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Heathen Camerawork: Crossing the Liminal Border with *The Third Day* Cinematography

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Abstract

This article focuses on cinematography and digital enhancement of the image, exploring the role of visualization strategies in augmenting the fictionalized filmic space in lieu of an immersive (liminal) experience and the ideas behind the technical conflation of HD photographic indexicality and magical realism (through portrayal of radical subjectivity, estrangement of familiar settings, and supernatural occurrences) in the surreal environment of a Samhain-like ritual portrayed in Sky TV's *The Third Day: Autumn* (2020). Whereas slow cinema's use of long takes traditionally intended to create a contemplative mood in the viewer in order to draw attention to fleeting aspects of the image, while providing involvement with a supposedly factual place, the episode's extreme "take" on the theme induces a trance-like state through disfiguration – firstly, by numbing attention through apparent boredom; secondly, by catching the watcher (who is most likely already well accustomed to the conventions of the livestream "genre") off-guard – as the festival transgresses from ritualistic procedures to cinematographic staging of a delirious consciousness.

The less there was to see, the harder he looked, the more he saw.
Don DeLillo, Omega Point (2010)

The logistics, choreography, and aesthetics of the long take always pose a challenge to the cinematographer. On the surface, it is a display of visual virtuosity. But in order to arrive at this illusion of unfettered swiftness of movements and image capture, the uninterrupted scene requires full orchestration that would weave together the script, acting, lighting, and in-camera trickery (nowadays, digital special effects). From Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), which grappled with ten-minute limits for each change of the reel, through Michaelangelo Antonioni's *The Adventure* (1960), achieving atemporality and slowness in a medium previously designed for rapid editing, we have technically advanced towards features like *Russian Ark* (2002) and *Birdman, or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* (2014), where (although mainly in the latter) digital post-processing of the image allows for feigning the impression that it has been shot in a single take.

Nonetheless, the plague year's *The Third Day* series, an effects-laden resurgence of Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man* (1973), created by Felix Barrett and Dennis Kelly, along with its special episode *Autumn*, set the bar even higher by narrating a story set on Osea island by means of a twelve-hour live stream event, without pauses or interruptions. *In one continuous and cinematic take, the rituals and traditions of the islanders are further revealed as the line between what is real and what is not increasingly blurs,*[1] claim the producers on the website of Punchdrunk, the theatre company responsible for this tour de force. By orchestrating the unity of time and place, the former distinction between live action and 'trick shots' could be muddled beyond recognition, so that the viewers could immerse, 'virtually' participating in the *livecast* rite of passage – an experience all the more meaningful after a year spent under house arrest.

Evidence of Autumn – core assumptions

The Third Day series follows Sam, a grieving father who finds himself trapped on an island in the estuary of the River Blackwater, East England. Due to tides and rising water level, our protagonist gets isolated from the mainland, at the mercy of Oseans and their neopagan beliefs. Presenting events taking place during the annual 'Esus and the Sea' festival – with Sam impersonating the eponymous Christ-like figure of the community's protector / Father – the special episode ties up the tail end of the first season (Summer) with the second (Winter). Even though it was planned as a 'technologically-assisted' immersive experience[2] from the outset, social distancing forced the creators to revise their initial blueprint. Directed by Barrett and Marc Munden, the pandemic-proof version of the special involved just the basic crew backed by the technicians and cast ensemble from Punchdrunk, a company which specializes in immersive theatrical productions that allow audience members to freely wander and interact with the performance and its microcosm.[3] The script had to be rewritten accordingly. *The community will decide not to do the festival. They'll close the causeway. … And instead* [of a live audience], *we'll put a camera there — the audience of one — for a continuous,*

12-hour Steadicam shot floating around. So, it becomes like an outside eye observing the sort of ethnographic [study] *of this community on their most holiest of days.*[4] As of 2022, *Autumn* remains the longest fictional narrative conveyed in a single take.[5] If 1960s auteurs probed their audiences' patience by means of extended takes, cognitive limits have definitely been breached by this extreme live stream.

And yet, this filmic text doesn't stray far from the spectatorship model set up by Slow TV, while employing techniques of engagement characteristic of slow cinema. At the same time, it touches upon the documentary tradition of ethnographic film – a practice definitely in line with measures to preserve, promote, or simply enact performances and rituals regarded as intangible cultural heritage. Representational strategies in regard to filmic space conjoin these generic conventions in a cinematographic séance. The study presented in this article dissects the filmic text and conveys the findings (observations on selected fragments) through thick description – after Geertz's ethnographic method – with particular focus on the construction of aural environment, off-screen space, and representational strategies that allow both these layers to work together in the course of a twelve-hour media event.

Causeway to the miraculous

The lapping of the waves, cries of the birds and crunch of the gravel immediately located you there. The camerawork was unlike anything I've seen on a live broadcast – cinematic quality, and the sound capture was exceptional. And soon that single camera was covered in rain spatters[6] – fan reviews were rapturous, highlighting the creators' struggle for gritty realism. In the absence of regular in-camera VFX that would have normally been added in post-production (the first three episodes accustomed us to such practice), a matching sense of wonder had to be achieved mainly through orchestrated ramble, primarily making use of the cinematic device of the long take in three major ways. First of all, *Autumn*'s cinematography immerses viewers in the claustrophobic setting of Osea island through the camera treatment of off-screen space. Second, as far as extended (and extensive) employed in the series are geared toward blurring the threshold between reality and hallucinatory states of the protagonist, thus bringing to the fore the tale's magical realist aura, the special episode's technological restraints retrace that tactical move for the viewer's pleasure of scrutinizing closer the protagonist's prolonged toil, repetitive manual labour, exhaustion, and (drug/fatigue-induced) mania channelling the atmosphere of a pagan ritual by means of participatory ethnography worthy of Jean Rouch's "film-trance" (*ciné-transe*). Finally, it is important to note that the HBO/Sky Atlantic production thrives on differences between modernist applications of the long take and their recent variants, among which one should include their reappropriation by the subgenre of pandemic livestreams, for the purpose of covering ritual practices and performances. Conveying action via subsequent shots-reverse shots would have been so much simpler, especially with multiple cameras set at predefined locations, capturing the 'festival' like a soap opera filmed before a live studio audience.

Also, transgressing the border between two worlds should not be restricted to narratives built on plots involving heathen festivities in the likes of Samhain,

precisely because contemporary applications of the long take comprise mostly of skilful displays of choreography and digital stitching. Thus, *rather than merely repeating how postwar cinema relied on long takes to represent existential alienation, ambiguity, disillusion, and emotional exhaustion, long-take photography today, in its very effort to reconstruct spaces for the possibility of wonder, often appeals to the dreamlike and surreal, the indeterminate, playful, and open,*[7] Koepnick notes. Putting his claim to the test, Barrett pointed out that resorting to live, unbroken shots helps *blur the boundaries between what's real and what's fictional.*[8] Applying the documentary mode of spatial survey to a magical realist agenda was for staging confusion, yet it simultaneously proved that photorealism is by far the only precondition for audience's immersion and engagement. A double-folded illusion is born – expect the unexpected in an expectable format.

Between the long take and the sequence shot

Modern(ist) cinema embalmed time through the image's index value. A scene or sequence, supposedly extracted from reality, remained an excerpt from a genuine event, presented to us all the more convincingly by the employment of long, (often) slow, uninterrupted takes. This was the core of Frederick Wiseman's observational documentaries, and it has maintained its function in times much less concerned with the capacity of the medium. The long take never completely replaced the classic editing style associated with mainstream productions, despite bearing on the landscape of 1960s cinema (Miklós Jancsó, Andrei Tarkovsky), and consequently being recognized by new generations of the remodernists (Béla Tarr, Alexander Sokurov) and slow cinema directors (Pedro Costa, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Apichatpong Weerasethakul). While providing a single source exegesis of the long take would have been a pointless effort at best, scholars like Ira Jaffe, Lutz Koepnick, or Emre Çaglayan avoid compartmentalization by discussing a limited but rich palette of meanings. Among them are: programmatic deceleration of narrative economies (Jorge[9]), *offering up a realist index of temporal passage* (Koepnick[10]), preservation of spatio-temporal continuity in plot presentation (Çaglayan, Bazin[11]), heightening the sense of time's slow passage (Jaffe[12]), and manifesting non-compliance in response to the 'culture' of constant alertness, this way challenging the *hyperactivity of commercial cinema*[13]. Additionally, while slightly off its veristic axis, the long take was often used for articulating magical realist or surreal juxtapositions (Tarr, Weerasethakul), or intrusions into disparate historical layers (Saura, Angelopoulos), landing next to spiritual evocations of temporality and philosophical ruminations on memory (Sokurov, Tarkovsky).

No less important is the distinction between the long take and the sequence shot, which rests just on technical limitations. While the former was traditionally achieved using up the entire span of the film reel, recording everything that takes place in front of the camera in a single take in order to *stretch or deflate time* [,] [though] *not to frustrate our attention spans but to intensify perceptual processes and sharpen our attention for what the rush of the contemporary renders mostly invisible,*[14] the latter attains a corresponding effect by stitching up much shorter fragments. There are curious exceptions from the rule with Andy Warhol's *Sleep* (1964) consisting of

slowed-down and then looped pieces of a recording of John Giorno sleeping. Digital equipment and storage increased room for cinematographic choreographies – a feature which would only thrive in the age of streaming media, giving rise to unprecedented mileages of bore with the emergence of the 'Nordic walks' of *slow TV* (*sakte-TV*). Cinema was evidently caught red-handed in the 2010s, exploring its genealogical roots with journeys by rail, although this time the train-mounted camera was more often heading for the Arctic circle rather than the movie theatre's front row seats.

Stitching up continuity from scraps and rushes sounds much akin to our cognitive process, in which the impression of duration stems from constant anticipation of events in the near future via harkening back to bits and pieces in the vast repository of past experiences.[15] In video streaming, a similar mechanism is at work, with just a few-seconds-long packets arriving to our devices, buffering the content ahead of our remote viewing to ensure the illusion of a smooth and stable flow. Aside from this laminar feature, the long take carries along various functions under the banner of projection-identification, for example conveying the sensation of velocity while bypassing the standard view from behind the windshield in Claude Lelouch's 1976 short *C'était un rendez-vous*, the affirmation of interstellar boundlessness in Kubrick's *2001: Space Odyssey* (1968), or a claustrophobic encounter with one of Shakespeare's most tormented characters in Béla Tarr's *Macbeth* (1982), composed of just two shots, the second of which nearly reaches the one hour mark. Hardly ever executed in real time,[16] contemporary sequence shots are achieved through photogrammetric match-moving of subsequent units, seamlessly embedding CGI transitions in the footage whenever blemishes are to be masked. The aim is to create the impression of spatial unity and thus uninterruptedness of both events and places taken up by them – a genuine event-space.

The significant expansion of the post-processing stage in film production came with the introduction of digital solutions allowing for the traditionally over-rehearsed sequences to evolve into versatile 'operas' ostensibly cast in the same mould. Such productions are on the crest of the same wave as slow TV / cinema, gaining recognition in recent film buff / critic polls, which name *Utøya: July 22* (dir. Erik Poppe, 2018), *1917* (dir. Sam Mendes, 2019), or *The Revenant* (dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2015) in the same breath as Sebastian Schipper's *Victoria* (2015), or Tuva Novotny's *Blind Spot* (2018),[17] heroically mixing up features put together from sequence shots with the aid of match-moving with masterfully executed long takes shot on Cannons EOS C300[18] rather than Arri Alexas or Red Ones. Guerrilla filmmaking in the service of staging subjectivity never looked so professional. *Classical long takes … slowed down cinematic time because they withheld shot/reverse shot patterns, reactions shots, and occasional point-of-view frames and precisely thus refused to stitch the viewer into a film's dynamic fabric of affects. Long takes … decelerated the viewer's perceptual processes and emotional energies as they no longer attached the viewer's viewing to the impression of a film protagonist's narrative agency and subjectivity.*[19] In *Autumn*, we are posited as invisible intruders, arriving from a modernist universe, while ending up absorbed into a whirl of events. Not by being pricked by the sewing needle. By walking.

On foot, not stopping – pausing

A suspicious watcher might see this as a tactical move on the part of the show's creators – employing boredom as means of artistic expression, expected to catch audiences off guard with a sudden burst of visual attractions. Existential boredom is also a by-product of the slower pace with which we scout the terrain, a modernist deceleration leaving us down to our pedestrian customs. *Walking is an intrinsically meditative activity and the films often exploit its prospects to explore a world through the eyes of a surrogate protagonist. Sonically, walking affords several possibilities: … [among them the fusion of] walking with atmospheric sounds that fulfil the material conditions of perceiving an environment.*[20] Accustomed to walking speed, we can measure the progress intuitively. In contrast to most live action spectacles, which can be decomposed into a string of attention-grabbing events tightly packed into a two-hour plot, with *The Third Day* livestream we are able to follow the plot's glacial development – from beginning to denouement – without missing out on any of the major plateaus.

Feigning a "descriptive pause"[21] (or "pronounced pause"), the cinematographers of *TheThird Day: Autumn* do need a moment of rest during this twelve-hour shot, circling the island multiple times in varying weather conditions, cleaning the lens from droplets and mud. The second, ruminative mode might therefore be a symptom of material fatigue on part of the equipment-laden cinematographer(s), which also signals corresponding sensation for the festival-goer in this extreme point-of-view shot. Scripted climaxes, seismic events, character arcs – all gestate over these twelve hours, and are eventually absorbed as an in-built feature of the 'winter' season (inessential but enlightening). Moreover, the main character's Christ-like torment could have been subjected to a far more 'kitchen-sink' treatment due to the aversion to cutting, if it weren't for the three-second-long intrusions into the long take's fabric in the form of close-ups on Jude Law's agonizing face, each tinted deep blue, intermittently building up to a mandylion of the father himself. He looks directly at us with a regained zest and glimmer in his eyes, impossible to confuse with benevolence. Apart from these occasional pit stops, for the span of the autumnal episode there are hardly any disruptions of our somnambulic drift through the village and its vicinities.

Livestreaming rites

The glacial blitz arrived as a fad in TV programming with the *Slow Television* project of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), taking us on unabridged train rides – already a dubious pastime in material reality – from Bergen to Oslo (In *Bergensbanen minute by minute* /2009/, a seven-hour train journey across Southern Norway), or to Kirkenes (*Hurtigruten – minutt for minutt* in 2011). Their subtitles claim a precise minute-for-minute ratio, ensuring us that no second of the broadcast is lost in transmission. The offer quickly expanded to include channel boat trips, coastal cruises, wildlife watching, even marathon academic lectures. In this company, *The Third Day: Autumn*'s coverage of a modernized pagan festival, together with the rite's build-up, doesn't seem that outrageous.

Nevertheless, economic deceleration caused by the pandemic did not become associated solely with slowed down narratives, insomuch as it posed a serious obstacle to live events that boost transmission, but not in terms of bit rate. Among the severely affected areas of communal practice were festivals and religious rituals, historical re-enactments, secular and sacred pilgrimages – namely, instances of intangible cultural heritage. The scarcity of articles on the subject, with a modest body of conference papers from the past two years, point to a discourse on live-streaming rituals (rather than rituals of livestreaming) – taken as a mode of digital preservation of practices recognized by UNESCO – that is yet to properly emerge.[22] In a UNESCO report from May 2021 (a survey covering the period between April 2020 to April 2021), a panoply of makeshift strategies toward preserving or transmitting living heritage were listed, eventually veering towards either postponing or cancelling the event, or limiting admissions and resorting to a live relay. Among the festivities for times of social distancing discussed in the report were the 25-kilometre Za Krizen procession on the island of Hvar in Croatia (an eight-hour long stream), the Finnish Virtual Kaustinen music festival, which aside from uploaded performance videos offered daily streamed workshops and concerts, or the *online events … conducted via video or livestreaming platforms throughout the month*[23] as part of the #RamadanTogether initiative by the National Heritage Board in Singapore. It is tempting to recognize *Autumn* as a 'black mirror' reflection of these emergency measures,[24] procuring a surrogate performing venue for the Osean jubilee on an online platform.

The ultimate festival experience. Contemporary audiovisual events designed for audiences in lockdown are entirely dedicated to providing content that would incite feedback levels reaching the end of the scale. An already high surge of productions created specifically for streaming services has been joined by a host of film premieres, which were quarantined from festivals and open-air promotional events. Deceleration (in terms of the usual supply of events and attractions) comes into focus, whereas fascination with not just stillness but presence thrives in equal measure in *The Third Day: Autumn* episode. We are promised surrogate presence warranted by patience. This way the philosophical stance of slowness corroborates what the long take set out to achieve. *Rather than merely offer slow images of slow life, long-take cinematography … wants to actively modulate the rhythms, reroute the itineraries, and serve as an echo chamber of the perceiving body*.[25] In this case screen (diegetic) time equates viewer's time (the referential timeframe of the audience), making it possible for us to engage minute-for/after-minute with *Autumn*'s anthropological surveying of the island. Apparently, it was not enough to breach mainstream cinema's temporal economies by endowing the viewer with the passenger's role for the larger part of the trip. The choice, set against temporal economies of the world at large, constricted us to local customs and rituals based around circular time. These, however, should be approached with the patience of an ethnographer that alters with the possessed self's compliance to the heathen worldview in this feat of "shared anthropology."

Ciné-transe by aural distress

Not an outright antithesis to what Ira Jaffe defines as slow cinema, the cinematography of *The Third Day: Autumn* coaxes us to drift, wander, hide, eavesdrop, witness, peep, oversee, discover, chase, march, lie down, cheer, inspect, and run after characters assigned as fellow visitors, reproducing their rhythms. Following Sam, the camera reproduces his tormented trudge, his falls at each 'station' of this delirious carnival. Sans excessively long takes, this mode of portrayal accommodates the techniques of *cinéma-vérité* over those championed by Nordic travel shows, securing a feverish immersion into rituals, free from any 'methodological' distance on the part of the director-ethnographer. In equal measure the creators follow Jean Rouch's theoretical writings and the immersive qualities of the technique prescribed by him, creating a unique aura around the event and the increasing engagement with events captured by the film crew. [D]*ue to* [their] *equipment and* [their] *new behavior (which has nothing to do with the observable behavior of the same person when he is not filming) … the filmmaker can throw himself into a ritual, integrate himself with it, and follow it step-by-step. It is a strange kind of choreography, which, if inspired, makes the cameraman and soundman no longer invisible but participants in the ongoing event,*[26] wrote Rouch, his enthusiasm usually unmatched by the reality at hand.

Does *ciné-transe* suffice to keep our eyes peeled? Perhaps, although neither the sibling pagan festival features (*Midsommar*, dir. Ari Aster, 2019), despite all its drug-altered portrayal of events,[27] nor *The Third Day*'s antecedent, *The Wicker Man*, testify to such an approach, contributing to the 1970s (or present-day) folk revivals mainly with the occult storyline, shamanic themes and a psychedelic soundtrack. *Autumn*, not unlike [f]*ilms by 'slow' directors* [,] *… capture*[s] *the mundanity of the everyday while creating an immersive experience for the spectator through long takes and a sound design that produces a dense auditory field.*[28] In ethnographic documentaries, we are subjected to similar dynamics between observation and participation mediated by the camera and the soundscape – both anchoring the film's claim to authenticity. *As a scientific instrument of representation, ethnographic film assumes that the camera records a truthful reality, "out there" - a reality distinct from that of the viewer and filmmaker.*[29] Otherness is punctuated in *Autumn*'s plot as a confrontation with paganism, with the Other constituted through religious rites, a dysfunctional dynamics of an enclosed, tightly-knit community that we eavesdrop on more often than engage in eye contact with. Otherness is therefore in most part aural, ever-present in the encroaching ambience captured by the wandering cameraman-boom-operator unit.

Autumn's long take is bookended by its credits and the otherwise dark screen bedecked with a message anticipating the episode's commencement, therefore highlighting the fact that most memorable segments would be quite complicated. However, there are two noteworthy transitions explicitly referencing the styles of slow cinematographers by means of in-camera editing, in order to attain a marvellous if frenetic effect (*ciné-transe*). When Sam is forced to tug a wrecked boat, the camera closes in on his face, providing coverage of every grimace, every cringe. It bends whenever Sam leans, closes in on the defunct vessel as he tries to pull it with all his might. Sam falls to the ground, the camera descends. When

he remains lying down, it stays put (5h53'49''). While not entirely subjective, the tenth hour's celebrations are portrayed like a shadow play with silhouettes shot against a background lit with golds and oranges – mud creatures with gleaming halos. Bright lights are flashing in front of the camera, complemented by a display of blurred circular shapes. In this impressionistic mode beholding the festivities, the camera tracks people, echoing the contortions of their bodies, reflecting their playful moods, tracing the arc of their jumps into a pool of mud by drawing a similar arc in the air. The cinematographer is ultimately captivated by the dancers, sharing their musical trance with the picture frame rhythmically tilting and moving about. Unable to keep still, it dives into the crowd and swirls as in a generic nightclub scene, resembling rushes from Schipper's *Victoria*, retold in the style of *The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey* (dir. Vincent Ward, 1988) (10h56'24'').

This neopagan (or faux-primitive) aspect of cinematographic participation does not stray far from Rouch's project of shared anthropology. *Through the magical properties of cinema,* [Rouch] *felt that he could join in the ritual as an equal participant and thus bridge the gap between himself and the culture he filmed. The utopian, transcendental aspect of his writing on possession rituals is inspired by the ecstatic character of the rituals themselves, in which individuals are transported out of everyday reality and become others, doubles of the gods and spirits who take control of their bodies.*[30] Prolonged scenes showing festivities, like the final fire procession or the rite of passage resembling stations of the cross, when Sam tows the carcass of a boat, or digs his own grave, are ultimately meant to instil in us with the wear and tear of the drudgeries on screen, echoing our own eye fatigue due to exposure to glare and blue light over an extended period of time. A trance-like state is induced in the viewer and sustained by the range of constantly changing vantage points taken on by the camera. Unlike the smoke and mirrors of pricey sequence shots, *The Third Day: Autumn*'s long take is a piece of updated ethnography, with the camera lens directed at a nearby though culturally quite distant location in the series' own magical realist Essex. Distortions of the image occur due to streaming errors and compression artifacts, although most of us fail to notice them, too captivated or nauseated by the incessant drift.

Orient yourselves

The marathon take is composed of extended moments of nearly motionless contemplation, or meandering sightseeing. We can feel time congealing as we approach the island through the causeway, which takes slightly more than thirty minutes of real/screen time. Eager backpackers overtake us, only to be stopped by a man shouting that the festival is cancelled. They turn back. We proceed. Not as tourists, but a ghost among the living. At 3h37'11'', we leave a village gathering during which Sam is put on trial. Driven out to an open field, he is forced to dig a hole, sweating over the task for much longer than the fifty minutes we behold (the camera wanders off before the task is concluded). Could we ever find a better show of de-dramatization? This arduous activity becomes equally tiring for the eyes, but this is also one of the first segments in which the diminishing distance between the camera-observer and the protagonist becomes apparent, switching from a static long shot – in the beginning we watch him from afar, merely one of

two figures in the landscape – to participatory documentary style of Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch. After some twenty minutes into the dig, we take a few steps towards him. Another twenty minutes pass and the camera encircles Sam like a swarm of bees. It zooms in on details, the martyr's muddied orange sneakers, pleats of his beige tatters, his knackered look. His gasping fills the entire soundscape. Kneeling, he scrapes off clay from the shovel while the camera follows him into the hole allowing the frame to overflow with Courbetian earthy brown shades. No less demanding (for both the viewer and the actors) is the scene of torment on the column, surveyed by the camera which makes headway from a static shot, going around the poles twice, until, after some 27 minutes, Sam falls limply into the water. *'Esus dies on the c…* – the description on the wayside shrine might have derived from the faded words 'Jesus' and 'Cross', hinting at the actual origin of Osea's neopagan rites that make its microclimate so unwelcoming to lay and Christian outsiders alike.

In *Autumn*, however, the deceleration of time, as well as the de-dramatisation of action seems to comply with the craftsmen's reverie, their patient preparations for the potlatch and the bacchanal, observation giving way to processions, enactments, and finally straightforward debauchery. At one point, around the 65-minute mark, the camera positioned firmly in the middle of the road is turned into a passive beholder, capturing guests arriving by car, family reunions underway, and village folk engaged in their regular activities. A little slide to the left and we delve into an open-air workshop, with elegant men in monochrome vests gathered around a pool of muddy water, kids playing, their mothers engaged in handicraft, a horseshoe-shaped banquet table and a wealth of motley decorations. Precisely such technological fasting attracted the most ample commentaries on the producer's website; they praised the show's marriage of oppositions (*live theater meets slow cinema*), splendid execution despite depleted technological resources (*no backstage, no greenroom*), finally the retention of high stamina levels throughout the entire endeavour (*…a continuous, 12-hour Steadicam shot…*).

Due to limitations on the in-camera special effects, prestidigitation had to replace post-processing. Therefore, a number of segments intentionally distract our attention by scenes of wildlife observation, anthropological dioramas, prolonged strolls during which we follow festivities and preparations. Watching sets in the act of being dressed is itself confusing, because we are constantly reminded that the access has been granted only as far as the boom operator can lead us in. We overhear rather than eavesdrop on fragments of dialogues, crowd murmurs, angry rants. Aural wallpaper. Still, some conversations conducted at the tail end of the banquet table cajole us into turning the volume up. Aside from speeches, declamations or monologues – loud enough for a ghost bystander to hear (for example, Jess's angry phone call at 10h40'00'', which ends with her shouting *I am never coming back*) – most verbal interchanges remain a secret, among them the conspiratorial conversation between Larry and an unknown man during the feast (8h55'20''), or Jason's talk with Larry as the former returns to the village after a short detour involving nailing pictures to a tree (5h13'02''). This only foregrounds the sensation of partaking in the festival as a televised/disembodied presence, of having been allowed unrestricted entry, but behind a protective 'plexiglass' barrier.

What seems like cognitive distance might in fact be a strategy for democratic and unbiased appreciation of this fresco, dipped in awareness of developments outside the frame, in compliance with ethnographic as well as extra-cinematographic mode of examining surroundings. As the movement or drift excludes cuts and abridgements, our cognitive effort is put to good use as an exercise in map-making. After a couple of hours, upon visiting the same locations, a vague sense of direction eventually emerges. Now we can anticipate what scenes will open up before us after traversing an open field, squeezing through a hedge maze, or turning the corner by the equipment truck. This way the long take, instead of narrating a one-way passage to the polar circle, supplants an individual positioning system embarking on the activity of mental mapping. We recognize the manor, the main street in the village, the grove, the Seabird Hotel, and various other gathering places which are key to the 'road map' of the Esus and the Sea celebrations. Scouting the area might not have been on the creators' minds, and yet we learn how to navigate the island's labyrinthine pathways, orchards, rocky beaches and scattered settlements, whereas in the series we got accustomed to being flung to some periphery to our genuine bewilderment. In essence, such augmentation and anchoring of the camera eye – and thus ourselves – in the diegetic environment is what differentiates (by definition) a long take from the sequence shot.

24/7 expressionism and the space on the outside of the vision cone

In the choreography of the long take, there are three levels of articulation that expound on the visualization strategy decided upon by the show's creators, negotiating between the aesthetics of slow cinema while sacrificing editing for the premise of participating in an uninterrupted stream of consciousness. The first level is that of trance. Not entirely a side effect of the gyroscopic 'nausea', but a tactic of inducing physical fatigue to elicit emotional response. The sheer length of the streaming event activates our defence mechanisms, yet at the same time we are mesmerized by the promise of the 'live experience' (eventually made available for further playbacks for a couple of months, and now permanently on Punchdrunk's website[31]) that ought to uncover *The Third Day*'s enigmas of Esus and the Sea – its meaning to Sam's backstory. The next level of this expressionist engagement concerns invisible stitches. Uninterruptedness of such endurance confronts not just our viewing habits, but our film-savvy hard-wiring, as we are conditioned by editing techniques that accustomed us to differences between 'trick effect' shots and live action segments. Finally, we should inspect the variables of portrayal: the framing of sub-plots and micro-events, whenever the camera remains nearly motionless, or suddenly springs into action.

What additionally enhances the *Autumnal* experience are the carnivalesque (in Bakhtinian terms) circumstances of the event, encompassing preparations for the festival and the event itself, almost in their entirety. There is a violent struggle unfolding before our eyes when the mob tries to 'crown' Sam with thornbush antlers. He is wrestled to the ground, though still struggling with the aggressors. The cinematographic eye draws nearer than before, closing in on a show of bru-

ises, dirt and blood. Chaos ensues, but only for a brief emotional outburst. Festival and concert livestreams are by definition counterweights to arrested periods of observation, where the patience of Frederick Wiseman meets the passionate involvement of cinéma-vérité. *The Third Day*'s special episode alternates between these representational codes so as to deliver its core message – that the livestream from an event becomes an event in itself.

Enduring the hike is not solely about walking through narrow corridors and stopping at forking paths. The vistas we memorize by staring at them for minutes on end beguile us to take note of the space outside of our visual field, the off-screen space located on the farthest peripheries of the screen's 2.35:1 aspect ratio. *While refusing to cut, the camera defined the off as a space potentially able to redeem a shot from its desolation and lack of meaning.*[32] Koepnick's account assigns great significance to what resides outside the frame, yet remains an imprinted presence (in memory, and as a retinal afterimage). The audience's awareness of this peripheral world became a chief preoccupation also for Grzegorz Królikiewicz, who considered the uncalibrated profilmic space as pivotal to our spatial orientation, describing how *in the traditional set-up the model of vision resembles a cone.* [E]*verything is contained inside that cone's field, with one shot succeeding another … . The cone is the model for the filmic world, and my idea was to replace it with a sphere. Where should we place the camera in this model? In its centre.*[33] Deciding what is to be shown, so important to Bazin's understanding of the role of the long take, ceases to be central in Królikiewicz's concept of the *space outside the frame*. While cinematic gaze is structured by a hypothetical cone of vision (Plato's ray-emitting eyes, Euclid visual cone[34]), this authoritarian command of the audience's field of view – according to the director – can be exploded by the democratic rendering of filmic space that, symbolically, replaces the cone with a sphere. Królikiewicz's model outlines a scheme valid also for binaural recordings or the spherical sound of Ambisonics. In both instances, our perception of the environment, while streamlined by the perspectival cone, is in turn expanded by sound design. Niv Adiri explains: [w]*e would take these sounds and slow them down, load them into a sampler and manipulate them, and they became quite musical. There are quite a lot of them…, in areas where we wanted to create uneasiness.*[35] The manipulated, distressing, overwhelming sounds in *The Third Day: Autumn*, as well as the uninterrupted recording of the Osea island's 'ecosystem', allows for a creative transposition of the profilmic space into a mock 3D diegetic space. Even though we are incapable of navigating our course, the mental map of the place is built over time from scraps of aural and visual cues streamed to our home offices or playrooms.

And yet a number of obstacles to cognitive map-making are working against the viewer, namely those that support the claims of Koepnick and Królikiewicz. Those include temporal ellipses. Oftentimes we do not 'personally' witness what is happening off-screen, despite our awareness of the festival preparations and various characters' private agendas we glimpse at 'in passing'. Frequently, the motivation for these tactics is suspense. Terrified by a battlefield covered in corpses (1h51'00''), upon approaching the bodies – in a matter of minutes rather than seconds – we discover that these are in fact human-sized puppets stuffed with hay: festival decorations.

Liberty from editing regimes, however, can produce an effect contrary to a vagrant traverse. In a subversive move, *the long take, in postponing the exit or escape afforded by a cut, conveys a feeling of confinement rather than freedom. In addition, the tendency of the long-take style to forgo or limit point-of-view shots and shot/reverse-shots perhaps reduces the sense that characters possess narrative agency … . The characters instead become passive victims of "forces compelling them", or captives of the overall design of the film.*[36] Not exactly condemned to behave like rats in a maze, due to these 'arresting' circumstances, we empathize with other detainees on an island. As in Mirosław Kijowicz's *Cages* (1967), in a gesture of reversed infinite recursion, *Autumn* draws the *etic* viewer into the depicted rite of passage releasing him or her after the twelve-hour session as an *emic* performer.[37] Towards the end we are led along with a noisy crowd down a forest path (11h24'37''). The camera hasn't trembled this much in the course of past eleven hours. Shaking rhythmically, bouncing to the sound of drumming which arises to a nauseating effect, it drifts as if the crew was caught by a storm at sea. It catches glimpses of the worshippers' faces. Among them is Sam's smug expression. Suddenly, the newly elected Father trots through the crowd, the cinematographer chases him, executing consecutive whip pans. There is an undeniable hand-held quality to those moments.

In *The Third Day: Autumn*, the nascent mode of depiction becomes synonymous with 'active' engagement in the transmitted live event. A 'live' streaming event brings back a sense of wonder via wandering, drifting, as well as through a choreographed indeterminacy, like a GPS-guided journey through a neighbourhood under construction. It opens up our cognitive abilities to the unexpected (largely absent from scripted television or cinema). The exhaustive, uninterrupted take enhances immersion and engagement, while blurring the borders of representational conventions, augmenting the viewer's experience with sound design and spatial coordinates. This distortion is echoed by distractedness embedded in the mute authority of the drifting camera. Finally, in relaying a cancelled event (*the festival's off*) the act of portrayal (live streaming, a virtuoso long take) is positioned as an event in itself, a surrogate cultural event held under emergent circumstances. No less vital is living through that experience, linked by the transformational arc intended for the audience just as much as for the protagonist they follow.

Conclusion: Streaming participative ethnography

John Melville Bishop, the anthropologist filmmaker who followed Alan Lomax on his hunt for the origins of Mississippi Delta blues in *The Land Where the Blues Began* (1979), remarked on the essential shift from a distanced, observational style to an interactive engagement with the subject by means of a "participating camera" advancing in close-ups, in zooms, in details. He has been quoted in Barbash and Taylor in reference to filming Cambodian court dancing: *Long wide shots don't work – too much is going on in the fingers and the eyes. You need close ups. At the same time, you also need to convey the total body and the group choreography. The trick (and even truth is a sleight of hand) is to shoot so that the artistry and aesthetic is that of the dancers and not the gambit of the filmmaker.*[38] Exhaustion makes us emotionally vulnerable. We engage in the spectacle, empathize with characters, cheer with cro-

wds, and never stop catching our breaths. Simultaneously, we scan the periphery – an activity that feels more natural, while having been made much easier due to the 16:9 aspect ratio.

After his Osean Golgotha, Sam becomes susceptible to anything, even being led to believe that his dead son has been returned to him in exchange for his ordeal in the final scenes of the special episode. Taking the boy by the hand, he walks away into the distance, while the procession heads towards us, passing right by the motionless camera. When the party fades from view, we are left to contemplate the dark night violently lit up by a raging fire that consumes a building at the crossroads. The ritual / transmission reaches its climax. In opposition to the slow-burning nature of (re)modernist long takes, the flames devour the structure in a matter of minutes, leaving nothing but a wooden frame. Leaving the resurrected Sam / Esus and the redeemed remote viewer – both laid bare in their livestreamed confinements.

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[1] https: // www.punchdrunk.com / project / the-third-day / (accessed: 5.04.2022).

[2] *"The Third Day" was always intended to be the world's first immersive television show. Originally, halfway through the series, viewers would have been invited to step into the real world of the programme and participate in a live event which further extended and drove the narrative of "The Third Day". Following the pandemic, Punchdrunk needed to adopt a new approach to the live element and so the idea of the livestream was born.* http: // digitaldozen.io / projects / the--third-day-autumn / (accessed: 26.06.2022).

[3] G. Cairns, *The Architecture of the Screen: Essays in Cinematographic Space*, Intellect, Bristol – Chicago 2013, pp. 125-126.

[4] B. Travers, "'The Third Day' Live Episode: Everything You Need to Know about the 12-Hour Event", *Indiewire*, https: // www.indiewire.com / 2020 / 10 / the-third-day-live-episode-explained-how-to-watch-live-stream--autumn-1234589739 / (accessed: 6.04.2022).

[5] Although one could argue about the truth behind this statement due to a number of second-long inserts showing close-ups on Sam's sorrowful face, shot in maximum blue, first of which appears at 3h27'39" into the feature.

[6] https: // sitdowncomedian.medium.com / the-third-day-live-autumn-9fee089631c4 (accessed: 5.04.2022).

[7] L. Koepnick, *The Long Take: Art Cinema and the Wondrous*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis – London 2017, p. 45.

[8] https: // www.indiewire.com / 2020 / 10 / the--third-day-live-episode-explained-how-to--watch-live-stream-autumn-1234589739 / (accessed: 6.04.2022).

[9] P. Lovatt, "'Slow Sounds': Duration, Audition and Labour in Liu Jiayin's 'Oxhide' and 'Oxhide II'", in: *Slow Cinema*, eds. T. de Luca, N. B. Jorge, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2016, p. 169.

[10] L. Koepnick, op. cit., p. 44.

[11] E. Çağlayan, *Poetics of Slow Cinema: Nostalgia, Absurdism, Boredom*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, p. 9; A. Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema", transl. H. Gray, in: *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 2005, pp. 33-35.

[12] I. Jaffe, *Slow Movies: Countering the Cinema of Action*, Wallflower Press, London – New York 2014, p. 161.

[13] L. Koepnick, op. cit., p. 244.

[14] Ibidem, p. 2.

[15] See: W. J. Friedman, "The Development of Children's Representations of Temporal Structure", in: *Time, Action and Cognition: Towards Bridging the Gap*, eds. F. Macar, V. Pouthas, W. J. Friedman, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht – Boston – London 1992, p. 74.

[16] Which might have been the case in the eight--minute obstacle course of Hitchcock's *Rope*, or when considering the intricate cinematographic logistics in the opening of Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil* (1958).

[17] S. Collins, "These Movies Were Filmed in One Take, or Look Like They Were", *Movieweb*, https: // movieweb.com / one-take-movies / (accessed: 5.04.2022).

[18] M. Chang, "Exploring the Cinematics behind 'Victoria' (2015 Film)", *Resource*, http: // resourcemagonline.com / 2016 / 07 / exploring-the-cinematics-behind-victoria-

-2015-film / 67959 / (accessed: 07.04.2022).

[19] L. Koepnick, op. cit., pp. 246-247.

[20] E. Çaglayan, op. cit., p. 81.

[21] This device is employed to create a special mood or humorous awkwardness (in mainstream films), as much as to make the audience partake in contemplation (in experimental cinema). (Çaglayan, op. cit., p. 59)

[22] Recommended are the special issue of "Heritage" on *The Impact of COVID-19 on Cultural Heritage*, guest-edited by prof. Dirk Spennemann, at https://www.mdpi.com/journal/heritage/special_issues/covidOnCH#editors (accessed: 25.06.2022) or the *(In)-Tangible Heritage(s): A Conference on Design, Culture and Technology - Past, Present, and Future* conference(s).

[23] „Living heritage in the face of COVID-19", p. 35, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377671.locale=en (accessed: 24.06.2022).

[24] Especially as by definition *intangible heritage* encompasses: *oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and knowledge and skills related to craftsmanship* (idem, p. 5), i.e., every micro-event and activity we witness during the show.

[25] L. Koepnick, op. cit., p. 250.

[26] J. Rouch, "On the Vicissitudes of the Self: The Possessed Dancer, the Magician, the Sorcerer, the Filmmaker, and the Ethnographer", in: *Ciné-Ethnography: Jean Rouch*. ed. S. Feld, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis – London 1973, p. 99.

[27] Although in the series Sam's acid trips, too, distort reality as conveyed through picture and sounds, which is reflected by the besetting sound design.

[28] P. Lovatt, op. cit., p. 192.

[29] C. Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*, Duke University Press, Durham – London 1999, p. 12.

[30] Ibidem, p. 193.

[31] https://player.vimeo.com/video/551894953?muted=0&transparent=0&controls=1&autoplay=true (accessed: 7.04.2022).

[32] L. Koepnick, op. cit., p. 157.

[33] P. Kletowski, P. Marecki, *Królikiewicz: Pracuję dla przyszłości*, Korporacja Ha! Art, Kraków 2011, p. 30.

[34] J. R. Senseney, *The Art of Building in the Classical World: Vision, Craftsmanship, and Linear Perspective in Greek and Roman Architecture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York – Melbourne 2011, pp. 63-64.

[35] J. Walden, "Designing the Disturbing Sound of 'The Third Day' ", *A Sound Effect*, https://www.asoundeffect.com/the-third-day-sound/ (accessed: 25.06.2022)

[36] I. Jaffe, op. cit., p. 164.

[37] In the *etic* approach, of major importance is the creation of generalized concepts and determining criteria for classification, providing a systematic, structural apparatus to researching a given culture. In comparison, the *emic* approach of the hypothetical anthropologist is *an attempt to discover and describe the pattern of that particular … culture in reference to the way in which the various elements of that culture are related to each other in the functioning of that particular pattern* (K. L. Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Glendale 1954, p. 8). Therefore, the latter comes from within that culture.

[38] J. M. Bishop, "Video Self: Kung and Khmer", in: *Eyes across the Water: Essays on Visual Anthropology and Sociology*, eds. R. M. Boonzajer-Flaes, D. Harper, Spinhuis, Amsterdam, pp. 34-35, cited in *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking: A Handbook for Making Documentary and Ethnographic Films and Videos*, eds. I. Barbash, L. Taylor, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles – Oxford 1997, p. 336.

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Abstrakt

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Pogańska praca kamery. Przekraczanie liminalnej granicy w *Dniu trzecim. Jesieni*

Autor artykułu analizuje rolę strategii wizualizacyjnych w konstruowaniu fikcyjnej przestrzeni filmowej przy wykorzystaniu techniki nieprzerwanego ujęcia. Łącząc fotografię HD i realizm magiczny w immersyjnym doświadczeniu specjalnego odcinka serii Sky TV, *Dzień trzeci. Jesień* (*The Third Day: Autumn*, 2020), pojedyncze ujęcie spełnia wiele funkcji: od niemal dokumentalnej rejestracji pogańskiego festiwalu po wprawienie widza, w geście zaangażowanej etnografii, w Rouchowski trans. O ile w filmach zaliczanych do nurtów (re)modernizmu i *slow cinema* długie ujęcia służą zazwyczaj kontemplacji, o tyle w *Jesieni* indukowane poczucie nudy usypia czujność. Można dostrzec tu odwołanie do konwencji *slow cinema*/TV i livestreamu, a przy tym aktualizację konwencji na potrzeby nowych modeli konsumpcji tekstów audiowizualnych.