Skeuomorphic Time: How Autocinema and Epilepsy Remake Temporality

by Sally Walker-Hudecki

A thesis exhibition presented to OCAD University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art in Interdisciplinary Art, Media and Design

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2024

Acknowledgements

I must thank OCADU for the President's Scholarship in recognition of my work, which financially made it possible for me to pursue this degree. I deeply thank my primary supervisor Paulette Phillips and secondary supervisor Selmin Kara for their insight, patience, humour, kindness, and support. I thank my immediate family for their sparks of genius and profound thinking in addition to every manner of practical support and encouragement they give. My mother raised me with many important sayings, the most relevant here being to always follow the burning fire within. I thank my extended family for their uniqueness, charisma, nerve and talent. I thank my most excellent teachers, and the good, kind doctors, but not the ones who didn't really listen. I thank my husband for every second he has known me. I thank my friends near and far for their most wonderful distractions and patience. I thank my actors and collaborators for their vulnerability and trust.

Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis uses feminist film theory and filmmaking practices as an entry point to investigate Geschwind's syndrome, a set of symptoms accompanying temporal lobe epilepsy that I suffer from. Geschwind's syndrome has been hypothesized to be responsible for cases of hypergraphia, a form of compulsive documentation in writing or drawing, as well as hyperreligiosity, states of euphoria, deja and jamais vu, and altered sexuality (Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Proust, and various figures of religious importance are speculated to have suffered from the condition, with their works marking the influence of some of these experiences) (LaPlante 2016).

Deja vu is an experience familiar to many, whereas jamais vu – the phenomenon of being suddenly unable to recognize familiar locations, faces, and objects – is more rare. The sudden appearance of such states introduces bumps, slips, skips, and loops into one's sense of linear time. While these kinds of experiences are present in all human encounters to some degree, one finds them intensified in both the Geschwind Syndrome and cinema, with regard to cinema's ability to convey ecstatic or heightened affective states, warped perceptions of time, and the desire for self-documentation in distinctive ways.

Taking this connection as a starting point, this paper explores what the Geschwind Syndrome and cinema can learn from one another by interrogating the affordances of mental and audiovisual intensification for understanding how humanity comes to terms with time and mortality. On a more speculative note, it also asks whether cinema is itself a manifestation of the Geschwind Syndrome or of the desire to transcend the looming end of our mortal perception.

Skeuomorphs, my thesis film, works to relate hypergraphia to various complex affective states, including nostalgia, disembodiment, and reflectiveness. *Skeuomorphs* investigates how we document and understand time, and how the technology we use to do so interacts with our inborn senses of the sacred and the sentimental.

I. Foreword and Introduction

When I was twenty-two, I had a conversation about creativity and madness with Jack White on the way to a sudden dinner in Nashville. At the time, White was somewhat of a religious figure in the music industry. As a modern spokesman of rock and roll, as well as the archetypal kingpin and ideological missionary of vinyl's comeback, he personified the invincibility of electric blues. I was quite strange myself.

We had just met, about twenty-five minutes earlier in Third Man Records, before he invited me out to get some food. We got in the car and the conversation soon led us to the explanation I often have to share in transportation with strangers. A reminder to loved ones too sometimes: I have epilepsy, so I can't drive. Although I have only gone fully unconscious once with my seizure disorder, I often experience altered states of consciousness during which I stay "awake". It's always clear on an EEG where and how they occur for me: once a month or less (or, alternately, much more often)[1]. This is how he came to know the secret about me. I kept it mostly to myself in those days, hiding profusely the pills I had to take, the emotional scars, the fear, the over-reliance on my parents, the moments I felt weak, anxious, wordless, disconnected, unplugged with tendrils of visual information glitching in my nervous system, the doctor's appointments, and especially the consequences of any deviation from my habits. White asked if I took medication and I revealed another secret, one that I keep even more closely guarded: that I felt more creative when I wasn't on medications for epilepsy at all, regardless of how disruptive my seizures were. Their risk was lesser to me then, at that stage in my neurology, than the risk of forgetting how to write, visualise movies, play and compose music, think fluidly, and have nimble ideas[2]. During the period without medication, I had begun to film and write often, trying to capture the uncanny sensations that I encountered. The products of that period of obsessive documentation form the basis of *Skeuomorphs* and this paper.

---

[1] This is not always the case with seizures. Sometimes one has to be confined to a monitoring ward and live in the hospital for at least three weeks to catch some murmur of activity, hooked up to electrodes and screening your brainwaves for all to see for almost 24 hours a day.

[2] That's no longer the case. At this time, I regard myself most complete with medicine.

But more on White: it was strange how familiar I felt with him. Public figures we observe daily have no awareness of us through the screen after all. I even recognised his fingers and knuckles, sat wondering at dinner, half a mind on our conversation and the other half about how on earth I could feel that I know the hands of someone I've never met before. Of course, I had inadvertently studied them as a fan, during the process of shooting his 2012 show at Alexandra Palace in London on super 8, guerrila-style, and editing it painstakingly into a DIY music video, which I put on YouTube[3]. But the feeling of unfamiliar knowing (an experience of epistemological confusion that is reminiscent of the uncanny or a kind of fascination evocative of the embodied sublime perhaps) was something I knew very well, due to my constant *interictal state*. In medical terminology, inter-ictal refers to the state between seizures, which can contain symptoms such as deja vu, hypergraphia, hyperreligiosity, memory problems, fatigue, anxiety, depression, and auras (physical sensations that can indicate a seizure is coming soon). That intersection between the intensive focus or attunement that comes with fandom and with altered states of mind also became one of the kernels for this project.

As the anecdote with Jack White lays out, this film and thesis paper concern the tension between obsessive documentation and experiences of the numinous. It also explores the perceptual dimensions of the pathological, especially as it relates to my experience of Geschwind's syndrome, and how it amplifies and extends consciousness. Geschwind's syndrome is a group of symptoms said to appear in people with temporal lobe epilepsy, causing the symptoms mentioned above as well as others such as social clinginess and altered sexuality (Seized, LaPlante). One of the most salient features of Geschwind's disease central to this project is the purported hypergraphia: compulsive writing or drawing, near-constant documentation, posited to be caused by changes in the temporal lobe. It surfaces between seizures during the inter-ictal state as I mentioned earlier. Notably, compulsive documentation is a tendency that is not solely encountered in epileptic experiences. It is also a prominent feature of our expanding automedial environment.

Automedia refers to both a process and product; "the range of media forms and technologies through which people engage in digital, visual, filmic, performative, textual, and transmediated forms

[3] This video can be seen at this link.

of documenting, constructing and presenting the self" (Kennedy and McGuire 1). The near-constant practices of self-documentation that come with smartphone photography and videography, as well as audio recording and writing, are forms of meaning-making that help to attend to, but ultimately do not resolve, a strong sense of precarity. They mark efforts to preserve what appears as ephemeral (including one's own sense of being) and extend consciousness. Media scholar Marshall McLuhan even goes as far as suggesting that proliferating media technologies serve to externalize memory and act as "extensions of man" (McLuhan 6). In 1964, McLuhan wrote that "after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned" (McLuhan 5).

Yet, automediality also gestures toward, responds to, and interacts with the human urge towards the sacred, the unspeakable, and/or the symbolic. Known for his spiritual approach to cinema, André Bazin suggests that "the guiding myth of the invention of cinema is… a complete realism, the recreation of the world in its own image — an image upon which the irreversibility of time and the artist's interpretation do not weigh" (Bazin 17). This omniscient realism — ambivalent to the work of the documentarians involved — borders on the divine, arguably outside our human time. Our networked documentations extend our memories and awareness electronically to mimic omniscience, a state of experiential knowingness linked previously and primarily to divinity, psychedelics, or the collective unconscious.

Geschwind's syndrome is a contested diagnosis, but elements of it have been observed for centuries. Norman Geschwind and Stephen Waxman initially described the effects of temporal lobe epilepsy on personality in the 1970s, specifying increased religiosity, hypergraphia, social clinginess, circumstantiality, meticulousness, and attention to detail (1580). They observed religiosity to include "an increasing sense of mysticism, but ecstatic ictal experiences, in some cases accompanied by visions of a religious nature… reported in patients with EEG evidence of temporal lobe discharges" (Lambert and Trimble). The highlighting of ecstasy in their account aligns well with the details included in Spanish mystic and religious reformer Teresa de Avila's autobiography (Juárez-Almendros 6). A figure canonized by the Catholic Church, de Avila is known to have recounted experiences of seizure-like states in her writings (yet situating these within a complex Catholic

cosmology) (Juárez-Almendros 7). “Excessive and compulsive writing,” on the other hand, was observed by Geschwind among temporal lobe epilepsy patients, gravitating toward “meticulous and detailed writing often concerned with moral, ethical, or religious issues” (Lambert and Trimble). Building upon Geschwind’s findings, Panico, Parmegriani and Trimble suggest that observed hypergraphia can also include drawings and paintings (Panico et al 1). In relation to this formulation, one could argue that that hypergraphia, in the twenty-first century, can include digital writing and note-taking, digital photography, and audiovisual documentation. *Skeuomorphs* and this paper take that possibility as a starting point, to reflect on the creative entanglements between hypergraphia and cinematic media.

The project and the thesis film introduced in this document started as an attempt to create a narrative out of the copious textual and audiovisual materials I had fervently collected, mostly between 2011 and 2015: 30,000 words on 75 digital documents, eighteen hours of raw footage, ten handwritten journals, and 23 rolls of 35mm photographs. These, I contend, are products of my hypergraphia from a period when my epilepsy was active and unmedicated. I had a strong sense during that time that the ictal and interictal experiences of warped time, sacredness, ecstasy, and intensified emotions imparted upon me and my work a greater sense of realism. It was as if my experiences of broken perception during and just after seizures intensified my perception of mundane reality, jarred loose the granular details of each moment. This idea led to intensive documentation — if I could capture each moment in its incongruous entirety, the ideas it led to, observations, feelings, overheard traffic, ignored text chimes, the quality of light on the wall, how a lock of hair fell over a lover’s face, the underlying aural mesh of trash tv playing in the background — perhaps I could represent the truth, as close to it as I had ever seen represented. It was as if I was close reading my life and expected something to fall from it. There was no analysis present in the writing I did at the time — rather it was lists, a compendium of simultaneous observations that I thought could contribute to this future work, a representation of reality as rich as I could make it.

I wrote 30,000 words (as well as ten books worth of journal entries) between September 2011 and July 2014. Then I stopped writing and started to film super 8 footage of my life. By early 2015, I had started medicine to contain the seizures that began to increase in duration, frequency, and

severity, and the urge to document in this way completely stopped. *Skeuomorphs* is composed of the aforementioned footage, as well as footage shot in the fall of 2023. The recent footage is designed, written and carried out as if for a narrative film. The skeleton of the screenplay, based on my older writing, has been condensed and collated in areas where there is repetition. It is intended to connect a sense of the self-conscious, autocinematic time of social media and real time, the sentimental nostalgic with the spontaneously raw. I argue that it is these clashing cohabitants that mark transcendence.

Between the smartphone and the millennial brain, there is a growing attachment and ardent relationship that reaches the extent of religiosity. While the millennial mind might be cynical and its medial attachments might be dubious, everyday technologies such as smartphones are often what one turns to when one is questioning, when one feels the need to connect, when one seeks to mark moments of ultimate significance. In fact, in recent medical research, it is hypothesised that people experiencing visual hallucinations due to schizophrenia may be able to alleviate them by looking through the camera on their smartphone (Lewis). Not unlike the Euro-Christian god of the 16th century, the networked camera is something that tests one's forbearance, delivers meaning, and helps one to feel connected to the world. Relating the technological to the spiritual this way allows us to understand both the ways in which altered states of mind might have found solace or grounding nature in various mediums at different periods in history, and the ways in which self-documenting digital video content can be seen as snapshots of our culture in the contemporary era. Further, we can see our use of technology still carries limitations, flaws, superstitions, and idiosyncratic habits, even as the capacities of media approach (and exceed) human perceptual limits. Finally, the ways that we use technology to self-document warp our sense of temporality and memory. The constant self-documentation that is commonplace makes filmmakers of us all, and the exposure to everyday documentation of others' lives in real time has created a new, diffuse, permeable spectatorship. In this way, cinema and film-making have become a ubiquitous presence, one that can be protective against suffering by making transcendent meaning of it.

My filmmaking is informed by my own seizures, by my inter-ictal states, and by the idiosyncratic flaws that are inherent in vision. I use super 8 film primarily because of its way of

capturing both transcendently beautiful grainy light and imperfect artefacts. My motivation in making most of my work is to channel a realistic feeling of embodied time by reaching for an overly sentimental, decorative look in conjunction with raw spontaneity. To me, it is the sense of being in a moment you know you will remember— the sentimentality of forming a memory, in balance with the unfolding, unpredictable nature of being there as it happens. My thesis film, *Skeuomorphs*, is intended to have the sense of an unfolding instagram story, fragmentary but immersive.

As well, the notion of a skeuomorph, an image used in design that refers to an earlier form or functionality of a technology, is a kind of cultural nostalgia. As defined by Beth Lipman and Dr. Jamie Jones in the panel discussion "On Function: Skeuomorphs and Other Traces" at the Chipstone Foundation, a skeuomorph is "an object that bears a resemblance to an obsolete or bygone form of technology, in which traces of this technology often become ornament or cues for users to navigate new material environments" (Lipman and Jones). It's an anachronism that reminds me that as time moves along, it leaves vestiges of visual knowledge, shortcuts. I use the film to explore questions of how certain images, kinds of femininity and relationships can be skeuomorphic. Perhaps these skeuomorphic images, like autocinematic selfies, can bend time, and transform the cinematic feminine image through obsolescence into a subversive symbol.

During the panel discussion, Beth Lipman and Dr. Jamie Jones discuss how skeuomorphs transmit anxiety about change, labour, leisure, and how we spend our time (Lipman and Jones). When one takes a photo or video with their smartphone, it is likely that the icon for the camera app contains an image of a 35mm film camera. This is one example of a skeuomorph. The cultural loss of handcrafts, including photochemical film, leaves remnants with vague, illegible recognition, such as sprocket holes and jumpy grain. This panel discussion describes the discomfort and uncanny effect of technological development, and its concomitant necessitation of indefensibly dangerous labour, such as silicon mining. We have ambivalence about the move to a digital world, and there is always a mediating factor — a skeuomorph is both mediated memory and information, and through it we remember a story of the past that we might prefer to be true. In my filmmaking practise and in this particular film, I hope to establish a more embodied sense of the past. The growing disembodiment of digital technological communication is combated in, if not editing, at least shooting physical film,

capturing light. This lends a welcome and important reminder that resources are limited. My collection of raw film reels cannot be accessed by government agencies, or removed by large corporations, unlike published digital video online.

In terms of aesthetic approaches to skeuomorphs, I am interested in the ornamental. In discussing such approaches, Rosalind Galt writes about the “pretty” (meaning decorative, ornamental, colourful, symmetric and painstakingly achieved) as the “often unspoken bad object of successive critical models” (Galt 2). She adds that the “foundational language of Western aesthetics is not only logocentric but, as a corollary, iconophobic, and it finds the image to be secondary, irrational, and bound to the inadequate plane of the surface” (Galt 3). Rather than privileging the photogenie of the "profilmic real”, Galt argues that “painterly” composition with “overt construction in the image” is not irrational, empty, or devoid of meaning (Galt 9). Mulvey’s similar critique of the foundational language of mainstream aesthetics informs her take on the classic male gaze, which she defines as an approach that treats the surface of the film like the body of a woman (Mulvey 835).

This viewpoint has been a salient, debated piece of feminist film discourse for many decades, yet Galt opens an innovative theoretical space for the ornamental, feminized image to be meaningful and subversive. In this way, the surface of the screen and the feminine image can be made meaningful even in scopic pleasure — there can form a powerful alliance between the pretty and the significant. I work hard to create a heightened visual style through my composition, lighting, and editing, and I think of Galt’s writing often. Her idea that “as an aesthetic category, the pretty contains within itself the ambivalence about the truth-status of the image that underwrites film theory” strikes me as incredibly accurate. There is no reason that the pretty image cannot contain serious questions, put forward arguments for the previously undervalued or unheard. I strain to include pretty visual elements in my filmmaking to match heightened emotional experiences that are true to life, bittersweet, ambivalent. Further, I enjoy including imperfections such as leader flickering and out of focus moments as ornamentations in themselves. These moments can work self-reflexively, to strategically distance the viewer so that they can examine their own identification with the image and its meaning. In my digital editing, these traces of photochemical film are skeuomoprhs themselves, symbols of an earlier cinematic existence that is now transformed.

1. Cinema and Warped Perceptions of Time

Warped perceptions of time are a familiar trope within the history of cinema. One finds representations of strange time in many generic forms — the music video, documentary, or transcendental cinema, for example. What I mean by transcendental cinema, here, is films that address mystical experiences or evocations of ecstatic states in the lives of ordinary characters. In this project, I am drawn to the impressions left by such moments of ecstasy or transcendence, as these speak to the states of consciousness marked by Geschwind's Syndrome. I have encountered such moments in films that are broad in their generic forms, and somewhat eclectic. Stylistically, they all embrace imperfections through diverse representational strategies that can even be considered as aesthetic poles. At one end, there is Direct Cinema, and its rejection of artificiality: embracing natural light, lens flares, muffled sound, interferences of noise, film grain, and shaky camerawork (Beattie). The imperfections integral to this documentary mode of filmmaking are particularly powerful in capturing and highlighting the mystical in the ordinary. At the other end, there is classical Hollywood melodrama, with its hyperbolic inflation of emotions through high artifice: saturated colours, studio lighting, lavish sets, elaborate scores, and extravagant performance styles. It is with regard to these techniques that melodrama is often celebrated for providing spectators with experiences of ecstasy and religiosity, the lack of which is a characteristic feature of modernity (Leoonard).

For example, the American-German indie film *The Future* (Miranda July, 2011), features an ordinary character — Sophie, played by the director herself, a dance teacher in her 30s. The film follows her and her boyfriend for a week as they prepare for the adoption of an injured cat. The film uses several devices to visualize the character's minor reckoning with mortality and the passage of time, as experienced through the anticipatory anxiety over the adoption of the cat. In one instance, we are treated to the internal monologue of the cat talking to itself, its paws shifting in a cage. Here, we are threaded through perspectives, as we hear Sophie's imagination of the cat's lonely voice. In another pivotal sequence, the moon is anthropomorphised, and it speaks with Sophie. In these scenes, the heightened emotional state of the character expands from her body to be seen and heard through aural and visual representations that are impossible and strange. What is physically possible is transcended, and the internal becomes perceptible.

In *The Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Benh Zeitlin, 2012), as Hushpuppy, the young protagonist, faces the imminent death of her father, we hear a heartbeat sound folded into the foley and environmental sound of their last scene together. The camera moves haptically, handheld, with her desperate hugs into his chest. In this way, we are placed into her emotional — but also physical — perspective. These are examples of aesthetic strategies that strengthen identification with main characters by externalising emotional states using heightened audiovisual means. In these scenes, extreme emotional states extend perception beyond the singular body, imbuing the environment with the physical sensations and emotional imaginings of the characters' internal worlds.

The direct cinema documentary *Monterey Pop* (D.A. Pennebaker, 1968) uses technical flaws to similar effect. During the sequence featuring Otis Redding's "I've Been Loving You Too Long", the camera lingers behind his back as he performs, and faces directly into a bright stage light. We see just bare flickers of his silhouette between totally white, blown-out frames, as he sings. By embracing the extreme-contrast, overexposed performance, we are placed into a state of emotional intensity, syncing up with Redding's voice, dips, and bows as he sings. We see very little detail, no audience, no band — and yet we are totally identified with the effort of his performance, the song itself, the fullness of the stage light at its peak while Redding holds a long, effortful note. In this way, technically flawed and extreme aesthetics capturing transcendent states can be constructed via cinema's manufacturing (of sets, costumes, puppetry, foley), or via the radical embrace of the direct moment without regard for technical perfection.

During a personal encounter, Pennebaker told me the story of that shot himself, at Hot Docs 2018. After a screening of *The War Room*, my father pushed me towards the stage where Pennebaker, his wife, and his collaborator Chris Hedges lingered. I shook his hand and introduced myself, shakily, and told him that the Otis Redding sequence had inspired me to see film as an art for the first time, when I saw it as a young teenager. He explained to me that as he began editing during the summer of 1967, he was torn about that section of footage. He knew it was technically flawed, but felt hesitant to remove any of Redding's performance. Robbie Robertson, a friend, viewed it with him, and encouraged him strongly to drop it, finding no merit in its unique, high-contrast translation of light and sound. Pennebaker dithered more, dropping it, with regret, until a few months later, when he was

informed by phone that Redding had died in a plane crash at the age of 26. His confrontation with mortality ultimately led to compromise, tethering the documentary to imperfection, ensuring that it makes keepsakes of everything, even ruins, as reminders. Such films constitute my archive of transcendental cinema.

In my epilepsy, I experience odd skips and jumps in time — effects that can directly invoke post-cinematic articulations of space-time relations, as well as the Freudian uncanny (Shaviro). The latter locates a sense of estrangement in the experiences of warped time. For example, the experience of jamais vu (a seizure effect that causes one to lose recognition of familiar spaces, faces, and objects) is highly defamiliarising and often comes on without warning. I have experienced this most notably as loss of the recognition of the neighbourhood I lived in for my entire early life, loss of recognition for the home I lived in, and inability to recognise the faces of my parents and husband at times. I must clarify that these absences of recognition are not experienced as emotionally neutral — rather, they accompany immense dread and fear; in addition, there is a sense that I should recognise them, that I should know where I am, a vestige of half-awareness that drones unintelligibly behind the numbness.

In another example, there are epileptic experiences of nearly psychedelic ecstasy (interictally and ictally). These contrasting extremes can be highly intensified experiences; often time unfolds as if in a dream or a poetic cinematic sequence: it becomes impressionistic, blurs. While outwardly impaired by a seizure and unable to express myself in any way, I have experienced incredibly strong senses of beauty, aesthetic pleasure, and powerful benevolent presence. Finally, in the aftermath of seizures (during which the jamais vu can last for up to half an hour), there is a jaggedness to the remembrance of the event, jump cuts persist, not the coherence of unbroken “well” time. These kinds of heightened states have been highly explored in cinema, visualised through techniques such as disjointed sound and image, montage, slow-motion, double exposures. Cutting, jump cutting, flashbacks, flash forward, and other abstractions of temporality are also techniques that help evoke heightened states in cinema. The temporal lobe seizure seems to open the interiority of consciousness that is rarely accessible in other forms. Because seizures don’t tend to cause loss of consciousness, only its alteration, they abstract other straightforward time. They also bring about a sense of fragmentation that generates a longing for continuity. This longing has a similar affective intensity

and tonality with nostalgia, especially as it is understood as an overarching structure of feeling in the twenty-first century (brought about by emerging technologies' fragmentation of everyday experiences). Discussing the intersection between technology and nostalgia, Svetlana Boym states: "in counterpoint to our fascination with cyberspace… there is a no less global epidemic of nostalgia…a longing for continuity in a fragmented world" (Boym XIV). This sense of fragmentation is what hypergraphia hopes to repair.

With the advent of smartphones, computers, and our networked world, there is an impression of inevitability to every captured experience; perhaps we could somehow record and represent each and every physical eventuality. There are more billions of seconds of publicly accessible video on YouTube than there are people on earth (Lozano). It would take over 17,000 years to watch it all. This hypergraphic documentation, or as Sian Petronella Campbell puts it, this "age of digital information hoarding," expresses an "an anxiety of the self" (Campbell 7). I contend that there is a hypergraphic tendency inherent in the constant autocinema of TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat, and other visual social platforms. This hypergraphic autocinema is "concerned with an anxiety of forgetting, or of being forgotten. We are self-conscious…concerned with how our work is and will continue to be perceived" (Campbell 7). Further, the rapid rate of technological renewal, accelerating exponentially, with its concomitant invitation to distribute one's own life materials, has resulted in an "anxiety of obsolescence" (Campbell 7). This odd sense of immediate obsolescence is itself another crisis of temporality. Images mirror and extend the temporalities that exist in the sublime, as characterized by Alicia Spencer Hall:

> Saintly visionaries and photographic subjects exist in a temporal framework outside of 'normal' linear time. Still-living, long-dead and yet-to-be-born individuals populate the vision realm of medieval saints. Mere moments spent in vision-space may be felt as hours by witnesses to the visionary episode, trapped in a different timeline. A photograph records a moment in time: figuratively in the narrative implied by the picture, and literally inasmuch as it chemically fixes the rays of light reflected from the photographed object(s). Film, composed of still photographic frames run together, resuscitates such frozen tableaux, offering spectators access to an alternate temporality which runs alongside our own. Specific acts of looking, however, allow those enmeshed in linear time to momentarily experience this alternative temporality – be that moments in which a Christian witnesses a saint's miracles, or a cinema spectator identifies overwhelmingly with the narratives onscreen (Hall 60-61).

With this link between divine visions and cinematic imagery in mind, how should we understand autocinematic production and spectatorship? How does autocinema alter our understanding of memory, cinematic production, and the numinous?

II. Feminist and Psychoanalytic Film Theory

We can begin to understand how to situate self-documentation within cinema theory through the writing of cinema scholar Jenny Gunn. Gunn writes on the feminine image: "what are we to make of the power and gendered dynamics that Mulvey identifies in the apparatus in the age of the selfie, where the feminine is so often the object of her own gaze?" (Gunn 2). Close reading Kim Kardashian's seflies as published in her 2015 book *Selfish*, Gunn observes that "the sheer obstinacy of Kim's own image starts to become uncanny and defamiliarizing the more it proliferates in front of a changing backdrop of location" and concludes that "Kim's selfies, in fact, refuse or prohibit access in a way that stands in opposition to the accessibility the selfie format seemingly represents' (Gunn 6). Here, repetitive, hypergraphic representation becomes defamiliarising, uncanny, a form of jamais vu. Further, the idea of feminine imagery as permeable is challenged. Now it is rather "the ontology of the selfie as performed action, the isolating and perhaps even self-protective nature of this format" that becomes notable (Gunn 6). The smartphone apparatus in female hands, "thrust…before her like a weapon" recalls prior theorisation of the camera, but here redefines the selfie as well as the self-produced feminine image (Gunn 6). Female self-documentation can thus be seen as a hostile act of alienation and distantiation. Gunn clarifies:

> Initial scholarly and popular conversations surrounding the emergence of the selfie format were preoccupied with questions of the male gaze – whether women taking and sharing their own photographs were finally achieving feminist autonomy or, alternatively, internalising and finally succumbing to a full and now self-legislated objectification. But the immediate assignation of digital self-mediation as a "women's issue" and an issue of representational politics alone also obscured the larger implications of the forward-facing camera as a new media form. (Gunn 153).

There is more to absorb in terms of Gunn's understanding of temporality in digital self-documentation.

Gunn goes on to describe the experience of the smartphone camera as "a simultaneously lived and mediated experience" (Gunn 153). Indeed, there is a way that social media self-documentation seems to mediate and remediate experiences in real time, as a way of visual writing. It is an instantaneous way of creating a product of memory that can be constantly viewed, and it engenders a sense of amorphous vigilance. One feels surveilled by an invisible public, simply within the social network itself, notwithstanding the privacy concerns inherent in the corporate collection of data by enormous social media platforms. The phone screen as a recording device engenders a new looking, both for the producer of filmed content and for the receiver.

Further, Gunn describes "the function of the smartphone camera as a filmic apparatus in which the mode of mediation crosses fluidly between objective and subjective modes, where the capture of reality in front of the lens is subject to interruption and put into a near constant dialectical relationship with the self" (Gunn 153). And again, we return to an underlying anxiety: "these self-referential gestures, and the selfie being of course the most self-referential of them all, thus speak to the anxiety of the subject in the face of the digital sublime" (Gunn 9). Here, there is contrast again — anxiety, perhaps even terror — and the sublime. This sense, of disappearance of the self within an expanse, justifies my turn towards the religious to understand our relation to this digital sublime. There is a sense of impossible scale at play here.

Roland Barthes seems to agree with the subject-destroying effect of documentation, as he writes in *Image, Music, Text*: "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every paint of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative· where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (Barthes 142). As he discusses the figure of the author, Barthes brings us to Proust:

> Proust…was visibly concerned with the task of inexorably blurring, by an extreme subtilization, the relation between the writer and his characters; by making of the narrator not he who has seen and felt nor even he who is writing, but he who is going to write…By a radical reversal, instead of putting his life into his novel, as is so often maintained, he made of his very life a work for which his own book was the model (Barthes 144).

We can thus understand Proust as a writer of autofiction, and in many ways, a character of social media and self-documentation. Barthes' use of the visual metaphor of the blur is intriguing; it is perhaps a reference to the inevitable failure of correlation between the symbolic and the Real. In

every representation, there is failure, loss, absence. This is only further foregrounded, made central, when the foreshortened lens of creation focuses so directly on a near-match, author and character, self and self-documentation.

> Barthes writes presciently on what would become autofiction, and its temporality:
>
> the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now….writing can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, 'depiction' (Barthes 145).

This holds true, in our age of instantaneous production and distribution, of vertically integrated devices. Now the devices which we use to document our lives are likely the very same with which we perceive much of the media of the outside world. This overlapping, permeable materiality (marked by media convergence) creates a temporal crisis in which the present and past are equally accessible. Sian Petronella Campbell and Kylie Cardell both write on autofiction and time in relation to data collection, noting that data collection on biometric devices (such as watches and smartphones) contributes to an automedial portrait of a person over time (Campbell 2, Cardell 3). Campbell contextualises automedia in our time by identifying that "with the rise of new technologies the instinct to record the self is increasingly becoming an automatic one" (Campbell 2). We should consider all self-documentation on social media to be automedia, the creation of our "photorealist, mimetic avatar[s]" (Broderick 8). Campbell also notes that "confession is increasingly a requirement when it comes to participation in digital media," a relation to religiosity (particularly Christianity) that ties back into Geschwind's syndrome (Campbell 3). When one uses a data-tracking device during exercise, there is also a "simple sort of pleasure in watching the red, green and blue rings spin round as you stand more, move more, run more…something soothing in knowing that at any given moment in time, you can press a button and see exactly what your heart is doing…and see what your heart has been doing today, yesterday, this month, this year….it was simply the accumulation of my 'self,' as viewed through the lens of time" (Campbell 4-5).

Campbell argues, similarly to Gunn, that "autofiction writers are concerned with an anxiety of *forgetting,* or of being forgotten" (Campbell 7). Autofiction in his account is "a co-mingling of a desire to record the self, as well as a desire to control one's own narrative" (Campbell 7). This

generates a vexed relation between the present and the future, one in which there is an imaginary future self that is perceived, and the desire to meet this imaginary drives an impulse to record the present. Of course, there is always a gap between the imaginary and the real, and so this desire can never be met. There will always be elements of spontaneity that cannot be captured. The desire to meet the imaginary seems to be a search for the ability to freeze time, and to be able to exist within a diffused point of view, to see the present as from multiple perspectives, including those that are impossible (seeing the inside of one's body, for example). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson write that "the teller of his or her own story becomes, in the act of narration, both the observing subject and the object of investigation, remembrance, and contemplation" (Smith and Watson 1). Until recently, such manifold perspective was always considered the realm of the divine, the spiritual. Now it has entered the realm of the technological.

In a conversation between Francesca Coppa, Alexis Lothian and Tisha Turk about the fan communities around vidding online, Alexis Lothian describes the temporality of the internet as "speeded-up", acknowledging that the way of engaging with visual internet content can be largely mindless and passive but for small niche communities (Lothian 238). Vidding is the practise of creating "fan edits", cutting together clips of certain television shows or films, and further, "a part of female film history in that it is the story of women re-cutting popular culture to make it more attractive to them, or to emphasise a different narrative or emotional strand of the story'" (Lothian 231). Here, there is also a permeable relationship to cinematic media, a "relationship to culture that you develop when media stops being a finished product and becomes material that you can use" (Lothian 239). Just like it does for the subversive selfie-taker and automedial documentarian, vidding opens another creative identity for women online: "vidding is giving young women a sense of artistic identity as video artists very early on: you can now be a vidder because you create and edit video, the way you can see yourself as a dancer because you dance, or a writer because you write" (Lothian 233). And like those other roles, it is also a labour that is visible and invisible at the same time (Lothian 238). In life writing, Smith and Watson analyse the nature of the doubled self — the writing self and the inner self, emphasis mine: "there is also the self experienced only by that person, the self felt from the inside that the writer can never get 'outside of.' The 'inside,' or personally experienced,

self has a history. While it may not be meaningful as an objective 'history of the times' it is *a record of self-observation*, not a history observed by others" (Smith and Waston 6). In this way, the recording of experiences of exceptional intensity, such as those experienced in seizures or in religious trances, are most interesting — being that they are so interior, and yet invisible to the outside. The smartphone camera serves the image as the conscious serves the subconscious; it is able to excavate and act upon the original matter.

There has also been a moral element to the recording of personal information and self-documentation for eons. Perhaps to counter the weight of potential narcissism, there tends to be ideological and moral elements to self-documentation. Benjamin Franklin, for example, kept an almanac detailing his day-to-day life, "to document and chronicle the self-conscious development of his character" (Cardell 4). Although we seem to document ourselves at a more and more intense pace, I would argue that this practise is neither narcissistic nor moralistic, but rather is a neutral component of human nature, empowered by technology. As Cardell puts it, "we look at our data doubles as we gazed into the mirror as teenagers wondering who we were and who we might be" (Cardell 6). As we know through neuroscience, memory is physically transformative, not exact: "remembering involves a re-interpretation of the past in the present" (Smith and Watson 22) And of course, "techniques and practices of remembering change. How people remember, what they remember, and who does the remembering are historically specific" (Smith and Watson 23). Further, "we are always fragmented in time" (Smith and Watson 61). Of course, the meaning made of self-documentation, memoir and autobiography is always dependent on the context of the time, but the desire has remained stable. In terms of tracking data, for example, "a Fitbit cannot record how it *feels* to spend 34 minutes in the "peak zone," but it can prompt recollection, it is a mnemonic, and it provides an account of time spent, how, and by whom" (Cardell 6). The search for ways to express the inexpressible, the wordless sensations of life, will never cease, and the ways in which we do this through autocinema are morally neutral. These practises are not only attempts at expression, but attempts to communicate through time, to fold time into a many-sided single whole. Through this folded time, we express the sensation of having memory while making more memories — a constant presence.

Now with an understanding of the autocinematic layers of time, we may move onto the discussion of the sacred and magical in relation to autocinema. Scholar Laura Marks writes on the relation of the cinematic and electronic to religious ritual and the image. She focuses on the practise of using talismans, which "in medieval and early modern Islamicate and European magical practice, are objects that intervene in the order of the cosmos" (Marks 134). Marks contends, and I agree, that "the talisman's legacy remains as a minor tendency in our disenchanted times" (Marks 135). Marks connects talisman images with "operational images", the term for contemporary images that do not enact change in our universe, or exist for aesthetic or representational purposes but rather to assist in functional performance of machines (Marks 135). Rather, Marks explains that "medieval talismans worked…because the practitioners understood how earthly beings were connected to the cosmos" (Marks 136). Marks explains how talismans work now:

> In our time, certain artworks, performances, and movies, as well as some activist projects, act as talismans by developing connections between earthly bodies and cosmic forces. They may do this by operating as microcosms, managing the cosmos in miniature; for example, art and activist works that connect earthly bodies to the powers of metals, wind, ocean, or stars. Or they may identify connections among things that appear separate in space and time and re-fold these connections in new ways, compelling individual or collective action in the present; for example, some Afrofuturist films operate this way. (Marks 136, 138).

Indeed, the use of devices to fold time and enact change on our universe has never stopped, and we do imbue these devices with magical import. Marks continues to explore exactly how smartphones specifically function as, and exist parallel to talismans:

> Like talismans, digital applications carry out algorithmic operations on the physical world, folding together distant points. Also like talismans, most of them are small, fitting easily into the hand or a pocket. They use their powers to affect things at a distance to send messages instantly, invest your money, protect you from maleficent intruders, and perhaps locate and attack the distant home of your enemy. They use their powers of divination to predict the weather, magically draw music and movies down from the clouds, predict when you will be fertile, and of course read what your stars are doing today. And like talismans, they aim to present the cosmos in miniature….A media archaeology of digital apps will find their origins in small devices, fashioned of particular stones and metals at particular calendrical moments, inscribed with mysterious diagrams, prayed over using powerful invocations, and worn or buried to begin their work. Talismans constitute the deep source of contemporary media technologies that exert action at a distance…Talismans are the precedent for technologies that rely on the interconnectedness of…seemingly separate things, and for images that don't represent but carry out operations (Marks).

Here, we can see how a charge of the supernatural remains present. Our behaviour is the same, using different objects for the same process. Now, our hypergraphic documentation devices are also our

talismans. In this way, by consolidating magic and the real into one device, are we more likely to mix them up? Do we know how to distinguish between the power of writing and the effect of spiritual invocation, when we are doing them on one device? Here again is the blur between performance and record-keeping, documentary and fiction, ritual and habit.

The link between hypergraphia and religiosity, as seen in temporal lobe epilepsy, is growing into a cultural experience (regardless of neurological health). To understand how the Geschwind syndrome has leaked into our technological culture, it is helpful to observe how the syndrome manifests in those with temporal lobe seizures, such as Teresa de Avila. Alicia Spencer-Hall writes that "medieval mystical episodes are made intelligible to modern audiences through reference to the filmic – the language, form, and lived experience of cinema. Similarly, reference to the realm of the mystical affords a means to express the disconcerting physical and emotional effects of watching cinema" (Spencer-Hall 11). Further, Spencer-Hall explains "that our use, enjoyment, and conceptualization of cinema – and more recently, three-dimensional virtual environments online – reflect our enduring preoccupation with those topics which were previously the domain of religion" (Spencer-Hall 11). Like Marks, Spencer-Hall locates within these screen environments the expression and containment of "our fear and anxiety of mortality; our quest to understand the intersection of body and soul… the need to know what 'lies beyond' our present reality, and even peer into others' lives; the desire for a 'user's manual' to the universe, an explanation for why things happen to us" (Spencer-Hall 11-12). Spencer-Hall works through "equal regard" in scopic relations "characterized by a sense of transcendence", finding that "spectatorial mutuality is rendered most fully intelligible in two domains: cinematic visions in the modern movie theatre, and divine visions" (Spencer-Hall 15).

Interestingly, the autocinematic visions of social media are technically more mutual in that the platforms usually contain a form of written communication that can be seen and replied to by the creator. However, they tend to engender much less transcendence — likely because the spectatorship is much less formalised, in fact happening in many places and times, with little separation from daily life. Like the intensity of a sudden vision (or seizure) Spencer-Hall notes that "cinema spectatorship…is immersive; in the cinema, one is captive to the projector's unstoppable whirr" (Spencer-Hall 44). This is another kind of time: impermeable, interruptive, immersive, incredible. It is

not the kind of time that is experienced in the smartphone, but it is what one hopes to invoke by the habit of hypergraphia. Smartphone time is much more fragmentary, faster — more like seizure time.

Encarnación Juárez-Almendros analyses Teresa de Avila's autobiography (perhaps itself a product of hypergraphia) in her book *Disabled Bodies in Early Modern Spanish Literature: Prostitutes, Aging Women and Saints,* published in 2017. De Avila's experiences included "frequent corporeal pains, convulsions, stomach problems, dizziness, loss of consciousness and strong emotional fluctuations involving mystical graces, involuntary and uncontrollable raptures, beatific and diabolical visions, hearing voices and prophetic messages….overwhelming repetitive ecstasies and the most horrible pains and anxieties, as well as the acquisition of transcendental truth through these experiences" (Juárez-Almendros 117). Several neurologists and "general medical research on contemporary subjects with ecstatic epilepsy seems to support that Teresa may have suffered this condition" (Juárez-Almendros 117). Juárez-Almendros contextualizes epilepsy in terms of social understanding: "epilepsy denotes a lack of boundaries, a characteristic attributed also to women…historically epilepsy been called sacred disease…and has been connected with women and demonic temptations" (Juárez-Almendros 117). De Avila's description of an event that she interpreted as a religious experience matches incredibly closely with my own experiences of partial seizures:

> While the soul is seeking God in this way, it feels with the most marvelous and gentlest delight that everything is almost fading away through a kind of swoon in which breathing and all the bodily energies gradually fail … one cannot even stir the hands without a lot of effort. The eyes close without one's wanting them to close; or if these persons keep them open, they see hardly anything—nor do they read or succeed in pronouncing a letter, nor can they hardly even guess what the letter is … They hear but don't understand what they hear … In vain do they try to speak because they don't succeed in forming a word, nor if they do succeed is there the strength left to be able to pronounce it. All the external energy is lost, and that of the soul is increased so that it might better enjoy its glory. The exterior delight that is felt is great and very distinct. (XVIII: 10) Juárez-Almendros 61)

I have felt these exact sensations, and in fact, upon reading this description to members of my family, found that they also recognised these as similar to my seizures. In my 2021 film *foreign ages*, which attempts to depict the experience of a complex partial seizure from an internal perspective, my narration describes it in a hypergraphic rush, not intentionally poetically. Here, De Avila's more unpleasant experiences commingle with jamais vu and a kind of ecstasy:

> I am breathing hard, and I see you watching me and there is nothing you can do and I hear your voice and I hear your words and I hear more sounds, mine, scared ragged snags on my

> desperate breath, and this light is some of the weirdest light I have ever seen, and nothing in this place looks right at all, it is all wrong in every way, and I know I have definitely never been here before, and I have definitely never seen this person before, and my face is crawling with invisible static, and when I close my eyes, the darkness is so beautiful, but something shivers through my side, a ghost running into the dark…Sudden rush of anxious clarity buzzing down my face….not able to control legs like ice down my legs and weird ticklish feelings reminding myself to breathe and hold my head up straight responding in throaty mhmms the way you do when you're still asleep slipping into memories like waking up next to some new person. It's so pinprickingly painful to feel everything all over my body….My face started to buzz. I tried to let [my husband] know but the only way was by smacking my face and moaning — a smack like it, like the feeling in my face, and it rushed through me and I couldn't do anything and he dragged me up onto the bed and I really couldn't help but I was limp and stiff scared and still crying and still lost —I feel so fused I thought —I feel so fused — parts of words but nothing going in or out…I heard him say she's hot…He got a glass of water and I wanted him to put it to my forehead…so I angled my calf at this strange angle on the bed and looked up at his calm face with the glory behind it and he rubbed the water on my forehead and I was calm and it was beautiful….I started to come to and wake up. But it took a long time. At first I still couldn't speak and my body felt off.

Juárez-Almendros offers further medical context, worth reproducing at length:

> Norwegian neurologists Hansen and Brodtkorb examined for the first time a group of eleven patients with ecstatic epilepsy using their clinical history, electroencephalogram and other brain-imaging technology and reported that ecstatic epilepsy is characterized by brief seizures that occur without warning. The scientists define the symptomatology of ecstatic seizures as "ictal sensations of intense pleasure, joy, and contentment" (667). The syndrome can also generate an obsessive personality, a grand sense of personal destiny, hypergraphia—or writing compulsion—and intense religious and philosophical interests. The majority of patients report that their sensations during the epileptic crisis, which includes seizures and visual, olfactory and oral hallucinations, do not have equivalents in regular human occurrences; therefore, it is very difficult to explain them in words. To describe their experience they use terms such as "an indescribably pleasant and joyous feeling," "an intense happy feeling," "pleasant, but not similar to ordinary joy. It is like an explosion," "a delightful sensation of 'inebriation and floating,'" a sense that the "mind leaves the body," "a trance." Five of the eleven patients had spiritual, religious and mystic experiences, illustrated with expressions such "telepathic contact with a divine power," "an indescribable phenomenon," hearing "the voice of God," and "receiving deeper messages" and prophesies. (Juárez-Almendros 126).

In these observations, we can find greater understanding of the experiences that autocinema may respond to. While documenting compulsively, one may feel as if connected to the universe (as in Marks's talisman images as smartphones). Our ability to technologically record more and more has only enabled the habit, resembling hypergraphic compulsivity even without any further neurological markers. Further, the sense of leaving one's body is merely a stronger version of the embodied transcendence Spencer-Hall describes. Finally, there is a long history of cinema theory grappling with the inability of one form to fully represent another (as in "sensations…which… do not have equivalents in regular human occurrences; therefore, it is very difficult to explain them in words"). Though we can correlate De Avila's experiences with those now understood to be epilepsy, "presents

her lived body spontaneously receiving graces and visits by God, as an important site of knowledge and as a vehicle for her fortitude and spiritual development" (Juárez-Almendros 127-128). As opposed to Teresa's understanding of her affliction as testing her faith, those in our time who experience ecstatic epilepsy, as I have, will find that their afflictions are reflected in the technological culture in which we live.

Some of these manifestations are explored within the study of post-cinema, a term explored within *Postcinema,* a 2016 book edited by Shane Denson and Julia Leyda, who introduce post-cinema as "essentially digital, interactive, networked, ludic, miniaturized, mobile, social, processual, algorithmic, aggregative, environmental, or convergent" (Denson and Leyda 1). In her section, Vivian Sobchack writes on the relation between the body and cinema, that "many people describe and understand their minds and bodies in terms of computer systems and programs (even as they still describe and understand their lives in terms of movies)" (Sobchack 91). Indeed, our sense of spectatorship extends beyond cinema into the way many people treat their bodies; as if the events that take place in our body and the sensations that can overwhelm us without warning are cinematic events, unreal, heightened, theatrical. Often, a seizure feels like an unplanned theatrical event: all focus goes like a spotlight onto someone who, in a swoon, attempts to communicate, each detail watched closely, waiting for a change, a sign of positive movement, what will happen next, the end of the play. In trying to describe the feeling of being awake but having lost functions of my body, including speech and motion control for up to 20 minutes or more, I have occasionally used the theatre as metaphor. For years, I attended concerts at the legendary Horseshoe Tavern in Toronto, seeing bands who I idolised up close, yet gazing from the darkened floor up to the lit stage. Eventually, I played several shows on the stage, and from the drummer's throne, could see from the inside out of that vision I had so strongly attended to. This is what it's like to have a seizure, be aware of it, watch your body be unable to move, and slowly have function return — like being backstage in your brain. Sobchack explains that "seeing images mediated and made visible by technological vision thus enables us not only to see technological images but also to see technologically" (Sobchack 93). In this way, I would argue that our technological seeing has not abandoned any prior relation to the

sacred, nor has it become perfected. Rather, the more our technological vision closely mirrors (and surpasses) our own capacities, the more of our own idiosyncratic flaws will emerge within it.

III. Film Practice and Cinematic Aesthetics

I wrote the film over the summer of 2023, using as reference the many pages of hypergraphic writing I had from 2011-2014. At least half of the film's footage is also from that time, particularly the super 8 film footage. I digitised the super 8 footage, then organised it, manually cutting and labelling it from 2018 to 2019, forming a searchable library that I can edit together with my digital footage. Some of this footage was also used in my 2021 film *foreign ages,* which was directly about the experience of a seizure from inside the sensations. *Skeuomorphs* is an experiment in coming as close as possible to a sense of real time, remembered, and to first person — but it is neither of those things. I shot all the digital scenes over October and November 2023, and have been editing it since December 2023. The film also includes photographs taken from 2011-2014, and computer and smartphone footage from 2011-2014. I am inspired also by silent film intertitles and practical effects, intrigued by the way that text on film has never gone out of style. The film has little synced dialogue and much music — this is a way to feel transcendently "plugged in" to emotion as much as possible. Music and sound function in the film to connect and disconnect different times, to lend a sense of something more distant but more significant. My editing is and has always been inspired by music. Like drumming, editing is a timekeeper, punctuation that allows the flow of filmmaking to cohere and surprise. The plot of the film is loose, following a young woman whose memories bubble up as she discusses creative choices and writing with a friend. This is the anchoring scene, a conversation between the main character Resi and her friend Fred; they discuss poetry composition, historical documentation, and how to make creative choices without paralysis. By using this one scene as an anchor, I hope to cohere the film around a central theme: how we remember — the quotidian and the transcendent.

By including myself in my film, and using my own writing about my life and footage from my daily life, I seek to make meaning of the hypergraphic collection I have amassed. In my intensive

documentation, I find richer and more surprising detail than anything I could imagine from scratch, or invent wholesale. The sense of layered time, of memory atop its recollection atop its reenactment, is one that I hope can express the strangeness of our digitally accessible archives. In editing, I work to find moments of synchronicity — almost to the point of twee — and then have it fall out of sync. These are techniques that I use to ensure that there is a sense of more, of beyond, and of unreality. Some of the experiences I have in ictal or interictal states are ones that help me to feel reality in a more intense way, but some are feelings that are absolutely anti-reality. Once, I had a terrible reaction to an anti-depressant — it caused me to have recurring seizures over a whole day and night. During one of them, I cannot explain how, but I felt, saw, and knew that I was a pair of shoes under a chair in a dusty, bright room next to a bowling alley. I can still see it now — a brown carpet, wood panelled wall, metal chair legs, but I couldn't see above them to the seat of the chair, because of course, I was the shoes. They were purple, faded, unlaced. I did not feel fear or much of anything, but as the night rolled on, I was desperately afraid to go to sleep. Epilepsy can be fatal, and regardless, its way of sinking one into states of such unfamiliarity creates immense anxiety. Further, when I was experiencing uncontrolled seizures and was purposefully unmedicated, during the hypergraphic state that is the impetus of my film *Skeuomorphs* and this paper, I was highly superstitious. I had a symbol that I believed led me to the right places, to safety, and towards a greater destiny. I had premonitions of many events, including writing this paper. I felt an unspeakable interior connection to certain people, places, and events that would later prove to be important and helpful to me. I had sudden dread and intuitions of danger. However, this kind of religiosity is not rare and is not limited to people with Geschwind's syndrome.

I would not consider the character I play in the film to be me — I wrote her with lines, a name, a costume. However, it is absolutely a work of autocinema. By using footage, writing, and photographs from my real life, I hope to accentuate the flexibility of hypergraphic autocinema: if one documents enough, one can later artistically rearrange, layer, double expose the real with the imaginary. In doing so, perhaps one comes closer to a truthful expression than by attempting to capture reality using traditional methods. The spark of the transcendent, that vestige of experience that is impossible to ever completely express, can be gestured to, and symbolised, by other means.

IV. Conclusion

The sense of union that includes the mundane, terrible, spiritual, pretty, subversive, uncanny, transcendent, punishing — this is what I seek to elucidate via my filmmaking and research. The excess of electrical energy that creates epilepsy can also be a source of power, hypergraphic documentation, and sacred experiences. What is now explained by science is no less strange and destabilising. Where Teresa de Avila narrativised her suffering and ecstasy through Catholicism, we now understand our most shocking experiences through social media technology. Yet, neither framework can ever totally fulfil the mystery that is left by these experiences. It is only the exploration of this ambivalence — doubt meeting spectacle — that starts to make sense of transcendence, and can find a purpose in our spectatorship. By making autocinema, we both meet our hypergraphic need to document ourselves and our visions, and we create a way to examine ourselves. By examining ourselves this way, we work to align ourselves with the eternal, and close the impossible gap between representation and reality. When we can look back at our images and understand the scale of the work that we do, we can understand how we make sense of time, its ways, and our brains.

Works Cited

Abidin, Crystal. '"Aren't These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?": Influencer Selfies as Subversive Frivolity'. *Social Media + Society*, vol. 2, no. 2, Apr. 2016, p. 205630511664134. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Barthes, Roland, and Stephen Heath. *Image, Music, Text: Essays*. 13. [Dr.], Fontana, 1977.

Baxendale, Sallie. 'Electricity Crackles with Authenticity'. *The Lancet Neurology*, vol. 14, no. 5, May 2015, p. 467. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

---. 'Memories Aren't Made of This: Amnesia at the Movies'. *BMJ*, vol. 329, no. 7480, Dec. 2004, pp. 1480–83. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Beattie, Keith. 'The Truth of the Matter: Cinéma Vérité and Direct Cinema'. *Documentary Screens*, by Keith Beattie, Macmillan Education UK, 2004, pp. 83–104. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Berlant, Lauren. 'The Female Complaint'. *Social Text*, no. 19/20, 1988, p. 237. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Bhandari, Aparajita, and Sara Bimo. 'Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media'. *Social Media + Society*, vol. 8, no. 1, Jan. 2022, p. 205630512210862. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books, 2001.

Broderick, Mick, et al. 'Virtual Trauma: Prospects for Automediality'. *M/C Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, Apr. 2018. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Campbell, Sian Petronella. 'On the Record: Time and The Self as Data in Contemporary Autofiction'. *M/C Journal*, vol. 22, no. 6, Dec. 2019. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Cardell, Kylie. 'Is a Fitbit a Diary? Self-Tracking and Autobiography'. *M/C Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, Apr. 2018. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Click, Melissa A., and Suzanne Scott. *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*. Routledge, 2018.

Formis, Barbara. 'The Critical Power of the Residual'. *Performance Research*, vol. 22, no. 8, Nov. 2017, pp. 7–16. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Freud, Sigmund, and Ritchie Roberston. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. 1rst published in an Oxford world's classics paperback 1999, Oxford university press, 2008.

Galt, Rosalind. "Pretty: Film Theory, Aesthetics, and the History of the Troublesome Image." *Camera Obscura*, vol. 24, no. 2-71, Sept. 2009, pp. 1-41. Link to text.

Gunn, Jenny. *Narcisscinema: Selfie Culture and the Moving Image*. 2019. [object Object]. *DOI.org (Datacite)*, Link to text.

---. ‘Theorising Digital Self-Mediation and the Smartphone as Filmic Apparatus after 6 January 2021’. *Frames Cinema Journal*, no. 18, June 2021, pp. 150–63. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Hill, Wes. ‘The Automedial Zaniness of Ryan Trecartin’. *M/C Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, Apr. 2018. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Jenny Gunn. *The Gaze in Millennial Culture: Selfies, Instagram and Richard Prince’s New Portraits*. Feb. 2016, Link to text.

---. ‘The I in Object: Selfie Culture and Object-Oriented Philosophy’. *Cinephile*, vol. 12, no. 1, Spring 2018.

Juárez-Almendros, Encarnación. *Disabled Bodies in Early Modern Spanish Literature: Prostitutes, Aging Women and Saints*. Liverpool University Press, 2017. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Kennedy, Ümit, and Emma Maguire. ‘The Texts and Subjects of Automediality’. *M/C Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, Apr. 2018. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Lambert, Michelle V., and Michael Trimble. ‘Interictal Behavior Disturbances’. *Encyclopedia of the Neurological Sciences*, Elsevier, 2003, pp. 680–83. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Laura Marks. ‘Talisman Images’. *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*, no. 61–62, 2021.

Leonard, Garry. ‘Tears of Joy: Hollywood Melodrama, Ecstasy, and Restoring Meta-Narratives of Transcendence in Modernity’. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, vol. 79, no. 2, Apr. 2010, pp. 819–37. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Lozano, Kevin. Review of *How YouTube Created the Attention Economy,* Review of *Like, Comment, Subscribe The New Yorker*, 4 Oct. 2022, Link to text.

Monterrubio Ibáñez, Lourdes. ‘The Filmmaker’s Presence in French Contemporary Autofiction: From *Filmeur/Filmeuse* to *Acteur/Actrice*’. *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 19, no. 4, Oct. 2021, pp. 533–59. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

“On Function: Skeuomorphs and Other Traces.” Performance by Beth Lipman, and Dr. Jamie Jones, *YouTube*, The Chipstone Foundation, 6 Feb. 2017, Link to video.

Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 1999: 833-44.

Panico, A, et al. “Compulsive painting: a variant of hypergraphia?” *Behavioural Neurology*, vol. 9, 1996, pp. 177–180.

Pedersen, Isabel, and Kristen Aspevig. ‘Being Jacob: Young Children, Automedial Subjectivity, and Child Social Media Influencers’. *M/C Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, Apr. 2018. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Poletti, Anna, and Julie Rak. '"We're All Born Naked and the Rest Is" Mediation: Drag as Automediality'. *M/C Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, Apr. 2018. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Przedpełski, Radek, and Stephen E. Wilmer, editors. *Deleuze, Guattari and the Art of Multiplicity*. Edinburgh University Press, 2020.

Shaviro, Steven. "3.4 Splitting the Atom: Post-Cinematic Articulations of Sound and Vision." *POST-CINEMA Theorizing 21st-Century Film*, edited by Shane Denson and Julia Leyda, Falmer: REFRAME Books, 2016, pp. 352–397.

Shouse, Eric. 'Feeling, Emotion, Affect'. *M/C Journal*, vol. 8, no. 6, Dec. 2005. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. 2nd ed, University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Sobchack, Vivian. "2.1 The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Photographic, Cinematic, and Electronic 'Presence'." *POST-CINEMA Theorizing 21st-Century Film*, edited by Shane Denson and Julia Leyda, Falmer: REFRAME Books, 2016, pp. 88–128.

Spencer-Hall, Alicia. *Medieval Saints and Modern Screens: Divine Visions as Cinematic Experience*. Amsterdam University Press, 2018.

Van Der Nagel, Emily. 'Alts and Automediality: Compartmentalising the Self through Multiple Social Media Profiles'. *M/C Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, Apr. 2018. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Wang, Ruoxu, et al. 'Let Me Take a Selfie: Exploring the Psychological Effects of Posting and Viewing Selfies and Groupies on Social Media'. *Telematics and Informatics*, vol. 34, no. 4, July 2017, pp. 274–83. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, Link to text.

Waxman, Stephen G, and Norman Geschwind. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, vol. 32, no. 12, 1 Dec. 1975, pp. 1580–1586, Link to text.