

SCREENING OULIPO

From Potential Literature to Potential Film

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ABSTRACT

This thesis documents a research and art project that explores the creative value of using constraints in film. The starting point is the Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle (Oulipo), the Potential Workshop of Literature, whose members explore the Potential of Literature by writing with constraints, and the films of the early twentieth century avant-garde, which demonstrate the promise of experimentalism in cinema. From these points of inspiration, the idea of using constraints to explore the potential of a field is transferred to film. As the practice of filmmaking with constraints is yet to be fully formalised and currently lacks substantial academic recognition, this thesis presents a theorisation of constraint filmmaking as a creative practice that cuts across cinematic genres and already established areas of filmmaking practice – those of short, feature, and documentary film. The cinematic work emerging from the Ouvroir de Videographie Potentielle (Ouvipo), the Potential Workshop of Video, and the movement of Dogme 95, are shown to be influential in the theorisation of constraint filmmaking practice, and several other examples of constraint films across cinema will be addressed to show how the use of constraints can enhance a filmmaker's creativity. The thesis is accompanied by three constraint films: *Project Cube*, *A Day in your Life*, and *Tales and Tellers*, which were made in adherence to the stages of the constraint filmmaking process. *Project Cube* is an exploration of mathematically inspired constraints and is grounded in the idea of permutation. Twelve shots are used to create several different films, with their order being determined by the rolling of dice. *A Day in Your Life* focuses on the interplay between linguistic constraints and their visual counterparts, reality and fiction, and past and present. *Tales and Tellers* is a project that shows the power of images, as fairy tales from participants are illustrated in moving images, using constraints to create these pictures. These short films demonstrate both my theorisation of

constraint filmmaking as a practice that can be adopted by other artists also, and my journey from Potential Literature to Potential Film.

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Introduction

You look at this stack of paper in front of you, bound together. You take a deep breath, turn over the first page, and start to read. And so your journey begins. A journey that takes you through the minds of Oulipian writers and filmmakers, culminating in an elaboration of my practice of constraint filmmaking. Maybe you have seen *Un Homme Qui Dort*, a 1974 film by Georges Perec and Bernard Queysanne.¹ This film tells the story of a student who, utterly alienated from the world, seeks solace in his solitary wanders through Paris. This film is narrated in the second person singular. Unconventional and experimental, the use of this narrational constraint creates a fascinating effect; one which both reveals and draws upon the tension between the engagingly strange and the strangeness of the “ordinary”. This film provokes many questions about constraints in art and, specifically, in filmmaking. It set me on my path to start the journey from Potential Literature to Potential Film.

At the start of my research, I was concerned with the question as to whether creativity prospers with the use of constraints, and whether constraints can have a beneficial effect on an artist’s creative development. Narrowing my focus, I decided to specifically examine the use of constraints by artists in the fields of literature and filmmaking. This is because the **Ou**voir de **Littérature Potentielle** (Oulipo), the Workshop for Potential Literature, has already brought into being a vast body of writing and research in the field of constraint-based literature. But is there a counterpart in the community of filmmakers? My research aims to find out whether constraint

¹ *Un Homme Qui Dort*. Dir, Georges Perec and Bernard Queysanne, feat. Jacques Spiesser (Independent Production, 1974).

filmmaking (hereafter referred to as CFM) is practiced, the reasoning behind this practice if so, and how it affects the filmmaker and the film. The experimental practice of the Oulipo provides a starting point for such an investigation.

Fluid and open to interpretation, the term *constraint* is key to my research. The use of a constraint indicates the presence of a limitation or a rule, as such at least one rule must inform the process of artistic creation in the practice of constrained artists. I choose the term *constraint*, rather than *limitation*, as I focus on the proactive confinement of an artist's practice. This is to say that I examine the practice of constrained artists that choose or reject the constraints they work with/in. Rather than focusing on whether imposed constraints can nevertheless produce great art, my research focuses on the effects of voluntarily chosen constraints in filmmaking. In Chapter One I will go into more detail on what I have labelled given constraints and chosen constraints. I will draw attention to this divide in order to both clarify and emphasise that my approach towards CFM is focused on constraints that are purposefully chosen and that contribute to the artistic creative process. An artist might also be presented with factors that they have to merely accommodate for in their creative process; as these do not constitute part of the artist's creative vision, such given constraints are not relevant to the conception of CFM put forward in this thesis. This is because the proactive employment of constraints most clearly speaks to the issue of creative prosperity and development, i.e. whether constraints are an element of artistry that ought to be more broadly adopted or not.

My own practice of CFM is influenced by three particular artist groups. The Oulipo artists opened up the possibility of CFM through their conception of the *Ouvroir de X Potentielle* – the Workshop for Potential X. That the X could be substituted by other mediums, such as film, indicated that there may already be a filmmaking counterpart to the experimental literary practice of Oulipo. My research uncovered two such workshops: **Ouvroir de Cinéma Potentielle** (Oucipo) – the Workshop of Potential Cinema, and **Ouvroir de Vidéographie Potentielle** (Ouvipo) – the Workshop of Potential Video. Obtaining information on the Oucipo and Ouvipo proved very difficult, as there are no publications on these groups. The Oucipo is listed as an official *Ou-x-po* under the regulations of the *College de Pataphysique*, the organisation that awards this title. However, Oucipo has ceased to exist and its members have left few traces. Ouvipo, though not listed as an official *Ou-x-po*, is an active workshop. Three of its members agreed to an interview, which I conducted in 2015 in Paris, where they reside. Next to Oulipo and Ouvipo, the third group that influenced my conception of CFM is Dogme 95. Founded in 1995 by Danish filmmakers Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, this movement was instigated in response to what they perceived to be the overbearing power of the studios and blockbuster aesthetics over filmmakers, and was intended to inspire individuals to engage with unconventional ideas. The movement was launched with a document referred to as the “Dogme 95 Manifesto” – or the “Vow of Chastity”. As indicated, this document contains ten rules, or – as I would phrase it – constraints, designed to simplify filmmaking and to eliminate costly sets, props, post-production effects, and shallow storylines that depend on visual spectacle over narrative. The Vow of Chastity thus demonstrates a rejection of the dominant Hollywood filmmaking style of the era, however, by using these constraints to rebel against the pressure on filmmakers to conform to Hollywood norms, the filmmakers of Dogme 95 ended up conforming to alternative norms. This is because these rules also constitute an ideology intended to be shared

by other artists. Interesting in this connection is the suggestion – which Oulipo would agree with – that norms themselves act as a form of constraint, suggesting that constraints are often present in artistic practice, whether we are aware of them or not. In my study, the effect of such rules on the filmmaking process and the filmmaker are examined with the intention of uncovering the potential benefits or negatives of using constraints in creative film practice.

My practice of CFM also echoes the approaches of avant-garde filmmakers. I present resonances between my work and avant-garde films, such as Duchamp's 1926 *Anémic Cinéma* and Man Ray's *Le Retour à la raison* (1923), in Chapter 2.2. Such resonances are identified by way of common motifs, such as the repetition of images, as well as strategic concerns, such as the rejection of commercial appeal in favour of experimentation. However, though CFM cinema resonates with avant-garde films, it does not exclusively fall under this genre in its broadest sense (avant-garde cinema encompasses aesthetically and ideologically varied movements, including, but not limited to, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Cubism), and neither is the CFM practice exclusively restricted to the work of short filmmakers. This is to recognise the issue of categorisation. This thesis argues that the practice of CFM cuts across other filmmaking practices – such as feature filmmaking, short filmmaking, and documentary filmmaking, each in their broadest sense – as well as genre – whether action, comedy, drama, or experimental. In film theory, I find that the category of CFM has not yet been identified as a practice in its own right, nor has it been defined clearly, perhaps for this very reason. The category of CFM – as I envisage it – is inclusive of any films made with at least one constraint, regardless of the filmmaker's time period, aesthetic belief, or choice of film form (short, feature, etc.) or genre. I do not claim that my definition of CFM is the only one that can exist; certain points can be developed differently

if approached from other angles. However, when reading my definition of CFM, it is essential to bear in mind that it retains a close relationship with Oulipian principles.

In Chapter Three, I explain my formulation of CFM, outlining how it ought to be implemented within the creative process of filmmaking. Although CFM is practiced across various strands of cinema, there are currently no publications that define the category clearly and promote the use of CFM to filmmakers. Therefore, in Chapter Three, I present an analysis of the process of CFM, which in turn acts as loose guidelines intended to encourage more filmmakers to use constraints in their own works. In the approach to CFM that I outline, the filmmaking process is divided into four phases: Idea Development, Script Writing/Storyboarding, Producing and Shooting, and Post-production. The process always has to start with the phase of Idea Development and end in Post-production. Constraints are devised by the artists in the first phase and applied in the three that follow. Further, these phases of Script Writing/Storyboarding, Producing and Shooting, and Post-production, each contain six sub-categories of constraints. I decided to assign sub-categories to the phases in order to simplify the classification of constraints and to make it clear when they are relevant to the filmmaking process.

Looking at how constraint filmmaking has been conceived and practiced elsewhere also helps to outline the conception of CFM as a practice that can be used by any artist. As such, in Chapter Three I also draw links between the differing approaches of Dogme 95, Ouvipo, and my own practice of CFM. Although constraints serve a far different function for Dogme 95 filmmakers than that of the Ouvipo, both aim to encourage experimentation in filmic art. However, where the filmmakers of Dogme 95 experiment with a set of pre-conceived constraints, members of

Ouvipo experiment through the collective generation of new constraints. Further, members of Ouvipo have the freedom to shape, or even change, a constraint according to ideas and developments that arise across the four stages of the filmmaking process.

In Chapter Three, I also discuss various films that have been made with constraints in order to demonstrate how their use can have a positive influence on the process of filmmaking. Merely describing the way that a filmmaker has used a constraint would not provide a useful analysis, and so I focus on the consequences of using constraints for the filmmaker, the film, and the audience. Further, the six films examined cut across different cinematic genres as well as forms (short film, feature film, documentary) associated with different filmmaking practices. Two of these films, *Victoria* (Schipper, 2015)² and *Tangerine* (Baker, 2015),³ are feature films made by directors that are not associated with any CFM movement or group such as Ouvipo or Dogme 95. Schipper decided to shoot his film in one take, which makes *Victoria* a fast-paced thriller made unique by its temporal structure, unusual camera angles, and use of improvisation. *Tangerine* is also faced-paced, but instead of using cameras, or a single camera as with *Victoria*, the entire film was shot on modified iPhones, allowing Baker to similarly follow the characters around a city on a low budget and to produce a film with a high level of naturalism. The films received critical accolades and the fact that the filmmakers used constraints was mentioned in the press, often as their key marketing points. Given the popularity of these films, which were

² *Victoria*. Dir. Sebastian Schipper, feat. Laia Costa, Frederick Lau (distributed by Senator Film, 2015).

³ *Tangerine*. Dir Sean Baker, feat Kitana Kiki Rodriguez, Mya Taylor, Karren Karagulian. (Duplass Bothers Productions/Through Films, distributed by Magnolia Pictures, 2015).

released during the writing of this thesis, it seems more important than ever to provide a theorisation of CFM that could be included in general introductory works to film studies.

Chapter Four is a discussion of my three film projects, *Project Cube*, *A Day in Your Life*, and *Tales and Tellers*. They serve as examples that illustrate the practice of CFM as it is outlined in this written part of my thesis. All three films were planned, produced, shot, and edited by myself. This is to say that I am the writer, the technician, the art director, the camera operator, the director, the editor – and occasionally, where possible, I am the actor or the voice actor. By avoiding collaboration, I challenged myself artistically and drew on my own creativity, using constraints to guide my creative decisions. The idea was to demonstrate that the use of constraints can enhance the filmmaker's creativity, and so, by taking control of all tasks, I was able to directly experience if and how the constraints would affect my creative decisions. However, as is discussed in this thesis, CFM can certainly be undertaken collaboratively if artists so desire.

For my first film, *Project Cube*, I started out from a literary basis heavily influenced by Oulipian practice, and, as such, focused on structures devised from mathematical patterns. The constraints used in this project are centred around numbers and repetition: all shots are of a set length and the 12 shots available are repeated numerous times. The challenge was to create different stories out of the same 12 shots. The frequency of each shot was determined by the use of a dice, to avoid subjective judgment in favour of a particular shot or shot sequence. Further, this film also employs visual constraints that do not directly link back to Oulipian practice. The overall visual theme of the shots consists of images of bodies, with the constraint that the figures will only be

partially revealed. The face being a major component of individual identity, these are depicted in a fragmented way and never in their complete form. This is to say that the film features close-ups of parts of the face, such as a pair of lips or an eye, juxtaposed with mid-shots and wide-shots of other body parts, for example a pair of hands or a midriff. The visual constraint isolates these body parts such that their physicality and movements are perceived more intensely.

My second project, *A Day in your Life*, is also influenced quite heavily by Oulipian practice. The film tells the story of a character alienated from social contact, caught up by loneliness, and haunted by memories of happier days. The main constraints are of a linguistic nature, where particular word patterns are imposed on the sentences. These initial constraints, however, influence the work on a visual and post-production level, too. For example, they define the order of the narrative, the number of shots, and the length of shots. As with my other two projects, there are no full faces shown in this film, yet, inspired by Sally Potter's film *Rage* (2009),⁴ *A Day in your Life* is a fictional story that is interwoven with real-life interviews. This inspired me to shoot through a camera lens that was modified in accordance with the constraint of omitting full human faces, which is to say that parts of the faces of the interviewees are blocked out by cardboard shapes.

For my third film project, *Tales and Tellers*, I decided to move away from using or adapting literary constraints and instead focused on a more technical set of constraints. Here the narrative

⁴ *Rage*. Dir. Sally Potter, feat. Lily Cole, Judi Dench, Eddie Izzard, Jude Law (Adventure Pictures, distributed by Cinetic Media 2009).

is subject to a key constraint: the filmmaker has no input on the content of the verbal narratives, is not involved in the writing of the narrative, and does not edit the delivery of the story – regardless of speech disfluencies or fillers. This is to mean that I recorded short personal fairy tale narratives told by people of many different ages and backgrounds, and then created the visual elements for these stories, without changing the original recordings. Another key constraint is the use of a chroma wall, commonly referred to as a green screen. This limits the choice of colours available and enforces the separation of elements, such as scriptwriter and filmmaker, foreground and background, static elements and moving objects. Linking this film to *Project Cube* and *A Day in your Life*, I again decided to adopt the constraint of omitting full human faces, and here found creative alternatives in the use of puppets, cardboard cut-outs, and limbs.

My practice of CFM is based on a strong connection between literature and film, as evidenced in both my films and the development of the focus of my research across its duration. At the start of my project, I thought that my background in creative writing would hold me back from developing into a filmmaker, but I soon realised that I could use this experience to my advantage: the starting point of my research were the works of Oulipo and their influence can undeniably be detected in my work as a filmmaker. The connection between constraints in literature and constraints in film pans out on the level of linguistic constraints, many of the constraints found in Oulipian works can be used in filmmaking with some suitable adaptations. The thrill of translating a word-based constraint into an image focused constraint has pushed my search for Potential Film. However, my research extends further than mere adaptations and translations of constraints from the medium of literature to the medium of film, I also advocate for new sets of constraints that are only possible in film.

1 Constrained Art

1.1 Understanding Constraints

Essentially, a constraint film is a film consciously made with at least one constraint. This means that the filmmaker decides to work consciously and creatively with constraints, in line with my earlier stated focus on the proactive use of constraints within film practice. Constraints cannot be retroactively recognised in the film – interpreted by a filmmaker, critic, scholar, or general viewer, watching the film following its completion. Usually there are several people involved in the creation of a film and different decisions are delegated to the person in charge – for instance, the producer will make financial decisions, the director of photography will make aesthetic decisions, and the art director will influence the set-design. For the purpose of my argument, I am using the term “filmmaker” to describe an individual who holds all of the major roles involved in the film production; here, the filmmaker is the producer, the director of photography, the art director, and more. This means that the control for all central decisions is with the individual who assumes the role of filmmaker. I believe this conception resonates with broader experimental independent filmmaking practice, which tends to be limited by given constraints, such as a low budget that restricts the hiring of other creatives, and tends to be characterised by the pursuit of a personal vision that is pursued solely by the individual, often without a crew.

Within the practice of CFM, the filmmaker needs to demonstrate the intentional use of a specified constraint. However, this does not mean that the constraint needs to be conceived before principal photography begins; constraints can develop throughout the various stages of a project.

As soon as the filmmaker defines something as a constraint to be creatively worked with/in, it needs to be treated as such. I want to clarify that for the practice of CFM that I propose, only constraints with a direct influence on the film's envisioned artistic value – its narrative or aesthetic – are relevant. There might be other constraints that arise during the filmmaking process, however if they are only relevant to problems with production – the sudden need to creatively work around the issue of a missing prop, for instance – they are excluded from my conception of the constraint in the context of CFM. In addition to the conscious use of the constraint, then, the constraint also needs to have some kind of desired artistic impact on the envisioned film.

In clarification of the above points, there is a distinction between *given constraints* and *chosen constraints*. I define given constraints as factors that the filmmaker agrees to accept, but which are an imposition upon their creative practice rather than a proactive creative decision. Here the filmmaker does not transform these set factors into constraints that would shape the filmmaking process in a deliberate way. They are not proactively incorporated but are instead accommodated. These given constraints solely relate to the circumstances of the film production, and they can change at any time. For example, the given constraint of weather is such that it might rain on the day that the filmmaker had planned to shoot a sunny exterior scene, and so the filmmaker creatively works around this constraint by either shooting interior scenes that were planned for a later date, shooting at an alternative exterior location, or adopting some other such strategy to accommodate for this constraint.

The factors that are turned into chosen constraints are not accepted in a passive manner, instead, they are proactively and consciously adopted and shaped into constraints affecting the filmmaking process and the film. Taking the example of rain again, for the filmmaker to devise it as a chosen constraint would be for them to commit to only shooting outside on rainy days, with the aim of harnessing such weather for specific artistic effects. In the earlier example, sunny weather would be a chosen constraint if the filmmaker refused to adapt to and accommodate for the rain, and if sunny weather was an intentional artistic motif rather than incidental, i.e. the availability of sunlight simply being useful for filming. For the purpose of this argument, I define constraint filmmaking as a category of filmmaking practice that makes conscious and active use of chosen constraints, and therefore the films that fall into this category are made within the range of chosen constraints. Films made only under given constraints, such as films made under censorship, do not fall under my definition of CFM and will not be examined in my thesis.

The following chapters elucidate an approach towards art and the creation of art that is based on concepts that originate in the practice of experimental artists. David Sterritt writes that “[f]ilm critics [...] often toss around the word “experimental” as a synonym for “unorthodox”, meaning the work in question is somehow out of the mainstream.”¹ This is to say that the work does not conform to the current aesthetically accepted norms and values or techniques used in the creation of art and is thus an alternative form of filmmaking practice to that of mainstream film production. However, Sterritt continues to write that such terms are quite “vague”.² Within experimental art – which encompasses a myriad of fields, such as photography, literature,

¹ David Sterritt, ‘Ken Jacobs’, in *Exile Cinema Filmmakers at Work beyond Hollywood*, ed. Michael Atkinson, The Sunny Series Horizons Cinema (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 95.

² Sterritt, 95.

painting, sculpting, music, or filmmaking, amongst other forms – the focus of experimentation is on the creative process itself; that which that results in such artwork. By departing from dominant or established modes of working, such artists attempt to push boundaries and challenge themselves to create something new; works of art that are set apart from the already existent. Though experimentation takes places in all art forms, for example music, painting, and installation art, in this thesis, the focus will be on literature and film. And the particular form of experimentation that is addressed is that which attempts to channel artistic creativity by using constraints.

In general, the word *constraint* can be used to refer to a restriction or a limitation.³ Transposing this term into the field of artistic practice means that the artist is subject to certain rules when creating their piece of art. The word “rule” perhaps carries a less negative connotation in this context than the word “limitation”, which suggests the confinement of an artists’ creativity. Given that artists use constraints to achieve the opposite – to liberate their creative practice and provide inspiration, as is discussed in a later chapter, “rule” is the more appropriate term to use in regard to the employment of constraints within artistic practice.⁴ Further, “limitation” better relates to the kind of *given constraints* specified in the Introduction – those aspects of production that the artist may have to accommodate for – while the word “rule” better relates to the kind of consciously *chosen constraints* that I am referring to here. Constrained artists are aware that they are constrained, then, however they are not always able to control the constraint, which

³ Online Oxford Dictionary, *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/>. Accessed 8 July 2014.

⁴ As Jan Baetens puts it in regard to the use of constraints by experimental writers: “Constraint writing can indeed be considered as a kind of literature that frees the writer as well as the reader.” Jan Baetens, ‘Free Writing, Constrained Writing: The Ideology of Form’, *Poetics Today* 18, no. 1 (1997): 1.

complicates the distinction between that which is given and that which is chosen. An example of such a situation is an artist working under censorship. I would argue that in the context of artistic practice, the politically imposed, and therefore given, constraint of censorship can *become* a chosen constraint if the artist intends to subvert such a limitation by making it a rule that the artists creatively and proactively works with in order to produce an art work. Constraint art that is produced under such circumstances will not be discussed in this thesis, however, due to the complexities, specificities, and sensitivities of such scenarios that require a full, detailed, examination in order to be given due (academic) justice. As such, my thesis is focused on a creation process in which the artist is free to choose and reject constraints without the involvement of any government authority.

It is also important to acknowledge that the nature and effects of constraints within artistic practice are medium-dependent. This is due to the fact that not all art works incorporate the same material elements and such elements may or may not be compatible with constraints of certain kinds. For example, an instance of incompatibility is where a painter chooses to only incorporate a specific colour. This constraint cannot be directly transposed into musical practice, only analogically, i.e. designating a particular colour to a particular sound / chord). If a constraint is compatible across different types of media, the constraints might also produce different effects and affects in regard to the artists, the artworks, and, subsequently, the viewer, listener, reader, and any other kind of recipient of the art. For instance, sounds function differently in film and in poetry, and so while a similar constraint could be used in the creation of both kinds of art, the effects and affects created will vary widely.

1.2 Positioning CFM

First, the question as to how the works produced through the practice of CFM relate to genre is addressed. Dixon and Foster write that “[u]nlike the Hollywood genre, such as the western, the musical, the horror film, the war film, and the like, avant-garde films belong to no specific genre and thus make unique demands upon their audiences.”⁵ This is also true for constraint films – the practice of CFM is not attached to any specific genre. The filmmaker can choose to use a genre *as* a constraint, however this decision is made on the basis of individual films and does not inform the practice of CFM in general. This is important to note, as the movement of Dogme 95, an exemplar of constraint filmmaking that will be discussed later, sets out the requirement that filmmakers should not produce genre films. This requirement contrasts with the freedom of CFM filmmakers to do so.

A further question relates to whether CFM is situated within a lineage of filmmaking practices, such that it marks a new stage that directly follows from the outcomes and techniques of preceding experimentations. Various scholars have tried to assign different labels to movements in film history and have tried to identify different categories of filmmaking practice. This is because, as Stephen Dwoskin writes, “[t]hough in any such movement there are many people, many ideas and many feelings, all beyond the limits of any one definition, the outwards impression given is often one of narrowness, even superficiality.”⁶ As indicated, according to

⁵ Wheeler W. Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, eds., *Experimental Cinema: The Film Reader*, In Focus: Routledge Film Readers (London: Routledge, 2002), 7.

⁶ Stephen Dwoskin, *Film Is: The International Free Cinema* (London: Owen, 1975), 23.

Dwoskin such labels do not always do justice to each and every filmmaker within a category.⁷ This argument extends to other fields of art also, as different groups might develop different ideas further, beyond the scope of the category they have been positioned within, making it difficult to label them under one term. For instance, James argues that “[t]he Oulipo is not easily labelled an avant-garde movement, since it insists less on novelty than on its debt to tradition.”⁸ Further, some categories sum up a broader spectrum of characteristics than others with one label, leading to such classifications being adopted depending on preference. And though categorisation therefore seems arbitrary, the question persists because, as Karen Mirza and Brad Butler write:

“with film as your chosen material, the hardest part is finding where you are within the heritage or what has been, which remains a powerful force, as well as determining where you are in the present landscape. Accepting you are part of a heritage is also to accept that audiences will project the past onto what you are doing which has implications for your work.”⁹

In this respect, positioning one’s film within a lineage can help with marketing, the elaboration of content, and to help group filmmakers with certain ideologies and characteristics together for study or distribution purposes. However, theorists such as Malcom Le Grice remain opposed to

⁷ Dwoskin, *Film Is*, 23.

⁸ Alison S. James, *Constraining Chance: Georges Perec and the Oulipo*, *Avant-Garde & Modernism Studies* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 108.

⁹ Karen Mirza and Brad Butler, "Mutation on a Form," in *Experimental Film and Video An Anthology*, Ed. Jackie Hatfield (Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing, 2006), 167–77.

the act of categorisation. This is because, according to Le Grice, it is not even always possible to put all the work of one individual filmmaker into one category, nor is it possible to truly account for every single aspect of a historical epoch. Le Grice writes “that a neutral and inclusive history is broadly impossible and that historical enterprise should be aimed at aiding the development of contemporary practice” instead.¹⁰ This is to say that historical accounts are largely subjective, being determined by an author’s intents and limitations (skills, access, biases, etc.), and, further, given the inability to fully encompass any stage of the past, a historical account is best formed in regard to its utility for understanding and developing the project it is being provided for, which is to focus sharply on aspects of relevance. This is important to note, as the practice of CFM as I describe it is not tied to a certain historical epoch, nor even to a particular art form, given its origins are not limited to the field of film. As such, I will be drawing on particular aspects of past art groups or movements that are most relevant to aiding the conceptualisation of CFM.

An example of an artist who also actively avoids the use of categorisation is Hans Richter, who believes that to classify experimental film is to tame the movement and to fence in the creativity that arises from experimentalism.¹¹ I agree with Richter, for while CFM employs constraints, such constraints are intended to encourage experimentation and discovery, so artists working with constraints should only be confined by the creative rules they have chosen, rather than expectations associated with any “type” of art.

¹⁰ Malcolm Le Grice, *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age* (London: BFI, 2001), 29.

¹¹ Hans Richter, ‘The Avant-Garde Film Seen from Within’, *Hollywood Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (1949): 34.

In regard to positioning, then, it therefore appears wise not to limit CFM in any unnecessary way. It is an approach towards filmmaking that is designed to be experimental in its very practice. Ideas that are realised within CFM can contain elements from any type of film and can even have their origins outside of film. As O’Pray writes, “[i]n many of the major art movements of the century – cubism, dadaism, surrealism, pop art, conceptualism – there has been a similar impulse to steal and borrow from other forms, to explore environments outside that of the art gallery, to confront and affront audiences.”¹² His quote emphasises the importance of diversity in the practice of the creation of art and in valuing the interconnectivity between different artistic fields. As Oulipian writings, a key influence on my own conception of CFM, demonstrate, constraints are often found outside literature, often in places the artists did not expect to find them. As such, in the practice of CFM, openness towards influences from different art forms is essential.

¹² Michael O’Pray, ed., *The British Avant-Garde Film, 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings* (Luton: University of Luton, 1996), 2.

2 Constraint film and constraint filmmaking (CFM)

As stated, the idea of working with constraints has been present in the field of arts for centuries. In this chapter the practice of the literary group Oulipo will be outlined, as their ideas are fundamental in my developing a theorisation of the practice of CFM. Further, the films of the avant-garde will be addressed for what they tell us about the breadth of variety that experimental filmmaking can take, highlighting particular aspects of practice that feed into my conception of CFM.

2.1 CFM and OULIPO – Workshop of Potential Literature

The following paragraphs provide an examination of literature produced within a constraint framework. In particular, the focus is on the constraints and writings of the Oulipo, one of the main influences upon the development of my own concept of constraint filmmaking.

The Oulipo originated in France in the 1960s. United by their passion for writing with constraints, Francois Le Lionnais and Raymond Queneau gathered a circle of people from across a variety of fields of expertise “to pledge fealty to a new kind of literature.”¹ Lauren Elkin and Scott Esposito have traced its initiation to November 1960, at a meeting in which the members

¹ Lauren Elkin and Scott Esposito, *The End of Oulipo? An Attempt to Exhaust a Movement* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2013), 1.

of the group adopted the title Séminaire de Littérature Expérimentale. It was on their second meeting that the artists decided to collaborate together under the name of Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle – Oulipo was born.

Membership of the group is eternal, so although the most recent published census of the group officially counted 38 members in 2012, only 20 of them are still alive.² Daniel Levin Becker, who has been a member since 2009, writes that “one may neither quit nor be kicked out of the Oulipo,”³ though he acknowledges that some of the Oulipian writers “have distanced themselves by geographic isolation or declared estrangement.”⁴ Nevertheless, as new members are chosen very carefully, being part of the Oulipian circle can be perceived as an honour. Meetings have the nature of a workshop, and some Oulipians have referred to Oulipo as a laboratory of creativity.⁵ As such, future members are expected to have “something to add to a perpetually evolving conception of literary possibility.”⁶ Given the desire to expand literary possibilities, the professions of members are rather diverse. As Levin Becker writes, “[n]ot all of them are writers: there are poets and novelists and dramatists and journalists and translators, as you would expect, but also linguists, cyclists, communists, literary theorists, photographers, lexicographers, actors, singers, gamers, historians, diplomats, and, well, you get the idea.”⁷ Anyone can be nominated, but membership requires a unanimous vote of agreement.⁸ In regard to the demographic profile

² Daniel Levin Becker, *Many Subtle Channels: In Praise of Potential Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 20–21.

³ Levin Becker, 1.

⁴ Levin Becker, 21.

⁵ Peter Consenstein, *Literary Memory, Consciousness, and the Group Oulipo*, Faux Titre, no. 220 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 17.

⁶ Levin Becker, *Many Subtle Channels*, 23.

⁷ Levin Becker, 20.

⁸ Levin Becker, 22.

of the group, the majority of the members are French, and there are more male members than female.⁹

It was a year after their formation that the Oulipo published their first manifesto. In this first declaration, Francois Le Lionnais writes that “[e]very literary work begins with an inspiration [...] which must accommodate itself as well as possible to a series of constraints and procedures.”¹⁰ Alison James writes that “Oulipian constraints are not always purely formal, as is often assumed; their sheer variety – mathematical, syntactic, metrical, lexical, “letteric,” semantic – makes generalisations about the group’s work difficult.”¹¹ Just as each member of Oulipo is a unique individual, so are their constraints and how they use them. Kevin Jackson, for example, has used the alphabet as a constraint for his work *Letters of Introduction* (2004). Each paragraph of this piece, is centred around one letter, and the paragraphs occur in alphabetic order.¹² Another example is George Perec, who has used a constraint called “lipogram”, in which the author has to avoid using one or several letters.¹³ Perec’s novel, *A Void* (original: *La Disparition*, 1969), does not contain any words with the letter E.¹⁴ In this way, we can see how constraints relating to letters can vary widely in their conception and execution.

⁹ Levin Becker, 22.

¹⁰ Francois Le Lionnais, "Lipo: First Manifesto," in *Oulipo: A Primer of Potential Literature*, ed. Warren F. Motte (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 26.

¹¹ James, *Constraining Chance*, 109.

¹² Kevin Jackson, *Letters of Introduction* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2004).

¹³ Georges Perec, *A Void: Georges Perec* (London: Vintage, 2008).

¹⁴ Perec, *A Void*.

However, despite the breadth of experimentation within the Oulipo, there are two core elements of Oulipian art: constraints and mathematics. The effects of these two elements are interlinked, as constrained writing often makes use of mathematical patterns and structures. Many constraints develop from mathematical patterns, which are adapted and shaped until they express a constraint. As Jacques Jouet, another member of Oulipo, writes: “[a]s for constraints, the Oulipo brings them back (sometimes exhumes them) from the past, or imports them from far away, or else invents them piecemeal, notably with resource to mathematics.”¹⁵ In this respect, it should be noted that the use of mathematics within the creation of literature did not begin with the Oulipo, there are scholars who argue that it can be traced back centuries. Peter Consenstein, for instance, claims that mathematical patterns were employed in the Bible to produce and maintain a specific structure.¹⁶ Given that the usage of mathematics is evident in writings even earlier than that, Consenstein writes that “[t]he nature of [Oulipian] experimentation, based on mathematics, is both so inherent to the evolution of literary genres and so easily applicable to all forms of art from any and all theoretical and ideological vantagepoints that its transparency verges on invisibility.”¹⁷ However, while the idea to draw upon mathematics is thus present throughout artistic practice of various kinds and for many centuries, Consenstein also suggests that there is a specificity to Oulipian practice by which they can be understood to not only recall but revive such experimentations:¹⁸

¹⁵ Jacques Jouet, ‘With (and Without) Constraints’, trans. Roxanne Lapidus, *SubStance* 30, no. 3 (2001): 4.

¹⁶ Consenstein, 19–20.

¹⁷ Consenstein, 18.

¹⁸ Consenstein, 18–20.

“Oulipians use mathematics to keep traditional literary constraints in a state of homeostasis, to guarantee and reinvigorate another round of eternal literary evolution. [...] [I]t becomes clear that the mathematical modifications performed on traditional literary constraints transform single manifestations of a genre, which has impact on the entire genre and consequently furthers literary evolution.”¹⁹

According to Consenstein, the specificity of mathematically-informed Oulipian practice is found in the deeply individualistic literary works that arise from the use of such formulas: “For if the Oulipian text is the superficial structure of a deep and unique literary algorithm – the newly invented constraint – then the author has forged a unique relationship with literature which engenders a mission of personal rediscovery, a unique relationship with self.”²⁰ And, following its production, the reader experiences what Consenstein refers to as a “transformation”, by which they are led to question and re-discover literature as a whole.²¹

The importance of mathematics to Oulipian writing is also reflected in how such writers often work with the artistic strategy of combining and re-combining material – an important aspect of their creative practice that will be explored later in this thesis in the context of film. Jean-Jacques Thomas writes that

¹⁹ Consenstein, 192–93.

²⁰ Consenstein, 22.

²¹ Consenstein, 22.

“Oulipian literature defines itself as a kind of combinational economics, having as its field of operation the identification and enumeration of a finite set of linguistic material destined to be subjected to formal manipulations that will generate the texts and their virtual or potential readings.”²²

Some Oulipian works are based on other pre-existing works, such that the already existent linguistic material is placed into different combinations, or is changed into smaller component parts in a work according to a particular pattern, such that a new piece of work with alternative effects can be generated. This alludes to the idea of repetition, which will also be discussed in further detail later.

The mathematical methodology employed by the Oulipo covers a variety of techniques, ranging from a simple substitution of words up to the production of complex algorithms that create structures for their literary works.²³ For example, Jean Lescure invented a constraint that involves the substitution of one word for another, referred to as S+7 or N+7.²⁴ This method “consists in taking a text and replacing each substantive [or noun if referring to N+7] with the seventh following it in a given dictionary. The result obviously depends on the dictionary one chooses.”²⁵ In the *Oulipo Compendium* (2005), Mathews and Brotchie provide us with an example in which

²² Jean-Jacques Thomas, "README.DOC: On Oulipo," trans. Lee Hilliker, *SubStance* 17, no. 2 (1988): 22.

²³ Thomas, 23.

²⁴ Harry Mathews and Alastair Brotchie, eds., *Oulipo Compendium*, Rev. and updated (2nd ed.) (London: Atlas Press, 2005), 202–3.

²⁵ Raymond Queneau, "Potential Literature," in *Oulipo: A Primer of Potential Literature*, ed. Warren F. Motte (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 61.

William Wordsworth's famous poem *Daffodils* becomes a new work titled *The Imbeciles*, on the basis of the above constraints and a Langenscheidt Standard *English-German* Dictionary from 1993:

“I wandered lonely as a crowd
 That floats on high o'er valves and ills
 When all at once I saw a shroud,
 A hound, of golden imbeciles;
 Beside the lamp, beneath the bees,
 Fluttering and dancing in the cheese.”²⁶

The original is still recognisable, but the text has also gained a new meaning. “The N+7 method has attracted writers who are not Oulipians”²⁷ as it is easy to understand and it opens up many possibilities in regard to the creation of new works on the basis of existing material. Another example is “Mathew's Algorithm”, which refers to a particular way of shifting words or letters within a table to create new ones.²⁸ Harry Mathews himself writes of the algorithm that:

²⁶ Mathews and Brotchie, 203.

²⁷ Mathews and Brotchie, 203.

²⁸ Mathews and Brotchie, 183–84.

“it’s a simple mechanism into which complex materials can be introduced. [...] The algorithm can make use of existing material as well as of material specially invented for it [...]. Its creative potentiality can manifest itself either in the actual construction of the table or in its subsequent solution. It can be used both to decompose (or analyse) texts or to compose (or invent) them.”²⁹

In one of his examples, Mathews starts with the words *tine*, *sale*, *male* and *vine* and after a shift of letters he receives the words *tale*, *vile*, *mine* and *sane*.³⁰

The use of mathematical patterns raises questions concerning randomness and chance in creative practice. Thomas writes that the first principle an Oulipian writer should follow is the submission to logical constraints as constrained writing is about “order, method and rules.”³¹ He further addresses the aspect of rigidity that constraints might bring, writing that “the goals which Oulipo has set for itself [are] rehabilitating literary *work* and eliminating the imprecise and chancy nature of writing”.³² Given this, constrained writing is certainly more controlled than writing that does not follow any rules and the Oulipo value the precision that arises from such work. As Queneau puts it, the Oulipo is “not concerned with [...] aleatory literature.”³³ On the matter of the value of artistic consciousness in Oulipian creative practice, Conenstein argues that writers need to

²⁹ Harry Mathews, "Mathew's Algorithm," in *Oulipo: A Primer of Potential Literature*, ed. Warren F. Motte (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 126.

³⁰ Mathews, 129.

³¹ Thomas, "README.DOC," 22.

³² Thomas, 22.

³³ Queneau, 'Potential Literature', 51.

not only creatively use language but to also use their creativity to invent new constraint techniques / methodologies.³⁴

Consenstein writes that “Oulipians strongly believe that potential and inspiration are codependent,”³⁵ As such, Oulipian theory combines the analysis of old elements from the past with new inventions, or creates new inventions through a combination, or synthesis, of old elements; as Consenstein puts it: “Oulipo reinvents the past by remembering.”³⁶ This was expressed in the first Oulipian manifesto in which analysis and synthesis are stated to be codependant elements in the production of original art works. Le Lionnais writes that “[i]n the research which the Oulipo proposes to undertake, one may distinguish two principal tendencies, orientated retrospectively toward Analysis and Synthesis.”³⁷ This is to say that Oulipians analyse work from the past that is then synthesised into “new possibilities unknown to our predecessors.”³⁸ As such, Le Lionnais writes, “Anoulipism is devoted to discovery, Synthoulipism to invention. From the one to the other there exist many subtle channels.”³⁹ Bill Seaman characterises, and clarifies, these terms as so: “‘anoulipism’ can be defined as linguistic discovery – forms, rule systems, structures etc. – and ‘synthoulipism’ as invention of new forms, rule systems and structures.”⁴⁰ As such, it is the interplay between analysis, discovery,

³⁴ Consenstein, 18–20.

³⁵ Consenstein, 19.

³⁶ Consenstein, 19.

³⁷ Le Lionnais, 27.

³⁸ Le Lionnais, 27.

³⁹ Le Lionnais, 28.

⁴⁰ Bill Seaman, "OULIPO | vs | Recombinant Poetics," *Leonardo* 34, no. 5 (2001): 428.

exploration, and creation, on the basis of a re/combination of uncovered elements from past artworks into new ones, that informs the creative practice of the Oulipo.

Further connected to the invention of new forms on the basis of past works is the idea of exhaustion. Thomas writes that: “Potential literature posits itself primarily as an attempt, by using logical operations and formal manipulations, to exhaust the creative *capital* allotted by the finite and rule-governed language system considered as a *concrete object*.”⁴¹ Oulipians create original structures (constraints) to work with/in through their synthesis of analysed works from the past, and then attempt to exhaust the creative energy incited by these structures, which is to exhaust the potential offered by these works of the past.⁴² Levin Becker writes that “for many second- and third-generation Oulipians, Perec in particular, the workshop’s most enticing offering was a way to *exhaust* potential – an outlet for restless creative energy, a lexicon of techniques and rules that could not only inspire writing projects but also make them cleverer, richer, weirder – in short, liberate them.”⁴³ Consenstein, too, makes reference to the work of Perec, for whom the exhaustion of a structure is a way to reach the core of what the artist intends to say.⁴⁴ “In exhausting the possibilities created by his constraints, Perec comes to see, and reveal to us, those things about the world that he deems important to represent in his literature.”⁴⁵ For instance, and as indicated by its title, Perec’s *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*⁴⁶ (original: *Tentative dépuisement d’un lieu parisien*, 1975) enacts and reflects upon the

⁴¹ Thomas, 22.

⁴² Elkin and Esposito, 24.

⁴³ Levin Becker, 33.

⁴⁴ Consenstein, 24–25.

⁴⁵ Consenstein, 25–26.

⁴⁶ Georges Perec, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, trans. Marc Lowenthal (Cambridge, Mass: Wakefield Press, 2010).

exhaustion of the possibilities offered by a textual account of a place. The book is a description of everything that Perec sees whilst sitting in a coffee shop in Paris. Many of the entries, such as the mention of buses, are repetitions. Howard Becker writes that “[a] very large layer of such stuff – buses going by, people putting up umbrellas, pigeons flying, letters on the side of trucks – surrounds us all the time. We become aware of it when something is ‘out of order’, when the pigeon defecates on our head, when someone puts up an umbrella and it is not raining, when a bus appears going the wrong way down a one way street.”⁴⁷ Although at first glance the piece might appear to be a simple account of events, the individual descriptions are placed together carefully, the juxtapositions creating a mixture of new information and effects by way of the re-ordering of their repetitions. Perec’s attempt at exhausting repetition itself, by presenting the reader with the same facts numerous times, raises the question as to whether such an exhaustion is even possible. For though the reader might not feel like re-reading the same information continuously, the continuing popularity of the text suggests that this attempt at exhausting the use of repetition itself actually holds their attention and that they continue to read, experiencing the production of new ideas through the repeated use of previously given information.

Both of the above strategies affirm that central to Oulipian activity is the concept of *Potential Literature*. Claiming this to be a new, or at least previously unrecognised, concept, Francois Le Lionnais writes, “[l]et’s open a dictionary to the words ‘Potential Literature’. We find absolutely nothing.”⁴⁸ Queneau defines Potential Literature as “the search for new forms and structure that

⁴⁷ Howard Becker, "Georges Perec's Experiments in Social Description," *Ethnography* 2, no. 1 (2001): 71.

⁴⁸ Le Lionnais, 26.

may be used by writers in any way they see fit.”⁴⁹ As the word *potential* already indicates, these new structures and systems may be actualised from potential found within previous literary works and strategies.⁵⁰ And according to Le Lionnais, “[t]he Oulipo’s goal is to discover new structures and to furnish for each structure a small number of examples.”⁵¹ As such, Oulipian writers do not solely produce their own creative pieces, they also provide other writers with methods that they can use to approach writing, many of which are listed in the *Oulipo Compendium*.⁵² In fact, Andrew Hugill writes that “[t]his emphasis on *potential* rather than actual literature meant that the Oulipo felt no obligation to produce creative writing as such. Instead, many of the early publications were simply elaborations of methods or manifestos.”⁵³ In any case, this Oulipian goal, and format of its achievement, underpins my own approach to the formalisation of constraint filmmaking. This thesis consists of a theoretical part that puts forward a structure / methodology for constraint filmmaking, which may be adopted by other artists, and is followed by three practical examples of my own, short films, that demonstrate the structure in use.

The idea of exploring the potential in literature, then, gives the Oulipo its impetus for creating art, however their pursuit of this goal has been criticised by some. In *The End of Oulipo? An Attempt to Exhaust a Movement* (2013), Elkin writes that “the Oulipo was founded with the twin aims of researching (anoulipism) and producing (synthoulipism) potential literature, [but] today

⁴⁹ Quoted in Warren F. Motte, ed., *Oulipo: A Primer of Potential Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 2–3.

⁵⁰ Consenstein, 19.

⁵¹ Motte, 3.

⁵² Mathews and Brotchie.

⁵³ Andrew Hugill, *Pataphysics: A Useless Guide* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2012), 58.

research has won out, and the creation takes place in the modes already laid out by earlier generations of Oulipians.”⁵⁴ Elkin accuses the Oulipo of relying on old structures and repeating its own past, exhausting already existing material without honouring their goal to invent new constraints. According to Elkin the “younger generation” is aware that they are solely living on the repetitions – and perhaps reputations – of their precursors without adding new elements to their experimentations; suggesting that the root of “[t]he problem may be that the group is weighted down by its own past.”⁵⁵ Her research indicates that many Oulipians are only focused on honouring the memory of their deceased members, which hinders the “younger generation” in their artistic progress, their ability to move forward with new ideas of their own.⁵⁶

The group’s future is unclear, and at times, members have questioned how long Oulipo can go on for. According to Elkin and Esposito, stagnation may have set in as early as the mid nineteen-eighties: “[i]n 1986 the Oulipo’s second president, Noël Arnaud, was worried about the future of the group. In his ‘Prolegomena to a Fourth Oulipo Manifesto – or not,’ Arnaud calls the group’s embrace of potential literature both its survival and its downfall: the *ouvroir* will survive, he writes, as long as it has not exhausted its potential.”⁵⁷ However, despite such criticism and the death of some influential members, Oulipo has not exhausted its potential yet. In fact, in 2017 it still exists and prospers.

⁵⁴ Elkin and Esposito, 68.

⁵⁵ Elkin and Esposito, 68.

⁵⁶ Elkin and Esposito, 68–69.

⁵⁷ Elkin and Esposito, 66.

Along with the movement of Dogme 95 and the Ouvipo, the Oulipo constitutes one of the key influences upon my development of the practice of CFM as it is posited in this thesis. Understanding the creative practice of the Oulipo is key to understanding CFM as the latter, too, encourages the employment of structural constraints, especially structures based on mathematical patterns. Within Oulipo, examples of these are numerous: the Græco-Latin bi-square, the Eodermdrome, and the Snowball, to mention just a few. I have focused here on structures that are informed by repetition and permutation as these are essential to my own practical work, *Project Cube*.

Further, the process by which artists use such constraints to shape and direct their artistic energy is equally essential for Oulipian writing as it is for the practice of CFM. It is the past of the group, the already existing works, that further guide the group towards the inventing of new constraints, and the practice of CFM connects to this past too, as it borrows Oulipian constraints and takes them into the practice of film. For instance, I adopt their playfulness with phrases, words, and letters, as framed by the rigidity of the employed constraints, in my use of dice to determine the arrangement of shots in *Project Cube*.⁵⁸ Playfulness here is found in the tension that arises between the rigidity of the constraint and the aleatory function of the dice.

Another key element of Oulipian theory that has been incorporated into my approach to CFM is the valuing of the potential in literature, which I have transposed into the field of film. This is to

⁵⁸ Elkin and Esposito, 3–5.

say that the Oulipians are devoted to developing new constraints in order to explore the potential of literature, and the practice of CFM engages with new constraints in film in order to explore the potential of filmmaking. As such, this exploration of the potential of filmmaking comes with an element of exhaustion. For as Elkin and Esposito express it, “[e]xhaustion is the necessary corollary to the Oulipian concept of potential.”⁵⁹ In regard to CFM, the correlate to the repetition and permutation demonstrated in *Project Cube*, which repeats the same 12 shots numerous times to create six different short films, can be perceived as the attempt to exhaust the potential provided by the use of such repetitions in filmmaking.

The idea of using constraints in the creative production of an artwork has been embraced by other fields of art also, resulting in Potential Workshops that go beyond literature.⁶⁰ In Chapter 3.2.3 of this thesis, Potential Workshops in the area of film will be examined for what they contribute to my own conception of constraint filmmaking.

2.2 CFM and the film practice of the avant-garde

The practice of CFM as I conceive it is also heavily influenced by avant-garde filmmakers. O’Pray writes that “[t]he film avant-gardes that emerged in the 1920s remain a potent influence to this day. They form part of probably the most creative period of twentieth-century avant-garde activity across the arts and are the indisputable models of avant-gardism.”⁶¹ The following

⁵⁹ Elkin and Esposito, 4.

⁶⁰ Mathews and Brotchie, 318–33.

⁶¹ Michael O’Pray, *Avant-Garde Film: Forms, Themes and Passions*, Short Cuts 17 (London: Wallflower, 2003), 8.

paragraphs will highlight some key elements of avant-garde film with emphasis placed on films from the 1920s, 30s, and 40s in Europe and America, selected for their direct influence upon my own practice of CFM. Through this discussion, aspects of CFM practice will be elucidated through the identification of common elements in avant-garde filmmaking.

The year 1929 marks an important point in the history of the European avant-garde, as this was the year when the first international congress of members of various, distinct, movements of such art took place. At this congress, representatives of independent cinema from fourteen different European countries - including Germany, France and England – got together to present their films and exchange ideas.⁶² As O’Pray points out, there are several key features that unite their work: “the film-makers who make up the avant-garde are producing films which are fundamentally different to their mainstream counterparts – no budget, intensely personal and using quite different distribution and exhibition circuits.”⁶³ This quote sets the groundwork for the following paragraphs, which will explore such filmmakers’ rejection of mainstream film culture, their strategy of non-commercial film distribution, and their embrace of technological development, as illustrated by selected avant-garde film examples from this period.

Many avant-garde filmmakers were artists that expressed themselves through a variety of media, being painters, photographers, writers, and filmmakers at the same time. Curtis identifies Man

⁶² David Curtis, *Experimental Cinema: A Fifty Year Evolution* (London: Studio Vista, 1971), 32–34.

⁶³ O’Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 2.

Ray as just such an artist, and suggests that this background in other fields of art impacted upon both the aesthetic and ideological concerns of his filmic output:

“Like other artists who turned to film-making, Man Ray, expatriate American painter and photographer, made films explicitly as part of his artistic output – none were intended for any kind of commercial exploitation. As well as bringing new ideas, these film artists also contributed techniques that gave the film a completely new appearance.”⁶⁴

This non-commercial ideology is shared by many of the avant-garde filmmakers, as is Man Ray’s experimentation with technology for the creation of unique aesthetic effects. Our first example, Man Ray’s film *Le Retour à la raison* (1923),⁶⁵ demonstrates the latter through its use of his “rayograph” – a method of creating images without the use of a camera. This technique involves placing objects “directly on the surface of photosensitive material before exposing it to light. A positive image gave him a brilliantly outlined white shape on a black background; the negative reversed it.”⁶⁶ The striking contrasts between black and white created by the rayograph offered new ways of seeing a “number of conventionally photographed images,”⁶⁷ such as a woman’s torso. As Sitney writes, “[f]or cinema, the implications of Man Ray’s photography were large and complex.”⁶⁸ Notable about this quote is the use of the term photography. Here we see how it was because many avant-garde filmmakers worked in other art forms that unique ideas were

⁶⁴ Curtis, 17.

⁶⁵ *Le Retour à la raison*. Dir Man Ray, feat Kikki of Montparnasse / Alice Prin (Independent Production, 1923).

⁶⁶ P. Adams Sitney, ‘Image and Title in Avant-Garde Cinema’, *October* 11 (1979): 100.

⁶⁷ Sitney, 100.

⁶⁸ Sitney, 100.

born; it is out of cross-disciplinary experimentation that Man Ray was able to create new kinds of *moving* images without the use of an actual camera. Man Ray drew on his experiments with still photography, where his rayograph was initially used, in order to create a film that complicates the distinction between the live-action of cinema and the animation of still images, given its employment of treated still photograms into a strip of film to be run through a projector. Relating this to my conception of CFM, working with different art forms – particularly in the devising of the elements that are to be used as constraints – enhances the artist’s imagination. In my work, for instance, the connection between writers and filmmakers is foregrounded – in *Project Cube* I adopt and adapt a constraint that had been previously devised and used by a writer, such that a visual counterpart is created for a constraint that has been expressed in a written artwork. In another work I have created, the connection between writing a story and communicating a story through the visual form of film is highlighted: for with *Tales and Tellers* I exclude myself from any involvement in the writing of the stories being told verbally and instead produce visual images that correspond to these stories of other writers. As stated earlier, my literary influences are drawn from the Oulipo experiments, and it is notable that some such writers have also been involved in filmmaking. Georges Perec, for instance, teamed up with Bernard Queysanne to turn his novel *A Man Asleep*⁶⁹ (original: *Un Homme Qui Dort*, 1967) into a film, *The Man Who Sleeps* (1974) (original: *Un Homme Qui Dort*, 1974) transposing his written constraints into images.

⁶⁹ Georges Perec, *Things: A Story of the Sixties with A Man Asleep*, trans. David Bellos and Andrew Leak (London: Vintage).

Marcel Duchamp, “whose interest and influence ha[s] ranged over almost every branch of artistic activity,”⁷⁰ provides another example of cross-disciplinary experimental filmmaking with his 1926 film *Anémic Cinéma*.⁷¹ Sitney describes the film as in dialogue with the commercial silent cinema, but in a manner that renders the conventions of such cinema obtuse:

“[p]art of the wit of Duchamp’s elaborately witty film *Anémic Cinéma* derives from the recognition that by and large the cinematic experience during the silent period was one of an alternation of reading and looking at images in an illusionistic depth. Duchamp carries this to an extreme limit; for every image there is a verbal passage, or between every two images, a title. In all, nine statements [...] are shown interspersed with nine nonverbal images.”⁷²

The audience is given a narrative in the form of moving words on the screen, intertwined with the image of a spiral. Both the words and images seem to move in similar patterns, such that the “[t]wo modes of representation are held together by the figure of a spiral.”⁷³ The movement of the spiral is repeated, switching from a revolving disc of words to black and white images. Sitney argues that “[t]he viewer’s response to this structure affirms the power of optical stimuli to create reflexes within a system of repetition.”⁷⁴ For although the audience is aware that “[t]he words are nothing more than single sentences [...] printed spirally on disks, winding from outside in,”⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Curtis, 19.

⁷¹ *Anémic Cinéma*. Dir. Marcel Duchamp (Independent Production, 1926).

⁷² Sitney, 103.

⁷³ Sitney, 104.

⁷⁴ Sitney, 103.

⁷⁵ Sitney, 103.

the minds of the viewers produce different responses on the basis of “an optical illusion of three-dimensionality” that is evoked by the motion of the discs. The viewer creates mental images that are “neither in the literal surface of the words, nor in the optical illusion. It is an operation of the viewer’s reading of one part of the film into the other.”⁷⁶ This is to say that each viewer combines the information drawn from the constant repetition of both the disc movement and the text to produce their own illusion of meaning. This is just one example how repetition is central to many avant-garde works, and as the repetition of an image is a core constraint for *Project Cube*, it will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

As indicated, both of these avant-garde artists created films outside of, and to some extent *against*, the commercial enterprise of mainstream cinema.⁷⁷ With this comes the disadvantage of having few financial resources to work with in the production and distribution of their work, as will be discussed later in relation to Maya Deren’s work. However, Scott MacDonald sees the advantage for such filmmakers as being their ability to work outside of the given constraints of commercial interests and to therefore create innovative works of art:

“[s]ince avant-garde filmmakers do not, generally, feel a need to compete with types of film which, at this point in time, are commercially and academically acceptable, they are free to explore filmic possibilities that their more “successful” colleagues are not. They are free to make films which are more personal, more dense, less easy to “de-code” than

⁷⁶ Sitney, 104.

⁷⁷ Curtis, 17.

film which must immediately return an investment. They are free to experiment with new forms of film language and with all aspects of the screening situation.”⁷⁸

This is certainly the case with the examples of *Le Retour à la raison* and *Anémic Cinéma*, both of which are dense and whose pleasure, limited to a certain type of spectator, is perhaps found in their needing to be de-coded. But by not attempting to appeal to general audience, who seek the immediate return of an investment as much as the producers of commercial cinema, such avant-garde filmmakers find themselves with the freedom to experiment and explore. The values of avant-garde cinema clash with the values of commercially driven film productions: avant-garde filmmakers want to challenge their audiences on an aesthetic and intellectual level, whereas commercial cinema is a form of entertainment that aims to produce narratives that please the viewer. As such, within the avant-garde, filmmakers are not afraid of using shocking and, to some extent, repelling images; for example, Buñuel and Dalí’s film *Un Chien Andalou* (1929)⁷⁹ features the slicing open of an eyeball early on in the film, and, although an animal’s eye was used, the sequencing of the images suggest that it could be a woman’s eye that is being cut. Buñuel and Dalí’s film is also a good example of the use of non-linear narrative within the avant-garde, by which viewers might become easily confused and are challenged to make sense of the film themselves. This contradicts commercial filmmaking, where the viewer is usually guided through a narrative with characters that they can relate to and sympathise with, so that enjoyment is easily attained and the film will attract more viewers, and earn more money, through audience

⁷⁸ Scott MacDonald, "The Avant-Garde Film: Why Fight It?," *Journal of the University Film Association* 33, no. 2 (1981): 5.

⁷⁹ *Un Chien Andalou* Dir. Buñuel and Dalí, feat. Simonne Mareuil, Pierre Batchef, (distributed by the BFI: *Un Chien Andalou / L'Age D'or* [2004]1929).

recommendation and reviews from critics. Characters in avant-garde films, on the other hand, are often difficult to de-code, if this is at all possible, due to non-linearity of the storytelling that fragments the characterisation of the figures featured.

Writing that “[t]he film avant-garde is renowned for its opposition to mainstream cinema,”⁸⁰ O’Pray suggests that many avant-garde artists do not ascribe mainstream cinema any artistic value, believing it to be “sentimental, melodramatic and banal,” and that this is because of the “mainstream film-maker’s meagre artistic control and consequent subservience to the conventions and banalities of ideology demanded by a mass audience.”⁸¹ This is to say that the filmic content of mainstream cinema is informed by the commercial demands of a production system that requires films to be both accessible and appealing to broad audiences in order to both finance itself and make a profit. This view is shared by Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, who created their Dogme 95 film movement as a rejection of the artistic influence that Hollywood exercises over the global film industry through its economic power.⁸² Stevenson writes that the Dogme manifesto could be understood as a detoxification or a deprogramming of the brainwashed.⁸³ Jake Horsley, the author of *Dogville vs Hollywood* (2005), writes that “*Dogville* [von Trier, 2003] not only exemplified von Trier’s refusal to ‘sell out’ or compromise his vision for commercial gain, it even tells a story about it.”⁸⁴ This is because the film presents a classical Hollywood narrative, but on a stripped down soundstage that visualises the ideological critique put forward in its narrative. This reading is supported by Geuens’ point that the Dogme

⁸⁰ O’Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 2.

⁸¹ O’Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 2.

⁸² Jack Stevenson, *Lars von Trier*, World Directors Series (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 104.

⁸³ Stevenson, 104

⁸⁴ Jake Horsley, *Dogville vs Hollywood* (London: Marion Boyars, 2005), 14.

95 movement tried to work against the “cosmeticization” of films,⁸⁵ which is itself affirmed by Gaut’s comment that “[e]ven the pervasive use of nakedness in [von Trier’s *The Idiots* (1998)]⁸⁶ suggests the central trope of Dogma – stripping film of its cosmetics”.⁸⁷ The films of Ouvipo are relevant here, too. The members do not seek to market their films commercially, and instead showcase their work at local independent events, demonstrating a “refusal to ‘sell out’ or compromise.”⁸⁸ Freedom from commercial interests is central to my conception of CFM practice, also. For the point of this creative practice is to push boundaries and create art as a means of expressing one’s self, through chosen constraints rather than the given constraints of commercial product. My films are an exploration of the potential (in the Oulipian sense) of film and, as such, they are not enslaved by commercial values. Using constraints to develop ideas can, for example, lead to radically non-linear narrative structures, characters that the viewer cannot relate to, or shots from angles that the audience does not find pleasant. To use constraints in film is to place emphasis on the artistic value of the film, regardless of the implications for its commercial success.

Ultimately, the reason why such avant-garde films lack commercial appeal is their freedom from, and subsequent avoidance of, traditional moving-image narrative structures – which in cinema relates to image sequencing, perhaps more so than dialogue or any other element of cinematic story-telling. *Le Retour à la raison* is one such example, and another is Fernand Léger’s *Ballet*

⁸⁵ Jean-Pierre Geuens, "Dogma 95: A Manifesto for Our Times," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 18, no. 2 (1 April 2001): 192.

⁸⁶ *The Idiots* (original title *Idioterne*). Dir. Lars von Trier, feat. Bodil Jørgensen, Jens Albinus, Louise Hassing, Troels Lyby, Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Henrik Prip (Zentropa Entertainments/Dr TV, 1998).

⁸⁷ Berys Gaut, ‘Naked Film: Dogma and Its Limits’, in *Purity and Provocation*, ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 95.

⁸⁸ Horsley, 14.

Mécanique (1924).⁸⁹ Léger's film jumps between images, such as a woman on a swing, a hat, a bottle, a pair of lips. There is no explicit narrative, "Léger's objects flash on to the screen with no logic to order them, there is no theme."⁹⁰ The shots seem unrelated and yet together they form a film.⁹¹ It can be argued that the meaning of the shots is given to them in the editing process. This emphasis on the role of editing was already present "[a]s early as 1919 [when] Kuleshov started to make radical experiments in the use of editing."⁹² His experiment with shot to shot associations brought with it the "conscious exploitation of the camera's ability to lie [which] lead to more than a reappraisal of cinematic credibility – it meant a new involvement in the schematic presentation of the art of editing."⁹³ Whilst other filmmakers such as Eisenstein and Pudovkin assisted Kuleshov in the exploration of montage techniques, this was not welcomed by the dominant film industry at the time. This is to say that while Hollywood filmmakers like D.W. Griffith had made major advances in montage, these were largely in the service of creating a fluid experience of a cinematic story for the spectator. As such, "[t]he full implications of editing – it's ability to manipulate the time/space continuum (as demonstrated by Gance, Kuleshov, etc.) – represented a threat to the orderly sequential continuity of the feature film; Hollywood's maxim was that editing should be as inconspicuous as possible."⁹⁴ Léger's film, too, rejects the time/space continuum, there is no sequential continuity and the editing does not try to conceal the fact that many of the images following each other have little or no diegetic

⁸⁹ *Ballet Mécanique*. Dir. Fernand Léger, feat. Alice Prin (Independent Production, 1924).

⁹⁰ Curtis, 18.

⁹¹ Malcolm Turvey, "The Avant-Garde and the 'New Spirit': The Case of 'Ballet Mécanique'," *October* 102 (2002): 40.

⁹² Curtis, 31.

⁹³ Curtis, 31.

⁹⁴ Curtis, 44.

connection. Instead, by actively impressing the contradictions of their juxtapositions upon the spectator, Léger creates an alternative cinematic experience.

Along with the separation between images informed by the experimental editing, in *Ballet Mécanique* Léger also creates an “isolation and fragmentation of objects” by capturing them in close-ups.⁹⁵ Le Grice writes that Léger “makes use of the abstracting techniques which separate the visual qualities of an object from its specific identity. For example, there are a number of sequences in the film of various kitchen implements chosen for their textural qualities (metallic and partially reflective), and their simple geometric shapes.”⁹⁶ This is to say that through the use of close-up in this film, the aesthetic elements come to define the filmed objects, rather than their functional uses, giving us a new way of seeing familiar things. The shooting of objects in close-up is an element that I have employed in my own short film, *Project Cube*, too, on the basis that it allows the filmmaker to bring small details of everyday objects to the audience’s attention that might otherwise go unnoticed.

As indicated, *Ballet Mécanique* is a collection of repetitions of the same images, which is also a feature that is found in both *La Retour à la raison* and *Anémic Cinéma*. Le Grice describes the excessive use of repetition of Man Ray’s work as “prefiguring what is now almost a ‘genre’ – exploration of the ‘loop’.”⁹⁷ Le Grice suggests that Léger’s use of repetition stems from his fascination with machines: “[i]n this context the repetition of the woman’s movement on the

⁹⁵ Turvey, 42.

⁹⁶ Le Grice, 42.

⁹⁷ Le Grice, 43.

steps could originally have been thought of as the application of machine ‘rotation’ to the human movement.”⁹⁸ Repetition is also a theme that is central to the work of Oulipo and explains why it is also a motif important to CFM. Constraints are often based on the idea that repeating a certain element will create new and interesting effects. For example, in Brainard’s *I remember* word combinations are repeated, such that every sentence starts with “I remember”, giving the piece a structure, rhythm, and a unique way of revealing its characters’ memories. In Perec’s novel *Life A User’s Manual* (original: *La Vie mode d’emploi*, 1978), to name another example, the reader is guided through the story via an exploration of a Græco-Latin bi-square.⁹⁹ The idea of repetition is also central to my own short film *Project Cube*, which is based on permutation, as 12 shots are repeated, their order being determined by the rolling of a dice. The use of repetition in Léger’s *Ballet Mécanique*, similar to some Oulipian texts and *Project Cube*, employs repetitions in a manner that takes the re/combination of its images to its limit. I will explore the theme of exhaustion, as induced by repetition, in Chapter Four in more detail.

In the 1930s there was a decline in avant-garde film activities throughout Europe. O’Pray writes “[t]he collapse of the avant-gardes in the 1930s in Europe was due to a complexity of factors – internal exhaustion, lack of resource and money, state antagonism and the rise of social-realism in the response to burgeoning fascism and Marxists-socialist ideas.”¹⁰⁰ However, at the same time, America experienced a rise in avant-garde filmmaking, arguably as a direct result of the fraught political situation in Europe – many of the artists involved in the European avant-garde

⁹⁸ Le Grice, 43.

⁹⁹ Georges Perec, *Life A User’s Manual*, trans. David Bellos (London: Vintage, 2003).

¹⁰⁰ O’Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 48.

found themselves compelled to leave their homes for the U.S..¹⁰¹ As such, Curtis writes that “America’s most active avant-garde period (1928-1932) followed immediately on that of Europe (1924-8),” and we note that the first international congress of the avant-garde occurred in 1929, at the turning point of this geographical shift.¹⁰² As we will see in the following paragraphs, works created by avant-garde filmmakers in America, too, demonstrate traits that relate to the practice of CFM.

Though “[i]t is often argued that the American avant-garde is the direct descendant of the European avant-garde of the pre-wars,” O’Pray points out that:

“the early work of Kenneth Anger and Maya Deren made in the mid-1940s was crucially different to most European work, especially in its attempt to deal with the self by using mythical themes and images, and the film-maker as narrative protagonists, as was influentially the case in Deren’s *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) and Anger’s *Fireworks* (1947).”¹⁰³

Deren can be described as one of the key figures of the avant-garde in America, playing a crucial role in the promotion of the filmic form within experimental art.¹⁰⁴ And, as with the earlier cited

¹⁰¹ Curtis, *Experimental Cinema*, 23–24.

¹⁰² Curtis, 39.

¹⁰³ O’Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 49.

¹⁰⁴ Renata Jackson, *The Modernist Poetics and Experimental Film Practice of Maya Deren, (1917-1961)*, *Studies in History and Criticism of Film*, v. 5 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002).

artists, Deren explores the connections between different forms of art in her filmic work. O'Pray writes that "[h]er background was not in visual arts but in literature", finding that "[h]er work owes more to poetry, dance and mythology than painting or film itself."¹⁰⁵ And beyond the experimental art itself, one of Deren's key contributions to avant-garde film is her fostering of the circulation of independent films.¹⁰⁶ As a pamphlet produced by the Arts Council of Great Britain puts it: "Maya Deren's work undoubtedly shaped the whole development of the American avant-garde film and her attitude to the independence of film, aesthetics, economics and promotion were to make her an exemplary figure."¹⁰⁷

Like Léger and Man Ray, Deren experimented with non-narrative film structures. Taking *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943)¹⁰⁸ as an example, Le Grice writes that "[t]he inevitable linearity of the film is used to explore a symbolic space which is not resolved as a causal narrative."¹⁰⁹ The film shows a woman entering a house, a scene that is repeated several times, yet each time the details are changed, prompting different actions of the character, who may be perceived as either a singular figure in repetition or as a person who is herself multiplied across the repetitions. Unlike the repetitions of *Le Retour à la raison* or *Ballet Mécanique*, Deren does not rely on re-using the exact image, instead, she focuses on repetition of the character's actions. For example, the main character is shown as she opens the door to a room, she glances around and sees a sofa, a

¹⁰⁵ O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 50–51.

¹⁰⁶ A. L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video: From Canonical Avant-Garde to Contemporary British Practice* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), 60.

¹⁰⁷ Arts Council of Great Britain, ed., *Stan Brakhage: An American Independent Film-Maker* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1980), 26.

¹⁰⁸ *Meshes of the Afternoon*. Dir. Maya Deren, feat. Maya Deren, (Re-voir: *Maya Deren experimental films* [2008], 1943).

¹⁰⁹ Le Grice, 318.

staircase, and a table with a knife on it. The same scene is repeated at a later stage, however the knife is now seen lying on the staircase. Reflecting upon this use of repetition, Le Grice suggests that

“[a]t each repetition, small changes expand the spectator’s imaginary construction of the symbolic space rather like a spiral through a matrix of action images. The spectator’s passage through the film requires each previous ‘version’ of the action to be reviewed by the next – not replacing it by a more definite version but deepening the experiential references in a cumulative transformation.”¹¹⁰

It can be further noted that the recurring appearance of certain objects within these repetitions, such as a white flower, a key, and a knife, creates a curiosity in the audience about their significance. The function of recurring objects will be discussed in regard to my own practice of CFM further in Chapter Four, for *Project Cube* employs particular objects, such as a brown glass bottle, in a contrasting way. Where Deren uses recurrent objects to break the continuity of the narrative, I use such objects to create a sense of continuity for the audience, to smooth out abrupt transitions of place. Deren used objects to confuse the viewer and to make them doubt what they see, as some of the objects are seen in different locations without an explanation how they got there. In *Project Cube*, the objects that I use largely appear in the same place within the frame across the film’s repetitions; the brown bottle is the only exception of an item that is taken

¹¹⁰ Le Grice, 318.

from one shot to another. Instead of instilling doubt in the viewer as Deren does, I used the objects as a stable element to reinforce the idea of a structured narrative.

Another aspect of avant-garde work that is evident in *Meshes of the Afternoon* is the filmmaker's close involvement in all aspects of the creative process of their films. As Dwoskin states, "there tends to be no division of labour, as in the commercial cinema: the film-maker conceives, shoots, edits (and sometimes even processes) his own film."¹¹¹ Though the footage for *Meshes of the Afternoon* was shot by Deren's husband, Alexander Hammid,¹¹² this is because Deren herself is the main actress of the film.¹¹³ This approach to filmmaking is centred around one individual, which is a central component of the practice of CFM, too. Deren is in control of every aspect of her film, and by acting in it herself she reduces the number of people involved in the creative production of her work. There are several reasons why a filmmaker might choose not to work with actors. On the one hand, it is a measure that reduces costs, and on the other hand it can be argued that the filmmaker gains a greater sense of control, as they do not have to instruct an actor. However, the disadvantage of starring in their own film is that the filmmaker cannot shoot the scene or may choose not to do so due to being unable to move the camera during a scene or because of the given constraints of money and time – shooting one's self is likely to run up more costs as setting up the camera, acting, and then reviewing the footage will take more time. Therefore, the filmmaker may feel she has to relinquish either her position as an actor or as the camera operator. Facing this dilemma in regard to my own work, for *Project Cube* I decided to work as an actor and to shoot all such scenes with a static camera so that I would not have to rely

¹¹¹ Dwoskin, 58.

¹¹² O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 51.

¹¹³ Curtis, 50.

on a camera operator. This course of action meant that I could work alone, however, it brought other aesthetic decisions with it, along with the use of fixed shot, which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Given what has been discussed thus far, making experimental films often also brings with it the question of finance. In many cases, the lack of commercial appeal meant minimal external funding for their projects, and so the filmmakers developed strategies that would cut the costs of the filmmaking process. *Meshes of the Afternoon* demonstrates such a strategy, by keeping the film crew to a minimum, and other measures, also. Brakhage explains that

“Maya Deren made *Meshes of the Afternoon* in 1941 with 16mm equipment and no sound. After the war, 16mm equipment [...] came onto the second-hand market in the United States [...]. These developments opened up film-making to people outside the industry, and allowed not one but several new cinemas to be born. The equipment is smaller, cheaper in itself, in stock and laboratory costs.”¹¹⁴

The case of the Ouvipo is another good example for working around the given constraint of a lack of funding for non-commercial film projects. The members of the Ouvipo rely on mutual favours to assist each other with their projects. While one filmmaker is ultimately in charge of all creative decision-making, they often assign smaller tasks that need to be done on set, such as

¹¹⁴ Laura Mulvey, ‘Film, Feminism and the Avant-Garde’, in *The British Avant-Garde Film, 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings*, ed. Michael O’Pray (Luton: University of Luton, 1996), 206.

installing the light or the sound equipment, to other members. I was also working within a restricted budget when creating my own films for this project, which influenced audio-visual choices, such as reading parts of the voice-over myself or using items that were available at a low cost. However, the fact that my films were not funded by a production agency gave me more artistic freedom as I could act autonomously. I did not have to compromise my artistic values to match someone else's expectation in order to receive a budget.

Avant-garde filmmaking continued to gain prominence during the second half of the 20th century, with the work of filmmakers such as Andy Warhol, Jonas Mekas, and Michael Snow, for instance, and to the extent that MacDonald would comment in 1981 that “since the avant-garde film already spans several decades and nations, a person who is just beginning to grow curious enough to approach the area will be confronted with hundreds and hundreds of demanding, unrecognizable films by dozens and dozens of interesting filmmakers.”¹¹⁵ And while it continues to grow a large body of work by non-commercial artists, the influence of the avant-garde is also evident in the 21st century feature films of David Lynch and Gaspar Noé, amongst other directors. By providing a formulation of constraint filmmaking practice, my hope for the future is that the recognition of such a category of creative practice will result in more work of constraint filmmakers being produced. As O’Pray writes that, “[i]n the end, all of these nomenclatures – avant-garde, underground, experimental, modernist, independent – share some sense of outside-ness, of marginality, of independence”¹¹⁶, and I believe that CFM works will

¹¹⁵ MacDonald, 5.

¹¹⁶ O’Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 7.

provide a further, significant, contribution to the already existent body of such experimental works.

3 The process of CFM

The first part of this chapter outlines how constraints are employed within the practice of constraint filmmaking as I envision it. CFM is seen to incorporate a four phase creative process in which constraints are first devised and then applied in different ways according to the stage of the film's production. The second part of this chapter elaborates on the practice of CFM by comparing and contrasting it with the use of constraints by the filmmaking groups of Ouvipo and Dogme 95 in order to draw out the benefits of adopting such an approach. The final part of this chapter analyses six films that have been made with the use of constraints, demonstrating the range of effects that are created by adopting this approach, as well as the value of doing so.

3.1 Phases of the CFM process

The process of CFM consists of four phases: Development; Scriptwriting and Storyboarding; Producing and Shooting; and Post-production. The first phase may be undertaken by an individual filmmaker or a group of filmmakers, but the following three are undertaken on an individual basis. This is to mean that constraints can be devised collectively but must be implemented individually.

In the first phase of the process of CFM, that of *development*, filmmakers determine that they are in a position where they can freely reject and choose constraints. This is to say that it is at this stage that given constraints are separated from chosen constraints. Once identified as factors

that need to be accommodated for, given constraints play no further role in the creative process. It is important to note that there are no chosen constraints ascribed to this first phase of CFM. For it is at this stage that the filmmakers brainstorm, choose, and develop the constraints that they intend to use in the following three phases. Three different types of constraints need to be chosen, as each type corresponds to different aspects of the creative process that emerge in the subsequent phases. The three different types of constraints that the filmmaker must choose are as follows: content/abstract constraints, practical/technical constraints, and post-production constraints. Any number of constraints may be devised and employed for each of these types. For instance, a filmmaker might employ two content/abstract constraints, three practical/technical constraints, and one post-production constraint. And it is important to note that though each type most commonly applies to a specific phase – content/abstract constraints for phase 2, practical/technical constraints for phase 3, and post-production constraints for phase 4 – this is not always the case, as is explained in the next paragraph. What is important is that each type of constraint is executed at exactly the moment of time at which they are relevant.

In phase two – *scriptwriting and storyboarding* – the filmmaker applies all of their chosen content/abstract constraints. This is the phase in which the filmmaker develops a script, where applicable, and designs the shots they wish to take. If the narrative of the film is constructed in a later phase, through editing, for example, the filmmaker applies their content/abstract constraints to the shots they devise in phase 2 as well as to the development of their film's narrative in phase 4. Taking the example of *Project Cube*, in phase 2 I only planned out the shots, not the narrative. I worked with a constraint relating to the theme of body images when devising the shots, but the verbal narration was written after the shooting. Further, when devising the

shots, a filmmaker may wish to undertake previsualisation and work with a camera to try out a shot before deciding to use it in phase 3. If they wish to do this they must apply the practical/technical constraints to these previsualisation shots undertaken during phase 2.

Phase three – *production and shooting* – involves the execution of all practical/technical constraints. Here the actual principal photography takes place, and constraints may relate to the choice of lens, location, camera angle, type of lighting, number of batteries, etc. Such constraints will impact upon the recording of footage for the film, as will be explored in more detail when looking at Baker’s work *Tangerine* (2015)¹, which was shot on iPhones instead of cameras. As suggested in the previous paragraph, practical/technical constraints need to be employed whenever shooting takes place, whether it is during principal photography (phase 3), previsualisation (phase 2), or following an initial edit (phase 4) that indicates the requirement for pick-ups / re-shoots.

Phase four – *post-production* – hosts all post-production constraints, as this is the stage that the filmmaker has allocated for editing. Here the filmmakers can choose to apply constraints on the editing process, for instance a specific shot length, the inclusion of a specific effect, or the requirement for a specific narrative structure as with the Ouvipo films discussed below. Further, practical/technical constraints undertaken in phase 3 may have a knock on effect on the post-production even if a post-production constraint has not been intentionally devised to relate to the other type. For example, for *Tales and Tellers* I employed the practical/technical constraint of a

¹ *Tangerine*. Dir Sean Baker.

chroma wall in phase 3, so in post-production I decided to match up all of the backgrounds with the corresponding blue or green screen action.

Each of the three types of constraints (content/abstract constraints, practical/technical constraints and post-production constraints) are further divided into six sub-categories. These have been identified in order to facilitate the devising of constraints in phase 1, and, given the potential cross-over of constraints between phases, to help the filmmaker to identify when their constraint ought to be employed during the production. Further, recognising that the constraints appear, albeit in different forms, in each phase ensures that they are not inferred or applied retrospectively.

The three categories of constraints are broken down into the following sub-categories:

CONTENT /ABSTRACT CONSTRAINTS

1. *Linguistic constraints*: During the scriptwriting, the filmmaker can apply a constraint directly upon the wording of the script, focusing on the letters, grammar, or syntax used. This approach is closely connected to the constraints that Oulipian writers use. Famous examples include the lipogram or the anaphora.
2. *Structural-narrative*: This category of constraints is focused on the structure of the narrative and so for example can apply to storyboarding and scriptwriting. Structural-narrative constraints are also closely related to Oulipian constraints, given the group's

application of such frames as the Græco-Latin bi-square or the Snowball to their literary works.

3. *Visual-narrative*: These are constraints that are applied to the narrative's visual possibilities. For example, the filmmaker might apply a constraint that suggests the inclusion of a particular object in every shot.
4. *Audio-narrative*: Constraints of this sub-type affect the audio design of the narrative. For example, a constraint could be applied that specifies that there can be no dialogue in the film, or the filmmaker might apply a constraint suggesting that certain filmed objects are not allowed to be named in the narration.
5. *Resources*: These are constraints affecting the resources needed for this stage. This can range from small expenses up to, for example, the allocation of a budget to hire a screenwriter.
6. *Miscellaneous*: Any constraints that impact upon the process of narrative construction and do not classify as any of the above-mentioned types of constraints.

PRACTICAL/TECHNICAL CONSTRAINTS

1. *Linguistic*: These are constraints that affect any spoken words that are recorded with the images. A possible example is the constraint of only recording every second sentence that an actor reads of a script.
2. *Structural-technical*: The constraints of this sub-type are concerned with the structure of the principal photography. For example, a possible constraint could require that all shots need to be filmed in a reverse order to their intended sequencing in the final film.

3. *Visual-technical*: These constraints are technical decisions that affect the production of the moving images. For example, a visual-technical constraint, such as the requirement to film everything handheld, relates to the choice of equipment used to produce the images.
4. *Audio-technical*: These are constraints that affect the recording of the sound. The movement of Dogme 95 presents a good example of such a constraint: all sound must be recorded diegetically, alongside the images, disallowing the employment of separately recorded sound.
5. *Resources*: Constraints that affect the resources of the production include aspects such as how much the filmmaker can spend on props.
6. *Miscellaneous*: Any constraint that relates to the production or the shooting of the film and does not fit into the above described types of constraint can be referred to as a miscellaneous constraint.

POST-PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS

1. *Linguistic*: These are constraints that affect the use of language as it may be employed during post-production, which includes dialogues, voice-overs, and title cards, for instance. Possible examples are that a filmmaker could cut out the audio for every fifth word spoken by an actor, or they could decide that particular sentences ought to be inserted into the audio track repeatedly in accordance with a mathematical pattern.
2. *Structural-post-production*: In the post-production process, the structure of the film is finalised, and it is possible to apply constraints specifically to this process of editing. For example, the filmmaker could apply the constraint that all shots need to be sequenced in

the order in which they were shot, or the filmmaker could use a constraint where the order of the shots available are numbered and then sorted and sequenced according to a mathematical pattern.

3. *Visual-post-production*: These are constraints that affect the images in the editing process. The filmmaker could, for example, constrain the use of colour grading or the use of optical filters, or the use of certain types of transitions between shots.
4. *Audio-post-production*: These constraints affect the sound of the film in all its aspects, including music, sound effects, voice-overs, volume, and more. For example, the filmmaker can choose to use a certain musical motif repeatedly, or they can decide that a constraint forbids the use of any additional sound effects.
5. *Resources*: These are any constraints that affect the resources available, the filmmaker could for example, constrain the budget for editing software or the number of days/hours they are allowed to conduct the edit.
6. *Miscellaneous*: Any constraints that do not fit the above sub-categories can be classified as miscellaneous.

A further aspect of categorisation relates to their employment as either *non-variable constraints* or *variable constraints*. All such constraints (the three major categories and the six sub-categories of each) can be employed as either non-variable constraints or variable constraints.

As a first step, the filmmaker – or a collective of filmmakers – develop and invent constraints for their film project. This set of constraints is referred to as the *non-variable* constraints. These

are core to the project and must be followed throughout the filmmaking process, across the three following phases. Though non-variable insofar as they must be used, it should be noted that such constraints may nevertheless be dynamic in their scope, such that there are different ways to execute the same constraint.

As a second step, *variable* constraints are introduced. These are constraints that are optional: the filmmaker may use the same non-variable constraints for several films but change the variable constraints employed in each of these films. For example, the collection of *Tales and Tellers* consists of five different short films, which are all subject to the same non-variable constraint of using a green screen. Each film, however, then has a differing variable constraint placed upon it, to give each story a unique element.

In some cases, the variable constraints can be a mere elaboration on the non-variable constraint – this is left open to the filmmaker to decide. For example, the non-variable constraint of Project Cube requires that a device be used to generate the order of the available shots. However, it is left open as to what kind of device this is, and so the choice of device thus becomes a variable constraint. Possible variable constraints that can be used to determine the order of the shots (the non-variable constraint) may be dice or a device with a spinning arrow or a bucket of numbered balls, for instance.

3.2 The practice of CFM related to other movements and groups

Heidi Philipsen studied the conditions in which the students of the National Film School of Denmark are taught in order to answer the question: “What does the use of constraints offer filmmakers?”² Seeking to understand “how creativity can be fostered by constraints and collaboration in film production,”³ her study focuses on the overall psychological state of the students who worked with constraints, describing the effect that working with constraints has on the students. After graduating, the students spoke positively about their experiences of making films under constraints. For instance, one student reported to Philipsen that the constraints “made him feel secure, inspired, and focused; they also made him experiment.”⁴ Philipsen’s analyses of these students thus validate the argument that constraints can enhance one’s creativity, and she summarises that “[w]hen filmmakers want to create something original (which is the hallmark of creativity) it seems to be an obstacle if they are working within a free concept [...]. In order to reduce pressure and to provide negative stress, filmmakers often benefit from the concepts of constraints and collaboration.”⁵ In short, the three areas of stress, inspiration, and focus, areas that constitute an important part of the creative functioning of artists, are seen to be positively impacted by the use of constraints within one’s creative practice.

In addition to her observation of the students at the Film School, Philipsen also analysed participants of the Danish Video Clip Cup, a filmmaking challenge in which young filmmakers

² Heidi Philipsen, "Constraints in Film Making Processes Offer an Exercise to the Imagination," *Seminar.Net - International Journal of Media, Technology and Lifelong Learning* 5, no. 1 (2009).

³ Philipsen.

⁴ Philipsen.

⁵ Philipsen.

create a piece of work following a set of constraints in a very short period of time. Assessing the impact of constraints upon this alternative educational environment, Philipsen suggests “that in order to help filmmakers in learning processes to think outside the box and get into flow, they (and their films) can profit from being placed “inside a box”, to work with the help of scaffolding at different levels.”⁶ Philipsen’s observations thus speak in favour of the argument that using constraints in the creative process of filmmaking fosters creativity, in this case because they force the filmmaker to experiment, which can result in exploring areas and learning new skills that were previously ignored.

In this section, I make an argument for the benefits of the use of constraints. To explain the positive effect of using constraints, I look at reasons why filmmakers choose to use constraints, with particular reference to the filmmaking groups of Dogme 95 and Ouvipo.

3.2.1 Dogme 95 – the relation of the Vow of Chastity to CFM

As stated in chapter 2.2., the Dogme directors employed constraints in a manner that reflected their desire to reduce the aesthetic excesses found in Hollywood production, artistic choices that were largely made on the understanding that the huge budgets of such studio films needed to be recouped through their commercial appeal. The aim of the Dogme brotherhood was to promote film as a medium that represents reality, or truth.⁷

⁶ Philipsen.

⁷ Gaut, 93.

Here it will be seen how the ten rules of the Vow of Chastity – the Dogme manifesto – can be classified as constraints within the practice of CFM. The original rules of the Vow of Chastity read as follows:

“*DOGMA 95:*

- 1. Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in (if a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found).*
- 2. The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot.)*
- 3. The camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. (The film must not take place where the camera is standing: shooting must take place where the film takes place).*
- 4. The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera).*
- 5. Optical work and filters are forbidden.*
- 6. The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc. must not occur).*

7. *Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)*
8. *Genre movies are not acceptable.*
9. *The film format must be Academy 35mm.*
10. *The director must not be credited.*⁸

To see how the rules of the Vow of Chastity fit in with my own conception of CFM, each rule will be ascribed to one of the four phases of the CFM process. Further, the Dogme rules will then be placed within the criteria for constraints within CFM; identifying where they are situated within the three major categories and their six sub-categories. This means we need to consider at which phase the rule is executed and which areas of the film or the filmmaking process it affects directly and indirectly.

During phase one of CFM as I define it, filmmakers choose to work with constraints. Filmmakers of Dogme 95 perform a similar action by choosing to adhere to the Vow of Chastity. The final command, rule number ten, of the manifesto relates to this. This rule states that the director's name cannot appear in the credits. In theory, this constraint should fall under phase four, as the director's name tends to be added in post-production, along with the other credits for the film. However, this is not necessarily the case – other films, such as those by Andrew Bujalski, include

⁸ Peter Schepelern, "Ten Years of Dogme," ed. Agnete Dorph Stjernfelt and Susanna Neimann, *Film*, no. Special Issue/Dogme (Spring 2005): 5.

credits on physical cards held up before the camera. Further, for the Dogme brothers this constraint acts as an ideological statement. It is a demonstration of their rejection of traditional Hollywood values and, therefore, though it is a constraint that is not central to the actual physical making of the film, it is vital to the entire construction of the film as it represents their ideology. As such, it very much affirms the director's choice to engage in this system of constraints and thus falls under phase one of my own CFM process.

The second phase of the CFM process is about content/abstract constraints, and we find that four commandments from the Vow of Chastity can be assigned to this phase. Rule number one of the Vow of Chastity states that all scenes have to be shot on location, hence films on certain locations that require artificial studio sets or special effects – such as for example out in space, on a cloud, a city in the past, or similar – are not possible. Further, there is the implication that Dogme films are unlikely to be set in far-flung locations that would require the bearing of costs associated with travel, transportation, permits, and other such factors, for shooting to occur on location. This resonates with rule number seven, which dictates that all narratives be in the present – for films set in the past or future necessarily require a level of artifice in their set design, costuming, and props. Rule number six states that there must not be any superficial action within the film, specifying the featuring of murder and weaponry. This rule limits the content for a Dogme film in regard to the genres it can engage with, which is emphasised with rule number eight, which explicitly forbids genre films. This affirms the liberating nature of such constraints, as it means that filmmakers cannot rest on generic narrative conventions and must be creative in the stories they tell.

In the third phase of the CFM process, the filmmaker concentrates on practical/technical constraints, which informs most of the Vow of Chastity. As already mentioned, the first rule regulates the shooting location and use of props. In practice this means no built-sets can be used, and no props can be added or brought to the scene, only the things found at the shooting location are allowed to feature in the film. Interestingly, while this may indicate the saving of money in regard to constructing artificial structures or purchasing items, shooting on location often brings in a range of other cost factors, relating to transportation, delays due to weather, permits, and lighting, amongst other things. Rule number three is related to the use of the cameras: tripods and other stabilizing objects for the camera should not be used. This results in the command that all shooting must be done handheld, which is a practical-technical constraint given that it impacts upon the kinds of shots that can be created. Further, two more of the rules from the Vow of Chastity apply here, one setting the practical and technical conditions that no artificial lighting can be used and that all film must be shot in colour (rule 4) and the other ruling out the use of optical filters that would, perhaps, prettify the images (rule 5). Rule number 2 states that no separately recorded sound can be added afterwards during post-production, meaning only diegetic sounds that occur during the recording of the scene can be used.

Two of the aforementioned commands from the Vow of Chastity would also classify as post-production related constraints and therefore fall into phase four of the CFM process. Rule number 2 of the Dogme manifesto regulates sound, such that no sound effects or non-diegetic music cannot be added to the film in post-production. Further, rule number 5 is a constraint that

also falls into the phase of post-production as it prohibits “optical work”, which suggests the use of post-production adjustments of colour grading and such.

Additionally, there is rule number 9, which requires that the film must be in the format of Academy 35mm. This rule is open to interpretation, and does not mean that the film needs to be shot in Academy 35mm; the filmmakers can shoot in Digital Video (DV) and then transfer the material to Academy 35mm afterwards. This is confirmed by Thomson, who states:

“This rule has been the source of some confusion with regard to the equipment used to shoot *Festen* [Vinterberg, 1998] (and the other Dogma 95 films). Indeed, the rule’s language (both in Danish and English) is vague: it does not specify whether the film must be shot on 35mm as well as distributed in the format.”⁹

Therefore, this rule can fall into either phase three as a practical/technical constraint, if the filmmaker chooses to shoot their work on 35mm, but it can also be classified as a post-production constraint and fall into phase four, if the filmmaker decides to shoot in DV and transfer the film onto 35mm afterwards for distribution.

⁹ C. Claire Thomson, *Thomas Vinterberg’s Festen (The Celebration)* (University of Washington Press, 2014), 57.

Allocating the rules of the Vow of Chastity to the phases of CFM shows that there is a general overlap within the various working practices that employ constraints. And, although the motivation for applying the rules of the Vow of Chastity differ from that of the practice of CFM, the effect that these rules, or constraints, have on the filmmaker are the same. By constraining the filmmaker's choices, the filmmaker is forced to look for alternative solutions and their creative energies are thus further exercised – along with their technical skills. Within Dogme 95, for instance, the filmmakers do not use stabilizing equipment or sets created in the studio, thus developing their technical prowess in regard to cinematography and location shooting.

Reflecting on the benefits of using constraints in filmmaking, however, it is important to point out that the Vow of Chastity constitutes a rigid list of constraints that leaves little room for the filmmaker to make certain choices. For instance, they cannot choose or select which constraints they wish to use, and the set of constraints does not change for different projects. While there is some leeway in regard to the following of all ten commands, and some Dogme 95 filmmakers, such as Levring with his film *The King is Alive* (2000)¹⁰, occasionally break the commandments, ideal conditions are met if the director follows all ten commandments of the Vow of Chastity. Gaut suggests that this is because “[t]he programme [Dogme 95] criticises the *auteur* theory for granting supreme power to the individual director, whose pursuit of an artistic vision threatens the presentation of truth,”¹¹ which both explains rule 10 of the manifesto, and also what the point of the constraints are here. The point is that the focus is on freeing film – in the abstract, the notion of a cinema free of the stamp of studios and the auteurs – rather than the filmmaker, which

¹⁰ *The King is Alive*. Dir. Kristian Levring, feat. Miles Anderson, Romane Bohringer, David Bradley, Jennifer Jason Leigh (Zentropa Entertainments, 2000)

¹¹ Gaut, 99.

is why within the Dogme 95 approach directors are given less power over the aesthetic choices that they can make; it is the director's duty to make a film that is a representation of the "truth".

For my approach, it is essential to give the individual filmmaker the overall creative decision-making power. This means that the individuals can choose, add, or dismiss, constraints devised by themselves or suggested by others, when working on their own constraint film project. There is no set list of constraints that is applicable for all films made within the practice of CFM, as there is for all films made within Dogme 95. Further, there are no restrictions on how much of their personal artistic vision the filmmaker can put towards their project. As opposed to Dogme 95, where constraint filmmakers are told to work within given boundaries, I argue that filmmakers should be encouraged to set their own boundaries. This is because choosing constraints helps the filmmaker to unlock their creativity. For the power of decision-making over constraints implies the ability to assess a range of constraints, thus giving the filmmaker a broader understanding of the different possibilities available in the creative process.

3.2.2 OULIPO

The Oulipian work process dictates that authors use a constraint; however, they have flexibility in regard to the specific form and choice of the constraint. This idea is transferred to CFM, where filmmakers have the overall creative control over each constraint that they wish to use. One distinction between the work of the members of Oulipo and a constraint filmmaker, however, is the medium of art through which they express themselves. Working within the field of literature, Oulipian constraints are applied in a medium of art that relies on a different type of visual

stimulation than the medium of film. As stated earlier, constraints are medium-specific and the creation of literature involves a different process to the creation of a film – for instance, stage four is not of much relevance to writing, in the broadest sense post-production in literature relates to the printing or reproduction of the work rather than any creative manipulation of it (book cover design and formatting would arguably fall under phase 3 – the practical/technical creation of a work). This means Oulipian constraints are not as easily transposed into the four stage CFM process as the Dogme 95 manifesto.

Further, while Dogme 95 only includes ten constraints, Oulipian artists have produced a multitude of constraints, and new constraints are constantly tried out and added. Most of these constraints are of a linguistic or structural nature. Allocating the linguistic and structural constraints of a written piece to a phase within the practice of CFM finds that they mostly fall into Phase Two and Phase Three of the creation process, where the literary piece is conceptualised and realised as a filmic work. An example of an Oulipian constraints that affects the language of the piece is, for example, the lipogram, which is executed during the writing process. An example of a purely structural constraint is the use of a chronogram, whereby the author transcribes a sentence by attributing letters to roman numerals, based on the fact that some roman numerals are already also letters. Another example is the constraint of the Snowball, where the writer starts with a one letter word, followed by a two-letter word, followed by a three-letter word, continuing to create a work on the basis of this pattern of word expansion. This instance is interesting as here the structural constraint results in a visual effect: each word occupies one line that expands until a point of contraction, creating the visual shape of a snowball

on the paper. This shows how methods employed in literary works may lend themselves to visual forms of art, as typographical effects relate to aesthetics in any case.

The Oulipian approach towards writing with constraints is a key influence on my conception of a practice of CFM. On the one hand, many constraints can be borrowed from Oulipo and used in the exact same manner for filmmaking, as filmmaking, too, often includes a linguistic element, such as dialogue or a voice-over. Other constraints used in Oulipian writing do not yet have an equivalent in film, and my own enactment of the practice of CFM is devoted to finding a visual equivalent for these constraints. The effect of this pursuit is that, even though Oulipian writers are limited to working with words, certain literary constraints act as a catalyst for developing enriching constraints in filmmaking.

3.2.3 OUIVIPO

As suggested above, a possible criticism towards Dogme 95 is that the movement mostly limits aesthetics through the use of constraints instead of inducing a liberation. Though the Dogme constraints can invite creativity with their use, subjecting the filmmaker to a rigid set of pre-conceived rules limits their power to make decisions as to which constraints to use and to therefore explore the range of constraints and their related filmmaking possibilities. This contrasts with the beliefs of Oulipo and Ouvipo, as their approach towards working with constraints is far more flexible and displays a certain fluidity. With these groups, new constraints are constantly discovered, devised, and added to the already existing collection. In short, the

work of Oulipians – as well as the Ouvipians discussed here - revolves around the expansive exploration of the potential in an artform. This is not the case for Dogme 95.

This may be why Oulipo and Ouvipo are considered to be practice-based groups rather than movements. The repetitive use of the same constraints for all Dogme 95 works relates to the ideology that the founders of Dogme 95 want to instil in cinema – a particular aesthetic that relates to a specific notion of “truth”. Von Trier is very passionate about filmmaking, and the movement of Dogme 95 originated partly out of his passion for his craft; he believed that the film industry had been corrupted and artists needed to know that they have other possibilities to make films, beyond that of Hollywood norms.¹² As such any interference with the constraints might lead to a deviation from the kind of visual representation the participants of the movement were intending, or expected, to create. Oulipo is vastly different in this respect. In regard to public involvement and media representation, the participation of members is rare, and this is because the Oulipo does not want to be perceived as a movement or a school.¹³ Although this is not always respected by every participant as an individual, as a collective the group does not have a political mission.¹⁴ The idea of being a laboratory from which structures and forms emerge is more important to Oulipo than being a movement in the traditional sense.¹⁵ James writes that “[u]nlike other literary groups of the twentieth century [...], it avoids adopting positions in political debates and keeps a sceptical distance from contemporary intellectual trends.”¹⁶ This political detachment seems to give Oulipo an image of being timeless, as well as being a distinct

¹² Stevenson, 104.

¹³ Levin Becker, 7.

¹⁴ Elkin and Esposito, 61.

¹⁵ Consenstein, 17.

¹⁶ James, 108.

feature that sets Oulipo apart from other experimental art groups, particularly the early twentieth century avant-garde movements that emerged with political declarations littering their manifestoes, as well as filmmaking movements like Dogme 95.

The approach of Ouvipo - **Ouv**roir de **V**idéographie **P**otentielle, or the Workshop of Potential Video – aligns with an Oulipian way of thinking, which, as outlined in an earlier chapter, is very influential on my own conception of the practice of CFM. Though Oulipo is a literature based group, it is important to note that both Oulipo and Ouvipo are created in the spirit of the Ou-x-pos, though, as mentioned earlier, the members of the Ouvipo are currently fighting for their official recognition as an Ou-x-po.¹⁷ This indicates that there is a common foundation for the two groups and that they share certain core characteristics. For instance, both groups believe that constraints can be combined and one overall constraint can create several sub-constraints, as is demonstrated in the film *Erre* (Savès, 2012).¹⁸ Further, within Ouvipo and Oulipo there is the possibility to apply constraints selectively, whereas within the movement of Dogme 95 this is not tolerated. Another reason why Ouvipo might be perceived as being close to Oulipo in spirit and method, is that some of the work of Ouvipo is focused on uncovering visual equivalents of linguistic constraints.

The practice of CFM ties in very closely with the work of Ouvipo. The aim of Ouvipo is to generate films that are made with constraints. For CFM any constraint that is possible can be

¹⁷ Katja Waschneck, 'Interview with members of Ouvipo – Julien Savès, Marc Lahore, and Marion Buannic', 10 January 2015. Unpublished.

¹⁸ *Erre*. Dir. Julien Savès, feat. Antoine Guiraud (Broken Productions 2012) <http://vimeo.com/70316192>

used, and so it operates in a similar fashion to Ouviaian practice, in so far as every challenge consists of both non-variable and variable constraints. The group is more focused on producing practical work than writing about their theoretical approach, and so I conducted an interview with three Ouvipo members: Julien Savès, Marc Lahore, and Marion Buannic. I began by asking them why they chose to work with constraints. The spontaneous and immediate answer that it is “because we are masochists” was followed by a lot of laughter.¹⁹ After a few moments of consideration, the three members of Ouvipo named several reasons for their choosing to work with constraints. They believe that the use of constraints “takes us [the filmmakers of the Ouvipo] away from common places,”²⁰ it forces the director to “think outside common pictures and to try a different path,” and, further, “the constraint allows us to make an artistic product.”²¹ The group aims to be innovative and to produce original work, and to do so they have created a framework for themselves that is intended to aid this endeavour and with which they feel comfortable. The idea of feeling comfortable in one’s creative environment is a central component of Ouvipo. In the interview, Buannic stated that before working with constraints, she was less secure about her ability to direct and the stress she was experiencing was higher.²² This relates back to the observations of Philipsen, who found in her study that the sampled students’ stress levels were lower when working with constraints compared to when working without constraints.²³ For the three filmmakers of Ouvipo that I spoke to, creating a film with constraints is fun – they enjoy the process and the fact that Le Labo – the artistic and experimental section of Broken Productions – gives them the freedom to experiment without the pressure to perform, also relates

¹⁹ Waschneck, ‘Interview with members of Ouvipo’.

²⁰ Waschneck, ‘Interview with members of Ouvipo’.

²¹ Waschneck, ‘Interview with members of Ouvipo’.

²² Waschneck, ‘Interview with members of Ouvipo’.

²³ Philipsen.

back to the reduction of stress levels. They do not need to infect their artistic works with commercial concerns as, in exchange for such freedom in their Ouvipo works, they also produce sketches and short films for Broken, which was founded in Paris in 2004.²⁴ The approach of the members of Ouvipo towards filmmaking with constraints is that there are no mistakes, one should just try an experiment and, if it does not work out, one has nevertheless learnt something useful from it. In their opinion, working with constraints frees the artist.²⁵ Further, by working in the team of Ouvipo, who all share a common concept of filmmaking, the filmmakers feel comfort in the support and encouragement that they can offer one another. Given that shooting with constraints often poses different difficulties to other kinds of filmmaking practice, and the directors of Ouvipo are used to dealing with such obstacles, if something goes wrong on their film set, the directors are better prepared to work through such problems by way of their shared knowledge.²⁶ Ultimately, the members of Ouvipo find that working with constraints helps them to develop as artists, or, as Lahore says, “to better ourselves as artists.”²⁷ For working with constraints forces you to think “outside of the box”²⁸ and encourages you to experiment.

As indicated, Ouvipo, Oulipo, and the movement of Dogme 95, all rely on the power of the collective. Similar to the members of Oulipo, the members of Ouvipo meet regularly to discuss constraints, and the responsibility of constructing a new set of constraints for a collection of films is usually shared. Yet though constraints are usually chosen as a collective, each group member

²⁴ Julien Savès, ‘LE LABO’, Broken Productions, LE LABO, 21 January 2016, <http://lelabo-brokenprod.blogspot.co.uk/>. Accessed 15 November 2014.

²⁵ Waschneck, ‘Interview with members of Ouvipo’.

²⁶ Waschneck, ‘Interview with members of Ouvipo’.

²⁷ Waschneck, ‘Interview with members of Ouvipo’.

²⁸ Waschneck, ‘Interview with members of Ouvipo’.

aims to engage in experimentation, which mean many different types of films emerge from their shared use of constraints.

CFM is designed to work for both groups that are making constraint films and individuals who desire to work on a project alone. This is because within the practice of CFM, the creative decision-making power must always be in the hands of the filmmaker. And yet the drive behind conceiving of the practice of CFM is the wish to encourage all artists to follow their passion. As such, my presentation of CFM, across this written thesis and my films, provides guidelines and initial steps that can be used, creating a supportive environment as with that found in the Ouvipo practice, but it is important to recognise that the constraints that I provide and demonstrate are there to inspire other artists to work with them in a way that they feel comfortable – this means that they might use them with precision, or they might use them as a starting point and then change them as they wish. Further, CFM also allows for the participation of individuals that are not affiliated with any specific group. CFM thus incorporates the supportive environment of Ouvipo, through the guidelines and demonstrations, but also allows individuals to devise the constraints to be employed in their projects.

3.3 **Examples**

In the following paragraphs we will look at some different films made with constraints. These films were made under differing circumstances, the filmmakers having applied constraints for different reasons, and so the range demonstrates how constraint filmmaking can cut across genres

as well as forms (short film, feature film, documentary) associated with different filmmaking practices. As examples, we will look at two films produced by the Ouvipo: *ErrE* (2012) by Julien Savès²⁹ and *Ressasser* (2012) by Julien Beaunay,³⁰ a Dogme 95 film, *The King is Alive* (2000) by Kristian Levring,³¹ *The Five Obstructions* (Leth and von Trier 2003),³² *Tangerine* (Baker 2015),³³ and *Victoria* (Schipper 2015).³⁴ The purpose of giving five different examples of constraints (the two Ouvipo films incorporate the same constraints) is to show the diversity of constraints, how they affect films – and filmmakers – in different ways, and to show practical examples that are not associated with my own work. All of these factors work to demonstrate how constraints can foster creativity in filmmaking. In each of the analyses put forward, I will show how the respective constraints of each film fall under the four phrases of filmmaking practice identified in chapter 3.1.

3.3.1 *ErrE* (Savès 2012)³⁵ and *RessasseR* (Beaunay, 2012)³⁶

ErrE (English: to wander) by Julien Savès and *RessasseR* (English: to brood over/to dwell on) by Julien Beaunay are short films made in 2012 as part of the third challenge devised and undertaken by the members of Ouvipo. Both films were produced by Le Labo, the experimental section of Broken Productions. For each challenge, the members of Ouvipo put together a list of

²⁹ *ErrE*. Dir. Julien Savès.

³⁰ *RessasseR*. Dir. Julien Beaunay, feat. Julien Monnin, Emilie Caillon, Arnaud Soullignac. (Broken Productions, 2012). <http://vimeo.com/70875478>

³¹ *The King is Alive*. Dir. Kristian Levring.

³² *The Five Obstructions* (original title *De fem bænd*). Dir. Jørgen Leth and Lars von Trier, feat. Jørgen Leth, Lars Von Trier (Zentropa Real, Wajnbrose Productions, Alamaz Film Productions, Panic Productions, 2003).

³³ *Tangerine*. Dir. Sean Baker.

³⁴ *Victoria*. Dir. Sebastian Schipper.

³⁵ *ErrE*. Dir. Julien Savès.

³⁶ *RessasseR*. Dir. Julien Beaunay.

constraints, which they published alongside their films.³⁷ The list of constraints for the challenge undertaken in *ErrE* and *RessasseR* is split into two sections: essential and optional chosen constraints. To be consistent with the terminology that I have used for CFM, we will use the terms non-variable for essential constraints and variable for optional constraints in the following analyses of these films.

CFM differs from the ideas of Ouvipians on the matter of variable constraints. In the practice of CFM, the variable constraints are to be designed entirely by the individual filmmaker, whereas they are collectively devised by the Ouvipo members. The aim of the filmmakers who participate in a challenge set out by the Ouvipo is to make films where all artists are working under the same conditions, through which individual experimentations will emerge. This is different for CFM where the filmmakers are encouraged to devise and add different variable constraints on an individual basis, to give both their films *and* their practice a uniqueness.

PHASE ONE – IDEA DEVELOPMENT

Before a new series of exercises starts, the members of the Ouvipo discuss the constraints that they would like to incorporate. As such, the filmmaker may not always be present when the set of constraints is put together. Regardless of who initially suggested a constraint, once the set of constraints is written down all of the listed rules are classified as chosen constraints for this exercise, and the ones that the members deem core to the project are listed as non-variable while

³⁷ *ErrE*. Dir. Julien Savès.

the remaining ones are labelled variable. In regard to *Erre* (2012), the film was made under the overall constraint of the palindrome. This is to say that the members of Ouvipo adopted the literary constraint of the palindrome and the challenge was to create visual equivalents for it.³⁸ Here the strategy the filmmakers took was to choose an element of the film that would be reversed. In *ErrE* this was the point of climax in the storyline, while in *RessasseR* the filmmaker chose to focus on a certain element of duplicity. *Erre* depicts the protagonist, a young man, running towards a mirror; he comes to a halt in front of the mirror and it shatters upon his looking into it; he then starts running again. *RessasseR* shows a man and a woman playing cards and they exchange a key. In addition, there are scenes that take place at an auction of a painting, and there are multiple storylines involving objects that appear in repetition; for instance, there is one in which the man takes the painting down, and one in which he hangs it up.

The constraint of a palindrome has a lot of depth. It can be applied at different levels, such as the storyline, the images, or the sound. Further, the palindrome is a well-known constraint, suggesting a palindromic film might appeal to a variety of audiences. This is to say that the use of this constraint is easy to identify and follow, for example using a time frame of 3:33 for *ErrE*, making this choice one that is both accessible to general audiences and yet a challenge for the Ouvipians who had not worked with it before.

³⁸ This demonstrates the group's earlier mentioned kinship with the Oulipo, as they often work with constraints that are initially borrowed from literature and try to find a visual representation for these constraints in film.

For clarification, I translated the list of constraints for this film challenge and a brief summary is provided here. The non-variable constraints are: a loop between the first and last image of the film; the maximum duration of the film can be 5 minutes; no more than 3 actors (though they can play multiple roles); no more than 30 shots; something must break or chaos must occur in the film. In addition to these non-variable constraints, the filmmaker can then choose from the following variable constraints: a duration of palindromic structure; the number of shots taken and the number of shots used in the final film must conform to a palindrome; the title must be a palindrome; all dialogue must be a palindrome; music and sound must be a palindrome.³⁹

PHASE TWO – SCRIPTWRITING/STORYBOARDING – CONTENT/ABSTRACT CONSTRAINTS

Beyond the overall non-variable constraint of the palindrome, both films, *ErrE* and *RessasseR*, are subject to the same set of other non-variable constraints. The first non-variable constraint is classified as a structural-narrative constraint: it indicates that the film must be five minutes or less in duration. However, a constraint from the variable list is added, suggesting a palindromic length is required also. Both films comply with these two constraints (the non-variable and the variable): *ErrE* has a duration of 3:33 and *RessasseR* is 2:52 minutes long. The second non-variable constraint in this phase is of a visual-narrative nature – the inclusion of something broken. Savès decided on a literal use of the constraint – *ErrE* features a mirror breaking, which then leads to the actions of the character being shown backwards. Beaunay decided to incorporate this constraint in a subtle manner, by focusing on the idea of chaos. His narrative

³⁹ *ErrE*. Dir. Julien Savès. <http://vimeo.com/70316192>, my translation.

unfolds through a split-screen image, where one side tells the story from the beginning and the other one starts from the end. His idea of incorporating something broken could be associated with his breaking continuity, as the story is non-linear and the viewer is never quite sure at which stage of the storyline they are following a cut between scenes.

A variable linguistic constraint requires the filmmakers to use a palindrome as a title for their work. Though variable, both Beaunay and Savès chose this constraint, as evident in their use of the French words “ErrE” and “RessasseR”.

PHASE THREE – PRODUCING AND SHOOTING – PRACTICAL/TECHNICAL CONSTRAINTS

Two of the non-variable constraints specified in this Ouvipian challenge classify as practical/technical constraints. The first one is a structural-technical constraint, as it requires the filmmaker to use 30 shots or less. In regard to the creativity produced by constraints, we find that Savès used exactly 30 shots, and adapted to this restriction by tracking the character in shots of long duration, so as to avoid the use of many cuts. Beaunay also only had 30 shots available but took an alternative approach with *RessasseR*, the shots are of shorter duration and cut between different scenes, and so his film feels much faster paced than *ErrE*. Beaunay managed to employ many cuts by incorporating the split-screen technique; this allowed him to repeat several of his shots at different points in the storyline across the two halves of the image. A closer look reveals that Beaunay has used less than 30 unique shots, leaving aside the repetitions. However, compared to *ErrE*, the storyline of *RessasseR* feels more abstract and transmits the

feeling of a fast and busy environment of decision making, whereas *ErrE* focuses on one character's body and its movements. We can see that the same constraint impacts upon the filmmakers' works in differing ways, allowing for a range of ideas to emerge and encouraging an experimentation with form. The second non-variable constraint is classified as visual-technical, requiring that the filmmaker can only use a maximum of three actors. Both films comply with this. In *ErrE* the audience only sees one actor, while *RessasseR* contains three actors, though we never see the faces of any of them. At times, the audience might have the feeling that there are more than three actors, an illusion created by the split screen. In some shots, the same actor can be seen on both sides of the split screen, while at other times just the hands of an actor can be seen and it is not specified which character's hands they are. Beaunay decided to maximise the potential of using three actors to create a range of different characters, whereas Savès has put the focus on one solitary individual, in order to channel the audience's focus on the body of this individual.

PHASE FOUR – POST-PRODUCTION – POST-PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS

One non-variable constraint falls into the phase of post-production. This constraint requires that the filmmaker creates an arc between the opening and the closing shot. For *Erre*, the first and last shots consist of an identical image, however the unfolding of the shot is reversed through an editing effect. The film starts with a shot where the camera tilts from the sky to the actor's feet, and it ends on a shot where the camera moves from the feet of the actor to the sky. Using this structural-post-production constraint helps to affirm the presence of the overall constraint of the palindrome through the use of visual symmetry. *RessasseR* also deals with this constraint through

the use of clever editing. After the opening credits the screen is divided in half, on each side the audience sees the back of a man, the protagonist, lifting a cigarette to his mouth, inhaling and then lowering it. The man on the right side of the split-screen takes a drag of his cigarette, and the gesture is repeated by the man on the left side a few seconds later. The men are identical, as if the image of them has been mirrored, with the smoking as a delayed-action. This first scene, where the action is repeated on both sides of the split-screen, gently introduces the audience to the aesthetic device, before complicating the split image with the subsequent shots, where the actions of the protagonist are shown on the right and the left in a different order to one another. The film also closes on the shot of the man smoking, however this time the man that is seen on the left half of the screen takes the first puff of smoke. Repeating the shot from the beginning at the end constructs a feeling of completeness in regard to the narrative, due to the circularity of having the man appear in the same place as where he started, and the audience can see him on both sides of the screen. The switching of the order of which man smokes first speaks to the broader palindromic order of the split-screen shots throughout the film. For example, on one side the man walks up the stairs and on the other he walks down the same stairs, or on the left half he is shown entering the house and on the right half he leaves it. By reversing the action in the last shot, the cycle of symmetries comes to an end.

Another variable constraint that both the filmmakers use in the phase of post-production is that which is applied to the music. In *ErrE* a soft tune builds to a more dramatic sound, which peaks at the shattering of the mirror, and then gradually falls back into the soft tune, in line with the reversed actions of the character. *Ressasser* does not feature any music in the main section of the

film, however, the opening and the ending are accompanied by the exact same short piece of music, played in reverse towards the end.

3.3.2 The King is Alive (Levring 2000)⁴⁰

Kristian Levring's feature film *The King is Alive* was released in 2000, five years after the founding of the Dogme 95 movement. Levring, along with Søren Kragh-Jacobson, was one of the first filmmakers to join von Trier and Vinterberg in adopting the Vow of Chastity. I have chosen this film as an example to discuss some of the ideas of the Dogme 95 movement in more detail as Levring followed 9 out of the 10 rules, and his film will be analysed with reference to the effect of these rules, or constraints, on the picture.

The King is Alive depicts a scenario in which strangers suddenly find themselves in a situation where they need to rely on each other and work together. After boarding a bus, the passengers find themselves lost in the desert with no fuel to continue their journey. They take shelter in an abandoned village and try to attract the attention of passing planes for help. While waiting to be rescued they entertain themselves by putting on a performance of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and various conflicts arise between the travellers.

PHASE ONE – DEVELOPMENT

⁴⁰ *The King is Alive*. Dir. Kristian Levring.

Levring, who worked with experimental films before,⁴¹ wanted to make a film within the Dogme 95 guidelines and in the search for ideas he remembered an acquaintance of his about whom he originally wanted to make a documentary. This acquaintance, an “Englishman,”⁴² as Levring described him, lived in a small isolated town in a desert. “Whenever he [the acquaintance] gets homesick, he arranges a ‘Shakespearean Evening’ with the locals, and so maybe it’s Chuck from the gas station who plays Hamlet.”⁴³ This gave Levring the idea for his film: a group of travellers stranded in the desert rehearsing a Shakespeare play to pass the time whilst waiting for help.

Because Dogme 95 prescribes a set of preconceived constraints, development did not relate to the devising of any constraints of his own. Though Levring largely follows the Vow of Chastity, it is debatable whether he has followed rule number 9, as the film was not shot on 35mm. Stevenson sees it as downside of the work, as he writes that “for all the freedom and convenience that shooting in DV afforded Overgaard [cinematographer of this film], it’s a pity *this* Dogme film wasn’t shot on 35mm.”⁴⁴ However, as mentioned above, rule number 9 is phrased very vaguely, allowing the filmmaker to interpret it as a rule that requires the film be *distributed* in 35mm, but not necessarily shot in this format. Thomson suggests that “[t]his rule originally concerned the shooting format as well as the distribution format,”⁴⁵ however, she acknowledges that the Dogme 95 filmmakers soon realised that with technology developing it had become plausible to shoot in DV. Thomson writes “Vinterberg and Dod Mantle both wanted to shoot on

⁴¹ Jack Stevenson, *Dogme Uncut: Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterburg, and the Gang That Took on Hollywood* (Santa Monica: Santa Monica Press, 2003), 113.

⁴² Stevenson, 114.

⁴³ Stevenson, 114.

⁴⁴ Stevenson, 115.

⁴⁵ Thomson, 28.

35mm but switched to digital video for two reasons: cost and feasibility.”⁴⁶ Levring seems to share this thinking of his fellow filmmakers; his budget benefits from shooting in DV and it also accommodates for the conditions of his already daring location of the desert. Shooting in a desert with a small crew seems more feasible on DV than on the academy 35 format.

PHASE TWO – SCRIPTWRITING/STORYBOARDING – CONTENT/ABSTRACT CONSTRAINTS

For scriptwriting, “Levring sat down and wrote the screenplay with Anders Thomas Jensen.”⁴⁷ As he is forbidden to create a “[t]emporal and geographical alienation”⁴⁸ the film is set in the present day and on location in a desert. Further, the Vow of Chastity requires that the director refrains from genre filmmaking, and Levring’s film is thus found to contain a bit of everything: the drama of being lost in the desert, comic interactions during the rehearsals, and the subtle development of feelings of affection and envy. However, Levring seems to break rule 6 by including superficial actions that drive the plot: there is the tragic sacrifice of one individual set on a path to get help, the element of action when the group tries to summon help, and the crime of poisoning.

PHASE THREE – PRODUCING AND SHOOTING – PRACTICAL/TECHNICAL CONSTRAINTS

⁴⁶ Thomson, 28.

⁴⁷ Stevenson, 114.

⁴⁸ Stevenson, 23.

To avoid “[t]emporal and geographical alienation,”⁴⁹ Levring opened his film with footage from inside a bus on the way to the location in the desert, where the rest of the footage was shot. Given that Levring chose to film in the Namibian desert, for the crew “[t]he shooting, all done on location, had been a true adventure.”⁵⁰ This visual-technical constraint is accompanied by another one: the crew was not allowed to use tripods or other stabilising equipment, because the Dogme 95 constraints specify handheld shooting. It is up to the audience to judge whether Levring has kept to this constraint throughout, but the slightly unstable shots, which are not always in focus, speak for themselves. Two further visual-technical constraints are relevant here also: the film must be shot in colour, but the filmmaker cannot use artificial lighting. For Levring, this constituted a problem, as he intended to capture the group in the evening. One solution would be to use optical filters on the camera, however, the Vow of Chastity indicates that the filmmaker is not allowed to use these. Instead, it is written in the Vow of Chastity that “[i]f there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp may be attached to the camera.”⁵¹ To find a way of shooting in the dark, Levring grouped the actors near or around a bonfire, which gives flickers of light so that the audience can see parts of the action. The fire further accentuates the atmosphere of the scenes, for the shadows and the smoke make the desert appear more dangerous, thus emphasising the dire situation of the travellers. As such, we can see again how constraints can help to encourage creativity and liberate a work of art. A rule of the Vow of Chastity that can be classified as an audio-technical constraint is that which states that all sound that is used in a film must be recorded together with the images. When analysing the film, the audience will notice that the film does not contain any non-diegetic film music, and if music is

⁴⁹ Stevenson, 23.

⁵⁰ Stevenson, 115.

⁵¹ Stevenson, 23.

used, as when the group spends their first evening in the desert having a small party, it originates from a source on the location.

Another constraint for this film, which does not have its origin in the Vow of Chastity is the fact that Leving had a low budget to produce and shoot this film. It is not publicised how much money he had available to spend on this film, however Stevenson writes that “[d]espite his modest budget, Leving managed to assemble an impressive cast.”⁵² With this statement, Stevenson confirms the fact that there was little money available, but at the same time he praises the way Leving made use of it to his best advantage.⁵³

PHASE FOUR – POST-PRODUCTION – POST-PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS

The visual-post-production constraint that can be found in the Vow of Chastity is the ban of optical work. For *The King is Alive*, optical work upon the images during the post-production stage could potentially have improved the quality of the scenes shot in the dark around the bonfire. However, avoiding such optical work gives the film a feeling of authenticity, as we are given images that reflect the condition of the shooting itself. In post-production, the audio-technical constraint of only using diegetic sound works in the favour of Leving’s film. The crackling of the wind adds authenticity, it shows that the crew and the cast really are in a desert. The stunning shots of the desert are not accompanied by music, however this works to emphasise

⁵² Stevenson, 114.

⁵³ Stevenson, 114.

the vastness of the empty sand dunes and the lack of living creatures beyond the circle of stranded characters.

3.3.3 *Victoria* (Schipper, 2015)⁵⁴, *Tangerine* (Baker, 2015)⁵⁵ and *The Five Obstructions* (von Trier/Leth, 2003)⁵⁶

In the following paragraphs, we will briefly look at three films, each of which originated out of different working processes involving constraints. Firstly, I will briefly highlight two recent films which were made with a technical constraint each, and I will explain how and why these constraints could be classified within a practice of CFM. I deliberately chose two films, *Victoria* (2015) and *Tangerine* (2015), which do not originate from the Dogme 95 movement or the group of Ouvipo, to raise the point that the scope of CFM goes beyond groups of filmmakers who share the same interests and also includes individuals working in this area. Secondly, I will introduce a third film, which is by von Trier and Jørgen Leth, called *The Five Obstructions* (2003). This film has a complicated relationship with constraints being a documentary that both records the process of working with constraints as well as its outcomes. The challenge von Trier sets for Leth is that he remake his film *The Perfect Human* (1967)⁵⁷ five times, each time with a different set of constraints. The documentary thus records both the process of Leth's attempts at remaking *The Perfect Human* under different constraints and includes the outcomes of these experiments.

⁵⁴ *Victoria*. Dir. Sebastian Schipper.

⁵⁵ *Tangerine*. Dir. Sean Baker.

⁵⁶ *The Five Obstructions* (original title *De fem benspænd*). Dir. Jørgen Leth and Lars von Trier.

⁵⁷ *The Perfect Human* (original title *Det perfekte menneske*). Dir. Jørgen Leth, feat. Claus Nissen, Maiken Algren Nielsen (1967).

These three films will not be discussed phase by phase, instead, I will look at one constraint from each film in more depth.

Both *Victoria* and *Tangerine* are films by which a strong practical/technical constraint determined the content of these films in their entirety. For *Victoria* it is a visual-technical constraint whereas for the making of *Tangerine* the constraint is more of a structural-technical nature. The filmmakers of *Tangerine* relied on a different choice of equipment than that used in mainstream pictures, as the film was shot entirely on phones. As Patricia Thomson writes:

“Moondog [lens developer from Rochester, N.Y.] sent them three prototypes, each one modifying the iPhone lens to approximate a 24mm. *Tangerine* was shot entirely at this focal length, giving it a distinctive look [...]. *Tangerine*’s wide-angle close-ups are in your face – which is completely in line with the high-voltage characters.”⁵⁸

Baker decided to use the constraint of shooting exclusively on a phone and it seemed to work in his favour on many levels. ““Aesthetically, it worked to enhance the way we are covering our subjects, which was almost a happy accident and something I’m very grateful for,” says Baker. “It brings the audience closer to these characters.””⁵⁹ By choosing to use light and small phones instead of heavy and conspicuous cameras, the film crew were aiming to achieve a realism in the

⁵⁸ Patricia Thomson, "Tangerine," *The American Society of Cinematographers*, Sundance 2015: Inspiring Indies, February 2015, https://theasc.com/ac_magazine/February2015/Sundance2015/page5.html#. Accessed 20th May 2017.

⁵⁹ Thomson.

milieu within which the characters were to be shot, and they noticed that shooting on phones had the advantage of not attracting as much attention from passers-by compared to shooting on locations with larger equipment. This made it possible to capture naturalistic background action effortlessly, as people do not usually pay attention to someone filming on a phone.⁶⁰ It also means that the camera crew is mobile, which is a central aspect of *Tangerine*, which is very fast paced and finds the characters constantly on the move. Using a phone to capture their journey made it possible to keep up with the movement, including scenes on public transport and in other small spaces. It is, in the first instance, a structural-technical constraint, as it changes the traditional structure of the film shoot. The filming does not take place in a sheltered location or a studio, instead, the actors are exposed to the public and the director has less influence over what happens in the background. On a second note, however, it is also a technical-visual constraint as it changes the technical possibilities that the filmmaker has, from the options on a camera to the options available on a phone. And adding to this, this constraint affects another aspect of the production: the budget. Baker and his team could not have made the same film with regular camera equipment due to the associated costs, and so the constraint of using mobile phones solved problems related to the costs of the production.⁶¹

Each constraint shapes a film in unique ways, and we will see that, though the constraint used in the creative process of *Victoria* is also of a technical nature, the film is very different to *Tangerine*. *Victoria* is a film that falls under the thriller or crime genres but differentiates itself from most pictures of these kinds by being shot in one take. Within the practice of CFM this

⁶⁰ Thomson.

⁶¹ Thomson.

approach is classified as a practical-technical constraint. However, it affects the post-production of the film, too, as there are no cuts made to the footage. All of the scenes flow directly into each other and the viewer feels immersed in the action as they are constantly following the characters. All of the character's actions and behaviours seem very authentic as seemingly insignificant moments are not cut out and the original pacing of the character's interactions are retained by the recording.

“Shouldering a heavy camera, Grøvlen [a cameraman] follows the group from a strobe-lit underground techno club into night-time streets, squeezing into tiny elevators and cramped cars, and descending into a claustrophobic parking garage before chasing after the group as they run from the police.”⁶²

The audience sees a mixture of the characters walking along the streets and more intimate moments inside a coffee shop, when the main protagonists get to know each other better. As the filmmaker cannot cut away from the characters to a different action or location, a very intense atmosphere is created, and, at points of intimacy, the audience might feel as if they are spying on the characters. The feeling of voyeurism is also present when watching the characters walk along the street, interacting with one another while we lag behind as if strolling around the streets of the city with them and unbeknownst to them. Some of the dialogue does not seem scripted and the characters' actions and reactions have a slight edge of improvisation to them. This,

⁶² Gerd Gemünden, 'The 65 Th Berlin Film Festival: The Return of the Political', *Film Criticism* 39, no. 2 (2014): 143.

however, works in the favour of the film as Gerd Gemünden points out: “[p]adding a twelve-page script with clever improvisations, Schipper evokes much of the humour from the German youth’s pseudo-English and their irreverent Berlin slang.”⁶³ The constraint of the one-take thus encourages a naturalism in the performances: “[w]e rehearsed and we shot three long takes,” says the German [Schipper]. ‘We shot the entire film three times. It was super intense, because we only had a 12 page treatment, and no dialogue.’ The actors would improvise lines on the move.”⁶⁴ However, it is arguable that with only one camera and no opportunity to re-take certain scenes, the attempt to achieve the best possible perspective of the action results in effects that clash with the tone of some of the scenes. As stated, the characters are always on the go, either by bike, on foot or in the car, and so is the camera, which gives the film a feeling of being in a rush. However, even in the few scenes where the characters stay in one location, there is a feeling of being rushed around, as the camera is always moving in an attempt to capture a different perspective of the action. On a more positive note, the audience might get the impression that they are watching a documentary, as the camera captures the moment without a second chance to capture it again.

The constraint of filming everything in one shot whilst still being on the move and shooting in different locations also triggers another constraint, which Gemünden indicates in the earlier quoted sentence by referring to the cinematographer’s “[s]houldering a heavy camera.”⁶⁵ This tells us that the camera is not set on a tripod or a tracking device. To create easy access to

⁶³ Gemünden, 144.

⁶⁴ Kaleem Aftab, ‘Director Sebastian Schipper Reveals How He Shot a Film in a Single Take’, *The Independent*, 11/03/2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/sebastian-schipper-on-german-film-victoria-that-was-all-shot-in-a-single-continuous-take-a6925271.html>. Accessed 20 June 2018

⁶⁵ Gemünden, ‘The 65 Th Berlin Film Festival’, 143.

locations such as elevators and cars, the camera operator needs to be able to move the camera freely, and, therefore, as with the Dogme films, everything is shot on a hand-held camera. This can influence the images in many ways, it can lead to shaky visuals, but at the same time it liberates the visual field: the camera can be swivelled around easily and quickly. The constraint of shooting everything in one shot also sets out a limited time frame for the action. The story of *Victoria* takes place during night time, into the early hours of morning, and follows the characters leaving a club and then getting involved in some illegal activities. Similar to *Tangerine*, the film has a feeling of realism to it and the use of a constraint strengthens this undertone, as many features, such as the time frame and the locations, were determined by the constraint of the one-take. The example of *Victoria* therefore shows how an idea, such as making a film in one single shot, can be developed within the practice of CFM, and how this one constraint shapes the entire process.

The Five Obstructions is interesting to mention in this context, as even though it is not a constraint film all the way through, it documents and shows the effects that constraints can have on a film or a filmmaker very explicitly. Hector Rodriguez writes that the making of the *Five Obstructions* “was deliberately set up as a creative and open-ended adventure.”⁶⁶ It is an adventure in the creative process for the filmmaker to work with these constraints, and it is an adventure for the audience that watches how creativity can be shaped by constraints. Five different constraints are given to Leth by von Trier to remake his 13 minute short film *The Perfect Human* (1967), which shows a man and a woman, each situated in an empty white room, carrying

⁶⁶ Hector Rodriguez, "Constraint, Cruelty and Conversation," in *Dekalog 1 On the Five Obstructions*, ed. Mette Hjort (London/New York: Wallflower Press, 2008), 40.

out every day actions such as getting dressed or shaving, accompanied by a descriptive narration of the task. The film transmits a feeling of voyeurism, the man and the woman become subjects that are watched in a manner comparable to animals in a zoo. The constraints are very different across the five challenges, leading to five different versions of the original film. Constraints are essential parts of this film, as the story depicts the filmmaker's initial struggle with the constraints, but it also shows how the problems are solved and how the filmmaker develops and learns to adapt to the use of constraints.

I will not analyse all of the constraints in detail, instead I will highlight a few of them to demonstrate how they relate to CFM as it is drawn up in this thesis. For two of the films, for example, von Trier chooses a constraint that defines a location. This could be perceived as a practical constraint and it challenges the filmmaker to make the most out of a certain location. As the original film shows the actors in a white room with no background, any change of location makes a major difference to the film. Using different locations, such as a busy street or the backdrop of a shabby looking wall in a room, creates a change of atmosphere and might even provide the audience with a distraction from the actions of the characters. Another constraint that serves as an example is taken from the first remake that Leth creates, where von Trier limits each shot to a length of twelve frames. This could be classified as a structural-technical constraint and is very similar to a constraint that I have used in my own work, which will be discussed in Chapter Four. Limiting the length of a shot, to frames as von Trier did, or to seconds as I did for my own work, is very interesting, as it gives the entire film a structure and a rhythm, and given the context of remaking Leth's original short, it creates a feeling of rushing through the images. The original film is slow paced and features a soothing narration by which the viewers' attention

is guided from detail to detail. The use of shorter shots creates a feeling of hurry, and the viewer gets a sense of haste and restlessness. In general, due to the time limit constraint on the shot, everything that the filmmaker shows has significance, there are no shots that just linger. The audience has a sense of control, as the time code promises predictability and regulates the flow of the film. It is interesting to see how the different constraints for each new remake of the film lead to a different outcome, as they each guide the filmmaker into new directions and act as a catalyst for different creative impulses.

With the example of *The Five Obstructions*, we move away from constraints in fiction and towards constraint filmmaking in documentaries. Using constraints in a documentary might present itself as challenging for the filmmaker, as they might have to explain the constraints to the participants of their documentary. There are two ways constraints can be used in a documentary: the filmmaker can either choose to constrain the filmmaking process itself, or they can choose to involve the subjects of the documentary film in their constraints. For *The Five Obstructions*, the constraints are placed within the content, the camera follows the subject without being constrained in its shooting, while the subject, Leth, is constrained in his actions, and the constraints affect his behaviour. To give an example of my own work, *A Day in your Life* contains snippets of interviews with participants, which presents their spontaneous reactions. In these interviews the participants are not constrained, however a visual constraint is applied on the camera, as certain parts of the lens are blocked out when shooting these subjects.

At the core of all these films, we find the idea that the filmmakers were seeking to work with constraints in order to optimize their creativity. The constraints used provided the initial inspiration and then determined how the films would unfold; and each did so in a unique manner that differs from most mainstream films of their type (short, feature, or documentary). Further these examples show how practices of CFM cut across various genres of film and are not restricted to any in particular.

4 Constraint films produced within this framework

To further demonstrate my approach to CFM, I will discuss the films I created within this framework as the practical component of this thesis. I will present three films: *Project Cube*, *A Day in your Life*, and *Tales and Tellers*, each of which helped to further develop the theoretical conception of CFM through its enacting and testing by way of these productions. The films can be found on the attached USB flash drive, further details of which are provided in the Appendix, section 8.5.

4.1 Project Cube

Project Cube is the name I have given to an experimental film that supported and influenced the development of CFM from a practical perspective. The film consists of six stories, each of which share the common theme of an individual's dealing with a traumatic event. The six films tell the journey of six individuals who are experiencing mental instability due to the death of a family member, anxiety, and war. Although the stories are not interrelated on a narrative level, they are connected by the central concept of the project: the permutation of images. The same twelve shots are used in each of the six films, but each film features the shots in a different order, the colour composition is adjusted, and the soundtrack tells a story inspired by the sequencing of that particular film. The six films are intended to be shown as one piece, allowing the viewer to explore how the permutation of images can produce different cinematic narratives.

However, *Project Cube* is also the name for the method of constraint filmmaking used for this film. In this respect, *Project Cube* should be understood as a generative structure for the creation of any number of films by any number of filmmakers. This structure is such that the order of the shots is determined by a randomising device, with a number of other constraints relating to the images that are sequenced in such a way. However, the filmmaker who works with the structure of *Project Cube* can shoot whatever footage they like for the shots and can employ further constraints if they wish. Given that a lot of variations are possible under this structure, the outcome of the project's undertaking depends on the individual filmmaker. As such, when I refer to "my version of *Project Cube*" herein, I am referring to the film I have created using the generative structure that is named *Project Cube*.

Project Cube is designed to be a do-it-yourself kit to motivate filmmakers to create their own version of this project based on a template devised by myself. My initial idea was to create a leaflet akin to a product assembly manual, however, this seemed too rigid. As such I have created a template for *Project Cube* that is flexible in terms of the pieces that are combined together. It instructs filmmakers on the method by which the pieces should be assembled, but it does not provide them with the individual pieces or a picture of the finished product. Such a template thus better resembles a sewing pattern or a cooking recipe than a product manual; some aspects will always stay consistent, however, the fabric or the ingredients might vary. This is to say that *Project Cube* features some constraints that are core to the project and are thus non-variable – these cannot be modified or left off, as they are essential. They form the foundation for every version of *Project Cube* and are both the catalyst for new films created on the basis of this template and the thread that connects them to one another. Further, these non-variable constraints

might serve as an inspiration for the development of further variable constraints. Each individual filmmaker can bring additional variable constraints to those already set-out in the template, which helps to emphasise the individuality and uniqueness of any version of *Project Cube*. The template that I have set up for *Project Cube* will help the filmmaker to assign their new constraints to a phase of the CFM process. A diagram of the template for *Project Cube* is added in the Appendix, Figure 3. It allocates the constraints to the four phases of the CFM process, and divides them into non-variable and variable constraints.

4.1.1 The Origins of *Project Cube*

The main idea for the overall structure of *Project Cube* originated from the theme of recycling. It is inspired by Tony White's short story, "Include Me Out", which was turned into the film *Include Me Out of the partisans manifesto* (2012) by Alan Phelan.¹ The film depicts a man obsessed with recycling DVDs. He tries to separate the DVDs into their original components and he fantasises about creating new substances out of the individual parts. He demonstrates the physical action of recycling, as he disassembles physical objects into individual components and then uses these components to create new objects. It is this notion, that existing combinations of material can be taken apart to create new combinations, that inspired the method that underpins the structure of *Project Cube*. Instead of disassembling the DVDs into their individual parts, however, here it could be said that it is the content on the DVDs that is disassembled into individual parts and put together in new structures. With *Project Cube*, the filmmaker places a

¹ *Include Me Out of the partisans manifesto*. Dir. Alan Phelan, feat. Brendan Mc Cormack, Joanne Crawford (2012), funded by the arts council/an chumhairle Ealaion. <http://vimeo.com/51669393>

number of shots on a DVD, each of these shots constituting the pool of material that is then put together, each time in a different order, in order to create a new product, a new film with a different meaning, each time. The core idea of *Project Cube* is to thus encourage the filmmaker to perform the action of the main character in Tony White's short story: to recycle.

Another source of inspiration for this central concept of *Project Cube* is a literary piece by Raymond Queneau. The French author, who is famous for his novels written under constraints, wrote a poem that can be written and re-written in 10^{14} ways. His work, *cent mille milliards de poèmes*, consists of ten sonnets, which means each has 14 lines.² These lines are constructed and written in a way that allows them to be combined and re-combined according to the reader's liking, in 10^{14} possible ways. Queneau's work thus emphasises the idea that there is pleasure to be found in the act of combining and re-combining – and in exhausting the possibilities of such an act. When exploring Queneau's work the reader is driven by curiosity, how often can they repeat the process, how many more poems can they generate? If following Queneau's set of rules, every act of re-combining leads to a new poem, and the pleasure of reading those same lines is enriched by their new context. The same principle applies to *Project Cube*, except where Queneau is toying with the curiosity of the reader, *Project Cube* draws on the curiosity of the filmmaker first, and then the subsequent viewer of their films also. Every time a new set of moving images is put together, the filmmaker anxiously waits for the outcome to see if the images look coherent together and if there is the possibility for a new storyline to emerge. Within *Project Cube*, the randomised material is visual – the filmmaker ends up with images – but the

² Raymond Queneau, 'A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems', in *Oulipo Compendium*, ed. Harry Mathews and Alastair Brotchie (London: Atlas Press, 2005), 14–33.

process is not complete until a voice-over is added. The aspect of generating a visual work that is not yet finished thus creates a further difference between Queneau's piece of work, where the reader immediately has a finished poem as a result, and *Project Cube*.

The idea as to how the variations in sequencing would be undertaken was initially inspired by a game called *Story Cubes*.³ In this game, the players generate a series of images with dice that are coded with pictures. Developing this use of a specific device to generate story patterns, the shots of *Project Cube* are each coded with a number and, provided that the filmmaker has coded the dice with the same numbers, they can now roll the dice to determine the order in which the shots will appear. The dice can be replaced with any other randomising device, however, a contribution to the method of story construction in *Project Cube* that was inspired by the literary work of Jackson Mac Low. Of special interest here are Mac Low's *Daily Life Poems*, which can be found in *Thing of Beauty: New and Selected Works*.⁴ To create a *Daily Life Poem*, the author writes down twenty-six sentences and assigns a letter to each sentence, starting with A and proceeding in alphabetical order. The author then thinks of a word and separates this word into its individual letters. Each letter of the word is now matched up with a sentence from the list that was created earlier, generating a new poem.⁵ Mac Low's way of coding letters with sentences shows that the creation of a structure for a piece of art can originate in different methods of coding a system. Mac Low is open to the modification of his own method, and experiments with different options in his generation of *Daily Life Poems*, describing two alterations of his first

³ The Creativity Hub. *Rory's Story Cubes*. 2012-2007. Belfast: The Creativity Hub.

⁴ Jackson Mac Low, *Thing of Beauty: New and Selected Works*, ed. Anne Tardos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

⁵ Mac Low, 116-21.

version.⁶ The first differs slightly from the A-Z letter version of coding, using a number code, rather than a word, that works with 25 sentences. This means that he can determine the length of the verse, whilst still determining the order of the sentences by way of the aforementioned pattern. A further way of coding, and which returns us to a 26 sentence system, is the use of playing cards.⁷ Each sentence is assigned a playing card, and the pattern of the verse is determined by the drawing of cards from the deck. The idea of coding a device is thus central to his work. Applying this idea to *Project Cube*, we recall that a number is paired with a moving image, but a further point is that the components of the system that is coded requires a certain compatibility between the coding system and the material being coded, hence the shifting number of sentences available in Mac Low's system as determined by the chosen coding device. This is to say that, if a dice is used, the number of images used in the film will have to be able to correspond to the number of sides on the dice, for instance, and this is the case with any other randomising device the filmmaker may wish to use for *Project Cube*.

Comparing the use of repetition within *Project Cube* and the aforementioned works of Queneau and Mac Low, brings out some fruitful insights into the effects created by the central concept of permutation. *Project Cube* encourages repetition and plays on the effects created by repeating visual material alongside original audio sequences. The use of a soundtrack is crucial. The words that accompany the images as a voice-over work to facilitate the creation of original narratives; they place the images into a context and thus guide the viewer towards adding additional information to the images. This is to say that allusions in the verbal storyline make it possible

⁶ Mac Low, 116–20.

⁷ Mac Low, 116–21.

to read extra details into the pictures, with the viewer transposing their mental image of the narrative on the image of the footage. The audience might get a sense of being trapped, as they continuously see the same images, but they cannot escape as the words are different and therefore a new storyline unfolds, aided by further elements of the soundtrack such as sound effects and musical motifs. Even in the voice-over, a few repetitions are embedded, as it supports the flow of the narration, working to either extend it over the relevant images or highlight the importance of some thoughts. Further, repeating a sentence or a word a few times might induce in the viewer the sense of taking a brief rest on their journey through a jungle of visual images. Mac Low, too, makes use of repetitions within his *Daily Life Poems*,⁸ as these are an inherent feature of his generating structure and the choice of his material. By not restricting the reader to a pre-set order and instead allowing the reader to create their own arrangement of the material from the entire pool of sentences, Mac Low leaves open the number of times a sentence may be repeated across their experiments. However, the possibilities are neither endless nor entirely open-ended – the structure of individual words (those chosen to structure each poem) provides limitations to the outcomes, as the occurrence of certain letters is more dominant than others in the English language, while certain letter combinations are unlikely to occur at all. Nevertheless, Mac Low assigns more power to the reader in regard to the scope of their combinations than the method offered by Queneau. Queneau's work, *cent mille milliards de poèmes*,⁹ follows a rigid pattern, which does not allow for the repetition of sentences. This is because, while Mac Low's approach is open to the number of lines each poem has, the outcome of Queneau's piece is a sonnet and so is limited to 14 lines. In recognition of this, Queneau specifies certain restrictions that the reader has to follow when choosing from the pool of material that is available, meaning that a

⁸ Mac Low, 116–21.

⁹ Queneau, 'A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems', 14–33.

constraint is applied to the structure of the piece. If comparing the systems of generating a pattern, it can thus be seen that these systems do not only depend on the level of rigidity in the generative structure but also on the amount of material that is available as an input to the system. With Queneau's piece, the reader can generate a maximum of 10^{14} poems. For the generic template of *Project Cube*, there is no limited number of possibilities, as this depends on the numbers chosen by the filmmaker; the number of shots only being restricted to the numbers available on the chosen randomising device it is correspondingly coded with within this system. Once these numbers are set, the filmmaker can calculate the maximum amount of possible visual combinations. The number of possible sequences increases by the number of shots added to the pool of material. For Mac Low's poems, this is different, as there is no fixed length to the finished product – and though, technically, the longest word in English has 189,819 letters, the number of possibilities available within this remit is enormous. In this connection, it is interesting that Queneau's initial pool of material contains more sentences than Mac Low's but produces less possibilities. My version of *Project Cube* has less individual pieces than Mac Low's *Daily Life Poems*. My version of *Project Cube* contains twelve different original pieces, so the possibility of new discoveries whilst watching the film sequences is smaller than in work that has a larger pool of original material. Therefore, I decided that the filmmaker can make changes to aspects such as colour grading to keep the viewer engaged.

The Oulipian influence is also evident in *Project Cube* which rests on the potential offered by repetitions and urges filmmakers to take the method to its exhaustion. Elkin focuses on the use of banal themes in Oulipian literary works to express her thoughts on their use of repetition. She writes that “[p]lacing the banal in a work of literature is a great and noble tradition in French

literature”,¹⁰ and that the reader’s patience is put to the test in the work of the Oulipo which sometimes describes banal events in a character’s life to the point that it is exhaustive. As Perec states in his introduction to the aforementioned *An attempt at exhausting a place in Paris*, it was his “intention in the pages that follow [...] to describe the rest instead: that which is generally not taken note of, that which is not noticed, that which has no importance: what happens when nothing happens other than the weather, people, cars and clouds.”¹¹ By exhausting the banalities through repetition, Perec forces us to pay attention to them, rather than treating them as the background information they usually function as. As such, although every repetition is part of an exhaustion of the material, it is also a way to generate new literature for the reader. Further, the Oulipian authors’ deliberate use of repetition in describing commonplace actions demonstrate their intention to exhaust their readers, too. The point is to wear readers out so that they think about the piece critically and reflect on the work itself, rather than being caught up in the narrative. George Perec’s description of what he sees and hears whilst sitting in coffee shops in Paris, exemplifies such an exhaustion; the action is predictable and while the reader might be waiting for plot progression they are instead presented with a pattern that repeats itself over and over.

¹⁰ Lauren Elkin and Scott Esposito, *The End of Oulipo? An Attempt to Exhaust a Movement* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2013), 92.

¹¹ Perec, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, 3.

4.1.2 On the Generative Structure of *Project Cube*

In the first phase of the CFM process - that of idea development – it is essential that the filmmaker attributes different terms to the differing material that are used within *Project Cube*. The terminology provided here helps to simplify this process.

The filmmaker has two different shot categories - shot category A and shot category B, with the material (filmed footage in the form of an unbroken shot) allocated to either A or B. The filmmaker then numbers the individual shots that have been placed within each category. The numbering is sequential within each category, rather than carrying across both, i.e. A1, A2, A3 and B1, B2, B3, *not* A1, A2, A3, B4, B5, B6. It is important that each shot can be referred to by their number as it can then correspond to the number on the randomising device.

One shot of category A followed by one shot of category B constitutes an A/B unit and several A/B units joined together will be labelled as a sequence within any version of *Project Cube*. Each version of *Project Cube* can consist of several sequences, and shots can be used repeatedly. For instance, a film may consist of three sequences that take the form of the following shots: A1/B4, A5/B1, A1/B1.

Objectivity plays an important role in the undertaking of *Project Cube*; the filmmaker ought not to favour some shots over others. As such, using a randomising device to generate the order of the shots prevents the filmmaker from making a subjective aesthetic choice of this kind. This

non-variable constraint of employing a randomising device further liberates the filmmaker as it frees them from having to work out the shot order, essentially voiding the role of scripting in phase 2 of CFM and placing emphasis on storyboarding / shot design instead. Given that the filmmaker has creative control over the assembly of the visual material, they need to be flexible when writing the narrative that corresponds to the visual images during phase 4. This can stimulate the filmmaker's creativity; the images might evoke an intuitive response or trigger certain questions that determine the narrative that they write. As such, by taking away some creative power in one area – that of editing, creativity is encouraged in another – that of writing outside of their comfort zone. It should also be remembered that, though this non-variable constraint requires that a device be used to determine the order in which the shots occur, no particular device is specified. As such, filmmakers are encouraged to consider different types of randomising devices and to try these out, thus further encouraging creativity in another area of their CFM.

For *Project Cube*, a further non-variable constraint indicates that each shot from category A is always followed by a shot from category B. Together, these two shots represent an A/B unit. This slightly limits the element of randomness within the project. Creating A/B units further means that although the general system allows repetition, it is not possible for one shot to be duplicated one after the other, as there is always a piece of material from the other shot category in between any such duplicates. And applying this constraint generates another non-variable constraint – each sequence must consist of the same number of shots from category A and B. It should be noted, however, that I do not provide a set number of A/B units per sequence; such a

choice constitutes a variable structural constraint to be decided by the filmmaker undertaking the project.

Another non-variable constraint appears during phase 3 – producing and shooting. This constraint requires that all shots within a specific category are of the same length. This emphasises the importance of having two separate shot categories, as it means that there are two sets of shots of a different length. With all shots equally long, the sequences might unfold in a monotonous manner, whereas with two different types of shots of different lengths the filmmaker has the opportunity to create unique rhythms for their work within this constraint. Using a rhythm also supports the concept of repetition. The viewer will be presented with a predictable time frame for each film made for *Project Cube*, and so the tension between the repetitive and the original emerges through the viewing of the various films that each conform to the same length and sequencing format and yet unfold with different image sequences and voice-over narrations. It should also be recognised that there is a level of creative control over the overall length and scope of the films that is afforded to the filmmaker by making the choice over the length of shots a variable constraint. As all A/B units are of the same length, a minimum and a maximum length can be calculated by the filmmaker, and these constraints further indicate that there is a limited number of possible visual outcomes (and, therefore, a limited number of films that can be made) depending on the number of shots chosen by the filmmaker, which can be calculated individually for each project.

This non-variable constraint on shot length informs a further non-variable constraint that impacts upon the post-production that is undertaken in phase 4: as all A/B units have to be of the same length, the filmmaker can only use simple cuts. This is because using other types of transition effects between shots would break the pattern of the ascribed sequencing. However, there is no non-variable constraint that states that the voice-over cannot overlap shots, and so the voice-over may break the rhythm of the images and create particular effects. A filmmaker may wish to apply their own variable constraints over the use of voice-over, however, in order to create alternative effects.

As indicated, the storyline for each film, which is communicated via the soundtrack, is developed after the visual material is shot and sequenced, during phase 4 – that of post-production. Recalling that objectivity in regard to shots is important to the undertaking of *Project Cube*, it ought not to be the intention of the filmmaker to shoot material that fits a preconceived storyline. This is to say that, during phase 3, a non-variable constraint is that the material is required to be shot without any reference to a script. The shots can be devised during phase 2, however, wherein the filmmaker can choose a theme for their shots. A theme allows for the filmmaker to make aesthetic rather than narrative choices in the shots that they film and allows for interesting rhythms to emerge when they are sequenced together. These shot categories may differ in certain aspects, as determined by the filmmakers themselves – for instance shot category A can focus on manmade objects, while shot category B focuses only on living beings. However, the filmmaker is free to choose the content and the level of contrast between the two categories, and they could both conform to the same theme, e.g. shot category A and shot category B both being focused on living beings. Any restrictions the filmmaker may wish to impose upon the devising

of shots and their themes will constitute a variable constraint of their own. For example, I chose to use static shots, however, this is not a requirement.

The filmmaker undertaking *Project Cube* is free to choose the focus of their voice-over narration during phase 4. For instance, rather than focusing on the objects that are shown, the filmmaker might focus on certain aesthetic elements, such as colours, or the movements or changes that occur within the unbroken shot. This gives the filmmaker more creative freedom in regard to the scope of their narrative. Further, although the style of the narrative employed in *Project Cube* is likely to be very descriptive given its origins in the images, the filmmaker has the option to add elements that are not visible in the shots. For instance, sound effects and musical motifs can be employed on the soundtrack, reconfiguring what the viewer thinks about the images. It further means that the narration can change even when being voiced over previously seen moving images within a single film. Further, it should be noted that the focus of the narration that the filmmaker chooses to pick for a certain shot depends not only on elements of the image they may wish to focus the viewer towards, but also depends on the place within the storyline where the shot occurs.

4.1.3 Reflections on Utilising the Structure of *Project Cube*

In this section I will explain how the generative structure of *Project Cube* was undertaken by myself to produce my own film which, as mentioned earlier, consists of six stories each built from a pool of twelve shots in re/combination. This account will be explained with the inclusion of personal reflections upon my own undertaking of the project.

For my version of *Project Cube*, I chose two themes: all shots of category A display a part of the human body (with one exception, which will be explained later). I chose to film hands, feet, and an eye. All category B shots are designed around the idea of some sort of movement: a vortex of water, spinning colours, bees in search of pollen, a flickering light, branches in the wind, shards of breaking glass.

Further, I decided to use a pair of dice to generate the order of the visual material. As such it is worth discussing here the influence of the game *Story Cubes* upon my approach. This game consists of a set of nine dice, each of which have drawings on their six sides instead of numbers. These drawings encompass objects, animals, places, parts of the body, signs, and symbols. The players generate a random set of such images by rolling these dice and putting them in a line, and they are then set the task of telling a story that contains the images seen on the dice. In *Project Cube*, the static pictures are substituted by moving images, coded to dice via the aforementioned numbering strategy, and randomly sequenced by way of the throw of these two dice – one relating to category A shots and the other to category B shots. The filmmaker then writes their story on the basis of the sequence of shots that has emerged through the throwing of the dice. Leaving aside the respective media in which each project operates, the invention of a narrative via *Story Cubes* can thus be compared to the creation of a voice-over for *Project Cube*. The interesting part of this comparison are the differences: in particular, the number of dice used. *Story Cube* is based on nine dice, which are all used simultaneously. As all dice have different pictures on them, repetition is avoided. Within *Project Cube*, however, the repetition of an image

is encouraged. When using a dice, there are only six possible outcomes, and so repetition is not unlikely in general, while if the film contains more than six A/B sequences (six shots from both category A and category B) repetition is unavoidable. Further, according to the rules of *Story Cubes*, the static images seen on the dice must be named specifically in the narration of the story. However, *Project Cube* is constructed from moving images, and in the broader tradition of cinema, voice-over narration does not necessarily require the speaker to mention what is being simultaneously seen on the screen.

For my project I decided that each sequence should consist of six A/B units, and I have set the shot lengths as follows: all shots of category A are 49 seconds long and all shots of category B are 15 seconds long. As such, one A/B unit equals a running time of 64 seconds. To calculate the length of one film within the project I multiplied 64 by six, which comes to six minutes and 24 seconds of film. However, I also added a title shot and credits, which needs to be added to the overall running time of the project as a whole, which features six films at the length of six minutes and 24 second each. In an initial test run, I attempted to fit one A/B unit into a minute, with the shots of category B being allocated a length of 10 seconds. This did not turn out successfully, as the ratio between shots of category A and B was too high, the lengths far too unbalanced, hindering the visual flow of an A/B unit. Adding 5 seconds to the shots of category B and losing one second of the shots of category A created a ratio that supported the visual flow of an A/B unit without making the cuts seem too abrupt and rushed. Though another filmmaker may wish to create this kind of frenetic effect with their own version of *Project Cube*, demonstrating the scope for variations and originality within the undertaking of this project and all of its non-variable constraints.

The voice-over is written and added to the film during phase 4 of the CFM process – that of post-production. The six stories that constitute my version of *Project Cube* are told in the form of voice-over, and each explore the emotions of a different character, with none of the stories being directly related to one another. As such, it is not important in which order the stories are watched, as each story has its own opening and ending. There is no diegetic, or non-diegetic, dialogue, making the voice-over feel even more like a narration. The voice-over reveals where the story takes place, as the close-ups of body parts deny the viewer a glimpse on the location of the character. Though the viewer can make some inferences through the visuals, such as if an action takes place indoors or outdoors, more detailed descriptions of the locations, for example in what building or vehicle the character is, are given in the voice-over.

Using a technique where the actions that are seen on screen are simultaneously described might at first seem unconventional for a fiction film, for, as mentioned earlier, cinema is a visual medium and non-diegetic audio is usually used to add extra elements to the narrative created by the images, without the elements of the latter being explicitly mentioned. Within my version of *Project Cube*, I have deliberately created a very descriptive voice-over, commenting on the obvious that the viewer can see, as my work is inspired by the Oulipo and their focus on the banal. My aim was to further intensify the viewers' feeling of exhaustion, beyond that which might already be induced by the repetitions of the images themselves; descriptions that seem unnecessary are added to induce a feeling of impatience. Further, some of the shots might seem quite mundane and not very exciting for a fiction film. However, pairing these images up with a

very descriptive narration forces the viewer to concentrate on all the small details of actions and objects that might seem banal. For example, the viewer watches a person buttoning up a cardigan, button by button, and there are no other elements or colours in this shot other than the hands and the cardigan. The viewer has to focus on the same movement being repeated for every button, when what they really want to know is how the story of this character is going to progress. The buttoning of a cardigan is a day to day activity that gets lost in our daily routines, we do not usually spend this much time looking at each individual button. The viewer might feel that the action of the film is slowed down by unnecessarily stretching out the shot – it is of my longer A category of shots – intensifying the viewer’s impatience, but, at the same time, the viewer also feels compelled to watch it, as the voice-over might reveal some additional information that re/contextualises the image. Small details that might seem insignificant are thus emphasised to force the audience to concentrate on the banality of every day actions, as in the Oulipian tradition.

The use of voice-over narration has been present across the history of cinema, even at the medium’s emergence, when, “in the late 1890s, silent movies relied on ‘lecturers’ hired by exhibitors to provide running commentaries for the audience of unbroken takes (films) or a string of several films (programmes).”¹² Though the use of a person to read the voice-over live at the location of the film screening decreased with the employment of title cards during the silent era, the improvements to sound recording that occurred in the 1930s led to the concept of using a voice-over on the film’s soundtrack instead. As such, “post-shooting voice-over narration became one of the most useful devices implemented to deal with the deficiencies of the early

¹² Eliana Franco, Anna Matamala, and Pilar Orero, *Voice-over Translation: An Overview*, Second revised edition (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), 17.

sound era.”¹³ For my version of *Project Cube*, the element of post-shooting voice-over narration is essential. All images are shot first, and the voice-over is recorded afterwards. The audience might perceive the voice-over as a commentary, telling a story that starts by describing the pictures and then places them into some fictional context. The latter is important because, along with the component of exhaustion described above, a further aim of the voice-over is to instil an emotional aspect into the visual images, to elicit a reaction from the audience based on the storyline that the filmmaker has been inspired to write by way of the randomised sequences.

For the voice-over of my version I used different pronouns for the sequences. The six different films that constitute the project are narrated from three different perspectives: *I*, *you*, or *she*. This development was influenced by Oulipian techniques, especially the work of Georges Perec. Within film history, it is not common practice to narrate a story using the pronoun *you* to refer to the main character. An example of a film where this method of narrating is employed is *Un Homme Qui Dort* (1974) by Georges Perec and Bernad Queysanne.¹⁴ Their work features a female narrator who tells the story of a male main character from the second person perspective. Similarities can be found in my version of *Project Cube*, as the narrator is male, however, the character you can see is female. Using a male voice to describe the actions of a female character, or vice versa, carries several implications. The narration could be interpreted by the viewer as instructions to the character, or they might perceive the narrator as a commentator describing the

¹³ Franco, Matamala, and Orero, 18.

¹⁴ *Un Homme Qui Dort*. Dir, Georges Perec and Bernard Queysanne.

events. In order to emphasise the latter, the style of the narration in my work is deliberately very descriptive, and the descriptions are mainly based on what the viewer can see.

Further to the voice-over, the soundtrack also features sound effects and musical motifs. In the days of silent film, even, there would sometimes be a musical accompaniment to the screenings, as live musicians were hired to play in the cinemas. The use of music can be used to influence the audience by contributing to an atmosphere of a shot. Further, within my version of *Project Cube*, the use of music is strongly connected to the narrative in terms of structure as well as tone. For in several of the sequences, the musical motifs are used to bridge the gaps between sentences in order to hold the viewers' attention by constantly keeping their minds occupied. In addition to the music, I also added sound effects. This variety of sound elements are employed to place repeated shots into different contexts. For example, in one story the black shot with the flashing lights is accompanied by the sound of rustling train tracks, so that the audience gets the impression that the character is on a train. Sound effects and music are the last elements I added in the stage of post-production. I decided not to apply any constraints on these two elements, as I did not want to overload my project. Although no constraint is applied to the soundtrack, the theme of repetition is also supported by the music. All six films feature a musical motif that is recorded alongside the image of the character playing the piano. I recorded different sets of piano music, all sounding disharmonious without rhythm to it. I cut the sound of the keys being pressed in a random order into very small sections, which I used as a repetitive sound in some of the sequences. The repetition here aids in inducing the aforementioned exhaustion of the audience, hearing it for the first time it might appear to be part of a song, but upon hearing it numerous times it turns into an irritating noise with no apparent connection to the storyline.

The theme of fear and loss is present in each of the six stories and it gives them a darker undertone. The narratives address issues such as the death of a loved person, having to flee from one's home and leave one's family behind, and the fear of violence against someone you care for. In five of the six stories, I placed the loss on an emotional connection between persons, only one of the stories describes the loss of an object. In the story where the object is lost, this object has strong emotional value for the character for whom it represents happiness. Three of the narratives have an open ending wherein the fate of the character is left uncertain, but there is the possibility of a happy ending: Sarah might find her key to happiness, the girl's ex-partner might return, the music teacher's prayers might be heard and answered. The other stories end on a note of self-destruction, abandonment, resignation, and emotional detachment. All six characters have a strong sense of their present and past, and a focus on their future. The audience sees the characters in their present state, where they reflect on the future as they deal with the consequences of events from the past, figuring out where it will take them. For one of the characters, the story ends here: the woman on the run decides that there is no future for her. The character in the hospital, who has lost their grandmother, gives in to despair and passivity. Lucy makes an active choice, she could confront her father, but instead she chooses to go alone into a world of uncertainty.

The emotional content of the films that constitute my version of *Project Cube* is also impacted by its visual material, which is centred around the concept of the human body. Five shots within category A display different body parts, however, there are no faces shown. With my project, I

want to explore the significance of the presence of human faces in film. Carl Plantinga argues that “the prolonged concentration on the character’s face is not warranted by the simple communication of information about character emotion. Such scenes are also intended to elicit empathetic emotions in the spectator.”¹⁵ In other words, the human face is used as visual stimulation to achieve a certain emotional response from the audience, which “is possible because viewing the human face can elicit response through the process of affective mimicry, facial feedback, and emotional contagion.”¹⁶ This is to say that the filmed face functions like a mirror; the viewer empathises with the emotional state communicated by the character’s facial expressions and develops their own emotions towards them. I agree with Plantinga that emotions are often communicated via the human face in film,¹⁷ and although this might be a well-known – and continuously applied – theory, my work explores the possibility of identifying other trigger mechanisms that might elicit a response from the audience. I experiment with actions that are commonly associated with a certain type of emotion, instead of facial expressions. The result of these experiments are that other filmmakers may feel encouraged (or discouraged, as appropriate) to make use of the connotations tied to these. Further, though no full faces are seen in my version of *Project Cube*, parts are shown, which could be seen to simulate and maybe even intensify a sense of intimacy between the viewer and character. Extreme close-ups of the eyes for example, makes the audience take in certain facial features in more detail than usual, taking them closer to the figure being depicted in an alternative way to the featuring of the face in its entirety.

¹⁵ Carl Plantinga, ‘The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face on Film’, in *Passionate Views Film, Cognitions and Emotions*, by Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 23.

¹⁶ Plantinga, 240.

¹⁷ Plantinga, 240.

Along with the suppression of easy empathy, there are also several other issues that can arise from not revealing a character's face, however. The audience identifies different characters via their faces. For facial features (generally) remain the same, even if other aspects of the character's appearance change. Not showing faces in their entirety means that the filmmaker needs to be very careful about all the other identifying features, for example changes in clothing, if they wish for a particular character to be identified across the various shots of a film. The way in which I provided a connectivity between the images of the faceless figure was the use of red nail varnish on the fingernails. This means that whenever a hand appears within a shot, for example in the close up of the midriff where a hand is seen buttoning up a cardigan, the fingernails have red nail varnish on them. The viewers might assume that the parts of the body that can be seen in the different shots belong to the same person, although they never see the whole body of that person. Further, there are other pieces of information that are communicated by an actor's face, by which the audience can characterise a figure for themselves, these include such aspects as age, lifestyle, or beauty. Featuring only a hand with coarse skin, for instance, may confuse a viewer as to whether the figure depicted is an older person or a young person who does much manual labour. All six protagonists that feature in my version of *Project Cube* are different. As the constraint makes it impossible to show the entire body of the characters, the audience can only make assumptions about characteristics such as age or beauty. It is possible to draw a few conclusions based on their occupation and the narration gives the audience a few facts about each character, but direct details on these matters are omitted. Take the example of the woman on the run, it is revealed that she has two daughters, however, there is no mention of her age or the children's father. For some of the characters, the audience does not even learn

their name. This creates a feeling of distance, as it is more difficult to relate to someone without getting to know them. All storylines are focused on one particular aspect of each characters' lives: their obsession with their ex-partner, a shooting, the fear of terrorism. The audience does not get to know the character from a variety of viewpoints, they are subjected to the narrator's account of events. For example, although the audience is being told about the shooting that caused the woman to flee, the viewer never sees this shooting.

Along with the prominence of faces in traditional cinema, establishing shots are often employed to set the scene being depicted. They define where an action takes place and show other elements such as weather conditions, lighting, and the state of a place. This initial picture can contribute to the audience's reaction to what happens further into the scene or how they perceive a character. For my project, all shots are kept very simple: there is no background action and the focus is on one part of the body. If a background is visible, it is abstracted from context by way of visual simplicity; inducing a generality that leaves no clues as to where and when the action takes place. I want to show that it is possible to transmit emotions through the cinema, even if traditional visual associations are minimised, and the focus is shifted onto other elements. In this respect, all of the shots share the commonality that the background consists of only one colour, where possible to create uniformity and to channel the viewers' attention to these other elements. Although I did not turn this into a constraint, I refrained from background elements that would distract the viewer, such as pictures, patterned wallpaper or ornaments. The walls of all indoor shots are plain, while in the outdoors we see grass and stone tiles. The blandness of the surroundings emphasises the colours of the objects that feature in the shots: the brown bottle, the blue cardigan. These are the objects that immediately catch the viewers' attention and they

establish a connection between the shots. Parts of the body are emphasised, using red lipstick and red nail varnish, whilst others are integrated into the background. For instance, the torso in a nude shirt blends into the beige wall it is stood before, but it is slowly covered with the blue cardigan as it becomes buttoned up by the red lacquered fingernails. The use of primary colours within shots of black, yellow, beige, and white backgrounds is thus very deliberate.

The constraint of using different parts of the body is only applicable to shots of category A of my version of *Project Cube*, however. To create a visual distinction between the shots from category A and category B, the theme I applied to category B was that of shots that did not contain any actors. The shots of category B thus communicate images related to the natural environment, colours, or moving elements such as water. And the non-variable constraint of A/B sequencing thus leads to the result that every shot of the body is followed by a shot that does not contain a body. There is only one exception in my version of the project; one shot from category A that features a black screen with flashing lights. The reason for this relates to phase 2 of my *Project Cube*. When planning the shots, my initial intention was to have one entirely black shot in category A and a corresponding shot of the same kind in category B. The black shots were originally designed as a kind of joker card in the pack of the material available as they do not contain a visual reference to anything. After a first test run, however, I realised that the black shots were shifting the emphasis too much onto the verbal storyline, and that the visual aspect was completely left out. It did not look like an intentional piece of visual material, instead it looked like a mistake, hence I decided to replace the black shots with new material. For category A, I added the flashing light to the darkness, to break it up. Although the shot still does not convey any image other than a black background, the light gives us a dynamic movement within

the duration of the shot. For the corresponding shot in category B, I decided to add another element that was moving: a vortex of water, resembling what is seen when draining a sink. To add an aesthetic twist to it, the vortex consists of a mixture of clean and dirty water.

In order to avoid a sense of abrupt randomness in the films that would emerge via this generative structure, I felt it was important to create a sense of connectivity between the shots within one category, as well as between the different shots of category A and category B, I employed two linking elements. Earlier I gave the example of employing red nail varnish in category A shots that feature a hand. As the nails are always the same, the viewer speculates and comes to assume that it is always the same hand that is being depicted, and, further, the viewer supposes that the actions take place one after the other. However, nothing in the images indicates the time in which the action takes place, and so the viewer needs to rely on the narrative produced by the soundtrack to conclude which sections may constitute a flashback and which are occurring in the present. The audio narrative combines with the images to construct a coherent storyline, and it helps the viewer to characterise the figure depicted across the shots, to see one individual across the separate, disconnected, shots of the body. The second linking element, which links together some of the individual shots from across both category A and B, is the object of a brown glass bottle. Present in several shots of both categories, this bottle is a visual element that creates a link between the two categories, and its reoccurrence facilitates the flow of a coherent storyline to be created in the narration as it gives the filmmaker a possible visual focal point in a storyline. The fact that the figure interacts with the same bottle in several different shots provides the viewer with the assumption that it is the same character, though they cannot rely on recognising the character by their facial features.

During phase 3 of my undertaking of the project, I applied a variable visual-technical constraint that required that I do not use a camera operator. To increase the challenge of this undertaking, I shot my version of *Project Cube* with no help at all. This means that no producer was involved at any stage of the project, there was no separate sound operator and no other director present on the set, while at the stage of post-production I also took on the role of the editor. My experience of working under this constraint was that, by being made responsible for choosing and shooting my material, my creativity was maximised and my films benefitted from the coherence that arose from my making decisions throughout the process. I was forced to control every single detail. For example, I evaluated some trial shots where the character is seen buttoning up the cardigan with different coloured shirts and cardigans and I had to make a choice that would usually be left to an art director. This shows how the constraint has pushed me to take on responsibility for all aspects of the images, ranging from the camera angle to colour composition.

The constraint of not having any help during the shooting triggers another constraint: no additional actors. This had an impact in two ways. Firstly, it meant that there can only be one character visible at a time in any given category A shot, as the filmmaker is the only actor available. This then creates a challenge in regard to the subsequent construction of the narrative. As there are never two characters in one scene, direct dialogue and descriptions of interactions between characters on the soundtrack become problematic. Secondly, in order to record images of body parts, I had to be in front of the camera, which impacted upon my use of the camera. It was difficult to zoom, pan, or track in this situation. Therefore, one might say that the variable

constraint of no zooming, panning, or tracking originated out of the variable constraint of not having a separate camera operator and actor. It also explains why I have classified the latter constraint as a variable visual-technical constraint – it directly affects the look of the shots. However, the constraint of shooting the footage without any movement of the camera came to be used for all shots, even those that did not feature body parts. As such, the element of static shooting is not a purely technical decision, but an aesthetic choice also, as reflected in the shots of category B. By presenting me with an obstacle, the constraint has helped me to find an aesthetically appealing solution, and it has lead me to explore different options. An example of this is the shot in which the character walks out of the frame and the shot is left without a character for a couple of seconds before the character walks back into the shot. The movement itself evokes the out-of-field, which creates the mental image of the space beyond the frame in the mind of the viewer, without my having to move the camera. As such, it showed me that, even if the camera is static, I am not limited in my options as to how to use the space depicted in the shot. Without the initial inspiration of the constraint, I would have followed the character's movement with the camera, however, as the camera had to be static, I was forced to look for a different possibility. This was a situation where the use of a constraint enhanced my creative thinking.

Another aspect is the budget that a filmmaker has chosen to make available for their film. I have deliberately not placed a non-variable constraint in respect to budget on the template. Initially, I intended to place a variable constraint on the budget for my project, but then I realised that the other constraints would help to regulate the budget indirectly. When calculating the cost for my film project, I noticed that if I do not have to allocate a budget to pay for actors, a camera

operator, a crew, or an editor, this keeps the cost of the film project to a reasonable amount in any case. This calculation strengthened my choice to not hire an actor or a crew, as the template for *Project Cube* should be accessible to all filmmakers, regardless of their monetary situation, such a variable constraint is enough to broaden the scope of those who may wish to partake in the project.

Going back to the earlier discussion concerning the use of the same shot within different narrative contexts, we need to factor in the role of colour grading during phase 4 of the CFM process. Although no constraint influences the initial choice of colours, which occurs in phase 2, in my own version of *Project Cube* the colour schemes for the shots are kept simple. Behind this decision is the intention of engaging in colour modification during the post-production phase. This is because colour modification can help to accentuate the audio narrative that is being imposed upon the randomised sequences. The overall atmosphere of some of the shots can be adjusted by using filters in the editing that give the images either a warm or a cold temperature. By grading the shots, it is possible to artificially create a sense of differently lit environments. In one sequence, for instance, the shot of the character putting on a cardigan has been given a heavy blue tint in order to simulate the lighting conditions of a shabbily lit bathroom at a train station. In other sequences, the same shot is graded in brighter colours, as the character is inside a house flooded by daylight. Another example is the shot of the bees, graded in tones of yellow to indicate a summer day in some sequences, while in other sequences the same shot is graded with a tint that leans towards blue and green colours in order to indicate that it is spring time. If necessary, the contrast between the colours can be changed, so that in certain shots the outlines of the objects and body parts look more defined than in other shots. Ascribing certain colours to each shot

influences the emotional perception of the audience and it can be used to manipulate the viewers' response to the images.

As discussed, repetition plays a central role in this project. On the one hand, we have the constant visual repetition, but on the other hand, there are also elements of repetition in the content. There are obvious repetitions: in Lucy's story information is repeated, the audience is told the same facts several times. In other sequences the repetitions are subtler, such as the worries of the music teacher and the fleeing woman. The music teacher fears that harm might come to someone she cares about, which is a fear that is repeatedly expressed in her thoughts. However, her character battles these reoccurring thoughts, differentiating the repetitions in this film from the bluntly repetitive statement of facts in Lucy's story. As a consequence of the constraints on the images there are many actions that are repeated. Putting on the cardigan is always the same action, however, it bears different connotations and symbolises different elements of the narrative. This can be simple, as when the woman on the run is cold and needs to warm herself, but it can also be more complicated, as when Lucy puts on the cardigan as a final act that symbolises her decision to leave home forever.

All six stories are based around the same objects: the bottle, the cardigan, the piano, the mascara brush. However, in each story the narrative transmits the meaning of the objects, with the result that they symbolise different things in each story. Take, for example, the bottle: for the woman on the run it is just a bottle. For Sarah, this bottle represents the key to her happiness. For Lucy and the girl who obsessively applies make-up, the bottle is a reminder of a life changing event.

Every character deals differently with the object, according to what it symbolises. Sarah, for example, wants to find the bottle, whereas the character in the hospital dreads it as it contains a tranquilizer. In some of the stories, the narration reveals the content of the bottle, yet in others this information does not seem relevant. When the bottle breaks, this has different implications for the characters. For the mentally unstable girl, the breaking of the bottle symbolises the break-up with her former partner; the collapse of that relationship haunts her and only when the bottle breaks does she have a chance of recovery. The same is true for the mascara brush. For this character, the application of make-up has become a coping mechanism; she uses it to hide and cover emotional pain. For the woman on the run, however, applying mascara is merely a distraction during her train journey. The viewer relies on the narration to reveal the importance of the objects. However, they can also come to their own conclusions as the objects are in the focus of the visual images. The variable constraint of the close-up channels the attention of the audience to these objects.

In regard to the stories being produced on the basis of the randomised sequences, the repetitive use of the same shots bears the danger of producing overused clichés or falling into the same story pattern repeatedly. This means that the repetitions have to be carefully selected, to create the wanted effect of exhaustion through banality. There are not many objects present in each shot, however, by assigning the objects different levels of importance in the six stories, I tried to avoid the production of repetitive storylines. The emphasis is placed on different qualities of the objects, making them defining features in some cases and parts of sub-plots in others. For example, for the story of the music teacher, the piano defines the character's professional identity. For the story set in the hospital, the piano signifies the character's passion, their love

for music. Yet in another story, that of the woman on the run, the piano does not hold any deeper significance beyond its being played. Most objects only appear in a single shot, so the action that the character performs with them is always the same. The mascara always colours the lashes, the cardigan is always put on, never taken off. In each category B shot, the focus is on one object, and these vary from shot to shot with the exception of the brown glass bottle. This bottle features in two category A shots and two category B shots. It is the only object that is shown in different places and it is also the only object that changes, as it breaks. Using the shot of the bottle shattering is a defining moment for each storyline, as it might cause a rupture in the linearity of the story. Unless the dice gave me an order where the bottle is first seen whole and then later seen broken, I had to find ways of incorporating the shards of the bottle into the narrative. This means that in several of the storylines the breaking of the bottle is used as a flash-back or a memory, demonstrating how the randomising of shots can lead to complex narrative structures.

4.2 **A Day in your Life**

A Day in your Life is an experimental film on the topic of human emotion and memory. The film depicts snippets of an ordinary day in the life of a character, interspersed with pieces of interviews conducted on the topic of memories and emotions. A diagram of the constraints used can be found in the Appendix, Figure 4. It should be noted that, unlike *Project Cube*, this is a film built on specific constraints particular to this experimental production. This is to say that it acts less as a dynamic template for experiments by other filmmakers than a demonstration of a particular generative frame that may be adopted by others.

The entire plot of the fictional sequences is narrated via a voice-over, addressing the character on screen with the pronoun *you*. The voice-over describes what the viewer can see, however it also provides further information that the viewer cannot infer from the pictures. For example, whilst showing the character walking, the voice-over tells us the time of the day or the location. The voice-over is free from any kind of subjective comment or personal evaluation of the situation, it is deliberately descriptive. It could almost be compared to a commentary on the actions depicted or an audio description for blind viewers. The reason for keeping the voice-over descriptive is to imply an objectivity in the fictional segments that helps it to cohere with the factual interview segments in the whole of the film. Where these sections of the film stand in contrast to the interviews is that the objectivity of the narration works to create a feeling of coldness and distance between the viewer and the character. The participants of the interviews, on the other hand, are specifically asked to describe situations where they felt particular emotions such as fear or happiness. Mixing the footage of the character's day, which comes across as quite dry, dull, and unengaging, with sections of the interviews, brings out the contrast between emotional engagement and disengagement.

4.2.1 The Origins of A Day in your Life

A film that has influenced both *Project Cube* and *A Day in Your Life* is the aforementioned *Un Homme Qui Dort* (1974)¹⁸ by Perec and Queysanne. *Un Homme Qui Dort* relies heavily on a voice-over that narrates the actions of a character from the second person perspective, as is the case for some parts of *A Day in your Life* and *Project Cube*. Interesting in this respect, is Chris

¹⁸ *Un Homme Qui Dort*. Dir, Georges Perec and Bernard Queysanne.

Andrews' point that Perec alludes to other literary works within the novel on which the film is based in an attempt to define a place for his work within a broader canon of literature:

“[i]n examining the intertextual dimension of *Un Homme qui dort* we have seen that the novel may be considered as a puzzle piece with regard to the texts which define its subject and as a whole puzzle with regard to these which furnish allusions and quotations. In the first case, the author makes a piece of his or her own to fit between those already in place; in the second case, a new puzzle is fabricated from pieces both pre-existing and freshly cut.”¹⁹

This idea of creating a puzzle consisting of pieces relating to various texts is essential to the conception of *A Day in your Life*. I constructed a narrative that is constituted by a web of fragments of factual interviews and the memories of a fictional character. As Andrews suggests, the different parts can be seen as puzzle pieces, and the interviews for my project, which were shot before the narrative was developed, can be labelled as the pre-existing pieces (akin to the literary precursors of Perec's novel) which give the overall narration a rough direction.

Further, the three filmic works of *Un Homme Qui dort*, *A Day in your Life*, and my version of *Project Cube*, are subject to a certain pre-defined structure. That this is the case with *Un Homme Qui dort* might not be immediately obvious to the viewer, however, going back to the literary

¹⁹ Chris Andrews, 'Puzzles and Lists: Georges Perec's "Un Homme Qui Dort"', *MLN* 111, no. 4 (1996): 789.

source of the film, Andrews has identified a clear separation of its narrative into chapters that are unified by the extensive use of lists.²⁰ Andrews writes that the “lists are repetitive, accumulating synonyms. Rather than displaying variety they seek to exhaust the contents of a restricted visual field, or the nuances of a single state of mind.”²¹ That Perec’s generative structure results in such lists highlights another commonality amongst the three works, the idea of exhausting the viewer through constant repetition. For *Project Cube*, the repetition lies in the images, but *A Day in your Life* is centred around linguistic repetition.

The voice-over employed in the fictional sequences of *A Day in your Life* is constrained by a particular sentence structure, which is an approach borrowed from the Oulipo. I decided that in all the sentences beginning with *I* the second word has to be *remember*, so all the sentences within the narrative by which the narrator refers to themselves necessarily describe memories. With this constraint, the first person narrator ends up only ever discussing herself in relation to her past, while the second person narrator of course avoids the “I” in favour of “you” and, by speaking in the present tense, creates the sensation that they are instructing the character to undertake the actions that are being described. This constraint thus enforces a temporal distinction between the two types of fictional segment that feature in the film. The choice of words employed in this constraint is not incidental – it is inspired by Joe Brainard’s work *I remember*.²² Although Brainard is not a member of Oulipo, the American’s idea was soon adapted into a constraint which can be found in the work of members of Oulipo.²³ It is listed in

²⁰ Andrews, 790–91.

²¹ Andrews, 792.

²² Joe Brainard, *I Remember* (New York City: Granary Books, 2001).

²³ Mathews and Brotchie, *Oulipo Compendium*, 163.

the *Oulipo Compendium*, as a “manner of writing [that], while not Oulipian, has played a large enough role among the group’s members to deserve mention.”²⁴ The constraint was even developed further within Oulipo and variations have been created, such as Jacques Bens’ *I’ve forgotten*.²⁵ In an afterword to Brainard’s *I remember*,²⁶ Ron Padgett, the Literary Executor of Brainard’s estate, writes: “I don’t remember the genesis of *I Remember*, but as soon as Joe Brainard showed the initial version of it to friends and read it in public, everyone saw that he had made a marvellous discovery”.²⁷ Padgett thinks that

“Joe’s originality came from the fresh way he looked at things. He saw straight through complexity and preconception to the clear and obvious. Instead of writing an autobiography or memoir, neither of which he was interested in doing, he simply wrote more than 1,000 brief entries that begin with the words “I remember”. His method had something childlike about it, and indeed Joe did have a taste for things that were free of adult overcomplication.”²⁸

It is precisely that childlike element that is key to the first person narration of *A Day in your Life* – the storyline is simple, the sentences are short, the word choices seem ordinary, and the style resembles a description. It might seem peculiar that the more rigid sentence pattern enforced by this constraint is imposed on the character’s memories and not their daily routine. However, the

²⁴ Mathews and Brotchie, 163.

²⁵ Mathews and Brotchie, 163.

²⁶ Brainard, *I Remember*, 169–76.

²⁷ Brainard, 169.

²⁸ Brainard, 170–71.

actions of the character are rigid *because* they are a daily routine, and, as such, such rigidity did not need to be reiterated in an imposed word pattern. Further, by applying an element of rigidity on the memories, the viewer might make a connection between the daily routine and the memories, perceiving the character as an individual who adheres to rules and values structure. Another interpretation points to the element of being trapped. The character is caught in a rigid web of structures that she cannot escape. These structures give the character a purpose but they simultaneously block her from dealing with her grief.

The idea of using interviews within a fictional film was inspired by Sally Potter's *Rage* (2009),²⁹ which tells its story through fictional interviews. This is to say that Potter does not employ any shots that depict the action of her storyline, but instead has actors perform scripted interviews. Her characters' shared story emerges through their talking about the events, themselves, and each other.³⁰ Given that there is no visual proof to verify the stories being told, the verbal testimonies come to feel like biased commentary and gossip. *A Day in your Life* makes use of interviews that are not scripted, and the interviewees were not informed of the questions beforehand. Their answers are thus spontaneous, and the footage is not rehearsed. And while the interviewees do not tell their accounts of a shared story, overall, the material produces a similar effect to Sally Potter's interviews – the participants are talking about an event that the audience

²⁹ *Rage*. Dir. Sally Potter.

³⁰ *Rage*. Dir. Sally Potter.

cannot see, therefore the audience is forced to rely on the biased and subjective telling of that person.

4.2.2 On the Generative Structure of A Day in your Life

The visual material is separated into three different categories: shots of the fictional character set in the present, flashbacks to the character's past, and sections of interview footage. A pattern of repetition between each of these types of segment was created using the following method. The fiction segments were comprised of the same number of sentences starting with *you* and sentences starting with *I*. I grouped three sentences starting with the same pronoun together, so that the verbal repetition is obvious, but the blocks of threes alternate between the two sets, thus creating a pattern of repetition on the level of the block structure. Further, in between each fiction segment (which each feature a block of three such sentences) there is a fragment of the interview footage. As such, the structure takes the form of: fiction (block of *I*) – interview segment – fiction (block of *you*) – interview segment, which is then repeated. By creating a more complex pattern of repetition the audience is challenged to detect the pattern over time.

Linguistic constraints are only applicable to the fictional part of the story, as it follows a scripted narrative. As stated earlier, the first linguistic constraint affects the opening of a sentence: every sentence of the narration has to start with either the pronoun *I* or *you*. The second linguistic constraint is that in all the sentences beginning with *I* the second word has to be *remember*. The linguistic constraint of using two different pronouns thus impacts the content of the narrative in terms of the temporality depicted. All the sentences that begin with *I* are told from the first person

perspective, and the conjoining of the pronoun with *remember* means they necessarily communicate memories, which in cinema tend to be visually represented through flashbacks, while those that start with *you* are used to describe the actions of the character, and so lend themselves to a depiction of the present. Following the decision to use these constraints, I decided to emphasise the split in the narrative perspective by using two distinct sets of voice-overs: one spoken by a female voice, the other by a male one. The use of a male narrator to portray the actions of a female character emphasises that such a voice-over is a description of actions, objective insofar as there is no equation between the male narrator and female character depicted, and it might further be perceived as instructions to the character. In contrast, the female narrator of the first person sections featuring the female character imply to the viewer that these are the character's subjective thoughts that are being told in the voice-over. This is supported by the contrast in the delivery of the two voice-overs: the male voice is distant and electronical-sounding, as opposed to the female voice that gently recounts memories. It is left open to interpretation if the sections that use the pronoun *you* refer to the same character as the one who features in the sections that start with *I*. Although no explicit connection between the two narrations is made, the audience is encouraged to assume that the first-person narration is telling memories of the character whose steps correspond to the second person narration.

The effects of the linguistic constraints exert a direct influence on the structure of the narrative, as they affect the sentence structure and therefore cause a certain inflexibility to the structure of the narrative and the amount of information that can be revealed per sentence. As the constraints force the words into a rigid pattern the flow of narration seems controlled and the audience is always aware of what will follow. After a few minutes of listening to sentences that start with *I*

remember, the first part of the sentence might seem to be a formality. The audience becomes part of a ritual, they witness that the character is trapped within a situation where everything repeats itself, and a pattern emerges. As the title of the film suggests, the narrative describes the daily routine of a character, which itself is defined by repetition. There is no escape for the character, the structure of the sentences indicates the order of events, which cannot be broken. Further, by applying a very rigid structural pattern onto the fictional narrative, the contrast between these segments and the spontaneous, unscripted, responses in the interviews is accentuated. The fictional character is given a limited space while the interviewees are not subject to time or word constraints, which supports the contrast between the freedom of the interviewees compared to the trapped fictional character.

The structural-technical constraint applied during the shooting of the fictional segments indicates that each sentence of the fictional narrative has to be composed of a certain number of shots. The sentences are written beforehand and each sentence is accompanied by two shots that, together, cover the length of the entire verbal delivery of the sentences. I use two shots per sentence to emphasise the time pressure of the fictional narrative, and the contrast that is created in relation to the non-constrained length of the interview segments. As the two shots are subject to the timing of the voice-over the cuts might seem abrupt, however repeating the structure of two shots per sentence creates a rhythm and produces a feeling of security for the viewer through its predictability.

The visual constraint that is applied to the interview footage can be referred to as a constraint camera lens. Whilst shooting the interviews, the lens of the camera was obstructed by a sheet with differently shaped holes in it, which means that only parts of the image are visible for the viewer. The viewer can still relate to the individual's stories, and the connection between the audience and the character on screen is created via their words and not their faces or facial expressions. The viewer has the chance to pass a judgement on the character that is thus not influenced by identity signifiers, such as age or cultural affiliation, for instance. Further, for each of these shots, the camera is kept static. Using a static obstructed camera to capture a moving subject strengthens the feeling of instability and fluidity, especially as here the figures' features and gestures are pressed into the spaces created by the rigid lines and patterns of the sheet. The obstruction pattern for the camera is different for each individual, as different sheets were used. Every time a different fragment of the interview appears, the eye of the viewer has to get used to a new pattern of black coverage, and different parts of the interviewee might be hidden or revealed this time round. If the person moves, occasionally, the viewer can catch a glimpse of a part of the person that was hidden before. This gives the audience the sensation of being constrained themselves. They feel trapped through a loss of control: they cannot influence which parts they see and they cannot predict if the character will move to satisfy their curiosity of having more details revealed. This also intensifies the feeling of suspense for the viewer.

The interview is divided into two parts, the first part consists of four questions, which are shot with the obstructed camera lens. The second part is a drawing exercise, shot without the obstructed camera lens but with the camera angled towards the table with its paper and pens, so that the interviewee's face is no longer in shot at all. The idea of using an obstruction to block

out certain parts of the interviewee's face relates to the film's overall theme of anonymity and interchangeability. Along with the concealment of the faces, the interviews are presented to the viewer in a four frame split screen, such that aspects of the four interviewees are shown at the same time, but only one of them is heard speaking. As three of the figures are male, it is not always obvious which of these figures is speaking when a male voice communicates their answers to the interview questions, while, by not showing the face of the main character of the narrative, the features revealed of the sole female participant among the four interviewees might influence the viewer's imagination as to how the fictional female character looks. In general, I believe that the interchangeability between these persons that such concealment creates produces a feeling of imbalance and pushes the viewer to ask if more information about the fictional character is even necessary, or if the narration is merely a distraction that further aids in the concealment of the character. Would it cause the viewer to react differently to the interviewee if they saw their entire face without being distracted by the constraint camera lens and the featuring of other interviewees simultaneously on the screen? This question also applies to the fictional character. The contrast of the fictional character, who is on the move, and the interviewees who are confined to a static shot, supports the subtle suggestion of memories unravelling throughout the day in the life depicted; the physical journey of the fictional character comes to be tied to an emotional journey communicated through the various voices.

Similar to *Project Cube*, then, no faces at all are shown in the fictional narrative, while the interviewee's visages are rendered obscured by cardboard shapes over the camera lens. However, here the different ways of concealing the faces of the persons featured in the film produces contrasting effects: from teasing the viewer with a shot of the character's feet and entirely

depriving the viewer of a face, to the overstimulation of simultaneously presenting parts of four faces. A further contrast is that the viewer is told a story about a fictional character whose face they never see, and yet they are presented with random parts of faces of interviewees that have no direct influence on the fictional storyline. However, as all the figures, the fictional character and interviewees, are talking about their emotions and memories, ensuring the two types of segments cohere into a filmic whole.

4.2.3 Reflections on the Utilisation of the Generative Structure of *A Day in your Life*

The story of the film is very simple: the character wakes up, goes to work and returns. However, throughout the day, the character revisits memories, opening a different level of the storyline. We learn that the character had a close relationship with her grandmother whose death has left her alone and vulnerable. The character is trapped repeating her daily routine. The film leaves the audience with a bitter aftertaste, it does not offer a different path for the character, she stays locked into her daily routine, to be repeated until her death. The moments of her day that are described are seemingly insignificant, minor, details of her life. For example, she realises she is late and so she runs, her legs are stiff and so she moves. At the beginning it is difficult for the viewer to relate to the faceless woman, there is no dialogue, she interacts with no one, and personal details are few. But as the day continues, an emotional life emerges. This is because the character's story is interspersed with interview footage that communicates verbal reflections on various emotions; insights into the inner lives of participants which are transposed onto the character by way of the sequencing of the segments. Further the character also communicates

memories of her own; the fact of which itself implies a communication of content that is worth remembering. The last memory is as follows: “I remember the sand, the smell of salt and I felt incredibly calm and secure. I remember that I wished I could stay there forever and never had to go back.” These lines, full of feelings and personal thoughts, reveal the real character behind the façade of her daily routine: the happy and calm character is in their desired environment of the past, dreading to go back to the daily routine, where the character is lonely and isolated.

However, while the story is simple, combining the three elements of a fictional narrative set in the past, a fictional narrative set in the present, and non-fictional interviews, it did not come without problems. The first problem was to create a structure that would incorporate all three elements without one part becoming overpowering. The use of the linguistic constraints helped me to assign roughly the same amount of footage to the past and the present of the character, however the interviewees were exempt from such constraints and so were not restricted in terms of duration. Further, the participants did not prepare for the interviews as the intention was to capture spontaneous answers, which in turn meant that their contributions could be extended by rambling, backtracking, and other verbal discontinuities. This meant that, in post-production, I selected an appropriate amount of the interview footage, cutting some of the participants answers to create a balance between interview and fictional footage. I did not use a constraint to determine which parts of the interviews to use. When watching an interview with one person, the audience expects the focus to be on this person’s face, but not only is this denied by way of the constrained camera lens, but also the simultaneous presentation of several parts of different faces. As I did not comply to the expectations of the audience, I had to ensure that I selected sections of the interviews that were long enough for the audience to adjust to the images and voices.

Another problem that I faced related to how I would differentiate the footage of memories from the footage of the past, on a visual level rather than simply resting on the voice-over narration. This problem was solved by applying a variable constraint on the colour grading of the two types of fictional segment. All shots showing the fictional character's feet, which are designated as the segments set in the present, are in black and white. The footage depicting memories remains in colour and is graded towards yellow. I used this effect to evoke the look of an old colour photograph that has aged over the years; such a photograph both depicts a memory and is an object of the past itself. A feeling of time discrepancy is thus created, with the viewer of the segment being given the impression that they are looking into the past of the character.

Such colour grading also speaks to the integration of the fictional segments with the interview footage. Through bringing the two sides of the project together meant a unification of very different material: the black and white shaky fast paced shots of feet stand opposed to the warmly lit static and stable images of the seated participants, the contrast works to create an integration of the footage into an overall tone for the film. This tone is one of instability which, as mentioned earlier, is also emphasised by the interchangeability and anonymity of the obscured figures that feature across all segments of the work. This instability that is invoked by the experimental nature of the film also speaks to the instability of the character in the story that is being told. As such, this film demonstrates how conflicting elements can work together to provide a unified meaning.

4.3 Tales and Tellers

Tales and Tellers is the third film of my project to enact and exemplify my conception of CFM practice. It consists of several short films, with a duration of one or two minutes each, that are shown together as a larger film that takes the stated title. Each section consists of a story written and read by a different person. Asked to respond to the topic of fairy tales, the tales told by the narrators range from fantasy stories to autobiographical anecdotes. My task was to create visuals that would correspond to these pre-recorded voice-overs and impact upon how the viewer receives the stories being told. As such, while *Project Cube* showed that a screenwriter can write an intriguing storyline for any visual material that they are given, this idea is reversed for my third film project. Here it is demonstrated that a constraint filmmaker can produce great visual material for any storyline they are given.

A diagram displaying the constraints used in *Tales and Tellers*, in accordance with the phases of the CFM process, can be found in the Appendix, as Figure 5. The same non-variable constraints are used for all five stories, however different variable constraints are used for each story. I created a diagram that takes one of the stories as an example and outlines the constraints, both non-variable and variable, that were used. This diagram can also be found in the Appendix, as Figure 5.1.

4.3.1 The Origins of Tales and Tellers

Key to the development of this project was the idea of splitting elements into two parts. Within my approach to CFM, certain elements are pre-defined as one entity, for example the role of writer and camera operator. Splitting these elements creates a new dynamic in the creative process as the focus shifts to how these elements are connected to one another and the question is raised as to what happens if these connections are temporarily disabled. In particular, it is the split between the written text, which defines the content, and the visual material, which animates the content in the film, that is central to the entire project of *Tales and Tellers*; as is indicated by the title. This initial idea led to the strategy of splitting the creative power between two individuals.

In this sense, the project highlights that CFM can be very versatile. For *Project Cube* and *A Day in your Life*, I deliberately took on all creative decision-making responsibilities. This was so I could experience the process of making films with constraints in all its aspects and thus reflect on the process within all four stages. For my third project, I moved away from this approach and decided to place some central creative choices into the hands of others. This approach is drawn from the Oulipo. For although each member of the group produces individual work, it is as a group that they look at, assess, and contribute to the creative process of each other's work. As such, there is a sense that the Oulipo is a collective working environment first and foremost, hence their meetings being referred to as workshops. When interviewing the Oulipo, they, too, communicated a very strong sense of being a collective of creative individuals who work together. As mentioned earlier, they tend to devise their constraints together and also help out during the production of each other's individual projects. Given the excellent results of their

creative practice, the power of collective work should not be underestimated. Therefore, for my third project, I wanted to involve other creative individuals in the production of the content.

A non-variable visual-technical constraint that is used for this film project indicates that the filmmaker has to use a chroma wall in the production of the visual content. The idea for this constraint has its roots in the concept of photomontage, which makes it possible to integrate objects or people into pictures in which they were originally absent, creating original connections within this new shared field of images. As Helen Hutton writes of photomontage:

“This technique may be defined as the pasting of assembled or cut-out parts of photographs into a montage. Developed from various types of trick photography, it was widely practised by the Dadaists as a means of liberation of ideas and relationships through the juxtaposition of these photographic images.”³¹

When developing the idea for this film project, I wanted it to be possible for any kind of fairy tale to be turned into a film. As I have no influence over the kind of fairy tale creatures that the authors would include in their stories, I had to think of a way in which I could create images that could accommodate for a range of fantastical images. I started experimenting with the concept of photomontage, which then lead me to experimenting with chroma wall techniques, commonly referred to as green screen or blue screen. Further, by using a chroma wall I found I could also

³¹ Helen Hutton, *The Technique of Collage* (London/New York: Batsford; Watson-Guption, 1968), 106.

integrate fantasy creatures with realistic backgrounds. The contrast that is rendered can thus be understood as my working with two entirely different aesthetic planes, allocated to the foreground and background, creating another split of elements.

4.3.2 On the Generative Structure of *Tales and Tellers*

I decided to set some guidelines that a prospective author has to follow in order to produce a short story that can be added to this project. I wanted all pieces to be roughly of the same length and to cover the topic area of fairy tales. Within the overall theme of fairy tales, and with the visual component in mind, I wanted to get submissions that go beyond creatures that exist. As such, I encouraged people to include dragons, elves, and mystical creatures. In regard to length, I initially asked people to submit their work, in both writing and as a voice recording, at a suggested length of roughly 100 words, which I anticipated would generate voice recordings between one and two minutes long. Some of the authors went slightly over that length, however, with general feedback being that 100 words is very little space for a fairy tale. As such, I decided to accept submissions that were slightly longer, to accommodate for narrative content, or shorter, as I realised that 100 words could also be spoken in less than one minute, depending on the pace of the reader. There were other factors, too, that influenced the authors' choices to write shorter or longer pieces. For example, one submission is a poem, and the author decided to retain its longer length so as not to break the work's rhythm. Overall, this variable structural constraint was implemented in the manner of a guideline, rather than a fixed set of timings and word length that authors had to confirm to. Further to the above, I only accepted original submissions and entries that had not been previously published.

The rules discussed above constitute constraints that directly affect the author, and although the filmmaker is therefore indirectly influenced by the constraints, the filmmaker has their own set of constraints that relate specifically to the visual content of the film. For instance, when I listened to the stories, I did not seek clarification from the contributors as to how they imagined the visual content of their stories. This was so I could create a visual narrative based on the verbal storyline, using their words as clues for the nature of the aesthetic content. The visual material that I have created thus exhibits a strong focus on what is featured in the descriptive parts of the stories being told. In many cases, I took the objects that were mentioned in the narrative and placed these objects against a background setting of my choice. For example, in the story about Baba Yaga, I decided to personify this mythical creature with the help of a black piece of cloth.

Given the visual focus on the descriptive elements of the tale, the extent of the literality of the approach has to be addressed. To take a literal approach would be to show the audience what they are hearing, with the audio being simultaneously taken as describing what they are seeing. When using the medium of film, the interplay between what can be seen and heard is very important, often differentiating it from other art forms. We can take as an example the transformation of novels into screenplays which are then turned into films. Certain aspects of the storyline that were described with words by the novelist are transformed into visual images, and the verbal description is not essential, in the form of a voice-over narration for instance, as readers become viewers in the shift from literary text to film. Leaving silent film aside, the role of the viewer usually includes the additional element of listening. Aside from the use of

contrapuntal techniques, sound design tends not to put an additional strain on the viewer, as the sound and image work together and are often received by the audience as one cohesive entity. For this film project, however, it is essential to recognise that these are ultimately two distinct areas of spectatorship. This is because, during the production stage of the project, the sound and the visual images are treated as two separate entities. It is because of this that the project might come across as very descriptive to the spectator, however, even if the images are a representation of what the viewer can hear, they are nevertheless my own visual interpretation of linguistic content. Although the filmmaker cannot change the narrative, they make decisions on colour, location, and items. As the five stories of *Tales and Tellers* show, the outcome can vary – some of the voice recordings are turned into abstract films, whereas others are depicted in a more traditional manner. The process of filmmaking here can be compared to that of illustration, interpreting a story and transforming it into images. I chose which elements of the narrative ought to be present in the visuals, and I further had the option to add additional elements to the sound track during the post-production phase, for instance adding music and sound effects. In this respect, the approach was less that of transforming the linguistic text in a literal manner than in an interpretive manner.

4.3.3 Reflections on the Utilisation of the Generative Structure of *Tales and Tellers*

Project Cube, *A Day in your Life*, and *Tales and Tellers* are all connected via one particular constraint: the absence of full human faces. As has been discussed above in respect to the first two projects, this constraint comes with both benefits and problems in regard to how the

character is perceived by the audience and how the film is made. For *Project Cube* and *A Day in your Life*, I decided to use footage where parts of the character's faces can be seen. There are two opposing sides to this. On the one hand, the use of close-ups can create a feeling of intimacy between the viewer and the character. I have taken this to an extreme with *Project Cube*, by showing extreme close-ups of the character's lips or eye, so that it already borders on fetishism through the isolation of these facial features. The viewer might thus feel like a voyeur, as when witnessing an intimate moment such as the character getting dressed from this kind of close perspective. However, this strengthens the bond between character and audience, as the character is in a state of exposure to the viewer, at points even eroticised in their presentation. On the other hand, the absence of the character's full faces can create a certain barrier between the viewer and the character, which might hinder the viewer from building a relationship with the character. This metaphorical barrier becomes a physical barrier in *A Day in your Life*, where the punctured sheet stands between the interviewees and the audience, and it physically obstructs the view. Instead of creating an intimate bond between character and audience, the constraint suggests anonymity and a possible connection between viewer and character can only originate from the verbal communication of the depicted figures and the narration. These two examples show how the same constraint can be employed to create different effects. Extending this comparison to *Tales and Tellers*, where I have used no human faces at all, it will be discussed how the constraint creates further effects.

As with the other projects, the absence of human faces raises the question as to how the filmmaker can visually support the emotional state of a character. For *Tales and Tellers*, I decided to represent the characters via other means, a black piece of cloth serves as an

embodiment of Baba Yaga and cut out shapes are used to represent elves, for instance. These objects are not designed in a way to show emotion, instead the idea is that the audience will transpose emotions that are incited by the voice-over narration onto these simple shapes. Using shapes and objects to represent creatures without human traits ensures that there will be no direct visual representation of emotions, encouraging the viewer to personify the shapes themselves through their experience of both the images and sound.

As indicated by the above point, and with my account of the other projects, part of my creative thinking is based on the assumption that the viewer carries a powerful imagination. For instance, that the viewer is able to imagine the remaining parts of an obscured face, or is able to create the figure of the character whose face is entirely absent from the screen, on the basis of the visual and audial content that has been provided in the films. This requires the viewer to see my work as more than passive entertainment, but rather interactive works that require the viewer to engage with the films and use their imagination to fill certain gaps. Active viewer engagement is especially important in the case of films that feature a constellation of characters. If multiple characters are present, it becomes more difficult for the viewer to identify and distinguish the characters from one another, as they cannot make this recognition via facial features. For *Project Cube* and the fictional segments of *A Day in your Life* I based the narratives around one main character to avoid ambiguous situations. However, the latter featured four interviewees, three of whom were male, and played on the ambiguity to emphasise the film's theme of interchangeability. *Tales and Tellers* differs from this in that it features stories where multiple characters are seen. Therefore, in order to differentiate the characters from one another, I made use of other aesthetic features, such as a variety of shapes and two distinct pairs of hands that

represent these figures without faces. In both of these cases of multiple figures, viewer engagement is actively encouraged through the visual content – the overstimulation of the split-screen in *A Day in your Life*, and the bright, rudimentary, electronic imagery of the fairy tale films, *Tales and Tellers*.

5 Conclusion

Constraint filmmaking (CFM) is not commonly included in standard introductions to the study of film; hence my thesis conceptualises constraint filmmaking as a form of creative practice that has its antecedents in a myriad of artistic fields, is currently being practiced by an array of filmmakers, but has yet to be theoretically formalised as an approach to filmmaking. For instance, in this thesis I briefly discussed *Victoria* (Schipper 2015)¹ and *Tangerine* (Baker 2015),² feature films made by filmmakers that do not belong to any particular CFM group but that employed constraints in their production, which occurred while my research was in progress. Both films have created waves with critics and audiences, as the work of Dogme 95 did two decades earlier, and yet there continues to be a general lack of recognition for constraint filmmaking as a category in its own right. There are few academic publications that address CFM, however those few writing about their observations of using constraints in filmmaking, for example Philipsen, acknowledge the benefits of doing so.³

To position my conception of the practice of CFM within the established field of film, I highlighted its strong connection to avant-garde filmmaking practice. This connection is found in the importance of experimentation to the work of both avant-garde artists and practitioners of CFM. To summarise, there are other points where CFM and avant-garde filmmaking overlaps: both are centred strongly around the filmmaker as both an individual and an artist (rather than a

¹ *Victoria*. Dir. Sebastian Schipper.

² *Tangerine*. Dir Sean Baker.

³ Heidi Philipsen, 'Constraints in Film Making Processes Offer an Exercise to the Imagination', *Seminar.Net - International Journal of Media, Technology and Lifelong Learning* 5, no. 1 (2009).

cog in the production process of an industrial art), innovating the field, taking ideas to their extremities, and refusing to conform to the mainstream aesthetic. Having drawn comparisons between my practice of CFM and selected examples of avant-garde films and filmmakers from the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, I next searched for groups of filmmakers that specifically worked with constraints. Starting with the literary group of Oulipo, who have perhaps popularised the use and formalisation of constraints in art more than any other practitioners, it was a logical step to look further into Potential Workshops for any that directly worked with film. This led me to the Ouvipo, whose work provided a great source of analysis, and whose members were kind enough to partake in an interview that gave me direct insight into a constraint based filmmaking practice. I decided to add the movement of Dogme 95 to my discussion also, so that a second perspective on constraint based filmmaking would be provided. This alternative angle was useful, as the Dogme filmmakers' motives for using constraints largely differ to my own, and so provide another aspect of variety to a conception of CFM practice. There are already many secondary texts that provide information on the movement of Dogme 95, however my work assesses the group under a frame that has not yet been fully explored. That constraint filmmaking has been under examined can be concluded from the fact that there are no official academic publications on the Ouvipo at all. With the information that I gathered in my interview with the members, my thesis creates greater awareness of their existence and gives them representation within the scholarly context.

Looking at the three groups in comparison, it can further be concluded that Oulipo and Ouvipo have more in common with each other than they do with Dogme 95, as they share a common origin in the concept of Potential Workshops. That Ouvipo is influenced heavily by the constraints used in the works of the Oulipo can be argued on the basis of both their strategies for

devising constraints and the focus of their work. However, that the members of the Ouvipo focus largely on the translation of literary constraints into their filmic works indicates a possible limitation in their development as an independent film movement and in their scope as filmmakers. Further, the practice of Dogme 95 is too restrictive as the Vow of Chastity is set out as a list of non-variable rules to be adopted by any filmmaker who wishes to create a Dogme movie. The document focuses primarily on technical constraints, with little variety or room for the interpretation or alteration of constraints by the individual filmmaker. From these observations, I concluded that constraint filmmaking as it is currently enacted is too restrictive and limited, perhaps enforcing its status as niche creative practice. Evaluating both approaches, I came to the conclusion that a practice of CFM should try to combine literary based constraints with technical and post-production constraints; I intuitively started formulating my creative practice from a literary influenced background, and so deliberately shifted the focus onto the more technical constraints in order to counter this tendency. And I also felt that constraints should not be pre-determined for all practitioners engaging with CFM, as with the Dogme movement, but should be devised on a project-by-project basis, as with the Ouvipo. These factors make for a conception of CFM practice that is both less limited and less restrictive.

One of the driving forces behind the development of my approach to CFM is the argument that constraints can work to enhance artistic creativity. The sample group of Philipson's article,⁴ as well as my interview with members of the Ouvipo,⁵ support this argument, with all participants

⁴ Philipson.

⁵ Waschneck, 'Interview with members of Ouvipo'.

agreeing that an artist needs to be able to unlock their creativity and think outside of standardised patterns in order to reach their full potential. These findings also indicate that using constraints can put the artist in a position where they feel liberated from the pressure of audience and industry expectations and are able to leave commercialisation and mainstream film industry aesthetics behind. This is because constraints function as experimental elements that breaks the mould of mainstream filmmaking. Constraining one's art thus expands one's artistic horizons.

My own practical experience as a constraint filmmaker showed me that the use of constraints can help a filmmaker to actively focus on all aspects of the creative process of their film. This is because constraints need to be allocated a place in the relevant phase of the production, compelling the filmmaker to fully consider each such phase. The filmmakers' consciousness needs to be focused on the process of creation and not just the end product. They have to consider the implications and effects of each constraint for the moment it is applied as well as for the film as a whole. To simplify this task, I suggested categorising the creative process into four distinct phases of CFM: development (1), scriptwriting and storyboarding (2), producing and shooting (3), and post-production (4). To simplify the creation process further, following the first phase, in which the constraints would be devised, I assigned each of the following three phases a particular type of constraint that would most generally be used during that period: content/abstract constraints (phase 2), practical/technical constraints (phase 3), and post-production constraints (phase 4). In order for the artist to best determine what kind of constraint they had devised and where it would best to applied, I split these three larger constraints into a further six different sub-categories of possible constraints, these are linguistic constraints, structural constraints, visual constraints, audio constraints, resource based constraints, and

miscellaneous constraints. Initially, I assumed that the four phases would occur chronologically. However, whilst working on *Project Cube*, I discovered that the stage of Script Writing and Storyboarding is interchangeable with the stage of Producing and Shooting. For *Project Cube* I created the images first and then wrote the voice-over afterwards, as this is part of how this project was set up. As such, recognising the very specific type of constraint being used allows the artist to decide where it actually should be applied, regardless of general guidelines that allocate a type of constraint to a specific phase. In conclusion, the approach I have outlined in this thesis is such that once a filmmaker knows what type of constraint they are using, they can then connect it to a phase and allocate it a place within their creation process.

In the introduction to my thesis, I highlighted my choice to make the films of this project with no help from actors or a crew. As a result, I experienced the undertaking of all the tasks on a film set, and all aspects of the filmmaking process were under my control. This choice supports my argument that constraints help individuals with their projects and act as facilitating factors for smaller film productions. One aim of my work is to empower individual filmmakers to believe in filmmaking as a way to express their creativity. Another aim is to support the belief that making a piece of art is possible without an industry behind you. I chose constraints that made it possible for me to work on a project that did not require a vast amount of money and I developed a vast range of skills needed in the production of a film as a result of this process. The positive influence that constraints can have on filmmakers who do not have a large budget or crew is also demonstrated by the example of *Tangerine*.⁶ Its director, Baker, was aware that his budget did not include the money for cameras and so he turned to the cheaper option of using a

⁶ *Tangerine*. Dir Sean Baker.

mobile phone to film his work.⁷ This technical choice enhanced the originality of his work, and so with the help of a constraint he was able to turn an initial disadvantage into an advantage.

My practical work can be looked at from two different sides. On the one hand, it serves as an example to explain my take on CFM. On the other hand, it stands as a collection of three films. Although the films are separate projects, there are certain characteristics that are present in all three films. The most striking element that I chose to employ throughout my entire collection of work is the absence of full human faces for fictional characters. For *Project Cube* I used shots showing parts of a face, such as an eye or the lips, in the interviews in *A Day in your Life* the character's face is concealed in favour of other body parts, and *Tales and Tellers* does not show any human faces at all. The overall intention is to engage the imagination of the audience, compelling them to envision the characters themselves on the basis of other elements of the work. Further, working with an absence of facial details meant that I created a theme of anonymity and interchangeability throughout my work. This is particularly evident in *A Day in your Life*, where the voices of the three male interviewees become interchangeable through the obscuring of their faces, while the female interviewee may be aligned, by some viewers, with the female character of the fictional segments, whose face we never see. Another characteristic of all three films is the use of literality and descriptiveness, which is to say that at many points in my films the viewer hears a voice-over that simply describes what can be seen. The use of this descriptiveness influenced the creation process of my films differently: for *Project Cube* the images came first with the narration being written after the sequencing, whereas for *A Day in*

⁷ Patricia Thomson, 'Tangerine', The American Society of Cinematographers, Sundance 2015: Inspiring Indies, February 2015, https://theasc.com/ac_magazine/February2015/Sundance2015/page5.html#. Accessed 14 June 2017.

your Life I started with the storyline and then added the images, and with *Tales and Tellers* I was given a pre-recorded audio narration that I interpreted through my film's visual content. I intentionally created a situation where the audience is placed in a conflicting position: on the one hand there are no full faces and their imagination is challenged, but, on the other hand, every action of the fictional character is commented on. The character is visually obscured, but aurally visible.

Another characteristic that I used consistently in all three films is the voice-over. I deliberately chose not to use any direct dialogue in my narratives or to let the fictional characters speak. They are given a voice via the narrator. In some cases, this gives them direct representation, through the use of the pronoun *I*, in other cases a distancing is created through the use of third person pronouns. Supporting the earlier mentioned idea of creating a feeling of interchangeability and anonymity, I further put the viewer in a position where they are reliant on the narrator. There is only one account of the events that is given, and this is by way of the narrator. As such, it is up to the audience to decide how reliable they think the narrator is, especially at points where events from the past are narrated without any visual depiction as to what happened. Using different pronouns can further create a range of relationships between the narrator and the character. For example, using the pronoun *you*, as is done in *Project Cube* and *A Day in your Life*, distances the narrator from the character and transforms him or her into a commentator on that figure, rather than a communicator of their subjectivity. Using the pronoun *I*, on the other hand, suggests that the words being communicated by the narrator are the thoughts of the character, giving the audience the sense that they are sharing a personal experience.

As with any approach, there are shortcomings to my conception of the practice of CFM, which need to be taken into account. One of the main concerns that arises for a practice of CFM is the danger of it becoming a dogmatic approach. This is one of the key criticisms that are applied to the movement of Dogme 95, with many scholars remarking upon its rigidity and inflexibility. As has been discussed, there is a certain validity to this claim when it comes to Dogme 95, however I have formulated a general, dynamic, approach towards CFM that leaves more choices to the filmmaker and is hence less restrictive. My conception of CFM allows the filmmaker to choose and reject constraints. This is also what sets this practice of CFM apart from filmmaking under censorship, which is only ever a given constraint. Another possible criticism of CFM, as it is currently perceived, is that it is practiced mainly in groups, some of which are very exclusive. Ouvipo is not actively seeking new members and the group is not widely known. There are currently no constraint focused film festivals and not many conferences where constrained artists can share their work with likeminded individuals. If CFM is recognised as a distinct category of filmmaking practice, and is thus included in more introductory film studies courses and texts, we might note an increase in these kinds of events and thus the opening up of this type of filmmaking to a broader range of practitioners. The fact that CFM is currently predominantly practiced in groups shows that the elements of showing, sharing, and discussing their work are recognised as important to the burgeoning of such filmmaking. Setting up festivals, workshops, and conferences aimed at bringing constrained artists together would reduce the notion of exclusivity and allow artists to gain a support network without being tied by membership rules. My thesis is written in a way that aims at both informing individual filmmakers about CFM and to encourage them to partake in such practice by engaging in the shared *Project Cube*, or by taking inspiration from my other two films. As indicated, then, the guidelines provided by my project are intended to help filmmakers to start their own constraint projects. My first draft, and

initial approach, towards formalising the process of CFM took a form akin to an instruction manual, so that the steps outlined could be easily followed by other filmmakers. Over the course of my research, however, the project began to take the shape of a more traditional academic thesis, so that the sources, influences, and background information related to constraint filmmaking could be better accommodated. However, certain elements of my initial approach are still present, especially in the diagrams attached in the Appendix.

My journey from Potential Literature to Potential Film has led me to question the process of filmmaking and the use of constraints in filmmaking. At the end of this journey, having analysed how constraints can affect the filmmaking process, the filmmaker, and the film, I can conclude that CFM brings a variety of benefits, if used appropriately. There are many filmmakers that employ a form of CFM, however other aspects of these works tend to stand in the foreground and push the practice of CFM aside. For example, Dogme 95 is mostly associated with the group's ideological content, hence the films made under this title are rarely purely discussed as a practice of CFM. As stated previously, Ouvipo has no textual representation in academia at all, as there currently seems to be little interest in establishing a general practice of CFM. As discussed, I am aware of the criticism that any practice of CFM might face, however, after careful consideration, I find that the benefits of CFM outweigh the shortcomings of the approach. I would therefore like to conclude with the point that due to its beneficial effect on challenging filmmakers' creativity, CFM should be included more frequently in introductory works within film studies.

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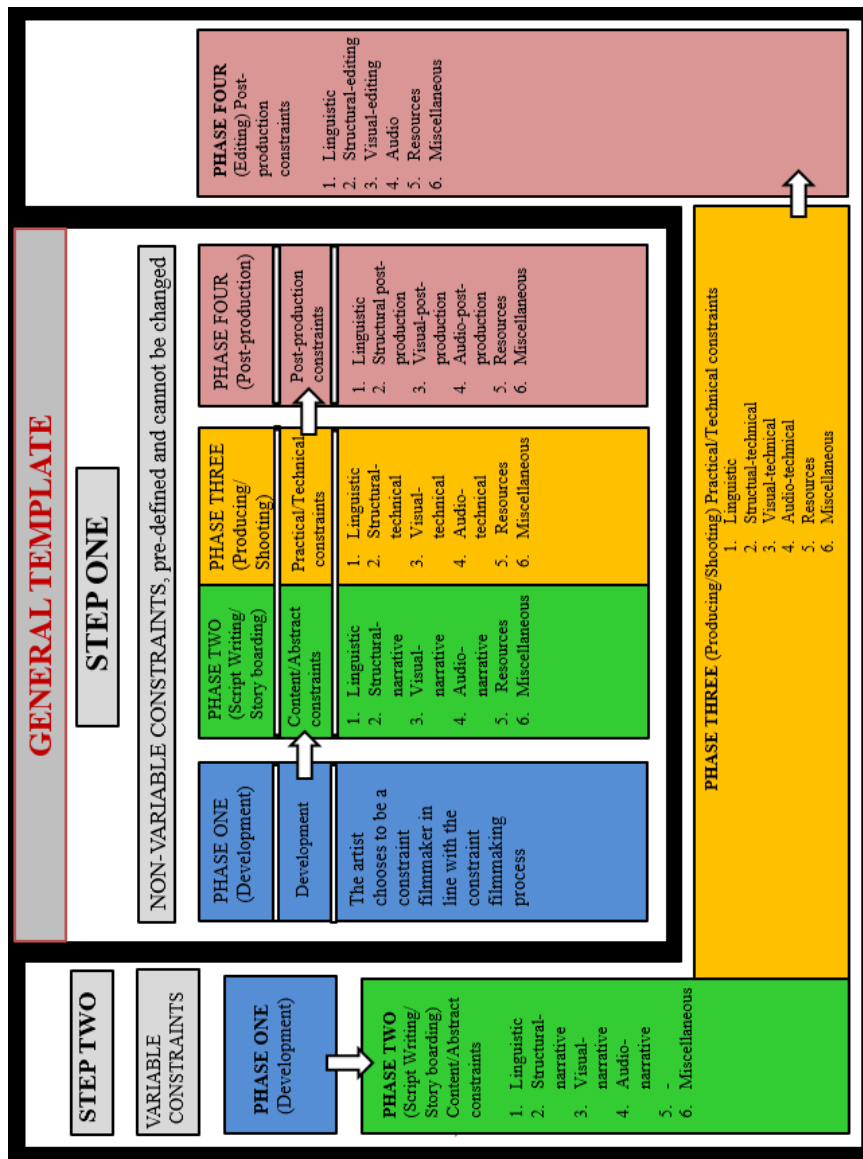
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8 Appendix

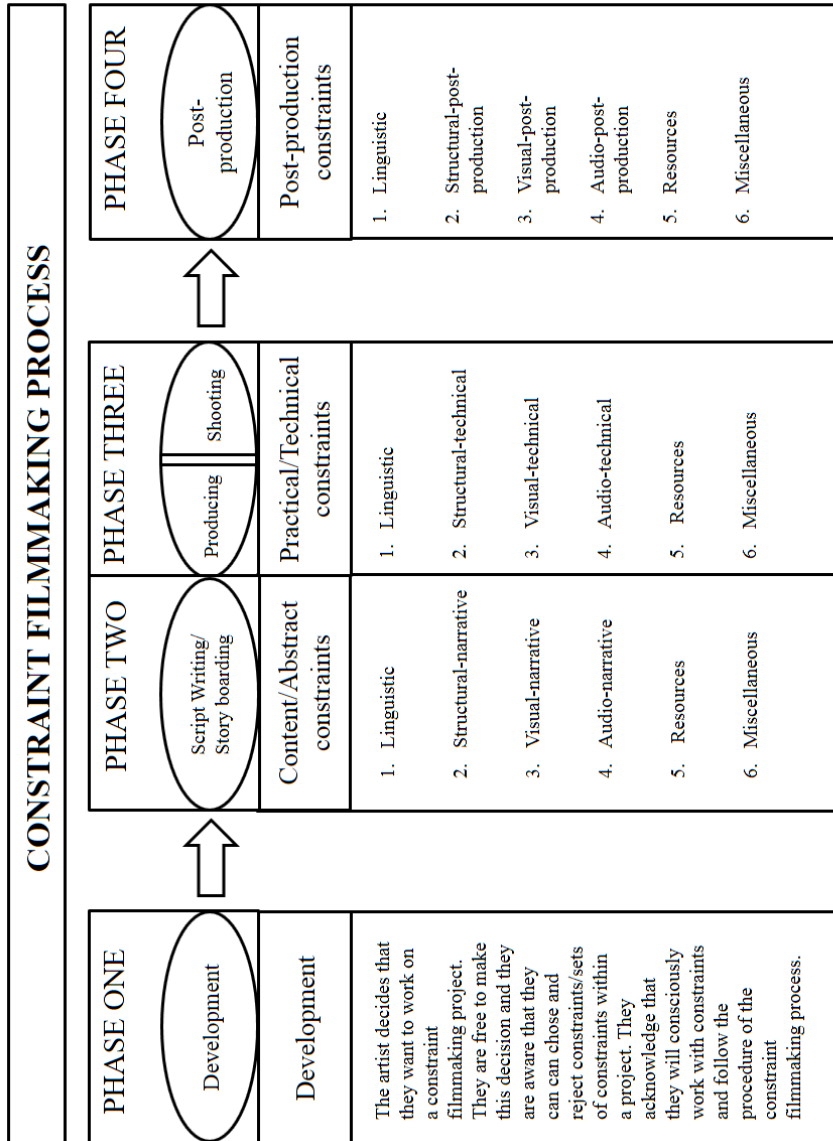
8.1 Figure 1

Diagram of the CFM process, depicting both steps, with all possible non-variable and variable options for constraints.



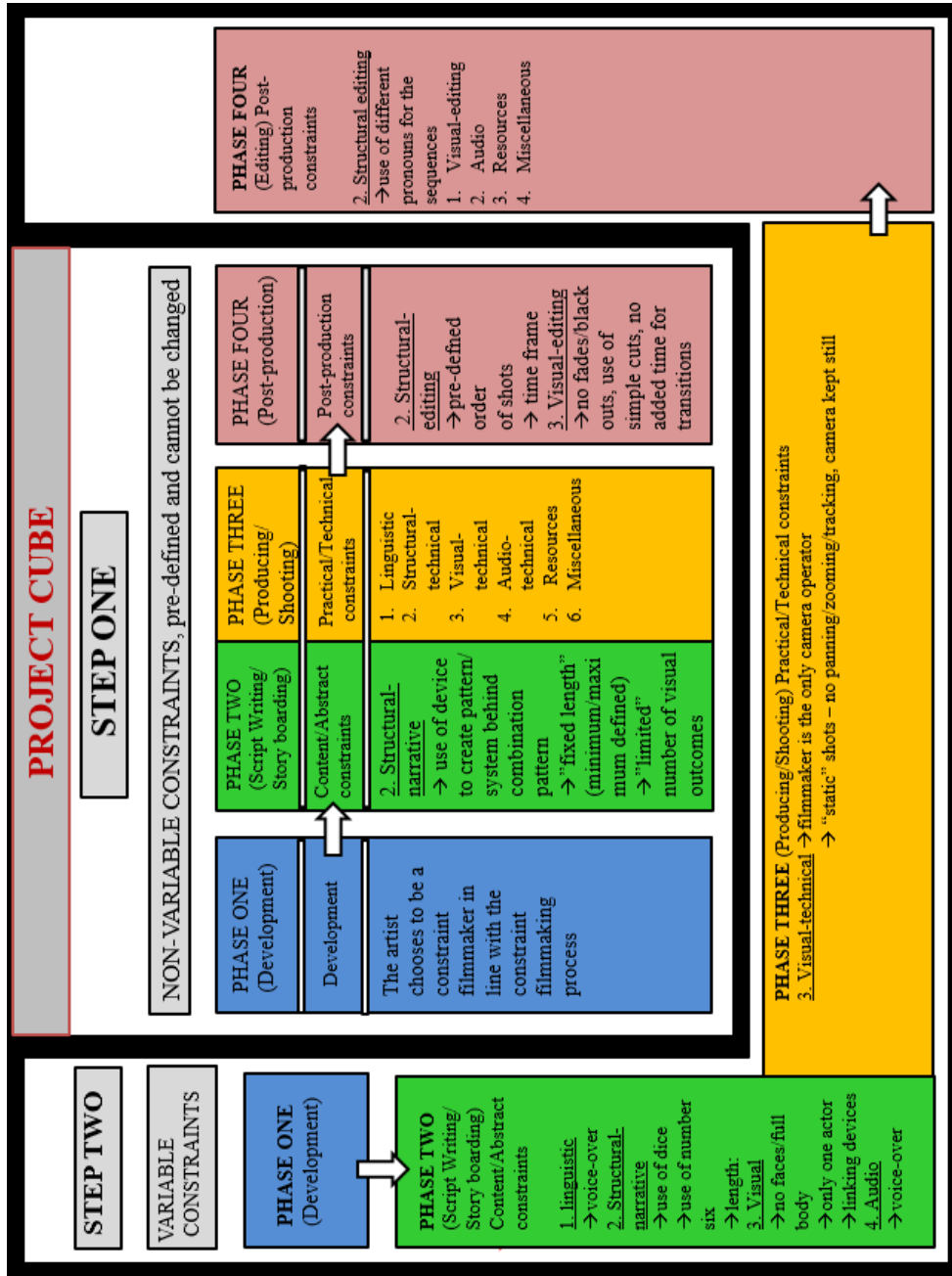
8.2 **Figure 2**

Diagram of the CFM process.



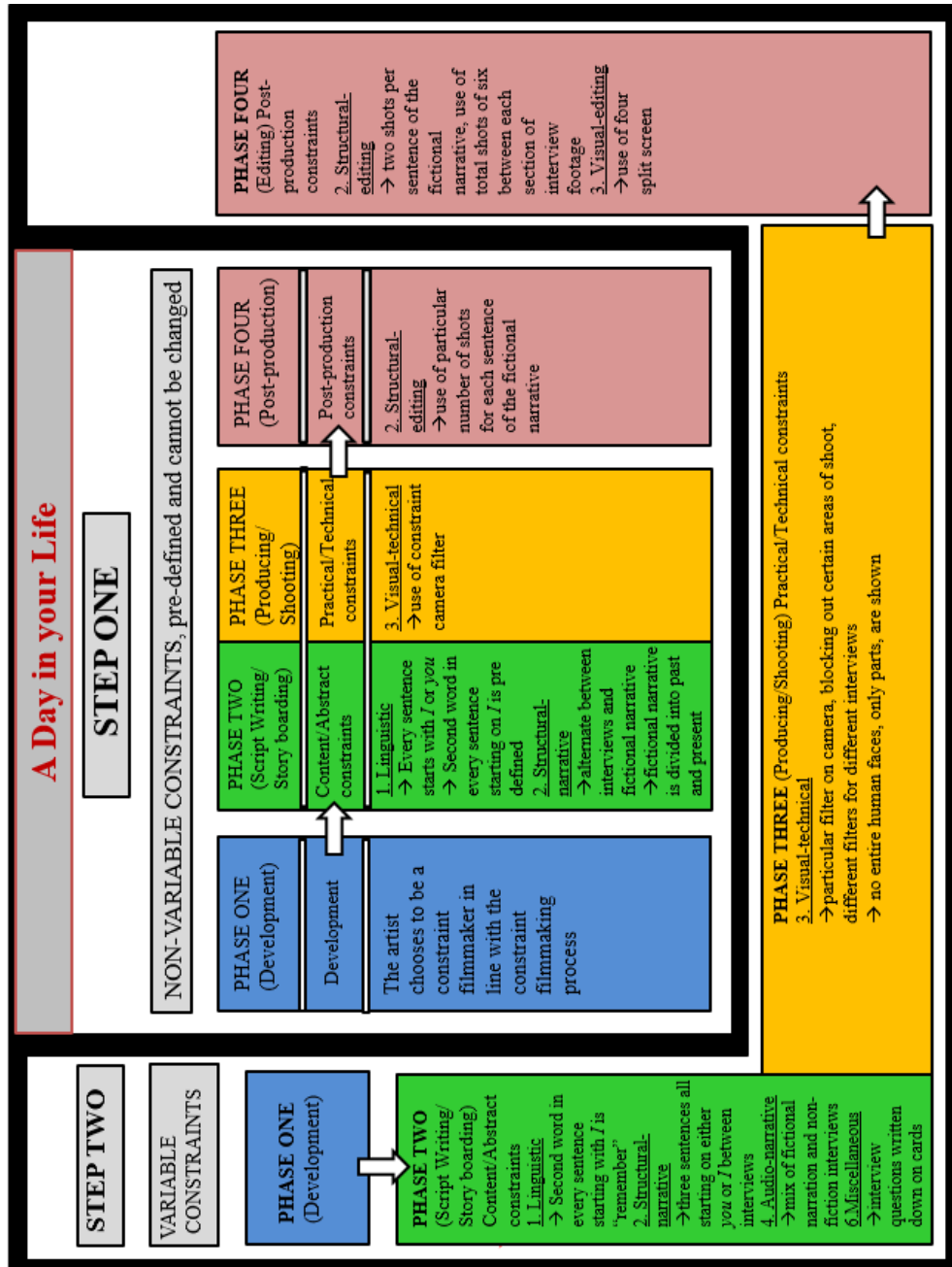
8.3 Figure 3

Diagram displaying the constraints of *Project Cube*, allocated to the phases of the constraint filmmaking process.



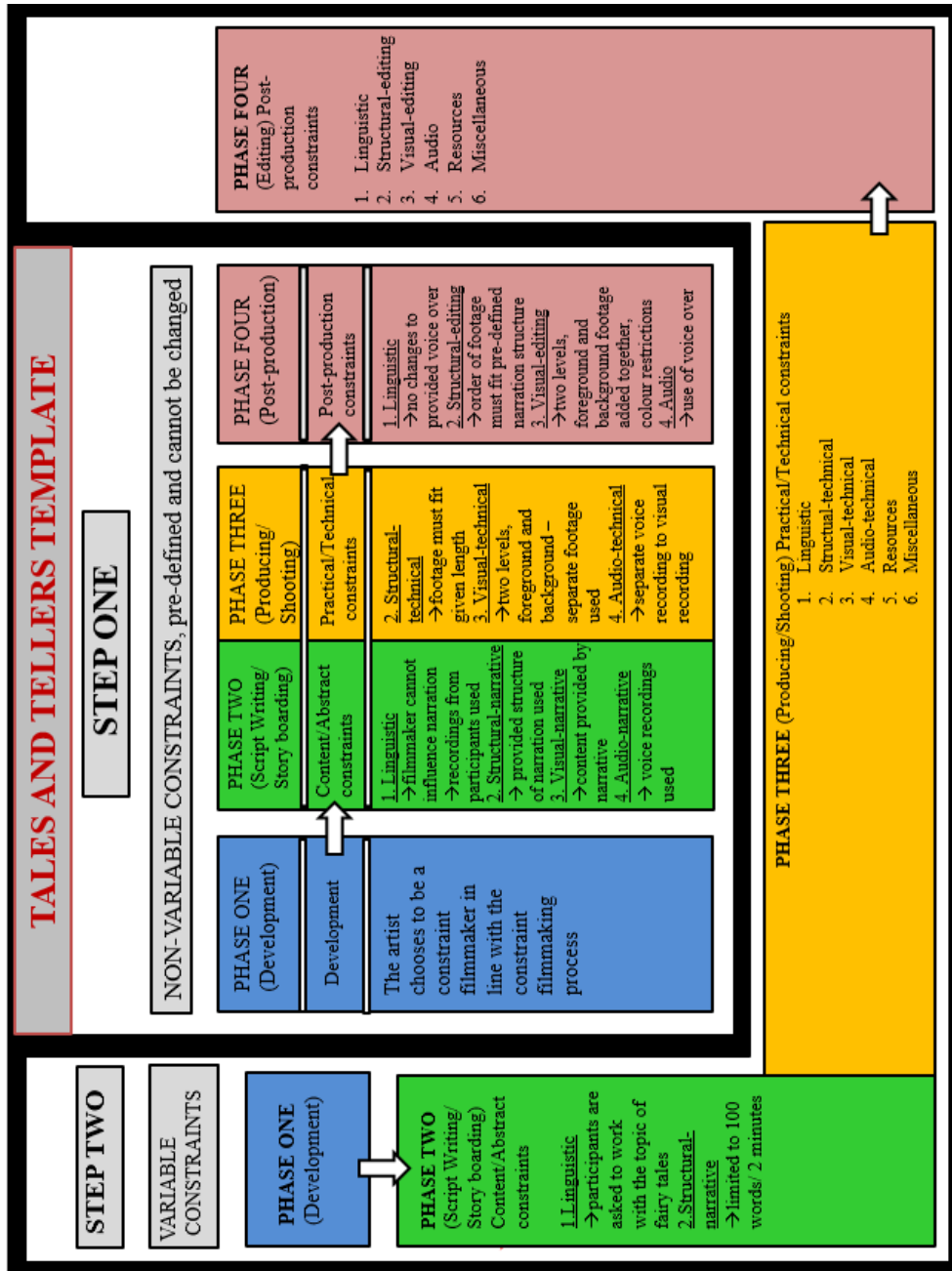
8.4 Figure 4

Diagram of the constraints used for *A Day in your Life*, allocated to the phases of the CFM process.



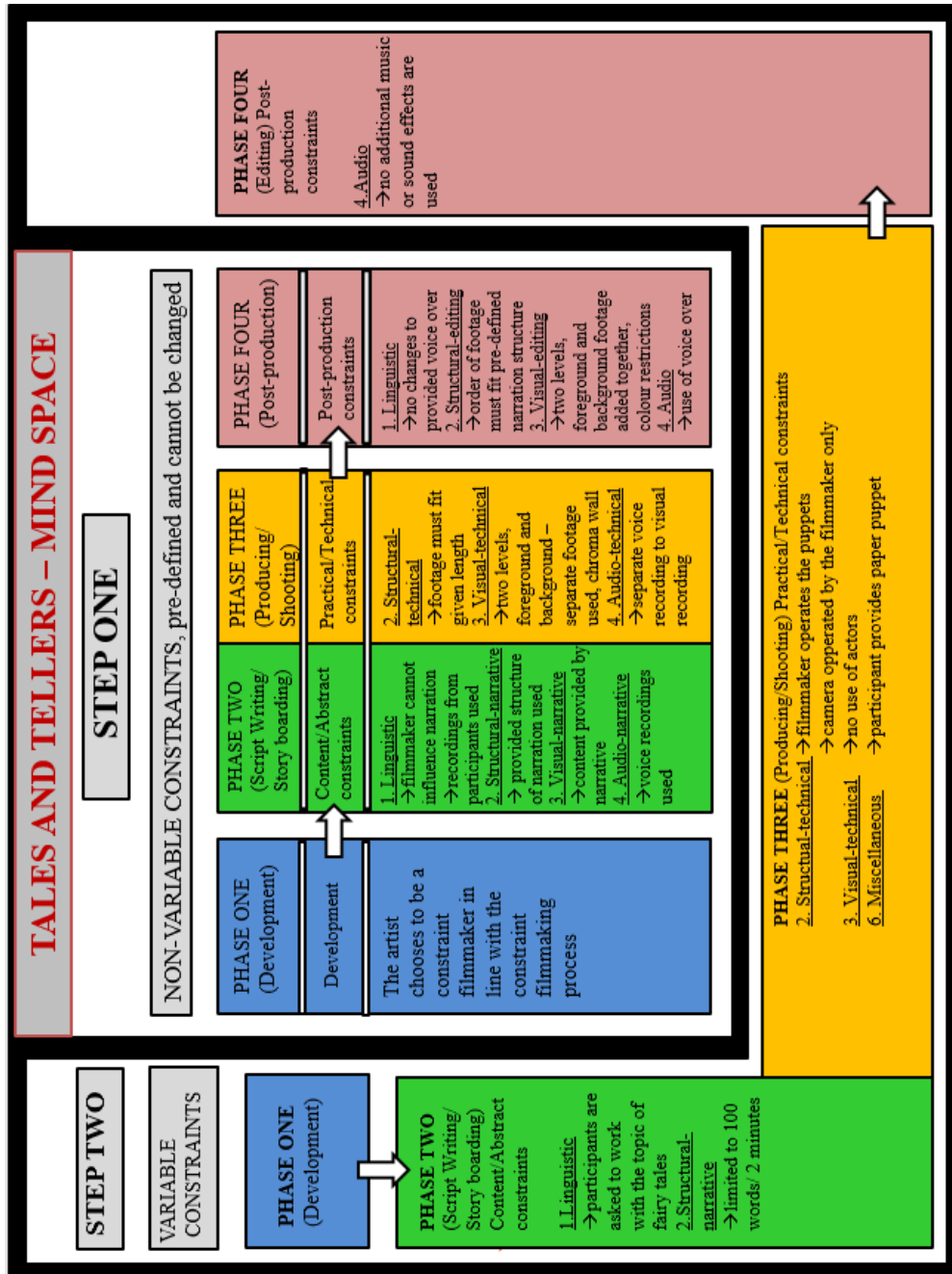
8.5 **Figure 5**

Diagram of the constraints used for *Tales and Tellers*, allocated to the phases of the CFM process.



8.5.1 Figure 5.1

Diagram of the constraints used for one of the five stories that constitute *Tales and Tellers*.



8.6 **USB Flash Drive**

Attached to this thesis is a USB flash drive that contains three films: *Project Cube*, *A Day in your Life* and *Tales and Tellers*. These are the three films that I made for my PhD project and they each contain the full credits of the people involved in the project.

Due to the size of the files, they cannot be played directly from the USB flash drive. To view the films, they must be copied onto the laptop that you wish to use to view them. Once copied, they can be opened with Windows Media Player or, alternatively, they can be viewed with VLC Media Player. Depending on the machine that is used to play the files, it is recommended to use headphones to get a good sound experience.

In addition to the three video files, the flash drive also contains a file labelled *back-up low quality small versions*, which contains a copy of each film in a lower quality. These can be played directly from the flash drive, however the image quality is set to very low, in order to create small files, and therefore the images might appear pixelated.

