cinema figures as part of the violent restructuration of human perception and interaction effected by industrial-capitalist modes of production and exchange; by modern technologies such as trains, photography, electric lighting, telegraph, and telephone; and by the large-scale construction of metropolitan streets populated with anonymous crowds, prostitutes, and not-quite-so-anonymous flâneurs.’¹³

2.2. Perceptual restructuration as effect of modern innovations

What is most illustrative about these visual outbursts people create at the fairground is that they stand on their own. They visualize and become attractions in their own right. But, again, why would people spend their money on film to produce views that serve no apparent purpose? In order to understand why people are drawn in not only by the attractions at the fairground but by the capabilities to create attractional images, I would like to draw on the experiential shift in perception that stands as a remnant of modernist tropes. In order to understand what constitutes an attraction I will analyze how spectacle becomes an architecture of vision in modernity.

One of the man changes effectuated, as direct consequence of technological innovations, lies in the externalization that transformed living conditions. The introduction of railways, standardized time, the telegraph, the telephone, and, of course, imaging technologies brought with it discordance in terms of sensory

¹² ‘Many questions which arose during the 19th century still retained their virulence after 1945. Trends were prolonged for the long-term from the late 19th into the late 20th century.’

Ibid., 1300–1301.

¹³ Miriam Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*, Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism 44 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 362–63.

experience in a shift from lived internality and autonomy to an external imposition. The externalization of lived experience functioned according to capitalist-industrial principles of production and exchange.

Innovations such as the railway and the telephone function as prime examples of how subjective experience became partially detached from sensory autonomy. One of the initial industrial innovations, the railroad, most perfectly illustrates this modification of experiential internality to externality. While previously bodily time coincided with duration of transport—although we will magnanimously allow for the slightly accelerated speed of travel by horse—the introduction of the railroad, both the machinery and the extended network of rails, radically altered and detached temporality from duration. For the first time, the body was disconnected from the duration of physical movement. Lived movement becomes accelerated movement induced by a machine. The expansion of the railroad further necessitated the introduction of a homogenous time system. This homogenization of public time had trenchant implications for an individual in that now time was not lived according to seasons or lived duration but was exteriorized. This exteriorization of temporality formed part of a larger modern paradigm in which internality was restructured by a capitalist emphasis on separation and exteriorization.

Concomitantly, industrialization brought about a restructuration that saw a shift from a seasonally organized labor to a division of life into labor and leisure. Again, the implications for a lived subject proved far-reaching in that the temporal organization of life was reorganized by capitalist principles of exteriorization and separation. For the first time, labor also meant an organization according to (later identified as) Taylorist-Fordist principles of a worker being responsible for a detail of a laboring process, for example, at the assembly line of a factory, which did not allow for an experience of the entire process of production. Furthermore, innovations such as the telephone, for example, brought about an experience of audibility no longer linked to immediacy. Imaging technologies constituted a furthering of earlier visual logic of the telescope and the microscope. The introduction of the phonograph, telephone, and radio technologies introduced a logic that uncoupled visibility and audibility from the sensorium as interior to the individual. Through the introduction of foremost imaging technologies, the modern subject was thus caught in a paradigm of visibility that

brought the world closer. As a direct effect of this proximity, the subject became alienated from said world.

This exteriorization of formerly lived interior experience was epitomized by the introduction of imaging technologies, both photographic and cinematic. It rang in and simultaneously reinforced modernity as an age of frenzied visuality and visibility. The introduction of imaging technologies hierarchized but also problematized vision. It brought with it a prioritizing of vision as the primary sense of knowledge production, while at the same time inducing a crisis of the principle of visibility and vision. Once we locate the practice of making images ‘within a history of sense perception in modernity, in particular the spiral of shock, stimuli protection, and ever greater sensations (“reality!”),’¹⁴ we can historicize the motivations underlying amateur films and filmmaking in more specific terms.

The camera came to visualize the tensions that structured modernity and fundamentally altered human perception. As Scott McQuire states: ‘By decentering the authority of embodied perception and destabilizing the customary relationships between presence and absence, the camera has induced a crisis at the border between “representation” and “reality”, affecting all contemporary experience of time, space and memory.’¹⁵ Needless to say, the way human beings experienced the world and their position within it changed fundamentally.

The new complexity of visuality restructured perceptual experience from a sense of omnipotence of lived visuality to a notion of absentness at the heart of human perception. The immediate given of sense data becomes impossible in a world restructured by and through the lens. Jonathan Crary analyzes the wider implications of this shift through a re-evaluation of the work of Charles Sanders Peirce. Both argue that the principle of attention revealed that visuality and cognition were no longer structured around an immediacy of a phenomenon in the world. Peirce positions meaning and cognition ‘against the ides of “immediate” sensations, asserting that they

¹⁴ Ibid., 363.

¹⁵ Scott McQuire, *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 1998), 1.

are irreducible complexes of association and interpretation.’¹⁶ While Peirce establishes a notion of ‘Firstness’ as absolute presence, at the same time, he recognizes the impossibility of such a non-referentiality in perception.

The impulse that underlies the use of imaging technologies by amateurs can be historicized as modernist effect. It ties in, engages with, and reacts to the exteriorization of perceptual autonomy. To date, Jonathan Crary has delivered the most engaging and in depth analysis of the manner in which human beings listen to, look at, and pay attention to phenomena in an industrialized and highly technologized lifeworld. He further identifies the restructuration of perception and concomitantly of experience as direct ‘*effect* of other kinds of forces and relations of power.’¹⁷ Crary states: ‘that our lives are so thoroughly a patchwork of such disconnected states is not a “natural” condition but rather the product of a dense and powerful remaking of human subjectivity in the West over the last 150 years.’¹⁸ Crary positions this historical remaking of human subjectivity as early as the 1700s in that it brought about perceptual experiences of shock, alienation, and dispersal consequential to a new manner of seeing effected by the introduction of the lens. While Crary sees the changes that perception underwent culturally and historically as conclusive to different practices managing attention and perception, he illustrates his argument more specifically through examples of emerging imaging technologies.

Cameras and photographic images reveal the world in a manner hitherto unseen. For example, as Walter Benjamin observes: ‘The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject.’¹⁹ The world was no longer simply discernible by a world-perception-subject paradigm, but presented an array of visual novelties that decentered the subject from a position of perceptive *autonomy*. Imaging technologies thus enhanced modernist anxieties, while paradoxically functioning as tool against those very anxieties. While the camera revealed the world as strange and

¹⁶ Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 27.

¹⁷ Ibid., 2–3. My emphasis.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1.

¹⁹ Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 236.

exposed human visibility as non-autonomous, the individual turned to it out of a desire for fixity in perception. The example of the close-up as an externalization not only of the hitherto unseen but also of a new manner of seeing perhaps best exemplifies the restructuration of perception, and consequentially, of subjectivity that was effected by modernist rationalization.

2.3. Views hitherto unseen: The close-up

On the one hand, ‘no one would dispute that photography gave a tremendous boost to the cognitive claims of sight, because—through close-up and remote sensing—it so greatly enlarged the realm of the visible.’²⁰ Vision was prioritized in the sensory production of knowledge. At the same time, the close-up emphasized the tenuous relation of visibility and world within modernism as the camera introduced new ways to ‘dissect space and time’.²¹ The close-up blew the visual wide open. It not only enlarged the realm of the visual, it furthermore introduced strangeness into the very heart of vision. Simply put, it introduced views unimaginable on a collective level. While lens technologies of microscopic and telescopic vision were introduced in the 1700s, the camera brought this new manner of seeing into being on a mass cultural level. The status of the object changed. The latter revealed its fundamental strangeness as exclusively visible through the lens of a camera. Walter Benjamin’s famous dictum that ‘the camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses’²² shows great insight into exactly those revelatory capacities of the camera that rendered the world strange while bringing it closer than ever before. It dissected the visibility of the world in ways previously unimaginable.

The close-up further illustrates how, in addition to new visual properties *of* the object *seen*, the camera also induced a new manner of *seeing for* the subject. The implications thereof brought about a restructuration of subjectivity itself. ‘The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was

²⁰ Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c.1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 115.

²¹ McQuire, *Visions of Modernity*, 51.

²² Benjamin and Arendt, *Illuminations*, 237.

visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject.²³ The bringing nearer of the world visually expelled the subject from a hitherto situated autonomous positioning in perception. The Luxemburger Wort, Luxembourg's main daily newspaper, hinted at this fundamental restructuration brought about by imaging technologies in its amazed, yet somewhat baffled, description of the new processes that underlie the cinematograph: 'Dieses neue Verfahren, das dem Lichte eine plastische Bildkraft abgewinnt, fügt sich harmonisch in die Reihe der Erfindungen ein, die das Individuellste des Menschen über das körperliche Ende hinaus in die Zukunft hinüber retten.'²⁴ The camera—not the individual—was celebrated as the savior of perception.

At the same time, we need to take into consideration that 'visual modernism took shape within *an already reconfigured field* of techniques and discourses about visibility and an observing subject.'²⁵ Visibility becomes an effect of other forces or relations of power introduced by institutional discourses that reconfigured the observer from the 19th century onwards. The modernist externalization and restructuration of subjectivity, while occurring in an already reconfigured field, nevertheless reached its high point with the introduction of imaging technologies. The close-up as illustration of vision externalized also coincided with capitalist-industrial principles of production that 'seemed able to make anything out of anything, without the laborious effort of skilled handicraft. In such new systems of labor, objects were transformed rapidly before one's eyes, and the stable identity of things became as uncertain as a panoply of magician's props.'²⁶ Vision was thus not only experientially externalized, it was furthered by capitalist rationalizing forces that went hand in hand with a re-conception of experience that saw the identity of things as uncertain. At the same time, the perceptual restructuration not only saw to a fundamental change of

²³ 'This new process, which gives light a plastic graphic quality, fits harmoniously within the series of inventions which save the most individual elements of humanity for the future beyond their physical end.'

Ibid., 236.

²⁴ Author unknown, "Das modellierende Licht". In : Luxemburger Wort. July 1st 1901. 2.

²⁵ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, 5.

²⁶ Gunning, Tom. "Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema". Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 17.

visuality (the object seen) and vision (the manner of seeing); it also introduced a shift in visibility (vision imposed on the body).

2.4. Visuality, Visibility, and the Body

Modernity is thus characterized as an age of frenzied visuality and restructuration of subjective vision. At the same time, it also saw an imposition of external forces upon the body. The body became implicated in a hitherto never experienced subjection to high visibility as governing principle. This subjection also reinforced the externalization of subjective interiority. The introduction of camera technology launched the body into visibility. It also included it in a rationalizing system that needed the body manifested externally. Modernity as age of frenzied visibility saw the introduction of external forces that could govern and control the body.

The camera came to be constituted as important tool for the visual governing of the individual body. The 19th century saw a refashioning of the body into distinct normative categories that went hand in hand with the standardizing discourse imposed by an optical empiricism. The introduction of visual archives, for example, attempted to standardize the body in terms of categories of social deviancy, whether criminal or pathological in nature, and was furthermore intimately tied to a demarcation of the populace in terms of class, race, and gender. McQuire argues that:

‘Positivism has historically attempted to define and regulate social deviance through photography by distributing photographic meaning along two methodological axes: that of generalization which converts photographic contingency into typicality by setting the photograph as “example;” and that of individualization dependent on a “machine” (a filing system and clerical apparatus) to retrieve the particular instance from the archive’s infinite bounds.’²⁷

Concomitantly, Allan Sekula sees the mergence of principles of interpretation and photography not as purely negative, since it also forms the base of respectability and affectivity, what interests me here is the imposition from above that is effectuated

²⁷ McQuire, *Visions of Modernity*, 46.

upon the body. Furthermore, the standardizing properties of photographic externalization again illustrate the fundamental shift from a subjective interior into an externalized presence in visibility. Sekula sees the upcoming importance of rationalist scientific discourse as highly susceptible to the means of imaging technologies. Giving the example of the close branches of physiognomy and phrenology he shows how the optical empiricism of the 19th century took form in 'the belief that the surface of the body, and especially the face and the head, bore the outward signs of inner character.'²⁸

As such, modernity saw a co-mergence that had implications for lived subjectivity and collective experience in that '[a] physiognomic code of visual interpretation of the body's signs [...] and a technique of mechanized visual representation intersected in the 1840s. This unified system of representation and interpretation promised a vast taxonomic ordering of images of the body. This was an archival promise.'²⁹ A first instance of this annexation by an external agency is found in the initial use of photography as a means to establish a visual database of criminals in France in the 19th century. A further example would be the use of photographic means to chart medical deviancies. Very simply put, imaging technologies helped impose standardization as the norm. These examples function as only a few instances of how external agencies could control and assess the body visually. The introduction of imaging technologies co-constituted and coincided with the desire to visually externalize interior qualities. As Lynda Nead comments:

'Still and moving images subjected the smallest gestures of everyday life to a new visual scrutiny. The most insignificant details of behavior were recorded and viewed over and over again, creating a new, common rhetoric within the everyday. Small, handheld cameras made the streets alive to the possibility of being seen without knowing.'³⁰

²⁸ Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *The MIT Press* 39, no. Winter, 1986 (n.d.): 11.

²⁹ Ibid., 16.

³⁰ Nead, Lynda. "Animating the Everyday: London on Camera circa 1900". *The Haunted Gallery*. P.69.

Qualities formerly belonging to a subject's interiority entered a system of visual standardization that followed a new rhetoric of visibility and visibility as currency.

2.5. Attention, Spectacle, and Attraction

After an elaboration on the modernist tropes that saw the externalization of interior qualities, including perceptual autonomy, to an outside structure of rationalization and standardization, we can focus on the main tropes that characterize not only modernist vision, but come to play a crucial role in amateur filmmaking. At the fairground, these are namely spectacle and attraction.

Two connected, if paradoxical, tendencies structure the discourses surrounding visibility in modernism. On the one hand, the introduction of imaging technologies revealed views hitherto unknown—a world imperceptible by 'mere' human perception—such as those introduced by the close-up of a lens of a microscope or the extreme long shots presented earlier on by means of the telescope. The observer is eliminated from a visibility that optical empiricism and positivism reconstitute as 'truth-holding'. At the same time, the introduction of imaging technologies brought up notions of perspective that saw the individual wielding a lens as also always reconstructing the world as image. Perspectivism³¹ and positivism both came to underlie the high cultural discourses accompanying the emergence of imaging technologies.

The recording capabilities of a supposedly neutral camera clashed with an awareness of the construction of a perspectival view through camera viewfinder. Within this argumentative vein, the camera loses its status as neutral and perception is structured as subjective. Positivist beliefs posit truth within the machinic view, while perception consequentially loses its status as primary plenitude through the recognition of subjective perspective. A consequence of this shift is found in the 'transhistorical insistence on a fundamental absence at the heart of seeing, on the impossibility of the

³¹ for a further elaboration on perspectivism introduced by the camera, see. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London; New York: Penguin, 2008).

perception of presence, or of an unmediated visual access to a plenitude of being'.³² This notion of absence henceforth structures the experience of the perceiving subject. Crary evaluates the notion of perspective under the term and analysis of *attention* as integral formation within and of perception.

Visuality, visibility, and the structuring principle of attention formed an experiential structure in which 'rather than a faculty of some already formed subject, it is a sign, not so much of the subject's disappearance as of its precariousness, contingency, and insubstantiality.'³³ Within this modernist dynamic, '[a]ttention [...] was an inevitable ingredient of a subjective conception of vision: attention is the means by which an individual observer can transcend those subjective limitations and make perception *its own*, and attention is at the same time a means by which a perceiver becomes open to control and annexation by external agencies.'³⁴ Here lies the crux of the paradox at the heart of modernist perceptual shifts. Attention and distraction, control and resistance, truth and perspective do not present oppositional sides of the modernist experience but come to construct a highly fluctuating space or architecture of visuality in which the individual navigated the world in an entirely new manner.

Both Guy Debord and Jonathan Crary see spectacle as an architecture of power that produces, in the line with Foucault's³⁵ arguments, 'the production of docile subjects'.³⁶ Debord insists on spectacle as the capitalist 'development of a technology of separation'.³⁷ Spectacle, for Debord, represents an accumulation of strategies that separate and isolate the modern subject in a space without community. As we have seen, the concept of spectacle thus ties in with the consequential individualization of the subject in an equation which structures perception exteriorly. Spectacle as identified here, taken a step further, organizes this new manner of seeing. The subject

³² Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, 4.

³³ Ibid., 45.

³⁴ Ibid., 4–5. My emphasis

³⁵ Foucault outlines diffuse mechanisms of power that structure the body by imperatives of normalization. for further elaboration see: Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

³⁶ Ibid., 74.

³⁷ Ibid.

moves from an (ideally) contemplative immersion in a society as community to a space in which spectacle isolates and separates.

Not only is the subject isolated in regards to a shift of perception from interior to exterior, its very distinct nature does not allow for a communal experience. Spectacle is never experienced communally; at best it is experienced individually within a crowd. Concretely, as Crary notes: ‘Spectacle is not primarily concerned with a *looking* at images but rather with the construction of *conditions* that individuate, immobilize, and separate subjects, even within a world in which mobility and circulation are ubiquitous.’³⁸ Spectacle is here taken as an architecture of visibility. Capitalist rationalizing forces manage its very structure. Within this architecture or structure, attention becomes a self-governing principle. It is argued here that attraction becomes the very impetus that governs and directs attention.

2.6. Contingency

Within this new architecture of spectacular vision, the contingent can never be completely contained. In fact, rationalization always and irreducibly *produces* excess and surplus. The inherent threat underlying notions of excess is revealed as the encroachment of meaninglessness. This threat is a direct consequence of the emergence of modernist standardization. It pertains to notions of restructuration of temporality, the incessant capability of description that was introduced by imaging technologies, and the exteriorization of perception from an autonomous interior to exteriority that is open to control and containment.

Contingency as such is a difficult concept to grasp. The most useful manner I found is to think of it in terms of surplus or excess and relate these concepts to different aspects one by one. Contingency is not a presence in itself; it reveals its presence in specific inquiries. For example, contingency has an immense impact when related to lived temporality. Imaging technologies came with a built-in archival promise. They present the possibility not only for record production but also for visual archiving. This, as we have seen, is one of main lures of amateur filmmaking, especially with

³⁸ Ibid. My emphasis.

d&a filmmakers who see themselves as audiovisual record-keepers. Because industrial-capitalist rationalization functioned according to principles of efficacy and productivity, contingency needed to be contained. For example, in Taylorist models of effective production processes, the body was introduced into a structure of efficacy. Every gesture not only had no meaning beyond itself, it was furthermore organized in terms of specific duration.

The externalization of lived temporality had severe consequences. As Mary Ann Doane concludes:

‘The subject is no longer immersed in time, no longer experiences it as an enveloping medium. Through its rationalization and abstraction, its externalization and reification in the form of pocket watches, standardized schedules, the organization of the work day, and industrialization in general, time becomes other, alienated. The desire to package or commodify time, to represent and distribute its experience in a highly controlled medium that nevertheless seems to be structured by a free, unsystematic alliance with contingency, is simultaneously a revolt against rationalization *and* its extension.’³⁹

Imaging technologizes introduced a structuring paradox in that, as Doane sees it: ‘[w]hat film archives, then, is first and foremost a “lost” experience of time as presence, time as immersion.’⁴⁰ If the external structuration of temporality sought for meaningful construction or substitution into homogeneity, archival fixation, and productive order, the concept of contingency as surplus re-constituted temporality as accident and heterogeneity and ultimately aligned it with meaninglessness. The archival obsession of the 19th century also co-constituted in its very principle a porosity that could lead to meaninglessness. The sheer accumulation that is present in the collection of archival objects also dehierarchizes particularity and substitutes it with sheer accumulation. Meaninglessness lies in generality as mass collection.

The perspectivism underlying representation also leads to a multiplicity concerning the sheer number of possible narratives. Quite simply, the establishment of a visual

³⁹ Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 221. My emphasis

⁴⁰ Ibid., 221–22.

archive as universal store of images also leads to an inherent meaninglessness in that if everything can be represented, where does meaning reside?⁴¹ Furthermore, contingency always represents a temporal irruption within the image. While imaging technologies carried within them the inherent promise to fix time, time also erupts within the image as what Walter Benjamin so aptly terms a ‘spark of contingency’.⁴² Such a spark carries within it the eruption of presence. Quite similar to Roland Barthes’s punctum, such a moment quite simply brings with it an awareness of the impossibility of fixation as it refuses narratological or homogenous order. For Barthes such a moment pricks or wounds the spectator with its obtuse ‘hereness’. It comes to relate to the inherent incomprehensibility of temporality as such. For Barthes, this moment arises when he views a photograph of his deceased mother wearing clothes that in their anachronism become exotic. He reads his own non-existence into the image. Here time is not contained, it is rendered strange by the incomprehensible presence that erupts in the image. In one of the first Lumière films, the feeding of a baby in the garden, while attractional in its own right, shows the inherent fascination and threat of the contingent in that people reacted most strongly to the leaves of a tree in the background that rustled in the wind. Here, the very ‘hereness’ of the moment, its very present, erupts in a medium that promises the harnessing of temporal disjunction.

The contingent as meaninglessness has death at its outer limit. Human frailty, happenstance, and finitude of course fundamentally underlie all discussion about the contingent. The fixation of temporality within moving images also promised a holding at bay of accident, disaster, and ultimately, death. As I have already elaborated with regards to the family film, the practice of creating visual records in movement inherently promises a harnessing of contingency as a ‘this-has-been’, as moving images are by default perceived as antithetic to stasis and thus finitude. The contingent, then, represents the uncontrollable, the inherent threat of meaninglessness,

⁴¹ These concerns of course underlie all archival collections, for further information refer to : Poos, Françoise. *The Making of a National Audio-Visual Archive : The CNA and the Hidden Images Exhibition*. Dissertation thesis (De Montfort University, Leicester) May 2016, publication forthcoming.

⁴² Walter Benjamin and Walter Benjamin, *1931 - 1934, Selected Writings*, Walter Benjamin. Michael W. Jennings, general ed. ; 2, part 2, n.d., 510.

and at the same time, it comes to offer the potential for resistance to the rationalizing forces that are imposed upon lived existence. According to Doane:

‘Contingency [...] emerges as a form of resistance to rationalization which is saturated with ambivalence. Its lure is that of resistance itself—resistance to system, to structure, to meaning. Contingency proffers to the subject the appearance of absolute freedom, immediacy, directness. Time becomes heterogeneous and unpredictable and harbors the possibility of perpetual newness, difference, the marks of modernity itself. Accident and chance become productive. Nevertheless, these same attributes are also potentially threatening. Their danger resides in their alliance with meaninglessness, even nonsense.’⁴³

The contingent as surplus thus illustrates the lived paradox at the heart of modernism: ‘Contingency introduces the element of life and the concrete, but *too much* contingency threatens the crucial representational concept of totality, wholeness.’⁴⁴ Contingency as surplus represents a threat to the restructuration of living conditions and subjective experience, but at the same time is presents a necessity of the whole system that co-constitutes it.

Imaging practices and production thus not only reinforce, but also self-disintegrate ‘[their] technological promise to capture time: immortality, the denial of the radical finitude of the human body, access to other temporalities, and the issue of the archivability of time’⁴⁵ can only ever be elaborated by its conceptual opposites of death, contingency, and subjective fragmentation. It is exactly the surplus of contingency that makes ‘tolerable an incessant rationalization. Such a strategy is not designed simply to deal with the leakage or by-products of rationalization; it is structurally necessary to the ideologies of capitalist modernization.’⁴⁶ While Doane refers to cinematic representation, the same structuring principles underlie the practice of amateur filmmaking, that is as such differentiated from classical narrative cinema, in that it does not make use of elaborate editing processes. The shift from early cinema to narrative cinema is never effectuated in the practice of amateur filmmaking, leaving the latter more vulnerable to the contingent in representation.

⁴³ Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 11.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 12. My emphasis.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 11.

While amateurs do structure their films according to the principles of a loose narrative structure and provide or impose meaning by meta-commentary, unlike classical narrative cinema, amateur films remain open to temporal complexities that cannot be controlled by the imposition of a closed temporal system within narrative. Amateur filmmaking thus reveals the paradox inherent in modernist restructurations in that it provided individuals with the means to seemingly capture and thus fix temporal sequences while it also provided them with the possibility of control and resistance to external forces imposed upon the body. Both Doane and Crary stress the inherent force of the contingent as resistance, as ‘within modernity vision is only one layer of a body that could be captured, shaped or controlled by a range of external techniques; at the same time, vision is only one part of a body capable of evading institutional capture and of inventing new forms, affects, and intensities.’⁴⁷

2.7. The Fairground as paradigm of the modern experience

The fairground provides a physical universe in which modernist tropes of technologization, attraction, and the restructuration of living conditions could be harnessed and experienced in a safe manner. It comes to represent a sensual panoply of electrified spectacle in which the modernist restructuration of perception as attention and distraction is actualized. In the following I will examine the fairground as self-contained universe with regards to modernist tropes of technologization, hyperstimulation, and atemporality that were repackaged as commodified leisure-time activity. Furthermore, the fairground illustrates the consumptive pattern of leisure activity that directs the visitor’s attention by a sensual over-stimulation and goes directly against an ideal of contemplative immersion. Fairground spectacle is also always a spectacle of surface. At the same time, as will be shown, the fairground also presents a space of resistance and creativity. The fairground as space of imposition upon the body by rationalizing forces does not negate its status as a potential space of resistance to said forces of rationalizing control.

⁴⁷ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, 3.

The fairground is a temporary amusement park. It lives by its technologized attractions. Walking the fairground, the visitor is assaulted by a dizzying panoply of electrified displays, neon signs, overlapping soundscapes emitted from loud speakers consisting of pop music and showmen vying for attention, the almost unbearable olfactory onslaught of fried foods, wasp-infested sweets, and, of course, the experience of a mass of bodies touching each other in the narrow space between booths.

Attractions at the modern fairground are mechanical. In fact, the fairground comes to represent the commodification of pleasure through the means of technology as attraction. Ironically, here the modernist tropes that restructured the very living conditions of the subject in the everyday are re-packaged and re-sold as commodity. In fact, up until 1965, the Luxembourgian electric plant sponsored the fairground. ‘Bis 1965 liegt die Organisation der „Fouer“ in den Händen der Stadt Luxemburg und dem städtischen Service de l’Electricité (Elektrizität).’⁴⁸

The predominant attraction of the more or less newly technologized fairground is the thrill ride. The thrill ride can take many forms; it merely needs to follow the characteristic of being thrilling for different age groups. The thrill ride might be a mechanized carousel-like structure for children who can emulate the activities of grown-ups by driving cars, motorcycles, boats, and later on even spaceships. The same allure applies to thrill rides for adults. Rollercoasters, interlinked carousels, pendulum rides, gravitrons, swing boats, and rotors targeted at adults display the same fascination, albeit in a speedier and more extreme fashion.

What all thrill rides at the technologized fair have in common is their inherent linkage of man and machine. The rationalization imposed by industrialism not only concerned lived temporality and spatial relation (mobility and transit) but furthermore had direct consequences on experiential physicality. As such, the individual was no longer in control of his/her own physicality in a lifeworld in which machines proved more

⁴⁸ ‘Until 1965, responsibility for organising the “Fouer” lay in the hands of the City of Luxembourg and the municipal Service de l’Electricité.’ Steve Kayser, *Schueberfouer déi Lëtzebuurger Traditioun zënter 1340* (Esch-sur-Alzette: Schortgen Ed., 2007), 42.

effective than the human subject. In the industrialized labor process, efficacy was relegated to the machine in a work process that denied the subject the possibility of being part of a linear notion of progress and implicated in the end result. If we were to go further we might call the fairground a cathartic modernist playground. First, the attraction of fairground rides pertains to the extraordinary. The thrill rides come to represent an experience that presents at once liberation from the rationalized forces imposed upon the body of the subject, while adhering to the same principles that re-sold the experience as commodification.

Finally, the fairground needs sensory over-stimulation to function. The fairground functions as sensory simulacrum. It does not provide a space of contemplative immersion but needs the spectacle of surface to function. For example, there is no sadder and more depressing experience than walking through the closed fair in the morning. Its very structure as pure and artificial surface comes to the fore in seeing the unlit light bulbs attached to naked steel structures. The eerie stillness of a closed fair without the cacophony of showman advertising attractions, excited shouts of thrill riders, and constant overlapping pop music reveals its fundamental need for over-stimulation as sensory excess. As Nicole Dahlen and Claude Bertemes note:

‘The tumultuous phenomenology of fairgrounds, that sense-numbing simultaneity of flashing lights, candyfloss aroma and screaming rollercoaster riders, is, in a certain respect, like the colourfully iridescent masquerade of a monomaniac functional logic. Fairgrounds, in both historical and contemporary terms, constitute nothing but an unparalleled jostling for attention. [...] [T]he surfeit of stimuli in a very enclosed space, which is typical of fairgrounds to an even greater extent than it is of urban environments, turn them into a classic arena and experimental ground for an “economy of attention”.’⁴⁹

The fairground as space only functions as spectacle of surface, as fundamental absence that is masked by hyper-stimuli offered by excessive displays of light, movement, smells, and sounds. This excessive display thus fulfills its full potential at night.

⁴⁹ Bertemes, Claude and Nicole Dahlen. “Back to the Future: Early Cinema and Late Economy of Attention An interim report about Crazy Cinématographe”. Martin Loiperdinger, *Early Cinema Today: The Art of Programming and Live Performance*, 2012, 79.

3. Views of an attractional display

The following will examine the differentiations that underlie the filmic modes adopted at the fairground. It will presents these modes and concomitant motivations as a two-fold engagement that presents related, if opposite, reactions to the sensory overstimulation of the fairground. Amateurs at the fairground either present a revelatory relation with the attractions of the fair, or they seek to contain the hyperstimulation through a transferal of the visual into the visible.

3.1. Ad-1 hydraulics in motion

Ad-1 subject matter, as mentioned in the introduction, represents a clear filmic focus on hydraulics in motion. These images depict the gears and levers that attach one part to another on the thrill ride. Often filmed in medium close ups, filmmakers also make use of the zoom function to get closer. These hydraulics in motion provide a surprisingly popular motif considering that filmmakers eclipsed the attraction of the thrill ride in its entirety, in order to filmically concentrate on ‘plain’ gears and levers that were never intended as attraction. Still, there are important differences within the views on hydraulics presented here. They pertain to which filmic mode they are produced in. The difference here pertains to the very nature of the motivation that underlies the imagery. In the following I will first concentrate on ad-1 views that are shot in a family chronicle style. Then I will differentiate the views with the same filmic focus underlying films of a documenting and archiving drive.

Before I specifically concentrate on ad-1 views, I need to quickly elaborate on the filmic focus that is drawn by the attraction at the fairground. The views of an attractional display come to illustrate how an impetus draws the attentive focus. Attractional views function as impetus that guide attention. In fact, the fascination that underlies the imagery here brings to mind the notion of the visual index. The index, according to Charles Sanders Peirce, comes to signify a metaphorical exclamation. Within visuality, it represents a visual impetus equivalent to an exclamation of ‘Look!’. The impetus thus represents a capturing of attention or a bringing to attention. At the fairground the attractional view can function as impetus

that draws in perception involuntarily. The visual index represents a drawing of perception by an exterior impetus. The visual impetus becomes attractional and coaxes attention from the outside. Attraction here represents the affective charge induced by a visual index that draws attention.

Crary relates to the index as follows: ‘Peirce insisted that indexical signs act on the nervous system, “they direct the attention to their objects by blind *compulsion*. [...] A rap on the door is an index. Anything that focuses attention is an index. Anything which *startles* us is an index, in so far as it marks the junction between two portions of experience.”’⁵⁰ Attractional views represent such an index in the architecture of spectacle (the conditions of possibility that structure attention and distraction and interiority as transposed to exteriority within modernist vision). They direct and guide the attention of the subject by an external impetus. They compel attention. At the fairground, technology is revealed as an attractional impetus. Indexical signs populate the fairground as views that pinpoint and guide attention. While people might start filming in an intention to produce a family record of the children, the camera often visualizes a ‘drifting’ of focused attention. There is an almost child-like quality to a camera’s trajectory. A filmmaker becomes distracted by something and pans from an intended visual focus to an almost helpless focusing on an unintended view. At the fairground, one of the main impetuses governing attention lies in the fascination of technology in motion. As we will see, naturally such technologized motion is also part of the lighted displays of signs and thrill rides, but there is also an astonishing display of hydraulics in motion within amateur fairground films.

3.1.1. Ad-1 in the family chronicle

Within the family chronicle style, filmmakers generally focus on children or rides at the fair. Occasionally, however, they shift focus to a close-up or medium shot of mechanical parts in motion. The mechanical infrastructure in the form of hydraulics seems to induce extreme fascinations to an extent that filmmakers abandon their intended focus. The main focus lies not on the object of gears, but on the fascination

⁵⁰ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, 114–15. My emphasis.

with hydraulics in motion. Non-human or non-organic movement triggers its own sense of fascination. The fairground offers ‘dynamic landscapes [that] featured a continual din of people and machinery in motion and electrically powered visual spectacle.’⁵¹ The zooming in on mechanical parts in motion becomes almost abstract as the views are framed in close-ups. They visualize these images as distinct cinematic vision. First of all, an individual would never be able to frame the view as closely as the camera, for the mere reason that organic vision cannot eclipse the visual periphery. Second, filmmakers in the family chronicle mode do not contextualize their images by an establishing shot.

The reoccurrence of this specific visual pattern comes to emphasize attraction at the fair as technologized space. Rob King, in reference to the popular amusement park of Coney Island, New York, states: ‘at Coney, the image of the world as a crazy machine was a fetish for the modern era, in which cogwheels, levers, and gears mashed to such exhilarating ends that there remained not the slightest gap for confronting the troubling costs of a mechanized environment.’⁵² The filmmakers who focus on the functioning gears and levers of the machinery reveal a specific fascination with the technological. During the postwar era, the capturing of technology in motion allowed for a visual appropriation of technologization. It also offered an experience of technologization that was re-sold as entertainment and eclipsed the anxieties that generally accompanied the industrial technologization of subjective experience. These experiences still structure the fairground well into the 20th century, as displayed by ad views.

At the fairground, technologization is presented as attractional impetus. It is furthermore transformed into visibility through technological means (camera). At the same time, the different motivations underlying the ad-1 views reveal a distinction in terms of a filmmaker’s reaction to the attractional impetus of technology. Family chronicle films and their visual narration (filmic language) reveal the restructuring of perception as attention and distraction in a most illustrative manner. Within the

⁵¹ Lauren Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland: Amusement Parks, Movies, and American Modernism*, Film and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 32.

⁵² Tom Paulus and Rob King, eds., *Slapstick Comedy*, AFI Film Readers (New York: Routledge, 2010), 127.

family chronicle, attention is involuntarily drawn in by the hydraulics in motion and away from the intended focus on children and family. This can be observed by the lack of contextualization. Family chronicle filmmakers do not provide an establishing shot of the ride in question nor do they introduce a sequential, deliberate focus on hydraulics in motion. Such an establishing shot would provide the viewer with a visual contextualization and thus reveal a deliberate embedding of the attractional view in documentation. Here, the visual trajectory of the camera is drawn away from the intended focus. What these views and the unintended pan that lies within them visualizes is how attention is drawn in and guided from the outside. In the everyday, the filmmaker would normally guide the camera in accord with principles of organic vision in which the body functions as the center from which mobile points of view are adopted. As such, these views and the drawing of the filmic focus come to illustrate how a modern restructuration of perception reorganizes interior perception as exterior visibility.

G.H.⁵³ presents us with such a filmic distraction in which attention is drawn away from an intended motif. He is visiting the fair with his two boys, and in one sequence he clearly intends to capture his sons on a plane ride. These rides prove immensely popular with children. It presents a tentacle structure onto which little planes are attached as carriages. They are mounted onto a sturdy middle part that also provides the rotating motion of the ride. He thus starts with a shot of his two boys seated in one of the plane wagons.

Figure 1



⁵³ AV031296 / IA_AMA002317, 8mm, color, mute, 1959

The younger boy points to the camera, and the elder gives an acknowledging nod towards his father. The next shot shows the ride beginning, and the carriage slowly moves. The camera loses sight of the plane as it moves out of frame, and we can see the middle part in motion for a brief second. The next shot focuses clearly on the middle hydraulics in motion without any visual acknowledgment of either planes or sons.



As the planes are lifted upwards, the middle part moves up as well. This is the motion the father clearly focuses upon as he tilts the camera upwards. The shot lasts about three seconds, and the next image reverts back to his initial focus as he captures the planes in motion in a low angle shot. He does not make the mistake of attempting to capture the specific carriage carrying his sons, but lets the planes flit past in two subsequent shots. The next sequence, however, is rather more complex. He has changed position, and as the planes are flying lower now, he attempts to film them from the side. Because the planes are flying lower the middle hydraulics come back into frame. While he first attempts to focus on the planes, the camera, appearing to do so almost on its own accord, slowly but surely pans back to the middle part.



The attractional view of gears in motion governs the visual trajectory. He ends the sequence with two further shots of planes flitting by in a low angle outlined against the blue skies. What becomes almost charmingly comic in this sequence is the involuntary disruption in intended filmic focus. During this sequence the visual trajectory is automatically drawn in by the attractional display twice. The spectator gets a sense of how G.H. wants to return to his intended focus—the planes with children—only to be distracted by the middle part of the ride in motion. The hesitancy in the pans, which denotes a filmmaker slowly drawn in by the impetus to capture the hydraulics, reveals how the perceptual focus is exteriorly directed and governed. Ad-1 visuals in the family chronicle style thus visualize how the attractional impetus exteriorly draws attention and interiorly manifests as its perceptual counterpart, namely distraction. The intended focus is thus relegated back to exteriority. Here we see how, within a modernist architecture of spectacle, vision is exteriorly managed and controlled. The bi-polar structure of attention and distraction is here made visible as the impetus of attraction guides the camera trajectory. The modernist reorganization of vision into attention and distraction is made visible.

3.1.2. Ad-1 in d&a mode

The focus on hydraulics in motion as attractional impetus can also be consciously embedded and its effect consequentially harnessed by filmmakers. Especially d&a filmmakers adopt such a strategy of harnessing the attractional view within film language. They visually contextualize the images. Here, the focus is not involuntarily guided; the filmmaker approaches the attractional view with an intention of visual appropriation. This intention is here revealed by the manner in which they film the view that is seen as attractional.

Before going into more detail in regards to the views on hydraulics, I would like to examine why technology and its materialization as hydraulics in motion present such an inherent attraction, in order to deepen the understanding of the need for harnessing. Technology at the fair is attractional in that it stands in for wider reconditionings of a subjective experience. Technology induces an experiential reconditioning in terms of a speeding up of temporality and spatiality. As we have seen above with examples of the railroad and the general advancement of pace and consequential mobility and transfer, technologization had immense impacts on the lifeworld, not all of them positive. The trenchant restructurations that were also an effect of the technologization that pervaded the modern lifeworld were also perceived as having an alienating, even uncanny, effect.

At the fair, this restructuration brought about by a pervading technologization of living conditions could be experienced as safe and leisurely activity. In a transformation of the uncanny effects of technologization into a consumerist appropriation as entertainment, the restructuration could thus be contained according to capitalist-industrial principles. Filmmakers producing in a d&a drive here follow the second principle of the modernist promise that accompanied the introduction of imaging technologies, namely, the promise of order, wholeness, and the harnessing of frenzied over-stimulation. As seen in the preceding chapter, the promise underlying filmmaking also followed positivist promises of homogenous progression and thus stability and order. Ad-1 visuals in the d&a style come to visualize a direct counteraction of sensual onslaught in that they *use* imaging technologies as means of re-appropriation of perceptual focus. This stance is however not characterized as

resistance to the reconditioning of perception as exteriorization; rather, it adopts a logic of consumption that furthers these exteriorizing principles. Filmmakers use the camera to transpose the sensory over-stimulation of the fair and the attractional qualities of technology in motion into visibility. They thus adopt the harnessing capabilities that accompanied imaging technologies as inherent promise.

The fairground, instead of providing a space in which the contingent and frenzy of modernism could be relived, is here used as a space in which the subject could take back autonomy and control in fixing its sensual attractions through visual appropriation. Consumption, including visual consumption through the camera, could enhance notions of control and mastery. Because d&a filmmakers embed the attractional view through sequencing, they could harness the contingency that underlies pure description. Here harnessing pertains to a containment in sequencing as rudimentary narrative order. As such, d&a filmmakers will include views of hydraulics in motion, but they will precede or follow up with medium and long shots of the thrill ride in its entirety. They embed the attractional impetus in visual sequencing. As such, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, through camera-use, filmmakers relegate the accumulation of pure description as order and control.

Pure description is aligned with the contingent in that it introduces a ‘capitulation of the vast and uncontrollable’⁵⁴ in contemporaneity. Everything is present all at once without the meaning-inducing context of a narrative structuring. This intimately relates to the introduction of imaging technologies themselves and their concomitant perspectivism. Narrative as visual sequencing provides a means to harness the contingent element in the visual. The ad-1 visuals in a d&a style do not present a senseless visual outburst but are carefully embedded by long shots that contextualize and thus validate their presence. Within the d&a style, the fairground is treated as a temporally contained event. It visually recounts and documents the fairground in all its aspects. The attractional views become part of the visual ordering of the event. Because amateurs generally do not order their visual sequencing through montage or post-production editing, they order within the imagery through film language.

⁵⁴ Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 12.

Here lies the harnessing capability of amateur filmmaking. Amateur films fix the attractional views in a visual recounting of the fairground as event. Sequential ordering as a rudimentary narrative device thus presents ‘an intimate relation with the past (it “recounts”) and is therefore able to testify to necessity and inevitability.’⁵⁵ Meaninglessness and sensual onslaught are ordered as sense and wholeness in their sequential embedment as event-structure (filmmakers order the sequence of their images). It comes as no surprise, then, that the imagery here is sequenced in a deliberate and concise manner. Often relayed in medium shots or controlled (not extreme) close-ups, imagery motivated by a documenting drive displays an interest not so much in the spectacular qualities of mechanical movement itself, but in a desire to document the technology that makes up the fairground attraction. In fact, filmmakers here dissect the attraction as different parts in sequential order so it can be contained and understood in their imagery. It thus constitutes the hydraulics in motion as another constructive element of the thrill ride. As opposed to family chronicle imagery that focuses on the same motif, the camera behavior is neither hectic nor rash. Neither is the view here unintentionally provoked. The framing is neat, the close-ups or zooms are calm, and the imagery is contextualized. Preceding or following shots that frame the imagery also provide visual context.

G.W.⁵⁶ is one of the most skilled d&a filmmakers in the corpus. His framing and filmic modus are carefully constructed, open, and always understandable. In one sequence, he becomes fascinated with the Hully Gully ride. This thrill ride presents the figure of a woman with top hat and skirt. The skirt is moving in time with the rotating base onto which carriages are attached. In fact, thrill riders are seated in the ‘seam’ of the skirt, while the rotating motion makes the woman figure spin around. G.W. films the ride in motion in a centered long shot.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ AV032445, no info on material, color, sound (music) retrospectively imposed, 1972

Figure 2



With every turn, the 'skirt' of the woman figure lifts up and down while rotating at the same time. He then zooms in neatly onto the middle part in motion. Every time the skirt is lifted we see the metal pipes that are attached to the rotating middle hydraulic on the underside of the construction.



As he has captured the middle part in motion, he tilts up and focuses on the top part that shows the upper body of the woman figure. He then proceeds to zoom out in the same controlled manner, and again we are presented with a clear, concise, and centered view of the ride in its entirety. He then zooms back in to frame the very bottom of the hydraulic middle part, a lever that serves as base for the ride.



He subsequently zooms back out and pans to the left in order to include the paying booth of the ride onto which the name of the ride appears on a sign. Finally, he zooms back out. All these views, pans, and zooms are presented within the same shot. Here attention is by no means involuntarily drawn. The attractional view becomes the intended focus, and the d&a filmmaker embeds the focus within visual context. G.W. also deconstructs the spectacle of the thrill ride as female figure in showing the underside of its construction. His filmic gaze dissects the spectacle of the woman-figure as mechanical ride.

As filmmakers construct the views as one coherent sequence, they take back control of vision as organized by a series of mobile point of views. While the filmmaker construes an orderly rendition of the attraction, the construction of a filmic universe functions according to principles of consumption. Visual focus is structured by a capitalist principle of separation as form of management. Through visual sequencing

within the image, the subject can reconstitute the overwhelming hyperstimulation of the fairground through a reconstruction of its attractions as visual components. The order that underlies the views is only construed in the image, not the actual experience at the fairground. Filmmakers here use the camera in order to create a visual universe that is perceived as homogenous and stable, in that they eclipse the sensual overflow of the fair in all its frenzied overstimulation. The imposed order exists solely within the image; it cannot be imposed upon the experience at the fairground. It can be re-consumed as ordered stability in the viewing. The selective shaping of the fairground attraction as documented harnessing is thus only retroactively effective in the image.

In fact, filmmakers emulate the exteriorization that underlies the restructuring of perception, in that they exteriorize the sensory onslaught of the fairground in their construction of an imposed order and stability in the filmic space. The relegation of control over vision as homogenous, stable, and autonomous points of view is thus illusionary in that it only exists in the selectivity of the images produced. Filmmakers here construe vision as order; however, order is only materialized in the filmic world, not the lifeworld. Filmmakers deconstruct the attraction (in the production of different views that are ordered into an overall coherent whole) in order to reconstruct a version of the fairground as visual universe in which order and stability prevail. These filmmakers do not celebrate the sensory overstimulation that the fairground provides as architecture of spectacle through attraction impetuses. Through imaging technologies, they harness and transform the space by documenting it according to notions of control, stability, and homogeneity. The sequencing of one view after another does not induce an experience in which everything is present all at once. It presents an isomorphic mirroring of the structuring principle of narrative as sequencing (one thing after another) that can be consumed as coherent within the filmic universe.

G.W. reconstitutes an attraction at the fair. He firmly establishes a visual context in which the ride is first seen in its entirety, while he subsequently focuses on one part of the ride after the other before finishing again with an entire centered shot of the Hully Gully. He breaks down the attractional view of technology in motion that can be consumed in manageable doses. Again, the images function in terms of capitalist structuring of separation and consumption, but also according to notions of control,

stability, and autonomous relegation in the image. The imagery of levers and cogs in motion comes to stand for a relegation of an experience of the technological that is also always alienating into attraction as entertainment. As such, the fairground comes to represent ‘industrial mechanization as an oversized toy’.⁵⁷ Filmmakers are either swept away by it, as attractions re-draw their focus, or they harness the potential contingency in embedding the attraction in visual sequencing. Ad-1 visuals thus visualize the inherent structures of the paradox at the heart of modernism as they either visualize the distraction as concomitant to an exteriorization of perception as attention or they adhere to the positivist promises of order and stability through the use of imaging technologies.

3.2. Ad-3: Phantom Rides

The fairground presents a cathartic experience in that it introduces ‘new perceptual orientations and anxieties about the modern technological world at large by ameliorating them at a very concrete level in the body of the subject.’⁵⁸ The technologization that pervades an individual’s everyday and the concomitant changes in experienced temporality and spatiality can be lived as thrill and entertainment at the fairground. The technologized universe of the fair emulates the organizing principles and forces of an industrialized restructuring of subjective experience. For example, the technologization of a labor process and the concomitant rationalization of an individual’s temporality, spatiality, and concrete organization of bodily behaviour into quantifiable and effective gestures, presents a process that is structured invisibly and thus naturalizes the impositions of industrial forces on body and general experience of the everyday.

The images produced by amateurs more than fifty years later engage the fairground as modernist space. The fascination that underlies attractional views continues to function as impetus to amateur filmmaking well into the 1970s. As we have seen, this relegated perceptual orientation and thus autonomy from a bodily interiority to an exteriority that could be controlled and standardized. This led to a high cultural

⁵⁷ Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 152.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 34–35.

discourse that saw anxiety, alienation, and general threat as affective impact. These affective consequences could be alleviated at the fairground. No aspect at the fairground emulated the principles of an industrial technologization as effectively as the thrill ride. At the same time, the thrill ride specifically alleviates the threat that accompanied the restructuration of the everyday in that it transposes perceptual orientation as thrill and repackages anxieties as entertainment. In the following, I would like to deepen the analysis of an experience of thrill. A further differently inflected view of attractional display actualizes the experience on thrill rides from two reverse, if related, sides.

Before coming to what I see as the epitomical visualization of spectacle seeing, namely ad-2 visuals, I would like to follow ad-1 visuals with an examination of ad-3 visuals, since both depict the technological motion of the thrill ride, albeit from quite a different perspective. Whereas ad-1 visuals are constituted from a position of observation, ad-3 filmmakers are clearly in the midst of things as participant. The views presented by ad-3 visuals emulate the cinematic phantom rides that proved popular in early cinema. A phantom ride presents cinematic views shot with a camera mounted to a moving device, most popularly the front of a train. Ad-3 visuals present views taken from the rides themselves. Nevertheless, underlying these views, two distinct motivations must be distinguished. These distinctions also pertain to the later experience of viewing, since their impact is opposed, if related. First, filmmakers record the experience of being strapped on a ride, such as a rollercoaster or thrill ride. Second, they capture the experience of filming the fairground from the highest point on a Ferris wheel. The latter presents the fairground in a panoramic view. Again two motivations underlie the production and later viewing of these images, namely the proprioceptive reveling in kinesthetic force exerted upon the body and thus a celebration of hyper-sensation and second, a harnessing of the frenzy of the fairground in a visual appropriation of a magisterial gaze. The views that are presented within the films come to emulate the fascination of cinematic seeing itself as they return to the fascination of early cinema for phantom rides. In the following I will link the fascinations of the phantom ride to the very experience of the thrill ride at the fairground.

These views bring to mind the early attractional view of the popular so-called phantom ride films in which a train rushing towards the audience⁵⁹ or shows views shot from a moving train.⁶⁰ The myth of origin surrounding this film, in which spectators panic and even run from the screening because they apparently could not distinguish between filmic image and real train, is indeed just that: a myth. Stephen Bottomore, in “The Panicking Audience?: early cinema and the Train effect”⁶¹ ascertains that by the 1890s audiences were already steeped in imaging technologies. While they were not necessarily habituated to moving imagery, audiences were already well trained by magic lantern shows, the optical illusions of magic shows, and a multitude of visual innovations that would have rendered these images not so much shocking or threatening as thrilling and enjoyable. Ad-3 views are foremost about novel perspectives that could be adopted by the private filmmaker at the fairground. This is also one of the main reasons ad views are exclusively created at the fairground. Quite simply, the perspectives adopted here represent extraordinary views that are not found in the everyday. Naturally, filmmakers could create a view that mirrored the early cinema phantom ride by filming from cars, boats, or in some cases even planes. Such views, however, present but a weakened proprioceptive experience when compared to the excess of the fairground. Images shot from cars, trains, or boats are still shot while positioned on ground. The fairground implements a kinesthetic force that defies normative gravity and represents the cathartic experience of technology seemingly out of control. At the fairground, the body is positioned as site for kinesthetic imposition. The reaction to these experiences is foregrounded in the different motivations that either come to celebrate the body as site of sensory imposition or seek to harness the sensory overflow of the fair through visual appropriation.

By the 20th century the notion of sensory shock induced by imaging technologies and kinesthetic acceleration by an industrialization of the everyday are already weakened through habituation. At the fairground, the sensory experience of modernist tropes was transposed from an experience of threat to that of thrill. Technological forces

⁵⁹ *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de Ciotat* (1895, Auguste and Louis Lumière)

⁶⁰ *Départ de Jérusalem en chemin de fer* (Alexandre Promio, 1897, distributed by Auguste and Louis Lumière)

⁶¹ Stephen Bottomore, “The Panicking Audience? Early Cinema and the Train Effect,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 19, no. 2 (1999): 177–216.

exerted upon the body were relegated into a consumptive pattern of entertainment activities. They not only remained within capitalist-industrial parameters of consumption, they were also rearranged as cathartic experiences that allowed for a reliving of modernist tropes. The thrill ride, and the rollercoaster specifically, epitomize heightened sensual experiences in an environment that promises safety and guarantees that no harm comes to the individual. On a primary level, the experience of a thrill ride presents a playful engagement between man and machine. This relation is not marked by alienation or separation that characterized industrial labor processes. At the fairground the experience of technology as thrill either results in a celebratory engagement or a re-appropriation of visual control.

First I will analyze the views that are created when filmmakers use their camera on the thrill ride. Later on, I will contrast and examine the views that are created while seated on a Ferris wheel. While both these views can be examined concomitantly, since both are produced while seated on a fairground ride, the views created are essentially differentiated in that one is created while being strapped on a ride that is foremost characterized by speed, while the Ferris wheel presents a more leisurely pace and filmmakers also prove in control of the views created.

3.2.1. The thrill ride

The images taken on thrill rides present chaotic views taken while the thrill ride is in full motion. Here filmmakers shoot while seated on a rollercoaster or generally on rides that present a kinesthetic experience of acceleration and frenzied motion. The body is mobilized exteriorly. It presents an experience in which the body is immobile while being propelled through space. As such, the experience already ties in with modernist restructurations of sensory experience from an autonomous interiority to an exerted exteriority. Still, the experience is lived as pleasurable since it is harnessed by the very parameters that structure it as entertainment.

As Rabinovitz observes: ‘These rides reversed the usual relations between the body and machinery in which the person controls and masters the machine: the person surrendered to the machine, which, in turn, liberated the body in some fashion from

its normal limitations of placement and movement in daily life.’⁶² Here a body-machine relation comes to the fore that is as much characterized by playful liberation as by a confirmation of the containment and governing of the body by technologization in everyday life. While Rabinovitz sees the man-machine relation as governed by human mastery in the everyday, within that same relation in a broader formation of labor processes within modernity, man was also upended by mechanical proficiency. The high-industrial ideals of productivity and efficacy were judged by mechanical efficiency rather than by human capabilities. The experiential equation thus also induced a sense of mechanical mastery that suffused the modern everyday. Ad views still engage with these anxieties and restructurations, albeit in an often-playful manner.

The fluctuating impositions of mastery and control that characterize this man-machine relation are thus also emulated at the fairground through the very experience of the thrill ride. As such, ‘[t]he imagination of disaster, the fantasy of seeing technology go out of control, and the pleasure in the resulting terror [are] integral’.⁶³ The thrill ride presents a thrilling and kinesthetic experience that can be consumed without risk and threat. Capitalist-industrial restructurations of experience are commodified as thrill and leisure at the fairground. To function as attraction, they are amplified. For example, the speeding up of temporality and spatiality that re-conditions subjective experience is magnified to such an extent that it is possible to experience these restructurations as thrill and attraction. As we have seen, because attraction as sensory effect and impetus can never be sustained, it also introduces a notion of harnessing by temporal limitation. The thrill ride can be consumed as thrill because it always presents a limited duration. The thrill ride presents an excessive sensory experience, but it is always contained and harnessed, first by its temporal limitations and second by its embedment in the spatial parameters of the fairground.

While modernist capitalist-industrial impositions are presented at the fairground, they need to be consigned as thrill in order for them to work as cathartic impetus. Technology as attraction thus functions by a process in which high industrial tropes of acceleration and separation become capitalist notions of consumption. The body is

⁶² Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 34.

⁶³ Ibid.

liberated from its daily limitations through motion induced by a machine. This in itself already pertains to wonderment and excitement, in short, to the extraordinary. The visitor, while being posited as immobile, directly partakes in a notion of technologized motion. The main attraction of the thrill ride lies in the following: *technological motion can be subjectively experienced*. The draw or notion of drawing in that defines the very principle of attraction is thus exerted directly and immediately upon the body. Here the body becomes the site onto which technological acceleration is directly imposed. The following example visualizes this very experience of technological motion. The imagery taken at thrill rides and the rollercoaster presents a dizzying and almost abstract imagery of frenzied movement.

F.A.⁶⁴ films the fairground mostly in a family chronicle modus. He visits the fairground with his three children, between three and six years old. Walking the fair, he also films the rides in motion in a clear and concise manner that we have identified as the documenting and archiving drive. At one point, however, we are presented with hectic, almost chaotic images that he films while being seated on a plane ride in motion. He films the steel construction that attaches the planes to the middle part. He frames a partial view of the plane in front of him, but mostly the spectator can see a blur of quick successive views of the crowd on the ground, the concrete of the parking lot on which the fairground takes place, and a general colorful blur of objects, booths, people, and neighboring rides swooping past. It proves impossible to establish any kind of clearly discernible view. What is witnessed here is the very visualization of kinesthetic force in motion.

Figure 3



⁶⁴ AV010425 / IA_AMA_00571, 8mm, colour and b&w, mute, Ca. 1957, ca. 1989



The shakiness of the images visualizes how the body is physically shaken. Filmmaking here is a rendering visible of the otherwise invisible forces of technological imposition upon the body. The sequence lasts a good ten seconds, and the position of camera never changes. The entire sequence is taken in a medium shot. What is important to note here is the relation of mobility and immobility that is visualized. What F.A. creates is a visualization of an immobile body (with camera) in a machine-man relation that transposes the world as motion. These images show the world in motion captured from an immobile position. Still, the experience is harnessed in that the circular motion never presents an immediate threat of the filmmaker being propelled out of the space and thus relegates physical harm into spatial containment.

A.D.⁶⁵ loves the fairground. She films the rides in motion for about thirty-six minutes. She uses her entire film roll on the fairground. In one sequence, she films while sitting motionless in a rollercoaster wagon waiting for the ride to start. She films the steel construction of the rollercoaster, the platform in front of it, and the people walking about the fair in a leisurely manner. She proves more interested in filming the ride on the opposite side as it is in motion and decorated with blinking lights that alternate in color. The next image presented is rather dark and not clearly discernible. All of a sudden, the camera tilts up and, seeing as the sides of the rollercoaster are lighted by a row of lantern-shaped lights, the viewer realizes that the filmmaker's wagon is being pulled up. She films the entire ride, and the slow ascent introduces a notion of anticipation and impatience. At the top, the wagon takes a slow turn, and a panoramic view of the fairground underneath comes into frame. We can clearly discern the

⁶⁵ AV035249 / IA_AMA_001051, super 8, color, mute, 1975

booths and lighted rides below. What goes up must come down, and after a few turns, the rollercoaster wagon rushes downwards. Because A.D. films at night, for a few seconds all that can be seen is a completely black screen until lights from the fairground and the rollercoaster provide enough clarity to render the downward motion visible. The black screen presumably presents the few first seconds of descent, but only when the lights partially illuminate the scene, the motion effectuated is rendered visible. Light brings movement to visibility. Light as attraction in itself also renders the proprioceptive forces exerted onto the body visible through its presentation as blurred lines. At the same time, the camera is shaking as she holds on to it and thus inadvertently visualizes the very forces exerted upon the body.

Figure 4





As the wagons accelerate, descend, and simultaneously take turns, the images flit past and become more and more abstract. All of a sudden, the images show only pure light in motion. The upward and downward tilts of the camera are less controlled by deliberate action as they come to visualize the movement of a head forcefully shaken from one side to the other. The fairground is presented in a lighted, shaky, indiscernible view that spirals past in a circular motion. Light renders visible the concept of technological motion. Not only do we witness objects in motion, we observe the very forces of motion in action.



The imagery reminds one of time-lapse photographs in which the lens is opened completely and light and movement are represented as lines. At the same time, within the moving images of the filmic sequences, these lines represent not only light, they

render motion legible. In fact, a viewer can only 'read' the motion that is effectuated through the lighted lines that flit past in the frame. The lighted lines thus visualize the kinesthetic forces of motion imposed upon the body on the rollercoaster. The shaking of the imagery and the dizzying display of lighted lines make for a viewing experience that is hectic and chaotic. Because no clear objects are discernible, once the wagon comes to a halt, a sense of relief takes hold of the viewer. Finally, as the wagon enters the entry part at the bottom with its clearly lighted canopy, objects regain their stable visual identity. Light is again constituted of clearly discernible light bulbs, and motion is halted.

Within these images, the world is related as motion. The body is seated in immobility. Objects lose their stable identity in vision, and lighted lines render the kinesthetic forces imposed upon the body by technological motion legible. These are the elements that structure the visual experience on a rollercoaster and the production of images while seated on the thrill ride.

The production of these views thus also plays into notions of pride, as not everyone dares to take a ride on a rollercoaster. The kinesthetic force that is imposed on the body, the lights rushing past, the world blurring in accelerated movement, all come to relate back to a living of the modernist conditions of high industrial culture. Ad-3 visuals taken from thrill rides celebrate the frenzied hyper-stimulation of a modernist lifeworld. Here the imposition exerted upon the body as site for sensory experience is celebrated. The proprioceptive liberation from everyday experiences of gravity and groundedness is celebrated in, once again, a distinctly modernist revel of disembodiment as detachment from interiority. The body functions as site for kinesthetic imposition. The experience is transposed as thrill since it offers absorption within technological motion.

The body is not grounded as the center of contemplative immersion but comes to function as the site of a paradoxically disembodied affect. The effect is pleasurable since the body metaphorically merges with the forces that are exerted upon it, rather than being constricted or limited by them. The modernist space of the fairground thus allows for a disembodied hyper-stimulation that co-constitutes the body as pure sensation rather than gravitational center from which action (also as motion) is

directed. A paradox thus structures the experience of the thrill ride: on the one hand, the body *becomes* the site of sensory hyper-stimulation, while on the other hand, the experience also proves liberating since it structures the body as disembodied entity within the forces exerted upon it. The experience is one of mergence within technological motion.

The effect of this experience as thrilling and liberating only functions through the relegation of the body as gravitational center. The body needs to be positioned as immobile for its attractional and thrilling effect to take hold. If the body still functioned as gravitational center from which autonomous action is directed, the experience would become one of threat and oppression. The exerted motion of the thrill ride would be perceived as oppressive since an individual would perceive the exertion of forces upon the body as imposition and would try to counteract it with bodily action. Because the body is immobile, however, the experience can be one of thrilling immersion and bodily absorption within the technological motion effectuated upon it. These are the experiential structures of the thrill ride. Bodily agency must be given up in order for the experience to become one of liberating thrill.

The thrill rider could experience a temporally limited occurrence that merged the body within technology as motion. Christa Blümlinger summarizes the modernist experience as one of instability and uncertainty. Relating to the commonality that underlies the cinematic experience and modernist innovations, she states:

‘This uncertainty is communicated in the cinema by means of high speed, the resulting increase in the number of impressions, disorientation and the unceasing changes of position. In this context one should not underestimate the significance of the fact that the new means of transport and the new media brought with them a disturbing increase in physical danger and nervous stimulation. Georg Simmel illustrates this modern perception in the case of the city as an “*escalation of nervous activity* which results from the rapid and *continuous alternation of outer and inner experience*.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Blümlinger, Christa. “Lumière, the Train and the Avant-Garde”. Wanda Strauven, ed., *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Film Culture in Transition. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 247. My emphasis.

Let us briefly consider Blümlinger's phrasing and apply it to the very experience of being strapped on a thrill ride: 'the resulting increase in the number of impressions, disorientation and the unceasing changes of position'⁶⁷ are all experiential tropes cathartically relived on the thrill ride. Here, nervous activity can be transformed into pleasurable thrill only because the body no longer functions as gravitational center. The body has to give up its status as grounding entity in order for the experience to become a thrilling celebration. Naturally, such a sensation cannot be sustained and is limited by the duration of the ride and the knowledge that the fairground visitor is safe and harnessed within its parameters.

Objects lose their concrete visible identity and become unstable in the experience of the thrill ride. The thrill ride actualizes this experience in that the world, lights, and objects lose their stable identity in views that alternate between appearance and disappearance and render motion legible. Built into the experience of the thrill ride lies a *dispositif* of vision that is common to cinematic spectatorship and the *dispositif* of the highly mobile traveller. In fact, at the fairground, this visual *dispositif* emulates cinematic structures that were in turn influenced by mechanic innovations of high mobility, such as the train or the automobile. The commonality of this *dispositif* lies in the immobility of a perceiver that sees the world as motion, rather than the body as center of movement in the world. This is, of course, the cinematic *dispositif* in which the body sits immobile while images move. Perceptual autonomy is relegated from the body as gravitational centre that organizes the exterior views in terms of mobile viewpoints to a site that perceives the world as motion. The cinematic views presented by the phantom ride further this *dispositif* in that they show the affinities between the cinematic view in itself and the notion of train travel. Amateurs filming on a thrill ride thus mirror the early cinema rendition of phantom rides. Writing about a train journey in 1861, Benjamin Gastineau observes: 'it presents the astonished traveler with happy scenes, sad scenes, burlesque interludes, brilliant fireworks, *all visions that disappear as soon as they are seen* [...].'⁶⁸ The thrill ride relates such an

⁶⁷ Blümlinger, Christa. "Lumière, the Train and the Avant-Garde". Ibid.

⁶⁸ Gastineau, Benjamin. quoted in Christa Blümlinger, ed., *Sprung Im Spiegel: Filmisches Wahrnehmen Zwischen Fiktion Und Wirklichkeit* (Wien: Sonderzahl, 1990), 247. My emphasis.

experience of vision as appearance and disappearance in which corporeal autonomy is substituted by frenzied sensory affect.

Differently said: it proves hard to govern vision on the thrill ride, as turning one's head when pinned by gravitational forces proves impossible. The world is visually experienced as frenzied and accelerated motion, and this experience induces perceptual instability. On a thrill ride this sensation could be experienced as artificially harnessed since the thrill ride 'combined sensations of acceleration and falling with a security guaranteed by modern industrial technology.'⁶⁹ As such, the thrill ride provided a kinesthetic experience that posited the world as motion. As we will see shortly, the introduction of a camera into the experience paradoxically reinforced vision as spectacle-seeing while also pertaining to a harnessing by fixing perceptual instability through imaging technologies. The dispositif of vision that is illustrated by these views will further be elaborated as distinctly cinematic in structure. In order to further illustrate how vision here becomes cinematic in structure, I would propose to have a brief look at views taken from the top of the Ferris wheel.

3.2.2. The Ferris wheel

The second type of ad-3 view is taken from the top of the Ferris wheel. Here the view positions the filmmaker's gaze as again situated between that of cinematic spectator and modern traveler. While the kinesthetic experience of the thrill ride is exerted directly upon the body, on the Ferris wheel the perception effectuated constitutes the perceiver as autonomous observer in a distantiating relation of visual consumption. Here the sensual over-stimulation of the fairground is commodified and can be consumed as image. These sequences are quite long, and they present two filmic positions: for one, they are produced at the very top position of the Ferris wheel, which always halts for panoramic purposes. Second, filmmakers often choose to include the slow descent of the Ferris wheel wagon in order to leisurely film different views of the fairground. The slow pace allows them to filmically move closer to an object of interest as they have time to zoom in. Here perception is relegated as gaze.

⁶⁹ Gunning, Tom. quoted in Bottomore, "The Panicking Audience? Early Cinema and the Train Effect". 200.

Perceptual control is re-transposed to the body. At the same time, filming translates as consumptive appropriation of the offered attractions. Sensory onslaught is visually harnessed and materially inscribed on film. The elevated position on top of the Ferris wheel and the promise underlying imaging technologies as visual harnessing allow for a re-appropriation of visual control. The spectacular playground of the fair is furthermore visually embedded in the spatiality of the city. It is clearly demarcated by the gates and streets that surround it. The fairground is clearly delineated and rooted within the city. At times, the outlines of the parking spaces can be discerned between the booths and rides, and they function as a reminder of the temporal limits of the fairground. The car park will soon cater to Saturday shoppers, office workers, and cinema visitors in need of urban parking spaces once again.

The views that are taken on the Ferris wheel relate the surround as panoramic image. The production of images thus relates notions of visual re-appropriation in that these images represent a commodification; they are materialized on film and can be consumed again and again. The filmic gaze roams the space of the fairground underneath and turns these mobile views into panoramic images. In fact, the views presented here are reminiscent of postcards taken and sold in amusement parks. Rabinovitz considers these postcards as commodity in the following:

‘Rather than one all-embracing view, aerial views like this one offer multiple vantage points that condense fictional mobility. In this regard the spectator may literally be static, but this more painterly, nostalgic view also argues for a mobile body incorporated into perspective. Above all, both postcards and movies represented the amusement park as a panoramic spectacle that afforded a magisterial gaze over the park as a phantasmagorical urban oasis.’⁷⁰

The views taken from the Ferris wheel exemplify the magisterial gaze of promotional films and postcards taken at the amusement parks. While the filmmaker is seated in a static position, he/she is nevertheless integrated into mobile views that transpose the spatiality of the fairground as image. The filmmaker could point the camera at views from within their static position inside a wagon and re-appropriate them materially in the transformation into filmic image. In a manner of speaking, the fairground and its

⁷⁰ Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 119.

attractions are flattened from a distanced position that renders them consumable. The view from the Ferris wheel is not absolute or complete. The filmmaker presents the different views in sequence. He/she engages multiple vantage points and thus reestablishes the body as center of visual autonomy and gravitational mobility. Nevertheless, rather than presenting a sensory engagement with attraction or an immersion within the space of the fair, the filmmaker commodifies the view for later consumption. The slow and leisurely pace of the Ferris wheel also provides a counterpart to the frenzied activity beneath it. It elevates the viewer above the overstimulating and nervous kinesthetic forces of the fairground as site of sensory stimulation.

J.M.⁷¹ is one of the numerous filmmakers who takes advantage of the half hour or so in which he can sit down and experience the fair from above. The filmmaker films his two sons in the wagon in front of him through the steel construction of the Ferris wheel that separates them. He also films during the daytime. He then focuses on the panoramic view of the sky and pans to the right. Not only can we see the fairground from above, he also includes the 'Grand Théâtre' that flanks the fairground. Again, through the visual reminder of the theatre that is a fixed institution within the city, the fairground is not only spatially harnessed, it is recognized as temporally limited. After all, attraction cannot be sustained and neither can the fairground, which would lose its status as spectacle by being a continuous event throughout the year.

One of my favorite filmmakers, W.B.,⁷² produces the most wonderful imagery at the fairground. He loves filming at night and is able to anticipate the effects of the lighted displays in the finished film. In one sequence, he films from the top position of the Ferris wheel. He films the lighted display below him that, due to equipment constrictions, shows up as being surrounded by absolute darkness. In fact, the image presents but outlines of the lighted rides situated beneath him. He neatly frames the lighted rollercoaster 'Super Railway' (note the name, which conveys the relationality between the railway and the rollercoaster and even the phantom ride). He also films what I recognize as the Ski Lift ride, a tentacle ride that has little wagons attached to

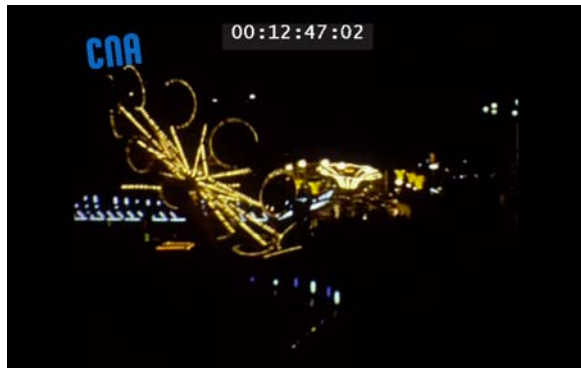
⁷¹ VII316/00578, no info on material, color, mute, 1964

⁷² AV034168_m.wmv / IA_AMA_00379, Super 8, colour, mute, no date

its outer structure. The tentacle construction is lighted and, seen from above, presents the image of a star made out of lights. The next sequence is taken with the Ferris wheel in motion; however, at no point is the imagery or motion displayed as hectic.

Figure 5





W.B. is experienced enough to follow the circular motion of the wheel with a pan in the same direction, and the views are presented as seamless panoramas that resemble the continuous flow of views presented to a traveler in either car, boat, or railway. However, this sense of passivity while faced with mobile views is not experienced as threatening. The uncanny of a visual experience as described by Benjamin Gastineau above, in which ‘all visions that disappear as soon as they are seen [...]’,⁷³ is here relegated back to the production of images as consumable entities. On the Ferris wheel, the fairground visitor partakes in an experience of leisurely entertainment. The filmmaker participates in a circular movement in which views can be repeatedly consumed.

What has been analyzed in the preceding is the dispositif of vision that underlies views taken from the thrill ride and Ferris wheel. The fascination that underlies early cinema views, including those presented by the phantom ride, is also exemplified by the dispositif amateurs adopt at the fairground. Ad-3 images present a fascination that is inherent to cinematic spectatorship. The experience of being seated on a thrill ride

⁷³ Gastineau, Benjamin. quote in. Blümlinger, *Sprung Im Spiegel*, 247.

mirrors the conditions that structure perception in the cinema. As we have seen, the thrill ride induces an experience in which the world becomes motion. It furthermore, especially with views taken from the fairground, transposes the world (surround or background) as image. Seated on the thrill ride, the perceiver is confronted with images that move. This dispositif emulates the cinematic experience. The views here are thus inherently cinematic in that the perceiver sits immobile while the world as motion passes as exteriority. The immobile body no longer functions as original source of mobile views. It is no longer the center of vision. The perceiver no longer chooses perspectives. They are presented to him/her exteriorly. The perceiver sits passively in a visual experience in which *images move*.

The modernist restructuration of perception relegated movement from vision to visibility. Here lies the crucial link between the fairground experience and its visual counterpart of cinematic seeing as attractional. The affinities that bind the mutual fascinations of the fairground and the cinema are thus multi-layered. First, the cinema is generally perceived to have originated at the fairground.⁷⁴ It was introduced as an attraction and novelty at the fair. Paul Lesch summarizes:

‘From 1897 onwards, the *Schuberfouer* played host annually to one or two travelling cinemas, which—for a relatively modest price—screened their short films (between one and five minutes, approximately) before an audience thirsty for new, unusual, spectacular and humorous moving pictures. Whereas, in 1897, cinema was just a simple interlude between variety shows, from 1898 onwards, it established itself as not only an independent attraction but also an enormously popular one. If one is to believe the newspapers at the time, cinematograph shows regularly sold

⁷⁴ I found the first mentioning of a cinematograph in: *Luxemburger Wort*, 14. December 1886, 2. Under the local news section a screening in Grevenmacher (salle Schumacher) on 9. December 1896 is described. The first screenings took place in different small venues throughout the country, a few years later, however, a cinema was established as staple component of the fairground. Paul Lesch has found an earlier mentioning of a film screening and states : ‘The first public film screenings in Luxembourg date back to October/November in 1896. They took place in variety show venues (such as the *Villa Louvigny*), in cafés (such as the *Métropole*), in hotels, schools and even at the Grand-Ducal palace.’ In : Lesch, Paul. “Travelling Cinematograph Shows in Luxembourg”. Martin Loiperdinger, ed., *Travelling Cinema in Europe* (Frankfurt am Main, Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 2008), 104.

out and rapidly became one of the most important attractions of the *Schuberfourer*.⁷⁵

At the same time, the fairground as conceptual visual architecture of spectacle adopts a distinctly cinematic *dispositif*. The restructuration of vision to visibility that also underlies the experience at the fairground is partially a consequence of the very perceptual restructuration that was influenced by the emergence of imaging technologies themselves. One can say that the filmic engagement of amateurs at the fairground brings this perceptual equation full circle.

The impulse to film while at the rides is naturalized by the very restructuration of perception as spectacle. In a double circumnavigation the filmmakers display a desire to capture views that are themselves implicated in a cinematic *dispositif*. The thrill ride and the Ferris wheel do not just impact the body; they also do so by *adopting a cinematic dispositif*. This is how a modernist restructuration of perception as spectacle is presented as always also inherently cinematic.

We have reached the heart of the modernist experience that extends into the amateur visualizations produced at the fairground. As Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz argue: ‘The culture of modernity rendered inevitable something like cinema, since cinema’s characteristics evolved from the traits that defined modern life in general’⁷⁶ and consequentially ‘modernity can be best understood as inherently cinematic.’⁷⁷ Imaging technologies thus originated in a cultural climate that had already fundamentally restructured perception and the body and only furthered said imposition with the emergent cinematic *dispositif*. While cinema famously found its birthplace on the fairground, the high-industrial technologization of the fairground then followed distinctly cinematic principles. We can thus speak of a mutual influencing of the common attractional displays of fairground and cinema. The fairground as space is here related as architecture of spectacle, since it provides the conditions of possibility that restructure perception in general. The fairground provides a phantasmagoric space in which views function as attractional impetus that

⁷⁵ Lesch, Paul. “Travelling Cinematograph Shows in Luxembourg”. *Ibid.*, 105.

⁷⁶ Charney, Leo and Vanessa Schwartz. “Introduction” Charney and Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, 1–2.

⁷⁷ Charney, Leo and Vanessa Schwartz. “Introduction” *ibid.*, 2.

draws attention from the outside. It furthermore structures the dispositif as seeing as cinematic since the perceiver is drawn into a visual equation that presents the world as images that move.

The exteriorization as effectuated by a restructuration from vision to visibility also plays a part in the construction of what Guy Debord calls a 'society of spectacle'. On a primary level, the experience at the fairground, its perceptive organization in terms of attractional impetuses, does not allow for a communal experience. At best, spectacle as perceptual reorganization can be experienced individually within a crowd. In fact, the restructuration of perception to an exteriorly drawn mobile view also relegates the body to immobility. At the same time, the view that draws attention is constructed as image. Within the architecture of spectacle at the fairground, the world is constituted as moving imagery. As Guy Debord notes: 'everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation.'⁷⁸

The transformation of world into moving imagery allows for a manner of engagement that follows larger capitalist-industrial patterns of consumption. Certainly, notions of appropriation play an important role here; the amateur visually materializes and thus appropriates the fair for later re-consumption. Similarly to postcards, the films taken by amateurs present the creation of a material object that could be taken home and be consumed again and again. Like postcards, films come to convey and visualize the very principles of consumption and appropriation of leisure-time activities. Here, a double equation of consumption comes into play. Like the family chronicle and the film adopting a documentary drive, the films of attractional display allow for consumption on a primary level in partaking in leisure-time activities, while the creation of a material object to be carried over into the private home allows for a second (and third and fourth) consumption at a later date.

A further differentiation must be made between the activity of filmmaking and the finished result. The views created in the filmic image pertain to two levels of fascination. First, they come to visualize the modernist restructuration of perception into attention and distraction; and thus illustrate the exteriorization of perceptual focus

⁷⁸ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983), paragraph 1. Chapter 1.

as drawn from the outside and emulate the perspective on a thrill ride that transposes the world as moving images. Second, they display a motivation of harnessing and fixation that is also translated as visual consumption. The images produced thus visualize the very restructuration of vision. These images come to represent a visual cutout; their selectivity also transposes the fairground either as space of spectacle or seeks to filmically harness the sensory excess through visual appropriation within the image.

These views of an attractional display that are created by amateurs at the fairground also exemplify their commonality with the early cinema of attractions. Rabinovitz's examination becomes most illustrative here:

‘[Early cinema’s] magnetism is the capacity of the apparatus for summoning novel points of view, for extending the panoptic gaze, and for eliciting wonder at the apparatus felt as a sensation of delight and pleasure in the viewer’s body. The cinema of attractions not only conquers space with the gaze but foregrounds the body itself as a site of sensory experience within a three-dimensionally contained space.’⁷⁹

This magnetism and fascination underlies the viewing of an attractional display. Ad images are thus, on a primary level, a concrete re-emulation of kinesthetic experience that characterizes the sensory over-stimulation introduced by the technologized experience of the fairground. On a second level, they come to directly embody the new architecture of vision that exteriorizes perception as the viewing of spectacle.

To sum up, we can follow Rabinovitz in stating that the fairground, just as the amusement park did, ‘addressed new perceptual orientations and anxieties about the modern technological world at large by ameliorating them at a very concrete level in the body of the subject.’⁸⁰ The images produced here represent the modernist fascination and attraction of the fairground while concomitantly presenting images that become attractional in their own right. The very activity of filmmaking conveys a presentation of how vision itself was reorganized according to modernist principles. Furthermore, these amateur films come to prove how these perceptual restructurations

⁷⁹ Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 35.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 34–35.

still exuded perceptual fascinations on amateurs that were already well versed in representational spectatorship. The production of these attractional views in a post–World War II society thus comes to illustrate how the restructurations of modernity still impacted the practice of filmmaking and the experience at the fairground in what is generally termed a post-industrial society.

3.3. Ad-2: Lights in motion

The views that have here been termed ad-2 proved the first genuinely baffling sights I encountered within my film corpus. While they occur least frequently overall, they nevertheless stood out not as exceptions, but as a regular reoccurrence at the fairground. Ad-2 films are generally shot at night. This in itself presents a surprising occurrence, for the mere fact that most filmmakers know their shooting equipment and the capabilities thereof. Filmmakers most frequently film on 8mm or Super 8 cameras, with some earlier exceptions of 9.5mm or even 16mm. The distinctions between equipment and material used is not examined here, but suffice to say, in amateur filmmaking as in all filmmaking, proper lighting conditions are crucial for clarity of the imagery. Simply put: amateurs using their camera at night to film the lighted displays at the fairground knew that their films would only display the lighted outlines at the fairground.

As we have seen before, this is in itself nothing new, since amateurs also film from thrill rides at night and capture the lighted world as world-in-motion. Here, however, a further distinction enters the images, namely the intended focus on lights in motion. Filmmakers deliberately film lights as motion. They do not contextualize or embed the imagery in long or medium shots. The zoom function of the camera proves extremely popular in combination with these displays of lights in motion. Filmmakers use the camera as deliberate means of creation and introduce a further layer of motion into the image. For example, filmmakers zoom in on lighted displays in motion and simultaneously emulate the movement of the ride onto which the lights are attached *with* the camera. They also often discover the creative possibilities that lie within camera equipment as they start zooming and zooming back out in quick succession or they start tilting the camera to such extremes that the images become dizzyingly

disconcerting. What characterizes ad-2 images is their abstract nature. We are presented with a display of lighted shapes in motion that is reinforced by either in-camera motions such as zooms or tilts and pans or the direct imposition of hand movement onto the camera.

The attractional impetus of lights in motion that draws in the perceptual focus is here engaged deliberately as filmmakers clearly display an intention to produce imagery that shows the attraction in pure abstraction. The views that are created are neither contextualized nor embedded in a background or surround. They stand on their own.

We can presume these images to be produced as *deliberately* abstract and non-figurative from the simple derogation that filmmakers understood their equipment would not be able to produce clear and discernible imagery at night—at least in the cases of 8mm, Super 8, and 9.5mm. Differently put, filmmakers were aware that only lighted shapes would show up on the film material while people, faces, or objects would not. We can thus assume that filmmakers taking their camera to the fair at night display a spirit of deliberation rather than distraction. The *mise-en-scène* here presents a range of close ups as crucial means of intended expression. Filmmakers display a desire to eclipse their shots from a visual context that would render the images visibly understandable (in terms of framing as contextualization). They use the camera as stylistically creative device in order to further abstract the images. For example, they use the zoom to close in on a lighted display until separate lights become blurred, and the result is a view that presents an abstract display of lights and motion. They zoom in and out, often in rapid succession, thus introducing their own created and additional motion into the image. Ad-2 visuals are thus an abstraction of lighted motion that finds no contextualizing anchor in the world. Here we encounter a visualization of modernist tropes. In the following, I will engage with these fascinating images according to their becoming visualizations of the modernist tropes that posit seeing as pure spectacle. I will engage with their temporal inflections that are transposed as circularity. I will elaborate on their deliberate creation in terms of an embrace of the contingent as excess that always accompanies rationalization and standardization.

3.3.1. Electrification as attraction

On a primary and crucial level, ad-2 images present electric lights on display. The fascination that lights at the fairground provoke is clearly related to their electric nature. As a matter of fact, the lights here come to function as a visualization of the immateriality of electricity itself. The immateriality of electricity is visually materialized on film. They offer tangible perceptual objects that concretized an experience of electricity itself. The fascination for electricity that pervaded the everyday could here be experienced as attractional impetus in an architecture of spectacle that functions through enhancement. While electricity was introduced at the fairground and proved a frequent staple in everyday life as early as 1903, amateurs visiting the fairground could enter a phantasmagoric space of concretized electricity that exuded its fascination well into the 1970s. Ad-2 views carry the proof of this electric impetus as attraction.

Lauren Rabinovitz grounds the essential attraction of the amusement park in the emergence of electricity itself. Rabinovitz states: '[Walter] Benjamin's assessment of modernist perceptual experience as a "shock" metaphorically adopts a sensation associated with "the feel" of electricity itself, and electrification was perhaps the most prominent feature of modernity in this period.'⁸¹ By the time amateurs began filming at the fairground this experience is no longer characterized by shock but comes to function as attractional impetus. During my research I came across Lauren Rabinovitz's description of a promotional film from 1905.⁸² This film, produced by Edwin S. Porter and Thomas Edison himself, advertised the wonders of Coney Island and can still be watched on YouTube. What struck me immediately is the similarity between this promotional film, which advertised the park and directly emphasized its electrification, and the fairground views created by amateurs throughout the decades.

⁸¹ Ibid., 13.

⁸² *Coney Island at Night* (Edison and Porter, 1905)

Figure 6



Coney Island at Night (Edison and Porter, 1905)

Figure 7



R.S.'s nighttime rendition of lighted display at the fairground⁸³

Coney Island at Night presents a visual focus on the lighted outlines of the various infrastructures of the amusement park and uses a highly elevated platform from which to film this electrified display. The filmmakers use panning motions to create a panoramic view of this landscape. Around minute 1:14 a display of separate blinking lights can be seen merging into a display that spells 'Dreamland' in light.



⁸³ AV013104, no info on material, black and white and color, mute, 1959

The amusement park becomes a space of phantasmagoria created by electric lights. The lights then disappear letter by letter until the screen presents complete darkness. This emphasizes the second level of attractional display, namely the notion that lighted display be effectuated by its contrast. Lights, simply put, need darkness to become visible. Here certain connotations pertaining to appearance and disappearance play into the equation; they will, however, be examined later on. Throughout *Coney Island at Night* the camera abandons the panoramic perspective and starts focusing on individual elements of the park; its major focus, however, always remains on lights. Even in black and white, the visual panoply of lighted display is conveyed by this very early example of electric illumination ‘en masse’. Coney Island and the fairground both provide excessive lighted displays and thus present this nighttime perception as extraordinary view. As mentioned before, the camera seldom remains static but introduces its own movement into the image. The inherent fascination with lighted displays and the motivation to create additional movement within the image that amateurs visualize thus coincides with Rabinovitz’s comments in regards to the *Coney Island at Night* feature:

‘[C]inema *nighttime views* of amusement parks defined new electrically illuminated settings associated with urban spaces as aesthetically awe-inspiring. ... [they] focus on the displays of artificially colored lights, rejoicing in the park as a vivid, electrified visual spectacle. Movies like *Coney Island at Night* (Edison, 1905) may not have been able to assault one’s senses with dazzling colors but still charged sensory activity through high contrast and the actual panning motion of the brilliant white lights silhouetted against the black night sky.’⁸⁴

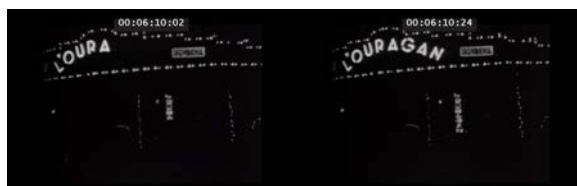
I would like to introduce an example that resembles the Coney Island film almost shot by shot. W.B.⁸⁵ is a proficient filmmaker. He spends an entire roll of black and white film on the fairground and shoots mostly in a d&a mode. He begins his film with a clear medium shot and documents the Hämmelesmarsch that traditionally rings in the fairground. During the day, he films the distinct booths and rides in a clear and concise manner mostly in medium and long shot. From minute 05:28 onwards, however, his filmic mode changes completely as he starts shooting during the night.

⁸⁴ Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 130.

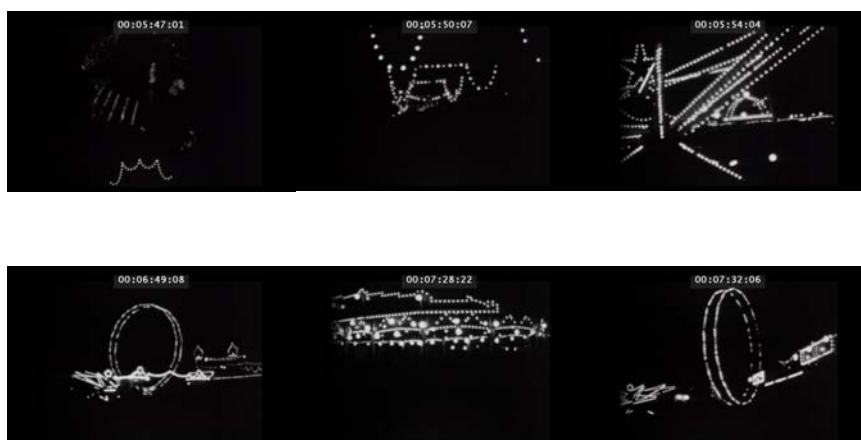
⁸⁵ AV034525 / IA_AMA000350, 9.5 mm, b&w, mute, no date

First he focuses on a lighted scene depicting a blacksmith with hammer in outline. He then points the camera on general views in which the different rides are only outlined as lights. Here the lights are continuously reshaped in different forms. One view presents an outline of fairy lights whereas, in the background, a presumed higher structure has lights attached to its outlines that repeatedly and alternately light up in quick succession. The next sequence shows an octopus ride in motion. Lights are attached to its tentacle-like structures onto which wagons are attached. The middle part presents a lighted star that is rotating with the thrill ride. The next sequence shows a show booth from outside. The lighted panoply that functions as its front sign successively presents its letters. The booth is called L'Ouragan and the letters are lighted one after the other until we are able to read the sign in its entirety. His images emulate the Dreamland shot from the Coney Island film.

Figure 8



We need not describe the film in its entirety, but it continues to show landscapes of lighted displays that include the lights attached to rides, to the Ferris wheel, or lining the panoply of the booths.





He keeps filming these lighted shapes for more than ten minutes—a surprising duration for an amateur film. The similarities to the Coney Island film from 1905 are striking. Not only does he present an artificial display of lights in motion against the complete blackness of the night sky, he even includes the alternating display of letters eventually spelling out the sign on a canopy. The fairground at night provides a visual platform for ‘electricity’s ability to transform a landscape into a magical city of disembodied lights.’⁸⁶ The immateriality of electricity as lighted display is here materialized as visibility.

The enhancement of electrified displays is furthered to the point of it becoming a pure presence in the image. Light is not only no longer attached to the objects it illuminates it becomes an objective entity in itself and can be consumed as image. Light no longer figures as attached to an object. It is separated from its natural functioning as illumination. Not only is this lighted display figured as visible object, it comes to represent modernist reification in that it is detached from its very function. Ad-2 images come to frame the fairground as ‘a vast visual display of radiant electrical energy against a flattened backdrop of blackness.’⁸⁷ In being liberated from its very purpose, light becomes reified as visible object, rather than condition of visibility. It also needs the complete darkness of the background to function. As soon as the lights come to illuminate an object at the fairground, the impact is rendered void. The lighted display of ad-2 views never focuses on further motifs at the fairground. As soon as light is relegated to its natural function of illumination, their attractational impetus as visible object is voided.

The lighted displays at the fairground and their transposal to visible object within the image thus function according to a reification of the inherent signification of light as illumination. Reification as concept accompanies modernist externalization as

⁸⁶ Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 132.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

separation and rationalization that is organized by capitalist-industrial restructuration. Fredric Jameson defines reification as 'a force whose logic is one of ruthless separation and disjunction, of specialization and rationalization [...].'⁸⁸ He furthermore elaborates the symptom of disjunction or separation as capitalist side effect to a restructuration that 'disjoins the signifier from the signified.'⁸⁹ While Jameson here illustrates this disjunction through language in the postmodern novel, what can be taken from his elaboration is the notion of detachment. Light as displayed in ad views is detached from its main function. It becomes a consumable object of visibility.

As such, it is relegated from a necessary means of *visuality* to an externalized notion of *visibility*. Here light is transposed as image. It comes to fulfill the very conditions of reification as it is rendered into a commodity. As Guy Debord shows in *Society of Spectacle*,⁹⁰ the image functions as ultimate form of commodity reification. Electric display at the fairground thus externalizes light from its status of a condition for visuality and transforms it into an object of visibility.

The perceptual experience of light as image again plays into a reconditioning of subjective perception as disembodied exteriority. This reification of light as image-commodity visualizes the central figure of modernist restructuration in its coming to emulate the circulation and flux that restructured the world as currency. As such, 'the importance of this technological sublime effect is as a convergent representation of electrical current and camera circular motion that demonstrates an energized traffic flow or circulation as the central figure of modernity.'⁹¹ This energized flow is visualized and enhanced in the abstract imagery of ad-2 material. The ebb and flow of the intensity of the lights on display, the structure of appearance and disappearance, and the high fluctuation within the image come to visualize the very principles of capitalist patterns of circulation and mobility. The attractional impetus of lighted displays is here not embedded. It stands on its own as self-contained entity. These lighted displays need to do so, as 'the technological sublime could not be fully

⁸⁸ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, reprinted (London: Verso, 2008), 96.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*.

⁹¹ Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 132.

realized from within the crowd encompassed by the light displays but only when the viewer could step outside the lighted arena and could regard it as spectacle-detached, distant, and unified.’⁹² In order to function as attraction, the lighted displays needed for perceptual distantiation. Lighted displays need to be excessive and stand as self-contained entities in order to function as attractional impetus: ‘they required the effects to both idealization and *distance* so that desire could assume a superior illusory position over actual physical participation and proximity.’⁹³

Again, the disembodiment that underlies the non-participatory condition of lighted displays also transposes seeing as cinematic vision. The filming of electrified lights in motion ‘also allowed for a convergence between the spectacle of artificial illumination and the new medium of the cinema, since nighttime illuminations provided so much light that it was possible to shoot movies of them and disseminate these spectacles well beyond the fairgrounds: “Through their cinematic rendering of the [1901 Buffalo] Pan-American’s electric light displays, these panoramic films simultaneously *enacted* and *aestheticized* technological modernity’s transcendence of the natural order through electricity’s dissociation of light from time.’⁹⁴ The dissociation of light from time will be examined shortly, but again, the effect of electrified attractions coincides with cinematic vision as exteriorized perception. Not only is the seen (here lights) transposed as image, again, the gravitational centre of subjective embodiment is relegated in favor of non-participatory perception. Also, the transposal of light as image to film image presents a double circumnavigation in which perception becomes cinematic and the reification that underlies modernist restructuration can be further consumed as commodity.

Amateurs here create a filmic universe that transposes light as illumination to light a consumable image. These views thus visualize the shift from visibility to visibility that underlies the restructuration of perception. Furthermore, they come to materially visualize movements of circulation and fluctuation as capitalist-industrial patterns of currency and high mobility. At the same time, the further transposal of light as image into the filmic image commodifies it since it becomes repeatedly consumable. As

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 133.

⁹⁴ Wissel, Kristen. in *ibid.*, 130–31. My emphasis

Rabinovitz comments: '[M]ovie views of amusement parks capitalized on opportunities to aestheticize electrical illumination and disseminated them as idealized packaged of spectacularized desire not only at the sites that provided them but also [...] in one's domestic parlor as mementos of urban modernity.'⁹⁵

3.3.2. Circularity and Repeatability: the structural organization of attractions

What has been shown so far is how the relegation of light to image visualizes the perceptual restructuration from interiority to exteriority. The films come to visualize how the attractional impetus at the fairground draws the attention of the filmmaker. At the same time, because these views are materialized on film they can also be consumed again and again at home. Filmmaking at the fairground thus also functions as visual re-appropriation, consumption, and the harnessing of sensory excess. In the following I would like to deepen the analysis of light as attractional view through an examination of the governing structures that underlie attraction, first at the fairground, but also in the filmic image. The structure of ad views furthermore coincides with the governing principles that underlie an early cinema of attractions. Attractional views need distinct parameters to function. They are structured by principles of circularity and repeatability.

Attractional views at the fairground present an isomorphic structuring similar to that of early cinema attractions. Both go directly against linear structures that use sequencing as narrative means. What underlies both attractions is the emphasis on non-sustainability and thus an atemporal inflection. André Gaudreault and Nicolas Dulac historicize the circularity underlying attraction by positioning the principle at the base of organization of early cinema and a range of optical toys such as the phenakisticope and the zoetrope. Said optical toys 'established a form of attraction, based essentially on *rotation*, *repetition*, and *brevity*, which was to dominate throughout the period.'⁹⁶ Several elements constitute the emphasis of circularity as structural organization underlying attractional views: first, said structure pertains to

⁹⁵ Ibid., 132.

⁹⁶ Dulac, Nicolas and André Gaudreault. *Circularity and Repetition at the Heart of the Attraction: Optical Toys and the Emergence of a New Cultural Studies*. Strauven, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 228.

attraction as atemporal in its nature as irruption of the present and non-sustainability. Second, it works on the basis of the visual spectacle of blinking lights itself. Finally, it relates to the spatial organization of the fairground, which uses the principle of circularity to organize individuals in space.

However, these principles of circularity are not presented as separate entities but artificially organize the space of the fairground according to principles of attractional impetuses that also structured early cinema. The attraction as structured by circularity also reiterates the notion of technologized movement as attraction since circularity as a concept presents closer affinities to the mechanical than the subjective experience. As such, '[i]f, as Paul Ricoeur remarks, "time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode," the temporality of optical toys is closer to that of the machine; it is more mechanical than anything else.'⁹⁷ In the following I will thus first elaborate upon the status of these images as attractional views that stand within the film collection. I will then proceed to show how the blinking lights that prove so stimulating to amateurs also pertain to circular principles in their emphasis on repeatable patterns and, finally, how the fairground functions according to a spatial organization that also follows a circular pattern. One commonality pervades all these argumentative strands: the functioning of attraction as atemporality.

Attraction, as we have seen, cannot be sustained. The reason for its non-sustainability lies in how subjects normatively organize time. As I have shown in the preceding chapters, the manner in which individuals can meaningfully organize their everyday lives is through narrativization. Within the filmic image or verbal narrative imposed upon them, this narrative organization functions through sequencing and thus the establishment of linearity from which coherent identities can be construed. This is not the case with ad views. These self-contained views are embedded neither within the image nor within the film collection in its entirety. The temporal inflection that underlies the attractional views is one of pure present and pure presence. It is not embedded in visual sequences that would allow for later recollective narrativization. Attractional views function as stimulus because of their non-normativity and their essential status as extraordinary. The attractional views, if not harnessed by visual

⁹⁷ Dulac, Nicolas and André Gaudreault. *Circularity and Repetition at the Heart of the Attraction: Optical Toys and the Emergence of a New Cultural Studies*". Ibid.

sequencing, are still part of the entirety of a filmmaker's collection. Their presence is never narrated—it irrupts. Naturally, the attractional views that irrupt relate more to the views that either present a distraction, are taken from thrill rides, or are the deliberate creation of ad-2 views. The notions of harnessing illustrated by the images taken on the Ferris wheel or the deliberate embedment of thrill rides in sequencing do *not* present moments of irruption and are thus eclipsed in the following.

The views of an attractional display stand in close affinity with a cinema of attractions in that both present a cinema of a 'shapeless, a-narrative and even non-human temporality which, as Tom Gunning has remarked, is similar to a kind of "irruption": "[t]he temporality of attraction itself [...] is limited to the pure present tense of its appearance." Its manifestations know only the present tense.'⁹⁸ The attractional view does not follow the sequential ordering that characterizes d&a images, nor does it present snippets for recollective narrative construction in the familial. Ad views are thus presented as visual outbursts that irrupt as pure present within the film collection.

L.K.⁹⁹ films a ride at the fairground called 'This is America'. It presents a closed vertical loop, which a caterpillar-shaped wagon circles. First he films the ride in a medium long shot. Soon, however, he zooms in further.

Figure 9



After a cut he has zoomed in even further into a medium close-up. By now the entirety of the ride can no longer be seen as he focuses on the wagon that spirals

⁹⁸ Dulac, Nicolas and André Gaudreault. 'Circularity and Repetition at the Heart of the Attraction: Optical Toys and the Emergence of a New Cultural Studies'. Ibid.

⁹⁹ AV026335 / IA_AMA002782, super 8, color, mute, 1979

within the loop. He proceeds to mimic the circular motion of the ride with the camera in hand.



He follows the loop filmically and thus introduces a further notion of circular motion into the image. Here the images are not embedded in a d&a style that would show the ride in stillness, the beginning of motion, the ride in full swing, and, finally, the end of movement as the wagon comes to a halt. The technological motion of the loop on a first level constitutes the attraction as image. It also conveys the atemporal nature of attractional display visibly. However, L.K. does not remain a passive spectator, but participates directly in the creation of a further layer of motion within the image.

This filmmaker's collection is generally motivated by a d&a drive. For example, in an earlier sequence he films an airshow in Germany and carefully documents not only the show, but also the table with refreshments, the visiting crowds, and the hangar. Other films in this collection include a rendition of different sights in Luxembourg City on an autumn walk and the recording of a season of grape picking in the East of Luxembourg. His films are generally construed in open and understandable shots. At the fairground however, his attention drifts as it is captured by outside impetuses of attractional views. The images produced at the fairground come to serve as attractional irruptions that are no longer embedded in visual sequencing. They present loops of pure attractional displays as the sights catch his attention. They also stand as self-contained within his film collection, which generally maintains a careful sequencing.

As such, what this film visualizes is the attractional impetus as isomorphic to the cinematic attraction as described by Tom Gunning:

‘Attractions [...] work with time in a very different manner. They basically do not build up incidents into the configuration with which a story makes its individual moments cohere. [...] In this intense form of present tense, the attraction is displayed with the immediacy of a “Here it is! Look at it.”’¹⁰⁰

The attractional displays in L.K.'s film collection stand as index of the pure present in his otherwise rudimentary sequencing within the image. The films of attractional displays and the very display at the fairground thus guide and draw a perceiver's interest by relating spectacular versions of present 'thisness', a sort of attractional index as pure presence. According to Gunning, attractions can only burst forth in pure presence, they cannot be built up by narrative nor can they be sustained for a period of time. They present moments of pure presence and pure present. Attraction and narrative structuring are not necessarily antithetical; ad visuality is embedded in a wider corpus of films that still display teleological motivations, whether as family

¹⁰⁰ Gunning, Tom. “Now You See It, Now You Don't: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions”. Richard Abel, ed., *Silent Film* (London: Athlone, 1996), 76.

narration or as documenting engagement. Attractional displays, however, are never homogeneously integrated within the rest of a filmmaker's image collection.

In a manner of speaking, ad visuals inhabit a space in a filmmaker's corpus not unlike that of a dance sequence in a musical: a moment of pure visual pleasure, a bursting forth of non-narrative display, part of, but not integrated within, narrative visualizations that structure the motivations of the remainder of a filmmaker's output. Ad views thus stand as visual outbursts within the film collection. They present moments of pure present and pure presence within the normative structures of narrations that either serve further narrative construction or adhere to principles of sequencing within narration. This is the standing of ad views within the film collection. The structuring principle of circularity also stands within the image and is visualized by the focus on blinking lights that function as circular through repetition.

3.3.3. Blinking lights

The blinking lights at the fairground follow a principle equivalent to that of circularity, namely that of repeatability that functions as temporal loop. Again Gunning is adamant:

‘Attractions [...] work with time in a very different manner. They basically do not build up incidents into the configuration with which a story makes its individual moments cohere. In effect, attractions have one basic temporality, that of the *alternation of presence/absence that is embodied in the act of display*.’¹⁰¹

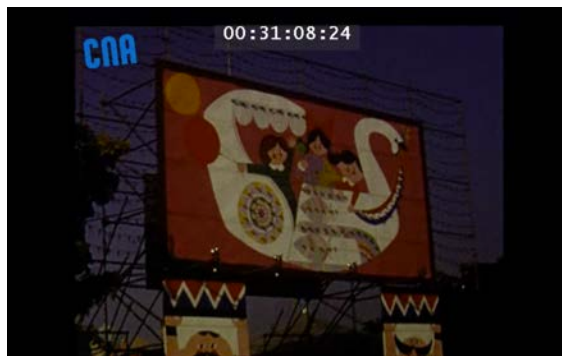
The blinking lights that follow a pattern of repeatability thus embody the very act of attraction as display in the cinema. While different in nature, they rely on the same governing principles of presence and absence. The principle structure of the attractional view thus functions as isomorphic to that of attraction in the cinema. As such, they follow cinematic principles of alternating presence and absence as attractional impetus. Furthermore, most of the lighted forms at the fairground are in themselves already circular. They furthermore provide an additional attraction in

¹⁰¹ Gunning, Tom. “Now You See It, Now You Don’t: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions”. Ibid.

blinking. They not only function as visualized circularity, they emulate cinematic attractional displays of alternating presence and absence. The fairground thus also presents a self-contained universe that is structured by the temporality that structures the early cinema of attractions, albeit not that of a later cinema of narrative integration. Repeatability introduces an experiential condition ‘in which everything was governed by circularity and repetition, a world which annihilated any hint of temporal progression.’¹⁰² The space of atemporality that is constituted at the fairground is visualized in ad-2 views in that their self-contained presence and present refuses visual and temporal contextualization.

E.H.¹⁰³ proves a rare filmmaker in that he combines all three filmic modes within the sequence he films at the fairground. The shifting of filmic modes *within the same sequence* becomes most illustrative of this spectacle architecture of the fairground that governs attention. He starts his filmic rendition of the visit with a long shot of the gates during daytime. This shot clearly figures into the d&a mode in that it already visually contextualizes what is to follow.

Figure 10



¹⁰² Dulac, Nicolas and André Gaudreault. *Circularity and Repetition at the Heart of the Attraction: Optical Toys and the Emergence of a New Cultural Studies*. Strauven, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 232.

¹⁰³ AV035667 / IA_AMA001916, 8mm, colour, mute, 1960; 1968



The next image presents a long shot of the ski lift in motion, an image he follows with a change in position so that in the next long shot we can discern the sign of the ride. He also films his children on a carousel in motion.



He does not make the error of following them consecutively, but films their wagon as it passes, stops the camera, and starts it again once his children come back into frame. Still, at certain moments, the carousel's movement proves too fast and he loses his children because—in typical family chronicle style—he films them too closely. Here the clear focus on children and the filmic device of the zoom come to display the emotional engagement that underlies family filmmaking. Soon, however, he becomes distracted and starts filming the upper part of the carousel in a high angle shot as outlined against the daytime sky. He keeps the camera running for quite some time as the ridge of the canopy flits by again and again in a visual loop without interruption.



The next shot, however, focuses on his children once more. The next sequence shows similar imagery as his son and daughter are seated on another carousel, this time with plane-shaped wagons. As the ride slows down he takes the opportunity to focus on his children. They are smiling and shouting excitedly. From this point on, the imagery changes dramatically as he starts filming at night. He films a lighted outline of an edifice, ride, or booth that remains indiscernible but for its lighted shape. The lighted outline forms a rectangular arch, and the only visual demarcation is provided by the lights attached.



All of a sudden, the middle part lights up as well and we can identify the image as the entry gate to the fair.



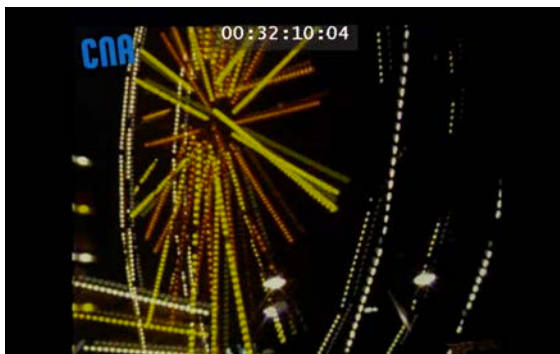
Behind the gate, the lighted outlines of different rides and booths become visible. He then superimposes the next image onto the shot of the lighted gate.



The superimposed image shows the Ski Lift ride in motion. This ride presents a cross between an octopus ride and a so-called paratrooper ride in which the wagons attached to a circular structure rotate at an oblique angle. The lighted sign spelling out 'Ski Lift' figures in the background. The effect is stunning. The lighted displays render the screen a veritable panoply of abstract lights in motion. The superimposition enhances the spectacular seeing of reified illumination as the image is doubled and distinct shapes and objects lose their mooring in terms of discernible visual identity. While the image of the lighted gate fades out, another image is superimposed upon the figuration of the ski lift ride in motion.



He superimposes the image of a lighted Ferris wheel—here figured as pure abstract shape of lights in motion—onto the ski lift image from a diagonal position. Then, as the ski lift imagery fades out, he superimposes one image of the Ferris wheel onto another one taken from a slightly different angle, so that the circular lighted shape is doubled but marginally transposed.



The next sequence shows the inside of a rink with moving bumper cars, but quickly his attention shifts to the middle part of another ride neighboring the bumper cars. Again he superimposes imagery of this rotating middle construction from slightly oblique angles.



Towards the end, he films the lighted sign of the rollercoaster 'Super Railway', but he superimposes an image of the rotating carousel in motion.



E.H. clearly engages the circular principle of the fairground attraction. He not only instinctively understands the attractational impulse but furthers the principle through deliberate creation. He creatively undermines the very principle of filmic temporality as primordially successive sequence. He even abandons the default temporality of film as presenting one frame after another in a twenty-four-frame-per-second ordering in that he uses superimpositions that destabilize the temporal sequencing not only at the fairground visit in general, but also within the imagery itself. We are presented with a visual amalgamation of atemporality in that the images here lose their successive nature and burst forth in spectacular displays as pure present. He creates a space of visibility in which '[t]he gesture of display figured a time that seemed to escape from a linear or successive configuration of time.'¹⁰⁴ Here cinematic vision merges the circular principle of attraction at the fairground with the governing principles of a cinema of attractions. Visibility is configured as display of a temporal irruption as pure presence and pure present in the merging of shots through superimposition and the abstract nature of the lighted shapes. The developmental logic of subsequent ordering is relegated to an afterthought in favor of a self-contained universe of pure present.

¹⁰⁴ Gunning, Tom. "Now You See It, Now You Don't: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions". Abel, *Silent Film*, 83.

W.B.¹⁰⁵ focuses on a display in which lights come to emulate fireworks. First the bottom half of the image is illuminated, while blinking lights mimic the form of rockets launched into the night sky.

Figure 11



¹⁰⁵ AV034525 / IA_AMA000350, 9,5 mm, black and white, mute, no date (by the depiction of the gate I assume the images to be produced ca. 1959)



He films the display repeatedly for quite some time. We can observe how lights in motion become pure presence in that the display is repeated in a seemingly infinite loop. While the lights change shape a few times, the display itself is organized as continual. This notion of pure presence, however, needs to function by its visual counterpart of blackness and disappearance. Because W.B. films the display that repeats itself for some time, his film visualizes how the spectator is constantly drawn in by the attractional impetus that keeps the spectator spellbound.

The structuring principle of early cinema thus also governs the visual display offered at the fairground as visualized in amateur films. The attractions at the fairground follow no temporal development. At the fairground sequencing is never built up. The thrill rides, for one, are mostly based on principles of closed loops and repeatable motions. The accumulation of rides at the fairground thus presents a visual display of repeatable motions that function according to circular patterns, and at night the abstract shapes light up in repeatable self-enclosed loops.

The teleological logic of an idealization of progress (as structuring principle) accompanied the rationalization of a high industrial culture. This also introduced the atemporal as a by-product of this restructuration. Early cinema and its emphasis on visual displays as surprise represented a cathartic reliving of this by-product, which was packaged as thrilling but not threatening as alienating experience. The fairground comes to function as a harnessed space in which to contain and live the atemporal as thrill and attraction. In this regard, attraction as concept can be harnessed within the developmental logic of narrative, but it can never be homogeneously integrated. As Tom Gunning notes in regard to the structure of attractions onscreen: 'The attraction can appear or disappear and generally needs to do both. While present on the screen,

it may in fact change, but insofar as these changes begin to entail further development, we move out of the structure of attractions and into a narrative configuration.’¹⁰⁶ This is the logic ad images follow as well. While the lighted display can change within the image—after all, the lighted contours do change shape—this change never follows a developmental structure.

Ad images also stand within the ordering of the rest of the images of the film collection as self-contained entity. Gunning provides the crucial link between the cinematic apparatus of early cinema works and the attractional display at the fairground: ‘It was partly this temporality that explains the enthusiasm the early avant-garde had for the aesthetic of attractions, whether in variety theater, the fairground, the circus, or early cinema. The gesture of display figured a time that seemed to escape from a linear or successive configuration of time. The potential shock of the cinema of attractions provided a popular form of an alternative temporality based not on the mimesis of memory or other psychological states but on an intense interaction between an astonished spectator and the cinematic smack of the instance, the flicker of presence and absence.’¹⁰⁷ The lighted shapes that function as flicker of presence and need the blackness of absence to become attractional visualize the very condition of the attractional impetus as pure present. The experience at the fairground and its visual re-creation within moving imagery thus allowed for an experience in which ‘the devotees of thrill rides at Coney Island, [and] the spectator of early film could experience the thrill of intense and suddenly changing sensations.’¹⁰⁸ This is the very structure and logic that underlies attraction at the fairground, in early cinema and, consequentially in the film collection. The fairground provides a space that offers an architecture of spectacle isomorphic to the very perceptual restructurations that underlie the early cinema experience.

The presence of light needs its absence as contrast by which to function as attraction. At the same time, however, this absence-presence paradigm again visualizes the

¹⁰⁶ Gunning, Tom. “Now You See It, Now You Don’t: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions”. Abel, *Silent Film*, 80.

¹⁰⁷ Gunning, Tom. “Now You See It, Now You Don’t: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions”. Ibid., 83.

¹⁰⁸ Gunning, Tom. “Now You See It, Now You Don’t: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions”. Ibid., 82–83.

functioning of spectacle-seeing as reification since it provides a vision that functions as negative visibility. As stated before, light was detached from its primary function as illumination and came to function as visible object in itself. At the same time, like a negative photographic strip, whereas before light provided the surround of an object, here darkness provides the surround of light as object. Again this emulates an architecture of vision that is not only linked to an ontological base of the technological as opposed to the organic, but also relates to a visualization of the unseen force of electrification. Similarly, it embodies the reifying logic of a modernist restructuration that needed a transposal from visibility into visibility in order for the experience to become one of thrill and attraction. Light as negativity is here experienced as free-floating entities that populate not only the fairground but also the filmic space. Light is no longer a condition for the interiority of perceptual capabilities within the body, but comes to function in its own right as exteriorized display. Light as primary condition of visibility is relegated to exteriorized visibility. The abstract lighted displays in motion and in alternation thus emulate the very principles of attractional experience that were already inherent in early film genres such as the magic film. For example, 'Méliès' transformations become emblematic examples of the cinema of attractions, endlessly replaying the effect of surprise and appearance.'¹⁰⁹ This endless replay of effects of surprise and appearance structure the architecture of spectacle at the fairground.

The fairground as space also embodies the loop as structuring shape and thus also adheres to a non-sequential configuration. Circularity is already present by default in the repeatable circular loops of the rides and the concomitant lighted shapes, but there is a deeper purpose to the popularity of the circular at the fair. The fairground itself is spatially organized according to a circular principle. People are ushered through the space of the fairground as circular transfer. They enter through gates that also constitute the exit. While it is possible for the visitor to exit the space of the fairground at any point (there is no enclosure), the experience is structured in loops in that the 'lanes' are constructed to 'herd' the crowd through the different parts. Everyone who has suffered the spatial organization of an Ikea store knows the principle. The spatiality of the fairground thus follows the circular structure that

¹⁰⁹ Gunning, Tom. "Now You See It, Now You Don't: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions". *Ibid.*, 78.

underlies attraction as impetus. This structuring has important consequences in terms of experiential temporality since it constitutes the fairground as a circular spatiality and thus a timeless, if contained, universe. One of the main reasons for the unchanging imagery that amateurs produce at the fairground throughout the decades lies in attraction's status as atemporal and thus ahistorical. Attraction does not allow for a progressive development. Its governing principle and very function are related by its circular structure and atemporal nature as eternal present.

The fairground, in a way, represents a space of timelessness. The fairground comes to constitute a space beyond the everyday that is always impacted by socio-cultural and historical changes and personal developments. As such, the fair also provides a temporal relief in its construction of a space of atemporal circularity. Circularity here thus also pertains to the non-developmental logic as ahistorical because of its non-linear structuring. At the fairground a teleologically progressive narrative organization is abandoned in favor of repeatable and circular stimuli of attractional displays that functions as spatiality liberated from temporality. The a-temporal nature of the fairground mirrors an effect that Jonathan Crary sees as 'eradication of historical consciousness in a society of the spectacle'.¹¹⁰ Here lies the common experience of spectacular seeing at the fairground and in the early cinema experience: both transpose vision as architecture of spectacle in which attention is drawn exteriorly and attraction functions as circular alternation of absence and presence. The experience is one of being held spellbound by attraction.

As Jonathan Crary notes, it pertains to 'the idea that the same loop of film can be indefinitely repeated and each time render its audience "spellbound."'¹¹¹ Spectacle-seeing as architecture of vision thus chooses circularity over linearity. This structuring principle provides an attractional impetus that keeps both the cinema spectator and the fairground visitor spellbound. The constant drawing of attention by attractional views that function according to a display of appearance and disappearance constitute an architecture of spectacle (either fairground or the cinema screen) in which the spectator is kept enthralled. This notion of being spellbound is distinctly modernist in that it does not represent a situation in which an individual engages in interior

¹¹⁰ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, 369.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

contemplation but rather is constantly stimulated by exterior attractions. It thus also pertains to a spectacle of pure surface. The atemporal nature of the fairground reinforces the spectacle of surface (absence or simulacrum) in that it cannot allow for successive development but needs to be contained within an eternal loop.

3.3.4. Resistance and Creativity

The fairground as attractional space thus restructures perception as cinematic vision. It draws the body into a field of visibility that effectuates a dematerialization of embodied perception. The fairground becomes a distinctly modernist playground in that it manages to rearrange formerly interior visibility into attractional visibility. This condition of disembodiment becomes as such cinematic. It needs vision to be exteriorized and drawn into displays of pure visibility. Cinematic seeing thus forms the basis of attractional direction as vision is drawn out of the body and redirected by visible stimuli. The subject is faced with a perceptual situation in which visual autonomy is no longer directed from within the body as center. Attraction needs sensory excess to remedy this loss of visual autonomy a subject experiences at the fairground and in the cinema of attractions. Only then can the restructuration of perception function as relegation from perceptual interiority to governance by outside stimuli. Sensory over-stimulation masks the inherent loss of perceptual autonomy by refashioning it as entertainment and thrill. Attraction is thus reorganized as paradox at the fairground and within the film experience: as Rabinovitz notes in regards to a thrill ride that combines motion and a cinematic view, ‘it attempted to dematerialize the subject’s body through its extension into the cinematic field while it repeatedly emphasized the corporeality of the body in all its fixity and in the physical delirium of the senses.’¹¹² The kinesthetic forces of the thrill ride physically liberate the body from everyday gravity.

In order for the inherent threat to become thrill, the dispositif adopted by the attractional impetus needs the visitor to engage in cinematic seeing. It needed for the world to become image that could be consumed by a more or less immobile body, as seen especially within the production of ad-3 images. The constant visual stimuli of

¹¹² Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 69.

the fair disembody perception as vision is drawn out from interiority to exteriority. The body is thus thrust into a whirlwind of paradoxical sensation at the fairground—a simultaneous acting upon the body and a perceptual detachment from the body. As such, at the fairground the visitor's physicality is structured by a paradox that emerges as distinctly modernist as 'bodies bridge the carnivalesque folk cultures of the past and the mechanical production of physical affect in industrialized modern leisure.'¹¹³ The thrilling liberation of the body's autonomous centering of gravity in favor of an immersion within technological movement and the imposition by kinesthetic forces comes to simulate older principles of carnivalesque bodily excess. However, this notion of the carnivalesque is again restructured as reification. It externalizes the excess as mechanically induced motion that implicates the body rather than situate excess at the core of bodily materiality. Bodily liberation, as by-product of rationalization, needed to be imposed from the outside rather than be experienced at the basis of corporeal excess, such as that proposed by sexual liberation or culinary indulgence that characterizes older notions of the carnivalesque. The sensory experience at the fairground thus promises a bodily liberation, while its structural foundation functions according to 'conditions that individuate, immobilize, and separate subjects, even within a world in which mobility and circulation are ubiquitous.'¹¹⁴

As we have seen, a by-product of this architecture of spectacle always also included the contingent as that which cannot be standardized and is represented as surplus. Both Mary Ann Doane and Jonathan Crary stress the inherent force of the contingent as resistance as 'within modernity vision is only one layer of a body that could be captured, shaped or controlled by a range of external techniques; at the same time, vision is only one part of a body capable of evading institutional capture and of inventing new forms, affects, and intensities.'¹¹⁵ Especially ad-2 images display a willingness to evade or resist the standardizing forces of an industrialized lifeworld. Ad-2 images always also present resistances to and an engagement with the sensory overload of the modern fairground for the very simple reason that they are deliberately and consciously created. On a second level, such deliberation also

¹¹³ Ibid., 126.

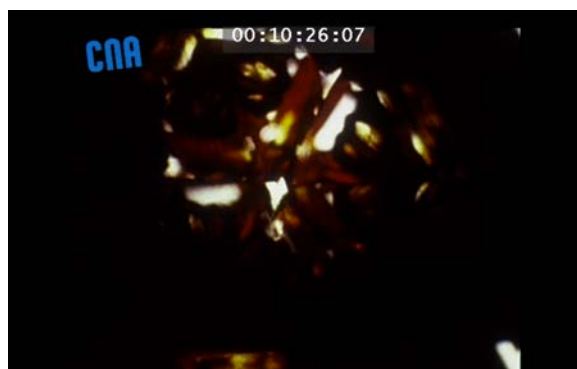
¹¹⁴ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, 74.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 3.

pertains to a willingness on the part of the filmmaker to include the attractional impetus within the rest of their film collection. The contingent (as excess) is thus deliberately allowed as presence within the films. While it is certainly true that imaging technologies provided a perceived means to harness the contingent surplus and thus the inherent threat of meaninglessness, at the fairground, filmmakers deliberately producing an enhanced and thus furthered engagement with the attractional impetus also present a celebratory revelation in the sensory excesses of the fair, if only for a self-contained moment.

W.B.¹¹⁶ is a brilliant filmmaker. He evinces real skill, talent, and imagination with the camera. The first half of his film collection shows winter landscapes during a bright day, and the manner in which he films shows a clear understanding for framing and filmic understandability. The snowy landscapes are filmed in a wonderfully evocative manner in which the very atmosphere of a sunny winter day is conveyed. Around minute 10:25, however, out of the blue we are presented with imagery that is completely baffling. He presents a view of colorful abstract shapes that move in a slow circular motion. The imagery reminds of a kaleidoscopic view. There is no clearly discernible figure in the frame; the light itself is presented as colorful shapes that constantly shift into new figurations. The rich reds, oranges, and yellows are interspersed with flecks of pure light that burst through the colors.

Figure 12



¹¹⁶ AV034168_m.wmv / IA_AMA_00379, super 8, color, mute, no date but the rides in the film suggest the 1970s

It proves impossible to say what distinct object created these views. I assume that the imagery was taken at the fairground since the very next image shows the lighted gate of the Schobermesse at night. Because W.B. is such a skilled filmmaker, we can also assume that this imagery was deliberately created. Simply put, W.B. knows what he is doing. The remainder of the film is produced in the same vein. Later on, he films the lighted outlines of the Ferris wheel in an isolated medium close-up. We are presented with a black screen that is interspersed with lines of light. The lights are blinking and simultaneously changing color from white to red. In between he films the lighted outlines of different rides, booths, and the entry gate that also remain abstract but for their discernibility of the structure they are attached to. The gate for example, is represented as made from pure light; however, as the lights cover the entire gate, we can discern its structure. Towards the end of this brilliant array of lighted shapes, colors, and forms, he films the lighted canopy of the carousel. Here a mass of tiny lights becomes an almost magical phantasmagoric landscape. W.B. first films the carousel in its entirety to capture the slowly rotating lighted outline. He then moves in closer off-camera, and the next image completely disembodies the carousel as distinct structure. The image presents a rotating abstraction of little lights that resemble a tree-like shape. The middle part is lighted while on the canopy a multitude of tiny lights is attached.



W.B. thus creates magical views that are deliberately included in his filmic corpus. He creates filmic interspersions that are dedicated and consciously engage with the attractional views offered at the fair. He voluntarily creates a furthering of attractional impetuses with the camera. He specifically uses close-ups to present views that emulate cinematic seeing in that he produces images that can *only* be seen technologically. He creates views that are impossible within 'organic' vision. His willingness to deliberately create is also revealed by the knowledge that the view can *only* be seen as intended in the viewing situation. Filmmakers at the fairground could not see this panoply of lighted display in close-up. They thus operated in an awareness and future-oriented motivation to create these views cinematically and thus enhance the attractions of lighted display even further in their images.

Again, Jonathan Crary's elaboration on visual strangeness is helpful. He speaks of distinctly modernist type of schizophrenia that is inherently linked to the refashioning of vision itself: 'Essentially it described a purely visual awareness of an object, that is, an inability to make any conceptual or symbolic identification of an object, a failure of recognition, a condition in which visual information was experienced with a primal strangeness.'¹¹⁷ The experience of disembodied lights as attractional impetus presents a similar strangeness, albeit, of course, to different effect. The reification of light as detached from illumination also coincides with an experience of non-identification. The primal strangeness, however, is here constituted as attraction rather than threat. At no point would I want to suggest that the filmic behavior amateurs engage in is here constituted as pathological. The experience of non-identification and strangeness as attraction present isomorphic structures, and the impact is similar if greatly weakened.

Again we witness a restructuration of modernist strangeness as thrill and attraction. What interests me here however is in how far an engagement and conscious creation of light as attractional impetus can also always be constituted as space of creative resistance to modernist perceptual standardization. Resistance is here not constituted as opposition or challenge, but as revelation and immersion within an attractional

¹¹⁷ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, 94–95.

space. The fairground provides such a space. Even if it is spatially self-contained and its temporally limited nature present a harnessing of the contingent as excess or surplus, it nevertheless provides a reveling experience that is deliberately furthered by ad-2 filmmakers. The non-normative inclusion of these views within the film corpus that is constructed by the family chronicle or d&a style can also be seen as the construction of a creative engagement with the restructuration of perception characterized not so much by distraction as by agency. The filmmaker is not passive. Crary, with regards to these non-normative perceptual behaviors, ascertains the following: ‘what is thus labeled as pathological behavior could also be seen as a mode of resistance to consuming the world in a productive or socially useful way, a rejection of habitual or conventional patterns that organized perceptual organization.’¹¹⁸

The ad-2 views were as such baffling and surprising as they display a deviation from normative representation that characterizes the film collections. They serve no social or productive purpose. These amateurs display a willing engagement and enhancement of the attractional impetus that results in a revelation in the architecture of spectacle at the fairground. Here, the views produced are not characterized in terms of productive outcome. In the family chronicle, the views produced can be seen as visual base from which to produce a family narrative, while the d&a style displays a willingness to create a visual archive on a communal level. These visuals are thus produced in a motivation of productivity and efficacy. They serve further purposes. This does not apply to the filmic views of an attractional display, which deliberately create a visualized engagement with aestheticized spectacle.

The deliberate creation of disembodied views that are detached from their stable identity as object recalls the magic of early cinema, especially of the attractional draw of Georges Méliès’s early films, to which Mary Ann Doane refers in the following. According to Doane, these films revel in

‘the instability and unpredictability of the phenomenal world.
Objects and human beings have difficulty retaining their identity.
There is an active resistance to the plausible or probable. The

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 95.

popularity of the magic show in the later nineteenth century [...] is the underside of fears about an encroaching science, a science attributed with powers that, combined with new technologies, could potentially transform everyday life. Magic is opposed to science in its celebration of mystery, of unknowability, of the impossibility of connecting cause to effect, indeed, of causeless effect. Magic seeks to distance effects from causes and to extol singularity, instability, undecidability.’¹¹⁹

Ad views represent such a break from the representational norms that structure the rest of the filmic output. They deliberately and creatively revel in the instability of the perceptual object. Especially the close-up views on lights revel in the unknowability of objective identification. However, the deliberate creation through camera equipment also pertains to a fascination with technological means that could transform the phenomenal world. In fact, filmmakers directly aspired to a transformation of the phenomenal world through the means of the camera.

As such, there is a more positive side to the attractions of the fair and the stimuli it presents. While it is true that the fair is organized according to capitalist principles of consumption, distraction, and containment, one should not forget the inherent *pleasure of looking*, of vision and visibility itself. While the perceived contemplative immersion that Walter Benjamin sees as the base of the authentic experience remains impossible at the fair, there is also a celebratory reveling in the new perceptual experiences of modernist visibility. In the words of Tom Gunning: ‘The metapsychology of attractions is undoubtedly extremely complex, but its roots could be traced to what St. Augustine calls *curiositas* and early Christianity condemned the “lust of the eye.”’¹²⁰ Here, the attractional display at the fairground is structured in the same manner as early cinema in that both are concerned with

‘a fascination with visual experiences that *seem to fold back on the very pleasure of looking* (colors, forms of motion—the very phenomenon of motion itself in cinema’s earliest projections) [...] and] a peculiarly modern obsession with violent and aggressive sensations (such as speed or the threat of injury).’¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 135.

¹²⁰ Gunning, Tom. “Now You See It, Now You Don’t: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions”. Abel, *Silent Film*, 75.

¹²¹ Gunning, Tom. “Now You See It, Now You Don’t: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions”. *Ibid.* my emphasis.

There is pleasure to be had from the experience of non-identificatory, non-normalizing stimuli of attractional displays. There is pleasure in visuality folding back on itself as visibility. The experience of visuality and visibility comes to constitute an attraction in its own right. The non-figurative display of ad films pertains to exactly the playful participatory engagement with the perceptual restructuration of vision. The pleasure of looking represents a further layer of spectacle pertaining to notions of participatory incorporation rather than externalized rationalization imposed on the body. Spectacle as experience of perceptual restructuration is thus tied to ‘an aesthetic of attractions, whether of the cinema, the sensational press, or the fairground. Attractions’ fundamental hold on spectators depends on arousing and satisfying visual curiosity through a direct and acknowledged act of display’.¹²² As such, recording with a camera presents a physical and sensual engagement with modernist perception as architecture of spectacle. Ad-2 visuals thus display the same attractional features that characterized early cinema productions, namely, an emphasis on ‘colors, forms of motion—the very phenomenon of motion itself in cinema’s earliest projections’. Amateurs further the attractional impetus of early cinema as they actively use the creative potential of imaging technologies.

I would like to come back to the ad filmmaker par excellence, A.D.,¹²³ and her stunning thirty-six-minute rendition of lighted displays at the fairground. About two minutes into her film, she focuses on the Calypso ride. A.D. pans over the fairground in a medium shot. She captures the lighted canopy of a bumper ride rink and pans further to the left to include a lighted octopus ride in motion. Already she starts tilting her camera hesitantly from left to right with an additional almost indiscernible circular motion. She zooms in continuously on the lighted ‘arms’ of the ride. Behind this thrill ride, another one, the Calypso ride, comes into view. She zooms in further onto the Calypso ride through the hydraulic arms of the ride in front of her. She zooms into the lighted sign, while the hydraulic arms of the front ride are still cutting through the frame. The imagery is somewhat hectic and uncontrolled. The next shot shows the middle part of the Calypso ride in extreme close-up. In fact, we can only

¹²² Gunning, Tom. “Now You See It, Now You Don’t: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions”. *Ibid.*, 74.

¹²³ AV035249 / IA_AMA_001051, super 8, color, mute, 1975

discern it as the Calypso ride as we have seen the sign in the preceding image and can recognize the colors.

Figure 13



She then proceeds to zoom out rapidly. While she does so, she keeps tilting the camera up and down while simultaneously panning from the right to the left. At one point she cants the camera to the extreme left and back to an extreme right. The imagery is almost presented as upside down.



She then tilts the camera back to its horizontal position. She zooms in on the lighted sign in such an extreme fashion that the lights that make up the letters of the sign are blurred. In the next sequence she creates a similar imagery with the ski lift ride. She

tilts the camera from left to right, she zooms in extremely quickly, and soon only indiscernible lighted points are visible. She zooms back out, she zooms back in, she pans from the left to the right, and she tilts the camera up and down. The entire sequence lasts up to a minute, and the effect is almost sickening. All stable spatial vectors lose their relevance and are dissolved and chaotically reconstructed as a completely novel perspective made up of lights and motion. Gravitational groundedness that is normally attached to and navigated with help of objects in space is completely abandoned. We perceptually inhabit a modernist space that is visualized here as frenzied motion and lighted displays that come to illustrate the very forces that make up this architecture of spectacle. The experience is one of vertiginous, liberating, and frenzied spatiality in which disembodiment becomes a celebration of a visual that is organically inconceivable.

The dizzying display of lights in motion and the further creation of additional motion in the image through the means of the camera relate a clear reveling. A.D. engages the sensory overload of the fairground at its most positive. What we witness here is exactly such a lust of the eye actualized by means of the camera. Her film reveals a direct and immediate engagement with novel perspectives and the inherent attraction that lies within them. The fairground, as such, already provides the inherent attraction of curious and extraordinary views that are liberated from an everyday perspective. She, and other ad-2 filmmakers, furthers this engagement with the creation of views that relate to the attractional qualities of imaging technologies themselves. Ad-2 visuals thus come to display a doubled perceptual draw—first, the fascination of the fairground attraction and second, the deliberate furthering of the attractional draw within the image and through the camera. While the concrete implications that underlie the bodily performance of camera and attraction will be elaborated in more detail in the following chapter, what can certainly be seen here is a direct revelation and engagement with the novel perspectives of modernist restructuration. The very unmooring of a seen from its objective identity is here related to the liberation from normative standardization and direct implication within the architecture of spectacle that is modernist vision.

Amateurs engage the attractions of the fairground with the camera and thus display creational agency. Ad-2 views visualize an engagement with the attractional impetus

of the fairground and a concomitant willingness to engage the camera as means of creation. They recognize the attractional qualities that underlie the cinematic apparatus itself. Here, the attractional views at the fairground are re-fashioned and furthered by their direct engagement with a camera.

While ad-views present a distinct visual outburst that is embedded within these film collections, in the following I will briefly examine how all amateur film productions are perceived as attractional. I will analyze how amateur films present an isomorphic structuring to that of an early cinema of attractions. Amateur filmmaking and amateur images reveal a close affinity with the attractional views of an early cinema. Amateur film, as a general movement, never effectuated a shift to a cinema of narrative inclusion. It never produced self-enclosed communicative systems such as the ones presented by fiction film. In the following I will briefly illuminate the tendencies, structure, and attractions of amateur film in general as it can be compared to the functioning of a cinema of attractions.

5. Afterthoughts: Reflections on amateur filmmaking as remnant of a cinema of attractions

The following presents a sort of afterthought to this chapter. It deals with amateur film practice overall and in general and notes an isomorphic structuring between amateur film practice and an early cinema of attractions. While some might find the inclusion of these afterthoughts somewhat patchy, the manner of audience address and fascinations that underlie an early cinema of attractions present too many similarities to the practice of filmmaking in the private to ignore. The following few pages thus concentrate on what renders the very practice of filmmaking attractional for private filmmakers before this study moves on to a phenomenological elaboration on film production and film viewership. One of the crucial changes effectuated within cinematic practice relates to the shift of an early cinema of attractions to a cinema of narrative integration. The cinema of attractions is here taken not as specific to certain image contents or subject matter. It relates to a view and spectatorial address constituting cinema *as* attraction. The cinema of attractions is thus defined as a placing of

‘early cinema in the context of the plethora of non-narrative entertainments familiar to the general public in the early 20th century. The attraction was characterized by a direct address to the spectator, novelty, a presentational (as opposed to representational) set of codes. The attraction constituted a form of spectacle.’¹²⁴

One of the crucial characteristics of amateur imaging practice is that a shift to a cinema of narrative integration never occurs. Here lies one of the main affinities of amateur film practice and an early cinema of attractions. Amateur film practice never effectuated the shift that professional cinema saw as natural evolvement. Amateur films, in contrast to professional cinema, never present a self-enclosed communication system or diegesis.

Rather, amateur cinema as practice presents an isomorphic structuring to early cinema practices. Such isomorphism relates to how the amateur spectator is addressed and how the images are produced with an immediate audience address as built-in mechanism. In the following I will compare the attractions of amateur images to the inherent fascinations that underlie early cinema productions. This comparison is not to suggest that amateurs consciously emulate an early cinema of attractions. Neither do I situate amateur film within a cinema of attractions. Rather, this comparative elaboration deepens our understanding of where the attractional qualities of amateur images lie, and how the audience within amateur film screenings is addressed in a fundamentally different manner than that of an institutional cinema audience. Positioning the effect, impact, and engagement with amateur film in an early cinema context helps to shed new light on the movement of image production in the private. It helps to understand how amateur film has a fundamentally distinct purpose from that of a cinema of narrative integration and how amateurs also never position themselves as creators within professional parameters. Quite simply, it helps reevaluate amateur cinema not as a failed cinematic practice, but as a genre that has its own distinct purposes and audience impacts. It serves to evade a perception of home movies or amateur films as ‘simply an irrelevant pastime or nostalgic mementos

¹²⁴ Bukatman, Scott. “Spectacle, Attractions and Visual Pleasure”. Strauven, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 78.

of the past, or dismiss[ion] as insignificant byproducts of consumer technology.’¹²⁵ In order to understand what renders amateur images attractive, I will briefly elaborate Tom Gunning’s and André Gaudreault’s analysis of early cinema practice as cinema of attractions.

5.1. The attraction of moving images

One of the main characteristics defining both early cinema and amateur filmmaking is the inherent fascination with images that move. Early cinema audiences responded to moving imagery as attraction since cinema brought the activity of vision into visibility. Moving imagery visualized the very activity of seeing onscreen. At the same time, moving images proved attractive in that they presented views that were perceived as non-normative. The close-up especially introduced a view that proved impossible in everyday vision. The primary attraction of moving images thus lies in its capabilities to render vision visible and in its introduction of hitherto unseen views.

Second, early cinema of attractions presented a distinct manner of audience address that is resuscitated in amateur film practice. Amateur filmmaking practices and images present vital relations to the so-called early cinema in terms of their dependence on meta-commentary during viewing, the predominant (though not exclusive) lack of montage, and the unshakeable fascination for the spectacle of moving images. This manner of image construction and concomitant spectatorial address of amateur films thus emulate traits commonly associated with pre-narrative, or so-called primitive cinema.

A common initial assumption about both media sediments a specific ‘myth of origin’ namely that ‘[f]ollowing a biological and teleological logic, this assumes that the later styles of cinema are a sort of natural norm that early cinema envisioned but was not yet capable of realizing because of technological and economic immaturity and a

¹²⁵ Zimmermann, Patricia R. “The Home Movie Movement Excavations, Artifacts, Minings”. *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 1.

natural need for a period of development guided by a method of trial and error.’¹²⁶ This assumption displays a conception concerning early cinema that can easily be applied to the bias surrounding the practice of amateur films, as both come to be regarded as ‘failed’ cinematic practices.

Amateur filmmaking and early cinema do not overlap temporally. Once the period generally attributed to early cinema faded out around 1908 (but more realistically around 1903), amateurs still had almost no possibility to acquire (or afford) the material and equipment needed to make films. It would still take another forty years or so for amateur film equipment to become affordable enough to warrant a legitimate amateur film movement or a positioning of the practice in the everyday. By then, however, amateurs possessed much greater freedom due to the transportability of hand-held cameras. While it would take another forty years for sound to become normalized within the practice, amateurs were amongst the first filmmakers to populate and roam public spaces and the home with freedom and mobility, at a time most professional filmmakers restricted themselves to studio productions (even if there are exceptions, of course, for example in the Italian neo-realist movement).

The cinematic apparatus soon lost its attraction as novelty. Quite simply, cinema evolved from a cinema of display to a cinema of narrative integration because audiences became habituated to seeing moving images.

‘This reversal in the trajectory of both movement and astonishment is not all that historically surprising. As Gunning emphasizes: “Astonishment is inherently an unstable and temporary experience. One finds it difficult to be continually astonished by the same thing. Astonishment gives way to familiarity.”’¹²⁷

Attractional display and narrative integration do, however, not prove antithetical. After 1908, the cinematic productions simply integrated attractional sequences within their narrative development. Attractional displays offered the spectator breaks within

¹²⁶ Gunning, Tom. “Now You See It, Now You Don’t: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions”-Abel, *Silent Film*, 71–72.

¹²⁷ Sobchack, Vivian. “Cutting to the Quick: Techne, Physis, and Poiesis and the Attractions of Slow Motion”. Strauven, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 341.

the narrative in which the images functioned as pure visible spectacle that did not directly serve a narrative purpose. The dance sequence in a musical proves one such example of attractional display.

The cinema of attractions never disappeared; it became integrated within narrative cinema. The cinema of attractions is thus a cinema of spectacle, of display, and ultimately, of visibility. The spectator was addressed directly without narrative intermediary in the form of, for example, a character that would guide the spectator through the narrative development of a fictional universe. The spectator was addressed directly and immediately by the attractional qualities of the moving image. The spectator was immediately implicated in this early mode of address that is transposed as exhibitionist rather than voyeuristic. Early films offered a cinema of presentation rather than representation. It directly addressed the spectator through display rather than providing integrating and integrative narratives.

These initial fascinations of the image as attraction and spectacle are resuscitated in the practice of amateur filmmaking and serve as one of its primary motivations, as will be elaborated in the following. Beforehand, one thing needs clarification: *Amateur films are not a cinema of attractions*. Their mode of spectatorial address and the fascinations that are relayed by their images present an affinity to early cinema that can help us understand the fascinations that underlie amateur images and their production.

5.2. Display as Attraction

A cinema of attraction does not tell—it shows. Framing is prioritized over plotting. Spectacle lies in display. But what does this mean concretely? The original appeal of the cinematic apparatus lies in its fundamental purpose and capability of “matter of *making images seen*.”¹²⁸ Attraction is thus intimately linked to visibility itself. ‘The attraction is there, before the viewer, *in order to be seen*. Strictly speaking, it exists

¹²⁸ Gunning, Tom. “The Cinema of Attraction: Early Cinema, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde”. Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker, eds., *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: BFI Pub, 1990), 63.

only in order to *display its visibility*.¹²⁹ Not only is this new attraction of the cinema able to record pro-filmic movement and reproduce it on screen, the cinematic apparatus is able to make the structuring principle of vision visible.

One of the main affinities between amateur image production and early cinema genres lies in their emphasis on display and thus their direct address of the audience. This spectatorial address is built within the image in that: '[t]he attraction itself is aware of the viewer's gaze, [it] is constructed to attract it.'¹³⁰ Amateurs produce for family, friends, and themselves. They know their audience. Within amateur cinema production the spectatorial address represents a built-in mechanism. Naturally, they need not construct elaborate narratives or sequencing, because most of the intended audience was present at the event that was filmed. 'As Roger Odin points out "in the home movie, those addressed by the film have lived the events depicted."' ¹³¹ Amateur films thus do not function through the building up of developmental logic or suspense. Its purpose lies in display and the attractional qualities of being exteriorized in moving images. The audience is by default invested in the images and participates verbally in the viewing. Unresponsiveness is not favored in amateur film viewing. As such, amateur films negate a voyeuristic position in that the spectator is not only addressed directly, but becomes implicated and participates in the viewing process by being called upon to comment on the images.

Attraction underlies a film viewing in which amateurs see themselves and their family exteriorized in moving imagery. On the one hand, as Richard Fung notes, '[t]he screenings elicited a great deal of laughter drawn from a mixture of embarrassment and pleasure at seeing ourselves in a medium reserved for Hollywood movie stars'.¹³² On the other hand, seeing one's own gestural behavior exteriorized onscreen presents an attractional display in itself. Being on display in moving imagery thus elicits this

¹²⁹ Gaudreault, André. "From "Primitive Cinema" to "Kine-Attractography"". Strauven, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 95.

¹³⁰ Gunning, Tom. "Early American Film". John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson, eds., *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 258.

¹³¹ Goode, Ian. "Locating the Family Film: The Critics, the Competition and the Archive". Ian Craven, *Movies on Home Ground: Explorations in Amateur Cinema* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 189.

¹³² Fung, Richard. "Remaking Home Movies". *Mining the Home Movie*, 30.

emotive combination of embarrassment and wonder. This attraction has to do with seeing oneself in a medium usually reserved for the stars, as well as seeing oneself *move* onscreen, but it also has to do with notions of mirroring. This relates to the simple fact that one is not as familiar with one's own face as the people around one. The display of one's facial features in movement, one's gestures and mannerisms caught on film would have added to this sense of wonder at seeing oneself exteriorized in movement. Differently put, there is wonder, fascination, and attraction, often bordering on the uncanny, in seeing oneself's physical change over a period of time as in the filmic image where the body is visually set as permanent and one's physique remains stable. An extreme account of this fixation in the moving image relates, of course, to the movement of a deceased loved one in the filmic world.

The immediacy of spectatorial address is translated by the direct look at the camera. Within early cinema productions this direct look became a means to implicate the spectator directly. This implicating look is, of course, a staple of the amateur film image. Within amateur films, the filmed subject acts with an awareness of being viewed by a later spectator. The awareness of a future spectator includes a future self. The filmed subject interacts with the camera as future spectator. Within the practice of amateur filmmaking, it is even seen as impolite not to face the camera and thus the later audience. Direct audience address presents an in-built mechanism in how amateurs produce images.

The look at the camera thus emulates the early cinema principle of the single-point view. Often decried as unprofessional and unskilled, the single point view pertains to filmed subjects directly addressing the camera and thus the spectator, as well as to the relative immobility of the camera position within the shot. Most how-to literature advising amateurs on how to constructively order their films advises against this positioning that always includes frontality. How-to literature took an adversary stance to this visual composition 'because it flouted key tenets of the classical model of cinema advocated in advisory literature. [...] Within advisory literature, however, opposition to the still pose was most strongly articulated in terms of an argument for

medium specificity.’¹³³ According to how-to magazines, this visual composition was more suitable for snapshot photography than filmmaking, and amateurs should do well to remember the medium specificity of filmmaking that inherently calls for sequential ordering and *movement*.

‘Despite this emphasis on continuity, advisory publications complained that home movies routinely comprised a “hodgepodge” collection of shots that bore little or no apparent relationship to one another. According to this literature, films were liable to jump from one subject to the next with each succeeding shot [...] As well as inhibiting narrative continuity, this “one-subject-one-shot” approach was seen to compromise graphic and spatio-temporal continuity.’¹³⁴

Amateurs, quite simply, never heed the advice of specific how-to literature. They continue to produce single shot sequences that remain understandable standing on their own. Most amateurs display no desire to create images as successive sequencing.

At the same time, the notion of frontality remains popular as filmmakers choose to create filmic portraits of their families. As such, another inflection of this single point view answers to cultural implications of respectability as evaluated by Pierre Bourdieu. ‘Honour demands that one poses for the photograph as one would stand before a man whom one respects and from whom one expects respect, face on, one’s forehead held high and one’s head straight’.¹³⁵ This notion of frontality is further reinforced by the identification with the camera as first person viewpoint, adopted in early cinema and retained by amateur filmmakers. As such, both genres live by their common first-person perspective of the camera viewpoint: ‘Spectatorial identification

¹³³ Howe, Maija. The Photographic Hangover: Reconsidering the Aesthetics of the Postwar 8mm Home Movie’. Laura Rascaroli, Barry Monahan, and Gwenda Young, eds., *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 45.

¹³⁴ Howe, Maija.: “The Photographic Hangover: Reconsidering the Aesthetics of the Postwar 8mm Home Movie”. Ibid., 46.

¹³⁵ Bourdieu, Pierre. quoted in. Danielle Leenarts. “The Valorisation of Amateur Photography with regard to Intimate Photography”. Sonja Kmec and Viviane Thill, eds., *Private Eyes and the Public Gaze: The Manipulation and Valorisation of Amateur Images* (Trier: Kliomedia, 2009), 27.

with the viewpoint of the camera is a linchpin of early cinema'¹³⁶ as well as amateur film. Neither early cinema nor amateur films need an intermediary, narrative or otherwise, since the ideal of participatory relation through direct spectatorial address underlies both practices

Two basic levels of attraction thus exist within amateur films as well as early cinema: for one, the inherent attraction of moving imagery either tied to the novelty of the film apparatus itself, as is the case in the beginning of cinematic practice, or to the mere fact of seeing oneself exteriorized in moving imagery, as is the case in amateur film practice. Second, these images that moved represented attractional views. They also rendered everyday images attractional as they became exoticized by their transferal into moving images. The earliest films of the brothers Lumière presented images that would later constitute typical home movie imagery. The first films by Auguste and Louis Lumière captured the everyday and thus exoticized it by its transposal into moving images. Films such as *Repas de Bébé* (Auguste and Louis Lumière, 1895) or *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyons* (Auguste and Louis Lumière, 1895) depicted everyday scenes that would later be canonized as stereotypical home movie imagery. Viva Paci writes: 'The very earliest films showed attractions, whether these were in the form of military parades or magic acts, and can very well be seen as an attraction of modernity, just like those on display in fairs.'¹³⁷ As such, the visual content of the earliest films presented views that we now know as the typical visual content of the home movie with its parades, children, and meaningful events of the everyday. Both early cinema and amateur films constitute the everyday as attraction.

5.4. Montage, or lack thereof

Amateur films are not reliant on complex editing and sequencing. In fact, their sequences come to resemble the zero-degree montage that underlies early cinema's so-called 'one-shot-sequences'. This pertains less to the fact that most amateur films

¹³⁶ Gunning, Tom. 'Primitive' Cinema A Frame-Up? Or The Trick's on Us'. Elsaesser and Barker, *Early Cinema*, 101.

¹³⁷ Paci, Viva. "The Attraction of the Intelligent Eye: Obsessions with the Vision Machine in Early Film Theories". Strauven, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 126.

are unedited and more to the fact that they remain understandable as self-contained sequences. In contrast to narrative cinema, amateur film sequences need not be organized in terms of a developmental logic in order to generate meaning. Similar to the universal language of a cinema of attractions, the amateur film sequence follows early cinema's 'regime of the single, uninterrupted shot, independent and unsubordinated to the demands of montage.'¹³⁸ While Tom Gunning sees early cinema productions as more complex in terms of editing devices that only made early films appear simplistic as zero-degree montage, what interests me is how amateur film sequences, like early cinema sequences, retain their understandability within the sequence. This understandability is, of course, related to the fact that meaning is generally generated within the viewing situation. It is generated by vernacular impositions upon the image, which brings me to the next point in this comparative elaboration of the affinities that underlie amateur films and early cinema.

5.5. Monstration

A further isomorphic parallel between early cinema and amateur film lies within how spectatorship is constituted in the viewing situation. The spectator of the oft-considered unruly early cinema audience engages in a participatory interaction with the image, but also with other audience members. This participatory interaction also characterizes the amateur film audience. As Odin notes: 'Unlike fictional film screenings, interaction fuses the projection of a family film'¹³⁹

I have up until now referred to the meta-commentary that accompanies the film screening as verbal narrative, and this certainly holds. The verbal interaction effectuated during the screening can, however, be further differentiated. The verbal commentary and participatory relation can also be compared to the role of the monstrator in early cinema screenings. Monstration can be understood as a visual showing effected by a professional showman at the screening. The showman directs

¹³⁸ Gunning, Tom. 'Primitive' Cinema A Frame-Up? Or The Trick's on Us'. Elsaesser and Barker, *Early Cinema*, 97.

¹³⁹ Odin, Roger. "Reflection on the Family Home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach". *Mining the Home Movie*, 259.

the focus of the spectator to certain filmic views; he also comments and provides exclamations. As Wanda Strauven observes:

‘Attraction and monstration, albeit both equally “opposed” to narration, cannot simply be considered synonyms. Whereas the concept of monstration implies a (narratological) instance that shows something, the notion of attraction emphasized the magnetism of the spectacle shown. In the mode of attraction the spectator is *attracted* toward the filmic (or the apparatical); this direction is somehow reversed in the case of monstration, where the filmic (or the apparatical) is *monstrated* to the spectator. Attraction involves, more manifestly than monstration, the spectator directly and immediately; it is a force put upon the latter.’¹⁴⁰

This process of monstration becomes part of the amateur film screening as well. Still, while the process of monstration underlies film viewing in the private, there is not one specific person that is attributed the role of monstrator. The audience of the amateur film production fulfills the monstrative function itself. The pointing of fingers, the exclamations that order others to look, the excited guiding of attention to a particular aspect onscreen all pertain to monstration as it functioned in early cinema productions. Monstration is provided by one showman but becomes a self-perpetuating process in which family members spur each other on. At the same time, the family takes a narratological function in providing meta-comments that construct a sense of unity of the ideological wholeness of the family as entity. The audience in general thus fulfills both narrative and monstrative functions. These modes of participatory interaction co-exist equally in the screening situation.

The spectator thus not only becomes narrator but furthermore exhibitor in that: ‘The showman rather than the films themselves gives the program an overarching structure, and the key role of exhibitor showman underscores the act of monstration that founds the cinema of attractions.’¹⁴¹ The same principles structure amateur film viewing. Here, however, the family takes over roles of exhibitor, monstrator, and narrator and

¹⁴⁰ Strauven, Wanda. “Introduction to an Attractive Concept”. Strauven, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 17.

¹⁴¹ Gunning, Tom. “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator” Philip Simpson, Andrew Utterson, and K. J. Shepherdson, eds., *Film Theory: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 85.

verbally accompanies the images in differently modulated inflections (sometimes more monstrative, sometimes more narratological). They order each other to look and point out attractional views, while they also recount the event as the basis of a recollective family narrative. These verbal impositions all function in accordance with the general attractional qualities that transpose the amateur image as spectacle.

5.6. Silent Cinema—Mute Cinema

A natural affinity between early cinema and the home movie lies in their common muteness. Naturally, this characteristic pertains more to technological equipment than conscious choice. Nevertheless, the effect on the audience is similar in both practices. ‘The silent cinema has often been presented as a symbol of modernity because it was considered as a “universal language.”’¹⁴² While we have seen that the visuals of each home movie is always also particular to *that* family and *this* filmmaker, the visual patterns or reoccurring thematic and filmic structuring also presents cultural communicative codes inherent in the standardized imagery of the home movie. Differently put, especially the family film presents sedimented imagery that is deemed socially acceptable and culturally structured. Amateur film, being a silent cinema, needs a standardization of its images in order to function as universal language. ‘It should be clear by this point’, notes Richard Chalfen, ‘that Kodak culture includes the production of a “standardized system of visual representation.”’¹⁴³ Filmmakers who display a certain cinematic proficiency will introduce titles that are a staple in early cinema productions. In silent film, ‘[t]he importance of titles as an integral part of the silent film transcends their purely informational function. As their value came to be understood, they were incorporated into the actual structure of the film, contributing to its pace and its rhythm.’¹⁴⁴ As we have seen, amateurs use titles in a variety of ways. They of course provide basic information. However, quite often they also display humor or wit, they ask hypothetical questions that address the spectator immediately and thus implicate

¹⁴² Lacasse, Germain. “The Lecturer and the Attraction”. Strauven, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 188.

¹⁴³ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), 141.

¹⁴⁴ William K. Everson, *American Silent Film*, 1st Da Capo Press ed (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 128.

him/her in an interactional relation, and they structure the rhythm and pace of the film in that they either present a new thematic sequence or beginnings and endings. Amateurs emulate early cinema strategies for dealing with a lack of sound. They provide an easily comprehensible and culturally standardized imagery that becomes universally understandable, and they even use the means of titles to provide structure and information within their image sequences.

The qualities that attract private filmmakers to the moving image and the manner in which an amateur film premeditates and addresses its audience thus present an isomorphic structure and function to early cinema. The functioning of the image as display, the direct address of the spectator, and the behavior of the audience during the screening relate much more to the early fascinations for the cinematic apparatus itself. The birth of amateur filmmaking forty years later thus comes to mirror the tendencies and fascinations that accompanied the very first film screenings. They present selfsame principles, if of course, different effectuations.

6. Conclusion

The filmic views as visual outbursts within a film collection that normally adopts either a family chronicle style or a d&a mode are, it cannot be stressed enough, a distinct engagement with the sensory overstimulation of the fairground. For example, filmmakers could potentially create the same views filming their blinking lights on the Christmas tree in an extreme close up. They never do so, however, and it becomes clear that amateurs deal with the fairground in two distinct manners: they either harness the attractional view, and thus construct a well-ordered and stable filmic universe that contains the sensory overstimulation of the fairground, or they revel in the sensory impositions provided by the spectacle of the fair. These fascinations and attractional draws that have here been situated as modernist in origin never lose their essence as perceptive impetus. The distinct manner of filmic engagement never changes over the decades from the 1950s to the late 1970s. While, naturally, the very aesthetics of the thrill rides and ornamentation of the fairground changes over the

years, their inherent fascination effected upon the fairground visitor in terms of lights and technology in motion never weakens.

In the preceding this attractional draw has been examined as mirroring the very structures of a cinematic dispositif. The attraction underlying both imaging technologies (either an early cinema of attractions and the later movement of filmmaking and the private) and the fairground has thus been shown to be isomorphic in its transposal of visibility as interior quality to visibility as exterior imposition. The filmic universe of the fairground thus comes to visualize its underlying function as architecture of spectacle. While this architecture of spectacle naturally also structures the profilmic experience of the fair, the construction of the filmic representation comes to materialize the intentional reactions and engagements with the attractions offered by the fairground. The surprising and somewhat baffling views presented by the attractional display thus reveal the reactive stance of the particular filmmaker when confronted with the sensory overflow of the fairground. These reactions, as we have seen, are alternately unintentional or deliberately furthering.

This got me interested in a deeper analysis of self-expression through technology, especially given their production by nonprofessional filmmakers. They display a creative impulse and understanding of filmic technology (framing as used to further attractional views as cutout visuals) that extends beyond the culturally codified manner of representation amateurs are generally attributed with. Patricia R. Zimmermann notes: 'Amateur film is [...] a historical process of social control over representation.'¹⁴⁵ As we have seen especially with the culturally codified representation of the family film, the representation of the family concurs with a transposal into the familial. Still, the multifaceted engagements effectuated by the d&a mode and the views of an attractional display also reveal the creative and deliberate impulses that underlie filmmaking in the everyday. The self-expressions effectuated here are not exclusively produced as socially controlled representation but display a more active and deliberate expression of these filmmakers' lifeworld.

¹⁴⁵ Patricia Rodden Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film, Arts and Politics of the Everyday* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), xv.

Because views of an attractional display serve no narratological purpose and because they are inherently linked to a pure aesthetic of pleasure, these views also come to show the complexities of motivations underlying amateur filmmaking. These views, in fact, triggered my interest in amateur filmmaking as a means of self-expression that extend beyond the cultural codification of a consumerist behavior (even if, it always partially is), but involves more essential structures of expressing the self and the lifeworld. The next two chapters will deepen these analyses from two different points of view. First the next chapter will deal with amateur film practice as a more ontological means of self-expression through technology and the concomitant implications thereof. Finally, I will engage with these visualized expressions as experienced within my own contemporary and particular viewing experience. The following will thus focus more deeply on how the visualizations amateurs produce are effectuated by means of, and in a rich engagement with, the very technology of the camera, while the last chapter will elaborate on the meaning-generation of a contemporaneous viewing that always includes the socio-cultural and memorial background of the researcher. Both chapters operate from a basis of embodied sense-making either as expression through the camera or as viewership in the flesh.

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by

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‘WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU LOST THE PAST?’
AGENCY, EXPRESSION AND SPECTACLE IN
AMATEUR FILMMAKING

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PART II.

IV Film Production

Intentionality and Technological Mediation

1. What is Phenomenology?

‘Without phenomenology, it may be practically impossible to understand phenomenology.’¹

Phenomenology deals with phenomena as experienced by a subject in the world. A phenomenological inquiry is always an inquiry into an experiential field. This does not mean that phenomenology is a purely subjectivist methodology as was argued by some, most famously by Jean-Paul Sartre who criticized phenomenology as casting a beam of subjective light onto the world. Every phenomenon is considered suitable for inquiry. Don Ihde summarizes the phenomenological field of inquiry as follows: ‘Images, percepts, moods, arithmetical phenomena or whatever, may be a valid region for inquiry. It is in this sense, and in this sense only, that so-called introspective data may be considered. But it should also be pointed out that *extrospective* data are equally to be considered. What is investigated, is the *field* of phenomena.’²

In its most basic form, a phenomenological approach takes as its object of analysis the relational engagement of subject and object, an engagement it recognizes as highly reversible and which constitutes the preliminary origin of all significations. Signification arises in the relation between a phenomenon as it is given in experience and the subject relating to the phenomenon. Here this relationality is examined as perceptual relation. Phenomenology thus presents a specific philosophical ‘style’ rather than a methodological framework.

The phenomenological approach evolved from transcendental phenomenology as originated by Edmund Husserl to a hermeneutically inflected phenomenology mostly

¹ Don Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology: An Introduction* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), 14.

² Ibid., 23. My emphasis.

associated with Martin Heidegger to an existential phenomenology predominantly inflected by the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The latter forms the basis for most post-phenomenological work conducted today by, amongst others, Don Ihde, Vivian Sobchack, Jennifer Barker, Elena del Rio and others. Post-phenomenology represents a furthering of the phenomenological approach applied to phenomena specific to the 21st century, most predominantly technological changes and scientific innovations. The post-phenomenological furthering of classical phenomenology emphasizes the co-constitution of subject and object in 'mediation', especially through and with technological artifacts, even more strongly. Ihde, for example, engages the phenomenon of technology while Sobchack, del Rio and Barker take a phenomenological stance towards film and film viewership, including specific elaborations on the digital in embodied reception. Post-phenomenological thinking reevaluates the perceived romantic essentialism of a 'to the things themselves' (Husserl) as authentic conception of a real and adopts an emphasis on mediation as co-constitutive relation that brings subjects and objects into being in their mutual relationships. Humans cannot exist in themselves; neither can they conceive of things in themselves. Both are constituted in the mediation that binds them in their relationship. Such a conception offers itself to 21st century technological advancements and how technological artifacts increasingly shape human existence. Man, things, and generally, existence are thus never fixed, but constitute a constant Becoming in mediation. The preposition post- can be seen as a concomitant engagement with poststructuralist thinking and its distinct weight on the fluctuating nature of man and reality. The diverse relations, influences and divergences between classical phenomenology, the rise of existentialism in the 1950s and the emergence of poststructuralism in the 1960s and 1970s exceed the scope of this work. The following study engages a more generalized existential phenomenology and adopts a manner of engagement that 'attempts to describe, thematize, and interpret the *existential* and *perceptual field* in which human beings play out a particular and meaningful structure of spatial, temporal, and bodily existence.'³ As such, as Don Ihde elaborates, existential phenomenology recognizes 'the role of subjective experience in co-constituting objects in the world. What a phenomenological inquiry

³ Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 87.

manifests is a ‘call to return to the richness of human experience as the base for all subsequent knowledge.’⁴

Phenomenological analysis functions according to an inherent reversal in that it arrives at insights or knowledge of subjective experience *not* by analyzing the subject itself, but by looking at its constitution in the very relational engagement between subject and world, here relationality as situated in perception. World and subject come-into-being co-constitutively, and meaning emerges in the relation that binds the two. This is the phenomenological correlation that binds subject and world. A paradox structures the phenomenological investigation of experience from the start: the theoretical, discursive, and general assumptions need to be peeled away to arrive at the naiveté that constitutes the starting point of phenomenological inquiry, which, as such, is almost impossible since these sedimented suppositions, statements, and sociocultural norms form a part of our very experience itself.

‘In this context phenomenology as a theory is itself the circle of experience within experience and its reductions are the arranging and valuing of how this global situation is to be understood. Within the circle of experience relative values are placed upon what is basic (the life-world or perception) and what is secondary (constructions).’⁵

This cycle of experience within experience is, however, not connoted negatively so much as it reveals an acceptance of phenomenology as presenting the common ambiguity of all theories and in no way reduces the productivity of phenomenological investigation.

1.1. Intentionality

Phenomenology as a style of investigation thus puts an inherent emphasis on consciousness as intentional relation. Intentionality presents one of the pillars of the phenomenological description. Simply put, for phenomenology, intentionality refers to the invariant of consciousness always and irreducibly being consciousness *of*

⁴ William Rosensohn et al., “Sense and Significance”. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 36, no. 2 (December 1975): 13.

⁵ Ibid., 157.

something. Intentionality thus relates to ‘the dynamic and directional organization of consciousness such that it always irreducibly refers to and is correlated with something.’⁶

Consciousness is then consciousness *of* something; framed phenomenologically it is intentionality directed at the world. Consciousness is furthermore always and irreducibly embodied, going against the body-mind dichotomy of a Cartesian worldview. In this vein, the body is always subject of the world and object in the world at the same time. Signification reveals itself in the reversible and sensible intentionality as relational engagement with its world-correlate. In a simplified manner: ‘a rule for phenomenology is that there is no subject without a corresponding object nor is there a *knowable* object except for and related to a subject.’⁷

An inherent—though not necessarily objectionable—paradox structures the phenomenological inquiry: it attempts to present a ‘naïve’ investigation of direct experience, but can only do so reflectively. The metaphor of the mirror is often invoked as ‘[i]t is from the reflection, the bouncing off from the object-correlate, that the eye is to be seen, and it is from experience of the world that the I is to be understood.’⁸ Here lies the main counter-argument against critics accusing phenomenology as purely subjectivist, since the subject is only and reversibly constituted by its engagement with the object-correlate.

Differently put, within a phenomenological inquiry, intentionality (the relationality of embodied consciousness as being *of* something) functions as a what Ihde calls ‘hermeneutic rule of analysis. It is the rule that specified the horizon or boundary of phenomenology within which the totality of things may be dealt with. Intentionality *functions* as a correlational rule.’⁹ Intentionality then also functions as the boundary or horizon to what phenomenology can investigate. Still, the reflective indirectness of phenomenological inquiry of the ego leads to the establishment of one of the main invariants of phenomenological structures, namely the establishment of ‘the structures

⁶ Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 16–17.

⁷ Rosensohn et al., “Sense and Significance,” 120. Emphasis mine

⁸ Ibid., 122.

⁹ Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology*, 41.

of experiencing upon the experienced.’¹⁰ Whereas with Husserl, the life-world as natural is bracketed in order to arrive at an essential formal ontology, Merleau-Ponty sees the ‘mirror’ (reflectivity) and the ‘eye’ (or ‘I’) as indistinguishable. ‘The world, for Merleau-Ponty, is [and can only ever be] the perceived world. It is presumed to be concrete, expressive, and rich in its contents.’¹¹ As such: ‘Merleau-Ponty retains the bi-polar Husserlian model, but interprets it through perception.’¹² This bi-polar model of experiencing upon experienced is furthered and limited (by the perceptual capacity of a body) in the Pontean revealing of the world *as* (not only through) perception. Merleau-Ponty applies Husserl’s bi-polar model of experience to perception. A phenomenological inquiry is constituted by the examination of structures, not essences. These structures are furthermore deeply correlational. Phenomenology can thus be described as relational ontology.

The relational intentionality that is exhibited in the correlation world-subject is thus not a means of purely internal reflection; it is the *very access* to the world. It is the means by which a subject can ‘have’ a world and the means by which a world is. Within a phenomenological framework, the ‘I’ takes on its significance and makes meaning in, as Ihde notes, ‘its encounter with things, persons, and every type of otherness it may meet.’¹³ This otherness includes historical, cultural and social phenomena. The ‘I’ in phenomenology thus arrives after the fact, so to speak. It arrives reflexively rather than initially. There is neither a subject nor an object outside this reflexive correlation, at least not within a phenomenological framework, as an outside position would again revert to a metaphysical structure that reduces the significance of experiential structures. Before we can begin to relate to the phenomenon of imaging technologies, I would like to quickly elaborate on the crucial notion of embodiment that underlies all intentionality.

¹⁰ Rosensohn et al., “Sense and Significance,” 122.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 126.

¹³ Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology*, 51.

1.2. The body

Existential phenomenology most firmly relies on a Pontean notion centering on the concept of lived body and its highly reflexive and reversible relationship with the world. In the words of Merleau-Ponty: ‘Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system.’¹⁴ He holds that the body mediates between the interior world of consciousness and the exterior world of objects. The body is always both subjective and objective, meaning that a subject is always at once subject engaged in conscious projects of the mind and an object in the material world. This is not to say that the lived body *constitutes* the world, or that it is acted upon by a world that is already determined. Rather, as Jennifer Barker emphasizes: the body is

““meaning-giving” and “sense-bestowing”; that is, it makes possible my relations with the world. It is the context (historical and cultural, as well as material) within which I inhabit, interpret and interact with a world that exists before “I” come into it, but to which my own and others’ presence gives meaning.’¹⁵

The body is at once home of intentionality, condition of possibility and platform of meaning-generation (signification) in the world. Merleau-Ponty refers to the body as ‘corps vécu’, translated as ‘lived-body’. But the term vécu refers to more than a lived-body. It also refers to a certain vectorial imagination the trajectory intentionality takes. Simply put, we are dealing with a principle that goes directly and in every sense against a Cartesian mind-body dichotomy. ‘In this it is part of the entire movement of phenomenology to counter the dualistic division of man and his world into matter and mind and instead to reassert the essential insertion of man within his world as incarnate being in a lifeworld.’¹⁶

¹⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 235.

¹⁵ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 17.

¹⁶ Rosensohn et al., “Sense and Significance.” 173.

1.3. The Lifeworld

Within an inquiry structured by said correlational rule—the world—or in Husserlian terms—lifeworld—is never merely objectively given in itself. In a phenomenological inquiry, the world is taken as already and ‘always pregnant with significance, but whose meaning must be re-won through an interrogation of its presence. The lifeworld appears *between* the subject and the world within the focus of perception’¹⁷. And seeing as the world can only be focused upon as experienced, the lifeworld constitutes the world. This is also the definition this project adopts and I will from hereon out refer to the world as lifeworld as posited within experiential relationality that correlate subject and object. Again: ‘The lifeworld appears *between* the subject and the world within the focus of perception.’¹⁸ Thus phenomenology functions as a rudimentary relational ontology, neither stable nor essential, as it comes into being within the world-subject correlation. Phenomenological inquiry thus moves from that which is experienced (noema) to how it is experienced (noesis) and this move reveals the constitution of the ‘I’ as a ‘correlated counterpart of the noema.’¹⁹ The *what* of experience is reflexively referenced in the *how*, both are inherently reversible and inseparable. This rather crude ‘what’ of experience is exactly at the core of Husserl’s dictum ‘back to the things themselves.’²⁰ A phenomenological inquiry thus sets a standard of investigation in which as Ihde clarifies: ‘our attention is only to those objects that *appear* within experience and we attend only to how they appear.’²¹

1.4. Pontean Perception as Husserlian Experience

What will not be elaborated upon in the following are the intricate differences and mutual influences between phenomenological thinkers. What will be adopted in the following is a generalized existential phenomenology that takes the correlational rule as basis of analysis. As such, the correlation that structures Husserlian noema-noesis relations is also taken as structure of Pontean perception. Simplified, perception

¹⁷ Ibid., 167. Emphasis mine.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology*, 50.

²⁰ David Carr, *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 8.

²¹ Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology*, 33.

presupposes a perceiver who infuses the perceived with meaning (Merleau-Ponty), just as experience presupposes an experiencer who infuses the experienced with signification (Husserl). While with Husserl this bi-polar experiential structure remains on an abstract or idealist level because Husserl postulates a transcendental consciousness, with Merleau-Ponty the perceiver is an embodied perceiver and perception itself is incarnate. Embodied perception is thus not only a-priori signification; it is the very condition of possibility *for* signification and thus the only means of access to and constitution of the world. Concretely this also means ‘that we can attend to all the usual furniture of experience, including those prosaic items that philosophers call material objects: chairs, tables, inkstands and the like. But these objects are to be attended to solely as occurring within experience.’²²

A phenomenological inquiry into the practice of amateur filmmaking thus proves fruitful as phenomenology ‘seeks to identify the underlying structures of the phenomenon at hand by studying its intimate entailment with the intentional act of perception to which the phenomenon is present.’²³ Expression, perception, and experience are the axes points around which a phenomenological inquiry bases itself, while a lifeworld is always a lifeworld as given in experience, rendering questions of technology and technological mediation highly engaging. In a simplified manner, filming is not only an intentional project in a situated lifeworld; it furthermore intimately links with more fundamental notions of expression and perception. A phenomenological approach thus proves rewarding and effective in dealing with a phenomenon that provides us with visualizations (materialized inscriptions on film) produced by a subject engaged in an intentional life-project. Over the course of this chapter I will ‘unravel’ the production process of filming and filmmaking as intentional project. The next chapter will deal with the implications of introducing moving images into a reception situation as experienced by the researcher and contemporary viewer.

²² Ibid., 32.

²³ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 11.

1.5. Amateur filmmaking—a phenomenon

The analytical problem of interpreting images proves as old as the history of imaging technologies. While traditional film theory partly resolves the problem of representation in seeing film as closed system of communication within its own parameters that enters into a relational engagement when viewed in the cinema, the case of amateur films renders the issue of re-presentation even more complex. A phenomenological approach to the production of images by amateurs turns on a very simple analytical problem: How can I make any clear assumptions about the production of visual imagery if the only thing I have left are the images? There are fundamental issues of a representational nature here. I could neither say that amateurs exclusively use the camera as neutral recording device nor could I impose the same status of construction that normally accompanies discourses on professional filmmaking. I had to go back to what it is that we see in the films. I had to examine what the films were visualizations *of*. Differently put: I could neither equate the camera with the filmmaker's perception or perspective nor could I take the film as presenting purely its own perceptive and expressive structures. If I were to take the films as visualizations of a filmmaker's perception, I would assume the technology of the camera to be neutral and consequentially completely disregard notions of perspective and technological mediation. But neither are the images purely constructed in terms of creativity for the very simple reason that amateurs do not edit.

In order to examine or inquire about how people engage with a lifeworld through a camera, we must conduct a necessary analytical move. Such an analytical move must incorporate two distinct entities, namely film and filmmaking and arrive somehow from the former to the latter. This is in itself problematic. If we simply take the images and language of the films as visualizations of a profilmic experience, we imply that film technology is neutral. Nevertheless, we must somehow resolve the problematic of a move from film images and language to film production processes if we are to gain an understanding of how filmmaking practices are firmly situated in the lifeworld. Phenomenologically speaking, we must move from the *what* (film language as given in experience to the researcher) to the *how* (the manner in which filmmakers engage the world filmically in the past) in order to arrive at possible notions of the *why* (the elusive concept of meaning and meaning-making by a subject in the world).

How can we gain access to past motivations and manner of engagements if we have no referent left? Can we make assumptions based purely on the notion of language and content?

Husserl's bi-polar structure of experience—transposed by Merleau-Ponty as perception—can also refer to the structure of language. It is important to note here, that *all* phenomena relate back to this dual or bi-polar structure of experience and experienced. Is there such a thing a prelinguistic experience? Perhaps. Can we experience such a pure prelinguistic experience? No. Phenomenologically speaking, then, we need not concern ourselves with such a world or experience.

The core complexity lies in a phenomenologically inflected analytical move that as Sobchack summarizes the inquiry:

‘may begin with a *particular* experience, [nevertheless] its aim is to describe and explicate the *general* or *possible* structures and meanings that inform that experience and make it potentially resonant and inhabitable for others. That is, although in historical and cultural existence particular experiences may be lived idiosyncratically, they are also, and in most cases, lived both generally and conventionally—in the first instance, according to general conditions of embodied existence such as temporality, spatiality, intentionality, reflection, and reflexivity and, in the second instance, according to usually transparent and dominant cultural habits that are not so much determining as they are regulative.’²⁴

The preceding chapters on amateur filmmaking practice were thus conducted in light of these cultural inflections that regulate the practice in a diverse macro-contextual evaluation of a micro-existential practice. Here we need to deal with the essential problematic of interpretation that relates to a production in the past. Can we, very simply put, infer meaning-making structures of a past project if all we have ‘left’ are the resulting images of that project? Can we refer back to an activity if all we have left is the result? How can we analyse the structures of an activity that has long ceased?

²⁴ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 5.

What we can claim is that films are visualizations *of* something. It is the ‘something’ in this visual equation that constitutes the complexity. I have so far not encountered a phenomenological examination of amateur film production, even though it is of course possible that such a work exists.²⁵ However, within the field of film studies, phenomenology is a research staple at least since Vivian Sobchack’s groundbreaking work *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* in 1992.²⁶ Since then, many thinkers have engaged with, evaluated, and furthered ideas of a reversible relationship in film experience with phenomenological inflections. All of these works concentrate on professional cinema and the reception situation of a situated viewer. This is not to say that they exclusively deal with so-called blockbusters, many of these works engage with artists that use the medium in a highly engaging manner and present films that defy a narrow categorization in terms of genre. Nevertheless, these works all engage with a cinema that is ‘constructed’, not only in terms of its mise-en-scene, but also foremost by its use of montage devices. These phenomenological approaches thus quickly pointed to the impossibility of equating the film’s perspective with the filmmaker’s perspective. They analyzed the film as film-body, in that the latter presents perceptive and expressive structures that are recognized by the film-viewing subject as quasi-subjective. As such, as Jennifer Barker postulates:

‘The film is more than a representation of the filmmaker’s vision- or the boom operator’s or cameraperson’s- because what we see when we “see a film” is not merely a record and product of what the filmmaker saw at a given moment in a given space: that would be a photograph. Nor is it identical to the human filmmaker’s own bodily forms of vision, because a filmmaker doesn’t see the world in close-up in quite the same way that the film does, for example. What we do see is *the film seeing*: we see its own (if humanly enabled) process of perception and expression unfolding in space and time.’²⁷

²⁵ Vivian Sobchack briefly elaborates on the experience of home movies as ‘films souvenirs’ in “Toward a Phenomenology of Nonfiction Film Experience“, however she engages with the films from a point of view of impact and reception rather than elaborate on the filmmaking practice as situated in a lifeworld.

Sobchack, Vivian Carol. “Toward a Phenomenology of Nonfiction Film Experience“. Gaines, Jane, and Michael Renov, eds. *Collecting Visible Evidence*. Visible Evidence, v. 6. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

²⁶ Vivian Carol Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

²⁷ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 9.

Amateur films, however, complicate these notions, for the very simple reason that amateurs do not construct in post-production, at least not in the corpus that frames this study.²⁸ It proves difficult as such to see the amateur film as film-body that self-sufficiently produces structures of expressive and perceptual engagements that are entirely its own, because they are not re-constructed in a montage-process that would bring-into-being a film-body in self-containment. Filmmaker's perception and film-perception are by default closely associated, but not equaled, in amateur filmmaking. At the same time, neither do amateurs engage in filmmaking 'subconsciously'. This would imply that amateurs have no conception of the camera as creative device, merely as point-and-shoot recording device. Such a notion proves false in that amateurs do engage in certain creative behaviors such as including intertitles, using filmic devices of framing, close-ups and general notions of construction through and *with* the camera. It would be false to see amateur films as non-creative, since they use the camera in a highly engaged and engaging manner. In the preceding chapter we have established that amateurs do indeed employ camera technology as referential recording device, this does, however, not exclude notions of creative engagement with the medium.

The main problem as such is that amateurs do not construct a self-contained or hermetically sealed filmic world: their filmic universe is always recognized as their own. At the same time, they are not afraid of using creative means to express that universe. We could, somewhat inelegantly come up with the following: the films present perceptual expressions of visualizations of a subject-with-camera, which is not untrue as such. It would however, be somewhat 'lazy' to leave it at that, because the question of what these visualizations constitute remains hazy. Could the films be seen as visualizations of a past intentionality in a lifeworld? This presents a feasible possibility, apart from the argument that the films also include a technologically mediated visual universe that distinguishes the film from the practice. No matter how we argumentatively twist and turn, we run up against this problematic of construction and recording. This problematic also means that we have a complexity on our hands

²⁸ Within this corpus I could not conceive of a clearly discernible editing process. Nevertheless, some of the work created by amateur films in ciné clubs and at home presents edited material. The corpus analyzed here, however, does not.

in which we cannot authoritatively move from the images to the experiential structures that underlie the production process.

Film production presents us with a multi-layered phenomenon consisting of: 1. The activity of filming; 2. The intention of filmmaking; 3. The result of the film; 4. The use of a recording technology. The films are further differentiated by: The recording of the camera and the creation or construction of a filmic universe not coincidental with the filmmaker's profilmic perception. We must find a starting point in our inquiry that is able to coherently include this multi-layered segmentation that faces us with amateur filmmaking. Simplified, how can we move from product to production process in a regressive move?

A phenomenological approach, in its distinct status as phenomenon of and in the world, no longer reduces amateur films and filmmaking to a secondary status of hobby or mere 'leisure time' activity. In the following the practice of filmmaking is taken as existential activity and we will examine the structures that underlie it as fundamentally experiential.

2. Technë

The main problem when dealing with amateur productions is the question of what it actually is that is visualized in the image. I came to realize one very simple, but crucial element about the practice of amateur filmmaking: without a postproduction process, what the films are actually visualizations of is the process of signifying expression itself. The corpus examined here is constituted exclusively of filmmaking practices and does not take video or digital production into account. Apart from referential questions relating to film versus video or digital—that are bracketed for the moment—there are fundamental differences in camera equipment. The crux of the matter presents itself as follows: using film cameras such as super 8, 8mm or even 9,5mm, amateurs had no secondary screen from which to simultaneously witness the images they produced. These lightweight handheld cameras had no build-in screen that simultaneously visualizes the images as they are produced and as we are used to in video or digital imaging equipment. Neither did amateurs possess second screens

from which to examine the visuals produced as is usual in professional filmmaking. This might seem trivial but the consequence of the impossibility of visualization during production is as follows: if amateurs had no means of seeing what they produced while doing so, then they could only witness their visualized production later on in the viewing situation (onscreen). Such a consequence is reinforced by or goes hand in hand with the fact that amateurs do not edit. In a postproduction process the images are seen and rearranged and are thus created anew as visualization. This is the fundamental basis of Sobchack's analysis of film as film-body. The film-body presents its own expressive and perceptive structures as a quasi-subjective other. This is not the case with amateur film production. Amateurs are thus only confronted with the visualization of their own productions later on. This entails a second crucial realization that what we see in the films is exactly the same amateurs would have seen in their own *viewing* situation, if not production situation. It also entails the statement that what we see in the films is the *process* of production itself. This is extremely helpful in that we can turn to what this visualization entails and how technological mediation enters into the equation. Two fundamental questions structure the production process. These questions are irreducibly intertwined and exist in a structure of reversibility but not conflation. Simply put, we need to fundamentally ask *how* amateurs engage the camera and *why* they film in the first place. These questions also relate to a certain point-zero position of inquiry. There is no further reduction possible from a phenomenological point of view. We thus examine the structures of the visualizations from a point of view of production and inquire about how amateur film production is here visualized as structure. A turn to Martin Heidegger's elaboration of *technē* as the structure of revealing proves not only helpful but also extremely rewarding in terms of an inquiry into amateur film production.

Technē names the *structures* of a process of coming-into-being or revealing. It does *not* name the process, but the experiential structures such a process entails. Heidegger evaluates the processing structures of *technē* from an earlier insight into technology. He comes up with a hitherto unconsidered evaluation of the technological, stating: 'The essence of technology is nothing technological.'²⁹ What he means, of course, is that the essence of technology is existential and functions according to the

²⁹ Martin Heidegger quoted in Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 84.

correlational rule that grounds phenomenology. Technology can never exist as separate from either world or subject. We will adopt the structures of *technē* but will do so by engaging it from a discrete position of inquiry into the production of amateur images. It might be easiest here to start back to front. The process of coming-into-being can help us unravel the structural functioning of the process. Vivian Sobchack describes the structure of this process as follows:

‘In sum, objectively material means (*technology*) and the tropology of subjective desire (*poësis*) are bound in an irreducible intentional relation as a revelatory bringing forth (*technē*) that, in its diverse historical and personal practices, makes matter meaningful and meaning matter.’³⁰

The structures of the intentional relation need to work together transparently in order for the project to be successful. What then is *poësis* when referring to amateur film? What comes-into-being or is revealed? Heidegger tells us: ‘Poetically dwells man upon this earth’.³¹ For Heidegger who takes the term from the Greek, *poësis* names a bringing-forth, a bringing-to-presence and also a manner of being in the world (‘poetically dwells man *upon this earth*’). It is thus not a far stretch from a more modern connotation of signifying. Signification is here taken as the move of bringing experience to expression. So inherent in the process of filmmaking is the subjective desire to bring experience to expression. *Poësis* thus concerns the bringing-forth of expressive signification. This is what the films visualize, but not exclusively so. We cannot take the film as a one-to-one visualization of the filmmaker’s perception for the very simple reason that what we see in the films is always also technologically mediated.

Expression here functions again according to the correlational rule of all phenomena in experience. Expression signifies a co-constitutive coming-into-being between world and subject. As such, as Ihde and William Rosensohn note:

³⁰ Ibid., 133.

³¹ Don Ihde, *Heidegger’s Technologies: Postphenomenological Perspectives*, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 41.

‘The emphasis [of the inquiry] is placed upon the genesis of an expression as it arises from the “prelinguistic” experiential basis (variously thought of as gesture, Merleau-Ponty; silence, Heidegger; or poetic symbol, Ricoeur). This emphasis is not accidental but a result of what the theory weights from the beginning. It is the intention to signify, the struggle with bringing experience to expression, the *vouloir-dire* of the speaking subject which seems to take precedence.’³²

Furthermore, as stated before, a lifeworld is always the world in which the subject is posited and the experience that is brought to expression is always their personal experience and can always ever be so. Still, expression here does not coincide with perception of the filmmaking subject, since there are fundamental notions of creative construction that come into play. The project that is filmmaking is not exclusively constituted by poësis in itself. The project of making films in the world is an intentional relation that is irreducible in its dual aspects of subjective desire (poësis) and technology (and the mediation thereof). The structures of this bringing-forth is thus termed technë. The relation presents an irreducibility of desire and technology. Here lies the crux of the visualizations that come-into-being in the films: the films reveal a bringing-forth that is structured as technë. The films visualize the bringing into being of expressive signification *through* and *by* the mediation of technology.

The subjective desire that lies at the basis of filmmaking in the world is thus existential rather than a ‘mere’ hobby or leisure time activity that could be viewed as secondary in its primary motivation. The desire underlying filmmaking is fundamentally existential since it comes to translate as the most primary desire of a subject to bring experience to expression; to signify; or even simpler: to make meaning. What the films visualize is thus the *bringing-into-being of expressive signification*. The films do not visualize a meaningful statement or meaning as such; they visualize the process of making meaning. Amateur films visualize the bringing-forth of expressing signification or signifying expression.

Heidegger relates the structures of technë to the revelations brought forth by technology, but expands this notion in his examination of art as revelatory bringing-forth. This is not to say that amateur films present an exclusive status as either

³² Rosensohn et al., “Sense and Significance”. 158.

technology or art. The structures of the bringing-forth however are similar to both. An implication of the structural process of *technē* helps us examine the practice of filmmaking in an analogous manner as, first of all it presents a coming-into-being, structured by desire and technology and second, it presents these structures as irreducible and partly reversible as well. Taking the films as visualizations of the process of revealing that is structured as *technē* helps us to understand the ‘revealing roles which both art objects and equipment or technological objects contain when they are seen as focal elements against a context or field that is “lighted up” as “world.”’³³ Again, amateur films are neither exclusively a technological nor an artistic object. However, the examination of these films as focal elements against a field that is lighted up as world (their lifeworld), serves as basis of inquiry from which to derive further and richer knowledge. The making of films by subjects in a posited lifeworld is thus taken as existential rather than secondary.

2.1. Technological Mediation and the role of the camera

As the subjective desire that lies at the very fundament of the practice has now been identified, we can now go on to quickly examine the role technology plays in the intentional relation of the filmmaking project.

Because technology exists in a fundamentally irreducible relation with *poësis*, the camera becomes a means in the project and can, from a phenomenological point of view, only be examined as such. Heidegger’s most famous example consists in his analysis of how a hammer changes its experiential status as tool in a project. The camera as tool is much more complex than Heidegger’s hammer, however, the experiential structures that underlie its *use* present an isomorphic organization. For Heidegger, the hammer in a use-context, such as being used to fix a roof or to build furniture withdraws in the intentionality that makes the project. It loses its status as opaque object-in-itself and becomes an object of what Heidegger calls ‘ready-to-hand’. The hammer as ready-to-hand becomes an extension of the capabilities of the hand or arm. The object in itself withdraws in the intentionality of the project. As Ihde states:

³³ Ihde, *Heidegger’s Technologies*, 76.

‘This transformation has been descriptively analyzed within classical phenomenology. Heidegger’s tool analysis notes that objects, such as hammers, are taken into the ways in which subjects project themselves into work practices. When in use, the hammer withdraws as a separate object and is taken into the action being performed.’³⁴

The camera in its most fundamental status as object-in-use displays the same structures in the intentional relation of the project. Its experiential status changes in the project that is filmmaking. The camera, stored in a wardrobe in its box is but an object-in-itself. It is a black box, with buttons, a zoom lever, and a filmstrip inside it. It is opaque from a phenomenological point of view and need not concern us here since, while present, it has no fundamental mode in experience. Entering the intentional relation that is the filmmaking project, however, the object-in-itself withdraws in that intentionality as a ‘ready-to-hand’. As Ihde notes:

‘In this analysis, Heidegger developed his own version of a phenomenology, molded to a *pragmatic emphasis*. Taking *tools or equipment* as basic things encountered in a surrounding environment, he applied what we have already seen as the gestalt features of phenomenology: First, all objects (in this case, use-objects as well) are relative to a context. There are *no objects-in-themselves*. In a *use-object* context, “taken strictly, there ‘is’ no such thing as an equipment in which it can be this equipment that it is.” [...] Second, these cross-relations have what might be called an instrumental “*intentionality*,” or reference, defined by the work project. Equipment is “in order to _____. In the ‘*in-order-to*’ as a *structure*, there lies an assignment or reference of something to something.’³⁵

2.2. Breakdown in and of the intentional relation

The focal reference of hammer and camera needs to be differentiated, as the camera becomes a means in a revealing of expressive signification. It proves hard to come to terms with the irreducibility of desire and technological mediation, but again

³⁴ Ihde, Don, *Bodies in Technology*. Electronic Mediations, v. 5. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. 7

³⁵ Ihde, Don, *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth*. The Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Technology. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990. 32

Heidegger's analysis provides a useful regressive move. He traces the irreducibility of the relation by showing how its status changes once the tool breaks down. The object reverts from the transparency of an object-ready-to-hand to the opacity an object-in-itself. The object reclaims its status as experiential opacity. As Peter Galison states: 'For centuries, philosophers have noticed that a working tool in use is often invisible. [...] But when the tool breaks, this relation alters. Suddenly, instead of a hammer being simply "available" (as Heidegger famously put it), its transparency in use suddenly becomes opaque.'³⁶

Again, the project of making films follows the same structures of intentional relation. It proves most useful to illustrate this irreducibility by looking at examples in which one side of this relation breaks down. In what follows I will draw on examples illustrating a breakdown on the side of technological mediation and, later on, of subjective desire. The following example is taken from several instances from family chronicles taken at the fairground: at the fairground, parents almost always film their children on carousels. They move in a circular motion and one of the predominant shots attempts to follow the circular movement of the carousel with the child. Parents attempt to 'catch' the child in frame every time it is driven past. It is a difficult shot in that, for most filmmakers, the speed of the carousel proves too fast. More experienced filmmakers choose to film the child as it passes, stop filming and resume once the child passes back into frame. Or they will choose a static medium shot from which to let the wagon with their child come into frame repeatedly. Most family chroniclers, however, try to 'catch' the child in a close-up or zoom in once the child enters the frame. However, they inevitably 'lose' the child as the wagon passes too quickly for them to film. A hectic panning and zooming occurs and they often give up filming the carousel ride altogether. They lose the child and filming stops.

Here we witness a good example of technological mediation in a state of breakdown. While the camera as such does not break down (it still works) the technological mediation is no longer controlled. The irreducibility of the intentional relation breaks

³⁶ Galison, Peter. "Breakdown". Selinger, Evan, ed. *Postphenomenology: A Critical Companion to Ihde*. SUNY Series in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006. 163. Emphasis mine

down as soon as the technology no longer exists as a means in transparency. H.³⁷ (no first name given) experiences such a mishap when he tries to film his children on St. Nicholas day. He tries to focus on the children in a medium shot first. The son and a toddler (gender uncertain) are examining the gifts and sweets on the table. Both are in their pajamas and very excited. He films in a high angle down on the toddler and starts to zoom rapidly on the child standing in front of the table. The toddler starts to move around a bicycle and runs out of frame, but the older brother comes into frame and H. makes the best of the situation and starts to focus on the brother. The older child looks at the camera, laughs and starts to run around the other side of the table. He runs out of frame and due to the close-up we only see the corner of the table in frame. All of a sudden, the child pops back up and we have a brief visual on his face. After a second, the child moves again and the camera starts to hesitantly pan around and we can see the floor. He manages to get the child back in frame and realizing his mistake, he zooms back out. Still, for a few seconds, we can see the hesitancy and mistakes as H. loses control and does not manage to get a clear shot of his children than run around excitedly.

If anything, this again proves the argument of amateurs using the camera as neutral a futile argumentation, since very clearly, camera mediation and filmmakers perception are revealed as non-coincidental if co-constitutive, most visibly when technological mediation breaks down. Most often the delicate balance of the irreducible intentional relation is disturbed when the filmmaker is no longer in control of what he wants to film; typically, because the movement of and in the world proves too fast.

On the other 'side' of this equation, disturbances can occur as well. If a subject in front of the camera is unwilling to be filmed, they often stick their tongues out at the camera, a gesture that can alternately be interpreted as flirtatious, annoyed and playful. Fact of the matter is, however, that the subjective desire on the part of the *filmmaker* is challenged by the acknowledgment of the camera pointed at the other. Most people faced with a scowling unwillingness of their intended subjects, will stop shooting. A.D.³⁸ encounters such an unwillingness in her stunning thirty-six-minute film taken exclusively at the fairground. She is very fond of filming while being

³⁷ AV034542 / IA_AMA_002379, 8mm, colour, silent, ca. 1967

³⁸ AV035249 / IA_AMA_001051, super 8, color, mute, 1975

seated on different rides. On one such occasion, she films while the ride has not started yet. She is seated in one of the carriages and films the couple that is placed in the car in front of her. The man has his arm casually around the woman and she is turned towards him and says something. He however is looking around and all of a sudden his head turns around towards the camera. He does not look pleased, in fact he looks unpleasantly confrontational and filming immediately stops. There is a sense of being caught spying on someone only to have that person catch you in the act.

Figure 1



While it might be normal for filmmakers to coerce subjects in front of the camera to act in a certain manner, such as inducing them to wave, smile or point at something, once the subject acknowledges the filmmaking on their own terms and not the filmmaker's, subjective desire (poësis) is disturbed and filming often stops. Of course, there are fundamental issues relating to intersubjectivity in the lifeworld, that is always also a social and shared space and we will come back to notions of intersubjectivity in relation to filmmaker, filmed subject and spectator later on. It is important to realize here, however, that an unwillingness to be filmed often disturbs the subjective desire of the filmmaker to bring *their* experience to expression. As a consequence, the intentional relation of a transparent project of filmmaking breaks

down. Especially elderly people prove very apt in staring unflinchingly and with a grim expression into the camera as if challenging the filmmaker to stop and the latter often do, an experience M.Q.³⁹ makes when he tries to film the grandmother of the family. In the oldest film of the corpus from 1929, we find an emphasis on portraiture. M.Q. is fond of filming the members of his family in portrait style for a few seconds and all of them oblige him by smiling. He also documents the livestock of the family farm. At the fairground he films three women standing in front of a carousel, again in portrait style. While two of the women smile engagingly, the grandmother on the very left, scowls and it seems she is even suppressing a sigh. Quickly, filming stops.

Figure 2



The revelatory bringing forth of *technè* in the filmmaking project thus inherently relies on the working together of desire and technology in order for it to be considered successful.

Another very simple argument can be made for the irreducibility of technology and desire in the simple notion that amateurs not only mediate their expression *through* the camera; they moreover create *with* the camera. As this work has emphasized again

³⁹ AV009596_m.wmv / IA_AMA_004418, 9,5mm, black and white, mute, 1929

and again, amateurs use of filmic language. They frequently and willingly engage with filmic devices such as zooms, pans, close-ups, framing, even, in some rare cases superimpose images within the frame (as seen in chapter three). E.H.,⁴⁰ in a truly surprising move superimposes two images of rides in motion at the fairground. Filmed at night, he films an octopus ride in motion and superimposes an image of the lighted Ferris wheel in motion.

Figure 3



The result is absolutely stunning and we are presented with an image of lighted movement that becomes fluid and surreally imaginative. Part of the attractional spectacle here is created *with* the camera. Filmic devices, emerging in the engagement with technology, come to form a constitutive part of expressive activity. How amateurs use the camera also conveys the encroach-ability of technology into poësis, since the manner in which they engage the tool shows how they use its functions as inherent part of the project. Because the filmmaking project is an irreducible intentional relation, amateurs not only create through the camera, they explicitly create with the camera as expressive tool.

3. Embodiment relations in the flesh

There one crucial element that has so far not been mentioned, namely the notion of embodiment. While a Heideggerian tool analysis proves extremely helpful to identify the structures of the experiential status of an object as tool, it leaves out the crucial

⁴⁰ AV035667 / IA_AMA001916, 8mm, color, mute, 1960; 1968

notion of how the camera as expressive means is also always in-corporated (taken into embodiment). We need to consider the use-context of the camera from an expanded point of view that takes a Pontean perspective of embodiment as sensual corporeality what Merleau-Ponty calls 'flesh'. Without going into too much detail, the notion of 'flesh' constitutes the consequential epitome of Merleau-Ponty's lifework. Flesh comes to term the element of sensual corporeality that is never limited by the skin or material body. It constitutes a space of corporeality that is shared by subject and world. This relation is not only irreducible it is highly reversible. As such, Merleau-Ponty uses the somewhat old-fashioned term 'element' to describe how subject and world are also always mutually incorporated. As philosopher Elizabeth Grosz summarizes: 'Things solicit the flesh just as the flesh beckons to and as an object for things. Perception is the flesh's reversibility, the flesh touching, seeing, perceiving itself, one fold (provisionally) catching the other in its own self-embrace.'⁴¹ Perception, in phenomenological tradition, relates not exclusively to the visual, but comes to incorporate all the senses in a heterogeneous and non-hierarchical organization.

This work operates from Vivian Sobchack's standpoint postulating that: 'The image cannot be opposed to the body, as representation is opposed to its unattainable referent.'⁴² An awareness of the flesh as the constituting element of corporeality arises from the understanding of a subject as being at once a subject of experience and an object for experience. It arises from the consciousness of being matter that means and meaning that matters. In the world, as an embodied subject, I can always also be acted upon as an object. This action can take on dystopian tones when related to violence or natural disasters that act upon the body in all its helplessness, but it can also relate to a passionate reveling in the fleshy incorporation of subject and world. This passionate intertwining is what Merleau-Ponty comes to call chiasm. The concept of flesh is notoriously difficult to enunciate. However, if we take the notion of fleshy incorporation on board in the evaluation of camera as means, it can be illustrated in a much more comprehensible manner. A chiasmatic relation at its very core comes to name a relation that is highly reversible. We can extend this chiasmatic sense of

⁴¹ E. A. Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power, Next Wave* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 126.

⁴² Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 61.

reversibility in regards to figure-ground relations and the emergence of gestalt variants. Here, however, perception and expression function in accordance to a chiasmatic reversibility that, as Sobchack notes, posits the

‘lived body as a carnal “third term” that grounds and mediates experience and language [...] both differentiating and unifying them in reversible (or chiasmatic) processes of perception and expression. Indeed, it is the lived body that provides both the site and genesis of the “third” or “obtuse” meaning that Roland Barthes suggests escapes language yet resides within it.’⁴³

What we can take from Sobchack’s enunciation of Merleau-Ponty here is the fact that the bringing of perception (Pontean experience) to expression engaged in by the filmmaker follows not only a reversible structure, but, most importantly, is embodied as well. Expression rises from perception and-in filmmaking-is translated back to a perceived. Especially the project of filmic expression emphasizes the highly reversible nature of perception and expression.

Merleau-Ponty engages with Heidegger’s analysis of objects in a use-context, but expands the relation in order to show how such a project as intentional relation is always also embodied. He gives several examples the most illustrative of which will be quickly elucidated in the following. Merleau-Ponty’s elaboration of the flesh as mutual incorporation of the world and the more general correlational rule that structures all inquiry, prove incredibly useful with regards to a more existential (and experiential) understanding of technology in the lifeworld. Somewhat simplified we can say that the lifeworld in phenomenological terms is never a romanticized vision of a supposedly natural lifeworld prior to technology. The lifeworld in this inquiry is also always a technologized lifeworld, indeed, following Don Ihde it proves hard to conceive of a world prior to technology if we take into account that technology embodies all means used in bodily action and is not reduced to mechanical machinery.

Ihde gives a wonderful example from a children’s fable in which both a fox and a human stand in front of a tree with grapes (never mind the weird misapprehension of

⁴³ Ibid., 60.

grapes growing on trees).⁴⁴ While the fox looks at the grapes that are far too high up to reach, he/she (the gender of the fox is never specified) reckons that the grapes must be sour and turns away. The human, however, faced with the same problem, grabs a stick, knocks down the grapes and tastes them. Ihde gives a very simple example of a means (the stick) that can already be seen to be functioning as technology. There is a further dimension to this intentional relation in the grape object, namely the fact that the stick here functions as an extension of the sensual outreach (here predominantly the sense of touching/grabbing) of the subject reaching out towards the world. Merleau-Ponty gives two similar examples of how technology is also always constituted as sensual expansion in its withdrawal in the intentionality of a project. The most famous example would be the Pontean blind man's cane. Merleau-Ponty rightly points out that the cane used by the blind man to find his way in the world is never merely a separate object-in-itself. In its use context it becomes not only an object ready-to-hand but in the added element of the flesh to this experiential status, it becomes 'an extension of his perceptual awareness.'⁴⁵ Again, it is necessary to emphasize that this perceptual awareness and the extension thereof concern the entire sensorium. Another example would be the driving of a car. For those of you who drive, you not so much know as take for granted the car functioning as an extension of perceptual awareness. When you drive through a narrow alley, you need not get out of the car and measure it in order to see whether it is going to fit. If you are used to your personal car, your awareness of it will extend beyond the limits of your body and include it in your perceptual awareness. There is a certain level of learning included in this perceptual gestalt-system, as when you get a different model or size of car, you might experience slight hesitations or insecurity concerning its fitting through the narrow alley. However, perception here is adjustable and flexible, perceptual gestalts are very quickly appropriated and 'righted' in perception once habituated. Ihde gives the example of how perceptual variants can be appropriated through the example of an experiment in which vision is turned upside down for the subjects of study. He notes: 'The most radical such variation is the well-known inverted glasses experiment

⁴⁴ Don Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth*, The Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Technology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 30 ff.

⁴⁵ Selinger, Evan. "Introduction". Evan Selinger, ed., *Postphenomenology: A Critical Companion to Ihde*, SUNY Series in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 5.

in which the viewer sees the “world” upside down. It takes several days for the viewer to relearn his actional gestalt such that the world seems “right” again—but it does.⁴⁶ While unaccustomed at first, subjects very quickly learned to ‘see’ and experience perception according to this new variant principle.

A third example Merleau-Ponty enunciates relates to a feather on a woman’s head.⁴⁷ The woman in her awareness of said feather will quickly learn to incorporate it in her sensual sense of corporeality and proprioception (the sense of navigating space) and remember to duck when entering a room through a door. Consciousness and embodiment function thus not as separate entities and here Merleau-Ponty once again illustrates the phenomenological basis of anti-Cartesianism in the inflection of a ‘*single system of flesh and consciousness that is the lived body.*’⁴⁸

The inherent incorporation of technology as means of sensual extended awareness already crystallizes from the examples provided above. How then can we illustrate the camera as means in an expressive activity as also always incorporated? By showing an example that is as simple as it is unusual. There is a certain gestural behaviour that I observed in films taken at the fairground. This gesture functions not necessarily as a norm, but it appeared often enough to become significant. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the films of attractional display demonstrate an affinity to and fascination for the technologized movement of lights and rides at the fair. We have also seen how these films display a notion of seeing as spectacle itself. We are in the vicinity of Heidegger’s postulation of technology as technological seeing, but there is a further layer to this expression of a technologized lifeworld. A fair number of filmmakers at the fair emulate the movement of the latter. It proves difficult to concretize this movement—these filmmakers do not necessarily mimic the movement itself, but they zoom and pan with the camera to emulate the spectacle of technologized movement. In combination with zooming and panning, the filmmakers also move the camera in hand either in a rapid up-and-down movement or a right-to-left pan. Hand and camera work together in this expressive gesture that is also

⁴⁶ Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 48.

⁴⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception*, 165.

⁴⁸ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 79.

fundamentally embodied. A.D.⁴⁹ presents numerous examples of such behaviour at the fair. One sequence is especially telling: she films the Calypso ride. Here rotating wagons are attached to a rotating circle similar in principle to teacup rides in amusement parks. First, she films the ride in motion, but quickly she emulates its rotating movement in ever-greater speed. Three levels of motion are presented: the wagons, the rotating surface and her hand movement. Still, she goes further and starts to tilt the camera up and down rapidly at first, and then slower but tilts the camera almost horizontally. The effect is dizzying to say the least, but this example really comes to show the principle of reversibility between world and subject in the flesh.

We are reminded of Walter Benjamin's notion of a child's sensual experience as highly polymorphous and non-hierarchical in the sense of synesthetic. As such this visual and expressive gesture proves similar to 'the *mimetic and corporeal activity* of the child who, as Walter Benjamin suggests, "plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher but also a windmill and a train."⁵⁰ Children engage the world in a chiasmatic sensual reversibility that relates as much to a playful mimicking of an object as that of a subject. The example of people using the camera at the fair to produce and emulate a sense of technologized movement comes to illustrate this playful and performative reversibility in and of the flesh.

As a consequence, any possible knowledge inferred about amateur filmmaking 'will emerge from the dance, the interrogation, the "foldings in the flesh" that Merleau-Ponty talked about in his late works, and they may be located by looking at the practices and in giving account of our bodily engagements and embodiments in that world.'⁵¹

The expressive activity of filmmaking is thus a bodily engagement in the world. The camera becomes incorporated in this fleshy engagement of subject and world as direct means of the expressive signification process. The intentional relation that structures

⁴⁹ AV035249 / IA_AMA_001051, Super 8, colour, mute, 1975

⁵⁰ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 289.

⁵¹ Don Ihde, *Bodies in Technology*, Electronic Mediations, v. 5 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 86.

the filmmaking project becomes structurally similar to what Don Ihde terms an embodiment relation in the following:

‘I call this [...] set of existential technological relations with the world *embodiment relations*, because in this use context I take the technologies *into* my experiencing in a particular way by way of perceiving *through* such technologies and through the reflexive transformation of my perceptual and body sense.’⁵²

Ihde takes eyeglasses as a basic example of such a set of existential technological relations. As soon as a subject is used to the glasses, they withdraw in the perceptual outreach and become transparent. While everyone who wears glasses knows what it is like to ‘get used’ to new glasses (either the new frames border vision differently or the glasses themselves are changed from normal to bifocal lenses) after a while the technology becomes appropriated and withdraws within the sensual corporeality of the subject. They are in-corporated. While the camera does not present the same degree of transparency nor frequency of use, looking through the viewfinder (a sort of window if you will), can lead to such a set of existential embodiment relations. The camera is thus incorporated and functions as an expansion of the sensual (perceptual) awareness of the filmmaking subject. Corporeality as flesh, as conceived of by Merleau-Ponty, comes to represent perception as the condition of the flesh’s reversibility. We have seen that the correlational rule as adopted by Merleau-Ponty, translates Husserlian experience as perception (sensorium). It follows that if expression in its most basic form is the bringing of experience to expression, in a Pontean sense it also relates to the bringing of perception to expression. Furthermore, if perception is a fold in the flesh and is brought to expression in the filmmaking activity, then from an analytical point of view, expression must also always and irreducibly be embodied and fleshed out.

Merleau-Ponty further conceives of the primary means of expression as a gesture arising from the field of pre-experiential silence. By this point we can no longer negate the fact that amateur filmmakers use filmic language and express not merely

⁵² Ihde, Don, *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth*. The Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Technology. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990. 72

through but also *with* the camera. We have also seen how the camera partially withdraws in the embodied intentional relation that is the filmmaking project and that the films visualize an embodied expressive gesture. The camera becomes an incorporated element of how a subject engages the world; directs bodily action towards it; and expresses experience (perception) within it. Summing up: what is visualized in the films is thus the embodied gesture of expressive activity. The manner in which amateurs express their experience thus also reveals a notion of embodied expression that can give us insights into the motivations (the *why*) that structure the filmmaking activity.

4. Feeling as E-motion: The Family Chronicle

We have seen that the representation of the family film is structured by an ideology of familialism that relates to the construction of a ‘happy family narrative’. We have also seen how the practice of filmmaking in the space of the family is always related to consumptive patterns and the motivation itself responds to a modernist conception of leisure as modern rationalization of temporality and spatiality. The socio-cultural implications of the discourse that structure the motivations underlying the family film can certainly not be negated. From a phenomenological point of view we can engage in an eidetic reduction that brackets these motivations for a moment in order to engage in what I think is a most crucial aspect of the motivations. While the content of the films does indeed play into notions of display, especially the display of an economic and social status, what can never be ignored is the sense of pride, love and care that very clearly underlies the practice. If we think film content and language *together*, the presence of these feelings of love and care come to the fore. Emotions are incredibly difficult to identify, as we need to be careful of presumptive imposition. Nevertheless, watching the films, there is an incredible presence of care for the subject. This might seem trivial if we introduce the argument that, of course filmmakers care about their subject, since they take the effort to film it, but the underlying presence of emotion is a rather more complex phenomenon and can be *felt* and identified by looking at film language. We will elaborate on this in the following chapter, but emotion comes to play a part in the expressive creation not only through but also *with* the camera as means.

Ron Burnett in his elaboration of knowledge and vision in *Cultures of Vision: Images, Media and the Imaginary* warns against a collapsing of gestures in production and gestures in reception:

‘Both Eisenstein and Carroll do not distinguish between the staging of an event for the camera (production context) and the subsequent performance of that staging on the screen. There is a difference between, for example a gesture produced in any moment of film production and the transformation of that gesture onto the screen.’⁵³

I would argue, however, while the basis of this argument is certainly true, neither can one, with regards to amateur filmmaking, treat production and reception as two completely separated entities or phenomena. In amateur filmmaking, production and film visualization are in an encroaching relationship, since the films present visualizations of an intentional project (technology and desire). Burnett’s main contestation lies, of course, in the fact that the images as received in the viewing are edited, and consequentially film presents its own closed communicative system. The coming-into-being of the expressive signification as process in amateur filmmaking, renders film as closed communicative system problematic.

In amateur cinema the production process is as important, if not more, than the construction of the film itself. The visualization of the expressive activity that is presented by the films brings expressive gestures into-being and the camera as irreducible part of this process records this bringing-into-being. The gestures effected with the camera give insight into the subjective desire that structures said project as well. The emotive element is always also part of the subjective desire and comes-into-being in the production process. It rises from the relationality that structures this process. While in professional filmmaking, the film presents and mimics subjective processes of expression and perception, it also translates emotions in a set of material revelations through the camera that become emotive. For example, the swelling of music in a film can express and provoke an emotional growth. As Jennifer M. Barker notes: ‘the film borrows our ability to feel things deeply and the style with which we

⁵³ Ron Burnett, *Cultures of Vision: Images, Media, and the Imaginary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 115.

express our feelings tactilely and emotionally.’⁵⁴ Because amateur films visualize the *process* of production, it follows that the expressive gesture rises *within* the project of filmmaking. It does not *originate* in the finished film. As such filmic language, created through and with the camera as expressive means, also translates emotions that rise in the relationality between filmed subject and filmmaker; and between subjective desire and camera mediation in production itself. Seeing as the films present a visualization of all these phenomenal components that go into the project, the emotive side of intention is also always present. ‘In *Emotion and Embodiment*, [Glen A.] Mazis notes that by its very nature, emotions operate in this space of intersubjectivity and reversibility, described by Merleau-Ponty as the basic structure of perception’⁵⁵. Barker, via Mazis, makes an important point here: emotions rise in relationality and cannot be situated exclusively in either subject or world.

The presence of love underlying the practice of home movie making is also always an irreducible intentional relation; its presence unfolds within the practice. It is not constituted *by* the practice but is brought to expression *within* it. The camera comes to express motion also as e-motion. E-Motion is here taken from Mazis’s following elaboration:

‘E-motion seems to entail both the motion away from the person to his or her world and away from the world to the person [...] In the etymologies of words used as synonyms for the emotions, one finds terms indicating literally a movement ‘into the subject’ *and* ‘away from the subject.’ ... The motion of e-motion undercuts any division into ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ ‘active’ and ‘passive.’ There is an indeterminacy in e-motion which is really an interconnectedness that is mutually enriching circularity: an expression of the subject and an impression of the object, or actually, rather, a *circulation* of meaning *within the circuit of both*.’⁵⁶

E-motion thus lies in the movement that underlies relationality between world and subject. It constitutes this move and is expressed technologically by the camera. The emotion it gives rise to, is of course never visualized in the films, e-motion here relates to the movement as expressed by the camera. In the following, e-motive relates

⁵⁴ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 148.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 155.

⁵⁶ Mazis, Glen A. quoted in *ibid.*, 156.

to technologically expressed movement that gives an indication of the emotion it provoked or that accompanied the filming. Emotion constitutes the non-mediated experience of the filmmaker that is, of course, in the present no longer existent. Emotion is a fleeting sense, while e-motion is the technologically mediated expression that can partially be sensed in the movement of the camera.

The ‘getting closer’, the movement towards the object/subject of directed and focused love through the embodied expression is visualized by camera means. It is the movement towards that brings the loving into presence; and thus into expression. Movement fundamentally constitutes the visualization and expression of emotion as experienced in the filming situation. We have seen that expression is also always embodied and thus comes to constitute a manner of comportment and bodily action towards and in the lifeworld. Sara Ahmed describes the way ‘[that] life is lived as specific inflections of a general “towardness,” hate as an “againstness,” fear as an “aboutness,” disgust as recoil away from something or other.’⁵⁷ What is important in this e-motion is the relationality it reveals. As such, as Barker conceives of it:

‘By emphasizing not bodies themselves but the contact between them, Ahmed understands emotions as emerging in and through that encounter. They are not preexisting emotions brought into *contact*; rather, they are brought into *being* and given shape by the contact itself. It is through forms of movement, alignment, approach and retreat, for example, that the character of “loved,” “feared,” and “hated objects is produced. Love isn’t something a lover “has” for a loved one, but something that emerges in the encounter between lover and loved, just as “fear” isn’t “in” someone fearful, but emerges in the contact between two entities, in which they take up a certain temporal and physical orientation toward one another.’⁵⁸

What the e-motive movement of the technologically mediated expressions comes to show is an evocation of the fleeting emotion that was experienced *during* the filming, even if such emotions can never be conclusively proven. E-motive expression (as movement towards or against as expressed by the camera) thus functions as evocation and indication rather than conclusive and visual empirical proof.

⁵⁷ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.

⁵⁸ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 16.

As we identified three important characterizations about amateur filmmakers: First, expression is also always embodied. Second, we have seen how the subject in an embodiment relation also always fundamentally incorporates the camera as means. Finally we have seen that amateurs do not post-produce their material. It follows that the expressive gestures that rises in the production situation comes to constitute this motion as taking a certain temporal and physical orientation toward one another. This becomes most illustrative in the family film. As Mazis points out: ‘There is an indeterminacy in e-motion which is really an interconnectedness that is mutually enriching circularity: an expression of the subject and an impression of the object, or actually, rather, a *circulation* of meaning *within the circuit of both*.’⁵⁹ Emotion comes into being in an intentional and highly reversible relation. Expression as embodied gesture (as conceived by Merleau-Ponty) constitutes such a motion of towardness in the family film.

Again Sue Cataldi wonderfully summarizes this move towards as expression of deep sentiment:

‘Deeper emotional experiences expand, if you will, our ‘personal’ horizons beyond that of our own body, our own living flesh. We tend in these experiences to lose or to expand our sense of ‘self’ or ‘subjectivity.’ ... The ‘deeper’ the emotional experience, the more ... we experience ourselves as belonging to or caught up in the Flesh of the world.’⁶⁰

The deeper the emotion, the more reversible it presents itself in the flesh. The love and pride of a parent for their children resurfaces in the visualizations of the film as e-motion as a getting-closer, which is why the close-up and zoom are the predominant filmic expressive devices used by parents. Especially inexperienced filmmakers use the camera as expressive means to get as close as possible to the child. There is a touching quality to images that desperately attempt to follow the child as closely as possible, even if such an endeavor more often than not results in a visual failure. Another example of such an emotional immersion is presented in the static shot of a

⁵⁹ Glen A. Mazis, *Emotion and Embodiment: Fragile Ontology*, Studies in Contemporary Continental Philosophy, vol. 3 (New York: P. Lang, 1993), 29.

⁶⁰ Sue L. Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth, and Flesh: A Study of Sensitive Space: Reflections on Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Embodiment* (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1993), 115.

newborn. These shots often exceed the normal length considered appropriate for a filmic sequence. The camera lingers on a baby sleeping in a crib and the filmmaker seems unable to keep the gaze from the wonder that is the newborn. R.F.⁶¹ is such a proud father. He films his baby in the crib for a sequence of one minute and twenty-five second (!), an enormous duration for amateur shots. First he films from a medium shot framing the entire crib from the right. He then moves into an extreme close-up by zooming in to the baby.

Figure 4



He cuts a few times, going back and forth between close-up and medium shot and in some sequences he has positioned a toy in the crib. He does not zoom in off camera. Here the film language expresses the movement towards translated by the onscreen zoom. This is e-motion visualized.

It proves hard to ‘unravel’ the emotive basis of subjective desire, but the trajectory that intentionality takes is also always evocative through its movement as e-motive. For example, a photograph of a child might be taken in close-up as well, but the effect of such a close-up is never as strong as it is in filmic movement as the zoom that accompanies the close up. The movement of the zoom, the motion of getting closer, reveals the relationality of emotion rising in the contact zone between filmmaking parent and filmed child. The zoom technologically embodies the motion in the intentionality of e-motion. Emotion thus rises in the relationality between subject and object as zone of contact (the filming situation that is lost in my viewing present). In everyday life e-motion can be rendered visible by the skin-to-skin contact of lovers

⁶¹ AV026506 / IA_AMA_001397, super 8, color, mute, 1975

but most of the time the directionality is diffusely felt rather than visualized. In the films, the irreducible intentional relation between subjective desire and technology renders this *motion visible*. In phenomenology, emotions also always form part of the single system of flesh (corporeality) and consciousness that is the lived body. An expression as embodied activity relates this emotional inflection through e-motive (technologically mediated) movement.

The filmic manner adopted by parents in the family chronicle is thus seldom distanced and why would it be? Naturally, from a filmic point of view, it would make much more sense to film the child engaged in an activity from a static medium shot that frames the entire space the child moves in. But this is never the point of the family film. Here lies the indication of the production process being as important and meaningful as the films as visual basis for the imposition of a verbal narrative. The filmmaking project that involves children is just as much about the activity of following and engaging the child with the camera. Movement characterizes the family film. Parents follow their child physically with the camera in hand—they might run after it when they move quickly and crouch with it in order to adopt the child's perspective and get closer to it. At the same time, the in-built filmic devices like a zoom are a subjectively inflected if technologically expressed gesture of getting closer. This space of family relationality, as almost goes without saying, is also intersubjective because it constitutes a space of contact, the child might directly engage the parent with the camera in hand to present toys for example or to tell the parent something. Camera movement, filmmaker's intention and the loving relationship between child and parent all come to be interwoven in the complex intentional relation that is the filmmaking project.

The e-motion of love that is expressed by the filmic expression adopted in the family film is perhaps the most obvious, but there are other examples that hint at more complicated emotional relations and these can also be witnesses as expressed in filmic language. I would like to introduce an example that caught my attention in the corpus of the family chronicle. The setting is a Sunday outing in nature. R.M⁶² is behind the camera and he films his wife, little girl and the latter's grandfather. The filmmaking

⁶² AV036447, no material, black and white, mute, no date

father is walking backwards to catch his family in frame as they are strolling forward. The girl playfully lifts her dress and laughs all in complete innocence. The mother, who also engages with the camera through her flirtatious facial expression, suddenly emulates the innocent gesture of her daughter and starts lifting her skirt to reveal more and more of her legs. The camera keeps focusing on the mother that playfully mimics the gesture of her daughter in a flirtatious even sexualized manner. The daughter can be seen laughing. When the camera pans to include the grandfather, the latter adopts a disapproving frown.

Figure 5



It is certainly quite clear that he does not approve of the playful spectacle the mother displays. The camera hesitates, pans down for a second and pans back up to the grandfather. When the latter still looks disapproving, filming stops. Within this specific situation lies a world of complex interrelational movement that the hesitancy translated by the camera reveals. The hesitancy brings a sense of embarrassment and taboo to the fore and, in the end, the motion in e-motion is a movement away from the situation and results in the ultimate sense of 'againstness', namely the end of the project as filming stops.

The camera not only expresses e-motion but can also trigger it. Emotion is never imposed from above but comes to be inherently implicated within the intentional relation of the project. Emotions are not revealed either in subject or object, but come to the fore in the relation *between* them and the remnant of this rising is expressed as e-motion in the image. There is always an emotional basis when amateurs pick up the camera. For example, in the preceding chapter we have seen that in the family film notions of consumption and status are important tropes. And this chapter does not contest such an assessment, but I would like to add on to these tropes. Yes, amateurs are adamant about documenting their possessions, they love filming their cars, houses, gardens, and even children as a sort of emotional currency. When filming their belongings, amateurs do often engage the camera in a medium to long shot and it remains mostly still. Here a sense of pride is translated by the image and the length of the shots translates such a feeling. If an amateur films an object for a short time, the argumentation can be brought forth that it was simply 'there' when the amateur started filming. If the camera lingers however, e-emotional intention rises to the fore. There is a sense of satisfaction in this display as if the filmmaker is standing in front of their house and car after a day of work and takes a moment to appreciate all the physical manifestations of their economic ascendancy. Thus the length of time of a shot also imbues a filmic image with significance. Duration thickens the expression of the filmmaking project. While, naturally, economic ascendancy is inevitably part of a capitalist rationalization of the private as consumptive space, one should never forget that this also has a personal and emotional significance for the filmmaker and is thus linked to positive emotions. Here, the e-motion is not as deep or strong a revelation in the flesh as with the zoom focused on children, but displays a subtler notion of contentment and pride. In terms of e-motion, the medium shot and static nature of the camera comes to represent more of a 'stepping back' and contemplation of all that has been achieved.

5. The acculturation of visual gestalting

We must nevertheless conduct an examination between the different foci a visual trajectory can take and the existential, socio-cultural and historical implications that lie within images. Perception and expression are always also socially, culturally, and

historically inflected. These implications form an inherent part of our lifeworld and experience in general. While we have bracketed these implications for structural reasons, we need to examine how they also always come to play in the bringing-into-being of perceptual gestalts. A gestalt is here related to as a figure that is constituted by how a subject organizes a visual field. A visual field always presents figure-ground alterations. Background and foreground are effectuated by attentive focus. A gestalt is then the visual figure as it is constituted momentarily in the visual field. We can call this highly fluctuating relation between perceptual field and focus ‘gestalting’. The visual trajectory my perception takes is thus organized according to a bringing-to-the-fore of certain perceptual aspects by attention. For example, I am sitting at my laptop and the screen presents the main figure of my perceptual ground since it is where my attention lies. When stuck in my writing, my gaze is lifted from the laptop and is directed out the window where certain aspects of the landscape alternately come into focus. I can consciously attend to the tree to my left that makes the rest of the landscape withdraw to the background. All of a sudden, a bird catches my attention and the aforementioned tree a figure retracts to a more general perceptual field as my attentive focus concentrates on the bird. These figure-ground relations present the fundamental basis of perception.

As such, in the words of Ihde and Rosensohn:

‘The field is the totality of presence which may be differentiated according to the question addressed to this totality of presence. Thus, if our question is visual, the field is the whole of the visual field before us. Focus is the region within the field which is attended to. Again, if the example is visual, the focal center may be a certain object which stands out against the background of the visual field. [...] Extended, the notion, field, is the phenomenological “world,” focus, the phenomenologically explicit attention within the world.’⁶³

As we have seen, the camera is incorporated and becomes a sensual expansion tool in this perceptual awareness and we must thus inquire as to how perception is structured. This notion of attention as a constant within visual gestalting proves fundamentally fruitful when analyzed in concomitance to the role of the camera in the embodiment

⁶³ Rosensohn et al., “Sense and Significance.,” 174.

relation. In a structure similar to Heidegger's breakdown of the tool, we can identify the most poignant illustration of attention through an examination of perceptual distraction that alters the focus of the visual trajectory. For example, at the fair, the family chronicler focuses on children engaged in certain activities such as duck fishing, eating, play and on rides. Frequently however, in an unpredictable move, the filmmaker becomes distracted by a phenomenon nearby. Most of the time, the distraction is provoked by the technologized attraction of the fairground. G.W.⁶⁴ films his wife and son moving towards him at the fairground. All of a sudden, his attention drifts to the thrill ride in motion in the background.

Figure 6



⁶⁴ AV032407, no info on material, black and white, mute, 1951-1954



The camera pans up and comes to rest on this attractional display while son and mother vanish from the frame. Here the altering of figure-ground relations is expressed by the visualization of the camera movement from one attentive focus to another. This is also where amateur filmmaking and professional cinema differ in a most fundamental manner, since amateur productions are a visualization of an expressive activity rather than a closed cinematic communication, they allow for and visualize this notion of distracted and drifting visual trajectories. Not only are filmmakers distracted by something in their vicinity that is unplanned and unconstructed as it is not necessarily part of their initial planned focus (such as the child), they also seem to get distracted by the very capacities of the camera itself. In films taken at the fairground, distraction by camera capabilities becomes an inherent part of the attraction. When filmmakers quickly zoom in on lights in movement and zoom out again, they are discovering the creative capabilities of the camera and quite often start zooming in and out rapidly and start panning the camera in a right-to-left or up-and-down movement. Here, and there is no other way to put it, filmmakers play with the camera and are temporarily distracted by the possibilities of the technological mediation as performance rather than by a focus on an intended view. A further example is taken from the fairground films as well, even though the distraction has

nothing to do with the spectacle of the fair as such. E.H.⁶⁵ tries to catch the stands and stalls of the part of the fair that resembles a bric-a-brac market where wares such as cheap jewelry, cooking utensils, sweets, clothes, cleaning products etc. are offered. All of a sudden the attentive focus shifts and with it the visual trajectory of the camera as the camera gaze lands on a crowd. The next sequence reveals that an accident has happened and an ambulance is at the scene. Not only does this intrusion upon the visual space present an example of contingency and happenstance encroaching upon the lifeworld, it also presents a direct example of how filmmakers and their perceptive focus shift from one instant to the next.

Figure 7



While there is frustratingly little to see (there is a voyeur in all of us), the filmmaker attempts to film the scene and get as close as possible. Once the ambulance leaves, the filmmaker gets back to his intended business of capturing the fair.

Experience as perception thus functions as a constant gestalting altering between figure and ground. The term gestalting becomes useful since it includes the perceptual alterations that structure the visual field. Consequentially, seeing as amateur films are

⁶⁵ AV035945 / IA_AMA_001907, 8mm, colour, mute, 1958

not post-produced, they *include* the alterations. Camera movement as expressive means bring this constant oscillation in perception to the fore. What this shows us is that amateur films as visualizations of an irreducible intentional relation also illustrate the ‘revealing roles which both art objects and equipment or technological objects contain when they are seen as focal elements against a context or field that is ‘lighted up’ as ‘world.’⁶⁶ What is ‘lighted up’ is neither filmmaker’s world nor film’s world but the filmmaker’s technologically mediated world. This is why we cannot speak exclusively of a film’s perceptive and expressive structures as closed system emulating a quasi-subjective vision, since the filmmaker’s world is lighted up through and with technology. Neither is the world that is revealed exclusively the filmmaker’s world, since technology changes experience and perception and is thus never constructed as neutral.

6. Macro-and microperception in filmmaking

While we have bracketed certain notions of how seeing is also always socio-culturally inflected until now, I would like to conduct a brief investigation of how amateurs and their manner of bringing perception to expression functions according to structures of gestalting that alternate between what Don Ihde comes to call macro-perception and micro-perception. These different alternations relate to his elaboration of the body as always lived as socio-culturally positioned and embodied. While Don Ihde relates to the sense of body one and body two in regards to technological seeing, I would like to ‘borrow’ his elaboration here in order to examine basic notions of perception and expression in the world of amateur filmmaking and their visual trajectories. What then are the concrete implications of these bodily senses? Ihde conceives of them as follows:

‘We *are* our body in the sense in which phenomenology understands our motile, perceptual, and emotive being-in-the-world. This sense of being a body I call *body one*. But we are also bodies in a social and cultural sense, and we experience that, too. [...] These locations are not biological but culturally constructed,

⁶⁶ Ihde, *Heidegger’s Technologies*, 76.

although they are located upon us as part of our bodily experience. I call this zone of bodily significance *body two*.⁶⁷

Vision in a body two sense of perception relates to a hermeneutic engagement: it needs to be learned. An example would be the reading of a thermostat, we conceive of heat and cold through the reading of an abstracted language presented by the thermostat. Both senses of this bodily seeing are of course fundamentally embodied in that they only present different modes of seeing. As Ihde states:

‘In the past perhaps the most familiar role within which we experienced and reexperienced being a body was what I have often called an embodiment relation, that is, the relation of experiencing something in the world through an artifact, a technology. [...] Perhaps we have forgotten that these simple extensions of the sense of our bodies once posed a problem for our self-identification, and that the new questions raised by virtual reality and intelligent machines have been taken up in earlier eras.’⁶⁸

We have already conceived of certain modernist changes in perceptive behaviour that also had fundamental implications for the practice of amateur filmmaking. For Ihde, body two perception relates to notions of hermeneutically inflected seeing that he comes to call macro-perception, while the motile perceptual being-in-the-world comes to constitute what he calls micro-perception. He extends on these perceptive inflections in the following:

‘The modification I shall make here upon Husserl’s example is by way of distinguishing two senses of *perception*. What is usually taken as sensory perception (what is immediate focused bodily in actual seeing, hearing, etc.), I shall call microperception. But there is also that what might be called cultural, or hermeneutic, perception, which I shall call macroperception. Both belong equally to the lifeworld. And both dimensions of perception are closely linked and intertwined. There is no microperception (sensory-bodily) without its location within a field of macroperception and no macroperception without its microperceptual focus.’⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ihde, *Bodies in Technology*, Xi.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 29.

I would like to generalize these notions of body-two-perceptions as socio-culturally inflected seeing. As such, the examination of filmic language and visual content need also always be elaborated upon from notions of a socio-culturally impacted gaze that is culturally embedded and inflected by notions of gender, race, age and sexuality. The camera gaze as expressive activity within the embodiment relation is also socio-culturally inflected as is the use and mediation of technology.

If we take the filmmaking project as structured according to the principle of *technē* and the irreducibility of desire and technology, we can understand more clearly what Ihde means when he states that: 'I argue that the very structure of technologies are multistable, with respect to uses, to cultural embeddedness, and to politics as well. Multistability is not the same as neutrality. Within multistability there lie *trajectories*, not just any trajectory, but partially determined trajectories.'⁷⁰ This is also technology as technological seeing as Heidegger conceives of it. Here technology is seen as experiential and embodied and not reducible to mere equipment (as technology is generally conceived of in a popular understanding).

It would not only be restrictive, it would be wrong to misconceive of the relation between macro-and micro-perception within the intentional relation of the amateur project as separate entities. Neither do these modes of seeing relate to parallel trajectories. Ihde is most adamant:

'While I do not believe one can reduce bodily-sensory perceivability to its solely social dimensions (presumably this is what some take to be the core of social constructionism), neither do I think there is any bodily-sensory perception that is without its sociocultural dimension. Rather, these dimensions interrelate something like a core/field or figure/ground gestalt within the relation between embodiment and environment or world. What makes the situation even more difficult to analyze relates to the indirect ways in which the body two or cultural perception occurs.'⁷¹

Based on a few simple examples I would like to show how the trajectories in amateur film expression are always differently determined in their social, economic, cultural

⁷⁰ Ibid., 106. Emphasis mine

⁷¹ Ibid., 133.

and historical inflections but are also always embodied and experiential. These trajectories furthermore exhibit the very structures of perceptual gestalting in that they alternate in inflections within the expression of the project. The gestalting that is brought into being in the fluctuating space of perception as focus-field alteration also fluctuates between socially determined trajectories and basic experiential modes of being-in-the-world. The degree of these inflections increases and decreases constantly, sometimes even being conflated within the same visual. For example in G.W.⁷² sequence of visual distraction: his son child becomes a consumable entity in a visual record inflected by an ideology of familialism, at the same time; the visual trajectory reveals an e-motive expression of love and care in the careful framing of mother and son. Still he becomes distracted by a different visual phenomena that demands a shift in trajectory and attention. Within the same shot and visuals, the multistability Ihde talks about exists co-extensively and in a fluctuating relation.

The same applies to the example involving father, mother, daughter and grandfather in R.M.'s⁷³ film and her playful lifting of her skirt. Neither style nor camera position change during the brief segment. Still, the connotations alter radically in the visualization of the different gestures and expressions adopted by filmmaker and filmed subjects. The visual trajectory observed here alternates in inflections. We witness a constant rising and ebbing, flowing and fluctuating between the socio-cultural and micro-perceptual implications that form the visual field of perception. While the filmmaker engages with the playful spectacle of his wife and daughter, as soon the disapproving gaze of the grandfather is inserted in the situation, notions of taboo and social disapproval enter the perceptive space and the visual trajectory changes its inflection. This macro-perceptual, socio-hermeneutically inflected sense is still embedded within the micro-perceptual experience itself, abruptly; however, it rises to the fore and takes precedence. This precedence influences the filmmaking project and brings it to a halt. An oscillating movement between macro-and micro-perception thus characterizes the visual gestalting of the filmmaking project. This allows for a visual trajectory that is always also partially, though never exclusively, determined by socio-cultural inflections. The home movie, especially the family chronicle, has often been elaborated upon in terms of the structuring visuality of the

⁷² AV032407, no info on material, black and white, mute, 1951-1954

⁷³ AV036447, no info on material, black and white, mute, no date

male gaze, since, and this is the gaze in the corpus examined here as well, most of the time, the filmmaker is the father. As Roger Odin ascertains: ‘The film visualizes how the father used cinema to rule over his family: he occupies the center of the image, organizing the shooting and ordering people to perform in front of the camera.’⁷⁴ And further: ‘Home movie productions are a festival of Oedipal relations: the person behind the camera is not just any operator but, in general, the father.’⁷⁵ Naturally, power relations are inherent in all image production, especially in that it is the father who constructs the family narrative and visual memory archive of all family members. The socio-cultural inflections of such a gaze naturally convey connotations of an ideology of patriarchic dominance within the micro-political field of the family. Still, as we have seen, the expressive activity of filmmaking and the e-motive inflection of the visual trajectory of camera mediation can also be completed ‘for this is where the new father can build up a closer relationship with his children’.⁷⁶

This complex interweaving of micro-and macro-perception is brought to visual expression in amateur films. Nevertheless, in the end: ‘the relation between micro-and macroperception is not one of derivation; rather, it is more like that of figure-to-ground in that microperception occurs within its hermeneutic-cultural context; but all such contexts find their fulfilment only within the range of microperceptual possibility.’⁷⁷ In the preceding chapters, the socio-cultural inflections of a macro-perceptual understanding have already been elaborated upon. I would thus like to examine a specific set of examples that intersperse the entire corpus. I would like to analyse how these examples represent a shaping of the visual gestalt that lies in microperceptual engagement.

⁷⁴ Odin, Roger. “Reflection on the Family Home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach”. *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 257.

⁷⁵ Odin, Roger. "Reflection on the Family home Movie as Document A Semio-Pragmatic Approach". *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Holland, Patricia. “Introduction History, Memory and the Family Album”. Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, eds., *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago, 1991), 5.

⁷⁷ Ihde, *Bodies in Technology*, 29.

7. Beauty and the World

A range of visual motifs recurs within the corpus. They mostly relate to shots of nature-themed motifs devoid of human presence. Filmmakers throughout the years establish a certain visual pattern that in a certain manner stands out from the rest of the images. Taking the corpus in its entirety, these examples are scattered throughout the filmic categories established in this work. I will elaborate on four visual examples in what follows. As such, the examples are neither unusual nor specific, but their presence becomes significant through the frequency with which they appear in the films. They furthermore surface throughout the entire temporal framework of the corpus and are not tied to a specific decade. A first reoccurrence within the films are close-ups on flowers and flowerbeds. Especially springtime provides a popular season to feature flowers in bloom and amateurs will include lengthy shots of flowerbeds in parks and their own personal garden. Quite often such material will include rather long close-ups or zoom-ins on flower-roses being especially popular. An equally popular second visual motif lies in the depiction of sunsets. Here, the shots typically run between a few seconds up to a few minutes of film. Filmmakers do not film the entire sunset but focus on the typical red, orange and purple hues of a sunset in ‘full swing’. A third motif focuses on winter landscapes covered in snow. Again, these visuals run for a surprising length of time and emphasize lonesome, still and peaceful landscapes devoid of human presence. A final motif that stood out due to its frequency in the corpus is the notion of running water in all its manifestations: from close-ups on a riverbed taken from boats, to quiet streams in a forest, to high angle shots of the seaside encroaching upon the beach.

What combines all these visuals is a certain notion of postcard motif. Petra Pierette Berger notes the ‘astonishing resemblance between the composition of some of the amateur’s own pictures and that of professional photographs, mostly postcards.’⁷⁸ She goes on to suggest that such imagery might present a mimicking of professional photographs. At the same time, what amateurs produce here are visuals that are also characterized by a certain bourgeois aesthetics of portrait landscape paintings. The

⁷⁸ Berger, Pierrette Petra. “Narrative of the Private Photo Album”. Sonja Kmec and Viviane Thill, eds., *Private Eyes and the Public Gaze: The Manipulation and Valorisation of Amateur Images* (Trier: Kliomedia, 2009), 37.

social connotations of such imagery thus pertain to a certain sense of kitsch in that they display a perceived artistry on the part of the filmmaker. Lutz Koepnik conceives of Walter Benjamin's notion of kitsch in the following:

'Kitsch [...] wants to trigger high-cultural effects by means of a mass-cultural apparatus, and therefore it remains badly understood if simply theorized in the concepts of aesthetic theory or the history of artistic styles. Kitsch signifies a false reconciliation between bourgeois aesthetics and postautonomous art, between high and popular culture. It masquerades industrial mass culture as folk art and endows it with the cultural capital of aesthetic refinement.'⁷⁹

Benjamin sees kitsch on the one hand as an instrument of fascism promoting emotional identification and thus political conformity, but also comes up with a more positive interrelation of kitsch as stylistic instrument of resistance employed by the avant-garde. What interest me here are the social implications of kitsch as displayed by imagery.

Amateur images are also constituted by what can be termed a bourgeois aesthetics. The visual trajectory that is displayed here is thus partially determined by what Jean Baudrillard terms the 'petit-bourgeois'. Not only do these postcard motifs display an inherent desire of social and economic ascendancy that he sees as stemming from Restoration aristocratic models, these themes furthermore constitute a manner of possession as protection of the private. 'Chaque fleur a son pot, chaque pot son cache-pot. Tout est protégé et encadré. [...] non seulement posséder, mais souligner deux fois, trois fois ce qu'on possède, c'est la hantise du pavillonnaire et du petit possédant.'⁸⁰ As we have seen in the preceding chapter, visual appropriation connotes visual possession and here; flowers are visually appropriated, protected and framed in a metaphorical flowerpot. Expression here functions according to socially inflected notions of possession through the visual. Furthermore, not only do these visual themes provide a display of what one possesses. It also relates to "comment on possède

⁷⁹ Lutz P. Koepnick, *Walter Benjamin and the Aesthetics of Power*, Modern German Culture and Literature (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 79.

⁸⁰ 'Each flower in its own pot, each pot in its own planter. Everything is protected and framed. [...] Not just owning, but also emphasising what you own twice or three times over is the obsession of suburbia and small wealth.'
Jean Baudrillard, "La morale des objets". *Communications* 13, no. 1 (1969): 34.

bien.”⁸¹ These social connotations of the petit-bourgeois also pertain to notions of neatness. It proves striking that the flowers and the flowerbeds filmed are all in neat order, they are groomed and particular notions of ‘natural wildness’ are eclipsed. It is the groomed flowerbed, rather than the natural meadow that becomes significant here.

The visual trajectory of camera and subjective desire reveal the cultural inflection of class mentality. Here a cultural contract or compromise is established ‘régé par les contraintes magiques et économiques du collectif: c’est le visage et la définition même de la *consommation*.”⁸² What these visual motifs come to show is the socio-cultural inflection of a body two perceptive mode. These stylistic choices or modalities refer to a “logique (et d’une esthétique) de la simulation _ simulation des modèles bourgeois d’organisation domestique.”⁸³

The subjective desire that co-constitutes the filmic project here relates to a simulation of a bourgeois aesthetics aspiring to and emulating principles of ascendancy, mobility and consumption. Its visual trajectory thus presents a social inflection that rises to the fore in the visual gestalt of the films. At the same time, the camera as an object is naturally implicated in this socio-cultural embedment in that it comes to represent a consumptive pattern of social ascendancy in that “de tel ou tel objet en soi est déjà un service social.”⁸⁴ Speaking about television, but easily applicable to the possession of a camera, Baudrillard states that: ‘brevet de citoyenneté, la TV est un *gage* de reconnaissance, d’intégration, de légitimité sociale. A ce niveau presque inconscient de réponse, c’est l’objet qui est en cause, non sa fonction objective – et il ne fait plus fonction d’objet, mais fonction de *preuve*.’⁸⁵ The possession of a camera functions

⁸¹ ‘how to own well.’

Ibid.

⁸² ‘governed by the magical and economic constraints of the collective: it is the very face and definition of *consumption*.’

Ibid., 45.

⁸³ ‘logic (and an aesthetic) of simulation – simulation of bourgeois models of domestic organisation.’

Ibid., 33.

⁸⁴ ‘one subject or another is in its own right already a social service.’

Ibid., 43.

⁸⁵ ‘as a certificate of citizenship, TV is a *guarantee* of recognition, integration, social legitimacy. At this virtually unconscious level of response, it is the subject and not its

already as sign of social ascendancy and economic possession. Moreover, the socially inflected gaze appropriates an aesthetics that reveals the desire of social ascendancy. At the same time, we can observe that no use of technology comes about as neutral as camera mediation comes into being in the interrelation between macro-and micro-perception. Simply put: perceptual sense changes with the use of a camera as we have seen extensively in the previous elaborations of the filmmaking project. The filmmaking project is itself already socially inflected for the simple reason that the introduction of a camera into a situation already changes the experience thereof and the camera itself already represents a status object of economic upward mobility.

The filmic gaze is thus always also the expression of a socio-cultural inflection. Both macro- and micro-perceptual variants govern perception and the filmic gaze. They oscillate in inflection within the visual gestalting that is here materialized in the film image. Based on the same examples, I would like to examine how such a body two gestalting is always fundamentally implicated in more general, bodily and experiential modes of micro-perception. While the visual motifs that amateurs capture over and over again are of course inflected by a 'petit-bourgeois aesthetics' that relates to notions of class, there is one important aspect that cannot be ignored: namely, the fact that these visuals are also perceived and expressed as something beautiful.

The gestalting of that is materialized on film oscillates in inflection. The filmic gaze is positioned socio-culturally but also displays a more primary notion of encountering beauty in the world. What these images also show is how in the lifeworld that is lighted up by the film project, the subject ceases to stand at the centre of the world in an encounter with beauty. The shifting of focus, attention or the connotation of distraction brings about an 'unselfing.'⁸⁶ What exactly happens in our encounter with something beautiful? Elaine Scarry in her groundbreaking work *On Beauty and Being Just* elaborates on this process as follows:

objective function which is in question – and it serves no longer as a subject but rather as *proof*.'

Ibid.

⁸⁶ Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 113.

‘At the moment we see something beautiful, we undergo a radical decentering. Beauty, according to [Simone] Weil, requires us “to give up our imaginary position as the center. ... A radical transformation then takes place at the very roots of our sensibility, in our immediate reception of sense impressions and psychological impressions.” ... [Weil’s] account is always deeply somatic: what happens, happens to our bodies, when we come upon beautiful things-...-they act like small tears in the surface of the world that pull us through to some vaster space [...]. It is not that we cease to stand at the center of the world, for we never stood there. It is that we cease to stand even at the center of our own world. We willingly cede our ground to the thing that stands before us.’⁸⁷

Expression in the flesh is here transposed as filmmaking in the world. It can thus relate moments of a decentering opening towards that world. While the social implications of the socially inflected gaze are not to be negated, there is something more to the imagery as revealed by the different motifs above. They can be seen as the visualization of a moment in which the subject stands before an opening to the world. The imagery of close-ups on flowers in bloom, of endless snow-covered landscapes that often glimmer in the winter sun, the orange majestic horizon during a sunset and the gay qualities of water running through a stream come to initiate a ‘creative act that is prompted by one’s being in the presence of what is beautiful.’⁸⁸ Here the bringing of perception to expression reminds strongly of Scarry’s comment about beauty being a ‘two-part cognitive event that affirms the equality of aliveness. This begins within the confined circumference of beholder and beheld who exchange a reciprocal salute to the continuation of one another’s existence; [...] dispersed out so that what is achieved is an inclusive affirmation of the ongoingness of existence, and of one’s own responsibility for the continuity of existence.’⁸⁹ This circumference of beholder and beheld is of course nothing else than the fundamental reversibility in the flesh that Merleau-Ponty calls chiasm. Beauty thus inspires a passionate intertwining between world and subject in which the subject voluntarily cedes his position at the center of his/her world.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 111–12.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 95.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 92.

Can the notion of protecting evoked by Baudrillard in relation to the private aesthetics and bourgeois possessions be related to a notion other than a pure desire of social upward mobility? I think it can; for the very reason that if ‘something is perceived as beautiful [it] is bound up with an urge to protect it, or act on its behalf, in a way that appears to be tied up with the perception of its lifelikeness.’⁹⁰ The beautiful wakes in the perceiver a desire to protect *and* to express: it triggers the desire to create. Here, the filmmaking impulse lies not only in visual appropriation but also about the reversibility of perception and expression in the flesh. Here lies the experiential basis of a phenomenon that is also always partially inflected by socio-cultural macro-perception. Naturally the aesthetics presented can be seen as an emulation of a petty bourgeois style in a simulation of kitschy postcard motifs of sunsets, flowers, landscapes and water. Still, it does not negate their experiential status as a confrontation of subject with the beautiful. There is a manner of perceptual care that underlies these sequences that denies an exclusive status of socially inflected display. The length of the sequences of flowers, water, snow and sunsets translate as perceptual staring and staring ‘is a version of the wish to create.’⁹¹ The duration of these sequences brings to the fore an impression of a subject standing rapt before a perceived in the world. These are not brief shots that are included for pure reasons of display and bourgeois aspirations. The length translates as raptness and a desire to bring that experience to expression.

Beauty can become subject to discussions between essentialists and historicist or social constructionists. As Scarry asks: Do we really seem to live in an age in which we “not [...] see the beauty of persons [and things] differently but that we do not see it at all.”?⁹² Are we also part of a world in which ‘as an outcome of this newly acquired, wretched immunity-people are asking us to give up beauty altogether?’⁹³ Whether one adopts an essentialist view (sunsets have always been beautiful) or an social constructionist view (sunsets have since become kitsch but might have been beautiful in another time) in the end these stances do not matter if we choose to live in a world, as Scarry conceives of it:

⁹⁰ Ibid., 80.

⁹¹ Ibid., 72.

⁹² Ibid., 74.

⁹³ Ibid.

‘where the pleasure-filled tumult of staring is a prelude to acts that will add to the beauty already in the world-acts like making a poem, or a philosophic dialogue, or divine comedy; or acts like repairing an injury or a social injustice. Either beauty already requires that we do these things (the essentialist view) or we are at liberty to make of beauty the best that can be made-a beauty that will require that we do these things.’⁹⁴

What amateurs deem beautiful might be socially inflected by class and notions of ascendancy, fact of the matter is, however, that they still deem it beautiful thus the process of ceding a central position in the world still stands. Also the visual motif, acting as small tear in the world, caught the attention of the subject and provoked a desire to create something. I am not, by all means, comparing the production of amateur film visuals to such artistic creations such as a philosophical dialogue, a poem, or a divine comedy, but the desire that structures the process of creation when faced with the extra-ordinary is similar.

The fact of the matter is that certain views incite a desire to create in the filmmaking subject. Experientially, this represents a lived Peircean ‘indexical sign’⁹⁵ or even a living of Barthes’ ‘punctum’—the notion that certain perceptions in the world pierce the subject as they provide small tears in the world, provoking the subject’s experience of the passionate reversibility in the flesh. This chiasmic relation triggers the desire to create, hence to bring experience (perception) to expression. The reveling in the reversibility in the flesh is as such proven as the subject voluntarily abandons a central position in the world and sensually reaches out toward the perceived. The encounter with something beautiful, fascinating or extra-ordinary reveals the oscillations between figure-ground or field-and-focus of perceptual gestalting. As Scarry explains: ‘At the moment one comes into the presence of something beautiful, it greets you. It lifts away from the neutral background as though coming forward to welcome you-as though the object were designed to “fit” your perception.’⁹⁶ This is visual gestalting at its most positive.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 75.

⁹⁵ for further elaboration see Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 114–115.

⁹⁶ Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, 25.

The film collections analyzed in this work present a surprising number of lengthy sequences that focus on landscapes devoid of human existence. This is as such not surprising. After all, we can assume that they found the landscape beautiful and as we have seen triggers a desire to create. The motivation underlying the visuals here is neither aimed at the chronicling of a happy family narrative, nor are they organized according to a documenting and archiving drive. The lengthy focus on landscapes, especially winter landscapes, reveals an expressive gesture towards a non-anthropocentric manifold. The following chapter will elaborate on the inclusion of the existential manifold in a more detailed fashion. Still, the expressive gesture towards a non-human landscape reveals a further notion of voluntary decentering as the sensual embracing in vision translates as a focusing on ‘the plenitude of being and existence even as it does not privilege human being and existence.’⁹⁷ The visual trajectory is here represented not as concrete focus, but as generalized diffusion in the existential manifold. Such a reflexive expression is however not annihilating or threatening in terms of subjectivity, but rather ‘this nonanthropocentric gaze is exorbitant: open rather than annihilating, amplifying rather than reductive’⁹⁸ as Vivian Sobchack so rightly notes with regards to the non-anthropocentric gaze of Kieslowki’s cinema.

What we can take from this interrelation of a more basic notion of experiential expression and socio-culturally inflected vision is the concept of amateur filmmaking as a perceptual gestalting that oscillates between macro-and micro-perception. Amateur filmmaking as a phenomenon represents the bringing of perception to expression. The visual gestalting combines style and content. Filmmaking expression as visual gestalting proves hard to unravel concretely since its expressive trajectories fluctuate within the field of perception. It constantly changes and alternates its macro-and micro-perceptual inflections in figure-ground oscillations. These multistable trajectories cohere, coincide and shift constantly and reversibly in expressive gestalting. For example, as we have seen, a visual motif such as a close-up on a rose is socio-culturally inflected as petit-bourgeois as well as being micro-perceptually experienced as voluntary decentering in the encounter with beauty. The filming of a child is always structured unconsciously by the representational codes that configure the family film, but a zooming-in on the child’s face also relates an expressive

⁹⁷ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 97.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

directionality of getting closer that translates as the visual expression of love, care and concern. Taking filmmaking as phenomenon in its entirety thus reveals how visual expression constantly fluctuates between the micro-and macro-perceptual inflections that structure perception as experience.

8. Films of a documenting and archiving drive: expressing the social

Amateurs do not produce in either historical or social vacuum. Their visual expression of the world must thus also be examined in terms of its socio-historical inflections. The lifeworld is always also irreducibly conceived of as social. A phenomenological understanding takes sociality as experiential. The social component is neither added upon nor imposed from above but constitutes a fundamental and ontological aspect of Being.

Historical consciousness (as the primary notion of being situated in history and sociality) is here taken as existential stance towards the world and is expressed as gesture in film language. This sense of being situated is here taken as ‘experience [that] in this context connotes not just observation but also involvement and interaction. We experience history not just in the social world but also in our engagement with it.’⁹⁹ We have already identified the film of documenting and archiving drive as motivated by such a sense of inscriptions in subjectforms that exceed the private. For Heidegger, *Dasein* (Being) itself is already always lived as the bottom stratum of historicity.¹⁰⁰ Historical consciousness here is related to two essential aspects: to the experience of temporality and to the social as deeply intersubjective. It configures as the primordial status of ‘being-in-history’. It relates to a fundamental sense of Being as ontologically being-in-time and being-in-the-social. Analyzed thus, this consciousness functions according to the same correlational rule that structures experience and ‘since it concerns not historical knowledge but

⁹⁹ Carr, *Experience and History*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ The differences in phenomenological thinking in regards to historicity and history will not be elaborated upon here. For a nuanced analysis of the distinctions adopted by different phenomenologists, please look to David Carr’s *Experience and History Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World*.

historical being, it is clearly not epistemological but ontological.’¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, as David Carr distinguishes: ‘This does not place it back in the realm of the traditional, substantive philosophy of history, however, since it is not about the being of the historical process as a whole, but about the being of the subject.’¹⁰²

D&a filmmakers not only express their experience as deeply situated and social, they also intend their films as directed towards a future sociality (at least type A and B contents as identified in Chapter two). The visual trajectory of the film comes to engage in temporal synthesis and intersubjective understanding that reaches beyond their individual life and world as centre. Why then do people feel the need to make visual records for a later generation? And what are the exact structures that configure such an expressive stance?

The motivation here must be analyzed from a broader phenomenological context as to how a subject interacts with and intends in a lifeworld. First we must examine the deeply social character of experience. This ontological saturation is grounded in the intersubjective character of Being-in-the-world. Naturally, the position a subject operates from is always constituted as a point zero position from which the subject interacts in the here and now. Expression as language (and this includes filmic language) already encompasses this fundamental intersubjective understanding in its most primary form. As such: In a phenomenological understanding of language and expression, ‘intersubjectivity here is the necessary given from which one begins for there is no private language to be found.’¹⁰³ Carr agrees in that:

‘intersubjectivity is an essential dimension of experience. It is not as if the subject could somehow exist alone and then encounter others. Intentionality is a perspective or point of view upon the world, and intersubjectivity is the encounter and interaction with a point or points of view which are not my own.’¹⁰⁴

The concept of alterity as disruption of such an intersubjective understanding is only valid if we work from an assumptive standpoint that postulates, as Carr notes:

¹⁰¹ Carr, *Experience and History*, 161.

¹⁰² Ibid. 161-162

¹⁰³ Rosensohn et al., “Sense and Significance,” 128–29.

¹⁰⁴ Carr, *Experience and History*, 161.

‘that in order to experience and know something I have to become that thing, or it has to become me, thus obliterating the distinction between me and the object, or reducing the other to the same. But this is just the mistake that the concept of intentionality is designed to overcome. The irreducible otherness and thereness of the other person is precisely the sense the other person has in my world. That sense does not make the other inaccessible, any more than the appearance of a thing is a barrier, a second thing, standing between me and the thing-in-itself. Rather, that sense is my access, which reveals the other to me even if my access is limited.’¹⁰⁵

Being a subject in the world I understand intersubjectivity as a basic understanding of a person not myself as having that same sense of other directed towards me as other. Furthermore, the experiential intersubjectivity that fundamentally lies at the very heart of experience is related to spatiality and temporality. Again David Carr at his most eloquent:

‘If the *here* is my permanent and absolute location as a perceiver, the *there* is the location of the other [...]. Just as it must be seen as embodied in the context of individual perception, here it becomes plural, and the first-person singular is replaced by the we-subject. But more than that: This we-subject exists in relation to a common world, or rather, common surroundings. It is not merely the subject that becomes plural: Remarkably, the *here* and the *there* become plural as well. No less absolute for being intersubjective, the *here* is now the place of the community, the territory of our communal life; it is where *we* live. The *there* now represents not the individual but the communal other. [...] Thus in the intersubjective as in the subjective sphere, space has a dual role: It provides the access to the other even as it reveals the otherness of the other. By setting up the limits between me (or us) and the other, it constitutes the sense the other has for me or us.’¹⁰⁶

Experience is always positioned in the *here* and *now* as fundamentally communal experience. We meet again with G.W.¹⁰⁷ one of the most avid and proficient d&a filmmakers who shows such a basic understanding of the intersubjectivity of all experience as he loves to include crowds in his fairground film. First of all, he

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 177.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ AV032407, no info on material, black and white, mute, 1951-1954

includes intertitles clearly labeling what is to follow. The first title even tells us that he conceives of his production as 'Journal filmé'. He also ends his films with a title 'Fin'. G.W. produces in a gesture directed towards a future spectator that might be positioned beyond his own lifespan. Not only does he visit the fairground with his family and occasionally focuses on mother and son, he is also clearly documenting the different attractions that the fair offers. What is most astonishing is how much filmic duration he invests in the depiction of crowds in motion. Not only does he film the crowds congregating in front of the show booths and attractions, he also films a space within the fairground that is neither occupied by booths nor rides and films the crowds passing in and out of frame in a clear long shot. He leaves as much space as possible to the crowds moving in and out and he consecrates a surprising duration to their depiction. The directionality of his intention towards a future spectator and his clear willingness to include the crowds at the fair come to translate an expressive gesture of a space that is recognized as communal space. He relegates the same importance to the anonymous strangers that populate his screen as to his own family within the fairground sequence. He thus expresses an understanding of the other as populating the here and now as subject. He relegates a masterful position at the centre of *his* lifeworld and expresses *the* lifeworld as always social and communal. He recognizes space as communal in the frame and has an intersubjective understanding of temporality as he clearly expresses for future spectators.

We can expand upon this notion of the 'now' as intersubjective as the temporal nature of experience is a complex field that includes intentionality as directed forwards and backwards simultaneously and coherently. 'In a sense, historicity is a combination of sociality and temporality, both essential features of our experience.', says Carr, and furthermore,

'We live in a social world and the social world has a past, and a future, that exceed our lifespan and our direct experience. This is something we are aware of, something which informs our existence and enriches our lives whether or not we become historians and turn our cognitive attention to the past.'¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Carr, *Experience and History*, 171.

This sense of past relates to the present simultaneously as the manner in which temporality is experienced and lived by the subject also relates to principles of what Husserl calls protention and retention. Giving the example of a melody Husserl examines how a subject can only hear a melody in retaining a sense of the just-now, a memory of the previous note. The present constitutes a complex interweaving of retention and protention and cannot be experienced otherwise. This anticipatory grasp in the now and the retentive motion backwards make up the temporal field of the subject. At the same time, the experience of spatiality is ordered in that the subject experiences the spatial field not only as ‘an empty array of abstract points but is occupied by events just as the spatial field is inhabited by things. It is through things and events that I experience space and time.’¹⁰⁹ By now it should be clear that experience is always experience in space and time and always intersubjective in its fundamentally social nature. Not only is the experience of the temporal field always structured by retention and protention, the temporal structuring includes a sociality that extends beyond the personal lifespan of the subject.

We are now entering the complexities of the field of memory. Simplified, for Husserl, the immediate presence is constituted of retention and protention, but a broader field of temporality is implicated within this thought. The manner in which a subject lives experience is always related not to abstract points or position in time, but relates to events that have significance for the subject. The subject thus lives and re-lives events as temporal stretches that overlap, run parallel, one finishing before the other, one starting before another—never in a linear and well-ordered fashion but always related, intermeshed and running against each other. Events further exceed retention in that they stretch back into an indefinite background and at the same time make up the horizon of my future. Events are not only lived through, they are remembered and thus constitute a broader form of retention that Husserl terms recollection. There is a future equivalent to this notion of recollection, namely the concept of ‘secondary expectation’ in which the subject anticipates or dreads events that might potentially come about in the future and he/she takes action in the present in order to avoid them or make them come about. The expressive activity and the subjective desire that underlie the intentional project of making d&a films fall within such temporal

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 179.

experiences as recollection and secondary expectation. Very simply put: meaning is not only generated in the now but intersperses the temporal field of experience itself. This of course also relates to situated expressive signification *and* the concomitant desire to fix this situatedness in the here and now on film. Both constitute motivations underlying the practice.

9. Temporal Synthesis in d&a motivation: The intersubjectivity of temporal experience

Naturally, these temporal dimensions underlie *all* amateur film productions. They most illustratively rise to the fore in d&a films since the motivation here is extremely unselfish, in that subjects deliberately decenter themselves in the temporal field in their awareness of producing for a later audience and in their awareness of the significance of constructing a visual archive (even if in the private). We might even say that here a process of isomorphic unselfing takes place. The intentionality directed towards a future does not so much project the subject him-herself into his/her future (though it certainly plays part in it), as here the subject intends a future that exceeds his/her individual lifespan. Here, the subject voluntarily ceases his/her place in their temporal lifeworld in order to produce a meaningful visualization directed towards a future generation that might recognize the films as significant and illustrative. As such, intersubjectivity as sociality transcends individual lifespans. Amateurs create a visualization that intends a meaningful and transposes the effectuation of said meaning to a future that might not include them. While the meaning as perceived by the amateur might never come-into-being as such, since they can never be sure whether it will a) be seen in the future and b) still be perceived as significant, the intention structuring said visuals are socially inflected at their very core and come to constitute a process of de-centering or unselfing that illustrates the deeply intersubjective basis of all experience. Interestingly, '[w]hat this means is that my experience of time is a function of the events that I live through, the events, that is, that are meaningful or significant for me'.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, it relates the experiences of time as a living of events that are deemed meaningful for the community that emplaces the filmmaking subject (in even if said community exists as abstraction in

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

the future). A second temporal synthesis underlies the framing of crowds. Not only does the d&a film pretend to the future of the filmmakers' temporality, the inclusion of a multitude of subjects in the frame also intermeshes a temporal interweaving of an Other. Such visualization thus relates to the sharing of space as communal 'now'. Spatiality is thus included in the intersubjective awareness that frames experience. The frame is made up of subjects moving in the world and the filmmaker displays an awareness of that other subject's capability of temporal synthesis. These moments captured on film thus provide a crossing point, a situated here and now, from whence a diversity of lived temporal strands comes together. This awareness is deeply intersubjective as the Other is recognized as subject who navigates his or her own temporal and spatial present.

What the films come to show through their underlying motivation translated as visualized intention by film language is, for one, the inherent social nature of temporality itself and further the temporal nature of sociality. What d&a films of type A and B variety not only show, but also trigger is a sense of historicity that is conceived of as 'a combination of sociality and temporality, both essential features of our experience.'¹¹¹ This experience is brought to expression in the intentional relation of the d&a inflected filmmaking project. As Sobchack notes with regards to a postmodern historical consciousness in the everyday: '[P]eople seem to carry themselves with a certain reflexive phenomenological comportment toward their "immediate" immersion in the present, self-consciously grasping their own objective posture with an eye to its imminent future possibilities for representation'.¹¹² It further defines this potentiality as deeply social and positioned in the communal.

The production of films that focus on the capturing of communal events such as parades, fairs, markets and processions as well as the intentional recordings of museum exhibitions and memorial sites are produced in a spirit of such an understanding and thus specifically convey this notion of situated acting in the world. This social understanding that a common attitude of being-in-history brings with it is not only related to temporality, it pertains to notions of spatiality as well. In fact, the

¹¹¹ Ibid., 171.

¹¹² Sobchack, Vivian Carol, *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*, AFI Film Readers (New York: Routledge, 1996), 4.

two notions cannot be treated as separate. Even more than the family chronicle and moments of attractional display, the d&a films reveal a conscious effort that is produced in a communal spirit. The filmmakers see themselves very clearly as members of a community and this brings with it a different conception of lived temporality. It is in this lived consciousness of the communal that temporality and spatiality reveal their experiential status as inherently social, as experience of a we-society. As such, in the words of Carr:

‘As members of a community, individuals participate in a temporality that reaches beyond their own experience, extending into the past before their births and into the future after their deaths. And so it is that the temporal field of subjective lived time opens out onto a larger field of social and cultural lived time. What we do and suffer together, the events we live through and the actions we perform, stand out from and get their sense from the larger cultural horizons of past and future. The time we experience is not universal time, it is *our* time-local time. That is, it is linked to our place.’¹¹³

The visual gestalting effectuated within the d&a films is inflected as an emphasis on communally lived existence. As a consequence, socio-culturally inflected macro-perception rises to the fore in the visual gestalting of the d&a film.

In d&a production, the intentional directedness towards a future generation illustrates how subjects live temporality as directed towards larger social and cultural embedment. Their significance is installed within a temporal field that extends beyond a purely private notion of subjective temporality. We can speak of a temporal unselfing here, because the filmmaker here installs significance in a temporal field that extends his/her own lifespan. He/she consciously intends their film production for a viewing in the future and by a next generation. The desire to archive that underlies these films in its simplest inflection represents a temporal decentering towards future signification. Furthermore, the visual language underlying these films embodies an expression that anchors it in the ‘now’ of the filmmaking subject. Here place very clearly relates to notions of home that are situated in a larger context of community, as opposed to a purely private notion of the home as self-enclosed within the familial home.

¹¹³ Carr, *Experience and History*, 180.

As seen in chapter two, the events and spaces captured by the d&a filmmaker are embedded within the public space and thus come to embody a personal appropriation of the communal. The intentional project that is filmmaking is thus produced in a temporal and spatial awareness in which ‘the intentionality of consciousness takes in the past and future of those objects, of the world, and of itself. The subject is not a substance persisting through time, or a timeless ego hovering outside of time, but a self-constituting synthesis of temporal relations.’¹¹⁴ Not only is the intentionality that underlies the project directed towards the future, the present is also treated in an awareness of becoming a future past when viewed in a future present. The spatiality of events deemed significant from a communal point of view such as parades and processions further support this awareness of present as future past. The museums and memorial induce a further layer of the past visually reproduced in the filmmaking present for a future viewing. Here, the past relates not only to an awareness of present as future past, but is also treated from a present moment of filmmaking. Especially type B d&a films—the visualization of World War Two memorials—come to display an ethical obligations to a communally experienced past. D&a film production thus represents lived historical situatedness (as experience) rather than narrativized history. ‘On this view our relation to the past is not mediated by a literary form but is an extension of our direct experience. It also has ethical dimensions, and [Paul] Ricoeur explores the notions of obligation and responsibility to the past, especially to the suffering victims of past injustice.’¹¹⁵ We need to tread carefully here, but we can assume that filmmakers capturing wartime memorials in the 1950s at least, had some wartime experience and the impulse of remembrance underlies not only the visit but also the archiving incentive. The activity of expression thus conveys a sense of obligation towards the past and a responsibility to remember in the present (production of the films) and future (in a generational linkage of a later viewing). Lived historical situatedness thus always also includes a sense of ethical responsibility as far as the filmmaking impulse is concerned. This sense of obligation already underlies the very concept of visual archiving. The awareness of historical situatedness is thus always closely related to memorial practices in the private, while

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 160.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 170–71.

concomitantly being implicated in larger temporal and spatial backgrounds of socio-culturally inflected experience.

The d&a films, in a more pronounced manner than the family film, thus visualize a multi-layered and ever shifting temporal and spatial synthesis. Present as future past, present past, future present—the d&a film, more so than any other category, represents a conscious synthesizing of temporal layers that directly visualize how a subject in a lifeworld always also lives temporality that exceeds the personal present and space. What proves noteworthy with this sense of historical situatedness is its relation to the lived present and not its exclusive focus towards the past. Here the lived present is relegated to a sense of future past and this represents the crux of the visual trajectory the films take: namely that it comes to visualize a synthesis of how the temporal field is lived and *expressed* in the filmmaking project. Signification as expressed by the filmmaking subject is thus never purely situated in the private but emerges in the awareness of the collective.

Sociality here relates its most basic phenomenological understanding of intersubjectivity as ontological basis of subjective experience. We are a long way from others as hell as conceived by Sartre. Here the communal is not only celebrated, it constitutes the lifeworld that is navigated by the filmmaking subject. The filmic language that constitutes the d&a film represents an opening of the visual field that encompasses this sense of we-spatiality. If the language of the family chronicle is emotive in its movement towards or closer to the subject, here, the language is one of inclusion, of display of as wide a frame of the shared lifeworld as possible. Not only does this opening relate to the sharing of a communal space, it also comes to illustrate a motivation to *give* as much space as possible to the Other. The Other, i.e. not myself, constitutes alterity within communality, however not as alienating presence but as constituent of my own particular lived experience. Intentionality here is always communal in a personal actualization of a we-intentionality in a Husserlian sense as Carr describes it. As such,

“we-“intentionality, where the first-person point of view, inseparable from phenomenology, is shown not to be limited to the first-person singular, but can be exemplified in the first-person plural as well. The background of the past becomes that of the

social or intersubjective past, which now belongs to the individual subject by virtue of membership in a community.’¹¹⁶

Here filmmaking is clearly filmmaking *for* someone other than the self or the family. The production of d&a films thus represents temporal synthesis that is brought together in the filmic space and further relates to an intentionality that is always constituted as we-intentionality. As Merleau-Ponty tells us: ‘As soon as we see other seers...henceforth, through other eyes we are for ourselves fully visible...For the first time, the seeing that I am is for me really visible; for the first time I appear to myself completely turned inside out under my own eyes.’¹¹⁷

The focus on crowds reinforces this understanding of we-intentionality as intersubjective experience as it not only relates a modernist fascination and threatening presence of an emerging mass culture, but also presents the less intimidating understanding of spatiality as intersubjective space. The visual foci on markets, fairs, processions and parades not only communicatively capture a public space; it furthermore always also records the multitude of others that populate said space. Such an understanding stands in direct contrast to a perceived sense of modernist alienation. The visual trajectory intentionality takes in d&a films thus pertains directly to an experiential reality in which an expanded view of consciousness (the direction intentionality takes in the correlational rule between world and subject) ‘now includes history, so to speak, as part of its makeup. That is, the social past figures as background of individual and collective experience.’¹¹⁸ We are a far cry from amateurs using the camera unskillfully and unwittingly if we take into consideration the historical situatedness that always forms an essential background of experience and that is brought to expression here. If intentionality, in a phenomenological understanding, also represents the very means of access to a world that is lighted up, d&a films more so than the family film illustrates how this access is always already social in its very foundation. The visual gestalting of film production here is modulated socially, communally, and historically and thus in the d&a films,

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 161.

¹¹⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Claude Lefort, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 143.

¹¹⁸ Carr, *Experience and History*, 161.

the figure-ground relation that makes up the expressive perception of the films makes the macro-perceptual inflections swell up from its micro-perceptual basis.

The temporal synthesis that underlies the intentionality in the d&a motivation is thus positioned in that grey area that lies between the conceptions of history, experience and memory in that

‘If we look at our experience of time in this way we begin to see how we might move from subjective to intersubjective time, from individually lived time to socially or culturally lived time. As an individual, I am engaged in a present that is determined by its place among events, past and future, making up my life. These are its horizons of retention and protention, horizons of memory and expectation.’¹¹⁹

These are the horizons that co-emerge in the d&a films produced by a subject that brings experience to expression through and with the means of a camera.

10. Films of an attractional display: the technologized lifeworld

The views presented under what has been termed visuals of attractional display present a variety of filmic engagements that pertain to differently inflected correlations between subject and world. Nevertheless, the motivations underlying the capturing of the extra-ordinary reveals an engagement with the world in what Merleau-Ponty comes to call *flesh*. While the very basis of all perceptive and expressive relational engagement with the world occurs within this notion of flesh as co-constitutive element of materiality, the ad style becomes the most illustrative because its inherent fascination lies within the correlation as spectacle itself. Elaborated above, we have seen that the filmmaking project is an intentional relation, an expression of a perceived that catches the attention of the subject. At the same time, expression is a bringing of experience to signifying articulation. Filmmaking thus functions correlationally as expressive structure between world and subject. We have furthermore seen that the camera as means functions as sensual expansion. This

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 179.

expansion can only emerge as embodied sense since it transpires in the flesh. These attestations stand as a general in the intentionality of filmmaking.

How do the attractional views of the ad visuals emphasize this correlational rule that underlies all filmmaking? What ad visuals bring to the fore is the passionate devotion to the world as the subject is also always recognized and aware of being an object in the flesh. Here it is useful to consider Vivian Sobchack's conception of interobjectivity that is structured similarly to intersubjectivity and its relation to alterity. Sobchack describes the relationality of common materiality as follows:

‘Whether put in terms that suggest existential ease or horror, awesome or awful encounters with inanimate “things,” inherence in the world or alienation from it, this question interrogates the *objectivity* of subjectively embodied and sensate being and how it is both like and unlike the sensible being of the world’s objective materiality. Indeed, as it is articulated by Merleau-Ponty on the common existential ground of both body and world that is the general medium or “element” of materiality he comes to call *flesh*, the question suggests that, in their material being, the subjective lived body and the objective world do not oppose each other but, on the contrary, are passionately intertwined.’¹²⁰

The world in phenomenological terms is always a lifeworld; it is constituted of a multitude of possible relations that the subject navigates with the body as centre of motility. The preceding chapter has already implicated the fairground as space in which modernist forces extend upon the body. These forces, however, are not presented as alien to world or subject. The lifeworld experienced at the fairground is already always a technologized lifeworld and the subject experiences and lives that world in a relational manner that in-corporates technologization in the flesh. While the technologization of modernist forces can be perceived as threatening, it must not exclusively be so. It is the argumentation of this work that filmmakers directly and explicitly engage with the technologized lifeworld of the fairground in the flesh and through the body.

Ihde, with help from Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, describes the framing of my attention as follows:

¹²⁰ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 286.

‘The reality of everyday life is organized around the “here” of my body and the “now” of my present focus. This “here and now” is the focus of my attention to the reality of everyday life. What is “here and now” presented to me in everyday life is the *realissimum* of my consciousness. The reality of everyday life is not, however, exhausted by these immediate presences, but embraces phenomena that are not present “here and now.” This means that I experience everyday life in terms of differing degrees of closeness and remoteness, both spatially and temporally. Closest to me is the zone of everyday life that is directly accessible to my bodily manipulation ... I know, of course, that the reality of everyday life contains zones that are not accessible to me in this manner. But either I have no pragmatic interest in these zones or my interest in the far zones is less intense and certainly a less urgent field-fringe.’¹²¹

These differing zones of closeness and remoteness of course represent the swelling and ebbing of visual gestalting in which attention and distraction, absence and presence exist in a reversible and ever-fluctuating relation. The visual gestalting is revealed comes-into-being in the visual trajectory. The visual trajectory here represents the intentionality displayed and directionality effectuated by the camera. The films present a shifting in camera perspective and express the multifarious ways bodily perception roams and incorporates the lifeworld. This becomes especially illustrative when amateurs visit the fairground, camera in hand.

While the technologization of the lifeworld certainly induced alienating and threatening effects in experience, contingency functions in a dual affectation: as meaninglessness and excess. Contingency thus functions also as a surplus to the rationalizing forces that structure experience. It thus alternately emerges as threat or lure. At the fairground the inherent threat of machinery in motion could be experienced and expressed in a playful and liberating manner that translates risk as thrill. The world at the fairground is a mechanized world. The alienating nothingness that so threatens Roquentin’s experience of a chestnut tree in Sartre’s *Nausea* can here become an even stranger experience in that its ontological status, the very stuff of its materiality, is inorganic. However, the fairground as technological playground relegates the threatening alienation of mechanization to the exhilarating experience of

¹²¹ Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann quoted in Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology*, 145.

the thrill ride. The fascination that underlies this playful engagement is expressed in the visual trajectory of ad images.

I would like to focus on the three main views that have been identified as momentary outbursts of attractional display: first, the capturing of hydraulics in motion; second, the phantom ride visuals taken while seated on the rides; and third, the voluntary creation of abstract imagery created as lights in motion. All three thematic levels are directly related to the technologization of the fairground and are expressed by the filmmaking subject.

10.1. Attention and distraction at the fairground

As we have seen in the chapter three, the focus on hydraulic parts in motion proves a popular motive. Nevertheless, two different manners of filmic engagement are presented here that pertain to either family chronicle style or d&a filmic style. Within the family chronicle style, the trajectory the camera takes relates more to a shifting of attention from an intended focus of the child to an attractional display. As we have seen perceptual trajectories always fluctuate between micro-perceptual and macro-perceptual inflections that present a visualized oscillation in the image. The shifting of micro-and macro-perceptual foci and the trajectories they take can thus be ‘read’ from the visuals and this is the case in the family chronicle. Attention swerves from intended focus to technology in motion. The notion of being distracted, while colloquially referred to as being perfectly natural, is furthermore historically inflected. Jonathan Crary in his brilliantly insightful work *Suspensions of Perception*¹²² sees the long nineteenth century (extending well into the 20th century) as responsible for a restructuration of human subjectivity that proved a direct effect of a reorganization of perceptual foci in terms of attention and distraction. Crary’s main focus lies on capitalist forces and the accompanying cultural discourses that induced a restructuring of subjective experience in modernism. He sees ‘[c]apital, as accelerated exchange and circulation, necessarily produc[ing] this kind of human perceptual adaptability and [becoming] a regime of reciprocal attentiveness and distraction.’¹²³ As such, the

¹²² Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*.

¹²³ Ibid., 30.

‘subjective adaptation to new perceptual speeds and sensory overload’¹²⁴ demanded a constant and fluid switching of attention from one stimulus to another. Attention and distraction thus prove direct *effects* of a capitalist restructuring of subjective experience and as we have seen, the subject always accommodates changes in perception—phenomenologically speaking—and these perceptual variants are quickly incorporated. These structures of attention and distraction are here not *imposed* upon a supposed ‘natural’ perception that is characterized by ideals of immersion and contemplation. Attention comes to *constitute* perception as material access to the world itself. Perception is thus re-constituted historically as well as experientially. In the words of Walter Benjamin: ‘During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity’s entire mode of existence’¹²⁵ and this resonates, naturally, with a very basic Pontean understanding of perception as field of experience itself. Perceptive changes as effects of a radical speeding up of temporal and spatial variants and a sensory overload need not necessarily be threatening however, since from a phenomenological point of view we can assume that subjects ‘learned’ to incorporate these new effects that re-formed perception. Perception as a mode of access (intentionality) is certainly subject to constant change in the correlation world-subject. Since the world of this correlation presents experiential variations, perception as inherently integrated and part of this correlation necessarily adapts as well. ‘Physiology has difficulty accounting for this phenomenon. A more gestalt-oriented phenomenology recognizes that I *am* a certain constellation of relations to a world and that this constellation is learned and relearned dynamically.’¹²⁶ As a matter of fact, these relations are the only means of access we have to the world and it follows that a pre-world distanced vision that holds truth in contemplation is simply not feasible.

Ad films in their direct visualization of the technologization of the fairground make these perceptual changes their thematic Leitmotif. The engagement with the fairground is, however, not alienating and threatening but playful. The visualizations here display a strong fascination for these perceptual changes and sensory overload.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations Essays and Reflections*, 2007th ed. (New York: Schocken Books, n.d.), 222.

¹²⁶ Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 49.

Attention is taken as the focus visual trajectory takes in the intentional relation that is the filmmaking project. While we have seen that this relation is co-constituted as camera mediation and subjective desire, said desire is not necessarily always conducted deliberately or voluntarily. In fact, Jonathan Crary sees attention as a direct result of certain modernist changes and apparatuses (including representational technologies) and it thus directly governs perception through attention. Attention and distraction equally constitute perception in a modernist lifeworld. Crary notes: ‘modern distraction was *not* a disruption of stable or “natural” kinds of sustained, value-laden perception that had existed for centuries but was an *effect*, and in many cases a constituent element, of the many attempts to produce attentiveness in human subjects.’¹²⁷ Furthermore, ‘[a]ttention thus became an imprecise way of designating the relative capacity of a subject to selectively isolate certain contents of a sensory field at the expense of others in the interests of maintaining an orderly and productive world’¹²⁸. At the fairground the rationalization of perception as attention and distraction could be incorporated in a safe and playful manner, because perceptual restructuration was here resold as commodified entertainment.

The fairground thus functions as a space in which the subject could be controlled ‘through the knowledge and control of external procedures of stimulation as well as a wide-ranging technology of “attraction.”’¹²⁹ It presented thrills, attractions and spectacle in a self-enclosed technologized universe in which the modernist reorganization of subjective experience could be lived in a playful manner since the technology here served no effective or productive purpose. Machines at the fairground do not manufacture a product. Thrill rides are a product. As seen in chapter three they function by perceptual restructuration that is re-packaged as entertainment and thrill. The subject was groomed and reeducated perceptually as proposed by an economic system of principles that demanded ‘disciplinary attentiveness’¹³⁰ from the subject. Lauren Rabinovitz elaborates: ‘[S]uch entertainments of a new industrial age ask us to reconsider representation as less about “the world out there” than about the physiological grafting of vision to attention, fascination, and even distraction as

¹²⁷ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, 49.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

embodied cognitive processes.’¹³¹ As we will see in the following, the camera trajectory materializes the immateriality of perceptual restructuration as attention and distraction.

10.2. Distraction

As we have seen in chapter three, the fairground provides a mechanical playground in which accelerated notions of speed, technological motion, and the visual spectacle of electrified lighting could be experienced on the very concrete level of the body. Differently put, filmmakers engage this playground in a versatile manner and in the following I propose to have a look at the different manners in which they engage the fascination of technologized movement and lights.

First, we have seen that the family chronicler focuses on children at the fairground and the fun they are having, whether this be related to certain activities such as fishing ducks, eating cotton candy or partaking in a ride such as carousels. We have also noticed that the visual language that often underlies these films is first of all, not the most proficient, and second, often influenced by a certain notion of distraction. The intended focus lies on the child on the carousel or ride, all of a sudden, however, the visual trajectory shifts to the hydraulic parts of the ride itself in motion. G.W.¹³² ‘s momentary distraction when filming wife and son moving towards him at the fairground comes to mind again as he almost involuntarily pans up to the ride in motion that can be seen in the background.

Here we witness an illustration of visibility as structured by the attention-distraction equation as *effect* of modernist reconstitutions. The fairground, like the amusement park, represents ‘[e]rector Set worlds of mechanical thrill rides. Their dynamic landscapes featured a continual din of people and machinery in motion and electrically powered visual spectacle.’¹³³ It thus represents visual spectacle as architecture of conditions that govern and guide perceptual trajectories and structure

¹³¹ Lauren Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland: Amusement Parks, Movies, and American Modernism*, Film and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 99.

¹³² AV032407, no info on material, black and white, mute, 1951-1954

¹³³ Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 32.

them according to principles of attention and distraction. The universe of the fairground presents such constructive space in that it provides a space of spectacle that 'is not an optics of power but an architecture.'¹³⁴ Crary considers the modernist reorganization of perceptual foci as spectacle in terms of a 'construction of conditions that individuate, immobilize, and separate subjects, even within a world in which mobility and circulation are ubiquitous.'¹³⁵ This certainly pertains to the fairground as a spatial organization through which the perceptual focus is constantly directed towards different attractional stimuli. When parents film their children but are then distracted by the attractional display of 'machinery in motion and electrically powered visual spectacle'¹³⁶ we witness the drawing-in or sucking-in that lies at the basis of attraction as a guiding of attention. Attention as visual intentionality is thus directed by attractional stimuli that themselves emerge through technologized movement and electrified incitements at the fairground. These attractional incitements are bundled under a set of conditions termed an architecture of spectacle.

Perception is thus re-organized in terms of principles of guided attention and concomitant distraction. 'The amusement park [and the fairground] addressed new perceptual orientations and anxieties about the modern technological world at large by ameliorating them at a very concrete level in the body of the subject.'¹³⁷ The drawing-in affected by attraction functions as the primary tool of this architecture of spectacle. The sensual expansion that is visualized by the camera is literally drawn away from the intended focus of the child and, figuratively speaking, the shifting of attention seems to translate a certain helplessness to resist the stimulus that is technology in motion.

The drawing away from the intended visual focus of children is thus more complex than a mere momentary diversion as it comes to epitomize the very architecture of the fairground that lives by its modernist restructuring of perception as attention and distraction. Furthermore, it comes to illustrate the inherent attraction of technology in motion that draws, lures and pulls the visual trajectory of the subject at the fairground.

¹³⁴ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, 74–75.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 74.

¹³⁶ Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 32.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 34–35.

The shifting of perspective within the family chronicle style visualizes a specific conditioning of perception and attention no longer lies exclusively within the volition of the subject but is also partially guided by the attractive stimuli at the fairground. At the fairground, the visual trajectory attention takes cannot revoke the attractional lures that are presented. The pans and close ups on the hydraulic parts in motion visualize this drawing-in by attractional views. Again, the zoom-in on technologized movement represents an e-motive move that translates here as an illustrative draw or pull exerted by the attractional display. The e-motion that underlies the visuals represents an expressive move of the perceptual shift that happens at the basis of the body with the camera as sensual expansion. A pan or tilt furthermore visualizes the shifting of attention as movement.

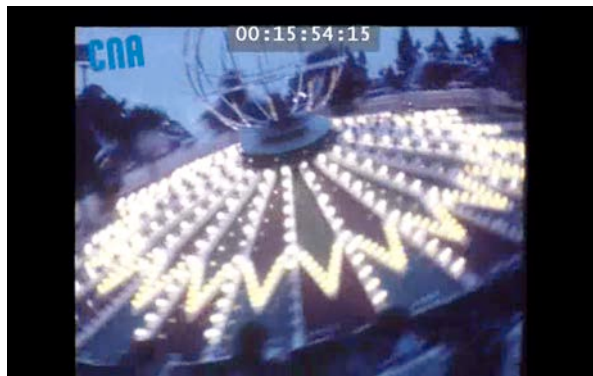
In the case of d&a filmmakers the visuals that focus on technology in motion present slightly different connotations in terms of their filmic modes. Here, filmmakers are not so much guided in their attentive visual trajectory as that they deliberately and concisely contextualize said attraction in image sequencing. The visuals of technology in motion here become an inherent part of the documentation of the ride as visual focus. J.G.¹³⁸ visualizes such a deliberate inclusion of technology in motion. He films the ride Hully Gully, a sort of rotating circle that tilts upwards and downwards at the same time. He frames the ride centre position in a medium long shot from the right side. Dusk is falling and the lights on the ride have been switched on, but it is still light enough to clearly discern the ride.

Figure 8



¹³⁸ AV032920 / IA_AMA_001674, super 8, color, mute, ca. 1975

The next shot reveals that he has not only moved closer and changed his position to almost directly in front of the ride, he has also filmically moved closer with an off-camera zoom.



As the ride tilts upwards and downwards we are alternately presented with either the colorful and lighted top part or the underside of the disk revealing its structural features and clearly. This filmmaker displays both sides are equally attractional since he very clearly includes it deliberately as the main fascination lies in the technologize movement, rather than either one side of the ride.

In terms of motivation, what the visual trajectory of the films reveals is a more concise appropriation of the fairground and its attractional display of technology in motion. Visual control here lies with the filmmaking subject. Attraction is tamed in its embedment of the visually constructed sequencing of filming a ride in medium or long shot, a closer shot of the wagons in motion and a medium close-up of the hydraulics in motion for example. Filmmakers here organize their material in a comprehensive sequential manner and the result is that a potential spectator is never presented with a visual non sequitur. The filmmaker is consciously embedding the

visual spectacle of technological motion within the careful filmic construction. Here attractional displays are not presented as overwhelming but become part of the almost educational recording of the visual documentation of the fairground in all its aspects. The attractional display is fixed in an ordering of visual facts in the d&a style. The sensual onslaught of the spectacle experience at the fair as accelerated speed, velocity and motion is harnessed by the consciously ordered imagery. The expressive manner thus includes a distancing that relegates spectacle to perceptual control.

The main thematic that underlies the visuals of hydraulic parts in motion is exactly the modernist restructuration of subjective experience through a restructuration of perception as attentiveness and distraction and as guided by an exterior stimulus. The difference in motivation between family chronicle style and d&a style pertains to notions of distraction and control. These notions are translated in the visuals by either the lack or fabrication of context. Attraction functions as a visual outburst. It is presented as self-contained and non-sustainable over a long period of time. While some theorists, most notably Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin, have characterized attraction and the principle of spectacle seeing as modernist shock experience, at the fairground, I would characterize these conditions of spectacle as sensual onslaught. As such, within the family chronicle these conditions of spectacle are fulfilled since filmmakers do not consciously provide a visual context. These close-ups and zoom-ins are expressed by a sensual and bodily e-motion that is involuntary as it is being visually pulled by the attraction. The d&a filmmaker is not pulled by the attraction so much as they consciously produce a visual embedment in which the attraction is harnessed and controlled by visual bookends of what they are part of, that is, the medium or long shots of the rides they are part of.

10.3. The Phantom Ride

A second display of attractional views relates to filming *while* being seated on a thrill ride in motion. The visualizations here are clearly produced for their supposed effect in a later viewing. Why would people engage in the rather cumbersome activity of holding on to a camera while being purported through space? The images emulate the views of early cinemas so-called phantom rides ‘which were shot from the front of

trains or prows of boats and which gave seated, stationary spectators a palpable sensation of motion'¹³⁹ only here, the films are produced while being seated on a thrill ride and present a notion of circularity as the movement here is not linear and has no destination. A second variation of this participatory notion of direct engagement is presented in the views taken from the Ferris wheel, preferably while it halts at the very top and thus presents a panoramic view of the entire fairground. These two views present different expressive variants however. As is the case with the close-ups of hydraulics, two distinct modes of engagement can be identified with regards to these visual motifs.

The first engagement signifies a bringing to expression of a distinctly kinesthetic experience that acts directly onto the body. The thrill ride thus offers the emulation of the external forces that are extended upon the body, albeit in a safe and risk-free manner. This is indeed the fairground as 'mechanical toy', as playground in which the external forces that constituted a post-industrialized lifeworld could be lived and engaged in experientially. Partaking in the thrill ride, 'the person surrendered to the machine, which, in turn, liberated the body in some fashion from its normal limitations of placement and movement in daily life.'¹⁴⁰ The bodily sense of proprioceptive motility (the sixth sense of navigating space) is directly acted upon and liberates it from the ordinary bodily coordinates of a situated here and now. There is a willingness to bring this liberating and chaotic experience to expression in taking the camera on the rides.

Lauren Rabinovitz provides the following description of a thrill ride experience: 'Thrill rides momentarily disoriented the rider, provided a novel perspective, amplified unfamiliar spatial relations, heightened cognitive sensations, and exaggerated the rider's physical self-awareness. By seemingly defying the forces of gravity and/or offering unaccustomed speed, they affirmed the instant as euphoric.'¹⁴¹ The images produced here represent an attempt to bring this experience of free-floating sensations to the fore, and they do so, albeit in a rather unintentional

¹³⁹ Gunning, Tom. "Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema". Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 16.

¹⁴⁰ Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 34.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

manner—the images are often chaotic and stay within the visual parameters of the medium shot. It proves to difficult to concentrate on camera settings when the body is whirled upside down. There is no direct control effectuated upon the filmic language. As a matter of fact, the camera is kept running and captures the experience of the ride as lived by the subject. The record shows the experience of a euphoric moment of kinesthetic loss of control in a bodily manner. ‘These rides reversed the usual relations between the body and machinery in which the person controls and masters the machine: the person surrendered to the machine, which, in turn, liberated the body in some fashion from its normal limitations of placement and movement in daily life.’¹⁴²

The experience of the thrill ride visualizes the external forces that are exerted upon the body. We are confronted with an outer world gone topsy turvy. It is in fact the outer world that is perceived in motion while the bodily perspective is characterized as immobile. Nevertheless, in its relations to the world, the body also kinesthetically experiences movement in the relation between world and subject. This relationality presupposes reversibility. The experience of the thrill ride in itself already illustrates reversibility in the flesh since here the movement of the world is effectuated upon the body as kinesthetic movement. At the same time, the experience of a thrill ride comes to emulate principles of film viewing itself since the body sits in readiness but immobility. Here as in film viewing the immobile body reflexively and reversibly reaches out towards the world and feels this reversibility as kinesthetic movement in the flesh. As Pasi Väliaho notes, a zone of contact is established between subject and world. This space is constituted as a “space” of continuous transformation in which visual movement is transposed into proprioceptive sensation, for example.¹⁴³ On the thrill ride as in cinema, movement does not originate in the body as navigational centre, but in a euphoric and liberating reversal, the world is experienced in motion. The origin of motion is experienced in the reversibility that structures perception. The unchanging filmic language (point of view medium shot) expresses the experiential immobility of a body seated in a wagon while the world rushes by as world in motion. Here the body is relieved from its everyday motility and, strapped in on the thrill ride,

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ P. Väliaho, “Spellbound: Early Cinema’s Transformational Spaces”. *Space and Culture* 16, no. 2 (April 22, 2013): 164.

is thrown into a proprioceptive whirlwind in which the world is perceived as upside down. The recording of the camera thus expresses this perception that is liberated from a bodily centered motility. A.D.¹⁴⁴ is one of the rare filmmakers producing in an ad style throughout and for the entirety of her film. At one point she films while partaking in the human fly attraction. Here fairground visitors are placed alongside the outer walls of a rotating circle. Through gravitational forces, the body is literally pinned on the wall of the ride. While the body is objectively in motion (it is propelled through space in a circular manner) it is experientially immobilized and the world is rushing by as movement. First A.D. films the people besides and opposite her before the ride has started. They are lining the wall and she pans 180 degrees to include them all. People are chatting and laughing and generally seem quite excited. She frames two girls in a medium close-up and the next shot shows the hydraulic middle part in the centre of the disk. Red blinking lights are attached to the structure and we can see that the ride has started since the world is in slow motion. The camera point of view remains unchanged however. The next sequence shows us the ride in full swing. She does not move the camera; it remains pointed at the middle part that is now furiously blinking in red and white and behind it a few people can be seen on her opposite side. The most fascinating part of these visuals, however, is the world rushing by. Even though we know that it is the ride that is in motion, it is the world that is perceived and thus experienced as motion. Here the thrill rider does not only experience the reversibility in the flesh, it is visualized in the film itself.

It thus illustrates an extreme variation of the reversible relation between world and subject. The subject experiences a decentering in perception as the proprioceptive sense that is normally experienced as centered within the body is liberated and defies the experience of gravity as grounded. Certain filmmakers that film the crowds waiting outside the ride perhaps best exemplify this rather complicated notion of a world in motion. Here the crowds are seemingly standing upside down since the spectator and filmmaker always right the perceptual expression of camera mediation. The reversibility in perception, the famous outside of the inside and inside of the outside come-into-being co-constitutively and this is most illustratively shown in these films in which it is the world that becomes motion. Motion of the world (the

¹⁴⁴ AV035249 / IA_AMA_001051, super 8, color, mute, 1975

upside down or topsy turvy view from the ride) is experienced as motion in the body through proprioceptive reversibility.

This is where the reversibility in the flesh comes in contact and emerges as an affective relation of euphoric enjoyment or thrill. There is always a certain sense of danger to the emotion of thrill, and here this slightly uncanny but positive emotion comes from the de-centering of the subjective body as a centre of motility in the world. Here, we are reminded of early cinema's phantom rides that 'frequently presented a simulacrum of travel not only by presenting foreign views but also through "phantom rides" films, which were shot from the front of trains or prows of boats and which gave seated, *stationary spectators a palpable sensation of motion*.'¹⁴⁵ And this motion is reversibly experienced in the body as world-in-motion and further materialized in the image later in the viewing.

What is experienced in the partaking of a thrill ride is the universal reversibility in the flesh. As Jennifer Barker describes this reversibility via Merleau-Ponty:

'In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty articulated the notion of reversibility in distinctly tactile terms by using the image of a person's one hand touching the other. When I touch one hand with the other, he explained, each hand plays the role of both the touching and the touched, but my experience of touching and being touched is not quite simultaneous. *Either* I feel one hand touching the other as an object, *or* I feel subjectively one hand being touched by the other, but I can't feel both at once. The two hands are never identical, nor is my experience of them confused. Instead, they each vacillate between the role of touching and touched, just as the self and other alternate between the role of seer and seen. This structure of reversibility does not collapse the distinction between the two hands or between self and other, nor is it simultaneous. It involves a shifting of attention and intentionality from one aspect of the encounter to another.'¹⁴⁶

This is the correlation in reversibility that structures perception as sensual capacity. It thus also structures the relation between seer and seen and, relevant concerning the

¹⁴⁵ Gunning, Tom. "Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema" Charney and Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, 16 emphasis mine.

¹⁴⁶ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 19.

experience of the thrill ride, between navigating and navigated (proprioception). 'For Merleau-Ponty this double sensation provoked by one hand touching the other is the archetype for the subject/object relations in the world: irreducible one to the other, but embedded in a constantly mutual experience, constituted of the same "stuff."' ¹⁴⁷ Still, the flesh presents an element of selfsameness within alterity. Flesh as common materiality still includes what Merleau-Ponty calls 'écart'. Flesh designates being as reversibility *not* selfsameness. As Elisabeth Grosz notes:

"The flesh" is the term Merleau-Ponty uses to designate being, not as plenitude, self-identity, or substance, but as divergence (*écart*), noncoincidence, or difference. For him, the notion of flesh is no longer associated with a privileged (animate) category, but is being's most elementary ontological level. Flesh is being as reversibility, its capacity to fold in on itself, its dual orientation inward onto psychical states and outward to the world.' ¹⁴⁸

Flesh constitutes the element of reversibility, however, it is not suggested here that this reversible relation is based on selfsameness in terms of an element as animate. Flesh is nonanthropocentric. The body as the centre that directs and controls action is relegated to an immobility in which the world is perceived as motion. The body is implicated within this motion and experiences it proprioceptively as a reversible structure of the same stuff, i.e. flesh. Thus, this relation becomes an illustration of how a technologized lifeworld can be experienced as common materiality, since technologized movement is reversibly experienced as bodily movement. What then makes this reversible relation in the flesh so thrilling at the fairground? According to Mikel Dufrenne in *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*: "The affective exists in me only as the response to a certain structure in the object." ¹⁴⁹ The object here is not necessarily an object, but more an experiential variation of the lifeworld (i.e. movement and motion) but the principle still stands in that here the relegation of agency as bodily motion is de-centred and reversibly positions itself in the world. Such decentering and sensual outreach results in a thrilling emotion.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Grosz, *Time Travels*, 125.

¹⁴⁹ Mikel Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, 2. paperbound printing, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 442.

A second view that also relates to filming on a ride includes the shooting from the top position on a Ferris wheel. These visuals present themselves as ontologically differentiated from the above in that they are never produced with a lack of control and come to represent an expressed distancing to the sensual onslaught of the attractions presented at the fairground. Here expression functions as taming of the spectacle of the fairground since the adoption of a masterful gaze that visually contextualizes the fairground in its entirety and thus carries within it notions of appropriating governance through the gaze.

Here the filmic language expresses an omni-potent authoritative gaze in its construction of a panoramic view over the fairground. As such, the views presented here are similarly constructed to postcard views as ‘seemingly omnipresent perpetrators of an all-seeing masterful gaze.’¹⁵⁰ These films taken from the very top of the Ferris wheel often present different perspectives in that the filmmaker focuses on one perspective for a certain length of time, turns the camera off, changes perspective, and starts shooting from a different vantage point. The Ferris wheel represents a sort of imagined centre-point of the fairground. In Luxembourg, it is always positioned in the middle of the fair and children are told by their parents to meet by the Ferris wheel in case they get lost. Every single child in Luxembourg knows the drill. The shots taken from the very top thus come to express the fairground ‘as a panoramic spectacle that afforded a magisterial gaze over the [fair] as a phantasmagorical urban oasis.’¹⁵¹ The gaze roaming the spectacular space underneath does not include a participatory reveling in the flesh or a decentering of bodily action to the motion of the world, even if both views represent a static and immobile perspective. Such a perspective furthermore reveals the self-contained structure of the fairground. The gates and outer edges of the space are clearly demarcated in the visuals. The spatial demarcation furthermore embeds the fairground in the city. The fairground is thus visually revealed as a space of containment in regards to modernist spectacle. This space is clearly demarcated by limits that enclose the potentially disruptive capacities of spectacle from everyday experience. Expression here always also pertains to control and containment. The sensual onslaught of the fair and the external forces proprioceptively acting on the body are here expressed in a clear willingness to

¹⁵⁰ Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 100.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

reestablish control. The expression and creation of visuals from a higher vantage point are macro-perceptually inflected in that they use the means of the camera in an intention of appropriation. While some filmmakers zoom in on different parts of the fairground, this zooming in does not translate as a notion of drawing in by a participatory relation with the fair and its attractions, as the higher vantage point represents a colonizing relation that integrates spectacle into a magisterial gaze. The visuals here represent a holding at bay of spectacle and its sensorial onslaught, as the gaze is a rationalizing one. The fair is not only visually contained, it is visually disclosed as enclosure within the urban landscape of the city. Quite simply, the elevated position of the expressing perceiver is too distanced to be drawn in by the sensual draw of attractional displays. Again, notions of visual contextualization prevent direct bodily interaction with attraction.

10.4. Celebration of sensual onslaught

Finally further views that we have in chapter three dubbed ad-2 present a continuation of this reversible immersion in the flesh identified above. Within the ad-2 style the reveling in the sensual onslaught of the fair and the images created can only be termed amazing. Filmmakers here zoom in on lights in motion, they engage with colors and they use the camera in a bodily manner. Zooming in, panning, moving the camera upside-down, the filmmakers here use technological mediation as sensual extension of the body. The results are images that induce a sense of a dizzying array of lighted movement inducing in the spectator a sense not dissimilar to seasickness. The next chapter will engage with the spectatorial impact of these images in more detail, here I would like to elaborate on the production of said imagery that is highly unusual in amateur film. What do filmmakers aim to express in the production of these images that stand out from the rest of their film collections?

The introduction of these images within the collections shows how amateurs use the camera not only representationally, but also as presentation. E.H.¹⁵² a d&a filmmaker that also films his children at the fair is one of the most skilled filmmakers within the corpus. He clearly understands the filmic medium. He often uses intertitles to

¹⁵² AV035667 / IA_AMA001916, 8mm, color, mute, 1960; 1968

contextualize his imagery and at the fair, he films the children in a well-ordered and concise manner. He films his son and daughter on the carousel and, in typical d&a fashion patiently waits until they come into frame, stops filming once they have passed and starts again when they come back into frame. He resists the lure of zooming in and chooses to film in a static medium shot. Everything changes at night. Being a routinized filmmaker, E.H. knows that the imagery taken with a Super 8 camera will only capture the lights in movement at the fair. Still, he chooses to engage the lights with the camera. While he keeps the camera still and most of the time in a medium or long shot, what proves interesting here is the fact that he uses the means of superimposition to reinforce the attractional display of electrification. He starts with a nighttime shot of the lighted gates, and the next shot of the thrill ride (an octopus ride called Ski Lift) slightly overlaps the gates. He then proceeds to overlap the image of the ride with one of the lighted Ferris wheel in motion. The effect is a stunning one in which one image presents not only numerous attractions in movement, but furthermore merges with further shots of different rides.

Figure 9



The lighted motion in the image is reinforced by the different colors of the separate rides. Standing before an attractional view, he not only feels the urge to record said attraction, but he is beckoned to create. The motivation underlying the images is not

tied to what we could normally expect to be a d&a filmmaker's highest priority, namely transparency in camera mediation. Here, he displays a clear desire to include the capacities of camera mediation within the creation of images. The camera becomes an inherent part in the intentional project. This, as we have seen, is in itself nothing new since *technē* always involves subjective desire and camera mediation. What is unusual here, however, is how the camera's presence is highlighted and as such does not withdraw as it does in the d&a and family chronicle styles.

In early cinema, imagery induced a sense of the uncanny since it represented 'an activity of *poiesis* that was experienced as uncanny, [as] cinematic images "brought-forth" into visible "presencing" an unprecedented reversal (or *peripeteia*) of the "real" that, recognized by spectators as "being the same," nonetheless also "reveal[ed] itself to be different."¹⁵³ E.H., however, voluntarily creates imagery that pertains to this sense difference in selfsameness. Here the notion of *écart* comes to the fore and is celebrated as selfsameness within alterity and flesh as reversible fold. While the imagery of the lights in movement is a motif that every person that has been to a fairground at night has in some form or other seen, the imagery created with the camera here presents a view that is not a 'natural' human perception. The superimposition between the image of the lighted sign of a thrill ride to the lighted motion of a Ferris Wheel in motion at nighttime provide a seamless flowing from one lighted display to the other and merges the two. The sensual pull of the attraction of lighted movement thus triggers a clear desire to create. This creation entails the production of a manner of seeing that is only possible through technological mediation. The spectacle thus lies in the visual expression of a new manner of seeing. Camera, world and subject engage in a trial relation that brings-forth a revealing that makes clear demarcation impossible. I would like to expand on this notion of expression and perception in the flesh by drawing on further examples of filmmakers sensually engaging the world with the camera.

¹⁵³ Sobchack, Vivian. "'Cutting to the Quick': *Technē*, *Physis*, and *Poeisis* and the Attractions of Slow Motion" Wanda Strauven, ed., *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Film Culture in Transition (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 339.

One of the most illustrative examples of an engagement of the fair by technologized seeing is again provided by A.D.¹⁵⁴ Her film taken exclusively at the fair during nighttime shows numerous examples of emulating technological movement with the camera in hand. For example, she films the Calypso ride, a platform that is moving in a circular fashion and on which teacup wagons are attached that move in a reverse circular motion. Attached to the outer structure of the ride is a panoply of lighted displays that blink in different colors. In one shot, she moves from the lighted canopy attached to a bumper car booth and pans to her right where she catches the lighted middle part of a ride in circular motion. She zooms out slightly to catch the lighted arms onto which wagons are attached and in a swiveling movement slightly moves the camera in a combination of upside-down, left-to-right movement. Behind this ride she catches sight of the Calypso ride and starts to zoom in on it in an extreme move that leaves the frame filled with blinking and slightly blurry lights and zooms back out. A cut follows and the next frame is filled with red blinking lights attached to the middle part of a thrill ride that is not identifiable at first. She zooms back out and we realize that she has now moved closer to the Calypso ride in motion. While zooming out she swings the camera rapidly from right to left, resulting in a slewing motion until the camera, at times, is almost horizontally inverted.

Figure 10



¹⁵⁴ AV035249 / IA_AMA_001051, super 8, color, mute, 1975

The next shot again shows the extreme close up of a ride in motion, this time an octopus ride named Ski Lift. Again she tilts the camera 180 degrees until the ride is presented in an inverted manner. She rapidly zooms in again until we are presented with pure lighted motion that constitutes the entire frame. A.D. fills her entire film with abstract imagery. While she is at the fair with two girlfriends whom we see briefly as they descend the one-man-show, she clearly engages the fair in a completely sensual manner. Being a young woman during an evening out with her friends, the question stands as to why she would choose to spend all of her film on visuals that follow no clear representational purpose. 'Where are we to put the limit between body and the world, since the world is flesh?'¹⁵⁵ asks Merleau-Ponty and I think within this question lies the crux of the sensual engagement with attractational displays.

For Merleau-Ponty perception is experience and vice versa. At the same time he elaborates the notion of flesh as an element of materiality that constitutes the common stuff of world and subject. Flesh terms that stuff that proves the ontological basis of all becoming and at the same time is the element in which the reversible relation that co-constitutes world and subject are brought forth. It is basis and condition for becoming. An existential manifold that is pre-subjective and pre-objective presents an infinitude of signification since it is the very stuff that precedes signification. This is a crucial difference to flesh as being devoid of meaning. Flesh is always pregnant with a primordial meaning that is of yet unwon. The relation and awareness of the reversibility in the flesh can be threatening, uncanny as well as passionate and devotional. One clear assumption that can be drawn from ad-2 films is that they were deliberately created. Their recording function does not aim at transparency but is implicated within the creation of a new manner of seeing, first of all, and, secondly, comes to translate a union between world and subject that presents a joyful reveling in the commonality of the flesh. Flesh 'connotes the structure of reversibility whereby all things are at the same time active and passive, visual subjects and visible objects, the outside of the inside, the inside of the outside... The concept of *flesh* is precisely what allows a renewed notion of subjectivity, one which introduces *alterity* into the

¹⁵⁵ Merleau-Ponty and Lefort, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 138.

very definition of “selfsameness.”¹⁵⁶ A.D., E.H. and other ad filmmakers come to visually express this relation in which the technologized lighted movement at the fair relates an experience in the flesh that encompasses the alterity of the non-organic (divergence or *écart*) as nevertheless a constituent of the world, and thus a component of the very stuff that the subject experiences as its own. Body and world can never exist as separate entities, ‘both body and world are thus intertwined-their general existence figuring and differentiating itself into particular forms and modes of material being.’¹⁵⁷ The fascination of electrified spectacle in moving lights at the fairground introduces alterity in material being that, here, is not so much threatening as it triggers a desire to create the distinctive reversibility that underlies the expression of this perceived. Differently put: while lights in movement at the fair are generally differentiated in their particular form and mode, their presence in the flesh provoke a desire to bring that experience to expression. The reversibility in the flesh stems from the very awareness that a subject has of itself, namely the fact that it always also an embodied object. Most of the time such an awareness carries uncanny undertones since it often relates to extreme external forces that act upon the body, think, for example, an earthquake or tsunami that reveals the extreme vulnerability of our material being and shows the irrelevance of subjective will. This must, however, not necessarily be so. This chiasmic relation can also entail a devotion to the materiality that makes the co-constitutive element of our being. Devotion ‘actively-passionately-expansive, [...] expresses our desire to enfold other subjects and objects (and often the world itself), to know their materiality and objectivity intimately and, indeed, to embrace their alterity *as our own*.’¹⁵⁸

It is the very movement *by hand* (or rather its effect in the image) that reveals the reversibility that characterizes a world-subject experience in the flesh. As such, it visually expresses a relation that underlies all experience in the world but that especially becomes specific in ad-2 imagery, namely the notion of bodily posture that mimics. Devotion to the materiality of the world (flesh) is not only reversible—it is mimetic.

¹⁵⁶ Del Rio, Elena quoted in Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 286–87.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 287.

¹⁵⁸ Gary Brent Madison, “Flesh as Otherness,” in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty* (Northwestern Univ Pr, 1991), 31.

Again Sobchack proves most elaborate:

‘This kind of devotion engages what Walter Benjamin has called the “mimetic faculty”-significant, as Jennifer Bean puts it, “because it lays bare, in its at once originary and imitative force, the ways in which the organism’s relation to its environment ... to the individual’s relation to the other, is blurred and confused ... Mimesis turns the relation between identification and desire on its head; identification emerges not as the result of the subject’s unconscious desire for a loved object, but rather as an imitation by one “self” of an “other” that to all intents and purposes is indistinguishable from a primordial identification in which the organism first *acts* like, and only later desires, the outside or other.’¹⁵⁹

Sobchack furthers her description in the following: ‘This overwhelming investment in and self-displacement in the “flesh” of the world or another is an unselfish, radically decentered, and expansive self-interest.’¹⁶⁰ A.D. expresses the motion of being sensually drawn-in and reflexively moved back out by the attraction at the fairground. She furthermore adopts a mimetic posture to the perceived and through the camera expresses that perceived technologically. She mimics the reversibility that underlies her perceptual engagement with the attraction. She furthermore adds onto and expresses this relationality. She does not wish to dominate the attractional view through a masterful gaze, but corporeally engages with the attraction through bodily gestures. She willingly furthers the attractional view by zooming in consciously. She visually expresses ‘our subjective body image [that] is always also materialized objectively in a potentially mimetic “postural schema” responsive to the world we inhabit.’¹⁶¹ While such a potentially mimetic postural schema is part of every engagement in the world, here the potentiality becomes an actuality that is expressed by and with the camera. This is the reversibility of the sensual outreach and reflexivity in the body visualized as materialized on film. The creative expression here visualizes the reversibility and reflexivity of the engagement in the flesh. We can thus reasonably say that the chiasmatic devotion to the world presents an alluring attraction in itself. The revelation in the flesh furthermore triggers the desire to create.

¹⁵⁹ Sobchack, Vivian Carol, *The Persistence of History*, 289.

¹⁶⁰ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 289–90.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 290–91.

Not only is the body experienced as material object by the imposition of external forces, whether lights that dazzle the senses or the kinesthetic exhilaration of the thrill ride, the chiasm of the world-subject relations also leads to aesthetic *creation*.

The extraordinariness of ad images in amateur filmmaking lies in the following: even though the ad images created by the ad filmmakers should feel alienating and strange, they seem somehow more authentic of the fairground experience. While I will elaborate on the viewing experience in more detail in the next chapter, we can say that here, more than anywhere else, do amateurs fulfill their potential as creative agents. They display a volition that bears witness to a creative impulse. Such a creative impulse connotes creation here as non-anthropocentric in that its nature exceeds the bounds of ego-centricity.

From whence does the aesthetic creative impulse originate? For Sobchack, it clearly stems from material foundations and the way it ‘allows us to understand in a primordial way the general pervasion in existence of material *sense-ability*.’¹⁶² The spectacular attraction of the fairground and the lighted movement that pervades it, draw us in a manner that pulls affective subjectivity away from an ego-central position. As Scarry notes, in the encounter with beauty, we relinquish our position as centre of the world, even if we never stood there. In the encounter with an attractional display a similar e-motion characterizes the world-subject relation. The e-motion as attractional draw or pull here is expressed as the zooming-in and panning motion that is created with the camera. The emulation of technologized movement as filmmakers tilt the camera from left to right presents a second level of motion that pertains to the postural mimesis that is adopted by the subject in the flesh. Both these levels of motion translate the voluntary devotion to the materiality of the world and thus present a world-subject relation that is deliberately experienced as porous. Here films are created in which world-subject encroachments are not only expressed, they are sought out and trigger a desire to re-create the overlapping in the flesh. E.H. goes as far as to re-produce this overlapping of world and subject in that he consciously superimposes images one over the other, so that, no clear demarcation between objects, world and subject can be sustained. E.H. re-creates the very principle that

¹⁶² Ibid., 190.

underlies subject-object relations in the flesh, as the ‘demarcation between the world’s “inhabitants is always provisional, never quite finished and always open to new possibilities of encroachment.”’¹⁶³ He visualizes the folds in the flesh by his use of superimpositions.

The subject cedes its position at the centre of his/her world and engages in a

‘devotion to the world, acting on and enfolding its and our own materiality through our *senses* and with *feeling*, intimately engages us with our primordial, prereflective, and material *sense-ability*—the general understanding of which becomes reflectively and actively re-recognized in consciousness as that particular *aesthetic* concept we call *sensibility*.’¹⁶⁴

The desire to create these images then pertains to a basic notion of aesthetic creation as ‘our reflective experience of sense-ability’. Here we have a direct, voluntary and creative engagement with the world as existential manifold and I would argue, this encroachment is what makes these visuals feel more ‘authentic’ of the fairground *experience*. Here, the world is neither perceived nor desired as objectively recordable. The filmmaker eclipses the underlying *belief* in camera as neutral recording device. The real arises exactly from the reversible and porous engagement with the existential manifold that is both preobjective and presubjective. We can follow philosopher Mikel Dufrenne’s reconstitution of the real:

‘The real is the preobjective. It is manifested in the brutality of fact, the constraining character of being-there, the opacity of the in-itself ... This overflowing character is like an inexhaustible reservoir of the given, but only because it holds nothing in reserve. It is an inexhaustible matrix of significations, but only because it has no signification of its own. [...] The unity of the world does not arise from the unity of the real but from the unity of the look which settles on the real.’¹⁶⁵

The deliberate creation of these views feels more authentic since it does not represent the wished-for construction of a perceived objective ‘real’, but re-constitutes the very experience at the fairground as sensual engagement. The encroaching sensual relation

¹⁶³ Barry, James Jr. quoted in *ibid.*, 293.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁶⁵ Dufrenne, Mikel quoted in *ibid.*, 300.

with the attractions of the fairground is not only recorded, the experience is consciously re-created in the films. The unity of the existential manifold, primarily devoid of signification, is here defined in the look of the camera that settles on and engages with it. This is also why these images somehow feel more authentic of the fairground experience since they corporeally emulate and express the affective experience at the fair.

The e-motive trajectory created by the camera here also again relates to the reversibility of perceptive-expressive relations, since the attractional display as perceived is expressed in a bodily manner and re-translated into a perceivable emulation in the viewing experience. We are a long way from the masterful gaze of a subject that appropriates the world through visual imposition. In this intentional relation of filmmaking at the fairground,

‘[e]goism is apprehended not only as a reduction and fixity of being but also in its possibilities as an extroverted expansion of being. Subjectivity is not lost but is decentered and diffused into all “things” in a “comprehension” of the grace of common material being-and its dispersal becomes a deep material knowledge of the reciprocity between subjects and objects that subtends any determinate division we might make between them or any particular privilege we would confer on ourselves.’¹⁶⁶

10.5. Lights in movement

One question remains: why do lights in motion constitute an attraction at the fairground? I think that lights in motion and the attraction they present is not *exclusively* related to the modernist spectacle of electrified display and the mechanical, even though it certainly plays a major part of its lure. The fact of the matter is that it is not solely light that is presented as spectacle, it is light in motion, attached to the thrill ride. Additionally, more often than not filmmakers prefer blinking lights to static ones. Here, attraction and spectacle are linked to visual presence and absence in alternation. Furthermore, blinking represents a movement of its own, a merging of one visual gestalt into another and back again, especially with lighted displays that change form and shape. Cathryn Vassaleu, in *Textures of Light*

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 302.

writes: 'At the point of light's contact with the eye, the objectivity of the visual standpoint becomes a perception of the presence of difference, where light is experienced as a non-rational subjection to feelings such as being penetrated, dazzlement, ecstasy, or pain.'¹⁶⁷ Indeed, her use of affective terminology here is not far removed from the vocabulary of spectacle and attraction in which dazzlement and ecstasy become enticing and alluring. This non-rational subjection to feelings is a natural co-constituent of the affectivity that is induced by voluntary engagement in the flesh.

I think that there is a further component to the fascination that lies at the origin of blinking lights. Intentionality from a subjective point of view always relates to a no-thing-ness, since it is the very access of the subject to the world and presents an immateriality and divergence to the thingness of the world. The blinking lights are as such fascinating since they never strictly fulfill an the status of pure object-in-itself or of 'thingness'. They come to represent a notion of no-thing-ness that relates to objective materiality. Neither object nor subject, they nevertheless come to constitute a presence that is closer to nothingness while presenting structures that are recognized as similar to subjective access to a world. In-between, neither object nor subject, electric lighting becomes attractional because of its uncertain and porous status in the flesh. We are here not speaking of the light bulbs as object, but of blinking lights as a visual outburst that comes into being and vanishes again only to emerge in a different formation repeatedly on, for example a lighted canopy. Lights in motion, especially lights emerging from the darkness in ever different forms and shapes, visually translate or mimic 'the primordial obscurity and openness of things-of-the-world, movements which emigrate into other forms, thus giving rise to domains of things ... which no longer seem quite so 'thingly.'¹⁶⁸ They pertain to the very reversibility of perceived and perceiver in subject-world correlations in which a stable identity of both is unmoored. Subjects here are no longer as subjective and objects no longer as objective as the no-thingness of intentionality meets the no-thingness that is light in motion. The relation that binds world-subject is still

¹⁶⁷ Cathryn Vasseleu, *Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas, and Merleau-Ponty*, Warwick Studies in European Philosophy (London ; New York: Routledge, 1998), 12.

¹⁶⁸ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 293.

reversibly constituted, but in a manner in which clear demarcation no longer has a place. Blinking as alteration between absence and presence also raises awareness as to the non-signification of the existential manifold in which absence can always be presence and vice versa. As Tom Gunning said in relation to early cinema: Now you see it, now you don't.¹⁶⁹ We are again moving in the domain of early cinema as spectacle in that: 'The early genres of cinema, [...] visualized a modern experience of rapid alteration, [...] by creating through trick photography a succession of transformations which unmoored the stable identity of both objects and performers.'¹⁷⁰ I would go further and say that the engagement and re-creation of blinking lights comes to emulate the principles that underlie vision as spectacle itself. Merleau-Ponty's inside of the outside and outside of the inside that underlies perception itself are here voluntarily re-created. Perception is itself expressed in a mimetic relation between world, subject, and camera. Signification here lies in that relationality that is induced by the common materiality in the flesh. The subject enters a relation of engagement in which subjective centering is unmoored and diffused in the existential manifold of the flesh. The ad style displays a desire, Sobchack notes

'not to see in the outside, as the others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen.'¹⁷¹

The indiscernibility between clear outlines in some of the more extreme close-ups on lights and the willingness to superimpose images pertains to this recognition and engagement with an overlapping or encroachment of outside and inside. And it also relates to reversibility in vision that here constitutes the original attraction. Perception is expressed by and with the camera. And furthermore, as we have seen, perception here relates to modern vision and the creation of the films pertains to the emulation of the main principles of a new manner of seeing. In the ad-2 films 'the intersection of one plane with another, the distribution of weight, tension across space, fulcrum and

¹⁶⁹ Gunning, Tom. "Now You See it, Now You Don't": The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions'. Richard Abel, ed., *Silent Film* (London: Athlone, 1996).

¹⁷⁰ Gunning, Tom. "Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema". Charney and Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, 16.

¹⁷¹ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 317 emphasis mine.

transparency. These were all classically modernist themes, but *what for them [the modernists] has been metaphor [here is] immediate experience.*¹⁷² The attraction that leads to the creation of ad-2 visuals is thus nothing more than the attraction that underlies vision itself and triggers a desire to emulate principles of perception through a film camera and further them in the image.

This is an engagement with modernist external forces and fascinations at its most positive, nevertheless, like attraction, this engagement is temporary and cannot be sustained. Furthermore, the embedment of attractional displays within the more generalized and narratological imagery of the film collection tames the volition that is expressed in this engagement. It is contained as momentary outburst within more conventional representational codes that structure the amateur film. Nevertheless, these visuals remain an inherent part of the filmmaker's collection and show, even more than the other two styles, how amateurs consciously and playfully create and engage with the spectacle of the fairground and express their experience creatively and autonomously.

11. Conclusion

What has been elaborated in the preceding is thus how amateur films visualize is the process (Becoming) of signifying expression as coming-into-being in the images. Nevertheless—as bears repeating—amateurs do not deliberately create existential statements in the sense that Kieslowki's cinema for example provides a deep engagement with primordial existential questions. However, engaging amateur films with a phenomenological attitude can help bring insights into how these films always visualize more primordial structures that underlie experiential meaning-generation. They come to materialize (because inscribed on film) how a subject engages, navigates, and makes sense his/her own particular situatedness in the lifeworld. As we have stated in the Introduction to this study, amateur films are here not taken as a 'mere' hobby. This needs explaining, since, of course, the making of films in the private is always a leisure time activity. In fact, I distance myself from the negative

¹⁷² Weinberger, Ed quoted in *ibid.*, 291.

connotations that underlie the term 'hobby' in that it often treats the amateur film practice as a by-product of a consumerist behavior. Engaging these films as existential activity here translates as the examination of how meaning-making structures are visualized in these films.

A phenomenological stance can thus give us insight into how amateurs are not exclusively concerned with issues of referentiality of a profilmic as authentic truth. It also allows us to treat these films as primordial basis of a coming-into-being of expressive signification rather than fragmented and uncompleted records of a profilmic 'real'. As such, the fragmented nature of the amateur image always illustrates a 'something more'. Naturally, the family chronicle in its sedimentation of fixed cultural representations presented a visual basis from which the entity of the family and its individual members could construct a familial identity. I understood how the family film could serve according to a memorial function that also emplaced filmmaker and filmed subject. The same applied to my experience with d&a filmmakers, I understood their primary motivations to appoint themselves self-styled audiovisual record keepers of a communal now. In short, I understood how filmic records produced by amateurs were also always constructed by cultural codes of representation that influenced amateurs and their filmmaking. Still, in the end there was always a certain sense of signifying surplus. Certain moments of extreme beauty, the expressive engagement with a seen, the creative handling of the camera, and the affective relationality that rose in film language presented components of an expressive surplus that refused categorization. It felt as if I could either ignore these elements of surplus or take them as inherent part of the research into the entire phenomenon of filmmaking. A phenomenological approach proves extremely helpful and I would say necessary to really come to terms with how and why amateurs produce films from a primordial basis. It relegates to the filmmaking activity the status of active participation, expressive directionality toward the world, and existential engagement with all common materiality. While, without meta-context, meaning as particularity is inevitably lost, primordial signification arises in the viewing of these films for the simple reason that I too am an embodied entity in the world and I recognize the expressive significance that comes-into-being in these films. Such a primary and sensual awareness thus grants me a primordial understanding into the different inflections and motivations that underlie filmmaking

as Becoming. The next chapter will engage with the phenomenon of amateur films in the viewing situation that implicates the contemporary viewer. What is analyzed is the notion of primary access and whether indeed such an access is possible at all. As such, it engages with the question not only of the present of these films that are taken from the archive, but also of the potential future engagements with these wonderful images that were created expressively by a situated subject in a past lifeworld. What this chapter has shown us is how the films reveal a coming-into-being of the process of signifying expression. Because such signifying activity is primordially embodied and effectuated as correlation in the flesh, it follows that the researcher, archivist, scholar, and general public engaging with these films from the archive cannot impose meaning onto these films from above. We need to engage them face-to-face, or indeed, body-to-body and as we enter into a co-constitutive relation with the visual remnants of an intentional trajectory from the past, it also follows that the contemporary viewer is him-herself co-constituted in the viewing relation. What a phenomenological approach can help us achieve is a meeting with the films on an equal footing. At the same time, as will be shown, it can help show how such an engagement is always also an enriching experience for the subject who engages with them rather than impose upon them. What has hopefully been shown here is how, when amateurs pick up a camera, they are not *exclusively* unconscious and passive creators of a pre-emulated cultural representational code, but they are highly active and, yes, indeed, even creative agents that take the camera into their perceptual and expressive relationality. The positivity of amateur filmmaking and films lies thus not exclusively within its basis for the reconstruction of happy narratives, but also visualizes a deeply material and creative devotion to these filmmakers' own situated experience in the world.

V. WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU LOST THE PAST? FILM VIEWERSHIP IN THE FLESH

1. Introduction

This chapter consciously takes the amateur films without infra-knowledge. It eclipses the meta-data that is offered on the information sheet provided by the CNA and exclusively relates to the filmic world that opens in film viewing. It intentionally strips the films of their context in order to examine essential questions of how moving imagery from the past can relate *primordial* meaning that rise in viewership. In the following, I will analyze how in film viewership significance arises in relationality. The following reflections are offered with one primary question in mind: Why do we need to preserve amateur films? In order to arrive at a conclusion as to whether we need to preserve the films and if so, what the future of these films looks like, I will take a phenomenological framework as to how we *primordially* experience film viewership in the flesh. What must be kept in mind in the following is that all meaning generation that is related within film viewership in the flesh is positioned as *primordial* and generalized. Furthermore, the following reflections relate exclusively to a viewing of these visual snippets that are offered by amateur films.

Several remarks must precede a phenomenological elaboration of film viewership in the flesh. First of all, as will be noted again and again, amateurs do *not* set out to produce images as a phenomenological statement. While notions of the existential manifold, the inherent intersubjective engagement with moving images and the affective charge that inflects the filmic experience will be examined; at no point does this work suggest that amateurs produce films to such an effect in a premeditated manner. Also, the analysis conducted here relates exclusively to film viewership in the present, and no presumption is made as to their viewing in their past screenings. I will analyze and engage with moments within the amateur films that moved me. I will examine *how* these strongly inflected moments impacted me in order to elaborate why they might do so. I will conduct the analysis from a personal point of view and

through an adoption of a phenomenological approach attempt to show how the strong impact of certain filmic moments are related to the embodied nature of the researcher and to a common materiality that underlies all film viewership. A further note refers to the fact that most of the images that will be analyzed here are characterized by their strong impact. They are taken out of the generality that marks the home movie. I chose these moments for their effect they had upon me in order to understand the nature that underlies all viewership.

Don Ihde notes, within a phenomenological approach the world is accepted as ‘always pregnant with significance, but *whose meaning must be re-won through an interrogation of its presence*. The lifeworld appears between the subject and the world within the focus of perception.’¹ This chapter interrogates such presence. At the same time, the amateur film in its different inflections and motivations is more complex than this analysis suggests. The following engages the films within my own viewing experience and seeks to examine how these images are always also primordially significant and how they are incorporated and flesh out my experience in the present. As such, I operate from a very basic position that, as Sobchack notes: ‘a body [...] makes meaning before it makes conscious, reflective thought.’² At the same time, I will analyze how my own sociocultural background not only always plays a part in viewing, but how the films can flesh out and be fleshed out by my embodied engagement with them. What is analyzed here is thus the relationality that lies between film and spectator. All statements and resulting reflections offered here rise within the relationality that characterizes the experience of watching *amateur* films.

My own particular viewing experience is engaged phenomenologically. The approach that this chapter adopts is based on the following structure, which also forms the basis of Vivian Sobchack’s *Carnal Thoughts*: it

‘begins its description with an experience as it seems directly given in what is called the “natural attitude” (better called the “naturalized attitude”), it then proceeds to “unpack” and make

¹ William Rosensohn et al., “Sense and Significance”. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 36, no. 2 (December 1975): 167.

² Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 59.

explicit the objective and subjective aspects and conditions that structure and qualify that experience as the kind of meaningful experience it is. Furthermore, although it may begin with a *particular* experience, its aim is to describe and explicate the *general* or *possible* structures and meanings that inform that experience and make it potentially resonant and inhabitable for others. That is, although in historical and cultural existence particular experiences may be lived idiosyncratically, they are also, and in most cases, lived both generally and conventionally – in the first instance, according to general conditions of embodied existence such as temporality, spatiality, intentionality, reflection, and reflexivity and, in the second instance, according to usually transparent and dominant cultural habits that are not so much determining as they are regulative.’³

The film experience is thus analyzed according to a bilateral structure that first examines moving images from a primordial process of meaning generation originating in embodiment and second, inspects how my own cultural habits play into the relationality that infuses the films with *general* significance. This final chapter thus represents the beginning of the signification process, and the analytical move that was conducted in this thesis sought to unpack the phenomenon of amateur film in order to arrive at its very beginning. This chapter is thus as much an inquiry into the phenomenon of the amateur film in the present viewing situation as it offers reflections on the very generality of Being-in-the-world. In this last chapter, I follow a Pontean principle and organize the inquiry as follows: ‘Let us try to see how a thing or a being begins to exist for us through desires or love and we shall thereby come to understand better how things and beings can exist in general.’⁴

I will first set the parameters of what constitutes viewership in the flesh. Concomitantly I will engage with questions pertaining to viewing equipment and dispositifs, which have a fundamental impact on how images are engaged. The main part elaborates the amateur images in experience in a bilateral structure: first, I will engage with the strongly inflected moments in my viewing that pricked me as punctum. Here I will examine how these moments always present a strong impact as they are micro-perceptually engaged. Second, I will consider how my own sociocultural background plays a significant role in how the images affect me, how

³ Ibid., 5.

⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 154.

they become significant for me, but also how discord can dissociate me from the image. In this second part, I will relate to these films from a macro-perceptual perspective. The final part of this chapter offers reflections on the future of these films and shows how they also impact my own postural scheme in the world. The main argument here pertains to the fact that not only do I engage with the images as primordially meaningful; they are also incorporated in my *own* particular experience and can lead to an enrichment of my own particularity.

2. Film Viewership: the researcher and the object

What characterizes film viewership in the flesh? How do we always also incorporate moving images within our own situated and embodied particularity? Taking a few examples of moments that moved me on a very primordial basis, I would like to elaborate film viewership phenomenologically. The chiasmic relation that underlies these moments applies to all film viewership but comes to the fore especially in moments that make me relegate my own central position of mastery and privilege. These are moments that are re-cognized, they are taken into a perceptive relation that is embodied, reversible, synaesthetic and coenaesthetic. Again, these affectively charged moments are here taken as illustrative of a perceptive engagement that underlies all correlational engagements including the filmic world of the amateur film and the contemporary spectator who has no infra-knowledge. As mentioned before, the examination conducted here relates to moments that are strongly inflected in order to examine the general structure underlying all viewership.

Amateur images taken from the familial context are often seen as senseless, as Scott McQuire states, ‘which is another way of saying that images have no essential meaning.’⁵ This statement is, however, only true if we take the initial meaning the films convey as positioned in the viewing of the home as fixed meaning. ‘Their significance is relation, their meanings are always partly determined by context, or

⁵ Scott McQuire, *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 1998), 61.

rather, by the intersection of multiple contexts.’⁶ Naturally, the meaning generation through context already falls in line with a phenomenological inquiry that bases all examination on the *correlation* of subject and phenomenon. In this chapter, we adopt the loss of initial context as parameters for analysis. Of course, it is always possible that some of these films are still used by filmmakers in the home, especially since a main incentive of handing these films into the archive is their transferal onto DVDs that the archive offers. Here, however, original context is eclipsed. At the same time, a phenomenological approach takes the phenomenon as an appearance in experience. We will thus engage with the films as appearance and see what can be gained in terms of understanding within the present experience. If we consider amateur films without original context as meaningless, no reason remains for us to archive these films in the first place.

This is not to say that amateur films are not inevitably marked by loss. In fact, the lack of verbal narratives, crucially important for the functioning of the films in their original context, also relates to a loss of their *particular* significance. The particularity of meaning has vanished with the transferal of the films to the archive. However, as will be shown in the following, these films still provide means of access through a transmission of meaning as generalized and primordial. ‘As soon as the home movie is taken out of its native environment, it has the capacity to become either senseless or *unheimlich*,’⁷ says Michael S. Roth in regards to the work of Péter Forgacs. And indeed, amateur films have the capacity to induce an uncanny ambiguity when they stare back at us from the past without an embedment in particularity.

This statement certainly rings true for images that lose their meta-narrative and thus particular context. However, this chapter asks whether moving imagery can ever be *completely* senseless. The shift that is analyzed here pertains to the transition that these images undergo in being transferred from the private to the public. The gaze that falls upon them is not the intended one. While the archive provides some information on these films, such as the name of the filmmaker, the material used, the localities of

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Roth, Michael S. “Ordinary Film Péter Forgacs’s The Maelstrom”. *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 66.

the shoot, the date (if available) as well as some rudimentary information on what can be seen in the film collection (such as Christmas footage or holidays taken), said context is not what would have made them meaningful for the filmmakers and their families in the first place. When ‘[t]he usually closed and referential system between image producer and recipient is interrupted [...] [t]hey lose their function as an individual source of memory [...] and [it] cannot be retrieved,’⁸ says Anke Heeleman who runs a photo gallery that collects what she calls ‘lost objects,’ meaning photographs that have lost their particular infra-knowledge and original context. When I open these films that have been sent to me digitally by the archive, I enter into a space of communication with them. I adopt a certain mode of viewing that I initially hoped to be professional and detached. I was going to be calm, qualified, non-judgmental and respectful but distanced to these films that, in my initial egotism, I took as an unskilled attempt at, for example, filming a baby having a bath. I was, in short, going to adopt what Roger Odin terms the documentary mode of film viewing. Odin identified five modes of communicative spaces in film viewing, three of which I would like to briefly allude to here:

‘The choice between the documentary mode and the private mode depends wholly on the state of the actant who is interested in these films. Whereas the locals from the region visit the archive as members of the community (private mode), researchers (historians, sociologists, ethnologists, anthropologists) and curious visitors predominantly mobilize the documentary mode; the question of verisimilitude is essential for them. Of course, the same individual can participate in both actant roles simultaneously.’⁹

Modes of viewing relate to how a viewer engages with images and what he/she looks for in an image. ‘When the private mode is dominant, we find the same kind of operator as we have found in the family, but on the broader level of community (a town or a region): the films as stimulants of memory and of relations. The importance lies less in what they show or say, than in the labor of memory to which they give

⁸ Heeleman, Anke. “Artist Project Fotothek-Speciality Store for Forgotten Private Photographs”. Sonja Kmec and Viviane Thill, eds., *Private Eyes and the Public Gaze: The Manipulation and Valorisation of Amateur Images* (Trier: Kliomedia, 2009), 103.

⁹ Odin, Roger. “The Home Movie and Space of Communication”. Laura Rascaroli, Barry Monahan, and Gwenda Young, eds., *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 23.

rise, and the link that they create (or reinforce) between the recipients. Contrary to this, when the documentary mode is prominent, the same films are treated as *vehicles of information*, and the operators have an entirely different position: they are the tools that allow us to reconstruct the past in a way that is more or less systematic, reasoned, at a distance that memory does not allow: analyzing operators.¹⁰ Odin furthermore introduces the intimate mode as a sub-category of the private mode. This mode represents the interior monolog people silently conduct while watching a film. This intimate mode can either agree with or resist to the consensus of recollective construction, but is generally conducted in silence and not exteriorized. The semio-pragmatic approach that Odin proposes here is extremely useful and enriching since it identifies the film viewer as actant in a communicative space. This space already pertains to the expressive filmmaker as an agent and furthermore allows us to see images as a significant trigger in a viewing situation and not as a neutral recording of a past event. As Odin illustrates, these modes are cross-referential. This encroachment is a direct experience of every viewer, including the researcher and scholars, and it should not be ignored. While Odin has described these different modes and set their parameters, what I am most interested in here is how this cross-referentiality is experienced and why a researcher can never exclusively adopt the documentary mode. The tone of this chapter thus alters between anecdotal, analytical, and personal.

This chapter presents a different approach, one that is often implicitly present but not explicitly articulated by the literature on the home movie. It examines the role of the researcher in the light of sensual engagement and embodiment. I thus aim to show whether, and if so, in what manner, someone who does not know the background of these private films can access the images of the amateur film. While the preceding chapters have illustrated how the amateur filmmaker is an actant, here the present and future of the amateur image are discussed further. It is the argumentation of this chapter that these films need preserving and not exclusively for the visual upholstery they offer institutional disciplines such as sociology, anthropology or history.¹¹ De Klerk examines how objects, fashions, and landscapes in the imagery become visual indicators of how people lived at a certain time and in a certain place. I would like to

¹⁰ Odin, Roger. "The Home Movie and Space of Communication". *ibid.* my emphasis.

¹¹ de Klerk, Nico. "Home Away from Home: Private Films from the Dutch East Indies". *Mining the Home Movie*.

examine what characterizes the experience of film viewing in a contemporary context. Viewership also always pertains to an engagement with objects from the past that initially seems opaque. I would also like to analyze whether the access that is provided to the filmic world can also be accessed in a very bodily and highly constitutive manner. The viewing of amateur films induces a complex gestalting (in the sense of how images are taken in by a viewer in perception that always oscillates between different inflections). The experience of the researcher must always be taken into account if we want to engage the reception of amateur images as co-constitutive in and enriching meaning generation. The understanding we gain is never limited to the infra-knowledge offered by the image but becomes experientially fleshed out through the viewer's own particularity.

As stated before, the premise of this work takes the amateur film as lost object. It operates on the basis of an assumed lack of context. While primary information such as date, material, name of filmmaker, and a general description of the content of the film collection is given by the accompanying information sheet provided by the archive, the meta-narrative commentary that renders these films meaningful in their particularity is, of course, always lost in a viewing without the filmmaker. Also, the information provided by the archive can be fragmentary, and errors can occur in the descriptions of the films. This chapter will show how primordial meaning nevertheless always comes-into-being in the viewing situation. It co-constitutively emerges in a correlation between viewer and film.

The meaning of imagery has always been firmly attached to contextualization as a means to avoid senselessness. As Scott McQuire states in regards to modernist reactions to the sheer incomprehensible amassing of images:

‘Contemporary responses to the reality of an image tend to be determined not so much by the image itself, but by assumptions concerning the origin of the images. [...] ‘These assumptions often seem to derive from the image itself, but are usually determined more by the context viewing.’¹²

¹² McQuire, *Visions of Modernity*, 146.

The researcher adopting a documentary mode of viewership always also seeks to identify patterns in reoccurring images and film style. The researching gaze scans the image for details that stand out as signification. Still, at a certain point, distance is no longer possible. The documentary mode can never be sustained as the exclusive mode of engagement. It inevitably shifts from the documentary to the private and the intimate. A multifaceted network of associations takes place that often baffles the researcher by its sheer complexity. All of a sudden the nature of my engagement with these films shifts from a documentary mode to a fundamentally intersubjective relation, and it is this shift that I would like to analyze in the following. Moreover, within the admittedly sometimes tedious images of the happy family, certain moments presented themselves that pricked me. They moved me in a way I could not immediately explain. Researching these films necessitated uncountable hours of engagement over the course of three-and-a-half years. All of a sudden, I found myself becoming protective of them.

Why, you might ask with justified indignity, would we need a chapter on what is inherently a narcissistic evaluation on my own viewing experience? First of all, Merleau-Ponty sees all perception as fundamentally narcissist since I am my body as centering unity of perception.¹³ In order to access these films, we need to take into account where primordial meaning originates. But more important, if we analyze how these films affect the viewer, not only in the initial context of the family viewing but including the embodied particularity of the researcher him- and herself, we can gain a rich insight into the care and love that went into the production of these films. We can relegate the amateur from a status of passivity and recognize them as expressive actant in their own lifeworld. We can gain important insights into the sensorial capacities that always accompany memorial practice (also my own), and we can gain insight into a potential future use of these filmic records, a future that hopefully surpasses a “mere” preservation or collection. What I experienced at first was a situation in which ‘under pressure of excessive attention, certainty of meaning recedes; interpretations drift and multiply,’¹⁴ and it took a certain relaxation of my stance to accept their gaps, fissures, and general resistance to homogenous

¹³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 552.

¹⁴ McQuire, *Visions of Modernity*, 143.

interpretation. This acceptance led me to experience film viewing as a space of communication between filmmaker, film and myself, but also induced a cross-referential temporal experience.

A further element of film viewership is to be taken into consideration here, namely the manner in which I choose to watch the film and the equipment that I decide to use. These decisions, as we will see, had an enormous impact on my own engagement with the amateur film collections.

3. Equipment or how that projector was finally on offer in the shop

As mentioned before, I viewed the films with a phenomenological approach in mind. However, no matter how often I watched the films I could not seem to really come to terms with them. I could not experience what I wanted to preach so to speak. I wanted to examine how all film viewership finds a basis in primordial signification originating in embodiment. An extensive phenomenological approach has, to my knowledge and to this date, not been applied to amateur films. Amateur films being mostly unedited would have added to the academic reluctance to apply a phenomenological stance that always characterizes a film as film-body. My main issue, however, when first viewing the material was that I did not seem to be able to engage with the films sensually. It seemed as if I would have to apply a phenomenological understanding as a purely theoretical approach, an act that would have gone against the very principles of a phenomenological understanding that is always a primordial stance or attitude adopted by the researcher.

As I stated in the Introduction to this work, I asked the CNA archive for films that were shot on the fairground. The archive sent me the fairground films embedded within a wider collection of the respective filmmaker. It included films that depicted different aspects of family life and the everyday. The films were sent via digital link and I downloaded a video application on my desktop to view them. While my laptop had a built-in Quick Time Player, several people I spoke to recommended I use a different player as the films would not always play properly in Quick Time. During the first two years of my research, I thus watched the films on my laptop. I would

open the little window of my player and, in a first viewing, maximize the window to fill the screen with the images in order to see them as largely as possible. Later, I would often go back to the films and look through them again and again, always in a maximized tap. Every once in a while I would need examples for conference presentations and I would fast-forward and go back within the films in order to find something that seemed suitable for the arguments I presented. Here I would often leave the window minimized and I could see other taps I had open on my laptop. While watching the films email notifications would annoyingly blink, a cat video on social media would run on auto-play and my desktop background (an old Kodak advert that advertised the simplicity of the equipment by having a woman handle the camera to film her child and dog) would partially be visible. It proved a veritable visual panoply and as the films were mute, I could listen to music while working, since, after all, I had watched them numerous times.

From the beginning, I realized that I wanted to examine the sense of agency that amateurs display and I noticed that what was mostly missing in the literature on amateur film was a focus on film language as filmic engagement. I thus went through the films from one cut to the next. Every time I encountered a cut, I would stop, open the Word document containing my notes and write down from what angle and in what position a sequence was filmed as well as what I saw in the image and the subjects depicted. This made for a sort of staccato viewing that provided an enormous amount of visual information and also allowed me to identify the three manners of filmic modes that have been elaborated in the preceding chapters. Still, I could not get a sense of or feel the images. They had no meaning for me. This might seem like a sentimental statement, but seeing that I wanted to examine notions of embodied viewership, it proved highly disconcerting. One day, I decided to invest in a little beamer-projector, as I had wanted one for a long time. It looked unassuming in its littleness and came in a humble white. I was skeptical as it had been on offer and it came with neither box nor manual. After a few days of grumbling and mumbling, the device was set up and ready to go. I would darken the living room completely and put the beamer in a central position behind the couch. I would sit in front of an entire white wall filled with moving images, and the term home cinema finally hit home for me.

I decided to re-watch some of the archival images on the beamer and, finally: there it was! It hit me completely and unexpectedly. All of a sudden, I could engage the images. I had access to them, and they moved me in a way I could at first neither understand nor explain. Seeing as I had to connect my laptop to the projector in order to watch the films, I could also not fast-forward or jump backward within the film, since that would have meant getting off the couch and you would be surprised by how often that takes considerable effort. I would settle on the couch, in the dark, with no sound and patiently and carefully look at the films. The oddest thing happened: before, while watching the films on the laptop, I assumed that the moments that would really engage me would be the scenes of happiness the films depicted. And they would, but more in a manner of ‘well, isn’t that nice’ rather than through a real sensual engagement. But the moments I genuinely engaged with were extremely surprising for me. The manner in which a woman dried her hands provoked a very strong reaction that seemed to trigger a sensorial and memorial engagement within myself. The close-up on a certain dish would cause the recollection of a taste from childhood. The location of a traditional pub or living room would activate a multitude of smells and a certain affective sense I could not place. I decided that these affective effects of film viewing warranted their own chapter, even though one always feels slightly vulnerable relating personal experiences, especially within an academic context. Without them, however, this study on amateur film viewing in the present would be impoverished and would bring no justice to the people who trustfully decided to donate their films to the archive.

Before I examine these moments that move us as viewers in more detail and from a personal perspective, I would like to have a look at why the viewing situation and locality as well as the equipment used would have such an impact on how I came to understand these films. Naturally, you sigh, you were distracted. After all, you had websites running in the background and you were not able to concentrate. And you would be right to say so. Surely, it is not only a matter of distraction as such. Notions of dispositifs are nothing new when it comes to film viewership. What interests me here is how the dispositif, the arrangement of my viewing situation would change my bodily experience of moving images. I will operate from the very simple statement that I sensually engage images since they are now ‘larger’ for me, thus closer to me. What interests me is the magnification structure that changes my bodily trajectory. I

realized that the crux of the matter lies in how I organize the perceptual gestalting of my surrounding. As seen in the previous chapter, the term gestalting here relates to the figure-ground oscillations that make up my perceptual field.

‘My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my ‘comprehension’,¹⁵ states Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception*. He extends: ‘I am not in front of my body, I am in it, or rather I am it.’¹⁶ For Merleau-Ponty, perception is experience and is lived by the body in a reversibly intentional structure. World and subject co-exist in a chiasmic relation in the flesh. Micro-perceptual awareness, as elaborated by Don Ihde¹⁷ and seen in the preceding chapter, structures my experience as embodied. Alphonso Lingis corresponds to Ihde’s statement in that: “My body as the inner sphere where representations are perceptible ... and my body as an image seen by rebound from the world, are inscribed the one in [the] other ... the density of the body is that of ‘pre-things,’ not yet differentiated into reality and illusion ... [The body] is a precinct of signifiers.”¹⁸

This is how a phenomenological inquiry takes all phenomena as appearance. The inside and outside of the thing-in-the-world is not taken as a re-presentation, since every phenomenon finds its origin in the world-subject correlation. This sheds a completely different light on the examination of moving images, since we are no longer bound by the parameters of representation and referentiality of a supposedly pro-filmic ‘real’. We incorporate images within perception and, because of the reflexive relationality that underlies all perception, the images also point back at my body. This pointing back reflexively positions my body in the here and now. My body is thus also perceptually positioned *by* the images it reflexively incorporates.

The body is always primordially positioned as the center of my relational and perceptual engagements. The body sits in readiness as the ‘here’ from which all bodily action and motility is directed. Nevertheless, this position is not determined by

¹⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception*, 2002, 273.

¹⁶ Ibid., 173.

¹⁷ see Don Ihde, *Bodies in Technology*, Electronic Mediations, v. 5 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

¹⁸ Lingis, Alphonso. quoted in Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 75.

fixity or immobility. ‘What is before me reflexively points back to a being-*here* which is concrete, the bodily spatiality which *I am*; but this bodily space is not distinct. It, too, is flexible and multidimensional.’¹⁹ My body is the positional *here* from whence relations reversibly engage in the flesh: Again, Merleau-Ponty puts it most conclusively: ‘What counts for the orientation of the spectacle is not my body as it in fact is, as a thing in objective space, but as a system of possible actions, a virtual body with its phenomenal “place” defined by its task and situation. My body is wherever there is something to be done.’²⁰

Still, this does not explain how I would engage with the films when presented with them onscreen rather than in my viewing on a laptop surface. Surely I am also sitting in front of my laptop as a body from which all perceptive action takes place. Why can I not engage the laptop interface as completely as the projected image onscreen?

A further level of analysis that needs addressing is the fact that the perception I engage is technologically mediated. As I understand it, the reason I engage more with images onscreen has to do with two main factors: namely, with a structuring of figure-ground relations in perception and with the irreversibility of temporality as lived by a subject.

All perception is at base micro-perception. ‘We cannot reflect upon and analyze either technologies or texts without having, at some point, engaged them *immediately* – that is, through our perceptive sensorium, through the materiality (or *immanent mediation*) of our own bodies.’²¹ This micro-perception is, however, in itself already always configured as ‘[...] relations [that] already include a multidimensional complexity. What I experience, anything in the world near me, is both *seen as* and *seen from*.’²² Allow me to briefly illustrate what said relations entail when I sit at my laptop.

¹⁹ Don Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth*, The Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Technology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 46.

²⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 291.

²¹ Sobchack, Vivian. “The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic Presence”. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Karl Ludwig Pfeiffer, *Materialities of Communication* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), 86.

²² Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 45.

In the morning, I go to the living room with my first cup of coffee. I turn on my laptop and while it launches I look around me. The dog is sitting in its basket, anxiously staring at me lest he misses a potential treat. The window is open; thus, I can feel a light breeze coming in, while I hear schoolchildren hollering on their way to school. I smell my coffee from where I am sitting and already I can feel that it is going to be a hot day. My bare feet touch the cheap rug in whose fibers I can burrow my toes. All these sensations and more are presented to me and engaged in a non-mediated way. I do not focus upon all these things; they are simply present. However, as Ihde notes: 'I do experience them as within a panorama, a field display.'²³ Visuality is given to me as a field of figure-ground relations. The panorama that is the entirety of my visual field, here the extension of the living room, plus the limited view I have from the window on neighboring houses are not presented in equal focus but are organized according to fringe and center as fluctuating relations within perception. 'I experience differences between what stands out within the panorama in direct relation to my attention and direction of my gaze.'²⁴ And further: 'I may not be explicitly aware of this directionality of my gaze nor of the gestalt relation between foreground focus and background field, but it can be easily recovered in reflection. Also, I can recover my dynamic seeing as simultaneously a seeing *from*. That immediate panorama *reflexively* locates me. What is before me reflexively points back to a being-*here* which is concrete, the bodily spatiality which *I am*; but this bodily space is not distinct. It, too, is flexible and multidimensional.'²⁵ While I look at my laptop in a concentrated manner and open the player with the films, the panorama of my situated location, i.e. living room with dog and buildings with neighbors, recedes to the fringe of my perceptual awareness. This situation, however, rapidly oscillates between background and foreground, when the dog starts barking as it spots the neighbor's cat in the front yard. The directionality of my gaze changes its trajectory, and it is now the laptop that recedes to the background of my perceptive engagement as the dog is focused as figure to my ground. However, there is already a slight mediation that has snuck into our unmediated micro-perception, namely my glasses. My lenses are already technological and my perspective is thus already mediated even if the glasses

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 46.

as means withdraw in my visual trajectory. Thus, the manner in which I experience the world is already ontologically changed. ‘This is because all our seeing *as* is also seeing *from*; and the transformation of vision through lenses changes, however slightly, our sense of bodily space. What was farther is now nearer; and when motility is involved, this calls for a new adjustment.’²⁶ As Ihde realizes very quickly: ‘Magnification, once discovered, suggests a new *trajectory*.’²⁷ Let me, finally, come to the crux of the manner, namely the magnification that changes my trajectory. I realized that the manner in which I watched the films on my laptop mostly had to do with the fact that a certain bodily distance was induced as the laptop and the films presented but a minor part of my panoramic field. While focused upon and coming to the fore as figure to my ground, the laptop presented but a restricted sensory engagement with the films since they offered but one small piece of the perceptual puzzle. ‘Fine,’ you might say, ‘you have found a phenomenological way of saying that you get easily distracted while working on a laptop.’ Nevertheless, these changes are more complex once we essentially think about how we take in our technologies in experience. What *happens* when I screen the images on the projector in a darkened room?

Magnified images become my background and foreground simultaneously. Granted, I am still aware of my living room, my couch, the dog etc. but my visual field is filled with moving imagery. The images are magnified to such an extent that my visual trajectory is changed as well. We can imagine this shift in scale as similar to the experience of microscopic vision, albeit reversed, that Ihde describes in the following in regards to microscope-vision.

‘The bodily space of vision even applies to less motile situations and may be noticed in fixed observations. There is even a sense in which our usual description of what magnification does is wrong. We say the microscope makes the microscopic “bigger,” but this is so only in a comparative relation between what we see with the naked eye and what is seen through the microscope. More phenomenologically put, what changes is the sense of distance and closeness to the object of vision. The paramecium seen through the lens is no bigger or smaller in my visual field than other things that I place close to my nose; but I, in a partially

²⁶ Ibid., 48. My emphasis

²⁷ Ibid.

irreal bodily sense, am now “closer” to the paramecium. What I took as “real” or naked bodily space is transformed through the microscope.²⁸

While the moving images onscreen are by no means of the same scale as a cell under the microscope, it becomes interesting how, through the projector, the experiential trajectory changes as well. In a sense, the imagery is never bigger than my visual field, but I am nevertheless closer to them. The same relation of bodily space is transposed in the shift from laptop to screen. The figure ground relations that structure my perceptual field change fundamentally. Whereas before the laptop was but one visual object that entered the visual field as figure on which I focus my attention, the fringe or background of my perceptual field is experienced as much larger, thus constantly encroaching upon my perceptual awareness. In a darkened room, the background that is my living room recedes to the fringe and minimizes the latter extensively. The attentive focus my visual trajectory takes makes the now minimized fringe of my background recede and the figure is engaged in a reflexive and enhanced manner. Magnification here provokes bodily enhancement. The directionality of my perceptual awareness alters in a magnification of scale. Again, Ihde’s assertion bears repeating:

‘I may not be explicitly aware of this directionality of my gaze nor of the gestalt relation between foreground focus and background field, but it can be easily recovered in reflection. Also, I can recover my dynamic seeing as simultaneously a seeing *from*. That immediate panorama *reflexively* locates me. What is before me reflexively points back to a being-*here* which is concrete, the bodily spatiality which *I am*; but this bodily space is not distinct. It, too, is flexible and multidimensional.’²⁹

Engaging moving images perceptually, these visuals also reflexively locate me. The reversibility in perception assures that I am the perceptual relations that point back at my body. Enhancement also means that what was farther is now nearer. This feeling of closeness is as such unreal in that my visual field never changes in scale. However, here a phenomenological approach brings to the fore the crux of the matter: My viewing experience is not necessarily enhanced because the images are *larger*, but because it brings them *nearer*.

²⁸ Ibid., 49.

²⁹ Ibid., 46.

Technological seeing is also embodied seeing. Still, we need to learn how to read moving imagery. A certain hermeneutic relation characterizes all film experience, since moving images are always mediated by the technological. While the effort that goes into this learning is never as elaborate as the one that goes into reading a graph or an instrumental display (think, for example, of the reading of a thermostat), moving imagery needed to be engaged with in a hermeneutic manner. Several elements thus constitute the film experience onscreen: the images are brought nearer to the perceiving subject. This changes, as Ihde, notes,

‘the polymorphous sense of bodily extension. The experience of one’s “body image” is not fixed but malleably extendable and/or reducible in terms of the material or technological mediations that may be embodied. I shall restrict the term embodiment, however, to those types of mediation that can be so experienced.’³⁰

The moving images perceived by the subject and projected by the beamer thus come to present a correlational engagement that is always also embodied given the reversible nature of perception. The bringing nearer of the object, here moving images, is impacted differently as ‘the near space around one’s material body is *charged*.’³¹ My body inhabits the position from which all relations are engaged in, it is reflexively pointed back at and always sits in readiness for potential action. As a consequence, the near-space of an object is charged stronger than the fringes of my perceptual awareness. When I watch films through a projector, what changes the experience is not so much the fact that the images are bigger, but the fact that they are brought nearer to my body, which sits in readiness for potential action.

The beamer must be situated behind me for this embodiment relation to unfold its potential strength; this is the best position for it, since it coincides with a Renaissance perspective that emulates the principles of perspectival vantage point. While the perspective introduced to me by the beamer and thus bringing me closer to the object is as such not a natural one since I do not bring my body closer to the object but sit immobile and fixed on my couch, it is by no means an alienating or novel experience.

³⁰ Ibid., 74.

³¹ Ibid. my emphasis.

The central vantage point that positions my visual trajectory in a tunnel shape through technological mediation as *dispositif* has been introduced as early as the seventeenth century. The extensive scale of technological inventions in the seventeenth century, not the least of which the introduction of lenses, adumbrated cinematic vision. The manner in which the perceiving subject engages moving imagery thus presents a perceptual variation that has long been embodied. After all, we are bodies in technology as Ihde so eloquently put it. Ihde ascertains of such a righting of learned alterations in perception in the following: ‘The most radical such variation is the well-known inverted glasses experiment in which the viewer sees the “world” upside down. It takes several days for the viewer to relearn his actional gestalt such that the world seems “right” again – but it does.’³² The perceiving subject thus long ago learned to right and take technological seeing into embodiment and perceptual awareness. The *dispositif* of the beamer is thus in-corporated by a hermeneutic learning of a perceptual variant that we take for granted by now. As a matter of fact, the *dispositif* of screened imagery has so long been a part of our perceptual being that it is more natural than the more recently introduced perceptual variant of a laptop interface. As Sobchack so rightly asserts: ‘We are all part of a moving-image culture and we live cinematic and electronic lives.’³³ Moving images presented on screen have so long been part of our culturally inflected macro-perception that they are automatically righted by the subject and the technological seeing presented by the beamer is taken into embodied perception. After all, ‘[t]he audiovisual has become deeply sedimented in our seeing/hearing and is taken for granted in our experience.’³⁴ While technological mediation by imaging devices introduce changes in my perceptual trajectories,

‘[i]n embodiment relations, such changes retain both an equivalence and a difference from non-mediated situations. What remains constant is the bodily focus, the reflexive reference back to my bodily capacities. What is seen must be seen from or within my visual field, from the apparent distance in which discrimination can occur regarding depth, etc., just as in face-to-

³² Ibid., 48.

³³ Sobchack, Vivian. “The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic “Presence””. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Karl Ludwig Pfeiffer, *Materialities of Communication* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), 83.

³⁴ Don Ihde, *EMBODIED TECHNIQUES* (USA: Automatic Press Publishing, 2010), 8.

face relations. But the range of what can be brought into this proximity is transformed by means of the instrument.’³⁵

What changes is the manner in which nearness is created, but not the reflexive reference that makes up perceptual engagements and that always point back at my body. I realized that the reason behind my inability to incorporate images on my laptop had nothing to do with the digitalization of *the imagery*, which is so often perceived as alienating, but has more to do with the mediation by a laptop interface. The films of this corpus are unique in this regard since they present analog images that were digitalized in the archive and sent to me by email, even though I occasionally went to the archive to consult films that had been transferred to VHS. Digital technologies change the manner in which embodied space is temporalized. There is an important distinction to be made, however. For a long time, I thought that my disengagement with the images had its origin in their transferal from film to digital. I thought that only analog images could be taken into incorporated engagement as I attributed film with quasi-magical qualities that would engage me in depth, rather than on the mere surface.

Naturally, there are differences in depth perception. A digital image presents a visual field that is undifferentiated in terms of sharpness. With analog film, the visual trajectory that also underlies the tunnel shape of the viewing situation in the cinema is directed towards the center of the screen for the mere reason that the film strip very slightly blurs at the edge of the frame. This is not the case with digital imagery. What about analog imagery that has been digitalized? The case here is a strange one and is different in each example. If the film, at the point of entry into the archive, already shows distinct signs of material alteration (decay) these alterations are then eternalized in digital form. Their scratches and changes in color are taken into the digital and frozen. The films are not tampered with in the archive, at least not in the versions that were sent to me; they present signs of material alteration, but once digitalized, they will never change again. What I could, however, not detect was the blurring at the fringe of the films. A directing of focus through distinctions in sharpness does thus not influence my visual trajectory. It was *my* experience that a shift in perceptual trajectory is exclusively related to the mode and technology of the

³⁵ Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 79.

viewing experience. In what follows, I would like to elaborate on how this viewing experience is fleshed out by its temporal dimensions. The argument presented here is that, while the images are digital in nature, through projection, the perceiving subject is situated in what Vivian Sobchack terms cinematic space, rather than electronic space. This has to do with how a subject fundamentally experiences moving imagery in time.

Sobchack characterizes the electronic space as follows: 'Images on television screens and computer terminals seem neither projected nor deep. Phenomenologically they seem, rather, somehow just there as they confront us.'³⁶ Once I project the images, my experiential space changes. Electronic devices are often celebrated for their relegation of agency to a subject. It would stand to reason that I should be able to engage with images in a more active manner if my body is not immobilized by the cinematic dispositif. Why is that not the case then?

The shift in experiential space also relates to the manner in which temporality is never merely imposed, but also lived and incorporated by the subject. Temporality is also duration. Embodied vision unfolds in time. Cinematic vision brought about a revolutionary shift in visuality and vision, since for the first time,

'the cinematic brings the *existential activity* of vision into visibility in what is phenomenologically experienced as an *intentional stream* of moving images – its continuous and autonomous visual production and meaningful organization of these images testifying to the objective world and, further, to an anonymous, mobile, embodied, and ethically invested *subject* of worldly space.'³⁷

Cinematic vision thus brings with it an experience of the moving image as 'subjective and intentional, as *presenting representation* of the objective world.'³⁸ I perceive the film's intentionality as quasi-subjective since it emulates an intentional stream of

³⁶ Sobchack, Vivian. "The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic "Presence"". Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Karl Ludwig Pfeiffer, *Materialities of Communication* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), 104.

³⁷ Sobchack, Vivian. "The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic "Presence. Ibid., 94–94.

³⁸ Sobchack, Vivian. "The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic "Presence. Ibid., 95.

images that I know as the basis of my own experience. What interests me here, however, is the fact that the existential activity of vision presupposes continuous and autonomous duration. The temporal structure of the film's vision made visible is structured by such continuity and autonomy. In fact, it makes my engagement with the film's intentionality as quasi-other possible in the first place. In the preceding chapter, we have contested the notion that amateur film can be taken as quasi-other; this elaboration still stands with regards to what amateur films are visualizations of, whereas here, the manner in which I engage the films presents structures of quasi-subjectivity that are attributed to film seeing.

Within electronic space, in my case the viewing of imagery on a laptop terminal, such an engagement is no longer possible. The reason being that in an electronic space, i.e. viewing situation, I can directly act upon the images. In my player on the laptop, I can fast-forward, rewind, pause imagery. I can even directly influence the coloring, brightness and size of the images. I can change them to black and white and, if particularly motivated, I can even color black and white imagery. The fact of the matter is that I can act upon the images and directly break into their temporal stream that can be experienced as quasi-subjective intentionality. Even if I do not use the means of alteration at my disposal, my awareness of the films is as such different since I *could* do so and my intentional relation with the films are implicated by this knowledge.

Within what Sobchack terms the cinematic; the subject takes the film as film-body. Again, it is stressed here that amateur films do not present a film-body as Sobchack perceives of it. Because the films are not post-produced, they never offer the same closed communicative system that would allow for my taking the film as a film-body. Still, within reception, the cinematic vision that I witness is recognized as quasi-subjective. I engage the film's intentionality as a quasi-other since 'the cinematic exists as a visible performance of the perceptive and expressive structure of lived-body experience.'³⁹ We will come back to the specific temporalities that underlie the moving image. Suffice to say here that the forward moving stream of images renders the subjective activity of seeing visible and is recognized as quasi-subjective since I

³⁹ Sobchack, Vivian. "The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic" Presence *ibid.*, 99.

too perceive in a temporal stream that is directed forwardly. As the projector streams the images and I sit through their duration, I am also partaking in a temporal structure that is a constant bringing-into-being.

A quick example might clarify this experience of duration. G.H.'s⁴⁰ film collection starts with a leisurely boat ride on a lake in Switzerland. He captures the sights and villages bordering the lake, he films people bathing in the lake. All views are taken from the boat in motion. As I watch the film on my laptop, I immediately have the urge to fast-forward through the uniform landscapes, which are repeated multiple times. After all, there is nothing to discover here. I watch the same film on the projector and all of a sudden, I enjoy the leisurely pace of the visuals. I come to appreciate how each frame brings me a turning of the boat, the inclusion of waves produced by the boat on the lake, the slow and deliberate pace of visuals unfolding without haste and without immediate purpose.

Figure 1



⁴⁰ AV031295 / IA_AMA002316, 8mm, colour, mute, 1957-1958

I engage with the experience of the boat ride in duration (if, of course, never with the “real” duration of the boat ride, after all he stops and starts recording continuously). I partake in an experience that brings about the atmosphere and mood of a holiday activity without haste. The unfolding of the Swiss landscape, while as such bringing nothing varied to the visuals, becomes almost hypnotic, and when I see the bathers in the lake, the sight genuinely takes me in. I enjoy the introduction of a slight visual variation.



Furthermore, in duration, I come to notice different aspects that eluded me before. I come to enjoy the glittering surface of the lake in sunlight. I realize how wide the horizon seems on this summer day. I admire the luscious green of the forest that lines the lakeside. Within duration, I allow the film to slowly unfold and come-into-being and only thus can I sensually engage with the plenitude of these visuals. I am only moved by the imagery because, in my immobile position, I allow them to *move* and move me. Film as a continuous unfolding is exclusively possible within and through duration.

If I allow for duration, this allowance grants the image’s coming-into-being. I engage with the film as quasi-other rather than as surface onto which I can impose my own action. I allow the film’s viscosity of the Swiss landscape to unfold without acting upon it. The forward-streaming intentionality of the film can only unfold in duration. The inherent capacity of a film bringing the activity of vision into visibility is only possible if I allow the film’s intentionality to unfold. If I fast-forward or in any other way change the trajectory of the film, I can no longer engage with the film as existential presence. It reverts from a cinematic space as coming-into-being to an objective status. Projected with my beamer, the film’s vision can unfold as a vision in

visibility. This does not necessarily mean that, within the film, only one temporal mode is present. Rather, '[a]rticulated as separate shots and scenes, discontinuous spaces and discontinuous times are synthetically gathered together in a coherence that is the cinematic lived-body: the camera its perceptive organ, the projector its expressive organ, the screen its discrete and material center.'⁴¹ For Sobchack, temporality within the image also depends on montage devices, such as flashbacks and fast-forwards, devices that – naturally – are bracketed with regards to amateur films. Still, the forward-moving stream of the viewing transfers images that imply a quasi-subjective temporal trajectory. Duration thus emulates structures of subjective intentionality in time. It also implicitly translates the imagery as coming-into-being as opposed to the photograph, which would present a flattened space as a 'having-been.' The filmic expression and perception thus present the spectator with an existential space that can be inhabited, a fleshed-out space structured by temporality and intentionality.

Nearness and duration thus inevitably structure and govern the viewing experience. It is through duration that the film unfolds its own intentional expressive and perceptive modes. And it is as an embodied subject that I recognize these modes and take them into my own embodied space. The elaboration of the images that will be presented in the following is thus always taken from the engagement within a cinematic space, i.e. as experienced by the images' projection with a beamer. While in film production we cannot say that the filmic visualizations represent a filmic body as self-contained entity, within film reception I recognize the intentionality *within* the filmic sequences as quasi-subjective. What is *not* said here is that an amateur film represents a film-body as it is constituted by Vivian Sobchack as its own self-contained vision coming-into-being. Herein lies the fundamental difference between amateur film and professional cinema. Rather, within the film reception I come to engage the intentional trajectory inside each sequence as quasi-subjective other. What I share in the viewing is the intentionality as unfolding in time and space, and because I am an embodied subject, I recognize it as visibility unfolding. However, this notion of film as quasi-subjective remains somewhat weakened when contrasted with cinematic productions that underwent a post-production process since here film does

⁴¹ Sobchack, Vivian. "The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic" Presence Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer, *Materialities of Communication*, 99.

not emulate notions of consciousness, expressed emotionality, or an emulation of behavioral action as is the case with professional cinema.

4. Film Viewership in the Flesh

What does it mean to sit in a movie theater as body? Over the last decades, the body has been omnipresent within academic discourses. The body has been seen as a site of imposition of power relations that inflect it from above. It has been seen as a site of violation and joyfulness. It has been seen as reduced by a rationalizing impact of industrialism. It has alternately become a site of resistance and control.⁴² However, an analysis that takes no interest in the materiality of embodied being, a being that inevitably includes the researcher, such a discourse, according to Thomas Csordas, remains: ‘without much sense of their bodiliness in their analyses. [...] Such a tendency,’ he continues,

‘carries the dual dangers of dissipating the force of using the body as a methodological starting point and of objectifying bodies as things devoid of *intentionality* and *intersubjectivity*. It thus misses the opportunity to add sentience and sensibility to our notions of self and person, and to assert an added dimension of *materiality* to out notions of culture and history.’⁴³

Phenomenologically speaking, the body is thrown into the world as already meaningful with ‘value emerging in the *synthesis* of the experience’s *subjective* and *objective* aspects.’⁴⁴ This constitutes the correlational rule that grounds phenomenological inquiry. Meaning and where it is made thus emerge in a reversible

⁴² an example would be poststructuralism’s examination of the body as site of control and institutionalized disciplinary actions. While it is not contested here that a body is always also a cultural body, what is contested is the exclusive focus on the body as site of control. see Ihde’s elaboration of the Foucauldian body in the following: ‘In contrast, Foucault’s body is thoroughly a cultural body, often described and analyzed in a third-person perspective. The body objectified by the medical gaze in the clinic, the body of the condemned in the regicide, and the subjection of bodies within all forms of discipline are culturally constructed bodies. Insofar as there is experience, it is experience suffered or wrought upon human bodies.’ Ihde, *Bodies in Technology*, 17.

⁴³ Csordas, Thomas. quoted in Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 3.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 2.

relation between world and subject. Primordial meaning is always material and embodied. It appears in the chiasmatic (reversible) relation in the flesh as existential manifold. Flesh, described by Merleau-Ponty as the element of experience, is here also taken as what Laura U. Marks calls ‘connective tissue.’⁴⁵ We come to the film experience and take the moving image as an inherent part of such a connective tissue. We are not presented with an object-in-itself that would somehow stand apart from the world or ourselves.

In the words of Sobchack: ‘As “lived bodies” (to use a phenomenological term that insists on “the” objective body as always also lived subjectively as “My” body, diacritically invested and active in making sense and meaning in and of the world), our vision is always already “fleshed out.”’⁴⁶ In consequence,

‘[e]ven at the movies our vision and hearing are informed and given meaning by our other modes of sensory access to the world: our capacity not only to see and to hear but also to touch, to smell, to taste, and always to proprioceptively feel our weight, dimension, gravity, and movement in the world – in sum, the film experience is meaningful *not to the side of our bodies but because of our bodies*. Which is to say that movies provoke in us the “carnal thoughts” that ground and inform more conscious analysis.’⁴⁷

This chapter analyzes these carnal thoughts that rose within my own particular and embodied viewership, and that primordially informs the analyzes that were conducted in the first three chapters.

How then does a material and embodied spectatorship signify exactly? A material engagement with moving images – a relation that underlies all film viewing – becomes most illustrative in moments where the sensual engagement is foregrounded by an affective quality that is positioned outside an everyday norm. What are these moments that tear me out of my habitual consummation of images? The engagement I have with them is stronger than a mere aesthetic pleasure. They relate to me in a manner that is experienced as breakage, opening and unfolding. Within every film

⁴⁵ Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xi.

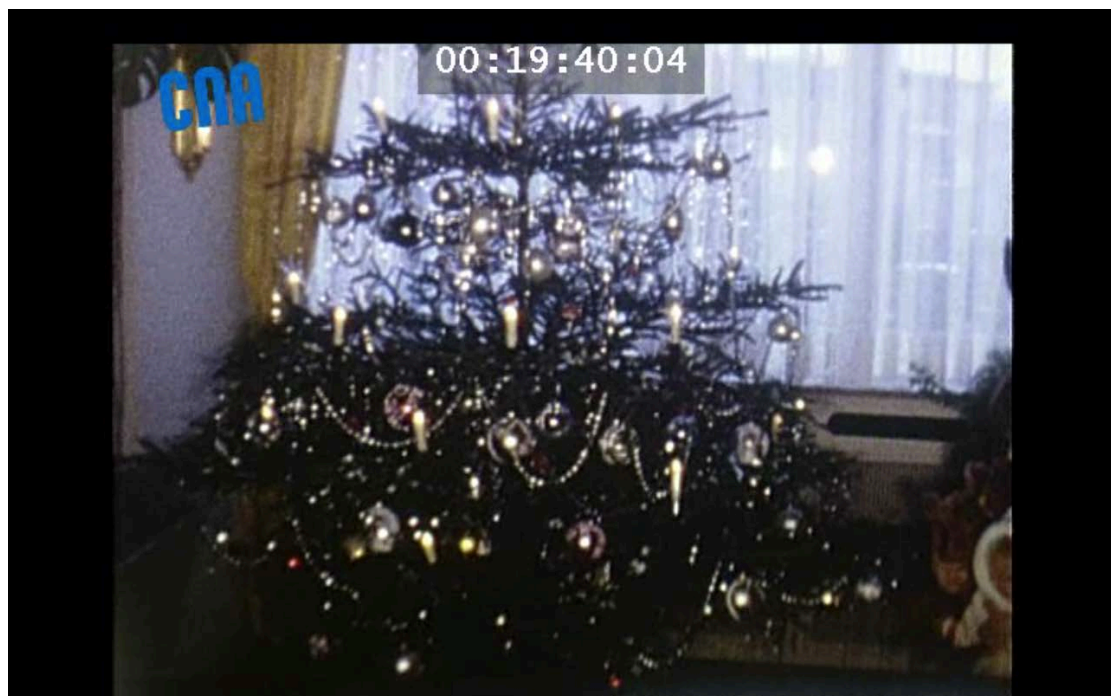
⁴⁶ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 60.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

viewing, strongly inflected moments present themselves that are extraordinary and the viewing of amateur images is no different. These moments arrive unexpectedly and unreflectively. They affected me deeply and echo long after the viewing. During my research, numerous examples were thus experienced, and I would like to relate some of these examples in the following.

L.K.,⁴⁸ in typical family-chronicle fashion, films his daughter in front of the Christmas tree. He then focuses on the replica of the Nativity Scene that is traditionally put up in miniature under the tree for Christmas. In the next sequence, he again focuses on the tree; this time, his daughter has left the frame. The images are stereotypical to say the least. They are generalized to the point of almost denying particularity to this specific family. What caught me in a completely unexpected manner, however, was the light. Typical white, semi-transparent curtains that conceal rather than reveal the outside veil the window behind the tree. We can still discern the buildings outside but cannot differentiate any details. The light is of a semi-dark blueish tint nearer to dusk than afternoon. The amazing thing, however, was that I *knew* from the quality of the light that it must have snowed.

Figure 2



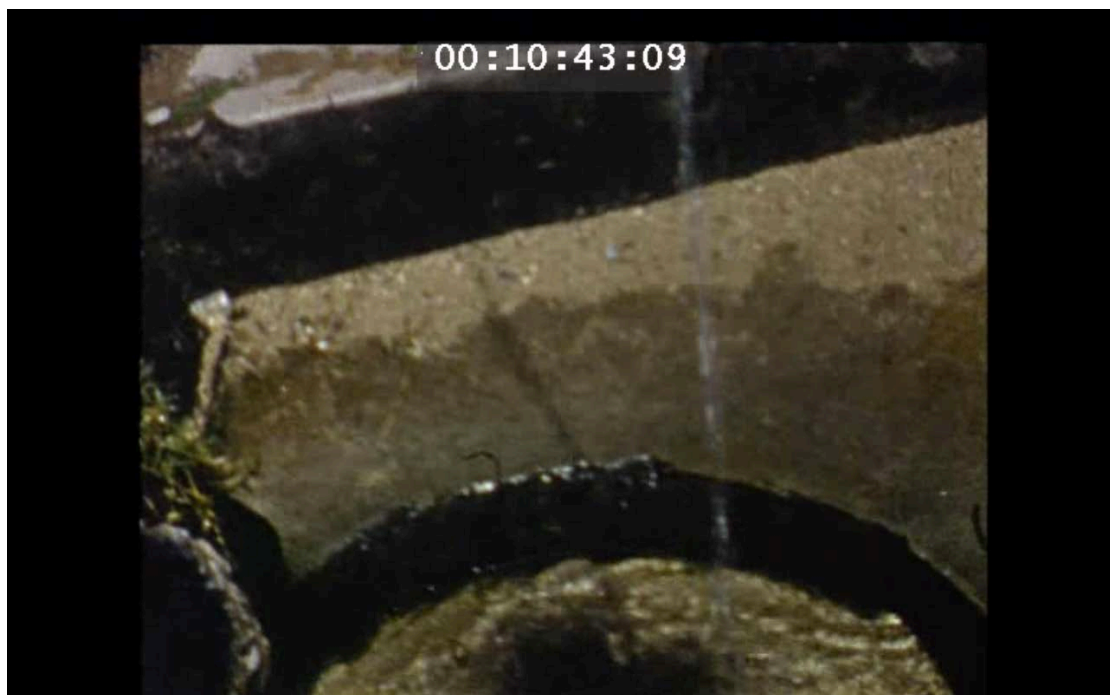
⁴⁸ AV026326 / IA_AMA_002773, 8mm, color, mute, 1964-1965

There was a quietude to the images that immediately brought forth a feeling of stillness. All this I knew – pre-reflectively and without a thought. I did not see the image and then think that the color of the light looked as if it might have snowed. Rather, the knowledge arrived contemporaneously with the image as soon as I laid eyes on it. Furthermore, that sense of calm and the feeling that the world is somehow hushed did not arrive after viewing the images. It was there from the start. It lay within the image and somehow within me. It emerged from the *relation* between the image and myself. The affective charge of the lighting had no discrete origin but appeared as diffuse and non-differentiated as to inside or outside in terms of perceived object and perceiving subject. You could say the images pricked me. It was here that I started to understand the inherently material basis of all film viewership. In a sensual engagement with the image, I realized, meaning and affect emerged neither from the image nor myself but from the correlational contact zone between the two. For the first time, I felt as if access to a lifeworld that I neither knew nor could have experienced had been granted to me since I could partake sensually in the atmosphere of stillness and calm, in what a snowy afternoon in December 1964 or 1965 *felt like*. I got a sense of an early evening that happened long before my own birth.

Another example caused an involuntary engagement on my side with a film depicting a holiday on a camping site. The filmmaker J.-P. K.⁴⁹ captures water trickling from a pipe into a basin underneath it. He first films the metal pipe with water flowing in an even stream from it. In the background, we see clear blue skies, nay a cloud, glittering sunlight and the top parts of palm trees. In a downward directed pan, he follows the water until he captures it pouring into a stone-carved basin.

⁴⁹ AV035027 / IA_AMA_002880, 8mm, b&w and color, mute, 1960-1962

Figure 3



The next shot shows his son in yellow swimming trunks playing in the water. What caught me here was not so much the son playing as the very sensual capacity of the trickling stream of water. I could feel the glaring hotness of this summer day in what I assumed to be the South of France. I could feel the baking heat, which the stone of the basin had soaked up during the day. I could also somehow taste the freshness of that

cold water coming directly from the pipe, down to the slight metallic taste often experienced when drinking water directly from a pipe. Again, this was not something I reflectively thought later as in: “it looks hot, so of course, the water must feel cold.” No, this was a sensual engagement that came-into-being in the relation between the image and my body, and I could reflexively feel a multi-sensory experience that implicated my body. I could feel the breeze swaying the palm trees, the refreshing coolness of the water, and the almost unbearable heat of the stone, which burns your feet.

Here film viewership is not concerned with referentiality as that age-old paradigm haunting all representation. The question is simply bracketed within this sensual engagement with imagery. A contact zone is established that denies clear demarcation between body and image. Steven Shapiro elaborates on this in the following statement:

‘[t]he important distinction is not the hierarchical, binary one between bodies and images, or between the real and its representations. It is rather a question of discerning multiple and continually varying interactions among what can be defined indifferently as bodies and as images: degrees of stillness and motion, of action and passion, of clutter and emptiness, of light and lack ... The image cannot be opposed to the body, as representation is opposed to its unattainable referent.’⁵⁰

What I experienced in these moments was nothing else than a contact in sensory reflexivity and reversibility that came into being neither exclusively in my body, nor separately in the image of the trickling water. Rather, this contact zone conveyed what Sobchack calls the ‘heightened instance of our common sensuous experience of the movies: the way we are in some carnal modality able to touch and be touched by the substance and texture of images; to feel a visual atmosphere envelop us; to experience weight, suffocation, and the need for air’.⁵¹

These sensuous experiences underlie all film viewership; however, in moments of extreme provocation they come to the fore. The main argumentation of this work is

⁵⁰ Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, Theory out of Bounds, v. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 256.

⁵¹ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 65.

not that context does not matter in the viewing of amateur imagery. The meaning that is referred to here pertains to a *primary* engagement with moving imagery in general. It comes to relate to the signification that underlies all viewership primordially. Existential phenomenology operates from the basis of a world that is accepted as always already significant and full of primordial meaning. The lifeworld thus emerges and is co-constituted between the subject and the world within the realm of perception. What this chapter then interrogates is the existential presence of signification as emerging in the complex relationality between subject, film and filmic world. As Ihde illustrates, it takes ‘[t]he lived body, the embodied subject immersed in a world pregnant with unwon significance becomes the basic theme of the existential version of the primary perceptual situation. This unitary and relational ontology is held to transcend the dualism of “Cartesianism.”’⁵² We thus operate from a basis in which film, world and subject come-into-being precisely because experience is already pregnant with it. The films that are taken in by me have already always been part of my situated lifeworld.

The meaning that emerges here is pre-reflective. It emerges without a thought through the sensorium of my own lived body. Still, what are the specific structures that underlie this experience? How could I sense the coolness of the water if I only saw it? And how could I sense it reflexively in my own lived body? The sensual engagement that takes place in viewing these moments relate to the existential manner in which a lived body engages the world. This engagement thus lies in the reversible structures that underlie experience in the flesh.⁵³ How can this reversibility in perception be explained? In the flesh, dualistic categories of inside, outside, mind and body, subject and world are not presented as mutually exclusive.

⁵² Don Ihde, *Expanding Hermeneutics: Visualism in Science*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 68.

⁵³ Some people might here be reminded of Rainer Koselleck’s evaluation of the horizon of expectation that plays into an experience of the present. While there are similarities, here the notable difference pertains to the fact that these charges arose pre-reflectively and without a thought. The experience of the image co-constituted the sensorial engagement. Simply put: there is no horizon in which to first adopt an expecting stance. Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989).

How can we imagine this experience of film viewing in the flesh? In the following statement lies the crux of Sobchack's phenomenological reworking of film viewership, which this chapter also follows:

'First of all, in the theater (as elsewhere) my lived body sits in readiness as both a sensual and sense-making potentiality. Focused on the screen, my "postural schema" or intentional comportment takes its shape in mimetic sympathy with (or shrinking recoil from) what I see and hear. If I am engaged by what I see, my intentionality streams toward the world onscreen, marking itself not merely in my conscious attention but always also in my bodily tension: the sometimes flagrant, sometimes subtle, but always dynamic investment, inclination, and arrangement of my material being. However, insofar as I cannot literally touch, smell, or taste the particular figure on the screen that solicits my sensual desire, my body's intentional trajectory, seeking a sensible object to fulfill this sensual solicitation, will *reverse its direction* to locate its partially frustrated sensual grasp on something more literally accessible. That more literally accessible sensual object is *my own subjectively felt lived body* [...] Thus, "on the rebound" from the screen – and without a reflective through – I will reflexively turn toward my own carnal, sensual, and sensible being to touch myself touching, smell myself smelling, taste myself tasting, and, in sum, sense my own sensuality.'⁵⁴

In my own particular experience of film viewing, I could feel the coolness of the water, the calmness of a snowy afternoon and the baking heat of the sun because the intentional trajectory of my body engaged them onscreen and in a reflexive move reversed its trajectory to my own sensuality that was sitting in readiness.

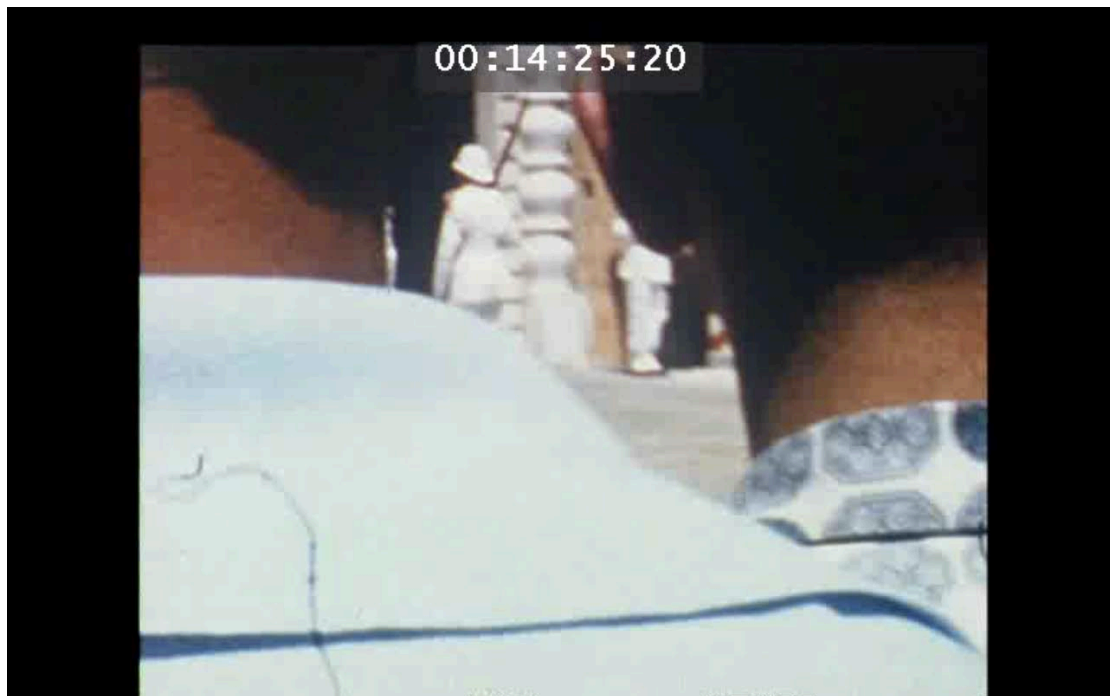
A further scene taken from the same holiday video clarifies this sensual grasp once we examine it in terms of a specific texture that solicits my engagement. The referred-to images were taken on an outing to a nearby city while on holiday, and this by the same filmmaker who also gave us the imagery of water trickling from a pipe. While J.-P. K.⁵⁵ films his wife and their friends picking out delicacies at the local market, my engagement with the images does not go beyond a certain general and diffused interest. He then films the changing of the guards in front of a local castle. Because he is standing in the second row, the frame includes the backs of the men in front of him

⁵⁴ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 76–77.

⁵⁵ AV035027 / IA_AMA_002880, 8mm, b&w and color, mute, 1960-1962

and they remain within the shot for the entire sequence. The two men in front of the filmmaker and framing the view of the guards who patrol the background are only partially visible. In fact, I only see a part of the back of their heads and a piece of their shirt collars. The one in the forefront wears a light blue shirt while the one next to him wears a light shirt with an ornamental pattern. The light blue shirt takes up almost three quarters of the frame. For some reason, the texture of the shirts sensually engrossed me. In typical 1960s fashion, the shirt had been starched within an inch of its life. I could even smell the laundered freshness that generally emanates from clothin once it is exposed to the sun as well as the musty smell of people sweating in the baking sun.

Figure 4



Further, I could feel the crispness of these shirt collars from their perceived texture. The implications of the synaesthetic exchange between a seen (the shirt collar) and its translation into another sensual modality (touch) will be elaborated shortly; what becomes important here, however, is the manner in which I reflexively experience the stiffness of the collar, the smell of laundered tissue and the heat of the sun as reversibility in the flesh. This sensuality emerges from and within relationality. I am implicated in a zone of contact. I become part of the connective tissue that is flesh as a

deeply material and existential manifold. This is carnal viewership as reversibility; ‘[i]ndeed, this reflexive and reflective exchange between and diffusion of my “sense” of touch in both the literal and the figural has opened me to *all* these fabrics and their textures – indeed, has made the literal touch of even a specific fabric on my skin an overwhelmingly *general* and intensely *extensive* mode of being.’⁵⁶ Naturally, I can never feel the image in the distinct manner in which I feel my fingers typing these words on my keyboard for example. Nevertheless, the sensual engagement I experience in the film viewing lies neither in the object (film) nor in my own corporeal basis, but unfolds in the reversibility of the contact zone itself. What I experience is not the literal crispness of the shirt, but my own incorporation in the materiality of the flesh. This sensual diffusion and transference not only pertains to a fleshy engagement between world and subject, but also relates to diffusion in the sensorium itself. The reversibility in the flesh not only negates a concrete body-mind dichotomy, but also renders a clear division between the senses void. After all, how can I experience a sense of touch and being touched when the only means of sensual access I have is the visual and visible? I would like to briefly expand on the transferring connotations that underlie the sensual relation between body and image in the viewing.

5. Synaesthesia and Coenaesthesia

L.K.⁵⁷, one of my favorite filmmakers⁵⁸, focuses almost exclusively on his wife and daughter. He mostly displays a filmic mode of the family chronicle. Nevertheless, he also presents a style that is more in line with d&a drives since he often films the family from a certain distance, careful to include whole figures rather than hectically zooming in. He films Sunday outings with the grandparents, he includes footage on Saint Nicholas’ day, he proudly includes lengthy shots of his house, the well-kept geranium pots and the all nightly bedtime ritual of bathing, praying and the putting to bed of their toddler. Still, his films present numerous moments of incredible beauty which, in their everyday-ness, become extraordinary. One such sequence stands out

⁵⁶ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 78–79.

⁵⁷ AV026322 / IA_AMA_002770, 8mm, color, mute, 1962

⁵⁸ AV026322 / IA_AMA_002770, 8mm, colour, mute, 1962

especially. Both parents are older than other couples in my film corpus. We can assume that the parents were in their forties when they had their daughter. Not surprisingly, the filmic focus lies especially on the child engaged in certain activities. One scene touched me in particular. The daughter and mother are sitting in the living room in their nightgowns. The light that shines through the window indicates late morning.

Figure 5



The mother is blowing soap bubbles with their circa four-year-old daughter, unconcerned by potential soap stains on the furniture. The room fills up with iridescent bubbles that shimmer in the sunlight. The daughter looks on fascinated and surprisingly does not attempt to make them pop immediately. The fragility of the semi-translucent bubbles floating amongst the sturdiness of their furniture in the living room provokes an extreme desire to touch them and make them burst. I could feel a twitch in my fingers, a concrete physical reaction rather than a cognitive result of a seen on screen. I did not reflectively think I would like to burst these bubbles but could feel in my body sitting in potential readiness a touching sensation. This sensation presented itself as diffused and generalized rather than particular. Vivian Sobchack speaks of a similar experience she had while watching the opening scene of

the 2002 film *The Pianist* by Roman Polanski. Before she consciously re-cognized what would later turn out to be fingers but could not be discerned as such at first, she describes how she materially *knew* what she was looking at as carnal knowledge.

She writes: '[f]rom the first (although I didn't consciously know it until the second shot), my fingers *comprehended* that image, *grasped* it with a nearly imperceptible tingle of attention and anticipation and, offscreen, "felt themselves" as a potentiality in the subjective and fleshy situation figured onscreen.'⁵⁹ My desire to burst these soapy bubbles onscreen was felt as a tingle in my own fingers. This situation illustrates perfectly how my own body, and that of every subject viewing a film, always sits as a potentiality in the seen onscreen. The structure implies a translation of one sense to another. When I saw the bubbles, the always-imminent potentiality that is my active body manifested itself in the tingle in my fingers. By now, the term synaesthesia has entered public consciousness as the reversible relation between two senses. Generally considered abnormal but not pathological, most people assume synaesthesia to be quite rare and restricted to certain people. It is generally assumed that synaesthesia refers to extreme situations in which a person would, for example, see shapes when listening to music. Even though, of course, such cases are well documented, Sobchack makes a compelling case for all experience being synaesthetic as sensual engagement is always also a transferal and an oscillation between the senses. Sobchack furthermore terms the engagement coenaesthetic, naming the oscillations in inflection underlying the sensorium. The entire sensorium comes to constitute what we call perception. Within perception, the senses not only engage in a transferal from one modality to another, but also do so in always differently inflected manners, which Sobchack terms coenaesthetic. Perception as the sensorium that grants access to the world presents the different sensual modalities as only retrospectively distinguished and hierarchized. Within perception, different sensual modalities are not only cross-referential, they constantly oscillate in strength and inflection. This is why a visual experience can incite a sense of touch, smell, and taste within my body. The sensual access of vision is cross-referenced in the sensorium of perception. Just as the face of a loved person might inspire the desire to touch, so certain images incite in me a direct physical reaction.

⁵⁹ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 63.

Let us consider another example. N.K.⁶⁰ films his boys playing in the living room. They are alternately wearing cowboy hats and generally roughhousing. The mother sits on the couch and looks on. As the youngest sits next to her, she affectionately takes his arm. The couch is dark gray, striped, and covered in rough velvet upholstery. She is wearing a dress that reaches to her knees and parts of her legs touch the surface of the couch.

Figure 6



Immediately, and without a thought, I get a sense of the scratchy surface of the couch touching flesh. The access I have to the image is visual, but in a pre-reflective engagement with the seen, I immediately get the sense of scratchy fabric touching bare flesh. Again, Elaine Scarry comes to mind when she states that: “[a] visual event may reproduce itself in the realm of touch (as when the seen face incites an ache of longing in the hand) ... This crisscrossing of the senses may happen in any direction.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ AV036201 / IA_AMA_002913, 8mm, color, mute, 1965

⁶¹ Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4.

Another example might illustrate this primordial sensual re-action to a seen. J.-P. K.,⁶² the filmmaker who brought us the visuals of water trickling from a pipe, films the preparations for a barbecue in the same filmic sequence. His wife and a few friends plus children are present, and the barbecue is set up outside. The beach is seen in the background and everyone is wearing swimming gear. They have either bought or caught a fish, and the mother is holding it up while a friend jokingly smells the fish. I have always hated fish with a passion. Not only could I never tolerate the smell or taste of it, I also feel physically nauseated by the mere sight of it. Seeing the images, before catching sight of the fish, my attention is generally diffused. I enjoy the sun-drenched beach in the background and the general activity of people walking in and out of the frame. Catching sight of the fish, I feel myself physically recoiling. One man even kisses the fish. I physically moved back in my seat in order to get ‘away’ from it. Even writing about fish here makes me feel slightly queasy.

Figure 7



The physical recoil is a prime example of a gut reaction that illustrates the synaesthetic and coenaesthetic cross-modality of the senses, albeit not as a drawing-in, but as a shrinking-from. Just as a certain texture seen on screen can incite a desire

⁶² AV035027 / IA_AMA_002880, 8mm, b&w and color, mute, 1960-1962

to touch, other textures can provoke a reaction to reject. What these examples show, in reverse directions, is how the sensorial access of perception is a highly fluctuating and primordially undistinguished realm. In this engagement, the perceptual trajectory functions as a back-and-forth that also points back at my body. When witnessing a view that disgusts me, my body here is literally thrown back rather than drawn in. As such, this throw-back comes to illustrate by contrast exactly how intimately we engage with the image across the complete sensorium. The access to the world through the senses is thus cross-referential and vacillatingly inflected. The coenaesthetic vacillation of the sensorium thus also identifies the sensorium as only retrospectively hierarchized. Sobchack recognizes the cultural organization of the senses with ‘the power of history and culture regulating their boundaries as it arranges them into a normative hierarchy.’⁶³ We will come back to these cultural inflections of sensorial access in a short while. I would like to elaborate on these sensual engagements that prick us in a very similar manner to Roland Barthes’s *punctum* in order to ascertain what exactly it is that provokes such an engagement.

6. Punctum

These engrossing moments come to represent moments of a common sensual engagement that underlies all viewership, even if in a strongly inflected implication. These moments can in fact be characterized as Roland Barthes’s famous *punctum*. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes defines the *punctum* as ‘that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).’ Such a moment is also characterized as ‘sting, speck, cut, little hole.’⁶⁴ Such an “pricking” experience is provoked by ‘the individual detail that escapes the conventional language of the image and addresses the viewer in a direct and physical way – a real gut reaction.’⁶⁵ While Barthes relates the *punctum* to the still image, I think the early fascination displayed by audiences of Lumière’s rendition of the feeding of a baby proves that it is not exclusively related to still images. After all, early audiences seemed more fascinated with the wind rustling the

⁶³ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 69.

⁶⁴ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage Classics (London: Vintage, 2000), 27.

⁶⁵ Nead, Lynda. “Animating the Everyday: London on Camera circa 1900”. McQuire, *Visions of Modernity*, 84–85.

trees in the background than by the antics of the baby in the foreground. For example, '[t]he magic lanternist G.R. Baker was among a number of contemporary commentators who were astonished by the rendering of detail in moving pictures: "The marvelous detail, even to the puffs of smoke from the cigarette, spoke volumes for the perfection of the apparatus employed."' ⁶⁶ The physical gut reaction that bespeaks the *punctum* is thus exactly that sensual engagement that Sobchack describes phenomenologically. It is neither voluntary nor reflected, but it can also never be sustained continuously. While I engage with all images through the sensorium (as the primary base of all signification), it is only in moments of stronger inflection that they come to the fore in as strong a response as a gut reaction.

The question remains as to why I am so strongly inflicted by certain images, but not by all. Why is it that the starched collar provokes a sensual engagement, but the multitude of dresses, suits, hats, bathing suits etc. leave me but partially interested? A clear answer is impossible; however, I think that what happens in moments like these is a voluntary movement of decentering. We have already elaborated the concept of decentering in the previous chapter from the point of view of the expressive activity of filmmaking. Here the structures that underlie the relationality between the world and the subject are similar, albeit from a different position. The confrontation with something beautiful or extraordinary provokes such a decentering of my own existential ground. The experience of the *punctum* emerges from the relationality between the subject and the world. It transpires from a profound engagement that provokes feeling of passionate intertwining. The diffusion of subjective intentionality in the flesh of the world can either be presented as uncanny, as in the case of Jean-Paul Sartre's Roquentin in *Nausea* ⁶⁷ who experiences the manifold flesh as threatening, or such an experience can provoke feelings of fervent devotion.

⁶⁶ Mark-Paul Meyer quoted in: Nead, Lynda. "Animating the Everyday: London on Camera circa 1900". *ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁷ Roquentin's threatening and alienating encounter with a chestnut tree: "I felt with boredom that I had no way of understanding. No way. Yet it was there, waiting, looking at one. It was there on the trunk of the chestnut tree...it was the chestnut tree." Jean-Paul Sartre and Lloyd Alexander, *Nausea*, A New Directions Paperbook 1073 (New York: New Direction, 2007), 135ff.

As we have seen, sunsets prove extremely popular within all styles of amateur filmmaking. These images can be linked to a petit-bourgeois aesthetic of a kitschy cliché. Nevertheless, watching these images provokes a completely different engagement than a mere sociological interest in their socially inflected aesthetic. L.G.⁶⁸ for example films different landscape features in quick succession. All views are devoid of human presence. We are presented with several quick shots of a winter landscape in the forest. He focuses on branches covered with snow. The skies are blue, and the sun is shining, making the snow glitter in different colors. He loves to film from a low angle up into the sky through branches. His filming is not quite steady, and he changes focus frequently; nevertheless, we get the sense of a day enjoyed in the forest. Next, he focuses on branches of a shrub bending under the weight of the snowy masses. After a couple of seconds, we are presented with a view of a thicket of branches and trees through which the sun is shining. It is the beginning of a sunset, and the orange light illuminates imagery and scenery. The next shot shows us an open landscape with a factory outlined against the sun setting in the sky. He rapidly zooms in on the chimney and heavy cloud of smoke that hovers above it. The following shot is again taken in the forest. This time, he is standing in front of a hillside covered with snow, and the top part is lined with trees. Through the trees, the sun is touching the line of the hillside.

⁶⁸ AV032948 / IA_AMA_001816, Super 8, color, mute, 1973

Figure 8



In the next sequence, the sun has almost set, and the color scheme has changed. The forest scape is now presented in a deep orange, purple and blue scheme, rendering the landscape almost surreal. The succeeding scene shows a sun that is no longer visible, but the sky is still orange, purple and red, and we see a pastoral outline with a church figuring against the dusk horizon. The next few seconds show us a thicket of branches and trees with the sun still shining through. The branches are gently swaying in the wind, rendering the shot alive and suffused with movement. After this, a darkish blue sky appears while with half the frame is filled with an enormous white cloud. In the second to last shot, we see the sky in full sunset, perfused with colors, stretching outwards towards us. On the left of the frame, branches become shadowy outlines, and the clouds in the sky seem to direct the scene towards us. In the last shot, L.G. has not changed his position but films the wonderful color scheme of the sun in a medium close-up.



While some branches are still framing the scene, the sun and its strong emulsion of orange light render the scene almost abstract. We are presented with a view of pure color, a fireball set against a dark sky. If not for the branches and their slight sway in the breeze, we would think ourselves staring at a painting.



I have seen my fair share of sunsets. I have been in the forest numerous times and I have seen snow at least once a year for thirty-two years. Why does the imagery still touch me so much if there are no people populating the screen and no specific activity takes place? As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the subject encountering beauty in the world, experiences the correlational engagement as passionate devotion. Furthermore, this devotion inspires the desire to create and to protect. Protection, here, is not Baudrillard's bourgeois encasing in metaphorical flower pots,⁶⁹ but comes to relate to a careful concern for the fleshy materiality that is common to world and subject. Witnessing the gradual unfolding of the sunset in the video, as Sobchack notes, 'we can lose sight of our egological selves enough to be passionately devoted to and transcendently moved by the sublimity of a sunset or landscape.'⁷⁰ When we witness moments of beauty, which also abound in amateur films, we undergo a passionate and voluntary decentering. We are implicated in a moment of transcendence that is not metaphysical, but directly material. Again, Elaine Scarry writes of exactly such a phenomenological decentering in her work *Beauty and Being Just*:

'When we come upon beautiful things-the tiny mauve-orange-blue moth on the brick, Augustine's cake, a sentence about innocence in Hampshire – they act like small tears in the surface of the world that pull us through to some vaster space ...It is not that we cease to stand at the center of the world, for we never stood there. It is that we cease to stand even at the center of our own world. We willingly cede our ground to the thing that stands before us ...'⁷¹

The trickling of water from a pipe, the calmness of a snowy landscape, the way in which the lighting hits us just so, present moments that 'act like small tears in the surface of the world.' Here, Barthes's punctum is presented as radically material and sensual experience. Barthes's vocabulary reinforces the fleshy materiality in which sensual engagement is not only reciprocated, but diffuses. Let us consider for a moment Barthes's choice of words regarding the punctum: 'for *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole [...]'⁷². This cut or little hole very much reminds of Scarry's

⁶⁹ see Jean Baudrillard, "La morale des objets," *Communications* 13, no. 1 (1969): 23–50.

⁷⁰ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 295–96.

⁷¹ Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, 111.

⁷² Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 27.

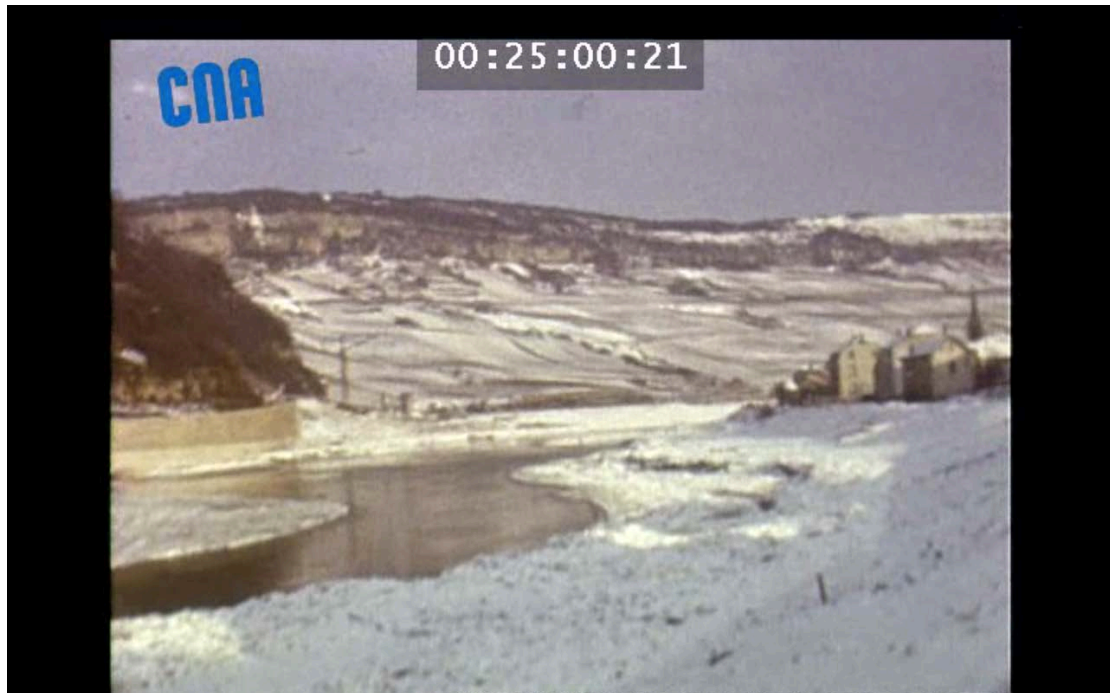
‘tears in the surface of the world.’ These moments that prick the viewing subject sensually thus provoke a sensual diffusion in which we are drawn or pulled to some vaster space. I would argue that this vaster space is exactly that fleshy materiality that is common to subject and world. A slight variation in inflection, if not structure, can be observed in the sensual engagement with images. Here the *punctum* is experienced carnally.

The relation I experience with regards to landscapes and sunsets presents itself somehow different to the relationality with the tactility of a texture onscreen or the engagement with trickling water. The sensual engagement with a provoking texture or sight on screen relates more to an experience of *punctum* as point. The point is here a visual that pricks me and provokes a sensual engagement. The trajectory or directionality of the senses can be imagined as pointed in that they reach out towards a specific point onscreen. The physical reaction is presented as sharp and poignant. Without conscious thought or action on my part, the sensuality underlying the relation between body and image is altered and directed towards the object that elicits it. The rough velvet of the couch in the living room alters my diffused trajectory and narrows it to the *punctum* of the image and reflexively points the sensuality of it back to my own body. Here, a tunnel shape characterizes the back and forth of sensual relations that reflexively situated my body as well. The moment that pricks my body, the water that trickles, the fish that makes me recoil, the velvety scratch on bare legs, not only point at my body, they effectively pin its materiality. Here, the sensual engagement provoked by the visual reflexively relates back to my own lived materiality. This is the physical gut reaction that acts almost as material shock. The sensual engagement, while originating in the relation between body and image, effectively impacts my own body.

The engagement with a sunset or winter landscape affects me differently. The experience somehow feels less pointed (as would be the case with an experiential *punctum*) and more diffused. While on an outing with his toddler daughter and her mother, L.K.⁷³ films the icy banks of a river in winter. While in his other films, the daughter proves the clear focus, here; he leisurely roams the landscape in front of him.

⁷³ AV026322 / IA_AMA_002770, 8mm, colour, mute, 1962

Figure 9



The river is partially frozen and floes of ice stretch from the riverbanks to the inside where water is still flowing. The scenery includes snow-covered vineyards that frame the river twisting through them. He includes sequences that show the snow and ice-covered docks and films the small rowing boats that are immobilized in the ice. With only a few cuts, and one sequence showing his wife and child sitting in the car waiting for him from behind, he takes care to film the landscape slowly and deliberately. Slow zooms and leisurely pans relay the scenery. The landscape is devoid of human presence apart from a few iceskaters in the distance. The atmosphere is one of hushed stillness. The sky is so bright as to be almost white, making a clear distinction between snow and horizon impossible. He films the landscape for 1:52 minutes. This duration is quite prolonged for amateur film sequences, especially for a scene depicting landscapes with no human activity. Something about this visual journey drew me in completely. I became completely immersed in the calmness that perfused the images. While there was not one specific detail that caught my eye, the gaze diffused over the visual field in its entirety.

What I live here, is the film's unfolding rather than the punctum's moment. I also come to experience the film's intentionality that comes-into-being in temporality. My senses are not only diffused in the landscape and the slow unfolding the visuals present, but also in filmic duration. Here, the engagement, does not sharply point back at my body, but my perceptual sensorium stretches outward and diffuses within the image.

While the punctum points back at me and provokes a physical reaction that is directly felt in the lived body, the diffusion provoked by a landscape or sunset decenters my general sensorium and positions it onscreen (though, never exclusively so). Naturally, such a decentering of subjective emplacement can occur in the engagement with a punctum moment as well. Still, here the more general diffusion points to a revelation in an existential manifold that inherently presents itself as non-anthropocentric as well. Diffusion also functions as expansion. What I take in, as a body sitting in potentiality is the existential manifold that always negates human centrality. This experience can either be threatening or liberating. The relationality of the existential manifold as flesh, also inherently denies the human being a central position. Flesh is non-anthropocentric and while most of the time we navigate the lifeworld as ours, certain moments present themselves in which the non-anthropocentric quality of the flesh presents itself either as passionate devotion or threatening nihility. Naturally such passionate devotion or threatening nihility are felt in a diffused and generalized way, not in the manner in which Roquentin, for example, feels the non-anthropocentric presence of common materiality. The threat inherent in the world as flesh lies in an awareness of the body being not only a subject, but a material object as well. Think of the inherent helplessness of a body thrown in the world. A body that is objective can always also be acted upon. Accidents and happenstance always lurk at the periphery of our existential awareness. In the words of Vivian Sobchack: 'Indeed, the facticity of our matter – and of our mattering – is precisely in this objective thrown-ness: in the utterly unique and constantly self-displacing specificity of "being just here" and "being just now" that each of us subjectively enjoys and suffers as we encounter the world and others in endless combinations of engagement.'⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 86.

While the home movie generally eclipses the happenstance of the world as flesh in order to create a filmic universe that conceals such a threatening presence, one moment comes to mind in which worldly contingency erupt in the filmic world. E.H.⁷⁵, one of the most avid d&a filmmakers, films while on an outing at the fairground. He carefully documents all the different elements and attractions at the fair, from rides to booths and show previews staged by showmen. One shot shows a crowd gathered and looking at something we cannot yet see. They stand in a half-circle formation and intently look in the same direction. No one is smiling and people look on earnestly. The next shot shows a street at the end of which another small crowd is gathered, effectively blocking the view onto what garners their attention. A small boy is running towards the crowd. In the next scene, he has moved closer and we now see that an ambulance is stationed in the street with a crowd gathered around it, trying to catch a look at what is going on. The police are present and one man tries to divert the crowd so that the ambulance can leave. E.H. then resumes filming at the fair. While nowadays we are used to the sensationalist capturing of events, such a scene is highly unusual in a film corpus that reaches until the 1970s.

Figure 10



⁷⁵ AV035945 / IA_AMA_001907, 8mm, colour, mute, 1958

The sight of the ambulance as such does not present a punctum moment. It functions more as a visual marker of contingency which can erupt at any moment. While not immediately engaged in sensually, the sight leaves a feeling of disquietude and the uncanny. In the single system of flesh and consciousness that is my body, this sense pervades the following visuals, which are tainted by the cognitive awareness of material happenstance. The sight of the ambulance triggers a reaction that is also cultural hermeneutically inflected. This sense of macro-perceptual inflections that are nevertheless based in a more micro-perceptual, bodily sensuality will be elaborated upon shortly with regards to cultural and historical backgrounds that inflect my own viewing experience. Here, I would like to illustrate, however, how the objective sense of the body in the fleshy manifold of experience can also provoke a joyful and liberating reaction.

When I sit through the duration of a lengthy sequence depicting a landscape, I also witness and experience an unfolding, a coming-into-being that is neither humanly centrified nor restricted to a particular object onscreen. Rather, the diffusion of my gaze in the visuals also expands my perceptual trajectory. My visual field, while not changing in scale, nevertheless expands to the plenitude of a universal manifold which, while threatening in its uncaring quality regarding my own existence, still induces a passionate intertwining in the common element of the flesh. The beautiful stillness of the winter landscape instills a sensual engagement in which my own subjectivity is no longer positioned in my body as subjective center, but comes to provoke a reveling in my own objectness as I diffuse my sensual access onscreen. Drawn in by the intentionality of the filmic gaze that is here non-anthropocentric, I come to experience a relation in which, as Sobchack notes in regards to the cinema of Kieslowski, ““man” is reduced as privileged “being,” but existence is amplified as an expansive field of “becoming.””⁷⁶ Again, it must be noted that amateur filmmakers never set out to capture the world as existential manifold, rather the experience of the reception of images implicates the viewer within an expansive field of becoming. The lack of human presence in a filmic sequence of this length induces a gaze in which the world looks back. However, this non-anthropocentric gaze is neither threatening nor reductive, but comes to reflexively situate me in the flesh as not only a subject that

⁷⁶ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 91.

means, but also an object that matters. The decentering that takes place provokes a general diffusion of my sensorium across the image. It situates my perceptual awareness in the flesh and the engagement in which I partake here, as Sobchack notes ‘*expands* to admit something *within* existence that is always potentially both awful and awesome in its obdurate materiality, its non-anthropocentric presence, and its assertion of the *existential equality* of all things, human, animate or otherwise. This vision of existential equality nullifies the primacy and privilege of human existence, meaning, and order yet simultaneously affirms human existence as always also transcendent and meaningful.’⁷⁷ Engaging with a sunset, winter landscape or a boat ride on a lake in all its duration, my position as supposed subjective center is undone and I give up notions of fixity. We do not only engage in a sensual decentering because we encounter something beautiful, but also find something beautiful because it provokes a voluntary decentering.

Witnessing the unfolding of a sunset, my senses are diffused in the materialism of the flesh. I engage in a relation in which vision is always also radically embodied. Furthermore, vision as flesh comes to constitute an impermanent realm in which, in the words of Amelia Jones, ‘flesh is an envelope, a “limit” inscribing the juncture between inside and outside but also the *site of their joining*.’⁷⁸ The gaze here functions in terms of contact zone, expansive and reversibly inflected. When my gaze diffuses in the landscape, I voluntarily engage in such a contact zone in which the fixity of my subjectivity is undone, since I commingle in the common materiality of world and subject, even filmic world and film viewing subject. I lose myself (sensually diffuse myself) in the site of joining between inside and outside. I lose myself in vision as flesh. Only in moments of almost meditative diffusion do I partake in an engagement in which it is specifically this ‘notion of a decentered gaze that opens on the universal surround as a constitutive emptiness.’⁷⁹ I recognize my own subjective access to the world as constitutive emptiness. This experience is, however, not alienating, but positively liberating in its re-cognition of an immersion in the common stuff of material embodiment.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 99.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 104.

This rather abstract notion of constitutive emptiness that is nevertheless always radically embodied is perhaps best exemplified by another wonderful image in L.K.⁸⁰'s renditions of different views taken in a snowy landscape. He is positioned on the right side of an empty street, lined with snow banks. Presumably the street has been cleared of snow earlier and the snow has been pushed to the side. A stiff wind is blowing from the left and carries wisps of snow over the street. The weather is harsher and somewhat more hostile than in the images that precede this sequence. The empty street makes the scene look more desolate; the sky is gray and murky rather than brilliantly blue. Still, this scene touched me like no other within the sequence. There was a quality about the harsh blowing of snow over an empty street that triggered a sense of fascination with a slight undercurrent of the uncanny.

Figure 11



These images captured the harshness and beauty of a winter landscape. The movement of the snow in the image does not induce a concretely focused figuring. Instead, the figure-ground relations that structure my visual field are diffused and thus expand to include visibility as fleshy manifold. Furthermore, the rendering visible of wind, an entity that normally escapes my gaze but is here visualized by the snow that

⁸⁰ AV026322 / IA_AMA_002770, 8mm, color, mute, 1962

moves across the street, also introduces a sense of existential presence that is deeply non-anthropocentric. The images instill a sense of loneliness and an uncanny feeling of harshness that has to do with the awareness of an existential presence that cares not about my supposed position at the center of my world. At the same time, a sense of liberation and openness structures this experience. The existential presence that is felt here is that of a plenitude of a manifold of which I am always part. Gaston Bachelard, in his habitual wonderfully poetic language, describes the experience as follows: ‘the winter cosmos is a simplified cosmos ... As a result of this universal whiteness, we feel a form of cosmic negation in action.’⁸¹ The expansion of my perception across a decentered space is one which Norman Bryson terms an experience in which ‘visuality is traversed by something wholly ungovernable by the subject.’⁸² The uncanny and the liberating present two axes of inflection that oscillate in this experience of finding oneself sensually decentered in the common materiality of world and subject. Within image reception, my own status as material object is brought to the fore in this diffusion and expansion of the gaze in the existential manifold of a world that reveals its presence as non-anthropocentric. The lengthy sequences of landscapes, sunsets, and boat rides engage me sensually because they induce a voluntary decentering in the existential manifold of the flesh. The incentive of the images thus goes beyond a petit-bourgeois aesthetics that only engages my interest on the surface. The frequency and popularity of such scenery and the sheer duration of these scenes also make me share the awe with which a filmmaking subject stood before the world in all its existential plenitude. What I sense in the image is a highly complex gestalting that brings to the fore a network of presence in the flesh: I experience not only the filmmaker’s bygone expression, the film’s own intentional trajectory, but also my own diffusion in the flesh. In what follows, I would elaborate on this complex interweaving of sensual engagement with the seen in order to examine notions of intersubjectivity that can partially bridge temporal and spatial limits. In the end, the complexity of engagements in the viewing experience provides me with a primordial access to a filmic world. A sensual engagement with moving imagery brings into being a notion of meaning as already fleshed out rather than an exclusively cognitive knowledge production. Within a phenomenological approach,

⁸¹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 41.

⁸² Norman Bryson, “The Gaze in the Expanded Field,” in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: WA: Bay Press, 1988), 91.

knowledge generation imposed 'from above' simply makes no sense, since I bring my own materiality to the viewing situation.

7. Immersion

Robin Curtis' elaboration on immersion in many regards concurs with Vivian Sobchack's synaesthetic relationality in the film experience. He also takes film as somatic landscape in which complex sensorial cross-modalities are experienced in the perceptual compound of the film experience. He couples this synaesthetic experience to the terminology of immersive experience. He sees the exclusive application of immersion to the field of virtual reality media as restrictive and postulates a more popular understanding of immersion in an experience of the imaginary. He moves in close terminological affinity to Allison Griffith's definition of immersion 'as that sense of being in closer communion with something other than the here and now, something that takes us into a "virtual" reality that could be defined as an interstitial space where we are never fully "there" because our bodies can never fully leave the "here."' ⁸³ Immersive spaces are here related 'as spaces where the senses are heightened through an embodied mode of spectatorship.' ⁸⁴ While Griffiths distinguishes between representational realism and experiential realism within cinematic experience and sides immersion with the former, I would like to have a closer look at Curtis's more expansive experience of immersion. He states that immersion is not exclusively the transposal of a viewer into an other space, but also always an experience that induces a softening of the very contours of subject and subjectivity. ⁸⁵ This softening of the contours of subjectivity relates to a softening of the culturally imposed hierarchization of the senses. Curtis relates experience as immersion to the roller coaster and the fun house at the fairground in order to show how a synaesthetic understanding of the senses can illustrate how a subject's perception is always also a cross-modal experience. He compares the experience of

⁸³ Alison Griffiths, *Shivers down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View*, Film and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 285.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Curtis, Robin. "SYNÄTHESIE UND IMMERSION Räumliche Effekt der Bewegung". Robin Curtis, Marc Glöde, and Gertrud Koch, *Synästhesie-Effekte: Zur Intermodalität der ästhetischen Wahrnehmung* (Paderborn: Fink, Wilhelm, 2008), 136.

the roller coaster to the early cinema attraction of the phantom ride and illustrates how the experience of the latter presents similar principles of movement to the former. Both need a rapid forward movement in real time.⁸⁶ He realizes that an illusionary reconstruction of a three-dimensional space is not necessary for an experience to become immersive. Rather, immersion relates to the fundamental manner in which senses are first of all cross-modal, and second, how the capacity for imagination substitutes for eventual gaps between the experience and the spatiality of the ride. Differently put, he realizes that a subject has the capacity to imagine and thus partially bridge an experiential gap. This also leads him to realize that perceptual awareness is not bound to a mimicking of conditions of realism. Immersion as the experience of a heightening of the senses is thus no longer exclusively bound to a perfecting of the virtual space, but becomes an effect of the very capacity of the perceptual sensorium.

As we have seen, the perceptual sensorium has the capacity for cross-modality in that a seen provokes a taste for example. This, of course, has been elaborated in view of Sobchack's reversibility of the senses in which a seen onscreen is reflexively positioned in the body and is grasped as taste, smell and the desire to touch etc. Because I can, for example, never literally touch a seen onscreen, the experience also presents a notion of gap, what Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls an *écart*.⁸⁷ Curtis relates to this gap and positions its partial bridging in the inherent capacity of imagination. In cases in which we experience a heightened embodied experience, the imagination and the synaesthetic cross-modality of the sensorium provoke an experience of immersion. What is important to note here is the fact that, for Curtis, immersion is an *effect* of the inherent capacities of the perceptual compound of the sensorium rather than an effect of the object or experience that provokes it. What this means is that we become immersed in an experience, such as film viewing, not because the images are immersive, but because the images provoke a cross-modal perceptual experience that becomes immersive as *effect*. Curtis compares the notion of imagination as bridging to the capacity for empathy. Both relate to a capacity for partial softening or disintegration of the difference between self and other. Curtis notes that both provoke a softening or disintegration of integrity between self and other. Here the sensory

⁸⁶ Curtis, Robin. "SYNÄTHESIE UND IMMERSION Räumliche Effekt der Bewegung". Ibid., 140.

⁸⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception*, 2002, 108, 241, 388, 389.

experience involves a provocation of a liberating sense of proprioception. Proprioception is characterized as sense ‘der auf Reizen von Körperteilen wie Muskeln, Sehnen und Innenohr beruhende Sinn, dessen man sich bedient, um seine Position relativ zum eigenen Körper und zum unmittelbar umgebenden Raum zu beurteilen.’⁸⁸

For example, the experience of the roller coaster and the experience of viewing a phantom ride present a similar experience of proprioceptive liberation since provoked with a seen on screen, the subject can bridge the gap between vision and proprioceptive motion through the imagination that softens the barriers between self and other. Naturally, such an experience can never be sustained for long, but it comes to illustrate the inherent attraction of images that emulate principles of proprioceptive liberation. Because what the subject actually experiences is the liberating capability of his/her own sensorium, the effect of the images is immersion. In fact, the attraction lies within the essential abilities of the perceptual sensorium rather than the actual experience itself.

In Chapter three, the films of attractional display have been treated in terms of their inherent attraction that transposes seeing into spectacle-seeing. Here I would like to add on to this attractional draw by positioning the attraction not in the experience but in the very capacities of the sensorium that come to the fore in the experience. In the views of attraction display, the inherent attraction lies within the coming-to-the-fore of sensorial capabilities, not within the attraction presented. The attraction has the capacity to draw out the synaesthetic and imaginary capabilities of the perceptual sensorium, and this makes the experience not only attractional but also immersive.

In Chapter three, we have identified certain views of attractional display, the most strongly inflected of which were films taken on the thrill ride (ad-3) and views that present disembodied lights in motion (ad-2). Viewing these films makes for an ambiguous experience. On the one hand, they can induce a sense of liberating

⁸⁸ ‘sense based on the stimulation of body parts such as muscles, tendons and the inner ear which we use to assess our position relative to our own body and the immediately surrounding area.’

Barker, Jennifer M., “NICHT SYNCHRON, NICHT SICHTBAR Synästhesie und Filmereignis“. Curtis, Glöde, and Koch, *Synästhesie-Effekte*, 76–77.

disintegration of spatial vectors and thus make for a proprioceptive loosening that is attractional. On the other hand, if they last for a certain amount of time, they can become disconcerting. As one scholar remarked at a conference in which I showed some of the material: ‘one feels almost seasick.’ Viewing these sequences projected on screen, the experience I had was highly immersive and in the following, I would like to briefly illustrate not only why these views provoke an immersive experience, but also why they can not be sustained lest they become unnerving.

A.D.⁸⁹ loves filming the spectacle of the fairground. I would like to come back to her filming while on a thrill ride which presents a structure of two arms attached to a pillar as center. Each “arm” presents a carriage attached to it. The carriage itself presents a cage-like shape. The arms are rotating in reversed directions.

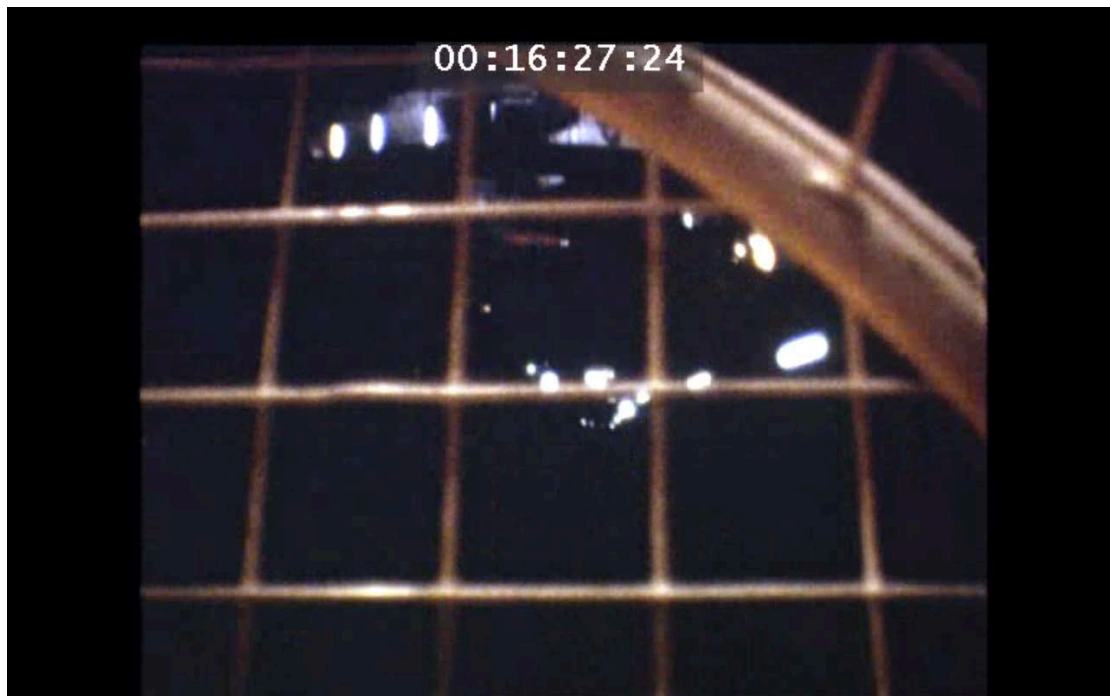
Figure 12



A.D. first films the ride from the outside, and the next images are taken on the ride in motion. I only recognized the ride because of the preceding image and the steel construction of the carriage. The images taken on the ride become a dizzying disarray

⁸⁹ AV035249 / IA_AMA_001051, super 8, color, mute, 1975

of lighted views that relate an experience in which the fairground seems to be in motion. The views alternate between a completely black night sky and the lights of the fairground coming into view once the carriage tilts down. At first, we can still discern the booth of the ride that comes into view as long as the carriage only swings back and forth in a slower motion at the beginning. As the ride gains in momentum, any discernibility as to clear structures or views disappears.



The only view that remains constant is the steel construction of the carriage through which she films. Images of non-discernible lighted shapes flit past in a circular, rotating motion. First, the experience of viewing these images are thrilling; however, after a while, the shaky rotating motion induces something akin to nausea. Here we witness not only a disintegration of normalizing proprioceptive conditions, but also an externalization of motion to the world. The manner in which a subject navigates the world, as we have seen above, positions the body as center of perceptual relations. The proprioceptive norm positions the body as ground and center of motility from which actions are directed. Here, the world is perceived in motion while the body remains immobilized. The gravitational center of perceptual relations is relegated to the world. Nevertheless, I am not seated on the ride; I “only” view images that present the experience in dizzying motion. Still, the synaesthetic organization of my sensorium relegates the experience as proprioceptive liberation. First of all, I can experience the proprioceptive liberation of the views presented here, since the synaesthetic cross-modality of my sensorium has the inherent capacity to translate the seen into a partial experience of proprioceptive liberation from the body as center of motility. At the same time, the experience is one of immersion. Because the synaesthetic transferal of the seen into proprioceptive liberation rises to the fore in the viewing experience, the effect is one of immersion. I become immersed in the images, because I experience the synaesthetic imagination that is my perceptual awareness. Here lies the attraction of these images. The attraction lies in the capacity of my sensorium that rises to the fore, rather than in the experience of the thrill rides itself. Still, after a while I feel nauseated and seasick. While the sensorium has the inherent *capacity* to transfer the seen into proprioceptive experiencing, the relegation of motion to the world and the immobilization of the body, while liberating at first, becomes threatening after a while. This has to do with the fact that even if my sensorium has the capacity to cross-modally move across the sensorium, the proprioceptive grounding of body as center of motility also provides the primary function of my navigation. For example, I need my body as gravitational center of motility; otherwise an action as simple as walking to the door would prove impossible. I need the proprioceptive grounding of my body as center in order to navigate my lifeworld. While the liberation of the body as center of motility proves

thrilling as attraction, once it extends beyond a momentary liberation, it translates as nausea.

For Curtis, then, the vivacity and intensity of certain images lies within the inherent capabilities of the sensorium. Their attractional quality lies not within image, but within our own perceptual potentials.

‘Stattdessen scheint die Plastizität der Erfahrung eines bewegten Bildes auch ein Produkt des menschlichen Wahrnehmungsapparats zu sein, und zwar (unter anderem) das Ergebnis intermodaler Wahrnehmung beziehungsweise amodaler Repräsentation – das heißt von zusammengesetzten Effekten der Wahrnehmung wie Intensität, Vitalität oder Rhythmus.’⁹⁰

Curtis explains that the potential for intensity and vivacity of the image finds its origin in the perceptive sensorium, not in the image itself. The rhythm of ad images, their abstract nature and intensity are only experienced because of our surprising potential effectuated by the sensorium. In the everyday, this inherent capability is suppressed as we need to body to function as gravitational center. What becomes thrilling and surprising, then, is the temporal suspension of body as navigational center and the inherent potential for normally ‘unexperienceable’ intensities. He sees it as the combined effect of how perception is always also organized in terms of intensity, vitality, and rhythm. The dizzying array of moving lights that exteriorizes motion from the body to the world thus finds its origin in the perceptive capacity. The experience becomes thrilling because I experience my perception’s internal capacity for cross-modality and the disintegration of normalizing principles of grounding proprioception. The attraction hence lies in the disintegration of perceptual hierarchization of the senses that rises to the fore and of which I am not aware in the everyday. This makes for an experience of thrilling immersion in which the normalizing boundaries that organize the sensorium are softened. It makes for an immersion in the very softening of perceptive boundaries in which I, as a body, am

⁹⁰‘Instead, the plasticity of the experience of a moving image appears to be an effect of the human sensorium, and more concretely (amongst others) the effect of an intermodal perception or amodal representation respectively—meaning of composite of perceptual effects such as intensity, vitality, or rhythm.’

Curtis, Robin. “SYNÄTHESIE UND IMMERSION Räumliche Effekt der Bewegung“. Curtis, Glöde, and Koch, *Synästhesie-Effekte*, 144.

diffused in the outside in motion. The attraction thus lies within the experience of my sensorium's inherent capacity for disintegration. Still, in order to function as navigational center in my lifeworld, this experience needs temporal limits. As soon as the experience becomes too intense or prolonged, I am propelled from the immersive experience that is now relegated to a desire to return to proprioceptive grounding. Simply put, enough is enough.

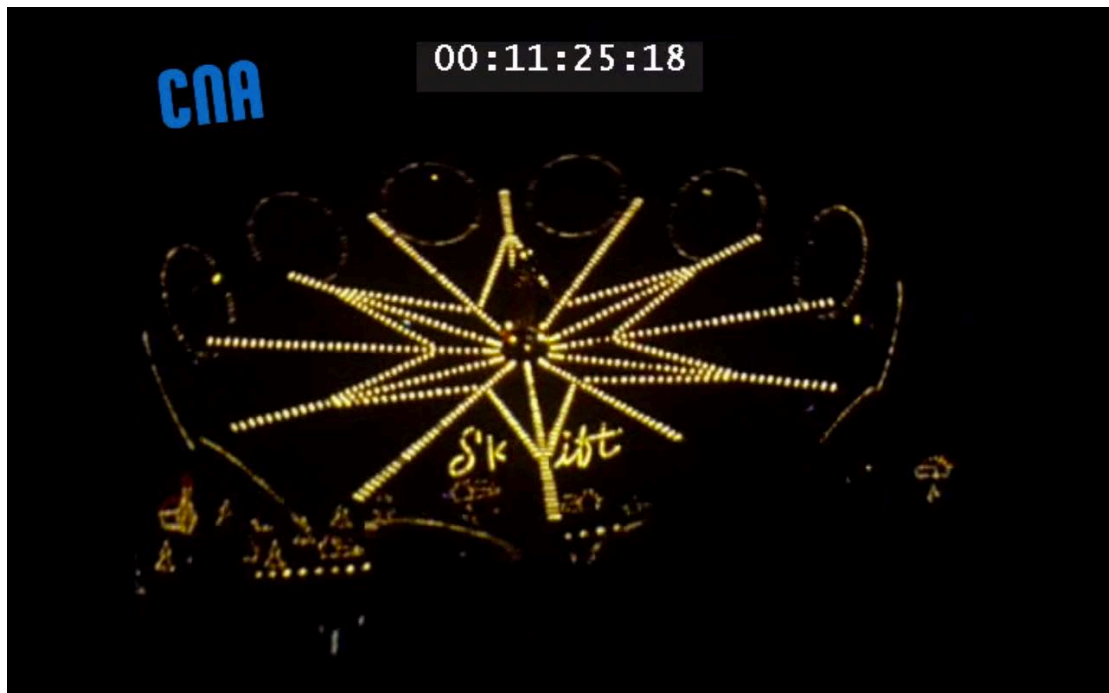
Ad-2 visuals bring to the fore the inherent fascination of cinematic vision. I come to share the attractional qualities of cinematic perception. In fact, ad-2 images represent a sort of crystallized visualization of the mechanical difference of cinematic seeing. We have stressed again and again how cinematic seeing becomes understandable and recognizable since I understand its intentionality as quasi-intentionality. We have also stressed how this recognition presents a gap or *écart*, since I can never adopt cinematic devices such as the close-up, pans, zooms, etc. I would argue that what makes the ad-2 images attractional is the coming-to-the-fore of this *écart* and the sensorial capacity to experience the alterity of cinematic vision. Again, what constitutes cinematic vision? Cinematic vision represents self-motion that is shared by the immobilized viewer. If we further cinematic seeing, it also represents a manner of negative seeing. It presents a medium made of light. It lights up its images. In fact, the inherent fascination for the cinematic image is the play of light and its visual objects that are constituted of lights. Cinematic vision also needs darkness to unfold its full effect. It needs the surrounding invisibility in order for its images to light up. In organic vision, light has a similar but inverse role. Here light in fact provides the invisible condition of visibility. In cinematic vision, darkness presents the condition of visibility for lighted objects to show up. Again, we are reminded of ad-2 images that relegate light to an object-status and relieve it of its function of surround of invisibility for a condition of visibility.

The fascination that provoked an immersion in the image is thus the same fascination that underlies cinematic vision itself. I sit in readiness and am confronted with lighted shapes that are filmed in motion and close-up. I can never perceive the world in the same manner. At the fairground, even if I stand in front of the thrill ride that is lighted up, I can never perceive it in close-up. I can never conclusively cut out the surround. I will perceive the crowds around me, the neighboring booths, I cannot erase the smells

that accompany the visit, the noise coming from the loudspeakers, the joyful cries of people on roller coasters, the night sky that is never completely dark given the electrification of the fairground. In ad-2 images, the surround is eclipsed.

W.B⁹¹. is my favorite filmmaker. He has an affinity for filming that is not only rare; the images he produces at the fairground are nothing short of stunning. He films at night, and every single view is produced in a clear desire to emulate the spectacle of an electrified display of lighted motion. He films the Skilift ride in motion. Fairy lights are attached to the structural outline of the ride and light up in the shape of a rotating star. He then moves into a close-up of lights that fill the frame.

Figure 13



⁹¹ AV034168_m.wmv / IA_AMA_00379, super 8, color, mute, no date (but from the rides depicted we can assume the mid-1970s)



He makes an effort to render the fair as a panoramic landscape of lighted shapes in motion. He moves on and concentrates on the lighted Ferris wheel that is flanked with a gated structure that lights up in two ornamented pillars.



The lighted star of the Ferris Wheel furthermore changes color from yellow to red, and in the next sequence he moves into an extreme close-up so that the only view discernible are red lighted outlines.



Next he again pans slowly and carefully over the lighted landscape of the fairground, which here presents a view that is distinctly cinematic in its essentially negative essence.



Towards the extreme left of his pan, a lighted carousel in rotating motion comes into view.



The slow and leisurely pace of the carousel in motion and the visual panoply of the multitude of yellow lights completely engross me. I could have watched the lighted carousel for hours. In fact, the experience here is nothing short of immersive. I enter

into a cinematic relation in which I am sensually positioned neither here nor there but enter a space of virtual immersion. This effect is even furthered in the next image. He has moved closer to the carousel. He films it in a medium shot and in the next sequence has moved on to a close-up of what I assume to be the lighted middle pillar of the carousel. Here the images are nothing short of magical.



The slow rotation of the lighted outlines of the carousel engrosses me not so much because I clearly discern the attraction of the carousel, but because I enter a relation with the image in which it is the very attraction of these disembodied lights in motion that provoke a sensorial immersion in the image. I realized that what completely mesmerized me was not the view but the manner of seeing in which I partook. The close-up of the camera view also presented a cut-out from the visual field that in my everyday vision is simply not possible. The almost negative manner of seeing in which light becomes an objective shape rather than providing the invisible illuminating surround that embeds objects made me share in the camera-seeing. Here I did not bridge the *écart* between camera seeing and organic vision; the thrill of the images lay specifically in the sharing of what renders camera-seeing and body-seeing distinct. For a few moments – of course, this attractional seeing can never be sustained – I come to see technologically, and my potential for doing so is what rendered the experience immersive. It is the fact that my perceptual sensorium has the

potential for experiencing and sharing cinematic vision that renders these images thrilling.

What renders the images abstract is the *écart* that separates mechanic from organic vision. And I would argue that here lies the inherent fascination of these images. The unfolding of images in duration illustrates vision coming-into-being. What moving images visualize is the rendition of vision into visibility. Pasi Väilaho examines the transformational spaces of early cinema. She bases her analysis on the work of James J. Gibson who describes an observer's field of vision in terms of surface and event. Vision here follows a bilateral organization in that: 'Surfaces mark the qualities of the substances that the observer perceives in the environment-their texture, shape, layout, color, and viscosity,'⁹² while '[e]vents on the other hand, are the changes that surfaces undergo – deformation, transition, destruction, emerging, and so on.'⁹³ In organic vision, this structure guarantees what Gibson terms affordance, simplified, the possibility for action. The body as center of motility comes to organize the spatiality of vision in presenting ever-changing mobile views. The perception of space is in fact created by mobile point of views that the body navigates and thus organizes. Cinematic vision presents those same structures, but relegates the perceiver to immobility. As Väilaho notes, the automaton of cinematic vision 'produces a novel type of technologically rendered visual environment where images lose their representational status and begin to act like performances in Gibson's sense.'⁹⁴ Cinematic views, in their very essence and regardless of genre or style, present a 'dynamic surface under constant modifications, deformations, and becomings, which afford such sensorimotor activities as tactile probing and spatial mapping, for instance.'⁹⁵ The terminology that Väilaho adopts here could indeed serve as a description for the attractional views of ad-2 images. They come to represent the essential nature of cinematic vision. In fact, they emulate its very essence. Here lies the inherent perceptual fascination for the moving image as self-motion. Its very characteristics of lighted shapes surrounded by darkness are mimicked in the ad-2 visuals of lights in motion. The ad-2 image in fact visualizes the inherent nature of

⁹² Väilaho, Pasi. "Spellbound: Early Cinema's Transformational Spaces," *Space and Culture* 16, no. 2 (April 22, 2013), 163.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

cinematic vision as an achievement of self-motion. It emulates the principle of cinematic vision as surface and event. It presents the continuous transformation of lighted movement changing shapes and colors. It presents said vision in close-ups that efface the surround. In fact, the cut-out vision of cinema through framing functions according to the same principle that is emulated in ad-2 images. Ad-2 images thus visualize exactly those characteristics that set cinematic vision apart from organic vision. While, most of the time, the moving image seeks to diminish this *écart*, ad-2 images celebrate it. This gap or *écart*, however, does not induce an experience of threat or alienation. It becomes attractional and immersive.

The experience I have of them in reception is one of complete immersion. As we have seen before, immersion comes-into-being as the effect of an imaginary bridging that can soften the subjective boundaries between self and other. Here the softening of boundaries between self and other afford me a sharing in cinematic vision. At the same time, the *écart* of this vision presents an alteration that my sensorium is able to share. I come to share in an essentialized vision of a distinctly cinematic nature. Curtis stresses the importance of imagination, which underlies perception in non-qualified capabilities such as the experiencing of rhythm, intensity and vitality. He compares these qualities to a capacity to perceptual recognition of atmospheric gray zones that lie between qualified sensory experiences such as vision, smell, taste, hearing and touch. He writes: ‘Ferner wird die Verbindung zwischen „spatial presence“ und Einfühlung erst dann deutlich, wenn die Rolle der Imagination bedacht wird. Einfühlung beschreibt natürlich eine breitere Beschäftigung mit der äußeren Welt, als „spatial presence“ es tut, indem die Einfühlung nicht nur die Einfügung des Subjekts in einen anderen Raum, sondern die vollkommene Unterwanderung der Integrität von Selbst und Anderem impliziert.’⁹⁶ He furthermore characterizes the perceptual capabilities in terms of an ‘Analogie zur physischen Welt der amodalen Wahrnehmung auf, die in erster Linie eine Welt abstrahierbarer Eigenschaften wir

⁹⁶ ‘In addition, the link between “spatial presence” and empathy only becomes clear if the role of imagination is taken into consideration. Empathy naturally describes a broader preoccupation with the outside world, just as “spatial presence” does, by implying not only the subject’s insertion in a different space but also the total infiltration of the integrity of self and others.’

Curtis, Robin. “SYNÄTHESIE UND IMMERSION Räumliche Effekt der Bewegung“. Curtis, Glöde, and Koch, *Synästhesie-Effekte*, 146.

Form, Anzahl, Intensitätsstufe usw. darstellt und nicht etwa aus gesehenen, gehörten oder getasteten Dingen besteht.’⁹⁷ The inherent capability to imagine also relates to the perceptual ability to bridge or soften the boundaries between self and other. I am thus capable of bridging the *écart* between cinematic vision and my own embodied organic vision, while at the same time, I celebrate its difference. Through a recognition in the quasi-intentional structure of the cinematic vision, I am inherently capable of sharing its capacities. The bridging that is effected here is, however, not meant to homogeneously read myself into the image. In fact, what happens here is that I come to perceive cinematically. I revel in the difference that the views present. The close-up, the zoom, the erasure of surround, the lighted shapes as objects draw me in, and I share the cinematic vision as self-motion. The disappearance and appearance that underlies the blinking of lights becomes surprising and relate the inherent fascination for cinematic seeing itself. The changes in intensity and rhythm that underlie these abstract images make me inherently aware of the cross-modal and amodal capabilities of my own perceptual apparatus. Within ad-2 images, I recognize my own perceptual potential to share in cinematic vision. Again, what needs to be noted is that amateurs do not set out to produce cinematic vision. However, the inherent impulse that underlies the capturing of these views relate the sense of fascination that lies within the attraction of moving imagery. The manner in which I receive these images comes to represent the inherent attraction of moving images. The cinematic vision I share here becomes immersive because it represents a crystallization of what renders cinematic vision fascinating in the first place. Here seeing is cinematic seeing.

8. Intersubjectivity in the flesh

A phenomenological approach operates from a basis in which perception and expression are not only reversible, but also deeply intersubjective. The engagement that underlies film viewer and film is structured by different intersubjective inflections: we establish a relationality with the seen on multiple levels, four of which

⁹⁷ ‘analogy with the physical world of amodal perception, which primarily depicts a world of abstractable properties such as form, quantity, intensity level etc. and does not for example consist of things seen, heard or touched.’ Curtis, Robin.
 “SYNÄTHESIE UND IMMERSION Räumliche Effekt der Bewegung“. Ibid., 148.

will be analyzed in the following. First of all, all film viewership becomes intersubjective in taking the film as quasi-subjective intentionality. This is the ontological basis of all film viewership and fundamentally necessary for primordial meaning generation. Second, the filmmaker's intentionality comes to reveal itself in the technological mediation that is film in projection, even though such a course of analysis must be trodden carefully. Furthermore, the subjects onscreen are recognized as subjects from a fleshed-out past. Finally, the temporality and spatiality that underlies especially amateur-film productions reveal a complex intersubjective interweaving that helps us not only gain knowledge of the past, but meaning in the present.

8.1. Film-intentionality as quasi-subjectivity

To understand the deeply intersubjective structure that underlies all film viewership, and this includes unedited amateur material, it is most illustrative to position it against the photograph that presents a completely different presence. Films, crudely put, are not only images, but also images that move. While it might be argued that film in itself presents twenty-four still frames a second, this is irrelevant if we approach the phenomenon from an experiential point of view. In film viewing, the embodied system of flesh and consciousness that is my body always and irreducibly engages the filmic space as movement. The most fascinating aspect of moving imagery is that they come to emulate the structures of perception.

Intersubjectivity presents a paradox: how can I perceive of the Other as subject if, living as embodied centrality, I always perceive of the Other as objective entity *for me*? As Merleau-Ponty describes it, the problem lies in the following: “In so far as the other person resides in the world, is visible there, and forms part of my field, he is never an Ego in the sense in which I am one for myself. In order to think of him as genuine *I*, I ought think of myself as a mere object for him, *which I am prevented from doing by the knowledge which I have of myself.*”⁹⁸ Thus intersubjectivity presents an asymmetry that is, however, not impossible to resolve and thus live

⁹⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception*, 2002, 410.

experientially. Vivian Sobchack summarizes the conditions of possibility for an intersubjective position that can be adopted towards my others in the following:

‘The asymmetry of this relation to the other (in which my subjective consciousness prevents me from being able to think of myself as a mere object) is balanced, however, by the objectivity of my own body as *perceptible matter*, which I know – because I subjectively live it – is also *perceiving matter*. Informed by my subjectivity, this perceiving matter actively “has” a world and behaves in it intentionally, going about its “having of being” in a purposive and directed manner. In that both I, as a body-subject, and the other body-object not only share the mutuality of material embodiment in a world but also perceptibly express mutual modes of intentional behavior, my own sense of being reversibly perceptible and perceiving allows me to comprehend the other not only as a body-object but also as a body-subject.’⁹⁹

The manner in which I can recognize an Other as subject lies in my recognition and understanding of the intentional structures that characterize the other as body in the world. I can understand the body as center of motility from which direction, action and motility emulate because this is the existential experience and knowledge I have of myself. The basis of my intersubjective understanding is thus founded on the recognizability of mutual expressions of intentional behavior. Here lies the basis of a film viewership, which is always fleshed out and reversibly inflected. If I understand and recognize the other subject by his or her intentional behavior in the world, this recognition is also extended towards the film as coming-into-being. Film is the activity of visibility made visible. In the words of Jennifer Barker: ‘What we do see is *the film seeing*: we see its own (if humanly enabled) process of perception and expression unfolding in space and time.’¹⁰⁰ The world I perceive onscreen is always also a filmic world. I sensually engage in the intentional trajectory in space and time that is the film’s visibility unfolding. I am thus inherently implicated in an Other’s intentionality, even if said intentionality is a filmic one. Because film displays a technologically mediated perceptual intentionality, however, I can only ever take the film as quasi-subjective. I can never see the world in close-up or in black and white; nor can I as flawlessly pan or zoom in on a view. These intentional structures are a

⁹⁹ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 312.

¹⁰⁰ Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 9.

prerogative of film seeing, even if I experientially understand the intentional desire to ‘get closer’ that lies at the basis of the close-up. Nevertheless, the unfolding that is the prerequisite of moving images situates the film experientially in the flesh. Duration provides the condition of possibility of an unfolding of intentionality that can be taken as quasi-subjective and here the cinematic fundamentally diverts from the photographic. Film, as images that move, presents a continual coming-into-being. It represents, as Sobchack notes, ‘a presence always presently constituting itself.’¹⁰¹ Fleshed-out vision can only occur in a revealing that comes-into-being. It can thus only occur in temporality and movement. A photograph, for example, can never achieve the same degree of incorporation in the flesh, since it temporally represents a moment rather than duration (no matter how long we stare at it). A photograph presents a temporal structure of a ‘this-has-been’ rather than a coming-into-being.

A.F.¹⁰² films one of the numerous processions in Luxembourg dedicated to the patron saint of the country, the Virgin Mary. We see part of a church adorned with banners. Slowly, the camera pans down and includes the small crowd that has gathered in front of the church and the statue of the Virgin Mary that is to be carried through the village. The next scene is filmed from a front position in the parade. He films the smallest children, dressed as angels, who generally presented the forefront of these processions. Some of them are wearing wreaths in their hair and they hold hands. A nun is accompanying the children, walking besides them and fidgeting with the rosary in her hands. The camera slowly pans upward to come to focus on the preceding participants of the parade consisting of adults and clergymen. The next shot is taken from the opposite side, and we see boy scouts marching with their forerunner holding their banner. Again, A.F. slowly pans to include the crowds on the pavement walking past and towards the camera. The next sequence focuses on girls dressed in shiny synthetic white dresses followed by boys in the traditional garments of mass servants (at the time, only boys were allowed such a role in Luxembourg). Thus continues the procession with a focus on the different participants who slowly make their way through the village. Every once in a while, we see a clergyman with his head bowed in prayer walking amongst them. What interests me here is the structure this seen on

¹⁰¹ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 93.

¹⁰² AV010425 / IA_AMA_00571, 8mm, color and black and white, mute, Ca. 1957, ca. 1989

screen presents to me. Similarly to the experience of the boat ride on the lake in Switzerland, each new view presents me with an intentionality that lies in the visual trajectory presented by the camera. I experientially understand the viscosity of the camera as reflexive positioning in motility. I understand how perception relates the world back to the camera position just as the camera relates to the world. The slow pans induced by the camera come to emulate a principle of visual directionality that I understand as quasi-subjective, since it is exactly the way I organize my perceptive positioning. The pan down in the beginning materially mimics the movement of my head as I slowly tilt my head down and scan the church.

Still, you might say that the vision presented is only an extension of the viscosity of the filmmaking subject. I will come back to the intentional trajectory of the filmmaker as presence in the frame; however, one must note that technological mediation is not organic vision. First of all, the imagery presented is in black and white, an experience I cannot recognize as my own. Second, I can neither cut nor frame as deliberately as a camera.

In one sequence, A.F. films the feet of the marching band walking by.

Figure 14



I would never be able to see this cutout view without a peripheral fringe of the whole figure of the musicians. Also, as mentioned before, I can never experience the particular structure of a close-up. I cannot zoom in with my eyes. These perceptive particularities are what sets technological vision apart from embodied vision. This is also one of the main reasons why, phenomenologically, I cannot equate the filmic view with the filmmaker's view. The film and the intentional structures it reveals are inherently the film's perceptive structures. This does not mean, however, that I cannot recognize this intentionality as quasi-subjective, because the intentional mode is of the mutual stuff of flesh. I understand the intentionality that underlies a close-up since I understand the embodied desire to get closer to where my perceptual focus lies. The views that come into being are a perpetual presencing that I understand and recognize as underlying my own embodied vision in temporality. My own eyes wander and graze the visual field in front of me. Seeing the manner in which the procession is captured here presents exactly such a structuring of visually grazing and coming to focus on certain views. The gaze is always mobile and perpetually wandering, and the views displayed by the film body here are presented in the same manner. It is thus through the structuring of visibility that I recognize moving imagery as visible rendition of vision. And it is as such that I come to engage the intentional trajectory of the film as quasi-subjective Other. However the intentionality I share here can first of all only ever be quasi-subjective, since it is technological and not organic, and second it remains partial since it is not I who directs the focus, but I share in the intentional trajectory of an Other whom I recognize as subject. There is always a notion of disparity in this sharing; after all, the views and their alternating foci are not mine to choose, and my body is not the center of motility as perceptual directionality.

Intentionality as access to the world comes into being (is visualized) in the film viewing. The film-viewing subject, as embodied entity in the flesh, thus engages in an intersubjective relation with the film's intentional trajectory. In the words of Merleau-Ponty: 'as the parts of my body together comprise a system, so my body and the other person's are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon, and the anonymous existence of which my body is the ever-renewed trace henceforth inhabits

both bodies simultaneously.’¹⁰³ Taking the film experience as a phenomenon in which film and spectator are implicated as irreducible within experience, the generation of meaning can only ever lie in the relationality in the connective tissue that binds us. It also relates the film experience as deeply communal and non-alienating as well as giving us an indication of how technology is always also in-corporated in the common material stuff that structures all being. The visualized expression and the expressive perception that underlie film viewing bring to the fore the reversibility and intersubjectivity that form the basis of all perception. The positioning of the camera relates to me a structure as center of motility that I take as embodied since that is the way I experientially navigate my own lifeworld. This goes beyond a mere concept of point-of-view identification since I experience vision made visible in intentionality. Furthermore, the recognition of the film’s intentionality as Other also positions my body reflexively in the film viewing. It is thus that I not only see the film, the film sees me as well since all perceptual relations point back at my body. This is the inherent reversibility in perception.

Why does it matter whether I take the films into my own embodied being and recognize the film body as quasi-other? The main beneficial incentive of this recognition lies in the fact that I gain an understanding of the films that is not dependent on my egological centrality and thus, as will be examined later on, I adopt an attitude that is inflected as primordially ethical. Furthermore, the sensual and decentering relation I enter provokes a deeply careful concern and a desire to protect these filmic worlds from the past. A further crucial element lies in the co-constitution that underlies the film viewing. I can never one-sidedly extract meaning from the films. In the relationality that underlies the film and myself, I always also come into being as a subject. As such, the films not only grant us a fleshed-out understanding of a past lifeworld, but also come to present insight into my own lived present. This is a lived and living access to the past. We will elaborate upon this notion further later on. Here, however, we must engage further with the specificity of the phenomenon of amateur film as distinguished from institutionalized cinematic productions.

¹⁰³ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception*, 2002, 411–12.

8.2. Filmmaker's presence

The intentionality that underlies all film viewing is presented on different levels that all pertain to existential presence. Amateur films are structured differently in terms of presence, which is revealed in the viewing. Because institutionalized cinema productions all have one common denominator, namely the process of post-production, the intentionality it presents is always exclusively its own. The intentionality in amateur films is more complex. A film can never be taken as a one-to-one representation of a filmmaker's vision for the simple reason that it is technologically mediated. In the words of Jennifer Barker: 'The film is more than a representation of the filmmaker's vision – or the boom operator's or cameraperson's – because what we see when we "see a film" is not merely a record and product of what the filmmaker saw at a given moment in a given space: that would be a photograph. Nor is it identical to the human filmmaker's own bodily forms of vision, because a filmmaker doesn't see the world in close-up in quite the same way that the film does, for example.'¹⁰⁴ The intentionality that underlies the visual trajectory of a film made by an amateur presents its own filmic seeing as intentionality. Nevertheless, because most amateurs do not edit or tamper with their material in a post-production process, an existential presence as a remnant of the filmmaker's presence underlies the image occasionally. This is also why the amateur film can never be taken as completed film-body. I would like to examine said presence in relation to an example that depicts the popular motif of filming flowers in close-up. L.G.¹⁰⁵ frames orange-red roses in close-up. The next shot focuses on one rose, in extreme close-up in which he attempts to keep the hand-held 8mm camera as still as possible.

¹⁰⁴ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 9.

¹⁰⁵ AV032948 / IA_AMA_001816, Super 8, color, mute, 1973

Figure 15



A very slight breeze rustles the petals, and the shot lasts for no more than two seconds. In terms of presence, however, the depiction of the rose is multi-layered. First of all, naturally, we sense the filmic intentionality in the close-up. The typical colors of the imagery also reveal a sense of technological presence since the colors are displayed in the typical saturated red-tinted hues of 8mm film. The camera presence is most certainly revealed in the imagery, and the intentionality that underlies the close framing presents vision as film-vision. Nevertheless, as we have seen before, the slight breeze rustling the petals of the rose also pertains to a presence that hints at an expansive existential manifold surrounding the framing. This presence, which always invisibly exists as visual *field* within which the cutout figure of the rose occurs, here comes to the fore visually through the indication of wind traversing the petals. A further notion of presence underlies the images, however. Filmed with a hand-held camera, the images reveal a slight shaking. Almost all images that present close-ups for a certain length of time reveal such a slight trembling since it is impossible to hold the camera completely still without a tripod. While the film that we engage sensually always presents its own intentional trajectory as quasi-subjectivity, the filmmaker's presence still underlies certain, if, of course, not all, images. Similar to the sensual recognition of the existential manifold of a past pro-filmic world that is revealed through the wind rustling the rose, so the slight shaking moving the images also hints

at the embodied presence of the filmmaker. As we have examined in the previous chapter, filmmaker and camera come to be engaged in an embodiment relation that takes the camera as a sensual expansion of the filmmaker's intentional and corporeal engagement. What comes to the fore in the shaking that is conveyed in the image is exactly the material engagement between camera and filmmaker. The expressive activity that is filmmaking is here revealed as embodied. The physical manifestation of the unintended shaking of the hand that holds the camera reveals this presence as a subjective one. This manifestation of a physical remnant of a gesture is here conveyed implicitly in the shaking of the image, never explicitly demonstrated. What I understand as embodied and conscious subject in the flesh is the following as elaborated by Merleau-Ponty:

'I say this is another person, a second self, and this I know in the first place because this living body has the same structure as mine. I experience my own body as the power of adopting certain forms of behavior and a certain world, and I am given to myself merely as a hold upon the world: now, it is precisely my body which perceives the body of another person, and discovers in that other's body a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions, a familiar way of dealing with the world. Henceforth, as the parts of my body together comprise a system, so my body and the other person's are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon, and the anonymous existence of which my body is the ever-renewed trace henceforth inhabits both bodies simultaneously'.¹⁰⁶

The phenomenon of amateur film images is thus inherently intersubjective as I recognize in the film's intentionality such a 'miraculous prolongation of my own intentions.' The filmmaker's physical manifestation underlies the image as presence if less pronounced than that of film intentionality, nevertheless always present as unintended bodily manifestation such as the shaking of the camera.

Furthermore, on a more general level, the reflexivity underlying all perceptual awareness implicitly hints at the reflexivity that also positions a filmmaker's body, even if I do not see the latter. Because I understand the reflexivity and reversibility of perception, I also recognize that the visual relations of the image momentarily pointed back at a body that held a camera. The visuality in front of the camera thus points at

¹⁰⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception*, 2002, 411–12.

an embodied presence behind the camera quite simply because that is the inherent nature of perception as reflexive. Scenes in which I perceive the shaking of the camera that is visualized as trembling in the image make me implicitly aware and sensually relate to me the physicality of an embodied subject engaged in an expressive activity. As Roger Poole so aptly points out: ‘Acts in space are embodied intentions.’¹⁰⁷ We can relate this crucial insight to Merleau-Ponty’s elaboration of intersubjectivity as the inherent subject capability to understand the body of the other as prolongation of my own intentional way of dealing with the world. We can now finally see how the expressive act of filmmaking that comes to the fore in the trembling image can be intersubjectively recognized and incorporated as embodied intentions that are visualized as acts in space (the activity of filmmaking).

While the mediation that shapes the image is technological, the revelation that imbues it with meaning is always also existential. Heidegger’s elaboration of technological revealing is helpful here. Don Ihde asks what is revealed in the technological revelation and answers the question most illustratively as follows: ‘Technological revealing takes its particular shape from its field of possibilities its framework. And its framework is a particular form of the human taking up a relation to a world through some existential intentionality.’¹⁰⁸ What comes to the fore in certain moments in film viewing, such as the trembling of the image or the involuntary inclusion of the hand of the filmmaker in the frame, is an unintended physical remnant of an embodied subject taking up a relation to the world in intentionality. As we have seen in the previous chapter, filmmaking presents a visualization of the expressive trajectory that the embodied filmmaker takes. Here, however, I sensually engage and intersubjectively witness the unintentional physical sign as a formerly embodied presence of the filmmaker. We can thus say that, while images are by default always technologically mediated, we have ‘recognized that the relationship to technology is not technological, but is an existential relationship and hence circumscribed by all the features that characterize existentiality.’¹⁰⁹ As such, we sensually engage the

¹⁰⁷ Roger Poole, *Towards Deep Subjectivity*. (London: A. Lane, 1973), 6.

¹⁰⁸ Don Ihde, *Heidegger’s Technologies: Postphenomenological Perspectives*, *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 34.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

embodiment of a filmmaking subject taking up an intentional relation to his or her world.

8.3. The filmed subject and the look beyond the camera

A further presence underlies the image, namely the intentional movement of the bodies that populate our screen and the filmic space. The filmed subject cannot be possessed as objective other. What we perceive onscreen are not only images that move, but also images of bodies moving in space. The occasional refusal of these subjects to be appropriated as object for camera, filmmaker and spectator comes to the fore especially in moments in which their expression hints at their unwillingness to be filmed. As we have seen in the elaboration of the intentional relation that underlies expressive filmmaking, this often presents a reason to stop filming. Here, I would like to look at the implications such an unwilling facial expression has on the spectator, especially with regards to how the look back at the camera refuses appropriation. After all, these faces not only scowl at the filmmaker, they also turn to us as spectators whether they intended to do so or not.

First of all, within all viewership lies a primordial intersubjective understanding that pertains to my own embodied nature: I am not only seer, but also always seen. The reversible nature of perception warrants this reflexivity since all perceptive relation also points back at my body. All film viewing is always co-constitutive and reversible. Not only do I take the film and its intentionality as quasi-subjective, I myself, as a subject, am co-constituted by the perceptual engagement I enter. This reflexivity and reversibility in the film experience comes to the fore in a more pronounced manner if I realize that a subject is unwilling to be filmed.

Two distinguished but related aspects structure the intersubjective relation I have with the subject onscreen: first of all, the recognition of the subjective status of the seen on screen and second, the look back as look beyond me that always also includes an existential surround of which I am implicitly, though not always explicitly, aware. I cannot engage in an intersubjective relation without becoming a subject within the relationality myself; I am co-constituted as subject for the duration of the film. The

look back of the subject onscreen also brings my own subjectivity to the fore. In the film experience, a subject-object dichotomy cannot be sustained. Most of the time, the reversibility in subjective co-constitution remains but an implicit conveyance in the perceptual engagement. However, in cases in which the subject is unwilling to be filmed, such engagement comes to the fore in a rather uncanny manner.

8.3.1. The look at the camera

What separates these filmed subjects from institutionalized practices is their look back at the camera. While I do engage with fictional characters onscreen, the viewing position I adopt is one of voyeur rather than participant. The filmed subjects in amateur films deny me such a position. The subjects onscreen stand as second selves in my experience of film viewership. I would like to come back to a scene that has already been described in Chapter one. M. L.-B.¹¹⁰ is an avid and proficient filmmaker who films family chronicles in a documenting and archiving drive. In one sequence, he films an outing in a park in Mondorf-les-bains. He focuses on their four children running around playing. All of them are dressed in their Sunday clothes, and the only girl's hair is elaborately styled in bun on top of her head. While the wife is present in almost all of the shots, she never engages the camera. In fact, we notice how, whenever she looks at her husband and notices that he is filming, she discretely turns away her head. He films their children on a slide, and the children are obviously used to the camera as they smile and wave at it. The next sequence is taken in front of their car on a different day. By now, we have noticed several things: the children are used to being filmed frequently and enjoy the process, the family is often together on outings, and the wife does not enjoy being filmed, even though she apparently tolerates it. The sequence taken in front of the car, however, makes her unwillingness truly apparent. He films her from the left. She is leaning against the car and looks directly into the camera. She is frowning and she does not smile.

¹¹⁰ AV010317, no info on material, color, mute, 1968

Figure 16



He keeps the camera running for about five seconds. The atmosphere is one of stalemate. He does not stop filming, and she does not look away but neither does she change her facial expression. During the last second of the shot, she briefly looks away and when she faces the camera again, she gives a quick and unwilling smile that does not reach her eyes. Only then does he stop filming her. The duration of the video introduces an uncanny feeling of intrusion. The look back of the wife is not exclusively directed at the filmmaker, but by extension engages me. Here I am directly implicated in a breakage of the intentional relation between filmed subject and filmmaking subject. As I am inherently part of the intentional relation that structures the viewing, I am confronted with an expressed unwillingness that makes me recoil. I sense the movement of reluctance physically as I am called out as a participant in an unwilling engagement between onscreen subject and camera. The look back at us is deeply unsettling in this context, because it undoes the mastery and privilege of my own gaze directed towards these subjects. It takes away any notion of appropriation as the subjects refuse my mastering position over their visibility. The look back brings to the fore the reversibility in vision in which I am not only constituted as a subject but also run the risk of being decentered as such. This relation is similar to the experience of the objective look back as elaborated by Norman Bryson in which ‘the network of past, present, and future social meaning that exists always in the deferrals of *différance* and always in excess of the specific and local interrogation of our gaze.’¹¹¹ The look of the wife back at me and her scowling unwillingness induce a relation that, while not as strong, is structured similarly to the annihilating negativity in a Sartrean sense. The experience of a subject looking back

¹¹¹ Bryson, “The Gaze in the Expanded Field,” 91.

at me can be annihilating since it induces the awareness that I am only a quasi-subject for the other, which also brings to the fore my always objective status of an embodied entity as matter. Here the filmed subject displays a scowling unwillingness that I cannot help but sense as being directed towards me. As Sobchack notes: ‘Sartre wrote [...] about the negative aggressivity of the human gaze as it fixed others as its object,’¹¹² which accounts for the disconcerting sense of being undone as the master of my own subjectivity.

Here we encounter the potential feeling of the uncanny that underlies all intersubjectivity. Still, these uncanny moments only come to fore in extreme situations in which the subject looking back undoes my mastery and displays their unwillingness to be a part of the visualized intersubjective engagement between filmmaker and subject and spectator and subject. The situation presents itself differently if the subject displays a willingness to engage.

E. H.¹¹³ loves filming his daughter Rita in moving portraits. In one sequence, he films three children and a baby and lines them up so he can record them in a slow pan from left to right. I am not certain of the relation he has with these children since in the films preceding this one, only one daughter is present. He also loves filming his wife in medium close-ups. She is dressed in a jumper and apron and is wearing a shiny broach. She smiles broadly and fondly into the camera. She makes a comment while the camera is running and from the expression on her face she is commenting on the fact that she is being filmed in a good-natured manner.

¹¹² Ibid., 97.

¹¹³ AV035958 / IA_AMA_001888, 8mm, b&w, color, mute, 1958

Figure 17



Her smile is not the half-smile of subjects confronted with social codes that dictate their facial expression. She looks happy and engaged. Naturally, the compulsion to smile underlies the representational code of the home movie as an idealization of the past. Still, the engagement with smiling subjects changes the intersubjective relation I build with the subjects onscreen. Because I understand the filmed subject as intentional being since I recognize the trajectories their motility takes as my own manner of navigating the lifeworld, most of the time, the intersubjective relation I engage in is not annihilating, but constitutive and engaging. The look back here draws me into a relation that is constituted by a sensual movement towards rather than against. The intersubjective relation I engage with the subject onscreen is thus also characterized by a certain style as mode of being in and *at* the world. In the words of Glen Mazis:

‘A “manner of being” emerges as giving identity to a thing and *the person(s) perceived* in the “coition, so to speak, of our body with things.” This “manner of being” indicates what Merleau-Ponty calls “style.” ... It emerges as the thread running through all the properties of the thing and in my interaction with the thing. [...] *Both perceived and perceiver are joined in that style of intercourse from which their identity emerges.*’¹¹⁴

Style as mode of being constitutes an inherent part of the intersubjective relation I build with the image. An engaging smile immediately inflects the style of my interaction with the person onscreen as a movement towards rather than against. A frown or hostile expression characterizes the engagement I have as movement in recoil or withdrawing. We can thus say that the experience I have here provokes an

¹¹⁴ Mazis, Glenn. quoted in Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 2–3. my emphasis.

emotional response. But how can this be if I realize that the engagement was never intended towards me? How can I feel rejected or drawn in by the facial expression of a filmic subject? The intersubjective reversibility of perception itself provides the space for e-motive movement in relationality. Jennifer Barker, through phenomenologist Glen Mazis, comes to the following conclusion:

‘The very act of perception moves us into the space *between* ourselves and others in the world. “‘To be moved’ means to come to a different position *in regard* to one’s situation,” writes phenomenologist Glen Mazis. “It is to experience a change in one’s ‘Being-towards’ something or someone or to things in general: the relationship as suddenly burst forth, or perhaps slowly blossomed forth, into some significance, in such a way that a distinctive quality of that relatedness has come forward into manifestness, whether for a moment or for quite a time.”’¹¹⁵

Even if the facial expression was never intended *at* me, my inherent engagement with the film and the characters draw me in emotionally. The relationality between the film and myself as viewer becomes e-motive and resonates as feeling of unease in my body. Because I am engaged perceptually, my engagement with the seen invokes a space of reversibility that can be described as stated by phenomenologist Sue Cataldi’s main argument in terms of touching: ‘Just as we may extend the circle of the touched and touching hands (in shaking or holding hands with another),’ she writes, ‘so our body can “annex” or “incorporate” the emotional body of another.’¹¹⁶ Emotions are a source of reversibility in themselves, for to recognize an emotion in another is to recognize it in oneself. ‘Through curiosity, the significance of the novel or the odd is apprehended,’ Cataldi writes. ‘Through serenity, the significance of peace or tranquility is grasped. Through grief, I perceive, emotionally, the significance of loss; just as through boredom, I apprehend the significance of monotony.’¹¹⁷ Even if not intended towards me, the facial expression is directed towards me perceptually. I can incorporate the visual display of emotions (though of course never the emotion itself) of a filmed subject that is expressed through their facial gestures and can engage in them bodily through a movement towards or against.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 155.

¹¹⁶ Sue L. Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth, and Flesh: A Study of Sensitive Space: Reflections on Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Embodiment* (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1993), 115.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 113.

Because I am an embodied and emotional subject of the world, I incorporate the expression of joy or sorrow directed towards me perceptually and I understand what it means to be unwilling or engaged. If subjects turn towards the camera and the filmmaker in a gesture of love or engagement, I am always also drawn in by their openness. Emotional significance here does not rely on knowing the people onscreen. I experience a generalized e-motive relation since, as Sara Ahmed notes, ‘feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation’.¹¹⁸ Just as meaning can always occur as primordial basis of all perception, so do affective engagements always form part of the perceptive space in a generalized and diffuse sense. Emotions here function as difference in selfsameness. I am never the object of the filmed subject’s affection, just as this subject can never really be the affective target of mine. Neither can I ever experience an Other’s emotion. I come to share the e-motive movement of the camera as intentionality and relate to it through an intersubjective understanding. In the same vein, I recognize the affective smile of the woman onscreen and primordially react to its openness and happiness. I share the impression of the smile, which results in a perceived openness on my part. After all, all sensations are mediated no matter how immediate we experience them, and what emerges in the film viewing as relationality is an e-motive movement that can deeply affect me.

Sara Ahmed explains the slide from sensation to emotion in the following:

‘it is through the recognition or interpretation of sensations, which are responses to the impressions of objects and others, that bodily surfaces take shape. I am not saying here that emotions are the same thing as sensation, but that the very intensity of perception of means a slide from one to another, as a slide that does follow as a sequence in time. Hence whilst sensation and emotion are irreducible, they cannot simply be separated at the level of lived experience. Sensations are mediated, however immediately they seem to impress upon us. Not only do we read such feelings, but how the feelings feel in the first place may be tied to a past history of readings, in the sense that the process of *recognition* (of this feeling, or that feeling) is bound up with what we *already know*.’¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 8.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

She takes a traumatic experience as example of the recognition of pain we feel. While the experience I have of the positive or negative look *at* me is by far not as strongly inflected as the experience Ahmed relates here, the structure is presented as similar. What arises in the relationality of the film experience is a movement of e-motion, meaning the mediation of sensations that nevertheless impress upon me. I can furthermore experience the emotion of joy or positive interaction as it is provoked by a facial expression that I already know. The emotion of positive engagement or recoil when faced with an unwilling expression does not originate in the image, but arises in the relationality (circulation) of the film experience.

8.3.2. The look beyond the camera

The look back at the camera also always characterizes a look beyond the camera. First of all, the look at the camera is most of the time a look at the filmmaker and thus already constitutes a look beyond the lens. Some subjects directly engage the camera rather than the filmmaker with an attitude that is almost coquettish. Most of the time, however, subjects look at the filmmaker behind the camera. This look beyond the camera has important connotations with regards to a meaning that emerges in the relation between look of the subject and spectator. Again, this notion of the look back has to do with the understanding I have of perception as inherently reversible. I understand that, while I see a technologically mediated look at the subject that reflexively positions my own body, but also a past filmmaker's body, the subject who does the looking must have a visual field that reversibly points back at their body, but that is evidentially lost to me since it has never been filmed and remains in the past. This is perception functioning as a Pontean mirror. As Merleau-Ponty writes:

'The mirror appears because I am seeing-visible [*voyant-visible*], because there is a reflexivity of the sensible; the mirror translates and reproduces that reflexivity. [...] The mirror's ghost lies outside my body, and by the same token my own body's "invisibility" can invest the other bodies I see. Hence my body can assume segments derived from the body of another, just as my substance passes into them; man is mirror for man.'¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Eye and Mind". in Maurice Merleau-Ponty and James M. Edie, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological*

While the mirror in film is one-sided, I know that the invisible off-frame is nevertheless reflexively co-constituted by the subject from the past. The mirror is taken as a metaphor of reflexivity that governs subject-object and subject-subject relations in perception. The metaphor of the reflexive surface of the mirror can help us understand the general structure of perception. As we have seen by now, perception in the Pontean sense is experience. We have also seen that the world reflexively positions my body as perceiving matter. Phenomenological reflection thus operates from a basis in which there can be no subject without object and vice versa. This relates to knowledge as well as perception, and becomes significant in the following statement by Don Ihde: ‘And if we were to ask the question: how does the eye see itself or the I understand itself? The answer will be, only reflectively or indirectly. It sees itself as reflected in the mirror and I understand myself through the world.’¹²¹ Furthermore, the perceptive mirror as metaphor extends to the subject as Ihde so elaborately explains:

‘If the perceptual lifeworld is the object-correlate for Merleau-Ponty, one would expect a symmetry in relation to the subject who must be thought of as a concrete perceiver. And this is the case. The problem of the body takes on a central role for the reflected side of existential phenomenology. The *embodied* or incarnate subject is the perceiving counterpart to the perceived world. *Le corps vécu*, usually translated as the lived body, is the perceiving subject in a perceptual world and the concrete finitude of the body corresponds to the perceived presence of the world.’¹²²

Furthermore, as we have seen, I can understand the other as second self since that self engages and navigates the lifeworld through intentional and perceptual trajectories that I know as my own. Seeing the subject looking at or beyond the camera, I thus understand that said subject is also reflexively positioned by a visual field that remains inaccessible to me. This is visibility in the past, structured by invisibility in my present. The visual field in question is the existential manifold of the past

Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics, 2. paperback print, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1971), 168.

¹²¹ Rosensohn et al., “Sense and Significance,” 121.

¹²² Ibid., 125–26.

lifeworld. It is the flesh of the world, which positions the subject in perception as reversibly and reflexively situated. The corpus that is examined here is densely populated with a network of looks either at the camera, to the off-frame, beyond the camera, and between the subjects onscreen. I will choose an example that is not so much significant because of its extraordinary character as in its typicality.

P. O.-M.¹²³ films in Bettange which he ‘tells’ us in a twelve seconds shot on the street sign of the village. He then follows with some everyday scenes in which two women hold a small child by hand while a teenage boy stands awkwardly behind them. A third woman is only figured at the edge of the screen by the arm of her fur coat. But wait! Behind the two women holding the child by the hand and a teenage boy behind them, I notice a window. It is positioned in the center of the frame behind the people he films, and at first we see two cacti plants on the inner window sill and a woman wearing a black top and a pearl necklace looking out at the congregation in the street. He cuts once, and in the next sequence the position of the camera and people is still the same, but now another woman can be seen in the window on the right side. She is wearing a dark top and one of those quintessential 1950s/1960s full-body aprons in blue with a floral pattern. Both look at the people in the street rather than the filmmaker.

Figure 18



¹²³ AV011111, no info on material, color, mute, 1963

Their gaze very clearly rests on the women and children and, seeing as we have visuals of the women and children, albeit from a different direction, the filmic world is presented as enclosed. This changes in the next shot. Here the filmmaker is positioned almost directly in front of the window, and the two women directly look at and smile in the general direction of the filmmaker with the camera. What we understand if we take perception as reversible and reflexive is that their visual field is also positioned behind the camera and filmmaker, while including the latter. While the next sequence shows us a courtyard, we can never be certain whether this yard is, in fact, positioned behind the filmmaker from the previous shot or in a completely different location. The existential manifold of their lifeworld encroaches upon the image even if it remains unseen by us. In fact, it structures the visual field of the subjects in the film as invisible surround for me. We become aware of the existential manifold of the off-frame. We understand it through the reflexivity as basis of perception. We see one side of the mirror and implicitly understand the existence of the other side, even if that view is forever lost and invisible to us. We understand that the enveloping gaze that is perception presents a lifeworld that is fleshed out. We have neither visual nor cognitive knowledge of this fleshed-out world which has forever vanished in the past. Through the intersubjective relation I have with these women onscreen as second selves and perceiving matter, I understand the films as a reduced cutout figure in an existential surround. While we understand that the lifeworld of the past has forever vanished even if we still perceive its movement in the films, through a phenomenological understanding we embrace an awareness of the lifeworld of these amateurs and their subjects as deeply embodied and existential. We come to perceive their world as a deeply fleshed-out universe that refuses appropriation. These filmic slices I have of the past lifeworld nevertheless always convey and hint at the existential manifold that is the stuff of their and my world. The look *beyond* the camera presents us with a bridge to a vanished world that is present as invisible surround that reflexively positions the looking subject in front of the camera. The look back at and beyond the camera makes us understand important insights into the nature of the filmic world. While the world it presents remains unalterable, we also come to understand it as part of a visual field that reflexively structures vision. The filmic slice that we are presented with comes to refer back to a universal surround that structured the profilmic manifold. While lost, inaccessible,

and invisible to me, I understand and incorporate this surround since I myself am a subject in and object for perception. What is implicitly, though never explicitly, witnessed in the look back or beyond the camera is what Sobchack elaborates in the following with regards to the look back of one of the characters in Kieslowski's cinema:

‘Speaking in another context of such a direct gaze at the camera, Marc Vernet notes the way in which its directness not only breaks the integrity of the film frame, but also is directed not “to a specific individual, but rather to [...] the entire universe taken as a witness to the look.” The [...] direct gaze, then, quite literally “dissolve[s] the apparatus of framing” and expands outward into an invisible but presenced universal surround, calling forth [Keiji] Nishitani’s “Gaze of the other enveloping sight on all sides.”’¹²⁴

Again, the amateur, as opposed to Kieslowski, never intended such an indication of the existential manifold. Nevertheless, I experience it in film viewing. This enveloping sight on all sides is exactly that Pontean notion of perception as experience. Furthermore, the universal visual field as surround does away with notions of a rigid tunnel perspective between subject and object. As Sobchack notes:

‘insofar as a frame is imposed on what is, in fact, not a tunnel but a universal surround, the viewer’s present view and vision are constituted (and here we are reminded of Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and Invisible*) as part of and “within the invisible”: “What can be seen is supporter and interpenetrated by what is *outside* sight, a Gaze of the other enveloping sight on all sides.”’¹²⁵

The look at and beyond the camera brings into visibility the invisibility that structures it. The look of a subject onscreen implies a visible surround that positions his/her body. The visible and invisible here also relate to co-emergent notions of inside and outside, subject and object that co-emerge in the flesh and are generally presented as reversibly inflected in the connective tissue that is the flesh. A dialectical terminology of inside and outside is thus rendered obsolete by film viewership in the flesh.

¹²⁴ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 104.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 102.

Here lies the enriching value of spectatorship in the flesh. Through the intersubjective reversibility that underlies the connective tissue between myself, the film-intentionality, the filmmaker and the filmed subject, I engage these visualizations not as a flat surface or exclusive object of study, but recognize them implicitly and primordially as a deeply fleshed-out universe from the past. Intersubjectivity thus provides the fundamental bridge that makes these films meaningful on an existential and initial level. Sitting as reflexively positioned body in potential readiness for sensual and motile engagement, I am provided with a primordial access to these films that is existential rather than cognitively evaluated through external context. I might not know or understand what these two women are looking at and where they are located, even if I assume it to be Bettange as I am given a visual clue of the sign. Nor do I know their names, ages and relation to the filmmaker and his family. When films enter the archive the majority of information is quite simply lost. If one does not visit the filmmaker, meta-informative context remains lost. However, this work takes as its main basis the loss of context since, after all, it proves almost impossible to track down each and every filmmaker. Nevertheless, I understand important details about the images produced. I understand the expressive intentionality of these filmmakers, which becomes an e-motive film language. I understand the visual surround that fleshes out these past life worlds through the look back and beyond the camera. I understand the breakage that underlies an unwilling facial expression. I understand the unfolding of the flesh of the world that is presented to me in duration during a sunset. I understand the decentering of a filmmaking subject presented with the liberating if non-anthropocentric beauty in and of the world. I also come to understand myself as co-constituted in the intersubjectivity that inspires all film viewing. I understand what it means to be-in-the-world and I attribute this status to the filmmaker and the filmed subject even if such a status partially undoes my own perceived mastery and privilege of as the center of my own particular world. All these aspects I understand through the experience of film viewing as embodied in the flesh, as reversible and reflexive positioning of my own and the second self's body.

What a work on amateur films from the past and taken from the archive must always take into account is the embodied and culturally shaped experience of the researcher. As such, this work falls in line with both Vivian Sobchack and Jennifer Barker when they argue:

‘that “as film theorists,” we are not exempt from sensual being at the movies – nor, let’s admit it, would we wish to be. As “lived bodies” (to use a phenomenological term that insists on “the” objective body as always also lived subjectively as “my” body, diacritically invested and active in making sense and meaning in and of the world), our vision is always already “fleshed out” – and even at the movies it is “in-formed” and given meaning by our other sensory means of access to the world: our capacity not only to hear, but also to touch, to smell, to taste, and always to proprioceptively feel our dimension and movement in the world. In sum, the film experience is meaningful *not to the side of our bodies but because of our bodies.*’¹²⁶

I hope it has been illustrated in the preceding how such an embodied engagement and primordial meaning generation occurs in the viewing relation between researcher and research object as well.

A notion that has so far not been examined, even if it has been hinted at several times, is the sociocultural inflection of all perception. I bring to the viewing experience a body that is as primordially meaningful as it is always culturally positioned and situated in a historical here and now. The implications are that I bring these notions of culture and historicized inflections to the viewing experience, and they change and influence the seen on screen. In the following, I will, however, argue that experience is as deeply embodied as culturally inflected, or differently put, that my own cultural background is also sensually inflected.

9. Macrop perception: the lived body as socioculturally positioned

My experience of the films, or rather experience in which I take the films in, is structured by what Barthes calls two different fields, but which I take as two different styles. My film experience is not structured by a constant experience of pricking. I would hardly be able to stand such a strongly inflected embodied experience over the duration of a film collection. It would certainly induce a heart attack. The question arises as to how I engage with the films if moments of strong sensual inflection do not

¹²⁶ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 4.

pierce me? After all, such moments are relatively rare. It is now time to take into account what Roland Barthes comes to term *studium*. The viewing of a film presents a perceptual experience that oscillates between these two styles. The styles here have to do with interest, focus or attention that structure my engagement. When first engaging with the films, I am intently aware of their nature as my research object. My interest is already structured by a vague and diffused aim to use them as an argumentative base. Viewing the films on my laptop, my general experience of them was one of, as Barthes terms it, 'polite interest'¹²⁷ and that I would add on to with boredom. My interest is general and diffused 'for it is culturally (this connotation is present in *studium*) that I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions.'¹²⁸

My emphasis on film language also meant that I often watched the films in a staccato manner, stopping, taking notes and resuming my viewing again. I thus scanned the images for specific details or grazed their surface in search of useful patterns that could give insight into an overall categorization. I engaged the films with an attention to infra-knowledge. In short, I wanted to establish and filter the cultural codes that structured representation produced by amateurs. Barthes sees this diffused and general interest in images as follows: 'To recognize the *studium* is inevitably to encounter the photographer's intentions, to enter into harmony with the, to approve or disapprove of them, but always to understand them, to argue them within myself, for culture (from which the *studium* derives) is a contract arrived at between creators and consumers.'¹²⁹

This is how a research object is treated most of the time. Quite often this leads to frustration since these films rarely cooperated with my initial hypotheses. If I wanted to look at differences that pertained to their date of production, I would realize that, apart from fashion, houses, cars, and holiday destinations, their content did not oblige my presumed research aim. I initially assumed that all films were family films, only to realize that a good part of them were clearly produced with a different motivation in mind. I assumed the films to be non-creative, which proved untrue when viewing

¹²⁷ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 27.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 27–28.

some of the material shot on the fairground. In short, the films did not cooperate, and one view or another, one motivation or another, somehow disproved every angle I adopted. This is the stubbornness and potential of every research object. At the same time, I came to realize that, as a consumer of these images, I entered a contract that is culturally contrived. I became part of and understood the cultural codes that structure the home movie. I realized that what I brought to the film viewing was a background that, apart from their temporal difference, presented itself as similar to the background of the filmmaker. In the preceding, we have learned that we always bring our body in potential readiness to the film viewing. I also realized that I brought a complex background of a body that was characterized as middle-class, female, non-practicing Catholic and Luxembourgian. My interpretation of the film visuals and the concurrent judgment I inevitably imposed co-constitutively in the viewing were thus already culturally, socially and historically positioned. I understand imagery on two, even three levels: as seen before I engage them sensually and gain an embodied and fleshed-out understanding of the expressive intentionality that underlies the filmmaking project. I also understand moving images because I have learned to read them in a coherent and comprehensive manner and I understand the socioculturally inflected representations produced by a filmmaker of a similar background. Still, analytically, we seem to find ourselves in a Cartesian bind. Does this mean that I only engage imagery sensually in moments in which they involuntarily prick me while I engage them in a style of *studium* when I am engaged as culturally positioned and consciously relate to my research object?

In the following, we will thus analyze questions relating to positionality. Not only do I engage the films from an always embodied and materially situated position, I also am situated historically, locally, culturally and socially. As will be argued, the cultural situatedness of my position is always also engaged through the sensorium as already culturally inflected. Finally, it will be shown as a consequence that cultural perception is always also embodied. The bilateral structuration of perception (as primordially existential and socioculturally inflected) will be taken as functioning according to figure-ground oscillations (gestalting) rather than engaged as separate styles. I will make use of Don Ihde's insightful elaboration of the body as always micro- and macro-perceptually engaged. I will follow Ihde in his conceptualization of body *one* and body *two* in order to show how my own sociocultural positioning helped me

engage with the films in a manner that fleshed them out for me. I will show how the films are thickened by my own socioculturally inflected sensorium and eventually how they can trigger memorial processes that are always inherently part of my situatedness in material embodiment.

A phenomenological approach takes the phenomenon of amateur film as it appears in experience. As such, the sociocultural background of the researcher cannot be ignored since it forms an essential part of the correlation between the subject and the world, which generates primordial meaning. As Sobchack tells us: ‘It is focused, therefore, on the *relations between* the subjective and objective aspects of material, social, and personal existence and sees these relations as constitutive of the meaning and value of the phenomenon under investigation.’¹³⁰ Amateur films do not only present a visualization of an expressive activity that is situated in historical and sociocultural particularities, they also come to generate meaning in a viewing that brings with it its own particular situatedness. Because I take the films into my own particular experience through my own socioculturally inflected sensorium, the viewing represents a complex, but ultimately existentially thickened generation of meaning and knowledge. An analysis that operates from a basis of existential phenomenology is thus able to take the phenomenon as meaningful, since it is engaged by ‘human beings who are themselves particular, finite, and partial, and thus always in culture and history, always open to the world and further elaboration.’¹³¹

Don Ihde calls what I have termed two styles, two senses of perception. I prefer the term style since it includes the *manner* in which I engage a phenomenon. Ihde calls these styles or senses micro- and macro-perception and relates them to different modalities of embodiment. These modalities he comes to call body one and body two. Ihde explains this dual sense of embodiment as follows:

‘We *are* our body in the sense in which phenomenology understands our motile, perceptual, and emotive being-in-the-world. This sense of being a body I call *body one*. But we are also

¹³⁰ Sobchack, Vivian. “The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic ‘Presence’”. in Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer, *Materialities of Communication*, 87.

¹³¹ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 87–88. My emphasis.

bodies in a social and cultural sense, and we experience that, too. For most those reared in western traditions, the female breast is an erotic zone, whereas for many Asian traditions the nape of the neck is equally more strongly such a zone. These locations are not biological but culturally constructed, although they are located upon us as part of our bodily experience. I call this zone of bodily significance *body two*.¹³²

Furthermore, Ihde makes an important distinction that relates to body one as micro-perceptual and body two as macro-perceptual. He writes:

‘What is usually taken as sensory perception (what is immediate focused bodily in actual seeing, hearing, etc.), I shall call microperception. But there is also that what might be called cultural, or hermeneutic, perception, which I shall call macroperception. Both belong equally to the lifeworld. And both dimensions of perception are closely linked and intertwined. There is no microperception (sensory-bodily) without its location within a field of macroperception and no macroperception without its microperceptual focus.’¹³³

The correlational rule that founds phenomenological inquiry in fact guarantees all perception as situated perception as there is only perception as ‘both a seeing as ____ and a seeing *from* ____.’¹³⁴ The perceived phenomenon is thus always presented as perceptual variant. Yet, there is truth in each variant. As the objectivity of the phenomenon is taken as invariable part of the subjective engagement, and no meta-physical authority can guarantee a universal truth, we are presented with a situation in which the phenomenal variant is not only open for investigation, but is presented as the only possible object for investigation.

The engagement I experience in the *studium* can also be termed a hermeneutic engagement. While it is not the specific focus here, we need to mention how images are not only read hermeneutically, but also how they fundamentally changed us as subjects. Chapter three has already elaborated upon the changes in perception that accompanied cultural modernism. We have seen how the frenzy of visibility that characterized modernism has led to a fascination and emulation of seeing as spectacle

¹³² Ihde, *Bodies in Technology*, xi.

¹³³ Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 29.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

seeing. On a more basic level, such a hermeneutic understanding relates to the very primary principle of understanding sequencing in images. On a very crude level, I understand the temporal lapse between images. I understand how a filmmaker such as G.W.¹³⁵ films his wife in front of the mirror brushing her hair, putting on her coat and being on her way to join the Holy Communion procession in which their son takes part. I substitute the gaps in the imagery, such as the leaving of the house through the front door through imagination and interpretation. I also understand the close-up as camera-seeing and I am not concerned with shots in which vehicles rush towards me as potentially causing physical damage. In short, my vision is already culturally and hermeneutically inflected since I am a body in technology and I see technologically. As both Sobchack and Ihde note: 'Seeing images mediated and made visible by technological vision enables us not only to see technological images but also to see technologically.'¹³⁶

While imaging technologies can be seen as culturally learned, they are also always taken into embodiment. This has to do with the structure of perceptual variants which are always righted by the subject. As seen above, Don Ihde elaborates on this existential capacity of human beings to in-corporate cultural variants within perception with an example in which subjects perceive the world upside down: 'The most radical such variation is the well-known inverted glasses experiment in which the viewer sees the "world" upside down. It takes several days for the viewer to relearn his actional gestalt such that the world seems "right" again – but it does.'¹³⁷ Imaging technologies and their technological vision, while hermeneutically learned, are still taken into and righted into an actional gestalt that takes the existential body at its base. Again, the sensorium is primordially culturally shaped. Consciousness and the material body present a single system in the flesh. While the nature of technological seeing is different since one is organic and the other mechanical, a subject can always incorporate and right such perception in the lived body.

¹³⁵ AV032407, no info on material, black and white, mute, 1951-1954

¹³⁶ Sobchack, Vivian. "The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic "Presence"". Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer, *Materialities of Communication*, 88.

¹³⁷ Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 48.

The following example illustrates the complexities that underlie perceptual variants. R.S.¹³⁸ films the excitement and ritual of St. Nicholas day. First, he introduces a shot with a clearly and prettily written title that tells us that what follows was taken on St. Nicholas day in 1959. In the first sequence, we see his three boys putting cheap cardboard plates on the table.

Figure 19



Those plates are a remnant of my own childhood memory, as we had to put them out on the eve of St. Nicholas day. If we had been well behaved during the year, they would be filled with sweets the next day. If not, there was always the risk of getting a rod, usually fashioned from hazelnut shrubs. The side of these paper plates reached upwards, were undulated and, usually, ornamented with some sort of Christmas-y imagery. The next shot shows us the living-room table, devoid of children; the paper plates have been overflowingly filled with sweets, and the table is full of gifts. R.S. slowly pans over the table not only in a documenting and archiving drive but also with a certain sense of pride which is translated by the time he takes to display them visually. The table is filled to the brim with rather expensive gifts, including cuddly toys, a toy carpentry set and an electric racetrack. The next shot is directed towards the door opening. The boys come in with excited and joyful faces. They do not look towards the camera, but their gaze immediately locks onto the bounty on the table. Next we see the boys from behind, as they stand before the table hesitantly, unable to decide where first to direct their attention. The sequences that follow alternately show the children discovering and playing with their gifts and the smiling adults who take a seat on the chairs that are lining the living room walls. I remember St. Nicholas day at

¹³⁸ AV013104, no info on material, black and white and color, mute, 1959

my grandmother's house. The chairs were always pulled out from the table and put against the wall. The adults could thus have a seat and observe the children who had free reign of the living room and the large table full of gifts. The setting of the living room was exciting in itself, since it was only used on special occasions when guests arrived. We were not considered guests, and the kitchen would do for us, but on this special day, the family was in the living room on its own. The use of the living room without guests already rendered the day extraordinary, and we children being in the living room in the morning presented another highly unusual experience.

A copious amount of informative layers and perceptual variants structure these very simple images. First of all, the manner in which R.S. structures the visuals as sequencing translates the occasion as sociocultural ritual. Furthermore, as we have seen, the visualizations also render the family as unit consumable and are structured by a consumerist pattern of children as emotional investment. These images are thus produced and invested in the bank of memories which will tell the family chronicle as a happy narrative. The exhibit of the gifts and the living room also function as a consumerist display. At the same time, the hesitant pans to follow the children as they move around excitedly also translates the e-motive movement of the camera trajectory as the mediating movement of care, concern and love. We have seen before that these visuals only present a slice of the existential lifeworld as experienced by the filmmaker. The locality of the house eludes me, but is self-evidently manifest to the filmmaker. The greater locality brings with it a network of social and cultural codes that I am also not privy to since I do not live in that village at that time. The adults seen in the image, two women and a man, I can interpret as the mother and grandparents following logical deductions concerning their age and presence in the frame.

The image is thus already structured by sociocultural inflections leading to perceptual variants in the filmmaker's perception which, while not my own, can still partly include me. There are certain visual remnants that are presented by the films, such as the table display or the presence of the grandparents, that hint at good relations and the enjoyment of children receiving gifts. At the same time, I bring my own perceptual variant to the image, informed by my own situatedness and memories. Having been brought up thirty years later, the ritual that I observe here presents itself

as similar. The apron the grandmother is wearing is even comparable to the one my own grandmother wore and which I would never see her without unless we would go to a fancy restaurant for a special occasion. I remember the excitement and dread (remember the potential threat of the rod) of putting out your plate, going to sleep and having to wait in front of the closed door before being granted access. Quite often, we would have to sing a song before entering as well, a part I always hated with a passion. From the very start, we are already in a contact zone of perceptual variants, theirs and mine. Would I understand the images in a different manner if I came from a background in which I never would have experienced the ritualistic sequencing of a St. Nicholas day celebration? Perhaps, but fact of the matter is that my own vision here is socioculturally impacted from the beginning. I do not draw meaning from these images *after* I see them. My own sociocultural experiences are integral to the experience of the seen. My experience of images is thus structured by dual variants – the visualized remnants of the expression in a situated lifeworld that is lost to me, and my own perceptual variants that engage these images with a cultural knowledge.

The manner in which I perceive these images is organized according to a figure-ground structure. This means that the body always mediates perception in the flesh as a single system of flesh and consciousness. However, perception always being situational, these two different modes oscillate constantly. Simply put, sometimes my perception is inflected as macro-perceptual, relating to my cultural body; at other times, as in a moment of the extra-ordinary, the micro-perceptual takes the stronger inflection of a punctum experience. Engaging the images in the style of the *studium*, I not only bring to the viewing my sociocultural background, but also my film education (hermeneutic reading) and the aims of my research project. Moments that prick me through their unusual extra-ordinariness provoke a shift in which micro-perceptual engagement rises to the fore.

Cultural codes always structure representation as we have seen in the previous chapters and naturally; they code the filmmaker's expression. They are part of the perceptual variant of the filmmaking expression. And they become part of the visual gestalting in film viewing. Being of the same background, some of these codes are well known to me as they form part of my own perceptual variant in watching these films. Here a *contact zone* is established. I understand the cultural codes of a middle-

class Catholic society, since it is the class that provides the background to my own experience. Still, the perceptual variants of filmmaker and researcher never coincide completely. I can never regain the fleshed-out sociocultural perception that went into the production of these films, but I further them in my own culturally positioned experience.

As Sobchack notes: ‘Most theorists and critics of the cinematic and electronic have been drawn to macrop perceptual analysis, to descriptions and interpretations of the hermeneutic – cultural contexts that inform and shape both the materiality of the technologies and their textual representations.’¹³⁹

The first three chapters of this work have analyzed the cultural context and representational codes that underlie and motivate the filmic style. What I would like to show here is how these cultural contexts and codes are always engaged sensually and bodily. In fact, macro-and micro-perception, and this includes culturally inflected representation, form part of the same perceptual system. Because the phenomenon in question is taken into my own experience, I am always also co-constituted by it. This made me reflect upon the taken-for-granted sociocultural nature of my own perceptual awareness. I had not reflected upon my own background in any distinct manner before and realized that the viewing of these films brought to the fore a wide range of multistabilities within my own perceptual trajectory. The perceptual variants that structure the position from which perception is situated is thus presented as oscillation. Some of these inflections are forever lost to me, others I can regain in the zone of contact between these filmmaker’s social landscape and my own, and some form part of my own background and were never intended by the filmmaker. The viewing is thus structured and oscillates between not only my own perceptual variants that tilt between micro-and macro-perceptual inflections, but are also positioned in inflections that are inside or outside contact zone between filmmaker’s macro-perceptual variants and my own macro-perception. This principle becomes most illustrative in moments in which they do not coincide. In certain moments, the contact zone is disrupted and by contrast the difference between macro-perceptual variants that inflect the filmmaking come to the fore. For example, as Heather Norris

¹³⁹ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 86.

Nicholson rightly points out: ‘While the naked intimacies of young children filmed in the home, on the beach or at nursery may now prompt a sense of voyeurism, the politics of representation may be central to why other footage seems significant for its now problematic depiction of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, occupation and so on.’¹⁴⁰ The family film presents numerous examples of naked toddlers, either in the garden during a hot summer day or in the nightly ritual of bath time.

L.K.¹⁴¹ films such a ritual. His daughter is in the bathtub which is filled with about ten centimeters of water. She is wearing a plastic white shower cap and she washes herself with a cloth. Most of the time, filmmakers will focus on children splashing around in the water. Here, however, he captures his four or five-year-old daughter washing herself. She is facing the camera and laughs while washing her genitals. The sequence lasts about twenty-five seconds until the mother steps in with a towel. Here, the representational codes that structure perception have changed in the short thirty years since the film has been produced. Uncomfortably, I watch the rather lengthy sequence, and the awareness of the inappropriate viewing of a naked child washing herself comes to the fore in a viewing in which the contact zone withdraws in these moments. The macro-perceptual variant is misaligned and changes from one of innocent acceptability to one that is inflected by an uncomfortable awareness of politics concerning the visualized nakedness of children.

A further example finds itself in the oldest film of the corpus. M.Q.¹⁴² films at the Schobermesse in 1929. Oscillating between a predominant family-chronicle style and a d&a drive, he also captures the offered attractions at the fairground. He has drawn a title stating ‘Schobermesse 1929’ and a second one follows with ‘AU VILLAGE NOIR.’ The second title has two smileys drawn besides it, one with a smiling and one with a frowning face. This is in itself unusual, since it seems to suggest that the filmmaker is in two minds about the attraction of this ‘village’ that displays African people. The next sequence is clearly produced with a d&a drive. He takes care to film them in a high-angle medium shot. We can see African people in traditional garments

¹⁴⁰ Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film: Meaning and Practice, 1927-77*, Studies in Popular Culture (Manchester ; New York : New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 113.

¹⁴¹ AV026322 / IA_AMA_002770, 8mm, color, mute, 1962

¹⁴² AV009596_m.wmv / IA_AMA_004418, 9.5 mm, black and white, mute, 1929

sitting in front of huts that were constructed in a village formation through which people could walk leisurely and observe.

Figure 20



We see two men playing a board game on the floor, women cooking over an open fireplace, a group of men lounging on the floor, smoking and gazing into the camera unsmilingly and, finally, a group of children playing and one boy posing proudly for a portrait. Here the macro-perceptual understanding of acceptability opens a gulf between the filmmaker's and my own. The film is problematic on numerous levels. First of all, naturally, the mere existence of this 'attraction' presents a colonial exploitation of the people on display. The displaying of people as 'exhibition' commodifies and exploits people whose culture and skin color is established as 'exotic'. A further level reinforces the uncomfortable politics underlying the representation by filmic means. Again, Nicholson is highly articulate here: 'No amateur filmmaker functioned in visual or cultural isolation: individual decisions about how to shoot, edit, splice and screen footage inevitably link back to prevailing attitudes and ways of behaving.'¹⁴³ The medium shot as a documenting device becomes exploitative in its distantiation. Moreover, the high angle of the camera gaze

¹⁴³ Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 109.

implies a further indication of power relations imposed from above. The white, middle-class, Western gaze is here literally imposed in a movement from above to below and thus also translates cultural ways of behaving that show the historical and sociocultural positionality of the camera and filmmaker's gaze. Because spectatorship always implicates participation, the macro-perceptual variant propels me out of the contact zone and is experienced as recoil. Here lies a first indication of how macro-perceptual variants are always experienced micro-perceptually as well. A feeling of discomfort translates in a bodily sense of againstness. In its strongest inflections it provoked a look away from the visuals, a refusal to participate in the macro-perceptual codification of filmic representation. Because of the intersubjective nature of all film viewership I not only recoil from the representational politics that underlie the filmic gaze, I also partly become aware of the objectification of the bodies onscreen, though only as imaginary since I can never fully experience what they experienced. Here, the filmed subjects are clearly reduced to Ihde's body two. Through the camera gaze, the filmed subjects are denied a first-person perspective. As such, the submission of their bodies under scrutiny of the colonial gaze brings to mind the Foucauldian body and cultural body. As Ihde notes:

'Foucault's body is thoroughly a cultural body, often described and analyzed in a third-person perspective. The body objectified by the medical gaze in the clinic, the body of the condemned in the regicide, and the subjection of bodies within all forms of discipline are culturally constructed bodies. Insofar as there is experience, it is experience suffered or wrought upon human bodies.'¹⁴⁴

Because I sit at the viewing as embodied and intersubjective being, I can relate to a certain extent to the imposition of experience wrought upon these embodied filmic subjects. However, because I am on the imposing side, because I am implicated and thus participate in the imposing gaze of the camera trajectory, the intersubjective material re-cognition translates as physical recoil. The macro-perceptual implications that structure the gaze here are thus micro-perceptually experienced in Sara Ahmed's inflection of bodily direction. In her words:

¹⁴⁴ Ihde, *Bodies in Technology*, 17.

‘life is lived as specific inflections of a general “towardness,” hate as an “againstness,” fear as an “aboutness,” as recoil away from something or other. The figures of the loved, the hated, the feared, and the disgusting do not in themselves possess qualities that make them the objects of these emotions; instead, they are shaped in and by these very movements toward, against, about, and away from them.’¹⁴⁵

Macro-perceptual variants oscillate and come to translate micro-perceptual inflections. In film viewing, such trajectories and inflections oscillate constantly. They fluctuate in figure-ground relations. Perceptual gestalting in experience functions fundamentally according to this figure-ground oscillation that positions the body not as Cartesian binary, but as diffuse and fleshy meaning generation.

9.1. Memory in the flesh – the thickening of the filmic world

While the examples above have translated as uncomfortable againstness, the experience of macro-perceptual variants in the contact zone can be a highly positive, because they engender a fleshy and thickened experience as well. The Holy Communion in Luxembourg represents an important rite of passage in which the child is initiated into the Catholic faith and is allowed to have a consecrated wafer for the first time. Generally, children are in third grade (about nine years old) when they have their Communion, and a lot of preparation goes into the festivities. First of all, the child is spiritually prepared and has to attend a religious course leading up to the Communion. Children are coached on the specific religious implications of the ceremony and also on the practicalities concerning the course of ceremony and parade leading from the village to the church. Second, for the family, the Communion presents one of the most important social occasions and is generally accompanied not only by a rigorous planning as to meals, location and invitations, but quite often also involves financial strains. The occasion itself is thus also one of display. I remember people having their houses re-painted before a Holy Communion lunch because relatives are invited and appearances must be kept up. This, of course, is an extreme case; however, people tend to go to great lengths. A professional cook normally prepares the meal and servers are hired for the occasion. Then there is the matter of

¹⁴⁵ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 4.

the dress. For weeks, I was pinned and pricked by the seamstress so that the dress was perfect. The petticoat under my dress was so big that I was only able to stand in the van my parents owned at the time, and the synthetic fabric of the dress was scratchy to say the least. Most children in Luxembourg go through this ‘rite de passage.’

R.H.¹⁴⁶ films his daughter’s Holy Communion. While most filmmakers concentrate on a few brief shots of their children coming down the stairs in their festive clothes, R.H. films it all. He starts filming in the bedroom where his wife helps their daughter getting ready. She is already dressed and her mother helps her put on her necklace with the crucifix. She then proceeds to put the veil on her daughter’s hair. The next sequence shows his daughter coming down the stairs ceremoniously and slowly. With one hand she grabs the bannister while with the other she holds up her dress, which the petticoat renders cumbersome. Her mother is walking behind her and holds up the back of her dress. In the next sequence, he films his daughter coming down the front steps of the house, holding her dress with one hand and the obligatory bible in the other. A second woman, perhaps an aunt, helps her down and is holding the large candle that children have to carry in the parade. The next shot shows the preparations of the parade and the hustle and bustle of parents and relatives all dressed in their Sunday best. He films part of the parade and a rather lengthy sequence upon their arrival back at the house. In the next sequence, people are already seated at the table. The meal is well underway and by now, the men have taken off their jackets. Their living room is a traditional one with dark furniture and white semi-transparent curtains. The table is elegantly decorated with several flower pieces. Dessert is served. Now, a Holy Communion dessert is an important feature of the meal. Traditionally, either ice-cream cake or a ‘Bamkuch’, a form of spit cake that is a rather dry affair, are served. Here, an elder man cuts the ice-cream cake while the women distribute the plates.

In itself, these images are highly generalized in that they present the same sedimented Holy Communion images as numerous other films. Engaged on the surface (in the style of *studium*), these images bespeak of the cultural consumerist pattern of display in the emphasis on dress, food and the family as extended consumptive unit. Then

¹⁴⁶ AV024889 / IA_AMA_002239, 8mm, color, mute, 1964, 1967

there is the fact that, as such, “nothing happens” in the imagery. We are in a space in which images function as cutout stylized sketches for the later memorial practice. Still, the images moved me and became riveting as a visual universe that went beyond notions of flat surface. I would like to analyze how even generalized images like these are thickened by an existential presence that is fleshed out by my own embodied and culturally inflected presence in the viewing. First of all, the sequence in which the mother helps the daughter get ready is already sensually engaging in the beauty of the veil outlined against the window.

Figure 21



The translucent fabric lights up as the morning sun shines through. The two women putting on the veil transposed me and brought up memories of my own mother fixing the veil. I remember the pinch of tiny hair getting caught in the bobby pins that held it, but also the care and sense of importance I experienced. Next, in the images of the daughter coming down the stairs, I immediately experienced a diffused sense of importance, but also the awkwardness of being on display. The cumbersome monstrosity of the dress is one of the predominant memories I have of my own Holy Communion. I also remember the candle being too heavy and the wreath constantly slipping from my head so that I had to manage both with no hands free. The scratchy

and mostly synthetic feel of the communion dress arrives as a memory in the sensual engagement with the image here. Again, I experience the reversibility that translates the visual of the dress back to a sensual feel in my own body, in this case the tactile experience of scratchiness. However, here lies a further element that we have so far not engaged, namely the matter of how imagery also triggers memorial responses in micro-perception and the flesh of the viewer. It is the argumentation of this chapter that memories and the memorial circuit that images trigger are always experienced materially and come to thicken the visual universe of the filmic world. A film viewing is by default a sensual engagement as has been stressed again and again in the preceding. I would like to analyze here how, in the words of Nadia Seremetakis: 'The senses represent inner states not shown on the surface'¹⁴⁷ and how '[t]hey are also located in a social-material field outside of the body.'¹⁴⁸ She evaluates whether 'memory [is] stored in specific everyday items that form the historicity of a culture, items that create and sustain our relationship to the historical as a sensory dimension'.¹⁴⁹ She takes the disappearance of a specific Greek peach from the markets as a starting point to an examination of how memories are always sensually implicated and lists the loss of material artifacts as an example of how such a loss coincides with an unraveling of social memory fabrics that are lived by emplaced subjects. What interests me here is how the senses oscillate between the social field outside and the inner sphere of the body in order to generate meaning that is as personal as it is social. When I open the films such as the communion sequences, I am sensually engaged in the unfolding of filmic presence. But I also engage with certain material artifacts in the film, and they trigger a response that ultimately leads to a thickening of the filmic universe. A re-cognition of the filmic universe as fleshed-out space also leads to an interweaving of memorial engagements between two lifeworlds, one in the present, one vanished in the past. Confronted with the imagery of the communion luncheon, I had a strong reaction to the setting. While the focus clearly lies on the family seated at the table, what I could discern of the living room presented a generalized Luxembourgian living room of which I have known my fair share. Not only did I recognize the dark oak furniture as similar to the one my grandmother (and

¹⁴⁷ C. Nadia Seremetakis, *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

numerous aunts and uncles, as well as grandaunts and granduncles) had in her living room, with the setting came the contemporaneous smell of such living rooms: This smell I can only describe as a mixture of musty old houses; a pungent smell of honey wax and herbs that I assume form part of the cleaning product used to treat the wood; a subtle fragrance of lemon, common to all cleaning products; an underlying smell of countless cigarettes smoked in the living room over the years and which lingers no matter how many times the room is aired; heavy perfume applied freely by grandmothers in a Sunday state, a sort of mixture of perfume, synthetic dresses and body odor that inevitably accompanies long lunches in contained spaces, cooking odors that seem comprised of fried onions no matter what the dish; and, as always, the smell of strong alcoholic digestive liqueurs that are stored in the house bar. Watching the images in the living room, these smells assaulted me physically. They were not only triggered by the images but accompanied them contemporaneously and without a thought. Here I experience what phenomenologist Elena del Rio describes as follows: ‘As the image becomes translated into a bodily response, body and image no longer function as discrete units, but as surfaces in contact, engaged in a constant activity of reciprocal re-alignment and inflection.’¹⁵⁰ Only here, the reaction I have is not only a reversible one between image and body, but extends to include my own memories sensually.

Another example might help illustrate these oscillations further, namely my favorite example of all: the depiction of dessert. The ice-cream cakes and spit cakes that are omnipresent in the filmic renditions of Communion lunches trigger memories that are both micro- and macro-perceptually inflected. Not only are most of these cakes of the same kind, a Holy Communion dessert is bought at only two patisseries in Luxembourg. They are known as ‘fancier’ bakeries, and people will go to either Oberweis or Namur in Luxembourg City for special occasions. People will buy the spit cake at Oberweis and the ice-cream cakes at Namur.

¹⁵⁰ Elena del Rio, “The Body as Foundation of the Screen,” *Camera Obscura* 13 (1996): 101.

Figure 22



The famous spit cake, a layered cake made with rum¹⁵¹

Figure 23



The sacrificial lamb made from ice cream (vanilla and strawberry)¹⁵²

It has ever been so. I will not presume that every single household in Luxembourg buys their dessert in those two bakeries, but the fact of the matter is that every single communion I ever went to had either one or both of these cakes. The fact that they were only served on special occasions made their taste an incredibly memorial one. The image of said cakes thus brings back the taste, feel, smell, and atmosphere of these communion dinners in an inexorable manner. Here the memories induced are clearly not only personal but socioculturally inflected. My own background rises to the fore and is micro-perceptually experienced by being confronted with a filmic past that partly coincides. As Seremetakis notes: ‘Here sensory interiors and exteriors constantly pass into each other in the creation of extra-personal significance.’¹⁵³ Not only do I reflexively “taste” the cake, I am also contemporaneously aware of the

¹⁵¹ AV031296 / IA_AMA002317, 8mm, color, mute, 1959

¹⁵² AV031296 / IA_AMA002317, 8mm, color, mute, 1959

¹⁵³ Seremetakis, *The Senses Still*, 6.

status that accompanies its consumption. Here the visual translates in a bodily sense of taste that is itself already infused with cultural connotations. What then is added to the image by a memorial triggering of image and subject?

Through a memorial unfolding in the flesh, I existentially and contemporaneously thicken the image. I come to engage the past lifeworld not only as surface, but as fleshy existential manifold in which I am implicated as well. The case of the phenomenon of amateur films is presented as follows: it is not the case that no truth or meaning lies in the image; rather, truth lies within each perceptual variation. Again, we follow a grounding phenomenological principle in which the phenomenon can only be examined in experience, and thus as appearance. It follows that there is truth in each appearance. Here truth as essential meaning generation rises from the communication of films and body, subject and world. An amateur film is not merely a material artifact. An amateur film is a somatic landscape that opens in the viewing. It represents an unfolding of different perceptual inflections that come to flesh out a truth in embodied viewership. Experientially, an amateur film can be imagined as Gaston Bachelard's notion of opening. In *The Poetics of Space*, he evaluates the philosophical implications of houses as metaphors of poetic coming-into-being. He notes: 'Chests, especially small caskets, over which we have more complete mastery, are objects *that may be opened*. When a casket is closed, it is returned to the general community of objects; it takes its place in exterior space. But it opens! [...] [F]rom the moment the casket is opened, dialectics no longer exist. The outside is effaced with one stroke, an atmosphere of novelty and surprise reigns. The outside has no more meaning. And quite paradoxically, even cubic dimensions have no more meaning, for the reason that a new dimension – the dimension of intimacy – has just opened up.'¹⁵⁴ It is my argumentation that such visualization can explain what happens when amateur films are opened. Inside and outside are tropes of a dialectics that relate to, as Bachelard so aptly puts it, 'an absolutism according to which these unfortunate adverbs of place are endowed with unsupervised powers of ontological determination.'¹⁵⁵ Amateur films can be imagined as landscapes opening up before me. Within the reversibility of perceptual relations with such a landscape unfolding, meaning emerges. The embodied nature of all viewing guarantees that they are always

¹⁵⁴ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 85.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

already fleshed out by the vision of my body. This meaning is always primordial and in certain moments, the single system of flesh and consciousness endows the image with knowledge that emerges from my own background.

C.K.¹⁵⁶ films from the passenger side of a car in motion. He films the passing landscape that rushes by in a green blur. I engage the imagery in a diffuse, if sensual engagement, and primordial meaning arises from my embodied experience of the flesh. I relate the image bodily in an understanding of the common stuff of world and subject. However, the vision I have of this particular landscape is already socioculturally emplaced since, presented with the flora and fauna here, I am already situated in Luxembourgian positionality. The next shot brings a physical shock reaction as I spy the radio towers in Junglinster, the village next to the one I grew up in. The sight brings with it a multi-complex triggering of memories. The feel of driving past the radio towers that, as a child, meant the drive home. Every time we drove past, the young me would remember stories being told about a worker having died during the construction of these towers. These stories presented a deliciously scary backdrop to the tales told between us children. To this day, I do not know whether there is any truth to these stories, but they provided the scenery with haunting connotations that we all enjoyed. The physical shock of unexpected re-cognition that underlies all memorial triggering comes to the fore in this sequence. At the same time, contemporaneously and without a thought, these stories rise to the fore even though I have not thought of them in years.

The sociocultural modulation of my perception and the triggering of memorial circuits in the viewing of a material object are here experienced physically. What such an engagement comes to show is how a film not only triggers but also needs completion by the perceiver. Material culture – of which amateur films form part as visual heritage – presents meaning as never fixed and always fluctuating. It demands, as Seremetakis notes, ‘connection and completion by the perceiver.’¹⁵⁷ Here we encounter the somatic landscape of the films not in the sense of ‘instantiation of a pre-

¹⁵⁶ AV033117 / IA_AMA_003005, 8mm, black and white and color, mute, 1950s (?) - question mark on archival information sheet

¹⁵⁷ Seremetakis, *The Senses Still*, 7.

existing code,'¹⁵⁸ but in an unfolding that thickens the filmic world as existential manifold and that has important implications for the researcher's experience as well. As we have seen, in the viewing, the spectator is always co-constituted in the relation. This has personal implications that are always also irreducibly inflected in the social. Engaging with these films that are produced as always socioculturally and nationally positioned, I am emplaced in a reversible engagement with them. I can neither help nor control the somatic landscape that triggers memory through my senses. Neither can I control my own sensual engagement with the seen nor the e-motive bridging that always forms part of an engagement with the technological mediation of the camera. Some of the memories that sprung me during the viewing had lain dormant for years until they were sensually triggered by the imagery.

9.1.1. Reversible Memories

As a side note, the following can also relate to how memorial processes themselves are always inflected as reversible: during certain moments in my research, such as driving through the forest on my day off to visit my family, the autumn light would hit the leaves just so and co-incidentally a memory of an amateur film would rise. Christmas time was inevitably inflected with such a reverse process of memorial rising in which the sight of *our* Christmas tree would bring back a diffuse and generalized feel of amateur images taken at Christmas time. Here we have memories of an immediate past (viewing) of a visualization of a remote past (film) rising in the present (my own Christmas). I had taken the films into my own experience in the here and now, and they reversibly became part of my own memories. Naturally, during my visit to the fairground this summer, these memorial triggers became so numerous that they imposed themselves *over* my own experience of the fairground. I would look at attractions, booths, the crowd, and immediately a memory of an amateur image would rise to the fore that substituted my own vision and fleshed it out as memory of a visualization that originally was not even my own. I had truly in-corporated the films.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

An engagement with material culture from a phenomenological point of view coincides with Seremetakis's elaboration on sensory memory. She sees the experience as transformation of the past that brings it into the present as 'natal event.'¹⁵⁹ She furthermore attests to the following: 'Their involuntary dimension points to their encompassment by a trans-individual social and somatic landscape.'¹⁶⁰ Amateur film in experience is constituted as a somatic landscape of poesis (a coming-into-being) in which oscillations between past and present, filmmaker and spectator, filmic world and experiential world occur in the generation of meaning that is impossible to untangle or clearly differentiate as to its origin.

Meaning as sensual truth emerging in different contact zones between filmmaker, film and film viewer and in different bodies (filmmaker, intentionality of the film, and spectator) can only come-into-being in the opening of the films. This might seem trivial: of course we need to watch the films for them to make any sense, but what renders this opening important is the fact that archives can no longer be accused of being 'depositories of old, dead, cultural artifacts.'¹⁶¹ It also has important connotations concerning the future of these films. If amateur film as phenomenon can only unfold in a viewing, it follows that these filmic worlds need not only be collected, but also need working-with. These films encased in an archive represent objects-in-themselves. They can only fully reveal their potential in viewing situations.

10. The potential of opening amateur films

What then are the potential enrichments that can be experienced when working with these films? First of all, embodied viewership and sensual engagements allow for a thickening of the filmic world in which filmmaker, film and spectator engage in an oscillating contact zone. Primordial meaning is generated in different inflections that do not always coincide, but come to be alternately revealed in different sides of this trial equation between film, filmmaker and film spectator. Access to films produced in

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 9.

¹⁶¹ Zimmermann, Patricia R. "Introduction: The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings". *Mining the Home Movie*, 19.

a past lifeworld thus lies in the flesh. Because films are not only perceptions, but also re-perceptions in the present, the meaning that emerges from them can never solely be considered from a position of the past. It is not enough to examine and inquire about the films as documents from which we can gain insight into a past lifeworld – far from it. An engagement with amateur films is also always an inquiry into the present, seeing as: ‘Mnemonic processes are intertwined with the sensory order in such a manner as to render each perception a re-perception.’¹⁶² Such an engagement leads to moments of self-reflexivity that can begin to show us how an engagement with visual heritage and its artifacts can function as a trigger for wider notions of sociocultural and historical reflexivity.

The thickening of the image in the flesh provokes an intersubjective understanding that incorporates the films as existential manifold – both former and present. An engagement with visual artifacts must thus also be examined from a point of view of socioculturally inflected perception since, as Merleau-Ponty tells us: ‘Sense experience is that vital communication with the world which makes it present as a familiar setting to our life. It is to it that the perceived object and the perceiving subject owe their thickness.’¹⁶³ Furthermore, perception is always also ontologically cultured and social, and I am co-constitutively emplaced in the macro-perceptual variations the images provide. Merleau-Ponty in his unfinished work *The Visible and the Invisible* comes to the following conclusion: ‘What I maintain is that: there is an informing of perception by culture which enables us to say *that culture is perceived*.’¹⁶⁴

The past lifeworld presented by amateur films is thickened by the different inflections and presences that come to the fore. Over the course of this chapter, the following has been established: I sensually engage and am co-constituted as subject in the present when viewing the films. My own viewing in the flesh refers to these filmic renditions not in a mode of grazing-the-surface, but fleshes out the imagery through the body. Summing up, we can say that an amateur film is structured by the following: what

¹⁶² Seremetakis, *The Senses Still*, 9.

¹⁶³ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception*, 2002, 52–53.

¹⁶⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Claude Lefort, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 212.

unfolds and oscillates in the viewing is a layering of differently inflected presences. First of all, the intentionality of the film is sensually engaged as a quasi-other, the presence of the camera comes to the fore in the expressive gestures of close-ups, zooms, pans etc. Moreover, the filmmaker's presence is felt as physical remnant in the trembling of certain images, the filmic subject perceptually engages us with facial expressions, and their look beyond the camera hints at the flesh of their existential manifold. These differently inflected layers of presence de-center my own hierarchical gaze and privilege. The image cannot be mastered.

Furthermore, the constantly fluctuating oscillations between filmmaker's, film's and my own macro-perceptually inflected variants come to the fore either in a zone of contact where sociocultural and historical positions coincide or are revealed, in contrast, in situations in which they diverge (*village au noir*). Last, the triggering and rising of my own memories through a sensual engagement with a seen onscreen comes to show how I am always implicated and co-constituted as subject within the viewing relation. Again, it is important to note that these different inflections rise to the fore contemporaneously with the image and without a thought. Meaning generation here is firmly situated in the body and comes-into-being in an engagement with visual culture in the flesh. Still, what does it matter? Why would we need to engage these films in the flesh?

The question of access becomes incredibly important in situations in which context is missing. One of the primordial questions that structures the move of these films from the private of the home to the public of the institutional archive pertains to the loss of their contextualization in the family. As Mark Neuman rightly asks: 'How do we read, understand and interpret amateur films when there is an absence, or poverty of contextual information?'¹⁶⁵ Some of these films, more than others, enter the archive as lost objects, and Neuman chooses an approach that consists of identifying as many landmarks and locations in the film as possible. Still, while such an approach makes sense when dealing with one single film, it does not solve the problem with regards to the multitude of films that enter the archive every year. Furthermore, while such identifications can provide us with certain insights into one specific element of these

¹⁶⁵ Neuman, Marc. "Amateur Film, Automobility and the cInematic Aesthetics of Leisure". in Rascaroli, Monahan, and Young, *Amateur Filmmaking*, 52.

films, such as the traveling habits of the middle class American family in Neuman's case, they can never replicate the most important contextualization of the films, which lies deeply in the psychosomatic landscape of the family fabrics. While the Centre National d'Audiovisuel provides information with regards to the name of the filmmaker, the date, the material used, and a brief description of what can be seen in the films, the information provided is not always complete. It furthermore does not add on to the notion of access that is described here as *primordial* meaning. Naturally, the date of the films is useful since it places them socioculturally and historically in a situated position. As seen before, what such information provides is what Roland Barthes comes to call infra-knowledge. Context as infra-knowledge thus 'immediately yields up those "details" which constitute the very raw material of ethnological knowledge.'¹⁶⁶ It can tell me details of material culture such as houses, fashion, holiday destinations, rituals etc. As Nico de Klerk so aptly puts it, amateur film 'furnishes the elements – our appearances, our homes and gardens, their flora and fauna, the weather – that are normally absent in mainstream history or sociology.'¹⁶⁷ These visual records provide 'the upholstery for these disciplines.'¹⁶⁸ Such approaches thus engage amateur films from a macro-perceptual hermeneutic understanding. However, if we see these films as expressions of a filmmaking subject in a past lifeworld, we need to do justice to this practice that is always and fundamentally existential. Such an approach positions these films not as lost objects, but as natal events that give primordial existential insights into subjective expression in the past and also illustrate a potential bridge or access in the present. I have thus engaged the films from as wide a variety of access points as possible. I have engaged them from a macro-perceptual hermeneutic understanding in my examination of representational codes that structure the family and thus adopted a sociological approach. I have further come to identify the documenting impulses that underlie d&a films and positioned the filmmaker as agent in their motivation as self-producing record keepers. I have also elaborated on the modernist fascinations that underlie not only the fairground as spectacle but also relate to filmmaking as spectacle-seeing. I have thus worked through the sedimented layers of macroperceptual meaning in order

¹⁶⁶ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 28.

¹⁶⁷ De Klerk, Nico. "Home Away from Home Private Films from the Dutch East Indies" *Mining the Home Movie*, 151.

¹⁶⁸ De Klerk, Nico. "Home Away from Home Private Films from the Dutch East Indies" *ibid.*

to emulate the principles of a phenomenological reduction or bracketing. The last two chapters have then taken the phenomenon of amateur film in its most primordial and existential ontological base and it is here that the films reveal their existential richness. The phenomenological approach is in this case taken as a fleshing-out of the sociological, historiographic and modernist implications that structure amateur-film representation. Not only does an existential unraveling of the phenomenon of these films in experience provide a richer understanding, it also introduces a notion of respect and relegates agency to the amateur. We are thus no longer able to engage these films from a position of mastery and privilege. As we are ourselves co-constituted in the viewing, the relation becomes one of reversibility and intersubjectivity. These principles, in the end, provide the bridge that makes a fleshed-out access to a past world possible.

The bridge to the past lifeworld lies in the fundamentally intersubjective relation we engage in when viewing the films. A phenomenological approach to these films as existential gives insights that are not restricted to the phenomenon of the research object, but come to elaborate on the experiential structure of general Being-in-the-world.

Through an embodied re-cognition of a perceived (film) as expressive gesture (intentionality of film and filmmaker as visual presence) I recognize an Other in the motility with which filmmaking and filmed subjects move through their world since I, too, always have a body as center of motility. These are the essential structures of Being, and meaning emerges not in relation to self-sameness, but in intersubjective recognition. I do not have to become the thing to understand it on a primordial level. A phenomenological understanding of intersubjectivity can provide us with access on two main levels: namely, with regards to temporality and a notion of empathy. The result of such an intersubjective relation can lead to a primordial stance of ethical behavior as experiential gesture.

11. Protention and Retention as Bridging

When meta-context is lost, the opacity of the past rises as an uncanny awareness. When we seek to understand these visual documents, we might attempt to find the producer in order to get him or her to give us as much information about the films as possible. Such an approach is not without problems in itself, since the filmmaker might tell us a version of the events depicted that is either altered in hindsight or presents a completely different version from the one a second participant in the filmed event might have. We can identify landmarks, localities, and family members and even ask about the emotional relations between them. We can gain important insights into the practice, film visualizations and family life posited in a specific here and now. As has been noted before, however, it seems near impossible to conduct such a research with *all* the films that enter the archive. Furthermore, filmmakers and film subjects might have long passed or films might have been found without relational information about the family that once provided its meaning. An amateur film is always but a slice of experience. Furthermore, it is a constructed version of a past that a subject will want to look back upon. Amateur films are stubborn objects that look back to us from a past that is always and irredeemably lost. As Peter Forgacs, the filmmaker who uses amateur material in the most innovative manner in his own films,¹⁶⁹ states: ‘They look out of the “local time” of the filmmaking moment into our “present time,” a projection of the filmed ego for the future, as the local time will have become past time when it is screened.’¹⁷⁰ Amateur films present us with constructed fragments in which the link to an objective profilmic world is extremely weak. They relate stenciled templates of a past lifeworld that always introduce a teasing glimpse into the past and thus ironically reinforce the opacity and loss thereof. After all, it provides an invisible glimpse into a life lived that was not filmically preserved. The frustration with amateur films is provoked by the invisibility that it visualizes as loss. The past ‘[t]herefore, as far as we are concerned, [...] does not

¹⁶⁹ see for example : *Wittgenstein Tractatus*. Forgacs, Péter. 1992. *The Maelstrom : A Family Chronicle*. Forgacs, Péter. 1997. *Miss Universe 1929 –Lisl Goldarbeiter. A Queen in Wien*. Forgacs, Péter. 2006. Et al.

¹⁷⁰ Forgacs, Péter. “Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies”. in *Mining the Home Movie*, 53.

exist.’¹⁷¹ The question of the loss of the past that is related here to amateur films collected in an archival institution is, of course, an issue that concerns all engagement with fragments of material cultural artifacts, whether visual or otherwise. These fragments that look up to us from a past come to present fragmentary pieces that need to be engaged archaeologically rather than historically. As Michael S. Roth rightly states ‘[a]s soon as the home movie is taken out of its native environment, it has the capacity to become either senseless or *unheimlich*.’¹⁷² As we have established in Chapter two, amateur films are never historical documents. They refuse to be so since ‘[t]he singular, disconnected phenomenon cannot *be* historical; entrance into the historical record requires a kind of contextualization that is a denial of singularity.’¹⁷³ This does not prevent a primordial notion of access. We only need to ask different questions. We need to engage these documents openly and without preconceptions or rigid goals. This presupposes an engagement that is marked first and foremost by a respectful approach. While home movies naturally offer a tempting generality in the sedimentation of their cliché images, we need never forget that they are witnesses to a particular and fleshed-out lifeworld of the past. They come to present slices of a life lived with all its fears, traumas, joy and loving relations. We also need to operate in a constant awareness of the trust that goes into a relegation of private films to the public and the researcher’s gaze. When we open these films, we enter into a cultural contract that demands that we adhere to its rules. For example, M.Q.¹⁷⁴ presents his family coming out of the house one by one and proceeds to portray each individual member in a portrait that lasts a few seconds each. The filmed subjects, while unbeknownst to me and probably long deceased as the film was taken in 1929, nevertheless directly engage me perceptually. As I engage the filmic subject perceptually, I am also drawn in and intersubjectively constituted by the relation. I enter a social contract in which the direct frontality with which these since passed subjects look back at me also constitutes me. This social contract functions according to rules that Pierre Bourdieu identifies with regards to portrait photography in which ‘[t]he sitter addresses the viewer an act of reverence, of courtesy, according to conventional rules, and demands

¹⁷¹ Forgacs, Péter. “Wittgenstein Tractatus Personal Reflections on Home Movies”. in *ibid.*, 55.

¹⁷² Roth, Michael S. “Ordinary Film Péter Forgacs’s *The Maelstrom*” *ibid.*, 66.

¹⁷³ Roth, Michael S. “Ordinary Film Péter Forgacs’s *The Maelstrom*” *Mining the Home Movie*, 69.

¹⁷⁴ AV009596_m.wmv / IA_AMA_004418, 9,5 mm, black and white, mute, 1929

that the viewer obey the same norms.’¹⁷⁵ Here my sociocultural background demands that I recognize the sense of the other as sense I have of myself as subject. This includes a reversible recognition of motility of embodied centrality. Again, the frontality that provokes a respectful social contract comes to illustrate the fundamentally cultural inflection nature of all perception. Because I understand the other as subject and because we share this sociocultural contract, I engage a stance that demands respectful recognition of the other in all his/her particular emplacement.

Still, this does not explain how I can take the past into my present and how meaning is generated primordially within such an engagement even though the structure of the cultural contract provides initial insights into the bridging between the films and the viewer in the flesh. I argue here that a notion of bridging can be achieved in the viewing of these films that has to do with the ontological capacities of subjects to engage temporality as protention and retention. A phenomenological approach treats temporality not as objective time measured by the face of a clock as discrete instants that constitute a flow of time, but engages temporality as lived time. As a subject in experience, I experience time as temporal events. Husserl elaborated on time consciousness in his 1905 lectures.¹⁷⁶ He takes the simple example of hearing a melody in order to come up with the structures that imbue temporality from an experiential point of view. When hearing a melody, I engage in a temporal structure in which I need to retend the just-past note in order for the melody to make sense. I also intentionally protend into the future to the next note. Meaning thus emerges in a thing against a temporal background. This proves highly interesting when related to amateur films. These films as we have seen not only present material objects, but are phenomenologically constructed as opening. This opening has complex temporal inflections. A most basic understanding of how a subject navigates experience sees intentionality as primordial access to the world. Intentionality, however, is in itself already fundamentally temporal. It can only unfold in duration. The manner in which we experience is thus already a subjective structure of temporal engagement as unfolding. While the past lifeworld in which the film was taken is inevitably lost to

¹⁷⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography, a Middle-Brow Art* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 82.

¹⁷⁶ see David Carr, *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34.

me, I nevertheless share the intentionality of the film as unfolding. As David Carr notes: 'I experience time by experiencing what Husserl calls "temporal objects" -that is, by participating in events that exist by taking time. Like the paradigmatic melody, to be what they are they must unfold in time, and to experience them I must grasp their unfolding.'¹⁷⁷ I take the film's intentionality as a temporal event unfolding within my own temporal duration in the present. A film is a constant coming-into-being, and as such continuously provides me with an opening that is structured as past-presencing. A film's vision is thus always linked to the present more than to the past, as would be the case with a photograph, since it presents quasi-subjective structures of intentionality coming-into-being in the present. I thus already share a most basic notion of presencing in taking the films into my own experience. The primary sense of these films is thus not one of uncanny loss or constant awareness of the past looking back at me since I share the intentional trajectory of filmic vision in the present. This is viewership in the flesh, which takes the body as center for temporal synthesis. What becomes important to note here is that experience is ontologically constructed in a tri-lateral structure: namely that of intentionality, intersubjectivity and temporality. Carr is thus able to show that experience is ontologically constructed as historical since the manner in which the subject navigates the lifeworld is inherently intersubjective and recognizes the embodied intentionality of an Other as temporal as well. Intersubjectivity, temporality and intentionality thus function in a field of temporal synthesis in subjective time-consciousness. As Carr states: 'The subject is not a substance persisting through time, or a timeless ego hovering outside of time, but a self-constituting synthesis of temporal relations.'¹⁷⁸ The intersubjective recognition of the intentionality of an Other provides the basis for a historical recognition that protends and retends beyond my own lifespan. Husserl comes to call this understanding of an other's intentionality in temporality a 'we-intentionality,'

'where the first-person point of view, inseparable from phenomenology, is shown not to be limited to the first-person singular, but can be exemplified in the first-person plural as well. The background of the past becomes that of the social or

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 179.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 160.

intersubjective past, which now belongs to the individual subject by virtue of membership in a community.¹⁷⁹

Again, this is perception not only as intersubjective understanding but also as sociocultural emplacement. Not only do I take the film's vision as intentional quasi-subject and share its temporal presencing as coming-into-being, as we have seen, the image is always also structured by physical remnants of a filmmaker's presence, a filmed subject's presence and the existential manifold as invisibility surrounding the image of the film. I am able to synthesize these different temporal relations because I understand their subjective structuring of temporality.

Because I recognize the sense the other has of him/herself, I also recognize his/her capability to protend to the future, which becomes my present. I am the addressee of an intentional protention that originated in what is now the past. An intersubjective understanding of intentionality as protention renders this gesture not alien, senseless or uncanny, but engages me in a reversible relation that originated long before my birth. Let us consider the element of intertitles for a moment:

The information that is provided by a title proves the protentive capabilities of the filmmaking subject to include an awareness that he/she might not be present to relate said information. Protention here functions clearly as social responsibility and intentional time consciousness that extends beyond an individual lifespan. I also understand the basic intentionality underlying the very project of filmmaking as future looking back since that is the manner in which I narratologically organize my own life. Following the intentionality of the film and including the presence of physical remnants of filmmaker's presence, I come to share these intentional trajectories, both as the visualization of the event of the film in "real" time (in the present) and as directionality that underlies the future looking back. D&a filmmakers, for example, present an expressive gesture which provokes intersubjective re-cognition. Viewing these films, I engage the capability of intentional retention into a social past that is not limited by my timespan. I also understand the films as past presencing since I live the event of its visualization in my own present. The intentionality and presences come-

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 161.

into-being in my own experiential present, and I intend towards the past that extends beyond my own lifespan.

I cannot help but feel that the intertitles are somehow also always for me, for a future viewer. Also, the recognition that the future in the past is now my present extends my lived temporality beyond my own, and intertitles relate a protentive structure of an Other that addresses me.

I understand all this through the intersubjectivity that underlies all experience and consciousness in the flesh. I furthermore understand and synthesize these temporal relations in the single system of flesh and consciousness that is the body. There is a further notion to shared temporality, namely the structure of the filmmaking project as *technë*. Because amateurs do not edit, they are presented with the visualization of the process of *technë* (subjective desire and camera mediation) in their *viewing* situation. This includes the awareness that I, too, am sharing that same vision as unfolding as the film spectator in the original *viewing* (not production). Not only do I share the coming-into-being as visualization in the films, I also share the same viewing experience in terms of the unfolding of the very process of filmmaking. I thus, albeit indirectly and diffusely, experience the coming-into-being of subjective desire and camera mediation. Again, it needs to be noted that what I see is not the scene as the filmmaker was filming it. After all, I do not have a camera in front of my eye. What I witness is the process of *technë* coming-into-being. The temporal layering structuring the film experience is highly complex. First, it synthesizes the unfolding of the *technë* process which always also unfolds in my viewing present. The fleshed-out past lifeworld comes to reveal a presence in invisibility as the enveloping gaze that encroaches from the off-frame. I further not only share the intentional trajectory of the film (as eternal present) but also recognize the protentive directionality that underlies the filmmaking impulse. Here, especially in viewing d&a films, I am directly addressed as future subject. I have thus been intended as a future in the past, even if as an unknown subject. The temporal complexities that are synthesized in my embodied viewing situation are thus as follows: the films present a future looking back (the production of films) that unfolds in the present (my viewing situation). The films also address myself as a future spectator (titles). This future becomes my present, while their present becomes my past, which nevertheless is always presenced in the

unfolding of the film. These temporal complexities are not cognitively actualized, but they underlie my own awareness while watching these films.

12. Death as Punctum

The moment of punctum, as elaborated by Barthes, can also pierce me as uncanny. It can relate as an instant in which the past pierces the present and brings with it a rising awareness of death. All human understanding of temporality inevitable includes an awareness of being-towards-death. Duration in its directionality 'towards' inevitably includes notions of finitude. A paradox that is keenly felt in certain instants underlies moving imagery. A film is a constant presencing. It can only ever be – by its very nature – a continual coming-into-being. While it can be argued that film is based on the photographic principles in presenting us with 24 frames a second, in *experience* we engage the imagery in movement and, as we have seen, this experience fleshes out the imagery as opening. Nevertheless, a viewing of amateur footage constitutes an inherently melancholic experience. This melancholy remains secondary and shadowy most of the time. It presents a background to my more immediate engagement with the images. At times, however, and without warning, it rises to the fore as punctum that pricks me. Again, the visual gestalting tilts in inflection. These moments occasionally rise to the fore in viewing a subject move in the filmic world onscreen. Through movement as visible indication of an Other's body as center of motility, I intersubjectively relate to the filmed subject as Other since we share the same manner of navigation. As we have seen, the intersubjective base of flesh as common materiality makes such an engagement possible. And we have also seen that the body is a single system of flesh and consciousness. Still, such a system does not prevent occasional disruptions in which I micro-perceptually engage a subject as Other, and all of a sudden the consciousness of their probable death rises. Here we are presented with a discord that rises between my experience in the flesh and my conscious awareness. Furthermore, my engagement with film as quasi-other (intentionality as coming-into-being) reinforces this sense of uncanniness since in the presencing that is film, stasis is the antithesis of presence. As most of the films are situated in the 1950s and 1960s, however, this sense of uncanniness is not related to concrete knowledge in terms of whether a filmmaker or members of his family are deceased or not. They rise

to the fore in a moment of difference that splits experience in the flesh. Such a moment presents the awareness of a ‘this-has-been’ that relates a direct antithesis to the nature of film as ‘coming-into-being.’ I relate to an Other as subject through the visibility of their motility. This is my access to the Other as a recognized subject. In moments of punctum as death, this relation is rendered uncanny since my consciousness of the potential decease of the subject onscreen brings to the fore the status of the body as not only subjective but objective as well. As we will see in the following, not only can such an engagement lead to an uncanny and melancholic experience of memento mori, it can also provoke a passionate devotion that founds the very basis of our ethical stance in the world.

First of all, however, what is the punctum that pricks me as the encroachment of death in the image? Roland Barthes describes the punctum of death following him seeing a picture of a death-row candidate:

‘I read at the same time: *This will be* and *this has been*; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is at stake. By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future. What *pricks* me is the discovery of this equivalence. ... Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe. ... These two little girls looking at a primitive airplane above their village (they are dressed like my mother as a child, they are playing with hoops) - how alive they are! They have their whole lives before them; but they also they are dead (today), they are then *already* dead (yesterday).’¹⁸⁰

First, we note his use of the verb ‘to read.’ The engagement here is macro-perceptually inflected. It is a hermeneutic relation to the image that I gestalt as consciousness rises to the fore. In the oscillation that underlies the term gestalting, the macro-perceptual reading of the image rises to the fore and is micro-perceptually translated as uncanniness. This moment of death as punctum is also always a pricking of time that invades the image and disrupts the constant presencing of filmic unfolding. Barthes relates this notion to the photographic image. I argue, however, that the inflection of such a provocation is even furthered in moving imagery. The movement in the image, movement being the ultimate sign of living, here involves a gulf between reflexivity and reflectivity that is nevertheless part of the same single

¹⁸⁰ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96.

system that is my body. I know they are dead, I know they will die, but they are moving, they are alive in the film. All of a sudden, the intentional engagement with the moving image becomes uncanny, even more so than in a photograph, which, by its very nature, I cannot inhabit. I micro-perceptually engage with an Other onscreen, that I am conscious of possibly being dead. Especially the film from 1929 introduces such moments of uncanniness. This experience is always part of the film experience.

The punctum is the noema of Time disrupting in the image. Time is experienced as discontinuous existence between presencing (film) and has-been (filmic world). This sense of the uncanny, while introduced by an oscillating inflection of consciousness, is nevertheless never experienced outside the body. It rather comes to translate as a sense of unease provoked by a seen. It comes from an experience of time as finitude, but also of temporality lived as history. It comes from a discrepancy that makes the inherent consciousness of finitude rise as directly provoked by a seen onscreen. Here, the punctum not only propels me out of the field of the *studium*, it also translates a reflective thought (these parents from 1929 are probably dead today) into a reflexive reaction as unease. Barthes, describing the punctum he experiences when viewing a picture of his mother taken before his birth, asks the following: 'Is History not simply that time when we were not born? I could read my non-existence in the clothes my mother had worn before I can remember her. There is a kind of stupefaction in seeing a familiar being dress *differently*.'¹⁸¹ While I do not know the subjects populating my corpus, they are nevertheless familiar in their communal emplacement. It is the discrepancy of difference in familiarity that makes me read my own non-existence into the image. Examples are numerous and rise to the fore unexpectedly and at any moment. For example, G.W.¹⁸² films people walking around the platform that links the Kirchberg to Luxembourg City. This space is called Dräi Eechelen since it presents part of the fortress onto which three acorns are attached. Nowadays, the museum of modern art is situated right next to it, and the structure itself has been turned into a museum. The film was taken sometime between 1951 and 1954. The imagery suggests a Sunday outing and is taken after the Holy Communion of the filmmaker's son, which I know since they are wearing the same clothes as in the preceding sequence showing the Holy Communion. The small group is walking away

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 64.

¹⁸² AV032407, no info on material, black and white, 1951-1954

from the three-acorn building and towards the camera in a leisurely pace. In typical 1950s Sunday state, the men are wearing suits with waistcoats and hat, while the women are wearing ensembles of pencil skirts and blazers adorned with flower broaches. They are wearing their black handbags in the crook of their elbow while with the other arm, they grip their partners arm. Most of them are wearing hats and their outfits are either pastel or black. All of them are wearing black pumps and carrying gloves without wearing them as the sun is shining. While they are walking towards the camera, the group keeps breaking up and new formations build as people move to talk to different people, occasionally sparing a friendly glance for the camera.

Figure 24





They are walking in the forest, a forest that to this day partially still exists, towards an outlook platform from which Luxembourg City can be seen from above.



Other people are standing on the platform as well. G.W. then concentrates on capturing the view from the platform. He focuses specifically on a bus that is driving down the sloping street underneath them. The bus is a typical 1950s bus with rounded

top and two-color exterior. While the footage is in black and white, I know the bus to be yellow on top and dark blue at the bottom since I have seen it in an exhibition in the national museum a few years ago. The footage here presents a typical Sunday outing with the family. The setting is familiar to me since I have been to that platform numerous times. I know the three-acorn structure and have even been inside since it has been converted into a museum. I have seen the buses as a relict of a time gone by. The missing of the museum of modern art, while noticeable, does not prick me as such. Still, the imagery of these people smiling, talking and generally enjoying their Sunday left me feeling uneasy. Perhaps this sense of unease was furthered by the fact that the images are presented in black and white, since they removed me even further from the filmic world. Through the visual upholstery of fashion, the look of the bus, and the missing of certain buildings from the setting, I read my own non-existence into the image. It is the familiarity with the setting in my own presence that introduces difference as unease. I cannot help but read the image as a “this-has-been.” Here referentiality is read as loss. It pricks me as a skeletal trace from the past. The people in the image, in their forties to sixties at the time of recording, are living and dead at the same time. Living in that I engage them as Other and dead in the consciousness that rises of a this-has-been. It is in this space of difference that the oscillations between consciousness and embodied viewing fluctuate and are experienced as discordance, if only for an instant. It is not the image that is experienced as uncanny; it is Time encroaching as finitude that rises as an ultimate unthinkable, but always present. Engaging the imagery, as Barthes notes, ‘I read at the same time *This will be* and *this has been*; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is at stake. By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future. What *pricks* me is the discovery of this equivalence.’¹⁸³ Death as finitude relates not only to the filmic subject that I witness in life, but also to my own ultimate finitude in the future. Then there is the perhaps naive recognition of a subject perceptually engaging me from the past. Again, the oldest film in the corpus from 1929 can serve as an example of this affective relation that leaves reflexivity and reflectivity in discord. M.Q.¹⁸⁴ loves filming his family in portrait style and does so repeatedly and lengthily. He loves filming his toddler son. The son is repeatedly

¹⁸³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage Classics (London: Vintage, 2000), 64. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96.

¹⁸⁴ AV009596_m.wmv / IA_AMA_004418, 9,5 mm, black and white, mute, 1929

invited to look directly into the camera. I perceptually engage the son not only as subject, but as child as well. The rising of consciousness makes the engagement an uncanny one, since I observe a subject that is (most probably) no more; what is more, this sense is furthered by the engagement with a child. The boy's expression is one of joy, affection and trust. Immediately, potential narratives start in my own mind about how his life might have been led, the sorrows and joys he might have experienced. The date naturally makes me aware of the imminent threat of the Second World War, and this functions as a constant background to all my engagement with the imagery and infuses the happy scenes with a shadowy presence of foresight. The rise of fascism is here included as an off-screen that frames these images of a happy family life. As Peter Forgacs so aptly notes: 'For us today, here and now, with our historical knowledge, we add an unforgettable and unforgiving dramatic perspective; *the invisible shadows over [their] happy moments.*'¹⁸⁵ The macro-perceptual variant in visual gestalting makes sure that historical knowledge is always an inherent part of viewership in the flesh. When historical knowledge rises to the fore as conscious engagement, it provokes an embodied reaction not unlike nervousness or unease. The happiness perceived in the image becomes a shadow of uncanny forbearance. A pre-war film renders such an oscillation illustrative, but the shadow of forbearance is present as background in all filmic engagements in the flesh. The open and trusting look of these subjects addressing me perceptually in the films is reflectively shadowed by the recognition of their probable death in my present. I would like to elaborate on these macro-perceptual variants and examine how they are always engaged micro-perceptually as well, in this case through the notion of affective bridging.

Two affective modes accompany the punctum as death. One, as we have seen, is the always uncanny recognition of finitude. I reflexively experience a seen as unease as the reflectivity that is part of my embodied being rises to the fore in the acknowledgment that this-has-been and this-is-no-more. Such a recognition includes my own finitude as I perceptually engage a subjective Other who is no more. My own reflective knowledge overshadows the films further. This introduces a notion of participation that prevents passivity. As Ruth Balint rightly notes with regards to

¹⁸⁵ Kilborn, Richard. "'I am a time archeologist'" Some Reflections on the Filmmaking Practice of Péter Forgacs". Rascaroli, Monahan, and Young, *Amateur Filmmaking*, 186.

Forgacs's use of home-movie footage in his filmic collages: 'The possession of historical knowledge transforms us as spectators into participants, in that the act of viewing these fragments also becomes an act of bearing witness.'¹⁸⁶ I would even go further and would like to examine how an engagement with *all* amateur films in the flesh can provoke a stance that is inherently, if primordially, ethical.

13. Ethics as primordial gestural stance

Viewership in the flesh as it has been elaborated here is accompanied by the rise of embodied awareness that is both uncanny and devoted. The single system of flesh and consciousness that is my body at the viewing positions this awareness firmly in embodiment. That is to say, the experience of time and finitude encroaching upon the image is also always experienced on the level of the body, as a feeling of unease or even shock, while certain moments of beauty make me share the materiality as flesh and provoke a decentering and devotion to the common corporeality of all things. Furthermore, as we have seen, a recognition of the embodied nature of viewership and expression in the flesh leads to a recognition of the fundamentally intersubjective base of Being. I would like to examine how such a viewership and re-cognition can lead to a primary and embodied sense of what Vivian Sobchack terms 'response-ability,' a notion that translates as a primordial sense of ethics as postural gesture. How can an ethical stance be not only situated in but also originate from your common embodiment in the flesh? Such a question only constitutes an issue if we relate to ethics through an approach of abstract idealism. Within the correlational inquiry of a phenomenological approach, however, ethics as either meta-physical or abstract thought concept have no place. An ethical stance rises in the relationality between subject and world. Ethics as postural bodily stance emerges from the irreducible reversibility in and of the flesh. It rises co-constitutively in those moments in which the flesh comes to the fore as a prick in experience. The concept of flesh allows for a reconstitution of subjectivity that embraces alterity within its very structure. This reconstitution emerges directly from the reversible structuring of subject-object correlations in common materiality. As Elena del Rio notes: '*Flesh* connotes the

¹⁸⁶ Balint, Ruth. "Representing the Past and the Meaning of Home in Péter Forgacs's Private Hungary". *ibid.*, 202.

structure of reversibility whereby all things are at the same time active and passive, visual subjects and visible objects, the outside of the inside, the inside of the outside.’¹⁸⁷ What this concretely means in viewership is that inside and outside of film and my own embodied experience is deeply reversible and cannot be treated as separate experiential spaces. The engagement with a seen not only constitutes the Other as subject for me, I am also co-constituted as subject in viewing. This is the look back at its most positive since it positions me in the reversibility of the flesh. At the same time, the awareness of finitude as the cessation of all materiality makes me not only an objective subject; it also constitutes me as a subjective object. In common materiality lies the primordial base of embodied ethics since it emerges as the response-ability of the body itself. Sobchack most aptly relates the primordial base of ethics as reversibility in the following:

‘It is this sense of passion as suffering the agency and power of external forces on our lived bodies that provides us the *material foundation* that primordially grounds the possibility of our *ethical* behavior toward others and the world. That is, the passion of suffering not only forces recognition of oneself as an *objective subject* always immanently and substantially “here” and open to being externally acted on regardless of one’s volition – but it also enhances the awareness of oneself as a *subjective object*: a material being that is nonetheless capable of *feeling* what it is to be treated *only* as an object.’¹⁸⁸

Part of this awareness of my status as an objective subject is always co-constituted by the ephemerality of my own existence through the punctum as death, which I experience in the viewing. However, such an experience need not necessarily lead to the threatening catastrophe that Barthes experiences when seeing the photograph of two little girls from the past. As Sobchack so rightly notes, such an experience can also lead to what she calls passionate devotion to all materiality. I would like to emphasize again that amateurs do not set out to produce filmic records that provoke such an engagement. What is examined here is how the uncanny experience of the punctum as awareness of death triggered in me a desire to protect. This desire stems

¹⁸⁷ Gary Brent Madison, “Flesh as Otherness”. in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 31.

¹⁸⁸ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 288.

from a primordial recognition of common materiality that affects my postural stance as response-ability.

In regards to amateur films, such devotion translates as a desire to protect. It constitutes the fundamental basis of the archiving desire. This desire – if we elaborate it from an embodied perspective - is thus not purely related to a desire to fix the past, but lies in the primordial meaning generation that directly relates to these films as significant. Amateur films are also reminders of what is good in life. They spring from an inherent wish to bring the ephemerality of the moment to expression. Such a desire to capture is, however, not examined here as appropriation, but as the fundamental bringing of experience to expression and a ceding of egological ground in a devoted relationality to the world. As Michael S. Roth so beautifully puts it, amateur films show us how: ‘The movie camera comes out for the vacation, for the new baby, for the first snow of the winter ... as if the ephemerality of those moments commanded us to record them, to capture them.’¹⁸⁹ As I experience viewership as intersubjective and reversibly situated in the flesh and I imbue the films with signification that is meaning generation in the body, I recognize the signification of the ephemerality of these experiences in the world. I experience the motile postural gesture of the past filmmaker, film, and filmed subject. The re-cognition of their signifying expression inevitably imbues them with value, and I feel the urge to protect.

When I witness L.K.’s¹⁹⁰ daughter and wife blowing soap bubbles in the living room, the joy and happiness of such an early morning in the family engages me primordially. I do not first and foremost recognize the cultural codes of representation that unconsciously structure the family film, but through the close-up on the daughter share in the affective charge of the film language; through the happy engagement of the wife with the daughter and filmmaker, I perceptually engage an Other who looks back at me, and the beauty of these fragile bubbles that float in the air also engages me sensually. I engage their ephemerality through the view of these fragile and bursting bubbles and I share the family’s wonder. Such moments present an opening

¹⁸⁹ Roth, Michael S. “Ordinary Film Péter Forgacs’s *The Maelstrom*” *Mining the Home Movie*, 67.

¹⁹⁰ AV026322 / IA_AMA_002770, 8mm, color, mute, 1962

that denies rigid oppositions between present and past, filmmaker, film, filmed subject and film spectator. It is in the relationality in the flesh that these films come to bridge difference in experience. Difference is accepted as alterity within self-sameness. Here lies their primordial value as meaning emerges in the opening of the films in experience. It provokes the desire to protect these ephemeral moments and the thought of their destruction or loss is concomitant with an awareness of the consequent impoverishment of our own lifeworld. As such, the protective desire that emerges in the flesh is the very basis of our need to preserve and work with visual cultural heritage. When we open these films as embodied subjects, we inevitably and involuntarily engage the need to grasp these Others as intersubjective alterity. At the same time, the sharing of these openings to the world also fleshes out our own experiences. Amateur films present an opening to the common materiality of the flesh. And it is as such an opening that they become meaningful. Meaning emerges from their past signification for the filmmaker and the fleshing-out of our own experience as embodied subjects. The passionate devotion to the world decenters our egological position, and we come to emerge as beings who are actively devoted to others and the objective world. Amateur films can serve as a trigger for wider inquiries into Being-in-the-world. The examination of expressive and perceptive structures in the film thus inevitably leads us to a postural stance in which I adopt a posture towards the world that is expansive, open and primordially ethical. As an embodied being in the film viewing, my engagement exceeds pure self-interest, also as researcher. An interpretation and imposition from above becomes impossible as I embrace the alterity of the Other in self-sameness. I come to materially re-cognize amateurs as agents. I recognize their postural comportment as subject. This introduces a notion of respect and care which always exceeds the activity of researching. In fact, treating and experiencing the films as opening also means that I engage in a passionate dedication that 'seeks to grasp what it is to be not only an *objective subject* but also a *subjective object* whose intentionality and alterity can be sensed from *without*.'¹⁹¹ Even as I engage the visualizations of the past lifeworld that a subject produced in the past from without, I never leave my body at the door. I re-cognize and engage their alterity within the self-sameness of the flesh. Not only does such an experience enrich my own existence, it can also fundamentally enrich institutional

¹⁹¹ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 290.

practice and social sciences and allow for a meaning generation that takes into account the fundamentally embodied and intersubjective basis of Being.

14. Conclusion:

An intersubjective understanding of an Other in the flesh also introduces an ethical stance that is affectively charged as empathy. A phenomenological approach can flesh out institutional research. It can help us confront the often baffling stubbornness of a research object that partly refuses the larger sociocultural or historical implications that we read from them. If we engage these larger contexts with more basic and primordial understandings about how subjects act in, express and navigate the lifeworld phenomenologically, the understanding we arrive at is thickened. Furthermore, such an engagement generates meaning not as situated exclusively in the past, but emerges in the present and extends towards the future. As we have seen, embodied viewership is also always affectively charged. A primordially ethical stance is thus also an empathetic stance. In ‘Reflections on Empathy as a Mode of Observation in History,’¹⁹² Thomas A. Kohut calls upon us to recognize the emphatic stance as a fundamental understanding of meaning as enrichment of knowledge. He invites historians to recognize the role of feelings in the production of historical knowledge. He states: ‘Knowing through empathic understanding involves reason and knowledge of course, but it also involves imagination, insight and intuition, sensitivity to people and emotional intelligences, even emotional resonance – qualities not generally associated with rationalistic social science.’¹⁹³ I would add that the intersubjectivity that underlies the primordial reversibility of a phenomenological understanding of experience encompasses all these aspects of intuition, sensitivity and emotional resonance. Kohut encourages historians to complete their inquiries by taking empathy as a mode of observation itself. He comes to the quintessential conclusion that

¹⁹² Kohut, Thomas A “Reflections on Empathy as a Mode of Observation in History”. *Sinngeschichten: Kulturgeschichtliche Beiträge Für Ute Daniel* (Köln: Böhlau, 2013).

¹⁹³ Kohut, Thomas A “Reflections on Empathy as a Mode of Observation in History”. *ibid.*, 192.

‘[e]mpathy as a mode of observation involves imagining ourselves in the place of another and trying to experience the experience of the other as if it were our own. Empathic understanding requires knowledge of the other person and of that person’s context as well as self-knowledge and self-accessibility, as we revive experiences of our own similar or related to those of the person we are trying to understand.’¹⁹⁴

In the end, it is perhaps as simple as realizing that our objects of study are expressions of subjects from the past. Maybe we need to realize again that what we study in humanities are people and the manner in which they express, perceive and navigate their lifeworld. It is my fundamental belief that a phenomenological approach provides us with such an access to material culture and allows for knowledge less related to institutional discourse than emerging as primordial existential understanding.

¹⁹⁴ Kohut, Thomas A “Reflections on Empathy as a Mode of Observation in History”. *Ibid.*, 196.

CONCLUSION

I have reached the end of my journey through the filmic worlds of my amateur films corpus. The preceding chapters have spiraled through the diverse meaning layers that I have identified, even if the study presented is by no means exhaustive. I have still left out multifarious different subjectforms that are taken up by filmmakers. I have for example left out the numerous foci on music and musicians. I have not fully elaborated on the religious emphasis that some filmmakers display. Neither have I examined what these religious depictions can tell us about the filmmaking impulse that underlies them. I have also not examined what it means to do research in such a small country. After all, an accompaniment to these films is always presented in my potential knowing of the family. Also a concise examination of the technological background of the camera in Luxembourg and a concrete examination of the changing fashions within these filmic worlds have also been eclipsed. A further track that proves incredibly interesting but has not been included here would be a comparison between the differences and similarities between these films explicitly produced in Luxembourg and their counterparts in other cultures. Within the same vein, while this study has elaborated from a basis of common patterns in filmic behaviour throughout the decades, the slight differences in foci throughout the decades would have proven another fruitful endeavor, such as whether the foci on religious processions, for example, changes between the 1950s and the 1970s. Also, it would prove incredibly fascinating to examine these films in the light of migration backgrounds. The increase in Portuguese and Italian migrant workers in the 1960s and 1970s and their filmic engagements of their lifeworld also gives us insights into a filmic gaze imposed upon Luxembourgian life through the eyes of migrant workers and their children as second-generation citizens. What has also not found expression in this study is the multitude of films that still inhabit the attics and cellars of private houses or the collection of amateur films that are digitalized by amateur ciné clubs throughout the country. A further element that I would have liked to have a closer look at is the films produced through the Second World War period. While my corpus did not present any films shot between the wartime years, there is a small number of films that can be accessed in the CNA. Treating these films as a coming-into-being of signifying expressions or as visual basis gives us rich insights and understandings into histories produced in the

everyday and from a particular situated position. They can help us understand the multifarious micro-expressions of private lifeworlds and thus also show how people react to, engage with, and filmically transform larger historical and socio-cultural impacts in their personal self-narrations. These eclipses show the prosperous variety and diversity that still underlies these somatic landscapes. Differently said, there is still much to be done with these incredibly rich audiovisual glimpses into the past. The preceding study thus hopes to function as incentive, as initial basis for the further working with amateur films offered by the CNA. Finally, this study has also called for a certain loosening of attitude adopted towards research. It has called not only for empathy and a concomitant analysis of the researcher's own background and materiality, but it also calls for an acceptance of the imagination that always inherently accompanies all experience. Bachelard calls for such an attitude in that:

‘By the swiftness of its actions, the imagination separates us from the past as well as from reality; it faces the future. To the *function of reality*, wise in experience of the past, as it is defined by traditional psychology, should be added a *function of unreality*, which is equally positive [...] If we cannot imagine, we cannot foresee.’¹

The amateur film, these materialized self-expressions from the past can thus serve as trigger. They give rise to understanding of how subjects make meaning in the world, rather than presenting concrete, unchanging realities. The amateur film effectively functions in accordance to a dreamscape. To open these films, as opposed to the photographic ‘this-has-been’, means to open a somatic landscape into which I am drawn. Their temporal inflections defy homogeneity and draw me into an experience that not only fleshes out my present (and presence) but also always opens towards the future. These visual snippets that are as much about an imagined landscape of a wished-for past than they present visual upholstery of how people lived at certain times. Working with these films and analyzing their concrete situatedness and filmic behaviour through the examination of film language, as has been effectuated in the first three chapters, is also to recognize the agency of a filmmaker that always exceeds beyond a mere hobby as consumerist behavior. Also, treating the opening of these films as trigger and analyzing them in terms of their opening of a filmic landscape can

¹ Gaston Bachelard and M. Jolas, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), xxiv.

give us important insights not only into filmmaking as intentional project of expression, but also into my own imaginary and memorial processes that accompany every film viewing. In the following I offer some preliminary and brief reflections on the future of these films. I will show how they flesh out my own space in the communal and what a potential future might hold for these films.

Where to from here?

The recognition of an intersubjective relation to these films is effectuated by the recognition of the intentional structures that underlie their signifying process as visualized onscreen. These structures also flesh out my own temporality in the communal. As I noted before, navigating my own lifeworld by taking a walk in the city for example, the images of these films stay with me. I remember and engage them while walking through specific streets that I have seen in the films. While temporally separated, we share a communal space. The temporal layers that now form an inherent part of it thicken my own experience. I have taken the films into my own experience. The thickening of my lifeworld renders my space communal in a sense that extends beyond my own lifespan and includes a past rendition of that same space. I thus inherently engage in a we-intentionality that co-constitutes me as subject. The thickening of experience that I experienced through working with these films furthermore led to my understanding of the importance of their collection and preservation. I do stand by my proposition that these films need opening and engagement. For a long time, I could not specifically say what form or shape such an engagement could potentially take until I read about a wonderful initiative that takes place in Miami on the so-called home-movie-day every year in March. The Florida Moving Image Archive and the Louis Wolfson II Media History Centre have introduced bus tours called the ‘Magical History Video Bus Tours’² in which six screens are mounted in a bus and inhabitants as well as tourists are driven through the parts of Miami that are featured in the home movies onscreen. This often leads to a secondary meta-narrative contextualization in which participants tell their own stories

² Davidson, Steve. “The Florida Moving Image Archive”. *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

of living in these specific parts of town or just generally relate memories of their own family films. In a televised segment that I found on YouTube³, a narrator reports on the experience that can be had on these tours. He calls the people getting on the bus time travelers and comments as follows: ‘this morning they will travel in air-conditioned comfort involved in the sights and smells of the past. The excitement mounts. The passengers board. Each beginning the journey with a different interest and expectation.’ One man tells the television reporter that their house had been built in the 1920s and after his wife had found a prospectus on the tours they would like to see ‘what it was like when their house was built’. Another woman comments that ‘this will give [her] a different sense of time and how the different parts of the city are related to that time.’ Because there was so much property development in the city, a lot of these participants would quite simply like to see their city again as it was when they were growing up. The simultaneous experience of driving through a space and watching footage on within that space throughout different periods thickens the spatial experience temporally. It introduces an awareness not only that this space is communal; but that time can be as well. An intersubjective understanding of temporal layers thus fleshes out space as communality. It emplaces a subject beyond his/her own life. This is lived access to history as Being. The intersubjective engagement with such films enriches our own present, thickens it and helps emplace us in the communal. This can only occur, however, if one watches the film unfold in duration. For example, a lot of footage in the film collection is taken in Luxembourg City. The pont Adolphe proves a popular motif, as does the market on Place Guillaume II or the changing of the guards in front of the palace. An engagement with these films while walking past these sights could flesh out these spaces with temporal layers for inhabitants and visitors alike. Experience in and as communality would be thickened. Such an experience would furthermore not only emplace national subjects in the collective, it could help flesh out these spaces as a lifeworld for newly arrived subjects, either temporary ones like tourists, or permanent ones such as immigrants. Emplacement would be relegated not as tied to nationality, but referred to as communal space. Such an understanding inevitably leads to a primordial ethical stance in which a we-intentionality does not follow a directionality of ‘againstness’, but to intersubjective communality in a fleshed out understanding of the shared

³ « Miami Magical History Bus with Dr. Paul George »
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUblvYVTGmQ>

present. Such an engagement would configure emplacement in the communal rather than the national.

Or why not put screens up at the fairground and thus thicken the space by a direct communal engagement with heterogeneous temporalities as layering? Why not use the multitude of screens throughout the city that display adverts to occasionally show one of these wonderful renditions of the same space that would thicken the present space with a past fleshing out of the social character of communality? Why not recreate home movie screenings in private houses that are visualized in the films and that might have passed into different hands and thus give people, whether the persons calling it a home, neighbors or complete strangers an experience that thickens their own existence? Why not make the films available for people to download on their phones who could thus roam their localities in an engagement with situated images from the past?⁴ We need to take these films back into our lifeworld. We need to open them and thus engage them otherwise they remain stale, senseless and yes, indeed opaque remnants from a lost past.

It is only thus that, as David Carr notes, ‘our expanded view of consciousness now includes history, so to speak, as part of its makeup. As such, ‘the social past figures as background of individual and collective experience’.⁵ Such a background also configures my own stance towards world and Other as response-ability. Engagement as temporally and spatially thickened experience of a we-intentionality provides a primordial access to a notion of history as lived and living. As such, opening these films as somatic landscape in our own situated experience can give us back an access to Being as Being-in-history. Heather Norris Nicholson asks: ‘how do home movies “speak” to us and what are they trying to say?’.⁶ Perhaps the concomitant joyful recognition but also uncanny obtuseness that underlies amateur films also relates to the fact that, in the end, they reveal just as much about us and our present than about

⁴ In a personal conversation with Françoise Poos, she related the idea of making these films available in a digital cloud in order to increase their accessibility. My gratitude goes to her for the insightful and enthusiastic comments on the nature and future of amateur films in Luxembourg.

⁵ David Carr, *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 161.

⁶ Young, Gwenda. “Glimpses of a Hidden History: Exploring Irish Amateur Collections, 1930-70”. *Ibid.*, 82.

past expressions. 'What do you mean you lost the past?' asks this study and the answer, of course, must be: we never truly have.

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