Finding the Personal Voice in Filmmaking

Erik Knudsen

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"Knudsen takes us deep into his own (very personal and successful) creative practice as a filmmaker and collaborator in the pursuit of developing cinematic stories. Out of his autoethnographic exploration, he has developed a rich and powerful methodology: ethnomediaology. This book allows us to reap the benefits of the hugely significant and seminal work of the AHRC StoryLab Film Development Research Network workshops. Of particular value are the series of exercises and questions which the reader can use to problem solve through processes that break down patterns of thinking and develop ideas using the notion of story and narrative resonance."

—Graham Roberts, *Leeds Trinity University, UK*

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Introduction

Abstract A general introduction to the book, outlining the ethnomediaological approach to the StoryLab International Film Development Research Network workshops that provide much of the case study examples cited. The introduction also outlines the content of chapters and contextualises these chapters within an increasingly democratised independent film industry sector driven by technological change.

Keywords StoryLab • Ethnomediaology • Personal voice • Practice research • Filmmaking • Film industry

Beginnings

The idea for this book is rooted in my engagement with students and independent filmmakers from across the world who have entrusted me with the privilege of helping them develop their stories and cinematic narratives. When working with them, recurring issues, themes and problems would appear which chimed with my own similar themes, issues and problems when creating my own cinematic work. It became clear to me that a critical aspect of the process of creating films was missing from much of the literature and the teaching and learning practices I saw around me. Particularly in light of Ben Okri's astute observation that "[s]tories are the secret reservoir of values: change the stories individuals and nations live by

and tell themselves and you change the individual and nations" (Okri 1995, p. 21), it became clear that there was an imperative gap to be addressed. While there are many excellent books about the craft of screenwriting and filmmaking,[1] almost all of these books would deal with the skills and craft of screenwriting and directing. Very few would directly attempt at venturing into the very personal experience of the creative process, the personal motivations for telling stories and build an ontological relationship to the process of developing ideas for filmmaking. Exceptions such as Vogler (2007) and Rabiger (2017) have aspects of their work which emphasise the personal experience as important sources and inspiration for the development of narrative ideas, but they tend to contextualise this very firmly within craft skills in relation to screenwriting and directing. A writer such as Lee (2013) takes a more theoretical approach to looking at the craft of screenwriting through the lens of psychology, but it reflects a quasi scientific relationship to the craft of screenwriting. It is, of course, difficult to formalise and systematise the personal into a set of craft skills that would fit into the hegemony of curricula design, or indeed research design, yet it was clear to me that there were a great many students of filmmaking, and independent filmmakers, who craved an understanding of how to marry their deeply personal feelings and motivations with that of the publicly facing craft of filmmaking.

It became clear to me that there is a gap in the literature on filmmaking practice that addresses that highly private and personal stage in the development of ideas and the early pre-screenwriting stages of the filmmaking process. This gap was particularly pronounced when thinking of this as a more mystical stage in the process of creating film ideas. When exploring these approaches with my students over the years, the response and engagement to story and narrative development was incredibly enriching for both students and myself. By combining my own on going practical experience of filmmaking and that of my students, I was able to evolve an approach to one aspect of my work I call ethnomediaology. More recently, I have been able to formalise this approach through the devising and creation of an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) research network project that I led between 2016 and 2018 entitled StoryLab International Film Development Research Network. Working with colleagues Dr Nico Meissner, Griffith Film School, Australia, Sarah Kuntoh, National Film and Television Institute, Ghana and Dr Carolina Patiño, University of Ibagué, Colombia, I was able to develop and implement this interdisciplinary methodological approach into our research. Inspired

from music and anthropology, ethnomediaology is an interdisciplinary approach blending the methodologies inherent in ethnomusicology[2] and autoethnography,[3] which involves the active and immersive participation of researchers in the research culture and creative media creation process, using active personal engagement as a basis for knowledge generation, data gathering and evaluation.

For me filmmaking, film teaching and conducting film practice research have become inextricably intertwined. I started off as a filmmaker, grew into embedding my filmmaking practices into my teaching of film practice, then developed a research profile driven by my filmmaking practice and this then in turn allowed research findings to find expression in teaching and learning. As I discuss finding our voices in filmmaking in this book, I hope it will become clear that the approach I have taken is to unashamedly root the exploration in that special interface between personal experience as a filmmaker, a researcher of film practices, in particular story and narrative practices, and the teaching of film practice. *Finding The Personal Voice in Filmmaking* will therefore have at its heart an autoethnographic expression in part grown from previous practice research[4] and the findings from the AHRC StoryLab International Film Development Research Network.[5] In keeping with the overarching theme of the book, the journey on which I hope to take you will be rooted in personal values, personal perspectives and personal motivation. My aim is, through the subjectivity of this auto-ethnographic journey, to introduce you to some new insights of wider significance that will hopefully be of use in your own creative exploration and expression.

The Personal Voice

The only reality I know is that which I experience myself. I smell, I touch, I hear, I taste and I see. Above all, I imagine and I feel. My whole body is involved in experiencing and through these experiences I engage with life. To speak of experiences that are not rooted in my own experiences would therefore seem false, inauthentic and, at best, distant. That authenticity is at the heart of my relationship with others and through sharing these authentic experiences I contribute to building a collective truth whose tentacles ultimately have roots in the personal experiences of us all. Building healthy societies is dependent on a web of individuals who have an honest relationship with their experience of, and engagement with, life and are able to share and bring that experience to bear on their social and

cultural contexts. I am a self conscious being, aware of how I float on a lonely planet in an infinite, timeless universe. The need for meaning, purpose and the longing to return home to some original innocence are powerful forces that drive me to want to tell stories that bind us together in a whole that ultimately is more than the sum of its parts.

What is personal then becomes universal. Paradoxically, perhaps, the more personal we get in our expressions, the more universal the consequences and impact of what we reveal. When I listen to someone else telling me about their experience, I do not want to hear something impersonal, inauthentic and generic. I want to hear their story, their experience, their perspective. What engages me is that the story I am being told emanates from the depths of an individual experience, with authenticity and humility. Usually, it turns out that the more authentic that experience, the more likely I am to recognise it in myself. Carl Jung talked about that collective unconscious buried deep in our individual souls.[6] The things that we share are so deeply imbedded in our souls and are inseparable from what makes us unique. We shall explore that drive that leads to expression and look at how we connect the stories we tell to those deeper impulses that lie in the depths of our souls.

This journey is not about the craft of creating and shaping stories into cinematic narratives. As already mentioned, there are many other excellent books that can help you grapple with issues of craft in, for example, screenwriting and directing. *Finding The Personal Voice in Filmmaking* is about that fragile relationship between the creation of an idea, its relationship to our deepest motivations, the creative process that enables that idea to start to take shape and how in the later stages of applying craft we can protect and nurture the essence of a story as it journeys through a complex cultural, technological and industrial process before it is shared with others.

As I create, I feel a deep need to be confident that it is the genuine 'I' who is speaking and not some other voice. I want to be confident that the truth, my truth, is the truth that I am sharing. I want to be confident that the way that I am expressing that truth does justice to it, is an authentic expression and fully articulates its simplicity or complexity. I want to be confident that it is my voice speaking about my experience. I want to be confident.

This focus on the 'I' is not about narcissism, as we shall discuss later, but is an exploration of how I can contribute positively to a greater whole and what role my voice has in that greater whole.

The Evolving Filmmaking Context

The means of communication that facilitate this sharing of our experiences is, of course, manifold. The medium of narrative film is one of the more recent forms of sharing and communicating and as a consequence, it still feels like it is in its infancy in terms of expressive language, its industrial and social contexts, as well as in terms of audio visual literacy. Unlike the written word and music, for example, which everyone uses in one way or another on a daily basis (from a text message to the rhythmic tapping of feet), narrative film has, until quite recently, been inextricably tied to industrial contexts and processes that excluded most people and reduced them to mere spectators or audiences. Film was not a form through which ordinary people expressed themselves or communicated with each other; it was a form through which a select few communicated unidirectionally with audiences. The idea of mass audiences was, arguably, developed with the advent of the narrative film paradigm, particularly that of Hollywood. The masses were there to be entertained,[7] to be enlightened, to be educated[8] or even to be manipulated. This was a medium ripe for the discourse of power relationships.[9]

Perhaps it is worth casting our minds back to a time when the written word was in a similar situation as film was until recently. Until the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, reading and writing was a skill reserved for the elite, scholars and religious teachers. Books and treatises were almost exclusively written in Latin and were published either by the few universities or learned institutions of the day, or by the Christian Church. The overwhelming majority of ordinary, largely poor, Europeans could not read or write. Of course, people used other forms of communication to share and engage with each other, including the mother of all the arts, music, but any ideas and values being communicated via the written word had to be mediated by intermediaries who were essentially, as a consequence, in positions of power.

The advent of the Gutenberg Press heralded the beginning of a technological revolution in publishing that was to play a major role in the advancement of Europe towards an Age of Enlightenment. The new printing presses made printing accessible. The Gutenberg press, and others like it to follow, was a relatively small printing press that could easily be manufactured and maintained. This type of press[10] was soon proliferating across Europe and from Martin Luther[11] to Copernicus,[12] radical new ideas were being published that would rock the foundations of the Church

and our understanding of cosmology. These independent publications were not published in Latin, a foreign language to most, but in the local languages of the peoples of Europe. Coupled with socio economic developments, it is hard to over estimate the explosion in literacy across the European continent over the coming decades and centuries.

Reading and writing is now ubiquitous: from the text message to the love letter; the poems written by children in schools to the self published novels sold by the millions; from the political pamphlets to the protester's placard; from the medical notes to the law; wherever there is a reasonable level of education, the written word is used by virtually everyone as a means of communication and the sharing of feelings, imaginations, thoughts and ideas. The written word is so integrated into our lives that we are hardly conscious of its continual presence in the way that we share and communicate with each other.[13] But it was not always that way.

Perhaps we can forgive the young for thinking the same of the moving image. For them, there is no direct memory of a time when filmmaking technology necessitated an industrial sector that was exclusive by nature. Early cinema was, of course, driven by imaginative entrepreneurs, but the technical and logistical challenges of distribution and exhibition soon saw the emergence of big conglomerates that started to dominate the sector. By the time television arrived in the 1940s and 1950s, the film and television sectors across Europe and North America were controlled by a handful of large corporations and the workforce organised by intractable working practices built around specific technologies and specialised roles. Even the emerging filmmaking education in the form of elite film schools reflected these practices. You either had to find a way of becoming an apprentice and work your way slowly up the ladder, or if you were lucky enough, had to get into one of the prestigious film schools—this was the only other realistic route into working in the industry. As technology evolved in tandem with the birth and evolution of the consumer society in the 1950s, we witnessed the advent of 16 mm and Super 8 mm film formats. Soon the idea of the home movie was born.

Though the 1960s saw the early stages of the democratisation of the medium of film commence, it was not until the advent of digital technologies in the moving image medium that we are probably the closest to experiencing what it must have been like when the Gutenberg Press first arrived in Europe. The challenging of working practices, job roles, aesthetic values, narrative approaches, thematic preoccupations, distribution methods, exhibition platforms, business models and the arrival of a

new breed of creative entrepreneurs made the moving image medium accessible to all and started a new revolution in how we share and communicate with each other. More recent developments in mobile phone technology have fully cemented the moving image as truly ubiquitous. Where film was once predominantly an entertainment, then a mode of education, news and propaganda, technological developments have allowed incredibly easy access to using filmmaking, and sharing and distributing the results, that it has led, like with the written word, to the medium being used for all sorts of things: from the personal video statement to the candid observation of everyday life; from film therapy to film based health campaigns; from digital audio visual humanities to moving image science experiments; from the academic video essay to the natural history film; from the capturing of a baby's first steps to the tearful goodbye to a loved one; film is used for an endless array of sharing and communication. No longer is the moving image medium used predominantly as a communication from the select few to the masses. It is now an expressive form available to all to communicate and share directly with each other.[14]

As a consequence, the hegemony of established business models and working practices is being challenged. Traditional film production and distribution companies have been scrambling to adjust to the mature stage of consumer society, and in the cracks that have emerged, new players have entered the filmmaking game with new business models and have rapidly asserted themselves.[15] Perhaps the most interesting place to look when trying to understand the impact of digital technologies on filmmaking is to look at what is happening in the low- to middle-income countries. India (Bollywood) and Nigeria (Nollywood) are now the two countries that produce the largest number of commercially produced films in the world (although the United States' Hollywood sector still leads the world in terms of turnover). In Africa in particular, there has been an explosion in filmmaking directly attributable to the advent of first video and later digital technologies. In Ghana, for example, a nation of some 28 million people, approximately 1000 commercially released feature films are made every year. Contrast this with the approximately two to three feature films made by a government controlled Ghana Film Industry Corporation prior to the video revolution that started in 1987. Now there are competing sub industries within Ghanaian film: "Galliwood", the film industry based in and around the capital, Accra; and "Kumawood", the industry based in and around the second city, Kumasi.

The striking aspect of these industries is that they produce film outputs that are not only popular within Ghana, but also within the wider Ghanaian diaspora across the world. They tell local stories, using local stars and actors, with dialogue in their native languages. The industry is led by a new generation of young creative entrepreneurs who are rooting their stories in personal experiences, local cultures and local histories. The results are often an authentic cinema whose aesthetic and technical values differ considerably with that of Western cinema.[16] These filmmakers have on the whole not been to university or film school and it is not uncommon for them to be illiterate. Given the fact that, like many developing countries, approaching 50% of the population is under 18 years old,[17] whereas the Western countries are seeing ageing populations, it is clear that there may be shifting sands in terms of where future cinematic developments are going to be strongest.

STORYLAB INTERNATIONAL FILM DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH NETWORK[18]

In this context of shifting sands, the opportunity to develop an international film development research network in three low to middle income countries across three continents proved an invaluable opportunity to explore the impact of the democratisation of filmmaking on the stories independent filmmakers were interested in telling. One hundred years of hegemonic dominance from Western, predominantly Hollywood, values and aesthetics may have created a long-term effect on how filmmakers in the developing world, and independent filmmakers in the developed world, tell stories cinematically. From ideas about classical story structures originally rooted in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1996) to aesthetic values rooted in European visual arts traditions,[19] the teaching of cinematic expression ultimately reflects the values of recent colonising cultures. But perhaps the recent developments in the technology of filmmaking, and the subsequent democratisation of the form and its processes, may be ushering in a potential post colonial shift in power that postmodernists may claim vindicates their world view of cultural politics. Which ever way we look at this, the explosion of filmmaking in black Sub-Saharan Africa, the emergence of a strong Latin American cinema and the empowerment of independent filmmaking evident in South East Asia are but a few examples of the consequence of the democratisation not only of production technologies, but means of distribution and exhibition.

As filmmakers in the developing world become more confident about their filmmaking and seek to explore their own identities in an increasingly globalised world, how might this growing confidence challenge Eurocentric and America-centric notions of quality, visual aesthetic, narrative structure and story themes for so long set by aspirations towards Western cinema?

A unique feature of the StoryLab International Film Development Research Network was the lateral collaboration that it encouraged between practice led film and media researchers in developing countries across continents. Our research team collaborated with the host institutions involved to deliver workshops in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Accra, Ghana, and Ibagué, Colombia, during 2017. This was then followed by a summarising StoryLab Research Symposium hosted by the Media Innovation Studio, University of Central Lancashire in the UK, in January 2018. Like the participants in the workshops, the researchers were filmmakers who had an added interest in applied academic research. There was no pretence at objectivity, partly because a core principal of the exploration lay in our interest in understanding the personal, emotional and spiritual engagement with cinematic story and its subsequent wider impact on shaping new cinematic paradigms. The very nature of what we were trying to discover predicated the need for a methodology which did not put up boundaries between observer and observed, but encouraged a collective immersion in the questions being addressed.

Years of teaching and years of supervising filmmakers seeking to express themselves informed the approach to these workshops. The reflexive and embodied knowledge emerging from these teaching and supervisory experiences are important and should not be under valued as research. Nevertheless, the StoryLab International Film Development Research Network provided an opportunity to explore some of the themes arising from these longitudinal experiences in a systematic and heavily documented manner that satisfy the requirements for rigorous research enquiry.

The StoryLab International Film Development Research Network sought to answer the following questions: What are the consequences for the democratisation of the means of filmmaking and film dissemination on how filmmakers in the developing world tell cinematic stories and in what ways are these stories, and their mode of expression, reflecting a different perspective on living in an increasingly globalised world? In what ways may these emerging narrative developments impact cinematic storytelling in the UK and beyond?

All the workshops followed the same format and pattern and took place during 2017. The first was in Malaysia (June 2017) and was hosted by the Malaysian government's film arm, National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (FINAS), at their International Pitching Centre in the centre of Kuala Lumpur and 13 independent filmmakers participated. The second workshop took place in Ghana (July 2017) and was hosted by the National Film and Television Institute in Accra. This workshop was attended by 14 filmmaking participants. The third and final workshop took place in Colombia (September 2017) and was hosted by the University of Ibagué and was attended by 18 filmmaker participants. Each workshop was conducted over a three-day period and involved contributions from myself and my research colleagues.

Day 1 of the workshops was designed to facilitate introductions and the sharing of past experiences, current projects and, importantly, thematic aspirations. A mixture of presentations, screenings of participants' previous work and audio visual interviews conducted in pairs by participant filmmakers provided immersive and comprehensive opportunities for all to understand more about everyone else, their work and their cinematic aspirations. These interviews, in which each participant interviewed a colleague on a mobile phone, were screened and uploaded to a private online Facebook group accessible to participants in all three countries. This meant that filmmaker participants could get to know each other and interact and respond to the work of others on an ongoing basis. Throughout each of the workshops, the private online Facebook group allowed filmmaker participants to share work in progress, make comments and follow progress made by colleagues across three continents.

Day 2 of the workshops started with an interactive talk and seminar discussion led by myself. Through an interactive discussion with filmmaker participants, we first explored the nature of the motivation that leads us to create and express ourselves, then sought to understand the mechanisms of creativity from a practical perspective and its relationship to our deeper motivations, finally to conclude with a discussion of story and storytelling and their relationship to lived experience. The content of this talk and discussion laid the foundations and framework for the subsequent exploration with each filmmaker participant in the development of a story unique to them. This individual story development phase started in the second part of Day 2. Each researcher would be assigned to a number of filmmaker participants and would use some of the approaches discussed in the morning session to develop a story in outline form. Each filmmaker participant would have some time to themselves and would meet an assigned researcher twice.

In the evening and over night, if necessary, filmmaker participants would work on their story in step outline form. Day 3 would see them uploading their step outlines to the private online Facebook group for all to see and would then present their story to colleagues. Lively and constructive discussion would ensue and by the end of the day, before closing remarks and conclusions, filmmaker participants would have an opportunity to make changes and share a revised version of their story. The online private Facebook group has enabled the establishment of a transnational community of filmmakers who manage to keep in touch on the basis of a shared experience and it also offers us, the researchers, opportunities for continued dialogue that may lead to further exploration.

Some of the key observations from this particular StoryLab journey which are of interest to me as a creative filmmaker pursuing the creation of original ideas expressed through a personal voice, can be summarised into a number of broad areas, including:

- age and experience made no difference to the underlying motivation and passion to creating and expressing;
- almost all filmmaker participants are motivated by things that have little to do with furthering careers in the film or media business;
- all felt driven by an uncontrollable feeling of necessity;
- there was a strong feeling amongst most about having lost a sense of uniqueness and personal vision;
- dominant meta themes across all three countries included religious dilemmas, spiritual searches, social injustice and loss of socio-cultural values;
- almost all, as a consequence of the process and approach to these workshops, created stories that they were unaware of and had never thought of before, in many cases consequently challenging fixed or preconceived ideas about what stories they thought they wanted to tell; and
- most were working independently of established traditional production and distribution infrastructures, in some cases also with film as agents for social change.

It is worth pointing out that these filmmaker participants were, of course, a self selecting group of people responding to a call to participate in a research-related workshop. The only prerequisite was that they had produced at least one cinematic work (including screenplays) available in the public domain.

Finding the Personal Voice in Filmmaking is essentially about articulating the core ideas that on the one hand shaped and guided the workshops, while on the other hand reflecting our findings. In particular, the book is based on a key lecture given by myself during each workshop, and subsequent discussions that provided the inspiration for the development of stories expressed with the unique voices of filmmaker participants. Using anonymised and disguised references to private conversions with a number of filmmaker participants, I am seeking to create an applied theoretical reflection that can be of practical use to cinematic storytellers. Being autoethnographic in nature, the findings of knowledge that I shall be discussing will often be embodied and will ultimately reflect my values and judgements. Perhaps I should not be surprised how much of what I discovered from working with the filmmaker participants confirmed and reaffirmed the underlying theoretical and critical ideas expressed in this work. While many seminal works have sought to systematically understand the nature of creativity,[20] why we create[21] and the ontological relationship to creating,[22] this work seeks to contribute new embodied knowledge as to how we might proceed as creative practitioners in that very early ideation stage of creating a story through an intimate understanding of our relationship to creative motivation, the creative act and the story within.

The Chapters

In Chap. 2 we will ask a number of questions: How are we moved to create? What drives us? What is it we want to express? Starting from the Self—that paradoxical Jungian notion of the deeply personal selfless interaction with the, largely subconscious, collective whole—this chapter will look at feelings and their role in causing and motivating the development of an idea. We will explore the journey of a fragile notion manifested as a feeling and chart the journey through a creative and industrial process, through an expressive form, to the impact in the hearts and minds of others.

On the basis of understanding the journey that an idea takes, Chap. 3 will look to examine the nature of creativity itself in this process. By citing examples from nature, illustrated with experiments done on apes in the 1960s, through classic scientific examples, such as Archimedes's Eureka moment or Copernicus's re-synthesis of past knowledge, then on to artistic examples ranging from the United Colors of Benetton advertising campaigns in the 1980s to Cezanne's approach to shape and perspective,

before finally looking at some film examples, ranging from Lumière to Godard and from Flaherty to Bresson, we will seek to come to a specific practical understanding of what is meant by a creative act and creativity, and look at the role that play (like children's play) and poetry (in the broad sense) have in the creative process.

Referencing anecdotal experiences and case studies from the StoryLab International Film Development Research Network workshops, this chapter will explore how patterns—personal prejudicial patterns, thought patterns, social patterns, patterns learned in schools, patterns learned in higher education and patterns emerging from peer pressure—limit creative acts and creativity. The chapter will then go on to explore ways of breaking patterns of thinking in order to come to an understanding how creativity works in the practice of developing original, and personally relevant, film ideas. The role of play, courage, gullibility and humility will be central to this discussion, as will the paradoxical need to place creativity within the context of an established language of film.

Chapter 4 will look at why we want to tell stories. Why are stories important? Indeed, why are they necessary? What is their relationship to feelings, emotions and the intellect? As storytellers, what is it we are trying to achieve by communicating from one human to another? This is such a vast subject that we shall briefly touch on it in the sense of understanding the relationship between lived experience and story structures.

In Chap. 5, with reference to three case study examples from the StoryLab workshops, we will summarise the key aspects of *Finding the Personal Voice in Filmmaking* and identify some of the most important hurdles to overcome for the practical filmmaker.

Finally, in the Appendix, you will have a chance to refer to and explore a few of the exercises and questions that were used in the StoryLab International Film Development workshops and, if interested, to try and apply them to your own filmmaking practice.

Notes

1. From McKee (1999) to Dancyger and Rush (2002) and from Field (1998) to Kallas (2010), we see a plethora of screenwriting craft books which engage with screenwriting as predominantly a craft as opposed to predominantly a self-expression.
2. See Post (2005).
3. See Adams (2014).

4. See, for example, films such as *One Day Tafo* (Knudsen 1991), *Heart of Gold* (2006), *The Raven on The Jetty* (Knudsen, 2015) and *Cleft Lip* (Knudsen, 2018), as well as written work on practice, such as Knudsen (2014, 2016).
5. See storylabnetwork.com (Accessed 23 February 2018).
6. See, for example, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (Jung 1961).
7. Interestingly, the French word entertainment—divertissement—emphasises the distractive nature of filmed entertainment.
8. See, for example, the BBC's mission statement: "To enrich people's lives with programmes and services that inform, educate and entertain" (http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/whoweare/mission_and_values, Accessed 23 February 2018).
9. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the age of cinema is inextricably linked to the age of postmodernism, with its preoccupation with relativism and the defining of truth through power relationships. Michel Foucault was one of the leading exponents of the postmodernist idea. See Foucault (1991).
10. See *The Gutenberg Revolution* (Man 2009).
11. Contemporary facsimiles of Luther's original pamphlets are available, such as "Self-Will" and "How Lucifer and Adam Fell" (Luther 2006).
12. See the revolutionary book *On the Revolutions of Heavenly Spheres* (Copernicus 1995).
13. Counting just formally published books, some 200,330 titles were published in the UK during 2014. (https://www.publishers.org.uk/resources/uk-market/ accessed 22 February 2018.)
14. This abundance of digital technologies does bring with it new challenges, which I discuss in my journal article "Cinema of Poverty: independence and simplicity in an age of abundance and complexity" (Knudsen 2010).
15. See, for example, Chris Anderson's analyses of these new players and their mode of operation in *The Long Tail* (Anderson 2007).
16. This is not to speak of a wide variety of ways in which film is used. From personal poetic expressions to cultural interventions coming out of participatory filmmaking, the medium is now capable of being used by ordinary citizens whether they are interested in being part of a professional industry or not.
17. https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana_statistics.html (Accessed 23 February 2018).
18. Visit storylabnetwork.com for full details about the project.
19. For a comprehensive exploration of European art, see *The Story of Art* (Gombrich 2007).
20. During our later discussions, we shall be referring to the work of Bohm (2004) and Sternberg (1999).
21. Later, we shall be referring to the work of Hogan (2003).
22. We shall be returning to the works of Koestler (1964), Jung (1972) and Booker (2004).

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Why Create?

Abstract In this chapter we will ask a number of questions: How are we moved to create? What drives us? What is it we want to express? Starting from the Self—that paradoxical Jungian notion of the deeply personal self-less interaction with the, largely subconscious, collective whole—this chapter will look at feelings and their role in causing and motivating the development of an idea. We will explore the journey of a fragile notion manifested as a feeling and chart the journey through a creative and industrial process, through an expressive form, to the impact in the hearts and minds of others.

Keywords Creativity • Emotions • Feelings • Ideas • Personal • StoryLab

Introduction

In this chapter we will ask a number of questions: How are we moved to create? What drives us? What is it we want to express? Starting from the Self—that paradoxical Jungian notion of the deeply personal selfless interaction with the, largely subconscious, collective whole—this chapter will look at feelings and their role in causing and motivating the development of an idea. We will explore the journey of a fragile notion manifested as a feeling and chart the journey through a creative and industrial process, through an expressive form, to the impact in the hearts and minds of others.

Necessity and Invention

When faced with this question "why create?" it is tempting to resort to the most common answer: I want to express myself. This answer is not invalid or inappropriate, but it does tend to flounder when interrogated with further questions such as: Why do you want to express yourself? What brought you here to do this workshop or to read this book? What has made you journey through complex decisions in your life to arrive at this point where you want to express yourself, to create? What made you press on, against all odds, to overcome countless barriers and obstacles so that you could create? For our purposes, it is important to dig deeper into the reasons why we create to try and understand the undoubted strong urges that drive people to create.

For some people that urge to create has led to painful journeys involving difficult decisions around family, commitments, allegiances, the challenging of social and cultural norms, and the overcoming of psychological fears and barriers. Many have left the safety of their home environments to venture on a journey in search of a context or situation in which they can create. Others know they want to create and have ventured onto a more metaphoric journey in search of a form of expression. In a few cases, some people have risked their lives to create. Despite the many risks of potential humiliation, failure or disappointment, people venture onto difficult and sometimes dangerous journeys to create. These journeys can be intimate or epic, or everything in between. That intimate challenge of picking up a paint brush and putting it to canvas[1] to the challenge of leaving home to venture thousands of miles in search of a place and context in which to create, or from the poet quietly writing poetry in her kitchen[2] to the writer who has faced up to solitary prison in one of the remotest parts of the world,[3] these are but a very few examples of people who have been driven to create. We are all engaged with creating to greater or lesser extents and for those of us engaged more overtly in the creation of cultural artefacts we are perhaps particularly conscious of the creative journey. Failure, humiliation, loneliness, isolation, and even death are possible risks of creating, and the fact that some of us nevertheless venture on this journey suggests that the underlying motivation is about more than a vanity-driven notion of wanting to express oneself. Socio-cultural norms and conventions, circumstances and the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" (Shakespeare 1963, iii, i) will test and challenge the creative motivations in us all and, as we shall discuss later, many of us will retreat to safe ground

in the face of these challenges, fearful of letting that creative urge take us into uncharted and insecure territory.

Perhaps like the hero called to action, there are times when that creative urge calls us to action when, consciously or intellectually, we don't really want to. Like the hero, we are thrust into a situation where we are compelled to create. We, the hero of our own story, are compelled to create and may initially, like the classical hero, reject this call to action.[4] We may discover a latent talent we never knew about, or a context and form may be ready and waiting for our particular experience and our particular knowledge to fill it with life and meaning. This is not an issue of vanity driven fame or stature, for we could be thrust into creating work that may never be recognised by our peers or may form some other role or purpose beyond our immediate comprehension. It may be a kind of obligation, a duty, a calling or simply an unavoidable impulse. For some, it is a spiritual calling, and as with Jonah[5] whenever we try to escape that calling, circumstances force us back to having to face it.

When I look back at my life, I see a meandering pattern shaped by decisions, indecisions, successes, failures, circumstances and encounters that have conspired to create a particular story—my story. While this is not a pre destined story, I do see an underlying force which has been with me ever since I can remember[6]; a force that has been present at every juncture, influenced every decision, brought me to encounter certain people and shaped my attitude to every opportunity. What is the nature of this force, this energy, this urge or impulse?

To create involves actions that lead to the creation of some kind of form, as we shall discuss later. Communication is clearly at the heart of this urge; some kind of deep desire to share with not only our fellow human beings, but often also with other animals, nature, God and, some might say, ourselves. Without getting into a lengthy ontological discussion here about the nature of being,[7] embodied in us is something that we wish to express, share and communicate.

Perhaps the only way of properly describing this urge or impulse is to think of it as necessity. It is necessary to create. We can't help it, even if our lives would be better if we desisted. Necessity is not a rational reason or explanation; it simply is and it compels us. Necessity, as the saying goes, is the mother of all invention. It drives us forward through the improbable, through the impossible, through the uncertain and through the unknown. That necessity also seems to transcend time and space; for no matter your race, your gender, your social status or even your historical time period,

this necessity has driven people to create. Is there any difference between my necessity and the necessity of Aristotle; that of my necessity and that of Basho; or my necessity and that of Orson Wells? That necessity to create seems to transcend form and time and links me to all others who feel compelled to create.

We know that this necessity to create in order to communicate is powerful and unstoppable. For what happens if you try to prevent this necessity from creating a communication? We know from observing children, for example, that when they struggle to express themselves adequately, or when they fail in successfully creating a piece of work that expresses their intentions, they usually become frustrated and aggressive. When this context develops into situations where young men, for example, deprived of the ability to properly articulate their feelings or thoughts, find themselves incapable of creating an effective communication that can lead to frustrations that explode as physical violence. Among the filmmakers we worked with in Malaysia, Ghana and Colombia, filmmaker participants would often cite exactly the same scenarios when imagining what it would be like for them if they were prevented from being able to create: I would get frustrated; I would become angry; I would become depressed; I would not want to live; I would become deeply sad—and similar observations prevailed.

To acknowledge and work with this necessity therefore seems critical for the creative person. It involves accepting an irrational aspect of the creative motivation and having a sense of its timeless and shapeless presence in all that is created. For some of us, it is an acknowledgement of the fact that the work we create, and the journey on which we embark in the creation of this work, is about more than us as individuals. This necessity is not narcissistic in nature, but instead suggests a function and process that serves a greater purpose than the needs of an individual; somehow it connects me to the motivation of other creators, the motivation of my mentors and the motivation of those creators who will follow me and my generation. Necessity is an underlying quality that helps me elevate my creative actions to something noble, something beautiful and something that transcends the judgement of others. Above all, I see that necessity as a force just like that force that drives creation in nature: the force that drives the creation of a flower in the desert; that drives the weeds to grow out of derelict building wasteland; or the tree that starts to grow out of a rock. In that sense, our creations could be thought of as growing out of the same necessity that drives all of nature, which in

that case means that the forms we create are an indistinguishable part of nature and natural forces. To create, therefore, is so deeply imbedded in our nature:

> Things are beautiful where they are inevitable, that is, when they are free exhibitions of a spirit. There is no violence here, no murdering, no twisting-about, no copying-after, but a free, unrestrained, yet self-governing display of movement – which constitutes the principle of beauty. The muscles are conscious of drawing a line, making a dot, but behind them there is an unconsciousness. By this unconsciousness nature writes out her destiny: by this unconsciousness the artist creates his work of art. A baby smiles and the whole crowd is transported, because it is genuinely inevitable, coming out of the unconscious.
>
> (Suzuki 1996, p. 281)

Feelings and Emotions

We are aware of this necessity through our feelings and emotions. Feelings and emotions are the foundations on which the transcendent and uncon-scious manifest themselves in the tangible embodied experience, one that enables self awareness and self consciousness through the mind-body manifestation. We are moved to act, moved to express, moved to com-municate by powerful emotional and feeling forces that manifest them-selves throughout the whole body:

> So immense are the possible combination of external forces alone that it seems ludicrous to discuss them in terms of what we now know and what we hope to know. The more promising course has been to learn our bodies and then from within to look outward. And we have come across one finding with which all that may be discovered will have to accord: *the entire human organism always participates in any reaction.*
>
> (Burnshaw 1991, p. 10)

Feelings and emotions are powerful actors in our embodied experiences and connect the materiality of the bodily directly with the immateriality of the unconscious in us.[8] They provide this unbroken link between one par-adigm and another, one reality and another. But feelings and emotions themselves constitute dichotomous, even paradoxical, dualities in our beings that reflect the duality of the physical: day and night, sunrise and sunset, force and opposing force, as well as more abstract notions such as

good and bad, right and wrong. If dualities are what give shape and form to the world in which we live, so feelings and emotions reflect that duality in our embodied experience.

Emotions are often associated with the release of adrenaline: it is the hormone that stimulates the body into a heightened state of readiness for fight or flight and is associated with the sympathetic nervous system—the nervous system very much involved with conscious and directed actions. Conversely, feelings are often associated with the release of acetylcholine: this is a hormone which does the opposite of adrenaline in that it makes us relaxed and tranquil, puts us in a more meditative state of mind and it is associated with the parasympathetic nervous system—the part of the nervous system involved with unconscious and involuntary actions in our bodies. Where emotions are self assertive in nature—in that they revolve around emotions such as fear, anxiety and sexual arousal, emotions that are there to assert and differentiate ourselves as individuals set apart from the environment and others—feelings are participatory in nature. Feelings, such as awe, love and longing, tend to want us to merge and participate with the broader environment and others, to sacrifice ourselves for others and the whole, to become one with the world around us. That contrast between self-assertive survival and participatory submission has profound impacts on the structure and approach to creative expression and storytelling[9] and will provide clues to the nature of the necessity driving the creative urge.

Becoming aware of the necessity that speaks to us through our feelings and emotions and compels us to act through a process of creating is a crucial part of the process of ideation. It may terrify us, or it may make us feel powerful; either way, it is a force to be obeyed:

> When your Daemon is in charge, do not try to think consciously. Drift, wait, and obey.
>
> (Kipling cited in Burnshaw 1991, p. 53)

What is it that wants to come out? What is it that wants to become conscious? What is it that wants to be communicated? What is it that needs to be expressed or said? When approaching these questions from the perspective of necessity, filmmaker participants in the StoryLab discussions tended to fall into silence. All certainty and clarity evaporated; if, indeed, it was there to begin with. It became clear that filmmaker participants felt a strong need to express themselves, to create, and a strong commitment to sacrifice in order to create. The creative journeys on which they had all

embarked were driven by something. Yet that something had no shape, no form, no clear meaning, nor was it even clear in the mind's eye. But there was a strong feeling of a presence that wanted expression, a purpose seeking an outlet, the formless seeking form.[10]

Something

Something. Something not only wants to emerge, but needs to emerge. It is necessary for it to emerge. Do we really know what this something is? Do we really know why it is necessary for this something to be expressed through the creation of some kind of form? And why is this something wanting to come through us? Why me?

This something is emerging from a place where there is no form, no shape, no time. It is emerging from the unconscious and the only initial connection we have with it is that we can feel it. We feel something. We are moved by something. We sense something. And necessity is making it emerge and bringing it into the light. It is this process of making the unconscious conscious, of becoming aware of an often undiscovered self that starts to take shape as a creative process. It is here that the stories that are paradoxically both unique and universal reside, the stories that paradoxically surprise yet seem so familiar, the stories that on the one hand terrify, yet are so comforting and reassuring, reside and await their time. The importance of understanding these paradoxical forces was evident in much of Carl Jung's work and he often emphasises the fundamental relationship between the unconscious and art:

> Great art till now has always derived its fruitfulness from the myth, from the unconscious process of symbolisation which continues through the ages and which, as the primordial manifestation of the human spirit, will continue to be the root of all creation in the future.
>
> (Jung 1958, p. 110)

The process by which we allow these stories to emerge and become what they want to become is that creative process that we shall explore further. I am unashamedly suggesting that the process of telling the most personal, universal and authentic stories are involuntary in their core nature. The roots of the stories are to some extend independent of us as embodied beings, yet it is through the embodiment of each of our unique circumstances and experiences that the stories find narrative shape and

form and come to have a material structure with which we engage, both as creators and receivers, making them relevant to the particularities of our time and place.

It is, of course, terrifying to start with what seems like nothing, or what is just a feeling or a hunch. That Buddhist-like emptiness can be a strange place to start for someone used to the comfort of materiality in which all ideas are rooted in psychologically explicable reactions to a tangible physical world in which only what is consciously rational is considered real.[11] It is right that this is the world in which we must live and die and it is therefore imperative that the lived life is continually enriched by ideas and stories that emerge from the unconscious.

Necessity, something, feelings and emotions are aspects of ourselves and the creative process we cannot touch, see, hear, taste or smell. We cannot even at this early stage in the creative journey determine meaning or purpose, nor can we explain why we want to express or how we are going to express it. Initially, we are simply moved to act. Actions are the tangible effects of the powerful forces at work in us. The mind and the body embody that inner will that makes us act and create.

Moved to Act

Being moved to act is, of course, a deeply embedded biological phenomenon. In the context of creative action, like the inseparable biological impulses in us, the journey we embark on is probably driven by the same necessities and somethings that we experienced as children, nuanced and shaped over time by the cloak of experience and maturity. We may even feel, or be attached to, ongoing feelings from our childhood; feelings that have never left us or have always been with us or feelings that have never been fully incorporated into, or resolved,[12] in our lives. Could it be that as artists, we are circling around the same issues, the same themes, the same somethings that have been with us since the beginning of our time on earth? Consider how Robert Frost creatively addresses this philosophical question in poetic form, visually articulating a meditation on his own experience of this issue:

> We dance around in a ring and suppose,
> But the secret sits in the middle and knows.

(Frost 1943, p. 46)

The process of acting to create starts much further back than the process of creating a clearly defined creative form. Either with or without the support of our parents and surrounding society, such as expressed through our school teachers, for example, we start to explore certain activities, forms and expressions. We are drawn to certain mentors and are inspired by certain people and events. Our curiosity openly, or secretly, takes us to new places where we learn new things and learn to master skills in certain physical activities, creative expressions and various technologies. Initially, these moves to act, the curiosities, these attractions may be entirely unconscious, only for us to become aware of them as we reflect on our childhood in later life. As we become older, we learn to strategise in order to satisfy the necessity that drives us to express something. It is worth reminding ourselves that even in childhood, as social norms and expectations are increasingly taught to us, the sad reality is that there are many discouraged, dissuaded or even forbidden to take action in accordance with their inner necessity. Some learn to strategise their actions into subtle behaviours and actions, others openly rebel and often then get into trouble, while others repress these urges and eventually have to deal with the consequences later in life. In fact, as we shall discuss later, most storytellers go through a process of rediscovering an aspect of childhood in order to revisit the somethings that have resided in them all along and which may, to lesser or greater extents, have been repressed or hidden from view.

An important and very complex series of actions that we are all involved with is that related to engaging with other people. It is hard to imagine the creation of a form, artistic or otherwise, which does not involve, if not a series of collaborations, then at the very least the influence, help and guidance of others. We are on the one hand individuals, moved to act independently, while on the other hand we are inseparably connected to each other on a species level and socio-cultural level. Feelings and emotions play a key part in these attachments. When discussing feelings and emotions with creative storytellers, including in the StoryLab workshops, it is striking to note how, when people share their innermost personal feelings, emotions, somethings and motivating necessities, what is intensely personal turns out to be paradoxically universal. What we think might differentiate us from others, conversely unites us and brings us together.

It is fair to say that most of the filmmakers who attended the StoryLab workshops were doing so because of some kind of search for creative solutions to both conscious and unconscious challenges. Under the guise of wanting to improve or develop cinematic storytelling skills, necessity had

encouraged them to make a whole series of decisions and take a whole range of actions that eventually made them arrive at these workshops at these particular moments in time.[13] These more recent actions were naturally part of a continuum of actions which were inseparable from all the other actions in a creator's life, including the supposedly mundane actions such as getting up, brushing our teeth and going to work. More complex actions include decisions to studying certain subjects, applying for specific jobs and moving to certain places. These complex actions are set within the context of socio-cultural behaviours, expectations and economic realities that act as both enablers and barriers to any one of us trying to 'obey our daemons'. But when we deviate from these underlying necessities trying to give shape to these somethings we carry around within us, we become unsettled, unhappy, disturbed and, in extreme cases, depressed and angry. In some tragic cases, even worse. The harsh reality is that if we as individuals do not succeed in creating then, as is the case with nature and natural forces, someone else, who is also driven by necessity and the same underlying somethings, will continue the expression of those particular somethings.

Action and Form

Let us be positive and acknowledge that many individual and particular creators succeed in galvanising and directing their actions to the creation, eventually, of some kind of physical form which embodies and expresses this something that they personally feel. Even before we start talking about art and the arts, meaning and purpose, we can say that any creation—a beautiful shoe, a mathematical formula, a tasty meal, an aeroplane or a burial ground—is often a manifestation in a physical form of that something necessity has driven us to create. Creation and the creative act are not confined to artists. Though this book is concerned with cinematic creation, we are all involved in creating through necessity. The arts and sciences are full of biographies of individuals who have overcome incredible odds to create forms that have enriched and transformed our lives. From grand cathedrals to painted caves and from flint stone knives to rockets, human beings have found incredible ways of expressing these somethings that have ultimately made them more than partially self conscious animals.

When we talk about form, we are referring to a physical manifestation—ephemeral or permanent—of an urge to create. We bring into a

physical dimension something which had no shape, no form, no time; something intangible whose existence could only be felt. But the fact that this something has no shape or form does not mean that it is not real. Quite the contrary: what we feel is real; it's so real we cannot help but want to make others perceive it, too. It's so real it moves us to act. It is real and has a presence that cannot be denied or ignored. Reality, therefore in this context, is not about whether something has a physical form or not, but is a question of intangible—or what some might refer to as spiritual—presence. The form that we create is to share that reality with others; it is one of the ways in which we create bonds with others. Indeed, for religious people it is also one of the ways in which we may create bonds with our God. Perhaps creating a form is a way in which we get to become conscious of our reality. In so doing, we also, through this creation of form, come to know and understand ourselves and the meaning of our lives better.[14]

The creation of a form, such as a film, is therefore not just about development, pre-production, production and post-production. The creation of a film has a very long tail in its making: from the heritage we bring with us into this world, the innate childhood impulses, aspirations and influences, the unconscious actions arising from these, to the more conscious actions of following through on youthful curiosities, learning skills, schooling, training, higher education and professional and personal friendships made in pursuit of creating this something that we feel is so necessary, we are moved in a particular direction that leads to the creations of a series of forms, one of which could be a film. Building awareness of this journey, whether intellectually, intuitively or a combination of the two, becomes useful for our own creative and human development. Through a continual process of trial and error, action and reflection, exposition and feedback, we fine tune the creation of our form until it starts to satisfy our conscious or unconscious aspirations for the work. In some cases, this trial and error, action and reflection, exposition and feedback takes a lifetime. Perhaps we are only really telling one story, but from many different narrative perspectives. Perhaps, as the renowned jazz pianist Count Basie, once suggested about his piano solos: improvisations are experiments in search of that one note at the right time and place, and once found, the rest of the improvisation is about winding down and bringing the piece to an end. In such a situation, we spend a significant part of our lives, or even a lifetime, experimenting and improvising in the creation of our expressive forms, circling around that "secret" that "sits in the middle and knows"

(ibid.). If all is working well, our circling around this secret through the perfecting of our craft is bringing us closer and closer to being able to express this something that sits in the middle of our being.

As we have already suggested, the creation of a form is part of a journey that is about sharing and communicating with others. We meet them around the tangible; in other words, we engage with others through forms which revolve around our senses. It is through the tangible experiences of engaging with forms that we will share the intangible with others. From our gestures and behaviour and our socio-cultural and religious rituals, to our scientific and artistic inventions, we are continually in the process of creating tangible forms to express the intangible. Focusing on the creative arts, who are these others for whom we feel it necessary to create these forms? Are they the general society around us? Our peers? Our family? Our political leaders? Our friends? Our domestic animals? The nature that surrounds us? Our God? In Hamlet, for example, our hero, guided by a necessity expressed through the intangible spirit of his deceased father, commissions a theatre play to present to the corrupted court of his mother and stepfather in order that they may see their own corruption by holding up a "mirror to nature: to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" (Shakespeare 1963: III, ii). By way of a contrasting example, St Augustine points out in *Confessions* that his work is not aimed at human kind— "Allow me to speak: for I am addressing your mercy, not a man who would laugh at me" (St Augustine 2008, p. 6). Let us for expediency's sake call all these variant others our audience.

I find it impossible to imagine a human society without art, science and religion. These are the key clusters of tangible creative forms in which we create in order to build communal contexts and languages through which we share our lived experiences, including the intangible experiences of somethings, necessities, feelings and emotions. The tangible aspects of art, science and religion are constructs that are socio-culturally created and they change and evolve over time and place. The underlying forces and impulses that create them are real—so real that in many cases we are will-ing to fight and die for them. It is in these contexts that our audiences come to engage with our work. (It is perhaps worth reminding ourselves that we are not just creators of work, but also audiences.) Our audiences have been moved to act in order to engage with our work. They have to work, for example, so that they can afford to buy a TV set or go to the cinema, to pay for their broadband connection and mobile phone. They

have to decide to go out into the rain, buy a cinema ticket and go and watch your film. They may read books and surf the internet in search of work that satisfy their curiosity, their need. They, too, are feeling something, and necessity moves them to act. Like with the creator of a work, that something and necessity will have a long tail stretching into the past, fuelling decisions and risks. Think of the risks audiences take in repressed regimes to view work that challenges their oppressors' values. Think of the young individuals reading books or watching films that their parents do not approve of. Think of the risks taken by independently thinking audiences during the Middle Ages in Europe when they dared to read the works of a new breed of scientists creating work that challenged the hegemonic scientific values of the dominant Roman church. Think of the risks churchgoers in Germany took when they followed the call of the pamphlets of Martin Luther and attended his alternative church services. From the risks taken by audiences watching underground plays in the former East Germany during the Soviet era to the risks taken by young women reading western books under the Taliban in Afghanistan, from those who dared read Galileo's new ideas in mediaeval Europe to the risks taken by young white Americans drawn to the evocative blues music in the 1950s of the former slaves of their grandparents, audiences demonstrate that their urge to engage with forms that speak to their somethings, their necessities, their feelings and emotions are as powerful as those that exist in the somethings, necessities, feelings and emotions of those who create (Fig. 2.1).
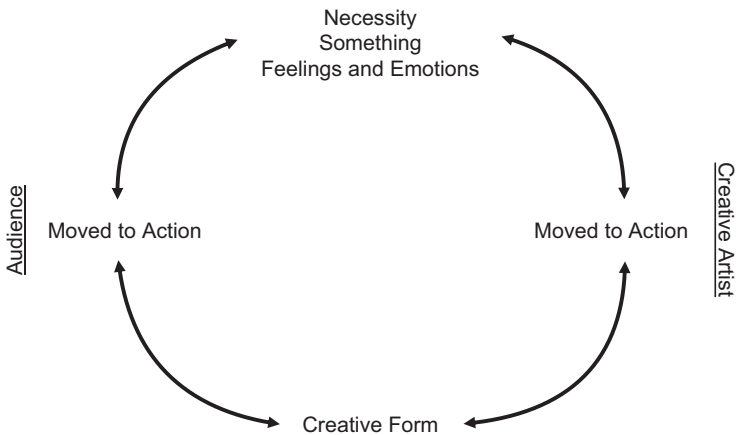
Fig. 2.1 Creative cycle

Consider the striking and revealing similarity between this creative journey and the journey that T.S. Eliot poetically articulates in the context of personal exploration when in lines 239–242 of Little Gidding (Eliot 1959, p. 48) talks about the end of an exploration only occurring when we arrive back where we started and only then seem to know that place, as if for the first time.

Beauty and Truth

It would seem that both on an individual level and on the collective level, we are in a perpetual process of learning about ourselves, who we are and what we're doing here. Whether in the mode of creating, or as an audience, we are moved to engage with each other through creative forms in a perpetual search for meaning, purpose and peace. Unreconciled, even restless, states of mind drive us to explore and at the end of it we want to know. We want to know who we are, why we're here, what we're supposed to be doing, how we can live in peace with each other and ourselves. In the arts, one could say that this ultimate state is beauty; in the sciences, a unified law; in religion, being at one with one's God. In all these cases we talk of the truth. The closer we get, the more we talk of how in art truth is beautiful, beauty truth. We talk about the beauty of a mathematical formula or physics theory and how in that beauty we see truth. In the religious experience, we talk of the beautiful experience in which truth reveals itself. We know that something is beautiful when it is true; we also know that the truth is beautiful. The nature of that knowledge is ephemeral and ontological in nature.

This idea of truth and beauty are important for the creative artist; for they lie at the heart of how we evaluate the purpose and quality of what we create. Embracing and incorporating these deep unconscious movements that lead us to create can play a fundamental role in giving us purpose, endurance and meaning and can play a critical role in enabling us to develop confidence in what we create. We are creating forms which are going to come to light in a hostile world full of competing agendas rooted in short term gratification and we are going to go through complex and difficult actions and processes, indeed in our sector industrial processes involving complex and unpredictable activities, that can easily destroy our confidence in that fragile something we wanted to share with others:

Art wants to pass into life, to lift it; art wants to enchant, to transform, to make life more meaningful or bearable in its own small and mysterious way. The greatest art was probably born from a profound and terrible silence – a silence out of which the deepest enigmas of our lives cry: Why are we here? What is the point of it all? How can we know peace and live in joy? Why be born in order to die? Why this difficult one way journey between the two mysteries?

(Okri 1996, p. 5)

We shall explore these challenges set out by Okri in subsequent chapters. But perhaps at this stage it is worth asking ourselves: from intangible somethings, through being moved by necessity, feelings and emotions to perform complex actions that eventually lead to the creation of tangible creative forms shared with others, who like us the creator have been moved to engage with our form, where in this journey does the truth ultimately reside? Indeed, where in this journey lies our reality? These are important questions to ask because addressing them can help liberate and empower us as creators to prioritise when confronted with dilemmas, paradoxes, challenges and creative opportunities.

In discussing issues of truth and reality as they pertain to this journey, we could be sidetracked unnecessarily by ontological or epistemological discussions about the nature of truth and reality. In our StoryLab discussions, we would not enter into ontological or epistemological discussions about the nature of truth or reality, but simply explore these questions as they related to every individual's experience, no matter their definition of the concepts of truth or reality. Invariably, following discussions in all three countries, a consensus emerged in which every participating filmmaker felt that both the truth, as they understood it, and the reality of what they were doing, resided in their feelings for these somethings that needed to be expressed and not, for example, in the physical actions of the journey or in the tangible form of the creation. This realisation has profound implications for our relationship to our craft and its creation.

Being attached to a form can be a serious problem for a creator. While we can love and enjoy our craft and the tangible outcomes we create with this craft, what happens if that craft is suddenly removed from us as a possibility, or what happens when what we have created is destroyed, decays or is reshaped by others or unforeseen circumstances? We know that art works decay, are destroyed or simply get lost. A film can be destroyed, or one can live in a country where one is forbidden from making films. In

collaborative ventures, our tangible forms may be transformed by others or, as is very often the case, the things we create are simply ignored or forgotten. In the case of ephemeral performances, for example, the tangible form is temporary, like the fleeting life of a butterfly. Some artistic forms are born, become popular and then disappear over time, or are barely kept alive by a few enthusiasts and historians. In other words, forms are constantly changing, coming and going, being transformed, dying, being destroyed and decaying. Tangible forms are fickle and transient by nature and while some expressive forms last longer than others, we know that in the long run they will disappear from existence, just like our own physical presence.

Yet wave after wave of creative expression in ever evolving forms rise, like a phoenix, out of the ashes and blossom in their time. In us, individually, and in our collective cultures, there is something essential that transcends the temporary nature of what we create, something that wills to be out. If our film is destroyed, as happened to Robert Flaherty in the early stages of working on *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty 1922), where he saw all his nitrate-based film stock succumb to fire, we start again and make another one. If for some reason we suddenly feel uncomfortable expressing ourselves in a particular genre, we change genre, just like the Polish film director Krzysztof Kieślowski (1941–1996) did when he switched to exclusively making fiction films after 20 years of exclusively making documentary films. In these examples the forms were destroyed and changed, respectively, but in both cases the underlying themes and motivations remain constant and unchanged. This something that underpinned their work was largely immutable, but the form was very mutable. We need not fear whether our creations decay or die, for the something that inhabits their form still exists and through our actions, or the actions of others, will continually reemerge into new forms. William Blake was a strong exponent of the supremacy of the imagination and G.K. Chesterton (1920) describes how Blake refers to a statement Jesus makes to Mary about the eternity of the imagination:

> You might kill all the lambs of the world and eat them; but you could not kill the lamb of the imagination, which was the lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. Blake's philosophy, in brief, was primarily the assertion that the ideal was more actual than the real: just like in Euclid the good triangle in the mind is more actual (and more practical) than the bad triangle on the blackboard.
>
> (Chesterton 1920, p. 160)

Even prototypical stories, those archetypal stories that form the canon of classical stories across cultures and across time, emerge from our collective unconscious time and time again to find expression in differing narrative forms and cultural contexts and through different individuals and the context of their lived experiences. We might be tempted to think of dreams as highly personal and individual, but as Carl Jung showed decades ago (Jung 1968), children yet to be fully embedded in their tangible cultures dream similar dreams using similar imagery across cultures and time periods. Joseph Campbell (1993) has illustrated how the idea of the hero and the hero's journey features in all our prototypical stories across time and cultures. Christopher Booker (2004) has suggested that there are only seven prototypical stories that find numerous narrative forms—from literature, poetry and theatre, through to film, animation and musicals—and that while we may experiment with these narrative forms, the dominant stories that we tell ourselves are ultimately prototypical in nature.[15] This delving into the collective unconscious as the source of our creations allows us to consider our creations not as something we create, but something that is created in us. Hogan succinctly suggests below that we may cognitively question the text-mind relationship and, indeed, I often look at a work that I have created and, particularly if I find the work truthful and beautiful, I find myself looking at it in wonder and asking myself: was that really me that created this?

> We do not ask what is the human mind that it can create and understand a text? What is a text that it can be created and understood by the human mind?
>
> (Hogan 2003, p. 3)

While the dominant stories we engage with tend to be prototypical in origin, this does not mean they are not personal. As is well documented with children, they "often use stories to deal much more directly with emotional concerns drawn directly from their own lives" and in so doing "appropriate and use for their own purposes someone else's experience, someone else's story" (ibid., p. 67). It is clear that people are "incomparably more alike than not. They share ideas, perceptions, desires, aspirations, and – what is most important for our purposes – emotions" (ibid., p. 3). The idea, therefore, of being simultaneously personal and universal is paradoxical and in this paradox lies a truth and a beauty that transcends explanation and exposition. Beauty and truth in this sense are not

describing the form itself, but are describing the very essence of which the form is made. As Kandinsky says, a good drawing "is a drawing that cannot be altered without destruction of this inner value, quite irrespective of its correctness as anatomy, botany, or any other science" (Kandinsky 2006, p. 105). And in this truth and beauty we hope to "send light into the darkness of men's hearts – such is the duty of the artist" (ibid., p. 10).

Narrative Film Forms

This kind of independence from the form can be liberating on a number of fronts. Is it art? Is it science? Is it religion? Is it a craft based vocation? Is it a service? In the context of the somethings, the necessities, the feelings and the emotions, these questions seem somewhat irrelevant. It becomes much more relevant to ask: What does my context allow me to work with? What do I instinctively like working with? Can I simply engage with a form that I feel instinctively attracted to? Do I have what others perceive to be a natural talent for a particular form? Does the form I'm interested in lend itself to my natural instincts, my way of seeing and my way of thinking? The question of form becomes much more pragmatic and of the tangible world. This is not to say that one cannot have a sublime relationship with one's form and processes; indeed, artists and crafts people can become very emotionally attached to objects that form tools of their trade. A tool can have a particular significance for the artist, helping them, for example, connect their practice to a larger story that links into their creative and cultural heritage, their family or memories. Likewise, a particular work can have an enhanced meaning for the artist, linking into memories, experiences, feelings and emotions. However, we all know that everything tangible and physical must come to an end at some point. Even narratives come to an end, even if the stories continue and are reborn into new narratives.

In terms of film narratives, we consider the many variations of types, genres and styles and attribute different levels of truth/reality authenticities to these. This is most evident in the schism between documentary and fiction, where there have been protracted debates about the supposedly intrinsic differences between the two genres. The documentary discourse in particular has been preoccupied with the debates around truth and reality ever since Grierson's well-known observation:

Documentary, or the creative treatment of actuality, is a new art with no such background in the story and the stage as the studio product so glibly possesses.

<div align="right">(Grierson 1933, p. 8)</div>

In fact, Grierson went on to observe:

My separate claim for documentary is simply that in its use of the living article, there is also an opportunity to perform creative work. I mean that the choice of the documentary medium is as gravely distinct a choice as the choice of poetry instead of fiction. Dealing with different material, it is, or should be, dealing with it to different aesthetic issues from those of the studio.

<div align="right">(Grierson 1946, p. 80)</div>

Since Grierson's contributions to define documentary, many eminent scholars have engaged in refining our understanding of the documentary genre, including Brian Winston (1995), Bill Nicholls (2001) and Alan Rosenthal (1988). Discourses in relation to definitions and concepts relating to art, fiction, reality, truth and ethics helped polarise the debates to a point where entrenched views about reality and truth distracted filmmakers into seeking these values in the physical work itself. Despite Grierson's early claim that the documentary genre is a creative tool, there remains a persistent adherence to the idea of the documentary as more realistic and, in terms of the ethical expectations bestowed on the genre, more truthful than fiction. We found this to be the case with our StoryLab participants, more than my experiences of working with European filmmakers. The expectation, even amongst mainstream audiences, is that the documentary genre, whatever it consists of, should adhere to an ethically determined set of codes that contrasts with those of fiction.

If, as we have discussed already, however, the truth and reality do not reside directly in the form itself, is there then any point in becoming distracted by the debate around the authenticity of documentary? Can we claim that the documentary genre is more truthful than fiction? Can we claim that the documentary film is more real than the fiction film? While many creative filmmakers have moved on from these questions and have challenged the codes of the genre to evolve the language of film, many others feel constrained by the perceived rules that define the authenticity of each genre. They feel bound by perceived notions that because one is filming actuality, as opposed to filming paid actors in recreated contexts,

then there is an ethical commitment to representing perceived reality. Actually, however, a documentary film is as constructed a form as the fiction film. While the codes that define how we define the genre suggest a pseudo reality, the reality, and ultimately the truth, lies somewhere else. How a film manages to have real impact is not determined by genre, but by the effectiveness of how the creator works with the form to invite the audience into an intangible and invisible space in which reality, truth and beauty reside.

I would therefore suggest that it makes no difference what form someone chooses in response to the call of necessity. Creative people work with whatever they are given, whatever is around them and in whatever context they happen to be born into and, as a consequence, you are likely to, as Robert Bresson succinctly observed, "[m]ake visible what, without you, might never have been seen" (Bresson 1977, p. 39). We take the tools that feel comfortable and deploy them in creating forms that are constantly changing, dying and being reborn, coming in and out of fashion and evolving. We may change the forms with which we work as we progress in our journey through life, or we may narrow down and focus our attention on ever more focused aspects of the forms with which we work. While each society will have its preferred forms that it values more than others at any given time, these are by no means fixed or immutable; quite the contrary, fashions and circumstances are constantly changing the forms through which creative people express themselves and engage with their audiences. Film itself, only just over 100 years old, is an example of a new narrative form, compared to, say, music and painting, which has come to be one of the most ubiquitous of our art forms. Digital technologies have spawned new forms of expression and, indeed, old forms return in new guises; traditional pottery and ceramics are seeing a comeback in popularity and astrology had a comeback in the late 1960s and persists to this day.

We shall in the next chapter progress to talk more specifically about those creative processes that come into play when moved to creative action. What does it mean to be creative? What is the creative act?

Notes

1. "At each touch I risk my life" (Cézanne cited in Bresson 1977, p. 70).
2. I am, of course, thinking of the American poet Emily Dickinson (2016), whose intimate domestic poetry has touched many across the world.

3. See, for example, *The Gulag Archipelago* (Slozhenitsyn 2007).
4. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Campbell 1993) there is a discussion about the fact that classical heroes always respond to the call with a first refusal.
5. The story of Jonah originates from the Book of Jonah in the Hebrew Bible.
6. Einstein reputedly claimed that all his scientific theories were based on ideas and imagery he was playing around with as a child.
7. You may explore such works as *The Undiscovered Self* (Jung 1958), *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 2009) and *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 2007) for comprehensive exploration of the nature of being and thinking.
8. See the work of Ekman (2004) and Goleman (2003) and their discussion of emotions. The distinction between feelings and emotions is one that I have extrapolated from these works and that of Koestler (1964) and explored in a number of works, including Knudsen (2009).
9. See, for example, the work of Knudsen (2008, 2009), Knudsen et al. (2011) and Grodal (2009).
10. Consider, for example, the premise in Luigi Pirandello's 1921 play, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (Pirandello 2014).
11. Most of us now live in urban environments and we are completely immersed in a world that we constructed, a paradigm that we created in which all phenomena have rational causes and effects. But there are people who have different relationships with living phenomena, where the coincidental, the mystical, the inexplicable, the contradictory or paradoxical, all have an equal standing to that of the rational—see Jung's essay on the subject, "Archaic Man", in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (Jung 2001, p. 127). And as we shall see, these life attitudes do have a profound effect on how people shape and tell stories.
12. Psychoanalysis, regression therapy, NLP and many other psychological therapies are examples of whole industries dedicated to understanding the impacts of our childhood, and in some cases past life experiences on our current lives.
13. A wonderful story about this kind of synchronous action is Thornton Wilder's 1928 novel, *The Bridge over San Luis Rey* (2000).
14. In my view it is overly narcissistic to assume that the search for happiness is an ultimate motivation. I think it more advantageous to think that having meaning and purpose for complex beings like ourselves is of paramount importance as a tool for coping with, and making the most out of, life.
15. The seven basic plots that Booker (2004) refers to are: overcoming the monster, which includes such stories as "Gilgamesh", "David and Goliath", "Red Riding Hood", "Star Wars", "Battle of Britain", any James Bond

film and so on; rags to riches, which include stories such as "King Arthur", "Cinderella", "My Fair Lady", "The Ugly Duckling", "Superman", "Billy Elliot", "Slumdog Millionaire" and so on; the quest, which includes works such as *The Odyssey*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *Watership Down*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Divine Comedy* and so on; voyage and return, such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *The Time Machine*, *Brideshead Revisited*, *Peter Rabbit*, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", *Gone with the Wind* and so on; comedy, including such examples as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Night in Casablanca*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Boys from Syracuse*, *War and Peace* and so on; tragedy, such as *Dr Faustus*, *Hamlet*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Lolita*, *Carmen*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Anna Karenina* and so on; and rebirth, including such works as *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Crime and Punishment*, *The Secret Garden*, *Per Gynt* and so on.

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CHAPTER 3

What Is Creativity?

Abstract On the basis of understanding the journey that an idea takes, this chapter will look to examine the nature of creativity itself in this process. Referencing anecdotal experiences and case studies from the StoryLab International Film Development Research Network workshops, this chapter will explore how patterns—personal prejudicial patterns, thought patterns, social patterns, patterns learned in schools, patterns learned in higher education and patterns emerging from peer pressure—limit creative acts and creativity. The chapter will then go on to explore ways of breaking patterns of thinking in order to come to an understanding of how creativity works in the practice of developing original, and personally relevant, film ideas. The role of play, courage, gullibility and humility will be central to this discussion, as will be the paradoxical need to place creativity within the context of an established language of film.

Keywords StoryLab • Creativity • Play • Ideas • Originality • Voice

INTRODUCTION

On the basis of understanding the journey that an idea takes, this chapter will look to examine the nature of creativity itself in this process. By citing examples from nature, illustrated with experiments done on apes in the 1960s, through classic scientific examples, such as Archimedes's Eureka moment or Copernicus's re-synthesis of past knowledge, then on to artistic

examples ranging from the United Colors of Benetton advertising campaigns in the 1980s to Cezanne's approach to shape and perspective, before finally looking at some film examples, ranging from Lumière to Godard and from Flaherty to Bresson, we will seek to come to a specific practical understanding of what is meant by a creative act and creativity, and look at the role that play (like children's play) and poetry (in the broad sense) have in the creative process.

Referencing anecdotal experiences and case studies from the StoryLab International Film Development Research Network workshops, this chapter will explore how patterns—personal prejudicial patterns, thought patterns, social patterns, patterns learned in schools, patterns learned in higher education and patterns emerging from peer pressure—limit creative acts and creativity. The chapter will then go on to explore ways of breaking patterns of thinking in order to come to an understanding how creativity works in the practice of developing original, and personally relevant, film ideas. The role of play, courage, gullibility and humility will be central to this discussion, as will be the paradoxical need to place creativity within the context of an established language of film.

The Creative Act

"Be creative" is a common mantra of our time. To be considered to be creative is in itself an aspiration, particularly amongst the young, who see creativity as an essential quality of a person on an upward career trajectory. Perhaps this is imbedded in the increased emphasis in government and its agencies' discourse which highlight the importance of a creative economy in an increasingly competitive world. And there is no doubt that for mature economies the creative sectors, and the creative elements of more traditional industrial sectors, play an ever increasing role in contributing to a nation's wealth. The fear is that any economy which does not have strong creative elements at the heart of its wealth generating activities will eventually fall behind those that do. To simply mass produce products is no longer an option in a world where there is an endless supply of cheap labour in poorer countries. Whether involved in the manufacturing of aircraft engines, or the growing of fruit, creativity and innovation are now considered critical components of any industrial or commercial strategy. Looking more specifically at the creative sector, creative industries in the United Kingdom contributed 5.6% of gross value added (GVA) to the UK economy in 2016, of which the film sector alone accounted for 0.9%

(DCMS 2017). By comparison, UK agriculture contributed 0.51% GVA to the UK economy in 2015 (ONS 2015). Creative industries, of course, includes the digital sector, where it is clear that creativity has been the driving force of technological change that has impacted a number of cultural industries, including film.

No wonder, then, that the higher education sector has seen an explosion, in particular during the 1990s, in providing education for those expanding creative industries, film included. While the old guard in the film industry bemoaned the dumbing down of film training, whether right or wrong, a new generation of creative entrepreneurs started flooding the creative industries sector to the point where over 70% of people working in these sectors are now self employed.[1] Creativity and innovation have led to the rapid expansion of new hierarchies which are still threatening the old institutional order of what used to be one film industry, but can only now be increasingly described as several film industries. We have seen this in music, publishing and film. New ways of consuming music, new ways of publishing books and new ways of distributing films have pluralised the content available to audiences, even if our consumption habits still tend to be dominated by the popular works.[2] In this context, young people in particular became acutely aware of the fact that creativity was an essential quality being sought by employers, clients and commissioners.

As a consequence of this, and coinciding with the introduction in the UK, by way of a contextual example, of a competitive environment for higher education institutions increasingly interacting with students as consumers, educational institutions quickly became aware of the need to sell creativity almost as a commodity, but certainly as a quality that could be bestowed. Many course titles, promotional leaflet, assignment briefs and assessment criteria would use the term 'creative' and 'creativity' and students would often be advised and guided as to how a particular course would help them to become 'creative'. However, there seems to be an innate contradiction in the idea of creativity and the conforming to a zeitgeist of demands from society. What does it actually mean to 'be creative'? What is 'creativity' and how can it be assessed? What do I, as a creative practitioner, actually have to do to be 'creative'? In any case, why is it important that I 'be creative'? Why all this pressure to come up with 'creative' solutions?

Perhaps because of the centrality of creative abilities being a separating factor in many people's definition of what separates us from other animal species, considerable academic and scientific research has been undertaken

in the study of creativity. Physicists, cognitive psychologists and educationalists are but a few examples of disciplines where understanding the nature of creativity can form an integral part of solving research problems. The work of Koestler (1964), Sternberg (1999) and Bohm (2004) provide examples of the breadth and depth of the work being undertaken to understand the nature and relevance of creativity and this discourse on creativity goes back a long time; even Aristotle across his seminal works Poetics (1996) and Metaphysics (1998) touched on, in all but name, issues of creativity. We are not here going to contribute new thoughts or ideas to this rich theoretical and scientific literature on creativity, but seek to note some commonalities between the creative discourse and the scientific discourse. We are concerned with gaining new insights into the practical application of creativity in narrative filmmaking in which an engagement with the autoethnographic and the ethnomediagraphic should provide the primary method for assimilating this new knowledge.

We have already touched on the underlying motivations for why we need to create and perhaps it is not surprising that at that level, as we discussed, there is little difference between the artists and the scientist:

> [I]n a creative act of perception, one first becomes aware (generally non verbally) of a new set of relevant differences, and one begins to feel out or otherwise to note a new set of similarities, which do not come merely from past knowledge, either in the same field or in a different field. This leads to a new order, which then gives rise to a hierarchy of new orders, that constitutes a set of new kinds of structure. The whole process tends to form harmonious and unified totalities, felt to be beautiful, as well as capable of moving those who understand them in a profoundly stirring way.
>
> (Bohm 2004, p. 20)

Would it then be a surprise if the underlying creative act does not differ in its fundamental qualities? We are trying to understand the act itself as a means to informing how we may act, creatively, as we endeavour to give palpable shape to our fragile ideas and notions. So what is a creative act?

It may be tempting to think that only human beings can be creative. This is, in fact, not the case. Koestler (1964, p. 101) recounts a famous behavioural experiment undertaken in 1914 with apes in captivity by the German Psychologist Wolfgang Köhler:

> Nueva, a young female chimpanzee, was tested 3 days after her arrival (11th March 1914). She had not yet made the acquaintance of the other animals

but remained isolated in a cage. A little stick is introduced into her cage; she scrapes the ground with it, pushes the banana skins together in a heap, then carelessly drops the stick at a distance of about three quarters of a metre from the bars. Ten minutes later, fruit is placed outside the cage beyond her reach. She grasps at it, vainly of course, and then begins the characteristic complaint of the chimpanzee: she thrusts both lips – especially the lower – forward, for a couple of inches, gazes imploringly at the observer, utters whimpering sounds, and finally flings herself on the ground on her back – a gesture most eloquent of despair, which may be observed on other occasions as well. Thus between lamentations and entreaties, some time passes, until – about 7 minutes after the fruit has been exhibited to her – she suddenly casts a look at the stick, ceases her moaning, seizes the stick, stretches it out of the cage, and succeeds, though somewhat clumsily, in drawing the banana within arm's length.

This is a behavioural pattern many may recognise when failing to solve a simple problem: this emotional journey from frustration through anger to depression. But this emotional journey led to a creative act. First of all, Nueva solved a problem. She was trying to overcome a hurdle to achieve something she wanted to achieve. Necessity, in the form of hunger, drove her forward, but there was a failure to achieve those ambitions. The array of emotions brought about by this failure is a strikingly similar array of emotions our StoryLab participants mentioned when we were discussing what would happen if they were prevented from creating: frustration, anger, depression. Nueva tried her best to obey the necessity and did so by following the usual actions that an ape would naturally do to reach a banana. What became clear from the observation of the actions of Nueva, was that something happened in her mind that allowed her to solve her problem.

What is the relationship with a banana and a casual stick? None, on the surface. Yet Nueva the ape was observed linking the two. Bananas are for eating and sticks are sticks, perhaps for climbing (in itself a result of a creative act at some point) and for scratching. Ostensibly, the banana and the stick are not related. However, something happened to the way Nueva was thinking in that she started to associate the two. The pattern of thinking related to eating and the pattern of thinking related sticks were being brought together in a new pattern of thinking that embraced both these objects. A new paradigm that would enable Nueva to solve her problem had been born resulting, in this case, in a new application using existing objects.

Thinking of this example, we can immediately start thinking of many other examples of animals combining patterns of thinking that enable them to come up with new patterns of thinking to solve problems. While their necessity may revolve around hunger for food, this does not diminish the fact that they have had to undertake creative acts. Think of the raven deliberately putting nuts on a road so that passing cars and trucks may break them open; for what does a nut have to do with cars? To bring these two separate mental paradigms together is a creative act. In fact, the study of animal behaviour and evolution is extensive, as it is recognised that being able to break patterns of behaviour is critical to survival of a species.[3] The most successful animals are the ones who are most consciously innovating—the most successful of which is the human being, whether we value human success as of benefit to the rest of nature or not—while other animals may engage in innovative behaviour more unconsciously. Conversely, where we see species who struggle to innovate, they depend much more on scale of numbers and random mutations for change and survival. Ants, for example, can sometimes enter into circles of death in which that persistent following of scent leads whole colonies into a spiral in which the ants march in an inwardly spiralling circle to a mass stampede which leads to mass death. They are unable to break the pattern of their thinking and behaviour to correct or deal with a problem.

Archimedes of Syracuse (c287–c212 BC) was one of the great Greek mathematicians, physicists, inventors and astrologers. He was well known for his exclamation "Eureka!" While well known, too, for the innovations around developing the screw and using mirrors to create heat weapons, it is perhaps for his Archimedes principle that he is best known. At the heart of this discovery lies a simple creative act. King Hiero II of Syracuse had commissioned a new solid gold crown from his jeweller and on receipt of the crown was suspicious that it was not solid gold, as promised. He asked Archimedes to find out if it was solid gold, without melting the crown down. In other words, he could not in any way dismantle the crown. Archimedes pondered this for some time. In fact, one could imagine him lying in his bath contemplating this and other problems preoccupying his mind that needed solving. One day, he arose from his bath and was drying himself when he noticed that the water level was below the grease marks. Questions arose in his mind about that difference and quickly he linked it to the idea of volume of what was in the bath. He hurriedly concocted an experiment which involved him submerging the gold crown into water and measuring the displaced water volume. He realised that the volume of

the water being displaced was indeed the volume of the irregularly shaped crown. By then weighing the crown, he was able to calculate its density. The story goes that he was so excited about his discovery that he rushed out of the house without any clothes on shouting: "Eureka! Eureka!"[4] As it turned out, the jeweller had indeed mixed silver into the gold and tried to cheat the king. We don't know what happened to the jeweller.

What has the gold content of a crown got to do with the dirty water of a bath? A gold crown is a valuable, ritualistic, ornament with symbolic purposes consisting of a precious metal. Having a bath belongs to a completely different compartment in one's life and consists of dirty water, cleaning oneself and so on. The patterns of associations and thinking have no tangible or even conceptual connection. Yet as Archimedes got out of the bath he was, in a moment, able to connect two unrelated aspects of his life by breaking the associative and thought based barriers that separated the two issues. In the breaking of these patterns, he was able to come up with a new association, a new thought pattern, a new paradigm. That moment involves a creative act.

In 1982, Luciano Benetton, of the Italian clothing empire, Benetton, hired the photographer, Oliviero Toscani, to embark on a new advertising campaign that was to last for more than a decade. The resultant campaigns were both innovative and controversial and certainly succeeded in getting Benetton's brand noticed. The Real Life[5] campaign in 1992 provided graphic examples of creative acts at work: a grainy image of three Middle Eastern women in black, seated against a crumbling wall looking mournfully down at a corpse under a white sheet, blood streaming along the ground from underneath the corpse towards us; Latin American children, somewhere between five and eight years old, working in an open-air brick factory, one lifting a single heavy brick, another pushing a small wheelbarrow with two large bricks, with adults working in the background; a semi naked three-year-old South Asian girl, face and body covered in soot and dust, sits in the rubble of a collapsed building clutching her white doll; a drift of pigs scavenging on a rubbish dump; an empty electric chair in a shabby bare room. Whether these images succeeded in advancing sales or not, not withstanding the ethics involved, they certainly succeeded in raising brand awareness through a mixture of controversy and admiration.[6] However, whichever way we look at this, creative acts were at the heart of what was produced.

The images used by Toscani and Benetton in the Real Life campaign were in themselves not unusual. We were used to seeing these images in

the newspaper and on television. In fact, every day we would see images of war, suffering and the struggles of those less fortunate than ourselves. These kind of images belonged to an associative paradigm of news and current affairs. Conventions and ethical frameworks had evolved to allow these images to enter our private spaces via designated platforms, such as television news and newspapers. (Indeed, to arrive at this stage for the news and current affairs paradigm itself involved separate creative acts of innovation.) The paradigm of advertising was built around ideals: ideal people, using ideal products and services to build ideal lives. The imagery of the associative paradigm related to the advertising world was beautiful, uncontroversial and aspiring. These worlds were about how we wanted to be and how we wanted to live. In fact, it could be argued that it was in the interest of a consumer driven market economy to ensure that the aspirational paradigm spoke to people's dreams and was not contaminated by transgressions that might challenge consumers' warm feelings about spending money on aspirational goods and services. In other words, the world of news and current affairs and the world of advertising belonged to completely different paradigms. Toscani, being creative, decided to bring these two unrelated paradigms together into a new paradigm, a new way of seeing Benetton, indeed a new way of seeing advertising, perhaps even a new and provocative way of seeing ourselves and our aspirations and their relationship to suffering. By breaking established conventions and expectations through the breaking of patterns of thinking and association, Toscani engaged in a series of creative acts.

Whether it be Copernicus bringing old Pythagorean calculations from 1500 years before him to his contemporary astronomical observations to redefine the motion of celestial bodies, Newton relating the fall of an apple to abstract ideas on forces acting on the mass of matter, or whether it be Picasso combining ancient two dimensional African art with his naturalistic three dimensional European arts heritage to invent a new paradigm of cubism, or whether it be Flaherty combining a Hollywood narrative aesthetic to an anthropological methodology, this breaking of barriers between patterns of thinking, patterns of association and patterns of perception lies at the heart of the creative act.

However, we should not only associate the creative act as being confined to the preserve of geniuses engaged with grand solutions to epic problems; for the creative act permeates all aspects of our lives and we are all—to greater or lesser extents—creative. Mundane examples such as: using a knife in the absence of a screwdriver to solve a DIY problem; in the

absence of a step ladder, taking advantage of a nearby stool; in the absence of a piece of paper, writing down a memo on the back of one's hand; or, before the advent of torch lights on mobile phones, people using the screen light as a torch in dark situations. More dramatic emergency moments often lead to creative acts, such as: taking off one's shirt to use as a bandage to cover a bleeding wound; tying bedsheets together to create an ad hoc rope to escape a burning building; using a Bic biro as a catheter to aid in the breathing of someone who is choking. While these examples might have become normative behaviour over time, and therefore not considered creative, at one point they were very creative acts. They all involved breaking associations and patterns of thinking in relation to unrelated objects or contexts. A problem needed a solution which could only be solved through an act that could break down existing thinking, perception, association or understanding. In that sense, the creative act can be instinctual or intuitive, which we shall touch on later, and the actor is not necessarily conscious of it being creative. It is also apparent how having the ability to act creatively, can be a matter of life and death.

It is worth dwelling very briefly on the issue of survival. We have referred to the fact that human beings are phenomenally successful as a species; so successful we are destroying and killing off many of our fellow animals and habitats in the process. Unlike many other species, our ability to be creative, particularly in moments of crisis, has enabled us to negotiate considerable health, environmental and climate challenges in the short time we have existed as *Homo sapiens sapiens.* Few other animals, within a single species, can both live in the Sahara desert and in the Arctic, live entirely from the sea or from land and negotiate the impact of almost total deforestation, fight off wild animals and tame some of them. Our ability to break patterns of thinking and association to deal with problems is considerable and embedded in our nature. Some individuals and some cultures are perhaps better at this than others and there is an argument to suggest that too much creativity, when unethically or randomly applied, can do immense damage. It is not suggested here that to be creative is necessarily a good thing, or even a desirable thing. Many people actively seek not to be creative; for example in pursuit of enlightenment and wisdom. Here the profound power and beauty of repetition becomes important; the discipline involved in focusing one's mind, or repeating actions in themselves becomes a gateway to new insights and new associations:

> Is it for singing always the same song that the nightingale is so admired? (Bresson 1977, p. 63)

The idea of the creative act and creativity presents us with a double edged sword, as do continuity and repetition. The acts that emerge from our necessities and somethings do not wholly rely on the disruptive qualities of creativity, but also on our ability to provide continuity through repetition (and by inference, imitation). The creative act enables us to assert our individuality in the face of challenges and opportunities and to survive as discrete entities through problem solving. Not just the survival of us as individuals, but the survival of a society, a culture or a language. Continuity and repetition, conversely, enable us to let go of our individuality and allow it to be subsumed into an immutable pattern of tradition, ritual culture and transcendent language. Creative acts cannot happen in the absence of continuity and repetition, as they need these conformed patterns to react against, just as conformity will eventually lead to death, if not continually renewed through the regeneration that disruptive creativity can provide. We shall return to these themes when discussing story and narrative.

The creative act, therefore, has a number of key ingredients: the underlying motivations; problems and obstacles; the creative act involving a breaking of thought and associative patterns and barriers to create a new relationship between previously unrelated elements; and a resolution in the form of a new solution, relationship or paradigm. (Note how closely these stages resemble the stages in a classical narrative.) There is a magical moment in which a spark, so to speak, leaps between two separately charged thought entities and makes a new connection. Eureka!

Transcending Patterns of Thinking

We often consider children to be creative. We may even from time to time lament the passing of our own youthful fresh eyed world view. Indeed, much of what we were aiming to do in the StoryLab workshops was exactly that: a return to youthful playfulness only available through innocence, with the benefit of the experience only available through effort and time. When asked about why children may be considered more creative than adults, the term that continually emerged from our workshops was that children lack 'conformity'; in other words, that children have yet to be conditioned into social behaviours, normative patterns of thinking, common aspirations and cultural conformities. Very young children can, for example, not distinguish between what is theirs and what is someone else's property; everything belongs to one mass and distinctions, differences and

fixed patterns of non-primal associations are yet to be formed. We are familiar with anecdotal experiences of children associating with, and talking to, imaginary friends, which they often can't distinguish from real life. Their imaginations are alive with a world of possibilities and these possibilities are often unconstrained by laws of physics, social conventions and cultural interpretations. Anything can happen and everything does happen.[7] The young child playfully navigates these boundless worlds without care for conventions or expectations.

Indeed spiritualist mediums and psychics also talk about a similar state of mind as being essential to perceiving the worlds and forces at work that transcend the explicable cause and effect of the material world. The medium Mavis Pittilla, for example, explains in the film Reunion (Knudsen 1995) that the key skill of someone who is mediumistic, or is able to make the most of their psychic abilities, is their ability to transcend distinctions between imagination and the real, and between fact and fiction. As a consequence, the spiritualist medium and the psychic do not make judgements on the imagery emerging in their mind, but simply speak of what they see. Though we probably are all psychic in varying degrees, we often think of children as being particularly psychic because their observations can at times be uncharacteristically wise, disturbingly uncanny or surprisingly prophetic. I, probably like many parents, can remember statements and observations from my children when they were young that fall into these categories, but when I mention these to my children now that they are adults, they claim to have no knowledge of these observations or statements. It is not just children who can operate in these states. Jung talks in his essay Archaic Man (Jung 2001) about how hunter gatherer cultures who do not adhere to the logical cause and effect thinking patterns of Western minds associate and think in patterns that to that Western mind seem arbitrary and coincidental. In Western cultures, we use somewhat simplistic terms such as 'magical realism' to define literature from Africa and Latin America where the literary traditions have strong roots in the pre-colonial traditions in which cultures did not have hard and fast distinctions between the real and the imaginary and between fact and fiction. Everything in the mind's eyes and ears is equally real and equally true, no matter how we may try to explain it anthropologically or sociologically.

When a child tries to put a jam sandwich into a DVD player or picks up a stick and plays out a game in which the stick does not simply represent a gun but actually is a gun, we are seeing truly creative acts of behaviour in action. The child has not yet been taught that jam sandwiches are only for

putting in the mouth and belong to the associations of the world of food, whereas the DVD player needs a shiny DVD, which belongs to associations related to a world of entertainment and technology. But for the child, who has yet to be conditioned into these patterns of association and linkages, why can't the two go together? Their inquisitiveness is constantly leading them to ask: what happens if…? And why can't a stick also be a gun? A child can be as emotionally terrified by standing in front of another child—or even worse, an authoritative adult—who is threatening to kill them by shooting the stick, as they can be terrified by a real gun. The free association across boundaries, real or imagined, the freedom to link unrelated things, the act of playing out stories that both live in the imagination and reality, simultaneously and directly impact on feelings and emotions, are all creative acts.[8] We look admiringly at children as they play. And play is helping children to physically, mentally and emotionally develop critical understanding and knowledge that is going to be crucial for their survival and wellbeing in an often hostile and dangerous world and to successfully integrate into cohesive social units and cultures.

Play can lead children into serious trouble, of course, and we see tragic examples of this all the time. We therefore keep a very close eye on them and while we, on the one hand admire the creativity of children, from day one we start an increasingly comprehensive process of ensuring that children as quickly as possible conform to society's patterns of thinking and behaviour. From our home life to the public efforts to teach children through all the various stages of education, we commence a rigorously systematic process of educating our children (Fig. 3.1).

All sorts of fears and motivations fuel the lengths to which we will go to educate our children. From the instinctual fears and motivations related

EDUCATION

DEVELOPMENT

HOUSE

HOUSE
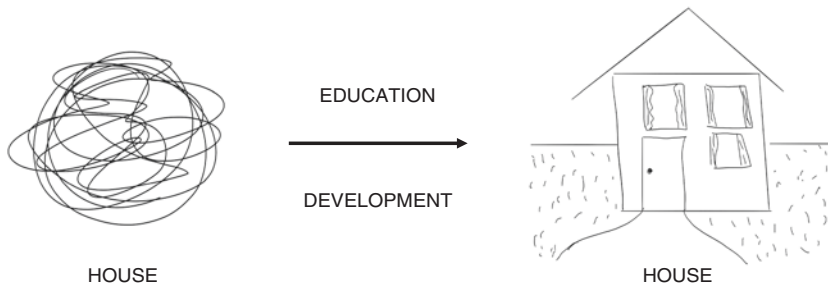
Fig. 3.1 Simulated illustration of a child's drawing

to socio-biological drives influencing their behaviours, such as sex, to ensuring that our children are fully included in the society and culture around them. We are fearful about the 'bad' people out there in the complex world and through a constant barrage of stories about the dangers that may be encountered—from nursery rhymes to horror movies—children are increasingly led to conform as they grow into adulthood. At some point, they themselves become the main drivers of this tendency to conform, concerned about peer acceptance and praise from adults. This narrowing into behavioural and creative conformity is also evident in how children engage with art, such as drawing:

> Most children between the ages of about nine and eleven have a passion for realistic drawing. They become sharply critical of their childhood drawings and begin to draw certain favourite objects over and over again, attempting to perfect the image. Anything short of perfect realism may be regarded as failure.
>
> <div align="right">(Edwards 2001, p. 69)</div>

While the education of a child on the one hand is designed to enhance their knowledge and prepare them with the necessary skills to live in, and make the most of, a complex and dangerous world, paradoxically there is an epistemological conflict with the very nature of creativity itself. On the one hand we say to those in education that they must be creative, while on the other punishing them through such things as poor grades and critical feedback if they stray too far from the conventions and expectations—the zeitgeist—of the times. Examinations and tests seek to quantify knowledge and encourage growing people to articulate that knowledge in very particular ways. For a child or young adult who wants to please, or for a child or young adult who is trying to build self esteem and confidence, or for a child or young adult who is trying to make new friends and start relationships, to play with ideas and imagery presents a new set of dangers beyond those that society is trying to instil.[9]

When discussing the conforming of children we must also include the conforming forces at work in universities, art colleges and film schools. Those of us involved in film practice education try our best to include in the aims, objectives, assignment briefs and assessment criteria of our courses, an emphasis on creativity in the practice outcomes. The creativity mantra is endless and relentless, coming at our film students from government policies and statements, quasi governmental bodies, such as the British Film Institute, film and creative industry leaders, our teachers,

peers and audiences: "[Y]ou must be creative!" It is, of course, inevitable that in order to function in any society and culture there has to be a strong unifying component of conformity to values, patterns of thinking and associations. While higher education institutions, art colleges and film schools try their best to create environments in which creative students are encouraged to take risks and 'be creative' there must be an inevitable tension between institutional requirements, peer review and fashions and the need to be creative. From the literature referenced to the advice given, there is an unconscious tendency to attempt to standardise and rationalise creative actions into definable processes with their own laws and precedents. The plethora of screenwriting books available to students, from Field (1998) to Dancyger and Rush (2002), each trying to present a unique perspective, try to systematise the creative process of writing screenplays within frameworks of guidance, theoretical frameworks or just plain dos and don'ts. Each one, of course, insists on the pursuit of creativity being at the heart of their approach, but the tendency is to focus on the practical craft skills based on existing successful precedents.

No future can be shaped without an understanding of, and engagement with, the past and past practices. The most creative people, from Warhol[10] to Fassbinder[11] and from Picasso[12] to Akerman,[13] built their visionary practice on their respect for, and deep understanding of, past masters. As the traditional British saying goes: "[Y]oung men [and I assume women, too] reject their fathers and embrace their grandfathers". Education, formal or informal, can play a critical role in enabling the creative practitioner to engage with precedents as part of a journey into their own practice and a well designed course can go a long way to helping the creative person understand their links to the past.[14] The past, and past practices, can be both the springboard and the prison cell for the creative person. The very nature of creativity, that disruptive action of breaking existing patterns to develop new ones, needs convention and precedents as a necessary starting point, but the purpose of creativity is not to destroy what has gone before, but to continually evolve it. As such, a creative person's sense and understanding of what they are evolving is crucial and the power of creative action can then be deployed to a greater purpose. This sense of understanding where we are at, in an ongoing development of our culture, traditions, our language, our art, our craft and ourselves, is a crucial component of the creative act. Like our great cities, we are constantly breaking them up and renewing them in ways that make them useful and relevant to our current lives. And like these cities, our great art resonates with our

past and our heritage and points to the possibilities of the future, but is very much of the moment in the present; a process and a sentiment that very much preoccupied T.S. Eliot, who in his prose and poetry often dealt with decay and rebirth as part of creativity, such as in the first verse of his poem East Coker (Eliot 1959, p. 21) where he refers to houses that are "removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place/Is an open field".

The social pressures to conform brought about by family, society, education, heritage and traditions ultimately impact considerably on the personal experience of creating. These pressures crystallise into powerful inner forces brought about by peer pressure, personal prejudices and fear and can seriously inhibit creative endeavour. In screenwriting we often refer this as 'writer's block', a kind of paralysis that prevents a creative person finding ways of creating and expressing themselves. As we discussed in the previous chapter, such blockages can have serious consequences for a creative person's wellbeing and can end up becoming an unpassable Rubicon. Reflecting on what produces such a paralysis, we are led to the debilitating effects of doubt and fear.

Doubt about our ability. Doubt about the validity of what we are doing. Doubt about why we are creating in the first place. Doubt about the quality of what we have produced. Fear of failure. Fear of what our peers will think. Fear of not meeting family expectations. Fear of departing from dominant forms and approaches. Fear of not being in tune with fashions. Fear of exposing our inner feelings. Fears about the quality of what we are producing. Fear of being alone. While doubt and fear can provide a humbling context for creative exploration, in that doubt can lead to faith and fear can lead to courage, it is when we lack our ability to use the transformative elements of those strong feelings into faith in our work and courage in our actions that they become destructive. How do we overcome the fear of standing alone? How do we challenge the fear of being ridiculed by our peers? How do we confront the fear of standing up to our parents' expectations? How do we brush aside our fear of breaking cultural norms? How do we transcend our fear of being different? Indeed, how do we overcome our doubt to have faith in our intuitions and instincts? How do we challenge our doubt about the value of what we create? How do we confront the doubt that tells us we are no good at what we do? How do we brush aside the doubt that tells us that what we have produced is no good? How do we transcend the doubt that stops us from having faith in who we are and what we do?

Playing

Don't be afraid, just believe. (Mark 5:36)

Of all the qualities we possess that we must turn to in order to create, it is that of courage. A playing child has innocence and doesn't know that the result of some of their playing could lead them into harm's way. When they are very young, children don't care what their peers think, nor what their parents think, as they head straight into an imaginary game where they play with new notions, new imagery, new combinations of objects and new methods. They are not afraid of what society thinks or whether the work they are doing is any good or not. They are often worryingly fearless (though there are clearly some instinctual fears that kick in, in certain situations) and have few cares in the world. In later childhood, as we have discussed, they become more self conscious and aware of expectations, normative behaviour and socially acceptable qualities. And as we grow into adulthood, fear becomes a major component governing our creative lives. In a sense, therefore, in order to remain creative, we need to return to a semblance of childhood playfulness, with both the burden and benefit of education and experience, to allow our minds to enter into states where we can more freely allow new ideas to emerge. This takes courage: courage to question; courage to challenge; courage to stand up and be alone; courage to be humiliated; courage to believe; and in some circumstances, even courage to face death. Through this courage, there are the battling forces within us that on the one hand need to create, while on the other constantly tell us that "the idea is bad", or "has been done before", or "no one will like this" and so on, they are reconciled to create a still mind; a mind at peace with itself; a mind ready to imagine and create. A mind that is agitated is like the surface of agitated water, incapable of reflecting the stars, where as a still mind, like still water, can reflect the stars clearly.[15] Poets and composers also talk of this state of mind:

We get a new song […] when the words we want to use shoot up of themselves". (Orpingalik, cited in Burnshaw 1991, p. 53)

My ideas come as they will, I don't know how. (Mozart cited in ibid., p. 53)

Conscious writing can be the death of poetry. (Moore cited in ibid., p. 54)

There is a letting go and trusting of the unconscious movements of our feelings and emotions, and allowing the mind to play with imagery and language in ways that can easily be destroyed by conscious intervention. It takes courage to let go of the conventional thoughts and imagery ingrained in us by years of learning, to allow the unconscious to play with them intuitively, to allow that fragile notion, that fragile feeling, that fragile imagery to emerge from the back of our minds to gingerly find the light of day before being condemned by consciously driven criticism, doubt and fear. These limiting forces that we need to have courage to overcome do not simply take the form of external forces, but have become ingrained in our own psyche. Our own prejudices and opinions have in part been shaped by our fears and the process of being creative has to start with self examination when attempting to play; not an intellectual self examination, but a constant challenging by asking such questions as: What if …? Why not …? Who says so …?

This kind of letting go will at first seem frightening: the combination of imagery one has never seen before; or the association of several components that intellectually seem wrong; or a thought that your rational mind thinks of as absurd and you laugh involuntarily with a shudder at the ridiculousness of it; these are all as much to do with our own prejudices as with outside forces directly impinging on the evolution of our idea. Yet we need to work ourselves into a state of mind where we do not make judgements—they will come later—where our mental gullibility allows every image, every notion and every thought space to exist and start the process of association that will form the beginnings of a new idea. As well as the courage to let go of safe patterns and structures, we need the courage to be gullible. Gullibility is often thought of as a negative trait, a trait that leaves people vulnerable to manipulation and oppression. That may well be true in certain circumstances, but in the context of creativity, gullibility is an essential quality, for it is an indicator of an open mind. A gullible mind is ready to contemplate any possibility, no matter how implausible or ridiculous, and it is this very openness that allows a non judgemental space for new ideas to be nurtured. Whether listening to people's own personal stories as part of research for a factual film, or listening to our own imagination, a gullible open mind is much more likely to see new truths, new possibilities and new insights, than a judgemental mind pre determining what is good and bad, right and wrong, strong and weak, before an idea has had a chance to come into full being.

It is striking how closely aligned the imagination and the actual are. We tend to think of them as separate opposites: one real, the other unreal. As we have seen when discussing children, pre-industrial cultures and psychic mediums, that understanding of the two as separate opposites is perhaps driven by a highly rational dogma that dominates materialistic societies which, as many of the poets cited earlier in relation to poetry, can lead to a death of creativity. For many of us, the actions of a fictional character in a given imaginary story can have as much influence on our lives as the actions of a real person living an actual story in life. Conversely, the characters and stories that emerge in our mind's eye as filmmakers are living and real, have their own lives, stories and destinies and take on a life of their own, independent of us as creators. Often when playing with imagery in the StoryLab workshops, it would surprise participants how apparently randomly playing imaginatively with imagery led to contexts in which there was a striking similarity between a lived experience and that of an imaginary story. At times, imagery arrived at through a playful imaginative exercise can prove uncannily prophetic.[16] Quite often, however, we use the term imagination as a derogatory dismissal of someone else's experience: we will condemn someone's view of the world, or a particular incident, as imaginary; or will reduce someone's recounting of events as living just in their imagination; or will condemn someone for imagining things that are not true. There are, in fact, many instances where we lift up the draw bridge between the real world and the imaginary world with a differential dismissal, usually as a defence mechanism to protect existing perspectives, conventions and traditions from the invading army of imaginings.

One exercise undertaken during the StoryLab workshops was specifically designed to encourage non judgemental play. While this exercise can be conducted by an individual, or a couple of people, we conducted the exercise in a plenary group. One filmmaker participant would be asked, without any time for preparation or thought, to identify a particular mundane habit or regular pattern of activity in their lives. We would then write down, in bullet points, a simple generic imagery sequence describing those actions. The filmmaker participant would then be asked to identify a second banal habit or pattern from their lives which in their view had little or no connection to the first one identified. Likewise, a simple generic imagery sequence was written down in bullet points. Initially, the participant, and everyone else, would stare at these two parallel narrative sequences and see no connection, nor how one could play with them in a way that might lead to a story.

Ms X in Malaysia described one of these patterns as being the routine of preparing her children's clothes every morning, then eventually waking them up and preparing them for school. As an unrelated activity, she described the process of sitting down in front of her computer to try and write fiction. Ms Y in Colombia described how one routine for her was waking up in the morning and having a glass of water before sitting down in front of her computer to check emails. A second, parallel regular activity was to take the bus down to the coast a few miles away, where she would sit on the beach and look out to sea. In both Ms X's and Ms Y's cases, these were considered to be unrelated habits. At first we would play around with the question of what the obvious similarities and differences were. In Ms X's case: a female character confined to an apartment in both situations; a strong sense of absence came across in both cases, clothes for children, but no children; and a blank page on a computer screen, but no text. In the case of Ms Y: a strong connection was water, internally consumed water and externally enjoyed water; and a contrast emerged that related to confinement and freedom in that in one instance the imagery suggests confinement and the computer, via emails, is reaching out, while in the other the person leaves the flat and the city to meet with the infinite freedom of the sea. Interestingly, in both cases we arrived at thematic feelings early on. It was possible to identify an underlying feeling or emotion that emerged out of looking at these two unrelated patterns—feelings and emotions that neither Ms X nor Ms Y was conscious of, but which they nevertheless immediately recognised and chimed with.

By then starting with the process of playing—what if …?—we could playfully experiment. What if there was a connection between what Ms X's character was trying to write on her computer and unseen children whose clothes the character lays out in the morning? We then played with several possibilities, everyone chipping in their thoughts, but the decisions being made by Ms X. The only criteria for what was decided in terms of imagery was whether Ms X had an intuitive feeling that that imagery felt right. No judgement, no analysis, no background information, just pure imagery. What emerged within 20 minutes was a complete psychological thriller about a woman overwhelmed by delusion as she struggles to come to terms with the loss of a child. She has a morning routine that involves preparing the child for school and taking the child to the bus stop and, as it turned out, the child was actually killed in a road traffic accident. But is the world in which she is living real and how does this life potentially threaten her well being? The psychological thriller element related to the

fact that the character's behaviour became dangerous when someone would visit; someone she imagined was going to take her child, who we gradually realised was not there. Likewise, we started playing with Ms Y's unrelated habits by asking the question "what if …?" Picking up on the theme of confinement and freedom by playing with the notion of needing water both physically and spiritually. Very quickly, Ms Y was playing with the idea of a woman who has a skin condition—a thought that simply popped into her head, as if from nowhere—that means she cannot go out in daylight. She is confined to a flat where the curtains are constantly drawn. However, through the crack in one curtain she can just about see the sea in the distance. Her only access to the outside world is through the TV. When she hears that the local council has granted a private landowner rights to wall off part of the beach near where she lives, and that work is to commence immediately, she endeavours to visit the beach in question at night. What emerged from about 20 minutes of playing was a quasi-surrealistic story of a young woman with a critical skin condition, who has enjoyed the peaceful sea at night surrounded by building machinery, finds herself trapped on that beach as the sun is about to rise.

In both cases we started the process of introducing some narrative shape by identifying a premise—why are we coming into this story at this moment in time?—and a key turning point, or climax—where in the story is the key conflict or confrontation in which the theme of the story is most visible? (We shall return to these narrative notions later.) Both Ms X and Ms Y were surprised that these stories existed in them. They had never imagined these kinds of stories before and despite being slightly different to what they were used to creating, they felt a very strong bond to the stories, and that the stories were an inseparable part of them and spoke of thematic truths that resonated with their deepest 'somethings'. We were able to achieve this by taking them into a territory where they were allowed to play with imagery without having to rationalise any of their decisions. Some suggestions and combinations of associations didn't feel right, others did. They were encouraged to simply say the first thing that popped into their heads and they were encouraged to articulate that thought, image or notion and try to play with it before their rational minds were able to dismiss them as unsuitable. This freeing of the mind to allow it to operate in an irrational and non-judgemental way is crucial for the creative person who wants to articulate their deepest 'somethings'.

We have spoken of the importance of emotions and feelings in the creative process. In addition to driving us to action, they are the guide that

steers us towards what must be said and how we may want to say it. We feel something is right, we feel it is wrong, we feel good about something, or we feel uneasy. Before our rational mind emerges to intervene in the creative process—and there will be such a time—it is important to be able to trust that inner feeling or emotion and have the courage to be guided by it. All too often, a creative person will lose their nerve, hesitate, or suddenly withdraw from a thought or a notion, only to regret this later on when it is too late to change things. In the case of Ms X and Ms Y, they ended up telling stories with themes they admitted they would not normally have dared deal with. Had circumstances been different, expectations, conventions and the fear of revelation and subsequent humiliation would have steered them well away from the underlying themes of these stories and the narrative approaches that emerged. While elements of any story will have its roots in our life experiences, this does not mean they need be autobiographical. In the cases of Ms X, who is a Moslem mother of three children, and Ms Y, a young Christian woman at a stage where she is contemplating lifelong commitments, we see themes that are deeply personal, yet the details of the stories they told, while starting in autobiographical habits, quickly evolved into independent narratives whose detail was far removed from the actuality of the authors' lives.

Another way of starting the process of preparing the mind for playing with imagery is to start with the feeling or the emotion. Feelings of awe, love and longing, for example, or emotions of anger, fear and anxiety,[17] can be the pretexts for playing with imagery to develop a story. By starting to play with imagery that evokes the feelings or emotions, we may have the beginnings of a story. This imagery, fiction or factual, can then be developed through play to create sequences. Was there a different feeling or emotion prior to the current ones and how would they be portrayed in terms of imagined imagery? What happens if we move from one set of imagery to the next? What happens if we rub these two sets of images together and play with them? And so on.

Mr A in Colombia was feeling anxious and uneasy. Mr A's tendency was to intellectualise things, so he would immediately start discussing the metaphors of death, the ontological meaning of death and the problems of societal perceptions of death. He was trying to intellectualise his way to a story and was finding it hard to focus on playing with imagery. By redirecting the focus of the conversation back onto the feeling of anxiety and unease, and after a bit of gentle probing, Mr A finally revealed that a few years earlier he had been attacked and stabbed in the street by a man yielding a knife and

had been left on the street slowly bleeding to death. While lying in the street, and before he was rescued by paramedics, he went through several emotional states related to near death experiences. These were memories that clearly haunted him. We then started the process by considering the autobiographical image of a man slowly bleeding to death and its relationship to the anxiety related to facing death. Playfully, he was able to start imagining related imagery as he reflected on the changing state of his emotions as he lay there on the street. What emerged was a story, told in the narrative form of an animation, about a man transiting various emotional states as he progressed towards death, then to return again to life from the brink. Abstract in genre, he was able to shape a narrative that articulated a deeply felt experience and to put this into a form that he could share with others. In this case, the creative process also yielded a therapeutic outcome which helped him reconcile deep seated conflicting feelings which he had never really acknowledged or reconciled.

It is worth noting at this point that we have not distinguished between fact and fiction at this stage. I am suggesting that at the early ideation stage, as being discussed here, the issue of documentary imaginings or fictional imaginings should not be a consideration, as the argument is that we are trying to break down these distinctions at this stage in order to allow the mind to play creatively. The source of what might eventually become a documentary narrative that still resides in the 'somethings' as felt by the creator and the feelings and emotions that move the creator into creative action are the same. The early stage of creative invention should not be stifled by pre-determined conventions on what define genres, but the imagery that comes to mind should be imagery emerging from anywhere. Any of the case studies alluded to above could be developed into different genres, such as fiction, documentary, animation and so on. The story, as we shall discuss later, transcends narrative form and genre as it can take shape in many different contexts. When we therefore talk about the personal voice in filmmaking, the documentary genre is included in this notion.

We cannot, of course, remain innocent children forever swimming around in an indefinable pool of audiovisual imagery. If we want to engage others in our 'somethings', we will need to operate within archetypal, historical, social and cultural structures in order to create narrative forms which others can understand and be moved by. They will need to recognise what we are presenting to them and see themselves reflected in it. The various narrative forms have their overlapping languages that have evolved

over time and sit in the context of specific histories and cultures. (Shortly we shall examine a number of examples and in a later chapter discuss narrative structures in particular.) Cinematic language, though a young one, has, like any other language, developed its patterns of codes and meanings. As with other languages, such as the written word, there is a tension between the colloquial and poetic; the everyday normative language that closely follows established conventions and forms the basis of how people are taught that language in schools, for example, and the poetic language of poets. We are, of course, talking about a spectrum from the colloquial to the poetic; a spectrum that spans from cliché to the experimental. Put another way, this spectrum spans language use from where language is dying (cliché) to where it is being reborn (experiment). The poets, including the poets of cinema, play a vital role in keeping language fresh and alive by continually playing, creatively, with language, imagery and meanings thereby refreshing the colloquial. Even if we are speaking of the same rose, the same lover, the same piece of art, if we are not evolving our way of speaking of these things, our words, our imagery, our music and so on will become ossified in cliché, become devoid of emotional evocation and, therefore, die. The language we use to talk of these timeless experiences are constantly evolving, reflecting changing contexts and circumstances and responding to a need for all living things to die and be reborn. Paradoxically, as we have discussed earlier, there is also a need for continuity, repetition and mantra. There is some magical balance, as in nature, between decay and renewal, and as creative artists we need to, on the one hand, have the ability to challenge and question existing conventions and practices, while, on the other hand, be able to utilise and build on these very conventions and practices. Some may characterise this as a balance between chaos and order, I prefer to think of it as creative wisdom; a wisdom born out of a great humility in which we have the ability to, as Reinhold Niebuhr's famous prayer suggest we strive for (Reinhold Niebuhr cited in Kaplan 2002, p. 735), tell the difference between what we must have the courage to change and what we must have the serenity to accept.

Cinematic Imagery

The history of cinema is a very short one compared to that of other art forms. The form is so young that it is not so long ago that an individual filmmaker's career, such as Hitchcock's, could cover almost the entire

history of the form and the key transitions through significant narrative, aesthetic and technological transformations. From the silent era of the 1920s to the new American cinema of the 1970s, Hitchcock was part of expansive developments in the cinematic language. When exploring what a creative act might entail in terms of filmmaking, the simplest thing might be to look at some examples from the first half of cinema's history, as it is in these beginnings that we see some of the most radical developments of film language. The creative act, as we have been discussing, is taking place all the time in many different contexts. The languages of the forms in which we create are constantly transforming themselves as part of a process of survival and growth, and the codes of cinema—the imagery onto which we project and from which we extrapolate meaning—are no different. Some creative acts lead to immediate and tangible impacts, while other creative acts can be subtle and make an incremental contribution to the evolution of our given language form. Cinema is no different. We do, however, for obvious reasons perhaps, tend to focus our discourse on the more tangibly dramatic creative acts; the creative leaps that happen as a consequence of circumstances being ripe,[18] including audiences being ready to receive the innovations and their consequences. The following examples are meant to serve as illustrative examples only of creative acts— often a series of linked creative acts—that have helped transform the language of cinema and are not meant to be an in-depth discussion of the films.[19] The development of cinematic language and the development of the technological tools to articulate through this language are inextricably linked and it is worth acknowledging the considerable number of creative acts involved in the technological development of the medium. Indeed, many of the earliest pioneers of cinema were entrepreneurs and engineers and not artists, in the traditional sense of the word. Throughout the ongoing evolution of cinema, though, the symbiotic relationship between developments in technology and the artistic expression of the form have been intimately linked, from the advent of sound, through the introduction of colour, smaller cameras to, more recently, digital capture and dissemination. Here we shall briefly look at creative acts as they relate more specifically to the development of cinematic narrative codes.

Lumière Brothers: **Arrivée d'un Train à Perrache**

The Lumière brothers were, arguably,[20] the first to create what could be considered a film narrative with their film Employees Leaving The Lumière

Brother's Factory (Lumière 1895). While this was in itself a sensation at the time, *Arrivée d'un train à Perrache* (Lumière 1896) perhaps best illustrates a simple creative act that would truly indicate the power of cinema. Very early cinema was dominated by films based on single static wide shots of a scene, looking at the action as if on a stage, somewhat removed, as if a distant observer. As editing was yet to become a central part of cinematic storytelling, that static scene relied heavily on photographic practice at the time, as far as the visual aesthetic was concerned, and theatre, in relation to the action taking place within the frame. While movement was clearly a feature of the moving image, the simple act of watching people move across the screen was in itself very novel. However, a simple creative decision by the Lumière brothers in their second film broke with that early convention of theatrical distance. By making the creative decision to bring the camera closer to the action by placing it on the platform right next to the track, the Lumière brothers were able to make a film that would move us purely on the basis of sensation. So innovative and effective was it at the time that the first cinema goers would take evasive action—some even ran out of the cinema—as the train approached the platform on the screen. Even though this is so early in cinema history that it is hard to speak of conventions, habits or established cinematic language, there was enough of a convention and expectation for audiences to be surprised by creative artists making a work which broke with their expectations. In a decisive creative stroke, the Lumière brothers established the natural iconic relationship of verisimilitude between the signifier and the signified as one of the main ways film was going to communicate with its audiences. The angle of the camera, the composition, the movement within the frame and the sensual, all conspired to test that boundary between the real world and the photographed world. To reach this point, the Lumière brothers must have played with a number of notions and imaginings and asked themselves: What if …?

Fitzhamon: Rescued by Rover

Though the language of cinema was to advance rapidly in those very early years through the work of such creative inventors as George Mélièr—*A Trip to the Moon* (Mélièr 1902) being one example of an oeuvre covering over 200 films—an often overlooked example of a seminal film in which key creative acts advanced the language of film is that of British director, Lewin Fitzhamon. His film *Rescued by Rover* (1905) introduced the idea

of not only parallel editing, but elliptical editing into film for the first time. Until *Rescued by Rover*, most films used the camera essentially to capture theatrically staged scenes in one wide shot. The plot was then advanced one scene at a time in a linear fashion. This was soon followed by parallel editing, in which parallel scenes were introduced to create dramatic irony; creating emotional tension by showing the audience visual information that the hero is not privy to, such as a train approaching in the unseen distance while the hero is trying to free someone stuck to the track. In many respects *Rescued by Rover* followed that convention as such dramatic irony was also used. We, the audience, are witness to the snatching of the little baby from the pram by a drunk beggar woman, unbeknownst to the maid and her lover. We are also privy to where the beggar woman has taken the child and how the child is treated: the child has been taken to a poor part of town and is being held by the beggar woman, who can't stop drinking. Rover, the family Collie, sees how the maid and mother are distraught and jumps out the window of the house and sets off through the streets of the town in search of the girl. What is striking is how shot by shot, we follow Rover through the streets of the town. This kind of coverage in itself was unusual at this time and required creative thinking. Rover ends up by a river, swims across it and finds himself in the poor part of town where the streets are lined by terraced houses, in contrast to the detached houses on the other side of the river, from where he came. Rover enters every house, until he eventually finds one house where the young child is being held. A second creative innovation is how Fitzhamon retraces Rovers return to the house in exactly the opposite way to his journey out: every particular shot is the same, except this time Rover is running in the opposite direction within the shot. A third creative innovation is, after Rover's return to his home, where he persuades the father of the house to follow him out again, we do not see the whole return journey back to where Rover found the child; only fragments of it. Rover successfully leads the father to the beggar woman's house and the child is rescued.

We might consider this to be obvious in this day and age, because we are used to this kind of normative narrative editing. How the reverse sequential and elliptical work together to give us a narrative spacial relationship between key scenes and how these sequences were used to create dramatic engagement are considered colloquial now, even clichéd. Perhaps we have moved on again. But there was a time when this was verging on the experimental; at the very least, Fitzhamon and his team were playing with the imagery and breaking the static, largely theatrical,

narrative conventions of the time to create a poetic narrative. This series of creative decisions would have required courage and the eventual outcomes contributed to evolving the language of cinema.

Griffith: Birth of a Nation

While Fitzhamon's *Rescued by Rover* (1905) broke with the codes of narrative continuity, D. W. Griffith's controversial film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) went further by breaking codes and conventions in relation to the shot and its role in a scene. A film about two families on either side of the American civil war, the film caused considerable opposition and even riots because of its portrayal of black Americans and the Klu Klux Klan. Notwithstanding any moral qualms about the film,[21] Griffith made some creative decisions—creative acts—that led to innovations that would contribute to the language of cinema. Most films at this time were still covering a scene in a single wide shot; the action would play out in front of the camera, like a stage play, and the camera's role was to capture that scene. Griffith decided to play with a visual element that was already by now well established in photography: the portrait. He broke with the patterns of established convention in terms of our understanding of screen time and space by breaking up the scene into constituent components. A typical Griffith scene would consist of a wide establishing shot covering the totality of the scene space, followed by a closeup of the main character in the scene, then a reaction closeup of another character, back and forth as appropriate, finally to return to the same wide shot that established the scene. This would become a new typical pattern that would become so ingrained and established in the colloquial language of cinema that variations of it still dominate TV and cinema to this day. But in its time, the breaking down of these existing patterns of covering screen time and space and introducing a new association was a creative act whose play with cinematic imagery was poetic in nature.

Eisenstein: Battleship Potemkin

Eisenstein was not only an innovative director with a strong body of films behind him, including the seminal Battleship Potemkin (1925), but he and his contemporary, Lev Kuleshov, theoretically contemplated the role of editing, or montage, in film narrative. Kuleshov's famous montage experiments in which he would elicit vastly differing emotional responses

from exactly the same shots arranged in different sequences proved that cinema was not just about engaging with the drama of a scene unfolding in a defined physical space. Kuleshov's experiments and Eisenstein's films powerfully demonstrated the centrality of the indexical signs in cinema—that is, the power of association—in which what Eisenstein called the metric, the rhythmic, the tonal, the overtonal and the intellectual, combined to emotionally engage the audience in the narrative by creating a new kind of relationship to screen time and space.[22] Battleship Potemkin is the story of the mutiny that took place on the battleship in question in 1905. The iconic scene from the film, the massacre on the Odessa steps by advancing soldiers, epitomises the creative acts/decisions of Eisenstein that broke with conventional ways of depicting action. Unlike most other films of the time, the battle on the Odessa steps is a construct of montage; fragments of imagery rhythmically assembled to create a new sense of time and space, in which we engage in the plight of the victims at the hands of the oppressors, is entirely created from associative juxtapositions. This idea of not following the dramatic developments of a particular character or characters, but being moved by the broader associations, was a break from convention and involved creative decisions in which poetic play again helped advance the language of film. For the first time, artistic patterns normally associated with music found their way into film and helped create a new paradigm that we now take for granted.

Flaherty: Nanook of the North

Ironically, Flaherty is often considered the father of documentary film. Ironic, because the later codes that would shape our understanding of what makes a documentary—such as raw camera composition, crude movement and lighting, whole scene editing, talking to camera, interviews and so on—are not conventions Flaherty established and are ones he completely ignored. Not only was Flaherty a filmmaker, he was originally an anthropologist. The Hudson Bay Company of Canada hired him initially in 1914–15 to document Inuit life in the far north of Canada and as part of that project he ended up shooting a lot of film. Unfortunately for him, perhaps fortunately for cinema, all his footage was destroyed in a fire. It was this destruction that prompted the actions that would eventually lead to the creation of one of the most important films in cinema history: Nanook of the North (1922). Nanook of the North is the portrayal of an Inuit family in northern Canada that revolves around one fishing trip. The

series of creative decisions that Flaherty made that constitutes the poetic play and innovation of the film revolved around his ability to play and combine the actuality of his anthropology and the Hollywood aesthetic of the time. He lived and worked with real Inuit people in their real and natural environment just as an anthropologist would do. He then proceeded to introduce a host of American values and Hollywood aesthetics to this anthropological actuality: first, he cast a family with one child that lived as a nuclear family unit (very unusual for any native group to have so few children and live in nuclear family groups without contact to the extended family); second, he intervened in the authenticity of their lives for creative reasons, including having to teach his characters to hunt for seal in the traditional way and to cut an igloo in half to facilitate filming; third, he structured a narrative with all the ingredients of a classic film, including antagonists (in the form of nature and, more specifically, a storm), aims, obstacles, a clear climax sequence and a resolution; fourth, his carefully set up shot compositions, from big skies to intimate closeups, reflected the Hollywood aesthetic that was rapidly emerging at that time. By playfully combining these vastly different disciplines and contexts, which in fact reflected his own personal character makeup, he was able to break with established forms of filmmaking to create a new approach to film language that would have a profound impact on approaches to fiction and documentary genres.

Welles: War of the Worlds

Orson Welles's impact on cinema, in particular through his seminal films Citizen Kane (Welles 1941) and The Magnificent Ambersons (Welles 1942), was considerable. Often considered a maverick, his playful and inventive use of audio-visual imagery refreshed the cinematic language in ways that still seem innovative to this day. His playful use of depth of field, his brave multilayered compositions, his elliptical narrative leaps and the increased presence of the *mis en scene* as a narrative tool all involved creative acts and decisions in which conventions were challenged by new combinations of audio-visual ideas. It is clear that Welles brought some of his new thinking from theatre and radio, two media he had worked with prior to entering the cinematic world. Often overlooked are his innovations in film sound: for example in Citizen Kane, his use of train sounds in the opening scene to suggest an impending event; or the use of elliptical sound to make a nearly 20-year leap as Kane grows from a child to a young

adult in one cut. These were very innovative creative acts that were clearly evident in Welles pre-cinema work. His famous radio play, The War of the Worlds (Welles 1938), for example, an adaptation of H. G. Wells's 1898 novel of the same title (Wells 2017) provides an obvious example of creative acts. The story of The War of the Worlds concerns the invasion of Earth by Martians. Clearly a fiction story—in fact an early example of science fiction—but Welles decides to play with the idea of fact and fiction. What happens if …? Welles decided to tell the story in the narrative format of a live radio news programme: from the authoritative male anchor news caster to the actuality recordings, the codes that were being used were all borrowed from codes we would associate with news. Traditional dramas would have followed clear fictional codes related to controlled dialogue in carefully progressing scenes with appropriate character development and performance styles that would have allowed audiences to clearly identify characters as fictional. By bringing together two relatively unrelated sets of codes, Welles was able to generate an incredible reaction in his audience. Some estimates—though this is disputed—suggest that up to 300,000 San Franciscans panicked and started leaving the city in order to escape from the invading Martians. The associative power of audio visual codes should clearly never be under estimated and carries with it questions of responsibility that have, on the one hand, dogged debates about actuality and authenticity, in television in particular, from observational documentaries to wildlife films,[23] while on the other hand leading to the development over time of entire new genres from docu-dramas and mocumentaries. Welles, like Flaherty, was creative through a series of creative acts that refreshed the language of cinema by introducing new associative relationships between cinematic codes that had remained largely separate.

Dali and Buñuel: Un Chien Andalou

It would be hard to discuss examples of creative acts in cinema without touching on the surrealist movement of the 1920s and 1930s. Salvador Dali, the most prominent surrealist in painting, and Louis Buñuel, to become one of the most prominent surrealists in cinema, joined forces to create what is a seminal example of cinematic surrealism: *Un Chien Andalou* (Buñuel and Dali 1929). Freudian ideas about the subconscious were gaining prominence at the time and the surrealist movement particularly picked up on the Freudian notions of the unconscious and the apparent free associations of dreams.[24] While on the surface, dream narratives

might seem completely free flowing in association, Freud would contend that underlying the unpredictable imagery of dreams were various repressions and complexes, such as the Oedipus complex, that governed the logic of these dreams. The same would be the case for surrealistic narratives. Interpreting them, therefore, remains a very difficult task that perhaps can ultimately only reveal subjective observations. The creative act, for instance, of combining the cutting open of an eye with a razor blade and the emergence of ants from that eye—for, what do ants have to do with eyes?—is surreal because that associative combination of imagery, quite apart from being disturbing on a primal level, may lie outside our capacity in our own minds to allow the imagery to merge into a meaningful entity. Dali's and Buñuel's playing with combining deeply archetypal imagery in ways that had never been seen before was the result of creative acts. In the case of surrealism, however, we may argue that we are straying into territory where the balance between traditions and continuity of language of imagery has tipped towards that of disruptive creativity to a point where we, the audience, are starting to lose sufficient reference points for us to hold onto, in order to create meaning and emotional engagement. These balances are, of course, subjective, but there is no doubt that the playful creative acts made by Dali and Buñuel enriched the cinematic language and influenced the evolution of that language.[25]

Godard: Breathless

Jean Luc Godard's over 60-year and 126-film oeuvre points to an era of creative innovation in the field of politically inspired filmmaking, from his first feature film, Breathless (1960) to his most recent feature film, The Image Book (2018). Most of his films involved continual inventive creative acts. It is perhaps worth returning to his first feature film for an example of creative acts, in part because this film was, on the one hand, drawing inspiration from an established Hollywood aesthetic while, on the other hand, challenging some of the cinematic codes of that convention, to profoundly shape and influence French and European New Wave cinema. The jump cut, which is now a ubiquitous way of manipulating time and space in our film narratives, was in fact a direct consequence of Jean Luc Godard's creative playfulness. The dominant Hollywood aesthetic, and generally that of the rest of the western world, in relation to treating screen time and space, was based on 180 degree action lines, the sanctity of the fourth wall and the primacy of continuity editing; cinematic

patterns that had largely grown out of the work of D. W. Griffith (who himself had innovated his way to them). The traditional cinematic codes of editing were employed to give the illusion of continual unbroken time within a scene and the characters in the film would not acknowledge the fourth wall, that is, they would not acknowledge the presence of a camera and sound recorder. In Breathless, however, Godard decided to play: What if …? In one of the early scenes in the film, the main character is driving a stolen car along a country road near Paris playing with a gun he has stumbled upon in the glove compartment. He finds himself in a car rage feud with a couple of other people in a car he has over taken and ends up confronting them by the side of the road. It ends with him shooting the driver and running off. During the driving, Godard introduces his first jump cuts. A scene that would normally be shot and edited in such a way that the events would appear seamlessly continuous, such as by using point-of-view cut-aways to disguise the condensing of real time to screen time, was now a single continuous shot, trimmed in the middle. In other words, Godard simply cut a section out of the long continuous shot of his character driving and playing with the found gun and reassembles it, thereby having an obvious jump in time and action. Not only that, he has his main character look directly at camera and engage with his audience[26] thereby creating a somewhat Brechtian *verfremdungseffekt*.[27] A little later, the killing of his car rage victim is made more shocking by fragmenting, through jump cuts, the illusory relationship between perception of real time and continuity and that of screen time and space. The shots of the gun, on the one hand jumping through time, while on the other hand holding on it for an unnaturally lengthy time; the omission of the actual moment of shooting; and the actual impact on the victim, all come together to recreate a new sense of time and space built from fragments of illusionary continuity. To break the conventional way of covering a scene in terms of time and space in this way, in order to make us look afresh at what had been a fairly common action in Hollywood cinema of finding a gun and shooting someone, required a creative act that in turn, through the poetry of playing with language, has made a significant contribution to the development of the cinematic language.

Ozu: Tokyo Story

A small selection of filmmakers—Ozu, Bresson, Tarkovsky and Dreyer[28] most prominent amongst them—creatively played with the codes of film

to bring elements of transcendence and spirituality to the cinematic language of the form. In the case of Ozu, Zen Buddhism was to play a major role in his approach to visual composition, narrative structures, rhythm and the rigours of the mis en scene. Creative combinations of influences from Zen philosophy, haiku poetry and Buddhist inspired drawing and painting can be clearly seen in all his work, not least in one of his most acclaimed works, Tokyo Story (Ozu 1953). He had a number of unique approaches to filmmaking including: consistent camera positions which saw him stick rigorously to static camera angles—with no movement at all in nearly 50 films—that were always situated one third of the way up from the floor in relation to the main character's position in the scene; visual mis en scene compositions which prioritised the two dimensional graphic positioning of objects in a scene rather than the verisimilitude of the three dimensional—for example, the same bottle may appear consistently in the right side of the frame, even if cutting back and forth between two characters talking across that same bottle, whereas in conventional approaches to continuity, that same bottle would appear on different sides of the frame depending on who we were looking at; and by way of final example, his approach to following a Zen narrative structure—normality, disparity, normality/transcendence[29]which remains very different to that of the western-dominated three-act Aristotelian aim and obstacle-dominated classical structures. One of Ozu's creative acts, to perhaps specifically mention as an example would be his challenging of the 180-degree action-line convention that is at the heart of western understanding of screen space. Where the dominant normative approach to screen space stipulates, through precedent, that in order to allow the audience to orientate the spacial relationships between characters, the camera must remain on one side of an imaginary 180 degree line between the main action points (such as two characters talking). This way, when, for example, we come in to look at closeups of two characters speaking face to face, their eye lines in the closeups match to indicate that they are actually facing each other. If the line were crossed (which it sometimes does in a movement that helps orientate the audience to the change) it would look like they were talking to the back of each other's heads. Ozu chose to ignore this convention and poetically played with the idea of working the camera in a 360-degree space. The consequence was that characters sometimes looked like they were talking directly to camera whereas they were talking to each other, challenging the illusion of the fourth wall, and sometimes they looked like they were both facing the same direction, introducing two dimensional

graphic continuity, but not the continuity of the three-dimensional illusion.[30] While some filmmakers have, since Ozu, also challenged these conventions, the 180-degree convention still dominates approaches to working with screen space to this day.

Bresson: Diary of a Country Priest

Arguably one of the most inimitable and influential filmmakers,[31] Bresson's small oeuvre of 13 films demonstrates the development of a consistent approach to film language that, on the one hand, grew out of a respect for habit and repetition—"All those effects you can get from the repetition (of an image, of a sound)" (Bresson 1977, p. 26)—while on the other hand, his disruptive creativity broke with conventions in a number of different ways to create something new—"An old thing becomes new if you detach it from what usually surrounds it" (Bresson 1977, p. 26). Diary of a Country Priest (Bresson 1951) epitomises the new and original language Bresson developed in cinema. From his minimalist approach to all aspects of the mis en scene, to his unique approach to using dead pan, repetitive screen performances from his actors (or 'models', as he called them), Bresson introduced a cinematic rigour to filmmaking that gives his work unusually original transcendent qualities. Diary of a Country Priest is the story of a young priest assigned to a new rural parish where he is viewed with suspicion and distrust. Despite being increasingly invalided by encroaching cancer, he helps a woman who is the lady of a local mansion overcome crippling spiritual doubts. The telling of the film is in the form of a diary. One of the many creative acts made by Bresson concerns the aspects of the diary format itself. Bresson plays with the layering of information given to the audience in the way that he depicts the narrative of the film: in many instances, we see the hand of the priest writing in his notebook and recognise the actual words; simultaneously, we hear the priest narrate and the narration is a direct description of what we are seeing, including a repetition of the actual words we see being written on the paper of the notebook. We see this layering of information, the voice-over repeating in detail the banal visual information we are already seeing, not merely as a way of setting a scene, but as a continuous habitual presence and approach. He deploys this new approach to first person voice-over not just in the context of a written diary. In his film A Man Escaped (Bresson 1956) we see an example of Bresson deploying the voice-over similarly, where every detailed minor action of our main character's planning of his

escape, every sound that he hears and every image he sees, is repeated, layer like, in his first person voice-over. In his film, *Une Femme Douce* (Bresson 1969) he adds a twist: the narrator is the husband of the main character, a woman who has committed suicide and, as he recounts the last six months of their lives together, trying to work out why she did this, it becomes clear that his narration is at odds with what we are seeing of her experience and turns out to be unreliable. Here there is layering, too, but it becomes disturbingly detached from the audio visual. Conventions around first person voice-over until that time would typically have been built around the patterns of voice-over as a means of setting or contextualising a scene with some additional background information not available audio visually, complimenting the audio-visual action with inner reflexive thoughts or providing a body detached commentary on the action of the film, such as in Sunset Boulevard (Wilder 1950). Bresson detached the first person voice-over from these conventions to creatively re-associate the voice-over with the audio visual in a new and original way thereby creating strikingly emotive cinematic poetry.

These brief and simple cinematic examples of creativity at work—that is, the breaking of existing patterns of cinematic codes and conventions and the playful reassembling of these codes into a refreshed language that can help us see anew—are all examples from the fiction genre. However, we can apply the same principles to the documentary genre, even in the sense, as many have done already, of challenging the codes and conventions that entrench the perceived differences between the factual and fictional genres in terms of dichotomies such as fact and fiction, truth and imagination. The theoretical discourse on defining the documentary genre in the context of fiction, from New Challenges for Documentary (Rosenthal 1988) to Docufictions (Rhodes and Springer 2006), is extensive and it is not the intention to revisit that discussion here. Suffice to point out that much of the creative developments in both genres have revolved around challenging and renegotiating the boundaries between the two genres. Perhaps this is not surprising when we consider the fact that, in much of our real daily lives, many of our new ideas spring from exploring volatile boundaries such as science and religion, fake news versus real news, self knowledge and delusion, and reality and imagination.

Our propensity for hierarchies and taxonomies also leads to extensive attempts by psychologists in particular at rationalising the creative act and creativity.[32] But from a filmmaker's perspective, wishing to find that personal voice, conscious thinking of these issues, as we have discussed earlier,

will likely not lead to creative decisions and acts. Perhaps it is more useful for the creative practitioner to think in terms of their own instinctual and eccentric qualities that separate them from others and to develop the courage to allow those eccentricities to emerge and challenge our socio-cultural inclinations to want to fit in and be appreciated, recognised and loved by others around us. Every one of the filmmaker examples we briefly looked at took risks, just as Cézanne observed about his own painting, that "[a]t each touch I risk my life" (Bresson 1977, p. 70), and what these filmmakers produced were film languages that chimed with their eccentricities that eventually led to their distinctive way of seeing the world.

There is always the potential danger that we become clichés of ourselves; once creative and inventive, only to gradually start repeating these inventions without the continued renewal and growth that comes from creative play. Challenging our own codes and conventions—constantly renewing our languages as a consequence—while also anchoring those challenges within accessible patterns and traditions then becomes the wisdom required to create unique work.

Notes

1. See http://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/uk-creative-overview/facts-and-figures/employment-figures; accessed 25 June 2018.
2. See, for example, Chris Anderson's study (2007) of how digital technology has created unlimited demand and the consequent development of the long tail business models we see in such new companies as Amazon and Netflix.
3. See, for example, Reader and Laland (2003) and Laland (2017).
4. Greek for "I have found [it]".
5. See examples at https://innovativedesignhistory.wordpress.com/2014/04/08/the-united-colors-of-benetton-campaign-history/
6. See *The Independent*'s article, Benetton Sued Over Shock Ads, from the 22 January 1995, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/benetton-sued-over-shock-ads-1569139.html
7. See, for example, Łoziński 1995, in which he powerfully portrays the playful mind of a child quizzically interrogating old people about their experiences; or Okri 1992, where he tells the story of a child caught between the living and the dead and how for that child it is all the same world.
8. Perhaps it is no coincidence that children can be profoundly moved by stick animations in ways that most adults have lost the ability to be. We probably read and engage with animation in very different ways to that of

the child in that adults arguably have a Brechtian-like *verfremdungseffekt*-driven relationship to animations. See Willett (1964, p. 91).

9. Using the quote attributed to the founder of the Jesuit order, St Ignatius of Loyola, "[G]ive me the child until he is seven and I'll give you the man." Michael Apted created an extraordinary documentary series for UK's Granada Television entitled *Seven Up* (Apted 1964) in which he followed the lives of 14 British children as they grew up, interviewing them every seven years. When looking at later interviews, it was striking to see how much their lives resembled their vision of their futures when they were seven years old. Similar concerns, interests and preoccupations already established by the age of seven would permeate the rest of their lives. Speculations about whether this could be down to nature or nurture could be entered into, but for our purposes, let us assume that it was a bit of both.

10. On opening up Andy Warhol's New York apartment to the public following his death in 1987, it became apparent that the entirety of his personal art collection was dominated by antique art.

11. A significant innovator in German cinema during the 1970s and 1980s, Rainer Maria Fassbinder was heavily influenced by the work of the traditional melodrama movies of Douglas Sirk, for whom he had tremendous admiration and respect.

12. Picasso famously had an African period, in which he went back to explore the basics of two-dimensional art, which was to be so influential in the development of Cubism.

13. Though a feminist filmmaker, Chantal Akerman spent a lot of time studying the work of the inimitable Robert Bresson and was heavily influenced by him.

14. I had a very influential teacher of screenwriting at York University in Toronto called Ewan Cameron. I admired him and loved his classes. He was responsible for a life-changing discovery I made as a young student. One day he came into class and announced that he was departing from his normal plan, as he had seen a film the night before which he wanted to spend the lesson telling us about. He proceeded to talk about this film by a director I had never heard of before, and while I don't remember anything he said, the thing that I did pay attention to was the fact that his eyes were welling up with tears. He was crying; so moved was he by the experience of the film. I remember being so struck by this that I was determined to find out who this filmmaker was and watch the film. The filmmaker was Robert Bresson. While it would take me another 25 years to see the specific film he spoke about, *Une Femme Douce* (Bresson 1969), the introduction to Robert Bresson changed my cinematic life. The inspiration, the influence, the foundations that have shaped all my cinematic creative endeavours started with this discovery.

15. Paraphrasing Dr Dartey Kumordzi speaking in *Heart of Gold* (Knudsen 2006), in which he is comparing the minds of rural Ghanaians with urban Ghanaians in relation to their relationship to their spiritual heritage.

16. When making my film, *The Silent Accomplice* (Knudsen 2010), I cast a mother and her disabled son. All the actors in that film were playing themselves as characters in scenarios I had made up, so this was a real mother with a real disabled son. He was wheelchair bound, but could walk short distances with crutches. They were to appear at the end of the film. The disabled son would get up, get his crutches, walk a few yards to the end of the peer and look out at a fishing boat that had just left the picturesque harbour. As I was waking up on the morning of the shoot, I awoke to a thought: why don't I have the mother anoint her son with holy water from Lourdes in a cross on his forehead just before he gets out of his wheelchair? When I met her on set, I immediately suggested this to my actress, pointing out that she could have a little bottle of holy water from Lourdes that she would always carry with her in her handbag. She pointed out to me that she did actually have holy water, but didn't carry it in her handbag, but always had it in her pocket. I hadn't realised that she had ever been to Lourdes with her son and had brought back holy water that she always carried with her.

17. Later we shall explore the differences between feelings and emotions as they relate to storytelling.

18. See Koestler's (1964, p. 108) discussion of the importance of ripeness in creative invention.

19. For introductions to understanding the development of cinema, a good place to start would be *Film Art* (Bordwell and Thompson 1979) and *How to Read a Film* (Monaco 1981).

20. Arguably, Louis Le Prince's 1888 film *Roundhey Garden Scene* was the first narrative film.

21. While being profoundly disturbed by the messages emerging from Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935), it is hard not to simultaneously admire the power of the filmmaking; perhaps it is this dichotomy that is particularly troubling.

22. See Eisenstein (1969).

23. Welles was to return to this theme more explicitly in *F for Fake* (Welles 1973).

24. See Sigmund Freud's 1899 book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1997).

25. Amongst filmmakers directly influenced by surrealism were Hitchcock and Salvador Dali, who, of course, would work with Hitchcock years later on arguably Hitchcock's most influential film, *Vertigo* (1958).

26. The breaking of the fourth wall is something Godard returned to again and again, most strikingly in *Pierrot le Fou* (1965).

27. See John Willett (1964), for more on Brecht ideas on the *verfremdungseffekt* (distancing effect).
28. See Schrader's *Transcendental Style in Film* (Schrader 1972), in which he discusses the transcendental qualities of Ozu, Bresson and Dreyer.
29. See Knudsen (2010) for an in-depth discussion of this approach to Zen narrative structures. *Tokyo Story* (Ozu 1953) provides one of the best examples of this Zen approach to narrative in a narrative fiction film.
30. See a discussion of eyes and eye lines and their relationship to story in *Eyes and Narrative Perspectives on a Story* (Knudsen 2014).
31. Filmmakers as diverse as Scorsese, Ackerman, Kaurismaki, Ceylan, Godard, Truffault and many others cite Bresson as a significant influence and/or inspiration.
32. See, by way of example, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's *Implications of a Systems Perspective for the Study of Creativity* (Sternberg 1999, p. 313).

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Why Story?

Abstract This chapter will look at why we want to tell stories. Why are stories important? Indeed, why are they necessary? What is their relationship to feelings, emotions and the intellect? As storytellers, what is it we are trying to achieve by communicating from one human to another? This is such a vast subject that we shall briefly touch on it in the sense of understanding the relationship between lived experience and story structures.

Keywords Story • Narrative • Feelings • Emotions • Story resonance • Transcendental realism

Introduction

This chapter will look at why we want to tell stories. Why are stories important? Indeed, why are they necessary? What is their relationship to feelings, emotions and the intellect? As storytellers, what is it we are trying to achieve by communicating from one human to another? This is such a vast subject that we shall briefly touch on it in the sense of understanding the relationship between lived experience and story structures.

Life as Story

Everywhere I turn, story emerges as the dominant way in which we understand and communicate about ourselves and the world around us. Whether in business, politics, science, religion or art, the story is central to not only grappling with the concepts of what we are doing in these fields, but communicating the essence of what is going on. Story is at the heart of how we teach and learn; it facilitates an understanding of complex philosophical concepts; it helps us understand where we come from and where we're going; it helps us understand our family and social relationships; it helps us share and articulate what we are feeling. And so on. From the child acting out fantasies in play, to the elderly neighbour telling the story of what is happening to another neighbour; from the teenager tweeting about a new discovery, to the miner recounting a working situation over a pint of beer; from the sales person trying to sell a service, to the company brand trying to engage customers in the unique selling point of a product; from the mystic trying to engage us in understanding our spiritual origins, to the scientist trying to engage us in our material origins——we are all engaged in telling stories. Every picture tells a thousand stories, so the saying goes, and even if there isn't an overt story in a picture—such as in abstract art—we more often than not try to conjure up a story emanating from the work. When Einstein tried to explain his theory of relativity and gravity, he resorted to telling very visual stories that embodied those ideas.[1] Jesus, Muhammad and Buddha embraced the telling of stories as their core strategy for helping people understand their relationship to the infinite; actually, they themselves are meta-heroes at the centre of prototypical stories that stretch back through archetypal structures to the very core of our beings. Indeed, it is hard to conceptualise a human world without story, and perhaps therefore not a surprise that Muriel Rukeyser went further:

> The Universe is made of stories, not of atoms.
>
> (Rukeyser 1971, p. 111)

It seems that story is hard wired into our core makeup as people and that it would be impossible to extricate it. Why might it be that we relate so fundamentally to story? What is it about story that so engages us and moves us?

Although much work has been done to examine these questions from Aristotle to *Russian Formalism*,[2] we will not focus here on examining

some of the theoretical issues which are comprehensively discussed elsewhere,[3] we will instead focus on some of the practical implications for filmmaking around story and narrative as they relate to creativity. First of all it might be useful to briefly describe what I mean by story and narrative and for this purpose it may also be useful to take a structuralist view of the differences between the two, as it provides clear cut parameters within which to discuss practice. Structuralist theory argues:

> [E]ach narrative has two parts: a story (*histoire*), the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse (*discours*), that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated.
>
> (Chatman 1978, p. 19)

Extrapolating on this, we see that the story is the component that has no form and cannot be physically seen, heard or touched because it exists as a dream, a memory, a thought, an idea or simply as a feeling. The story can be never ending, vague, jumbled, or quite explicit, or as a clear memory, for example, and in many ways this notion of story relates back to our earlier discussion about the presence of 'somethings' that need to be expressed. While the story may feel very real and present for you and I as creators, full of events, characters and situational contexts, it only really comes into existence in the telling. In other words, once we start to organise the story into a series of tangible events, characters and settings—the discourse—these tangible arrangements, find their way into physical forms—even if those physical forms are ephemeral, such as a live performance—and become narratives. This structuralist perspective can be very instrumental in liberating a filmmaker, or any storyteller, for it allows us to understand how a story, prototypical, archetypal or not, may be retold in many different narrative forms and contexts. Even if, for example, the filmmaker revisits the same story, they could tell that same story in many different forms, such as an animation, a live action drama, a documentary, a game and so on.

Let us now return to the question of why stories and narratives have such a hold on us. Perhaps the best place to start is to remind ourselves of how we engage with children to teach them about life. If we want a child to understand something, the most effective way is to engage them in a set of experiences, either through engaging with a story through play, such as in a game, or through the emotional engagement with a character in a

story over which they have no direct control, such as in a narrative film. In the story with which they are engaging—and the narrative form doesn't really matter, as they could be playing a computer game or playing out a story with sticks and stones in the woods or they could be watching a stick animation, a live action docudrama or a theatrical performance—they recognise themselves and can identify with the emotional situation because it relates to their direct experience. The child might recognise a character, a situation, a series of events, decisions that have been or need to be made and the consequences of actions. In the case of film, an engagement through iconic verisimilitude, indexical association and symbolic meaning, in that priority, enables the child's empathy and imagination to be stimulated in ways that allow them to see themselves in the story.

In other words, the story to which the child is being taken by the narrative is for all intents and purposes their story. Quite apart from the meanings and associations evoked, structurally the narrative will contain many of the elements of their lives. The child's life—our lives, for are we much different to that child?—is, in itself a story and a narrative. The older that child becomes, the more rich that story is with actual life experience. But there are primal experiences—some would say legacy experiences from before our lifetimes—which we will instinctively recognise in archetypal stories, characters and situations, even in certain types of sound, rhythms and imagery. Children will respond to certain characters, situations and imagery based on archetypal experiences, even if they have had no direct experience, and while we as adults may filter some of these out— even repress them—with the intervention of actual experience and reason, the archetypal presences remain powerful forces in our engagement with stories through narratives.

I am actually a protagonist in my own story expressed as a narrative of tangible life experiences. While my story may have begun well before I was born, and will continue well after I am gone, my narrative has a beginning, a middle and an end. As a protagonist, I have deep seeded aims, some unconscious, some spiritual, some biological, some socio-cultural, but on the whole my conscious aims are associated with me as an individual and could, for example, be related to wanting to seek meaning and understanding. There are obstacles and antagonists in my life, struggles and hurdles that I must overcome, key turning points and climaxes (perhaps when looking back there was one major turning point?). Many other characters enter my life and some of them are important characters in my narrative life journey. Though my narrative may have a main story driving it,

my life is also made of tributary stories and sub-plots. There are dramatic ironies in my narrative: the things I know; the things I don't know; the things I know I don't know; and the things I don't know that I don't know. If I step back and look at my narrative from a critical and reflexive distance—in fact, this gets easier the older I get and it becomes possible to get a good view of my story unfolding—I can see all of these components clearly. What a beautiful sight it must be for an old man or an old woman to look back at their story and narrative. In my experience, it is rare to hear the elderly be bitter about their life stories, no matter what horrors they had to go through, as there is an inevitable beauty and truth to it.

A story and a narrative need not be solely about an individual human being, though we probably tend to anthropomorphise stories about animals, objects and ideas. Indeed, the idea of story and narrative could equally be applied to a family, an ethnic group or a people, as central protagonists in which meta-heroes become representative of these larger groupings. Given all of this, is it therefore any wonder that the narratives we create imitate these very fundamental structures with which we are so intimately familiar?

FEELINGS, EMOTIONS AND STORY

Central to our starting point in exploring the nature of story and narrative will be Stanley Burnshaw's seminal observation that the whole body is involved in the creation of poetry: "Poetry begins with the body and ends with the body […] So immense are the possible combinations of external forces alone that it seems ludicrous to discuss them in terms of what we now know or in time hope to know. The more promising course has been to learn our bodies and then from within to look outward" (Burnshaw 1991, p. 10). As lives are different, and people have different priorities which means that they engage with their life narratives in different ways, so it may be reasonable to assume that the narratives we create would reflect these variations. Popular interpretations of Darwinian theory[4] contends that we are primarily concerned with survival and when that is combined with post-modernist interpretations of relationships as predominantly revolving around power relationships, it immediately starts to become apparent why the dominant classical narrative forms tend to be built around themes that ultimately are associated with survival and succession. Combine this with the fact that most of the time, we are concerned with material survival and wellbeing; we are protecting ourselves, our families

and our societies from enemies, we are seeing off invaders and undesirables; we are accumulating wealth; we are preoccupied with procreation and raising children; we are overseeing the growth, welfare and transition of our children to adult life; we are passing power and privilege from one generation to another; and we are dealing constantly with leadership succession at all levels, which could have particular impacts on our individual lives. We may also be engaged in meta-existential struggles related to the survival of our culture, our ethnicity, our identity and our nation and be worried about how we protect our values from one generation to the next. Indeed, we may be preoccupied with narratives of survival of the human species itself, such as in apocalyptic concerns, both factual and fictional. These are complex and serious threats to our material existence that dominate most of our lives. The most popular classical prototypical stories with which we engage, from children's fairy tale animations to hyper realistic blockbuster disaster movies or horror movies, and all the more subtle variations in between, including romantic comedies and gritty urban dramas, evoke the same underlying emotions that relate to our engagement with the material world. These are ultimately emotions that are self-assertive in nature in that they are about us asserting our identities, and our egos, as separate human beings, with distinguishable careers, diverse cultures and independent clans and nations.

These "self assertive emotions" (Koestler 1964, pp. 10–14) are, on a physiological level, adrenergic responses in our bodies to external stimuli; usually threats. Normally associated with fight or flight contexts, these are emotions connected to the release of adrenaline[5] in our bodies and include: fear, anger, sexual stimulation, anxiety and jealousy. What makes these emotions self-assertive is that they help us reassert our ego and our individuality by separating us out from our surroundings: we are in a ready state to run or defend ourselves, to assert our authority over others, to laugh at other's misfortune, to impose our superiority over others, to identify ourselves as distinguishable from others and our surroundings. We are driven to take action, or to react, to be awake and alert, ready to survive and, if possible, to propagate and procreate.

But we are, however, not always concerned with survival and succession. In fact, some people have dedicated their lives to engaging differently with life. Their narrative journey is not focused on survival and succession, at least not in the materialist sense, but on self-sacrifice and transcendence. Many religious and mystical practices focus on developing an ability to submit our individuality, including our ego, to a greater whole

and to sacrifice wealth, power and social standing for a greater ideal. Rather than separating out and asserting our own individuality, it is about sacrificing that individuality, allowing it to become subsumed, assimilated and embedded in a whole that is greater than ourselves. Rather than self-assertive, this is a participatory state that physiologically involves a cholinergic[6] response in the body.[7] These participatory feelings, far from making us alert and ready for action/reaction, make us relax and become vulnerable and may include feelings of awe, love, grief, longing and sorrow. We are moved to participate, to sacrifice, to forego our ego and to submit, and the narrative journey that this implies is very different to that driven by the self-assertive emotions.

Whilst most people tend not to distinguish between feelings and emotions,[8] I do so here in order to suggest that differing attitudes to, and engagement with, life precipitates differing attitudes and relationships to narrative. As storytellers, there are themes embedded in our stories that may best be told through an engagement with our audience's self-assertive emotions, themes that may best be told engaging through our audience's participatory feelings, or perhaps a bit of both. Because the values of western-influenced societies are dominated by materialist-based world views, we clearly see a tendency for narratives that address our self-assertive emotions to dominate; whereas in societies where values tend to be less dominated by materialist world views——such as indigenous societies or societies with persistently strong spiritual and mystical traditions—we see more examples of transcendental narratives that engage audiences through their participatory feelings.[9]

Thinking of the whole seamless body, mind and soul as one entity that is both involved in the creating of a story and in the engaging in a story, contrasting approaches to storytelling emerge: on the one hand what I call a psychological realism in which our emotions are engaged through our sympathetic nervous system, while on the other what I call a transcendental realism in which our feelings are engaged through our para-sympathetic nervous system. While the self-assertive emotions will tend to lead to action, the participatory feelings will lean towards inaction. The fight or flight notion embedded in psychological realism suggests movement, while the accepting notion inherent in transcendental realism leans towards stillness. The action and movement of psychological realism suggests externalisation of phenomena, whereas the inaction and stillness of transcendental realism suggests internalisation of phenomena. Consequently, we can start to contrast the material and the immaterial as being contrasting components of

how a narrative is constructed. Key elements of how we think of the material and the immaterial involve our understanding of the world in terms of coincidence and cause and effect. The material world defined by palpable, externalised actions and movements is conceptualised by hierarchies of cause and effects. "Causality, so understood," as Jung said (1961, p. 149), "is one of our most sacred dogmas […] We are now surrounded by a world that is obedient to rational law." This is in contrast to a transcendental realism perspective, where coincidence plays an important role in narratives. Cause and effect, the underlying world view that drives such narrative development, terms such as character motivation, plot, emotional arcs and decision moments, ultimately work in a paradigm of psychology, a science that attempts to understand human behaviour rationally. These underlying world views are instrumental in the dominant approaches to developing narratives in western cinema and provide the framework on which we determine quality and relevance. Contrast this with so called coincidence, an underlying world view that embraces the irrational and inexplicable, mainly through the paradigm of the experiential, finding expression in such narrative concepts as shifting states, cyclical and repetitive narrative arcs, key moments of departure and key moments of return.

While we are all made up of elements of both of these paradigms, it is evident from the dominant stories of western cultures that we are particularly preoccupied with stories of survival and succession; not just stories of the survival and succession of individual lives, but also in relation to the survival and succession of a culture, a people, an ideology, individual's rights, an organisation, our sanity or even survival and succession as it relates to animals or the natural world. In all of these scenarios, a protagonist, of one kind or another, is attempting to assert themselves by setting off to achieve aims, in the face of at times seemingly insurmountable obstacles, that are often associated with protection and saving. These narrative journeys, embedded in psychological realism involving action, movement, externalisation, material agents and, crucially, cause and effect, will usually involve some kind of ultimate change. The transcendental narrative, conversely, usually involves no change. Often protagonists have no aims, in the psychological sense, and the underlying themes of the stories will be internalised. Inaction and stillness, both within the frame and in the overall narrative arc, will lie at the heart of the narrative strategy and coincidental characterisations, events and imagery will often be acceptable narrative approaches in ways that would not be possible within the paradigm of psychological realism.

Where the psychologically realist narrative seeks to engage us through the causal relationships between characters and scenes, the transcendental narrative seeks to engage us in characters and events for their own sake: links between characters, actions and events can be irrational or even inexplicable. Where the psychologically realist film is dealing with palpable change as a consequence of externalised actions and reactions, the transcendental narrative, through its predominant engagement with stillness, inaction and internalisation, is usually concerned with changing perceptions and understandings that come from a transcendent relationship with the immutable, the timeless and the inevitable. One way of looking at this is to think of the experience of a transcendental narrative as being one in which the subject-observer relationship is broken down into a spiritual whole, whereas the experience of a psychological narrative is one in which the subject-observer dichotomy is reaffirmed.

Classical and Transcendental Narratives

D.T.Suzuki tells a traditional Zen Buddhist story about a Zen master recounting how he came to understand what Zen Buddhism was about (1996, p. 240). One of the very few to discuss the transcendental qualities in film is the American filmmaker, Paul Schrader, who tells exactly the same story in *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* (1972, p. 38):

When I began to study Zen, mountains were mountains; when I thought I understood Zen, mountains were not mountains; but when I came to full knowledge of Zen, mountains were again mountains.

On the basis of this thinking, Schrader extrapolated an approach to narrative structure in Ozu's work—in particular Ozu's universally acclaimed masterpiece, *Tokyo Story* (1953)—that I believe can be applied to all transcendental narratives and involves the idea of shifting states from "the everyday" (ibid, p. 39), through "disparity" (ibid, p. 42) to "stasis"(ibid, p. 49) in which nothing has materially changed except that our relationship to the story has changed to one of a transcendental relationship with the immutable. That mundane normality of the everyday changes into a disunity with the surrounding environment where the cracks reveal complexities, only to return to where we first started and transcend it.[10] When we look at selected works from across the world, we discover that there are

many seminal examples of transcendental realism at work, from both the fiction and the documentary genre: Kiarostami's 10 (2002), Łozinki's *Anything Can Happen* (1995), Dvortsevoy's *Bread Day* (2001) and *In The Dark* (2004), Varda's *The Gleaners and I* (2000), Kassakovsky's *Hush!* (2003), Erice's *Quince Tree Sun* (1992), Saless's *Still Life* (1974), Ceylan's *Uzak* (2004), Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979) and several of my own films, including *Brannigan's March* (2004), *Heart of Gold* (2006), *The Silent Accomplice* (2010), *Vainilla Chip* (2009) and *The Raven on the Jetty* (2015). These films lean heavily towards the transcendental in their narrative structures—normality, disparity, normality/transcendence—and possess many of the qualities we associate with transcendental narratives, such as stillness, inaction, mysticism, internalisation, coincidence and a tendency for the material aspects of the stories not to change. It is not in the storyteller's interest to have you seated upright on the edge of your seat, adrenaline pumping through your heart, but to have you relaxed, more meditatively engaged in the story in a participatory manner, where you lose yourself, give yourself to the story as it unfolds through the narrative.

Because the classical narrative, rooted in the paradigm of psychological realism, is so ubiquitous, we are inundated with examples from Hollywood to Bollywood and from Nollywood to Kumawood. Hollywood has, of course, set the global agenda in terms of approaches to the classical narrative. From animations such as *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) and *Coco* (2017), to extreme action adventures such as *Armageddon* (1998), to more subtle variants like *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) and *Silence* (2016), we see the consistent ingredients of what we expect of a classical narrative: usually a three act structure with key components such as a protagonist with aims, obstacles and antagonists, a number of turning points, culminating in a climax, a resolution, psychological character motivation, emotional story arc and, importantly, some kind of material change. We expect to see action and reaction, what we commonly refer to as drama, elements of the story externalised, usually around material aspects of life, movement within the frame and in the narrative arc of the story and, critically, that this fits within the causal pattern that can, largely speaking, be rationalised. To varying degrees, these approaches to narrative are aimed at having you seated on the edge of your seat, anxious, fearful, sexually aroused, angry and engaged in wondering what's going to happen next or how things are going to pan out. You are, in effect, ready for fight or flight and asserting your individuality in that process. Is it any wonder that the strategies for generating narrative structures that can engage these

emotions in you are very similar to the narrative structures used by games designers and theme park designers? From a business perspective, the characters and the stories that thrive within the classical structures can therefore easily be transposed from one classically driven form to another, maximising business opportunities.

The study of this classical narrative paradigm has been extensively studied, not least by Aristotle (1996), and prominent story and screenplay theorists and educators, such as McKee (1999) and Field (1998), have extensively analysed the classical narrative and presented screenwriting solutions for screenwriters. Even where authors such as Vogler (2007) have included alternative perspectives in their analyses of screen narrative strategies involving myths and mythology, particularly influenced by Joseph Campbell (1993), there is still a tendency to operate clearly within the classical narrative paradigm. Others[11] have sought to look at screen narrative strategies from a variety of perspectives, and while they present some useful and provocative approaches, they all have in common an underlying assumption:

> It's a rational proposition of ours that everything has a natural and perceptible cause. We are convinced of this. […] There is no legitimate place in our world for invisible, arbitrary and so called supernatural forces.
>
> (Jung 1961, p. 149)

Consider what Robert Bresson thought to be a limitation in our approach to filmmaking:

> Cinema films controlled by intelligence, going no further […] No psychology (of the kind which discovers only what it can explain).
>
> (Bresson 1977, pp. 24, 39)

Because our discourse finds it very difficult to theorise approaches to storytelling that are more irrational and intuitive, how do we achieve what Blake suggests (2004, p. 15)? In these few lines from Blake, we see a powerful expression of the magical and mystical space where story, through a transformation of the everyday, can take us:

> To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour.

We are considering these questions not from the perspective of film-making or screenwriting craft, but as a means of understanding how a number of underlying paradigms might impact on our approach to narrative craft when seeking to discover and develop a personal voice in film-making. Whether our story leans towards the psychological or whether it leans towards the transcendental is not meant to be considered as rules in a narrative practice or discourse, but as aids to help us understand our own attitude and engagement with the life-story-narrative interaction and how it might impact on the stories we want to tell and how we want to tell them. For the very act of discussing these questions intellectually and rationally inevitably reduces these issues to an incomplete truth defined by the limitations of a dichotomous gaze.

Prototypical Stories

Perhaps it was inevitable that the European cultures' millennia old nurturing of the sanctity of the individual human being in social, cultural, scientific and religious contexts would lead to the strongly narcissistic tendencies we see today; exemplified in the veracious ways in which social media are used and the rhetoric of the voices of the opinion formers of society's zeitgeist, extolling identity politics, the rights of individuals, and the mantra of limitless opportunity and choice: you can be whoever you want, do whatever you want, achieve whatever you want and you have a given right to be happy. Many feel that the state and society around them have a duty to them as an individual. The inference from this is that the stories we want to tell, the way we want to tell them and the underlying themes we want to deal with are, or should be, entirely individualistically determined, except shaped by socio-cultural factors that are often interpreted within the political paradigm of the politics of oppression. Yet in Europe the overwhelming transdisciplinary history of religions, philosophies, sciences and arts suggests a preoccupation with trying to understand the deeper undercurrents that drive our perceptions and actions. We see from Plato to Tielhard de Chardin, from Darwin to Sheldrake and from Sophocles to Freud, a small selection of examples of influential thinkers and how they have sought to understand some of these undercurrents. Above all, the prototypical stories that transcend time, place and culture, and that are continually being retold in ever changing narrative forms, tell us very clearly that there are underlying currents in our storytelling that go well beyond the individual person, a specific society or even a specific time. These are stories that emerge

through us and are reconstructed by our imagination and the narrative tools available to us in a particular context and time.

Whether it be the fairytales of H.C.Andersen, the plays of Shakespeare, Walt Disney animations, the cinema of Spielberg and Kubrick, or the literature of Joyce and Rowling, the popularity and longevity of their work is, to a large extent, derived from the creative ways in which they have (re)created prototypical stories into contemporary works that embellish the underlying themes of the stories with contemporary idioms and context. This is not the same as adaptation, where specific works have been consciously interpreted, transposed or translated, but differs from adaptation in the sense that much of this connection to, and inspiration from, the prototypical is often completely unconscious and has, paradoxically, roots into both the personal and universal. As discussed earlier, many of these prototypical stories are concerned with themes of survival and succession and take the form of classical narratives and variations of classical narratives. We see attempts by authors such as Booker (2004) and Black (2013) to illustrate how prototypical stories in different forms and time periods reflect and shine a light on the human psyche and its evolution. As discussed earlier, Booker proposes the notion that prototypical stories can be broken down into seven types and illustrates how these seven types of prototypical stories manifest themselves in various narrative forms from classical plays to contemporary cinema; Black, on the other hand, proposes that we can best understand the evolution of the human psyche through story and proposes some exciting ways of not distinguishing between fact, fiction and imagination. Coupled with the idea of archetypes introduced by Jung (1972) and meta-heroes, as discussed by Campbell (1993), we can discern that the idea of prototypical stories also stretches into character and character motivation. Particularly in popular movies, we see archetypal characters more clearly drawn out—from hero to trickster, from spirit to rebirth and father to mother—but in more subtle variations, too, we see how the archetypal character finds his or her way unconsciously, and sometimes consciously, into most of the stories we tell.

If these powerful undercurrents unconsciously drive my storytelling, how do I find my story and my voice? Indeed, what is mine in these stories? Thinking of J.F.Kennedy's challenge to the American people set out in his inauguration speech in January 1961 when he told them "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country", perhaps it may be appropriate to question whether asking such a question of ourselves is, indeed, the right question to ask. Should we be asking a

question that would in essence encourage us to be narcissistic? Should we instead be asking something along the lines of not how these stories can be shaped to become mine, but what I have to offer to bring these stories into life?

I will often look at a story I have created—particularly one that I am pleased with—and ask myself, "Did I really create that? Me? How is that possible? Where did that come from?" The inference being that when a story really works, it has qualities that I was not conscious of creating and is bestowed with a life independent of me. Independent in the sense that I didn't know I had the capacity, the knowledge, the information, the skills, the creativity to create it, and that somehow I entered into a zone where something magical happened and a story started to emerge. Not unlike the birth of a child, I gave birth to my story. My DNA and my rearing of that child will, of course, mean that I have made an individual contribution to his or her creation, and while they will have some of my and my partner's hereditary qualities and our socio-cultural values imbedded in them, they are a separate being with a separate will and a separate destiny. I look at that child and marvel and not for one minute do I think that that child was my creation: I contributed to an inevitable process by giving of myself what I had to offer——rich, poor, talented, not talented, privileged, oppressed, able bodied, disabled, black, white, extroverted, introverted or whatever—and, instinctively, sacrificed everything.

Once you look at stories in this way, you can explore different kinds of relationships to creativity and storytelling. Instead of asking, "what do I want to say?" you might ask, "what needs to be said?" Instead of asking "what do I want to make a film about?" you might ask, "what story wants me to make a film?" Instead of asking, "why do I have no ideas?", you might ask, "what do I do to open up to the stories around me?" Instead of asking yourself, "why would anyone be interested in what I have to say?" you might ask yourself, "does it really matter whether I——my ego——has something to say or not?" Instead of simply asking, "why me?" why not answer confidently, "because this story chose me and expects me to deliver".

The implication of this approach is that stories, even the same underlying prototypical stories, seek to find expression through a diverse range of people, contexts and cultures. As we discussed earlier, storytellers are moved to tell stories; it's a necessity and can't be helped. We feel our way forward, one step at a time, constant trial and error, as we find the right expression for our story. We bring our character and our values into play

as we give form to the formless and gradually a work emerges. This sense of being possessed is a theme many creative people talk of, and in Leonard Cohen's evocative lyrics we often see that he engages with this sense of being possessed and controlled by love:

[…] I am not the one who loves – It's love that chooses me.

(Cohen 2001)

Story and Narrative Resonance

As we discussed earlier, creativity is by its very nature disruptive. It is the narrative stage of the storytelling process that involves creative disruption; in other words, the stage where the intangible story takes form in material time and space. While teaching, learning and training can lead us to useful craft skills, as well as help us understand contexts and semiotical codes, the disruptive nature of the creative act must, by definition, counteract the move towards stasis. Without such a tendency, clichés are born, meanings wane and language dies. The creative act, and the consequent innovation, is therefore inevitably the result of——sometimes informed——trial and error. Like a child, we try things without being sure if it will work or what others will think of it. A very few of these experiments may work, or yield some new insight or new solution that then impacts on something else we may be doing. However, most of these experiments fall by the wayside and are forgotten. This is no bad thing; for the process of trial and error, the process of experimenting, is continually yielding new insights, improving our skill levels, teaching us things about our narrative form and, indeed, could be an important way in which we come to see and understand the story that needs to be told.

Experimentation can, rather like an improvising musician finding their way to a melody, be an important method of discovering a story, coming to understand a story or shaping a story. Not only on an individual level, but perhaps also at the meta-cultural level, we could look at experimentation from sectors of society as an important way in which the culture as a whole, and within that culture the cultural codes and narrative forms themselves, are refreshed. The fact that some people in society feel compelled to make experimental films few understand, and which might be forgotten relatively quickly, involve creative people who are as important for a culture as creative acts are important for an individual filmmaker. A culture that has no one who experiments or operates at the edges of the

mainstream is like an individual who never experiments or never allows themselves to creatively play with their narrative form. The culture of such a society would slowly die.

As naturally creative beings, we will also use emerging technologies experimentally to seek new ways of telling our stories. From scratching film stock to mashing multiple digital images, and from telling stories backwards to telling stories interactively, we are continually experimenting. It is also striking how young people instinctively want to play with imagery; until the education system curtails these instincts by frightening them with assessments and career expectations. Interestingly, however, many young people are instinctively drawn to making similar experiments with the form as their grandparents and great grandparents, and where education can be useful is to teach these students that they need not reinvent the wheel, but that they need to evolve it.

We shall not here look at these many different narrative forms and narrative genres, suffice to acknowledge that we see storytelling drive virtually all our engagement with new film technology and its interactions with sister narrative forms. Interactive computer games are dominated by overt prototypical stories being told in classical interactive narratives. Immersive three-dimensional experiences seek to give us a complete experience of a story, often as a means to be more directly 'in someone else's shoes' as their story unfolds. As we move into the theme park immersion experience, the stories almost become theatrical in their narrative form, or we may mix media in an effort to continually keep the language fresh to facilitate the stimulation of, in particular, adrenal responses in our audiences.

No moving image entertainment sector has been as consistently successful over many decades of stimulating our adrenal responses as Hollywood. If we look at the sustainable success of Hollywood as an industry, it is to a large extent because there has been a far reaching hinterland of experimental filmmakers, independent filmmakers and independent creative entrepreneurs within the United States, as well as fringe talents in the form of European and Asian directors and artists whose homeland work is decidedly non-commercial in the Hollywood sense, who have been able to be absorbed into the mainstream industry, thereby constantly refreshing its language and practices. Unlike the film industries of many smaller countries with centralised film structures, Hollywood has been built on creative migration that sees talent on the fringes find pathways into the mainstream. Whatever one's opinion of the ever narrowing classical blockbuster narratives of contemporary Hollywood, when we

then look across at the newer phenomena of online platforms, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and other similar platforms, we see evidence of innovation in mainstream storytelling that used to be evident in the Hollywood sector. We see the same phenomena in the computer software industry where the large behemoth institutions such as Google, Apple and Microsoft regularly buy small start up companies who have been experimenting with new ideas and concepts on the fringes of the industry. Without this hinterland of passionate creative people playing around through trial and error, these mainstream industries that rely on continual innovation would be in trouble. Examples of this process of dying can be seen in the initial challenges the traditional film companies had with the arrival of the internet. While many of these big film and media companies were traditionally based on protecting and isolating themselves from wannabe filmmakers, we now see that these same mainstream film and media companies are constantly scouring YouTube in particular in search of new talent and narrative forms. The democratised and open source film and media cultures evident on that and similar platforms is on the one hand challenging these traditional narrative forms, and the institutions built around these forms, while on the other hand they are providing exciting new opportunities for telling stories and sharing those stories in new ways.

These principles can also be applied to storytelling in film. Experimental and independent filmmakers, good students and old hands who are continually evolving their craft, play an important role in the cultural health of a society. While most of the films——and perhaps also, from a cultural perspective, most of the filmmakers—will be forgotten, micro influences and impacts, plus the odd macro-impact and influence, will affect the overall cultural health of a society. Some of us, and some of our ideas, will be absorbed into the mainstream language of the mainstream, just like the written and spoken language has been, over time, influenced by both obscure and famous poets, people who spoke and wrote 'incorrectly' and those who experimented with language through humour, such as comedians. Could it also be that the impacts we have on our culture as filmmakers——whether known or unknown, successful or unsuccessful, remembered or forgotten——could mirror the ideas of "morphic resonance" (Sheldrake 2009) discussed within evolutionary biology, in which a critical mass of biological or behavioural change attained by a certain number of members of a species within a population can lead to leaps in species level behavioural change? This idea is not conceptually far from the idea within quantum mechanics in physics of "quantum entanglement" (Einstein, A.,

Podolsky, B., Rosen, N. 1935, pp. 777–780) that postulates that two atomic particles in completely separate parts of the universe are instantly affected in a non-causal way by merely consciously observing one of them.[12] Applying these concepts to story and narrative by creating a notion of story and narrative resonance, reinforces the notion that we have already alluded to earlier, that we are in fact inextricably entangled and connected by stories and that various stories and their narratives emerge and impact on us as if from nowhere, but potentially as a consequence of resonances related to others across cultures (and perhaps time, too) who are similarly moved. Is it conceivable, for example, that individuals being attracted to a certain story in one part of the world may lead, in a non-causal way, to another group of individuals in a completely different part of the world also being attracted to the same story, but resulting in very different narratives that reflect their particular circumstances?

No spectator is passively engaging with a story, unless they are completely unmoved by it. For whether we are physically engaging in responding to a narrative in which we may have some element of control, or whether we are quietly absorbing imagery from a narrative in which we are unable to intervene, our whole mental and physical being is responding and interacting with the story. In fact, I personally find that the narratives whose simplicity require my imaginative engagement, and in which I have no direct influence over events and outcomes, tend to be the narratives that engage me in the most evocative stories which have the power to change me and stay with me for a long time. A few of these stories will have come to me through film.

Firstly, these films are telling stories that are told by your authentic voice; that is, in a narrative form, or one that I could describe as having a narrative resonance, that I feel you own. That sense of ownership will be evident in the way that you will have combined elements of the language of film to reflect your particular circumstances, your personal history, your cultural heritage, your specific mentors, your actual culture and your direct experience. It is the combination of these elements that is part of making you unique and that uniqueness could be reflected in the unique use of the narrative form. It is an approach that usually means that our entire work has an authentic signature in the form itself; one that evolves over time and, like your face, becomes instantly recognisable.

Second, I will feel that the stories emerging from your films that move me are stories in which I recognise myself and my own experience. When I'm moved by these stories, I'm not thinking about you; I'm thinking

about myself and the plight of people I care about in my life story. I may arrive at this through feelings and emotions created by the sympathy and empathy I have for characters and their plight, but ultimately, as Shakespeare suggests,[13] your work is like holding up a mirror to me and my life and this is why I'm being moved. This story resonance actually emanates from what you and I share, not what separates us, and yet it is deeply personal. For that story resonance to emerge has often involved a difficult personal journey of preparation.

Third, the necessity and the contextual timing of the narrative expression are crucial for a story to resonate in me.[14] If I am not ready to receive, I may be unmoved by your story. Sometimes, I will come across a film that I have been aware of in my youth, at which time I may not have been particularly moved by it, only to later in life be profoundly moved by it; conversely, I may look back at a film that I remember being profoundly moved by in my youth, only to discover that it leaves me unmoved in later life. Ripeness, therefore, is a crucial ingredient in any story resonance. This is why, as creators of stories, it is important that we stick to our instincts and intuitions to tell those stories when we feel compelled to do so; for we do not know who will be ready to receive it and when.

Notes

1. See *Relativity: the Special and the General Theory* (Einstein 1961).
2. See Aristotle's *Poetics* (1996) and Victor Erlich's *Russian Formalism: history, doctrine* (1965). Probably the best-known Russian formalist, writing mainly about the fairy tale in literature, was Todorov. See, for example, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (2018).
3. See for example Chatman (1978) for an unpacking and discussion of formalist understandings of story and narrative and Hogan (2003) for a discussion of the relationship between emotions and story.
4. See Grodal (2009) for a discussion of the relationship between Darwinian theory and narrative structure.
5. The release of adrenaline in our bodies is associated with our sympathetic nervous system and involves an increased heart rate and blood pressure.
6. The cholinergic hormonal response in our bodies is connected to the parasympathetic nervous system and involves the release of the hormone acetylcholine. In contrast to adrenaline, the heart rate slows and blood pressure eases.
7. See Koestler (1964, p. 305).
8. See, for example, Ekman (2004, p. 1) for further definitions and examinations of emotions.

9. See a more detailed discussion of transcendental realism in fiction film in Zen and the Art of Film Narrative (Knudsen 2010) and *Creative Documentary: Theory and Practice* (de Jong, Knudsen and Rothwell 2012, pp. 87–160).
10. This narrative journey very closely resembles the journey undertaken by the creative storyteller that we discussed in Chap. 2.
11. See for example the work of Dancyger and Rush (2002), Kallas (2010), Beker (2013) and Lee (2013).
12. See Einstein, A., Podolsky, B., Rosen, N. (1935).
13. See Shakespeare (1963, III, ii).
14. We have discussed this earlier in the context of creation and referenced Koestler's notion of "ripeness" (1964).

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Transformations

Abstract In this chapter, with reference to three case study examples from the StoryLab International Film Development Research Network workshops, we will summarise the key aspects of *Finding the Personal Voice in Filmmaking* and identify some of the most important hurdles to overcome for the practical filmmaker.

Keywords StoryLab • Case studies • Personal voice • Story • Narrative • Transformation

Introduction

In this chapter, with reference to three case study examples from the StoryLab International Film Development Research Network workshops, we will summarise the key aspects of *Finding the Personal Voice in Filmmaking* and identify some of the most important hurdles to overcome for the practical filmmaker.

Mr U

Mr U is a young man based in Malaysia. Like most of the participants in our StoryLab project, when confronted with the prospect of having to discover a new story to tell, he was somewhat at a loss. This was not because he lacked experience—for he was a film-school-educated man

with some industry experience, including the writing and directing of his own short films—but perhaps because he was over-thinking the creative process and creating a mental block. Rather than focusing on 'the film' or 'the story' or 'the narrative', we started by having a broader conversation about his life. Being a devout practising Moslem, it became apparent that he was reaching a watershed in his life around his faith and the temptations of contemporary liberal urban living. He was being exposed to a more liberal, non-religious environment and felt both attraction and reticence towards the world of modernity. When we talked about the feelings or emotions this situation evoked in him, we were able to identify anxiety and unease, as well as a lingering attraction: attraction to women; as it turned out that he did not have a girlfriend.

We then discussed some imagery that he associated with these feelings. What imagery did he associate with the liberal urban? What imagery did he associate with the pull towards good religious behaviour? Amongst a range of imagery, such as young people at a party, came to his mind, as did imagery of his mother reminding him to attend the mosque. From some of this basic imagery,[1] we started to play. What if …? What if you fell in love with a girl? What if that girl invited you to a party …? Having loosened Mr U up and given him free reign to play with imagery, he soon progressed with his exploring. Every time he started to intellectually question what he was doing, he would be encouraged to not make judgements, not to think his way forward, as thinking and judgements would come later. Instead, he was encouraged to simply go with his gut instincts: Did this situation, articulated with that imagery, following on from those events feel right? Following his instincts, he had a broad skeleton of a story within an hour, which he was then able to refine into a step outline overnight.

The eventual story was simple and was broadly the story of a young Moslem man who falls in love with a young Moslem woman, who is not as devout as him. In fact, he discovers that she is involved with a youth scene that is decidedly un-Moslem in terms of behaviour and beliefs. But he is madly in love with her. She invites him to a party with her friends—friends he is to meet for the first time—but this clashes with the time he is supposed to be attending the mosque. His mother is a devout and strict Moslem and always reminds the main character to attend the mosque. Caught in a dilemma, he secretly decides not to attend the mosque, but to meet up with his girlfriend so he can go to her party. At the party he becomes increasingly anxious, for he discovers that people are smoking

cannabis joints. He is quietly shocked and the tension builds as he can see the joint is being passed around and is making its way to him. It is his new girlfriend who hands the joint to him, but at that moment, he is in a dilemma; he is then so overwhelmed with conflict that he leaves the party in a hurry. He roams the street and can see that his mother is trying to phone him. As is his girlfriend. His girlfriend does manage to find him and they have a conversation about the situation, but he is unable to be honest with her. Later he returns home to an angry and troubled mother who wants to know where he has been and why he did not attend the mosque. He has a choice to tell her, but chooses not to.

As the narrative was developed, Mr U moved quite naturally further and further away from the autobiographical. The underlying themes, the dilemmas, the feelings and emotions driving the narrative were all his and in that sense, while not being autobiographical, the film idea was deeply personal. And despite this, the story has deep archetypal and prototypical story elements that tie in to finding and losing love, and succession. While this story has a continuation, pregnant with potential consequences of his actions, the narrative has found a natural point of ending (pausing) because the storyteller, Mr U, has reached a point of expressing that something that he finds necessary to express.

Ms V

Ms V is a beautiful young Ghanaian woman. In fact her beauty has been at the heart of her career to date: she has been a model, an actress and has worked in the film and media industry for some time. In all of these areas, she claims that her beauty was instrumental to her success. But more recently, this had started to trouble her. She was becoming conscious of the fact that her beauty was also an inhibitor to a deeper and richer engagement with the world around her, including her jobs and career. In part this was due to her own attitude about herself, as she acknowledged that she consciously exploited that beauty to further herself in male-dominated environments. However, she was becoming aware of the fact that having working relationships with men only on that level was becoming a problem and she was finding it hard to change male perceptions of her. In other words, she was not convinced that any of the men around her were aware of the talents she might have that had nothing to do with her looks.

These observations came out of a general discussion with Ms V for, like most of the other StoryLab participants, she did not know where to start

with a new story. Like the previous example, we started with trying to identify a feeling or an emotion. In Ms V's case, the overwhelming emotion was one of frustration. She felt frustrated about her situation and felt unable to fulfil her wishes and desires. We started to play: What if …? In some cases, the outcomes of this play may have been more closely aligned to autobiographical experiences than in our other examples. However, what emerged was a classical prototypical story of rags to riches—not unlike the story of Cinderella.[2] A young, beautiful junior branding designer works for a large advertising agency that has large multinational clients. One particular client is commissioning a large project and wants innovative new ideas. The main character joins a number of meetings and contributes to the project. In fact, she has a number of good ideas that are adopted by the team. But she is never acknowledged and is usually ignored by her boss in favour of her similarly junior male colleague. This male colleague is very dependent on our main character for ideas and help to put things together for the boss. At another meeting, her male colleague presents these ideas as his own and is praised by the boss. The boss asks this male colleague to be part of a small presentation team to meet the client and asks him to prepare for this. Again he is dependent on the help of our main female protagonist and at one point the boss has an opportunity to learn this. However, the boss ignores this and the team, without our protagonist, goes to meet the client and make the presentation. The presentation does not go well and the clients ask questions that the presentation team, including the junior male colleague of our protagonist, can not answer. It is clear that there are some ideas in the presentation that the team only know superficially. The clients demands to meet the person who actually conceived of the idea, as they feel there is something in it, and our main protagonist is summoned. She takes over the presentation and is able to deal with all the questions and issues that the client raises and they are immensely satisfied. They ask to meet with the protagonist separately and the rest of the presentation team are sent back to their office. A little later, our protagonist arrives back at work, confronting miserable and vindictive colleagues, including her young male colleague, and happily clears her desk; it is clear she has received a job offer with the clients.

While this is a classical prototypical story—like the rags to riches story of Cinderella—it is a deeply personal story to Ms V that is contextualised in her time and situation. She has found a narrative form that resonates with her contemporaries. At no point in our discussions did we mention Cinderella; this story was not a conscious adaptation of an existing

narrative, but a narrative emerged quite naturally that revealed a story that resonates both personally and timelessly.

Mr W

A jovial young Colombian, Mr W did not have a clue what he wanted to tell. Unlike the other case study examples discussed, he had no immediate feelings or emotions that he felt he could reference. So we started casually talking about what he had been up to recently. One of the things he mentioned was that he had recently been on a lengthy coach trip across rural Colombia. When he explained more about the coach trip, he made a casually and self-depreciating humorous mention of the fact that on the coach he had had the good fortune to sit next to a young woman that he fancied. However, they had sat throughout the entire journey and he had never had the courage to say anything to her. He was lamenting this as a missed opportunity, as he was a bachelor in search of love.

We decided to start our creative play there: with the imagery of a young man getting on a packed coach on which he finds himself sitting next to a young woman. The coach sets off and gradually he gets to know the woman from her little gestures, her hands, glimpses of her profile and so on. He never speaks to her and she never speaks to him, but he becomes infatuated. So far, we are close to the autobiography, but what if …? Mr W started to play with possibilities through trial and error. Eventually, he ended up with a fascinating narrative about an emotionally lost young man in contemporary Colombia.

As evening approaches, the coach stops at a petrol station in a small remote Colombian town. To his consternation, the young woman is getting off at this stop. The protagonist is disappointed, but detecting what he thinks is a faint smile, he disembarks too. Ostensibly, to have a toilet break, but also to perhaps talk to the young woman. Before he knows it, she is heading into the town and he makes a split second decision to follow her with the intention of establishing contact. But she has disappeared in the streets and he is momentarily lost. He makes it back to the petrol station to see the coach leaving, with all his things on it. He is unable to catch the driver's attention and soon the coach is gone. He finds out from the petrol station attendant that the next coach is not till the morning.

Penniless and lost, he decides to continue his search for the young woman and what ensues is a number of slightly bizarre encounters with typical small-town Colombian institutions, such as the police, the taverna,

the clinic, some local bureaucrats and stray dogs. It is a darkly humorous exploration of an emotionally lost man's interactions with Colombian society and how that society engages with the lost man. In the morning when he goes to the petrol station to wait for the next coach, he discovers that the young woman he was looking for has just started a shift working behind the counter. He goes into the shop hoping that she might recognise him, but she does not. As his coach arrives, he is torn between talking with her and hurrying out to catch the coach and he eventually decides to catch the coach. The narrative ends as it started, nothing has changed, yet everything has changed. The immutable cyclical narrative, the stillness of night, the absorption in the experiential for its own sake add to the classical elements some additional strong elements of the transcendental narrative, and through the shifting states of the young man's transcendent experience we have come to learn something about the Latin macho male and his circumstance.

Denial and Fear

There are two great obstacles that the creative filmmaker seeking to find their personal voice will encounter: denial and fear. While doubt can be a precursor to faith and creativity,[3] denial suggests the drawing up of a draw bridge to seeing and understanding. It would be convenient to deny, for example, that our attraction to certain stories and ways of telling those stories had nothing to do with our personal feelings and emotions, and our personal life experience. Even simple randomly observed imagery that we may collect without forethought somehow reflects an autobiography of experience, concerns and preoccupations. Every observation has an observer and that observer has a history and a context, as well as a character and psychic make up, that shapes what is observed and how it is observed. Any stage in the development of a story, therefore, must necessitate an acknowledgement of that deeper motivation that drives the need for the observation and the need to articulate that observation. Our attention and gaze is directed by invisible forces that live in and through us. Intellectually we may distrust that idea and dismiss it as logically flawed, but I have yet to see a great piece of art that was born from intellectual logic.

To acknowledge these deep connections between who and what we are, in essence, with everything that we do, even if what we do may seem significantly different and distant, takes courage. Fear is a serious inhibitor of

creativity and the personal articulation.[4] Fear can paralyse us by disguising itself in many different forms: from intellectual argument to excuses, and from psychosomatic illnesses to mental health crises. Fear is the creative person's greatest enemy and if there is anything that great teaching and supervision can do, it is to help creative people overcome their fears and become fearless champions of the stories that want to be told through them.

Summary

I have taken you on a journey that is the result of my own creative practice as a filmmaker and my engagement with filmmaking students and practitioners in their pursuit of developing cinematic stories. Out of this auto-ethnographic exploration, I have introduced a more specific methodology, ethnomediaology, that relates to ethnomusicology practices in music, in which I have been directly involved, including the development of film ideas and the creation of cinematic works. Through these methodologies, I have been able to forge research outcomes that are predominantly evident in my own cinematic works, supported by written, applied, critical and theoretical reflections. The StoryLab International Film Development Network project has afforded me opportunities to join with colleagues to more formally explore and document ethnomediaology at work, and *Finding The Personal Voice In Filmmaking* plays the role of, on the one hand, articulating the underpinning research that shaped and drove the StoryLab workshops, while on the other hand, reflecting outcomes from the workshops by verifying and supporting the underpinning research in practice.

The democratisation of the moving image liberates the filmmaker from the restrictions of the traditional film industry and opens up new applications and opportunities for the medium. Film is no longer just about a select elite making film for the masses, but is now much more accessible as a pluralistic medium engaging in all aspects of our lives, from a personal expression to training and education. Just like the explosion in written literacy in the European Age of Enlightenment, in part as a consequence of the new technologies of the printing press, contemporary moving image technologies are opening up a new kind of audio visual literacy. In my experience, students of film struggle the most with developing ideas, being creative with those ideas, and having the courage to articulate those ideas in ways that they believe in, rather than in the craft and technical

skills that dominate existing literature on film practice. The StoryLab project reaffirmed my belief that there are many people who want to make films that they truly believe in on a personal level: films that have strong personal themes imbedded in the work and which are rooted in deeply personal motivations.

I started our journey by discussing why we create. Understanding this underlying motivation is important to you, the filmmaker, because the creative journey of a film project—indeed, maintaining an oeuvre through a lifetime—is a tough one in which personal feelings, fragile notions and imperative ideas need nurturing and protecting through complex socio-political and industrial contexts. This is inevitably primarily about values; understanding the things that are important to you and being able to, in a sense, understand, even if only semi-consciously, the purpose and the reason why you so wish to create. It seems clear that an overwhelmingly powerful sense of necessity and strong feelings and emotions suggesting the presence of something in you, lie at the heart of the motivation to create. These are the intangible realities that seem to want to find form through you.

In deconstructing the creative act itself and examining what is meant by creativity, I have identified that creativity is, in its simplest expression, problem solving through processes that break down our normal patterns of thinking, association and codes of meaning. As I have suggested earlier, creativity is, by its nature, disruptive; but I also discussed the importance of history and continuity to the creative process and vice versa. In other words, being creative is not simply about being novel or different; being creative means having tremendous respect for, and understanding of, what has come before and having the mental and personal freedom to be able to evolve our perception and our cinematic languages through a trial and error process closely affiliated to the way that children play. Our ability to play, to free our minds from fear and prejudice, are critical to that creative process. The survival of our cinematic language depends on the poetry of renewal and, as creative people, we are, in the broadest sense of the word, poets helping our audiences see afresh.

Postulating on the idea that the universe is made of stories, I explored the centrality of story and why story is so important to us. I used a structuralist approach to understanding the difference between story and narrative and the consequent impact on how we structure our cinematic narratives. There is a strong relationship between our emotions, feelings and our narrative forms and I looked at how the whole body is involved in

engaging with a story. We have self-assertive emotions and participatory feelings and these aspects of us create a balance between survival instincts and transcendence instincts. As a cinematic storyteller, you could make the most of this and apply differing narrative strategies to engage with your audience's emotions and feelings, depending on the themes you want to address. A very important aspect of our relationship to story is that of our relationship to archetypal characters and prototypical stories. I introduced the idea of story and narrative resonance, in which I propose that stories exist independent of us as individuals and belong to our collective subconscious and that, as a consequence, it is not you or I who chooses the stories, but the stories that choose us. It might be tempting to suggest that this is not personal, but I have argued that the personal is universal and that the more personal our work, the more universal it will be. It is the narrative form that a story takes, in other words, that which you and I create in the physical world, that will reflect our differences because just as our life experiences and contexts are reflected in our eyes and face, so our work will have the unique stamp of our particular lived context.

Though I have referenced a few sample case studies from the StoryLab workshops, I looked at three examples in a little more detail. These brief examples illustrate the film development approach discussed in *Finding The Personal Voice In Filmmaking*. I have concluded by identifying, very briefly, the two biggest enemies of personal filmmaking: denial and fear. You and I must combat both of these tendencies, as they can be very damaging to our creative efforts.

Finally, let me try to sum up everything I have said in these pages in one sentence: Finding your personal voice in filmmaking is, essentially, about preparing yourself to receive stories that need to come through you into our material world, in a way that only you can do it, for the benefit of human kind.

NOTES

1. When using the term imagery, I very much have in mind both images and sounds. Sounds often provide deep and powerful associations that are very often underused in filmmaking.
2. See Booker 2004: 51.
3. See my own works exploring my spiritual and creative doubts in my book and film, *Doubt* (Knudsen 2017).
4. See my article on this, "Fear eats the soul" (Knudsen 2000).

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Appendix

Introduction

What follows is a series of exercises and questions we used during our AHRC StoryLab Film Development Research Network workshops to help in the process of developing ideas using the notion of story and narrative resonance.

Exercise 1

Objective

The objective of this exercise is to challenge your patterns of thinking in order to explore creative approaches to working with audio-visual imagery.

Project
Part One: Think of something very familiar, a regular event, a habit, a way of carrying out a task; something ordinary that in itself does not have much significance (e.g., "Every day, I get on my motorbike and ride it to work."). How would you film that to portray it as a matter of fact?

- Write down a simple outline treatment of a sequence showing that.

Part Two: Think of a different regular event, habit or way of carrying out a task; something equally ordinary which carries no particular significance and which has no direct or obvious connection with the previous familiar

event or habit (e.g., "Once a week, I hang my washing out to dry on a clothes line."). How would you film that to portray it as a matter of fact?

- Write down a simple outline treatment of a sequence showing that.

Part Three: Now look at both these events, habits or activities again. This time, relate the actions to each other. When you try to connect and combine these actions, do you see ways in which you can inter-connect them and inter-weave them into a combined series of events? How does it change the original actions? Does it bring a new dimension to it? Does it allow for the development of a theme or visual metaphor? Does it present a paradox or an irony? Has a new significance emerged that goes beyond the insignificance of the individual components?

- Write an outline treatment or step outline with both sets of activities/actions interacting with each other in such a way that it brings out a little narrative which has some significance or meaning.

Exercise 2

Objective

The objective of this exercise is to help develop an understanding of the connections between feelings, personal memories and external events and to be able to begin to work with that symbiosis creatively.

Project
Part One: The other night you were getting ready for bed, or you were about to fall asleep. Something was on your mind, perhaps it's been on your mind for a while. You were feeling certain things; certain thoughts were flying through your head, making you have certain feelings or emotions. Perhaps you even dreamed about it at some point.

Try and identify what that feeling was.

- Write it down in a simple statement.

Part Two: Then, without referring directly to whatever the source of that feeling was (e.g., something has happened to you or someone has said something to you), think of a series of some other audio-visual imagery

and/or events which you feel might evoke that feeling; not with a view to explaining it, but with a view to capturing a mood that encapsulates it (e.g., perhaps you feel that the imagery of water dripping slowly from a tap in an empty farm kitchen evokes that feeling, or perhaps you feel that the imagery of a young girl running in between sand dunes with a kite evokes that feeling …). This imagery could be either factual or fictional.

- Write down a brief one- or two-sentence description of this imagery or event.

Part Three: Then look at unrelated factual events going on around you (e.g., from the news media or events happening around you, your family or friends) and identify an event or situation which you feel relates to that initial feeling you identified in Part One of this exercise.

- Write down a brief one- or two-sentence description of these events.

Part Four: Can you think of ways in which you can relate Parts Two and Three? How can you combine the two into a coherent whole? What would the effect be?

- Write a brief outline treatment or step outline in which you combine the imagery from Part Two with the imagery from Part Three to create a narrative in which you evoke the feelings you identified in Part One.

Exercise 3

Objective

The objective of this exercise it to help you understand how seemingly unrelated observations are connected through the observer.

Project
Part One: Have a notebook with you at all times and get used to making notes of random thoughts and observations. This could also be done with a dream book, in which you have a notebook by your bedside and write down, very simply, your dreams. They could also be photographic notes or audio notes. These notes can be as banal or as profound as they wish to be. Do not distinguish at this stage.

Part Two: Sit down one day and go through all the notes and observations. Looking at them together, do you see patterns? Do you see reoccurring themes? Looking at your notes together, what do they make you feel?

Part Three: Having identified some imagery, theme or feeling, use one of the techniques in Exercise 1 or Exercise 2 to develop a story and narrative.

Questions

What if …?

Why not …?

Why are you interested in this story …?

Why are you interested in this image or this sound …?

Do you have any direct experience of what your ear or eye is drawn to …?

What about this imagery, situation or event attracted your attention in particular …?

No matter how insignificant or banal, what's the first thing that has come into your mind?

What was the main underlying feeling when you went to bed last night or when you woke up this morning?

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.