A FILM EDITOR'S POINT OF VIEW (POV): EXPLORING "PLANES OF MEANING" IN FILM EDITING/MAKING

A Thesis with Creative Work submitted by

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ABSTRACT

A Film Editor's Point of View (POV): Exploring "planes of meaning" in film editing/making.

In referring to the process of editing and the role of the film editor, film-editor Ralph Rosenblum states "that outside of the Director and Editor almost no one had any idea what that [film editing practice] contribution was [to a film project] (Rosenblum 1986).

This doctoral research asserts that the creative practice of film editing is an integral part of the whole process of filmmaking (Harbord 2015), where the role of the editor is often invisible to the audience. While this might seem apparent for some film-makers, this research seeks interrogate this notion. Calling upon 40-year practice as a film editor I will examine and reflect upon current film editing practices, the impact of film theory on editing (Eisenstein et al.) my making processes. The result is a 50 minute original documentary that is the creative work that accompanies this Exegesis.

Chiefly, this research explores a concept coined by myself as the researcher: **Planes of Meaning**, which is theoretically positioned to analyse and guide the documentary-making process. Using this concept, the research interrogates key questions around film editing decisions, aesthetic and experiential processes and the transition from analogue to digital filmmaking. The research findings provide further assertions and a refined model of the Planes of Meaning that may be used by emerging editors who consider themselves as artists.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS WITH CREATIVE WORK

This Thesis is entirely the work of Mark Norfolk except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Principal Supervisor: Associate Professor Janet McDonald

Associate Supervisor: Associate Professor Luke van der Laan

Student and supervisor's signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research has been supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship. I would like to thank Laura Black who proofread, copyedited and formatted this Thesis.

My participants

As will be evident by the exegesis that follows, my DCA journey has been a very personal experience. Whilst there have been times where the process became exhausting and I found I had to push myself harder to realise my project, it was largely an exhilarating and joyous experience. Of particular note was the journey back to Hong Kong to film and interview my film colleagues of many years. Having them sit before my camera and reflect upon their creative practice was an extreme pleasure and I would like to thank them all for being so gracious and going out of their way to fit in with my schedule and to contribute so much to the success of my research project.

So a heartfelt thanks to: Alfred, Angie, Ayden, Brett, CC, Charles, Chris, Chun, Dalbag, Daniel, David, Duc, Eddie, Francis, Helen, Karin, Kitty, Michael, Morton, Nelson, Paul, Pete, Peter, Polly, Rob and Stanley.

My documentary and subsequent exegesis would not be what it is without your input.

My informants

I would also like to thank Hamdani Milas, Documentary Filmmaker Hong Kong who I have collaborated with on many projects and who is a very knowledgeable and experienced confidant with whom I have often corresponded with over the years since leaving Hong Kong. Hamdani showed me way into the back streets of vast shopping complexes in Hong Kong to purchase the best deal on vital camera accessories. Recently, after viewing the documentary, he has given me extensive feedback upon revisions I may consider in the re-edit I am contemplating in the near future. He has kindly volunteered by offering his services in the realisation of those modifications.

Whilst Stanley Orzel, American Filmmaker, was a participant in the survey and interview process of my project, he also graciously accepted my offer for him to be an

additional reader of my exegesis as I pieced it together. He also viewed a draft edit of the film and in both circumstances he provided excellent feedback that contributed to the realisation of my project. So thank you Stanley.

My lecturers

I would also like to thank Senior Lecturer Dr. Nike Sulway and Associate Professor Beata Batorowicz who together led our classes and provided the foundation for the research processes that we all, the first year cohort of the DCA, undertook. Together Nike and Beata helped me realise the value of my creative practice and how that should be the centre of my personal interrogation.

My supervisors

My Supervisor, Associate Professor Luke van der Laan, was the person that initially suggested undertaking a Doctorate at the University of Southern Queensland. I had just completed my Master of Professional Studies under his thoughtful and instructive tutelage. Luke had been instrumental in reshaping the way I considered my job as a film editor, now as a creative practice. Over the course of this DCA Luke has been very supportive and has always given insightful and important guidance as I broached each step of this exciting and exhilarating journey. So thank you very much Luke.

The guiding beacon that has on many an occasion steered me away from the rocks and kept my journey steady and progressive is Associate Professor Janet McDonald, my Principal Supervisor. Janet's unrelenting determination for me to do better at each stage of the DCA is the reason I have been able to complete the work. I always left her office, after an intense conversation into the approach and consideration of my work, feeling inspired and with an increased sense of self-belief. I will always be grateful to Janet for all that she has given me over the last four years.

Indeed I shall especially miss those interactions with my lecturers and supervisors as I undertake the next step forward in my life.

My family

I would to especially thank my family, daughter Jade and wife Jill, for their continued support and encouragement during the DCA. Certainly, throughout the course of the DCA the deeply introspective nature of the critical reflection process has had an occasionally disturbing impact on our lives. But Jill has provided me with the time and space to complete the DCA and has often been a creative contributor and given inspiration when I felt things were overwhelming me. I will always be deeply indebted to my dear wife for the love and understanding that she has given me over these past few years.

I would like to dedicate my research to two dear friends who were initially ready to partake in my project, Film Director Tony Hope and Film Director Mark Amdur. Sadly they both have passed away due to ongoing illnesses. Tony and Mark had always afforded me the opportunity of working on their projects initially by myself and then having input upon a review of an edit. I miss them dearly.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Why this project?

As a film editor with over 40 years of experience working across multiple genres of film in Australia and Asia I decided to quantify and qualify my extensive experience by completing a Doctor of Creative Arts (DCA) at the University of Southern Queensland in Toowoomba. This decision to dive headfirst into advanced academia in order to "get back in touch" with the aesthetic and technical forces that propelled my initial recognition of the "art" associated with film editing has turned my life upside down. I began to redefine aspects of my work; rather than "read" my work as something commercial that was completed within the bounds of what a client may expect to see, I started to rethink my work as being part of a dynamic and specific creative practice, worthy of interrogation and examination in order to advance the knowledge that surrounds the art and craft of film editing. I have learnt new terms that point to a system of reflective practice, encouraging me to look back across years of experience to identify the origins and impetus that drove my practice forward, continually learning and informing future developments in my practice as a film editor.

Certainly, in my experience, there comes a time in any creative practitioner's career, particularly in the later stages, where introspection towards practice and questions concerning impetus and "reasons for" may arise. But personally there are other reasons why I feel compelled to "come out of hiding" (as it were) as an editor. Film editors are usually considered invisible in the filmmaking process, an issue I will discuss further in the Literature Review and consequently the Conclusion chapters, but they do, I contend, have a great role to play. In doing this study I aim to add to the knowledge and history of film editing practice. From the examination of the literature I have identified, in the process of this study, that there is a dearth of information that really gets to the theoretical root of what a film editor does, their thinking and imaging and the fictional worlds that they create. That is my viewpoint as an editor who is in the process of really interrogating my own practice as a film editor.

This Exegesis will act as:

a) a record of my achievements, thinking and practice around editing, and

b) an experienced set of practices to enthuse/infuse new and emerging editors in the digital platform and to go some way in explaining the ghosts of celluloid and analogue that still haunt new film work.

The Exegesis will cover the theoretical areas of the phenomenology of film, aesthetics and the reflective process. In later chapters I will look at the work of film editor Walter Murch and filmmaker and film theorist Sergei Eisenstein, two key practitioners who have influenced me over different periods of my professional life. Through this analysis I will establish, in my Conclusion, how Planes of Meaning, the concept and the documentary, *Planes of Meaning* emerged concurrently during the making process.

1.2. Influencers

My personal evaluation of the film aesthetic connected to film editing is centred on a point of visual and auditory perfection and an understanding of that sense to the communication between filmmaker and spectator. The unearthing of the origins of the "sensibility" or "taste" that has underpinned my own film editorial judgements over time is of particular interest to my research project. In the course of this project I am keen to interrogate whether my "sense" was already inherent or developed over time and parallel those anticipated revelations with the experiences and opinions of my film participant group, whose makeup I will reveal in later chapters. This approach has formed the basis of my creative work for this doctoral degree and also played a large part in the structure of the filmed interviews for the final work (see 3. Methodology and 4. Conclusion chapters).

1.3. Researcher position

Looking back beyond my experience as an editor I wondered if perhaps there was an "artistic" streak within my family that may ground my own "sensibilities". My father, whilst being a draftsman in the early part of his career, had also been a brilliant sketch artist. But as a child I had no exposure to anything particularly artistic; I played no musical instruments, my childhood in the late 1950's could be described as reasonably "normal" for those times. My father worked hard, built his own first home, studied at night to further his ability to earn. My mother had four other children. We

went to school, learnt and studied and enjoyed our weekends or going away on caravan holidays. However, it is the intensity of the image that has always stayed with me. I do have strong visual memories of massive bonfires on Guy Fawkes Night, the view from our front verandah to the fields and valleys below. My Great Uncle and Aunt had a chicken farm in one of these valleys. They had two children, both who died young. Separating themselves from the unfair world that surrounded them, Uncle Alan built a huge fence around the farm, both physically and metaphorically, and it remained as it was in the late 1950's until they both died many years later. I made my first film and photographic assignment at their farm when I was studying at Swinburne College. I was struck by the particular aesthetic that presented itself and which inspired me to capture it on film, to preserve it. I recall entering their house and feeling like I was stepping across a time barrier into a past world, the sound of a large wooden grandfather clock ticking loudly, striking the hour, defining the era and the space.

I see images as being connected to emotion and when assembled into a film they enable us to travel back to another time and place. When I recall the experience of making the film I called *Come on Sam* (1975) I remember capturing on 16mm film the quiet anguish and resignation of my Great Aunt and Uncle as they went about their lives. As I reach out to that experience I have a sense of the film reaching out back to me (Col, 2019, p. 19) as a distant but still vivid memory. This demonstrates how the phenomenology of film is able to recreate memory for any audience. I have always felt slightly dissimilar to other members of my family because I "saw" images differently and I have always thought deeply or reflected upon the process of creating, no matter at what level.

Whilst at Swinburne College I would often venture into Melbourne city, sit on the steps of the main Post Office, and watch the people rushing by. Many years later I revisited those steps imagining that young, eager long-haired, bearded man perched above the throng dreaming of what might happen next. Now, upon reflection, embarking on this research project, I see how visual memories are important to the development of my aesthetic insight and application, for instance how light can be manipulated to create emotion and other memory. I can also now see how my emerging "sensual" intake of my surrounds has manifested itself in my film work and editing.

1.4. Making the work

This DCA journey, that relies on me looking back in time to create new practical and theoretical knowledge about editing, has occasionally been nauseating when I have revisited some uncomfortable realities but also, revelatory in my rediscovery of those things that inspired my young filmmaker/editor self. From the outset of this research project, and to ably present my assertions towards the art of film editing, my aim was to produce a film documentary, referred to in this Thesis as the "creative work" for this DCA. I wanted to use this format to explore the creation of meaning through film editing, a concept that I conceive of as the Planes of Meaning in my film editing/making. My intention was to 'speak' to the audience of the documentary in an unconventional manner, experimenting with editing technique and format. My interpretation of traditional documentary, and one that I set out to challenge, follows what Nichol's refers to as "expository mode" of documentary; this emphasises verbal commentary, an argumentative logic, and a type of documentary that most people identify with in general (Nicholls, 2001. P34*).*

To produce the documentary, I enlisted the help of creative film practitioners that I had worked with in Hong Kong between 1978 and 2005. My methodology was to initially ask them to fill in an online anonymous questionnaire to them, referring to them simply as "the participants". This then inspired me to conduct full filmed interviews in-situ in Hong Kong in early 2019. The film or creative work is now complete, informing this Exegesis, and the filmed interview content provides the spine of the overall film narrative. Since my visit to Hong Kong to reconnect and engage in a period of reflection with my former colleagues, tragic events in Hong Kong, whose origins I believe are buried deep within the disturbed psyche of the populace, broke outwards in physical protest against the intransigence of the Hong Kong government. While travelling across Hong Kong in early 2019, by the underground MTR subway train system, visiting and filming participants in their offices, restaurants, hotel lobby or city parkland I was oblivious to the under swell of discontent that was growing within the community. Months later as I sat in my editing room in Australia, piecing together the documentary that would become my exposition regarding the art and craft of film editing, through social media I witnessed the Hong Kong people's discontent exploding onto the streets of Hong Kong. Many of the film participants in my creative work were now participating in massive anti-government marches across the city.

Many vented their anger and frustration on the Facebook pages we shared as a group and which had previously been the conduit to the film editing investigative participation process.

I do now "see" how the confluence of the protests in Hong Kong that have emerged as I have edited the work may now be possibly reviewed through the lens of that political upheaval in Hong Kong in my documentary. Although unintended, my participants' personal responses to posed questions and the way I have juxtaposed those responses may be perceived as being both a political and ethical act, the meaning and audience perceptions unintentionally altered by the imposition of knowledge of the current and developing events in Hong Kong. Although the themes discussed in the documentary are divergent from any social uncertainties that may have existed beneath the surface of my participant's lives, I have framed the film within the complexities of the city of Hong Kong and the relative calm of Toowoomba. My use of "shaky" camera techniques may now be construed as alluding to an imminent danger as if I, filmmaker, the editor, had some prior knowledge of what was to occur.

Indeed upon review of my current draft edit of my documentary *Planes of Meaning* I feel compelled to enhance this possible underlying sense of dissatisfaction amongst my participants by including material from the protests in the film as an overlay. This is something I may undertake at a later date.

1.5. Structure of the Exegesis

I will now provide a brief description of each subsequent chapter:

In the Literature Review I have concentrated my reading and analysis of films that influenced me, on film editing practice and film theory. I have looked to sources that attempt to define and position film editing practice. I have also included readings on the nature of aesthetics, looking at the work of Alexander Baumgarten (Makkreel 2006) and Jacques Aumont (1992). I have always been interested in where my particular "sense" of the aesthetic originated and the role that sense played in my career as a film editor. I will explain something I call "the joy of the cut" or the thrill of editing film. I will do this through a detailing of film editing techniques and styles that ultimately form the basis of my concept of Planes of Meaning.

In the Methodology chapter I will describe how Critical Reflective practice was the cornerstone of my research project using the work of Schön (1987) and Killion & Todnem (1991) guiding the reflective processes I utilised in the making of the documentary and the writing of this Exegesis. I will conclude the chapter by outlining the phases of the study, the methods used and how the data gathered during each phase informed the subsequent stage of the study and ultimately the making of the documentary.

In the Conclusion chapter I will discuss how I knew the analogue to digital transition process in filmmaking was important through my own experience and how I used this phenomena, shared in time by all my participants, to anchor the conversation surrounding reflective practice, the cornerstone of this research study. I will investigate the notion of "invisibility" of creative practice generally and the art of film editing and in doing so will discuss how the role of the film editor has evolved over time. Finally I will describe how my concept of Planes of Meaning may be interpreted and utilised in the editing rooms of the future.

1.6. Conclusion

Everything I edited throughout my career was driven by learnt experience and acquired knowledge gained as result of a deeper understanding of visual and aural stimulus that I never truly appreciated at the time. A major part of my DCA journey has been to unravel my past experience through reflective practice, letting my discoveries inform the redevelopment of my current film editing practice. A challenge has been to re-examine my own creative practice through an academic lens, looking for those elements or influences that, throughout my career, had shaped my approach to film editing practice and that ultimately I could articulate with clarity in an academic arena. Now through the experience of the work and the "making" I can assert that my role as a film editor constructs and induces the work of film and documentary through a process of prescription and inscription. Understanding and being able to examine these emergent aspects of the work has become central to how I formulate the "making". Looking "back in time" and reaching out to past influences and experiences I have discovered an aesthetic grounding that centred my own practice as a film editor.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In preparation for this Literature Review I concentrated my reading efforts on film editing practice and film theory. I looked to particular film theorists and film practitioners, editors, some of whom I studied when at Swinburne in the mid 1970's and some of whom had inspired me in the early part of my career. I returned to these previous influences with an open mind, after almost 40 years of practical experience, eager to rediscover and rekindle the academic skills that I possessed. The readings have also informed my creation of a ways and means to analyse the making process as I undertake this research, and ultimately the making of a film documentary. This Literature Review will conclude with the reasoning behind my emerging Planes of Meaning concept in regard to the art and craft of film editing. I have chosen to use the terms "the art and craft" of film editing based upon a key article I have been using as a reference, written by Greg Crowdus for the *Cineaste* magazine in 2009 when the magazine interviewed key editors working within the American film industry. It seemed a pertinent title that reflected my own sensibility towards film editing.

I begin this Introduction with a substantiated view of where my film editing practice is situated at the forefront of the film production process.

In the journal article "The Potency of Film Editing" featured in the *Contemporary Theatre Review* 2015, author Janet Harbord examined the nature and capabilities of film editing in creating meaning by analysing the work of Soviet film editor, Esfir Shub (1894-1959) and American artist and experimental filmmaker Joseph Cornell (1903-1972). Harbord describes how Shub was tasked with re-editing foreign and pre-revolutionary films for a new Soviet audience. Her process demonstrated the power of film editing and how it could craft multiple stories from the same material, rewriting the meaning of any previous sequence of image and sound (Harbord 2015, p. 68).

Of Cornell, Harbord examined his use of assemblage in creating films made from segments of other established films. Through the random juxtaposition of selected images, repetition and projection techniques, Cornell was able to create a new

configuration of things that had previously existed apart, creating a type of archaeology that unearthed other meanings (Harbord 2015, p. 70). The work of Shub and Cornell demonstrates how the formation of meaning through film editing is possible in all forms of audio-visual presentation. As a film editor I am fully aware of the potential that exists within film editing to create alternate stories from any filmed material. In new projects, through careful analysis of the raw footage and with creative juxtaposition of imagery and sound, I may produce films that directly impact meaning and in turn, influence or manipulate an audience's perceptions. Harbord concludes her essay by positing that:

> *Editing is production, not postproduction. Editing, most of all, returns political and ethical possibility to our [societies] engagement with audio-visual culture. Editing defines our engagements with the cinematic in the current moment (Harbord, 2015, p. 72).*

In other words film editing, although traditionally classified as being solely part of the "post" process of filmmaking (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 22), may be seen as being a "production" process, enabling the formation of meaning and facilitating the way an audience interacts with the film medium. It can also shape an audience's interpretation of all media, whatever it may be, that is enabled through editing practice.

This chapter will explore theoretical and practical approaches to film editing as a way of illuminating and articulating my own practice and which ultimately informs my creative work. I aim to posit my ultimate concept of Planes of Meaning in regard to film editing practice. I have developed this term to expand upon the thinking that concerns the film editor as they might interact with the raw captured footage that ultimately forms the final product. The Planes of Meaning emerges from the theory and practice of film editing, and will be revisited in the Methodology and Conclusion chapters of this Exegesis.

2.2. The emerging aesthetics of my editing

In a career spanning over 40 years (1975–2019), I have made edits driven by an aesthetic that I assumed was learnt through the development of my own personal creative practice and absorbed via the observation of my mentor's and colleague's

practice over time. During my investigation into the theory underlining aesthetic judgment, in relation to film editing, I discovered the work of philosopher Alexander Baumgarten (1714-1762). He described aesthetics as being the "science of sensible knowledge", as cited by Makkreel in his journal article *The Confluence of Aesthetics and Hermeneutics in Baumgarten, Meier and Kant* (Makkreel, 2006, p. 621), based upon how objects distinctly presented themselves (Makkreel 2006 p.68). I now understand that when I edited films, I was undertaking a kind of "sensible" (meaning of the senses) representation of those objects, constituting a creative choice. These are the assembling inherent "fragments", as per Eisenstein (Aumont, 2004, p. 61), or layers of context that have no physical form but nonetheless come together in the mind of the film editor and are then transformed through processes across the film editing table. This is then resolved in the creation of the final product, whether it be a film documentary, feature film or television commercial. This is central to the way in which I edit films: perhaps similarly to a composer or curator, of sorts, that assembles these non-physical layers balancing each respective editorial consideration to achieve the perfectly considered aesthetically pleasing edit.

Jacques Aumont wrote in *Aesthetics of Film* (1999) *"*the aesthetics of cinema is … the study of the cinema as an art and the study of films as artistic messages. It implies a conception of 'beauty' and thus of taste and pleasure of the spectator" (Aumont et al, 2004). Consideration of audience reaction and viewing experience via the "sensible" arrangement of beauty on the screen for pleasure drives the editor's decisions. I understand the film aesthetic as being both a point of beauty, and integral to the communication between filmmaker and spectator. The sensibility or taste for what works better in a film editing context, as part of the stimulus or communicative outreach of a piece of work is of interest to this study, particularly where this sensibility originates. I am keen to interrogate whether my own "sense" was already inherent or was developed over time. This formed the basis of my creative work for this doctoral degree and also underpins the approach I took with the questions for the filmed interviews for the creative work (see 3. Methodology and 4. Conclusion chapters).

The potential spectator or viewer's reaction was a consideration in nearly every shot selection and film edit decision I made as a film editor. Delivering finished films that could also be deemed "artistic" or "pleasurable" was a desirable outcome for the

filmmakers with whom I worked. Everything I edited was driven by learnt experience and acquired knowledge gained as a result of repeated actions in the editing suite that developed my deeper understanding of visual and aural stimulus. Part of this DCA journey has been to unravel my past experience through reflection and let my discoveries inform the redevelopment of my current film editing practice.

For a large part of my career I worked in the field of television and cinema advertising, particularly in Asia, where concepts were borrowed, duplicated and imitated from cinema, MTV and other contemporary practices. The aim was to manipulate emotion using the "a sensible logic" (Baumgarten in Makkreel, 2006) arrangement of aspirational and evocative images, accompanied by inspirational and captivating music and sound. In this way, the work consciously played upon the desires and aspirations of the audience whose lives were, in part, defined by imagery and soundscapes they experienced in the audio-visual vortex of the cinema or in front of their television sets. English art critic, novelist, painter and poet John Berger wrote in his seminal book based on the BBC TV series of the same name *Ways of Seeing* (1972), how advertising was about the "future buyer", that is how the image presented via advertising made the viewer envious of how they might be (Berger, 1972, p. 132). As a film editor embedded in the advertising sector I willingly embraced these concepts of motivational stimulus of imagery and sound that propelled a viewer to "spend". I now realise that I was part of a "simulacrum", perpetuating perhaps false perceptions of a perceived aspirational reality.

Jean Baudrillard, in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) asserted that our cultural age is so complete that we live in a simulacrum, defined as the generation which models "real" without origin or reality: a hyperreal (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 1). By this I recognise that today we live in a society that is driven by the image and the continual replication of the image resulting in a "hyper reality" not dissimilar to the futuristic short films of Japanese filmmaker, designer and artist Keiichi Matsuda. His work portrays a world where technology is ubiquitous, and physical reality is obscured by virtual screens which pop up everywhere (Holmes, 2016). Matsuda's virtual world presents a scenario that reflects shared contemporary living circumstances which are shaped by the digital possibilities available in this time. The "image" and the "replication of the image" was also significant in my early advertising work in the

1970's and 80's. Although not as graphically presented as Matsuda's work I am aware that the advertising I created dealt with many of the layers of audience engagement that advertisers appealed to. Ideas and opportunities in Matsuda's work were presented as interactive floating propositions, but in the work I did those connections were developed through associations with recognised icons that pervaded the media landscape.

The following is a written description paraphrasing some of the advertising work I was involved with as film editor. While somewhat dated, it nonetheless captures the zeitgeist of the era.

> *From a roaring helicopter overhead, a James Bond lookalike clad in an immaculate dinner suit, who leaps onto the roof of a New York skyscraper to battle a sinister foe. Once the battle is over he glances at his Longines watch, just enough time to free the beautiful heroine. A Philippine version of Indiana Jones breaks through an underground caves rock face to discover the hidden "gold" chocolate bar. A Paul Newman lookalike is able to "hustle" his arch nemesis at 8-Ball Pool because he had "arrived in better shape" thus promoting the comforts of travelling on a specific airline.*

The above written description of work is an example of an external illusion, a deliberate intertextuality that still remains in the contemporary aesthetics of film, and especially in cinema and television advertising. In many circumstances I collaborated with advertisers creating and enhancing concepts built on previous contemporary visual "texts", allowing the characteristics of the recognisable champions of the screen, or "signifiers", to flow onto the viewing audience's perception of the products advertised.

As a film editor working in the advertising sector for many years I was engaged in the realm of creating illusory and aspirational fictions to sell products. I recognise that I was inadvertently, willingly, contributing to the phenomena of "replication of the image" where the use of visual clichés and stereotypes were commonplace and created an alternative actuality that appealed to the sensitivities of an audience requiring an outlet from the banalities of day to day life. These seemed to appeal to

these imagined audiences, because I was kept employed by producers and advertisers wishing to achieve these heightened experiences for their intended audiences.

2.3. The phenomenology of filmmaking

During the early stages of my career I was not yet able to specifically articulate the notion of intertextuality of the film medium. Now, upon reflection, I can observe how as a film editor I was manipulating and juxtaposing image and sound "texts", building upon previous filmic representations. I also note the importance of my developing aesthetic understanding and how this guided not only the creative choices I made during editing, but also the technical and mechanical necessities impacting on my creative practice.

Additionally through the rigorous investigation of my own practice I now recognise how the phenomena of "lived experience" of me as the film editor, and as the first audience of the raw filmed material, has influenced the creative judgements of assemblage in film editing. This has greatly impacted on how I grapple with the communication of understanding in order to properly articulate the confines of my creative practice. Through the investigative process that is this Literature Review I have come upon the term "existential phenomenology" as linked to the craft of film editing (Sobchack, 1992, p. 26). I do note that while I am usually physically detached from the material in front of me, to begin the process of editing, I am still the individual, who is a "moment within a whole" (the "whole" being the filmmaking process), and who ultimately brings everything together. That assemblage ability is based on an aesthetic sensibility that has extended from my own lived experience. In his journal article *A Phenomenological approach to the film editing practice: Legacy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty* researcher Doga Col posits:

> *…when thinking of editing phenomenologically, we see that it is a moment of the whole and on its own it is nothing and without it a film is arguably an uninterrupted and untouched recording of moving images – as editing refers to every bit of addition, subtraction, and/or modification made after the moving images are recorded (Col, 2019, p. 31).*

As editor I *am* the "first" audience of the filmed material. I get to shape and "manipulate" images and sound, "calling" the audience to where I am looking, sharing the cinematic experience (Col, 2019, pp. 40-43). As I sit before a blank screen with images and sequences labelled and categorised in digital "bins" to my left, I do consciously attempt to detach myself from the process of editing and let the material dictate and determine my creative process. Certainly, in making the documentary for this study this has been my methodology of practice.

Previously, I may have been following a script or at least an outline of a film that was generated by someone else, to influence and guide my edits. Material may have been filmed to match specifically to a written text or in some cases filmed in an unrestricted manner (usually amounting to a lot of film) with the director leaving it to me to construct the final narrative. In each case, my approach to the material would differ. In situations where the order of shots and scenes were pre-set, I would employ, what I now understand to be a "syntagmatic analysis", where I would determine how each shot, scene or sequence relates to the others in forming the narrative (Yahaya & Abubakar, 2018, p. 35). In their journal article *Cinema Semiotics,* Yahaya and Abubakar describe syntagm as being "a combination of different collaborative and dependent elements within a given film narrative… referring to the way filmic fragments (scenes, shots, transitions) are sutured together in making meaning" (Yahaya & Abubakar, 2018, p. 45). Whilst editing within a formalised setting to create a narrative pre-set by a script or outline, I did follow an editing principle where consideration was given to how each shot interacted with every subsequent shot and collectively as a sequence that may be intercut with another sequence. This subsequent "syntagmatic analysis" (Yahaya & Abubakar, 2018, p. 35) created meaning determined by the deliberate juxtaposition of images. An experiment I intend to test in the creation of my documentary is to ignore the conventions of understanding of relationships between shots, to redefine the "syntagmatic chain" by "free-wheeling" the combinations of shots. I am only restricted by the inherent perception and expectation of traditional "norms" of practice that inhabit my current practice. This is a challenge that will emerge in the execution of the creative work.

The whole notion of creating meaning in film editing, whilst foreign to me in those early years of my career, is now looming large as I undertake this research

project. I believe, in order to ground my investigation and give credence to my notion of Planes of Meaning and articulate it effectively, I need to return to those filmic influences that shaped my thinking during the early part of my career.

2.4. Film practitioners of influence

As a film student at Swinburne University (1972-75), I was drawn to the theories and practices of early significant filmmakers. I later recognised that perhaps my aesthetic "awareness" in regard to my film editing practice was partly shaped by my exposure to those filmmakers and their films.

I am indebted, particularly and significantly to: Sergei Eisenstein and his theory of montage (Eisenstein, 1977); François Truffaut and his conviction regarding the auteur, the creator (Corrigan & White, 2009, p. 465); and also Pier Paulo Pasolini and his stark portrayals of grim realism (Corrigan & White, 2009, p. 412). There were the "bloody" films of Sam Peckinpah: *The Wild Bunch* (1969), *Straw Dogs* (1971), *The Getaway* (1972), the sometimes bizarre and beautiful films of Stanley Kubrick: *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), *The Shining* (1980), *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *2001 A Space Odyssey* (1968). Also, Michael Curtiz's romantic drama *Casablanca* (1942), the revolutionary car chase sequence from Peter Yate's *Bullitt* (1968) and most memorably, the opening sequence of Mike Nichols' *Catch 22* (1970) all left an indelible imprint on my film editor's developing psyche. In all instances I saw the editing style, with the exception of *Casablanca*, a Hollywood classic, as manifesting an extreme bending of the concept of the "syntagmatic chain". These films expressed shifts in time and space that became commonplace, the edits were exciting and unexpected, something I also tried to emulate throughout my editing career.

I have long admired the work of American film editor and writer, Walter Murch (1943–) in such films as *The Godfather* series (1972–1990), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), and *The English Patient (*1996). I particularly relate to his systematic approach to the preparatory stages of the film editing process, something that I have incorporated into my own practice. In the analogue era when Murch cut on actual celluloid film, he had single frames taken from each filmed shot and had photos made from them and then displayed on huge boards in his editing room. In essence, he had an overview of all the material shot, effectively being able to see all the material, all at once (Crowdus,

2009, p. 59). He could then plan his edit, taking into consideration all juxtapositional possibilities. In the digital domain those boards have been replaced by computer screens that can display thumbnails (small frames) of each filmed shot. I have always valued this approach as I feel it is hugely beneficial to be able to see all the material available, in some form or other, readily enabling an overview and effective creative choice.

Walter Murch's work and knowledge of his work process positively affected the institution of my own practice as a film editor. Those films that I saw as a young film editing student remain indelible in my memory, and, upon reflection they had a dramatic influence on my learning of film and film editing. In this research project I have drawn upon these reflections to develop and articulate my own processes and practice when making the creative film for this research. In particular, those impulses that inspire the making of the cut, the edit.

The cut is a very difficult proposition to present to an audience unfamiliar with the art and craft of film editing. Below I have listed instances of editing practice and my film editing influences that may go some way in describing what I call the perfect cut and give some background to how I view the specific intricacies and excitement that underpin film editing.

2.5. The joy of the cut

In *The Technique of Film & Video Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, Ken Dancyger asserted that if an edit is "visible" then the editor has failed (Dancyger 2011 intro xxi). The issue of invisibility and visibility of film editing practice is a contentious one and something I will address in the Conclusion chapter of this study. Yet from my own experience, having an edit completely visible can deliver a powerful impact on an audience. In David Lean's epic movie *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), Peter O'Toole, who plays Lawrence, in one scene, is toying with a lit match, testing his ability to withstand pain, then as he blows it out there is a direct cut to a stunning sunrise over the African desert. The edit is startling and completely visible. Hot flame of a match, to a burning sun: a cut so dramatic and exciting as to have two pieces of film so different in content and context when taken separately. The joining of the two shots perfectly exemplifies Eisenstein's "collision" where meaning is generated via a

match in colour, the heat of the flame to the heat of the desert, from the small match to the expansive desert denoting a complete change of scene location. All of these justify the cut. Even Dancyger, perhaps contradicting himself, describes the edit as "being shocking but also exhilarating", further describing it as "illustrating the power of editing to generate a series of ideas from two shots" (Dancyger, 2011, p. 84). In this way, he is echoing the ideas and concepts of montage and results of collision of images of Soviet era filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein (active 1923–1946).

I studied Eisenstein and his theories of film editing when I was at Swinburne. As part of this research, I returned to experimenting with Eisenstein's techniques in filmmaking in my new documentary, *Planes of Meaning*. In his book: *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* (1977) Eisenstein explained his theory of expressive montage generated by a "collision" of shots creating meaning. He described the physical act of the edit and the transformation that occurs when images are brought together to create new meaning. Anyone who has had in their hands a piece of celluloid, analogue film, knows by experience how neutral each shot remains, even though it may be part of a planned sequence, until it is joined with another piece. Then, it suddenly acquires and conveys a sharper and quite different meaning than was planned for it at the time of filming (Eisenstein, 1977, pp. 10-11). Often when considering the edit decisions there are many factors that editors need to take into account. I believe the paramount reasoning that influences the execution of an edit is to deliver impact and to expect to elicit an emotional response from an audience from that transition. I do not necessarily agree that editing should be invisible to be effective, I believe as previously stated: "the cut", whether visible or not, should certainly expand the developing narrative and also propel the audience across time and space within it. I believe therefore that the cut may be perceived as being joyous, and expansive and equally revelatory and occasionally deceptive.

All of these permutations of the cut will be investigated and reflected upon in the Conclusion chapter. I will do this in respect to my own practice as a film editor and also through the interrogative process of the filmed interviews with the group of creative film participants. I will explore the previously unappreciated import of the derivation of meaning through the execution of the cut. I believe that many of my interview participants may have never considered this editing process as a way of

delivering meaning, apart from what was initially expected of them according to a script or client briefing. This investigative process is especially intriguing as the possibilities that arise from my enquiry compared to the practitioners who apply "what feels good", rather than understanding the meaning they impose within their juxtaposing of images and sound, may prove to be revelatory and contribute to the overall comprehension of the practice of film editing and the import of the "cut".

Walter Murch in an interview with *Cineaste Film Magazine* (2009), discussed the evolution of the "cut", and stated: filmmakers discovered that the cut was often accompanied by a mysterious extra meaning not present in either of the shots themselves, as if each played the adjective to the other's noun (Crowdus, 2009, p. 55). The connection of two independent shots creating new meaning is the essence of Eisenstein's theories of editing or montage. The realisation of meaning through connection of images may well have originated in the early period of filmmaking from one-reelers to multiple-reelers, where the editor was indeed a technician joining rolls of film for projection. The technical joining process consequently evolved into a process where meaning and import were derived from the juxtaposing of images and ultimately sound. According to film editor Pietra Scalia, editor of *The Gladiator* (2000) and *The Martian* (2015), who described his early editing experiences: "I was making a silent short, my first film, and putting these two pieces of film together gave me a jolt. The feelings of joy and surprise combined with a sense of accomplishment was so strong that it stayed with me to this day" (Crowdus, 2009, p. 63). This is similar to Eisenstein's description of a "collision" of shots causing a transformation, Murch's, "creating new meaning" at the edit and Scalia's "joy and sense of accomplishment" (Crowdus, 2009) at creating an edit all resonate with my own personal film editing experience. In my own experience, from the analogue era, the physical act of joining two pieces of film together, either with glue or tape, to the contemporary digital domain; the sense of achievement or "thrill" of that moment remains the same.

I shall never forget the first television commercial I edited in Hong Kong in 1978, when, after I had tried many editing permutations, I finally received approval from the senior editor. There was a great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. After receiving his approval I reviewed my work and I noted that assuming the role of a detached observer as I might do in the process of reviewal, every cut was sharp and

had impact. The images flowed to a beat, and mini concurrent narratives emerged through the juxtaposition of the different shots. I had been cutting on camera movement, changes in light, action within the frame and many other criteria. Upon recent reflection, I believe I was doing this subconsciously and instinctively following a Planes of Meaning process without it being articulated. I was able to see all levels of manipulation all at once, creating a sensibility that had originated somewhere that now I feel the need to investigate is I'm reflecting upon my practice of making the creative work.

In the process of looking backward and identifying the underlying impulses that were guiding the development of my practice, I returned again to the practitioners that had influenced me early on. As part of this investigative process I started by looking at the film editors who so impacted my appreciation of film editing practice. One of my first discoveries was Walter Murch's book *In the Blink of an Eye* (1992), that detailed his theories of film editing. Interestingly, the foreword to the book was written by Australian film editor Ken Sallows. I had worked with Sallows on *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1978), a film directed by Fred Schepisi. I felt an immediate connection to the writings of Murch through my direct association with Sallows.

In his book *In the Blink of an Eye* (1992) Murch describes his six motivational rules of editing (Murch, 1992, p. 23). He lists them in his order of importance to making an editing cut. My descriptions appear after each "rule".

2.5.1. Six motivational rules of editing

Emotion: Where attention is made towards how the audience will feel when a cut is made rather than necessarily maintaining continuity of the narrative.

Story: The cut made to move the story forward in a dynamic, interesting and unique way.

Rhythm: Where rhythm is related to the pace of narrative development. If a story begins to feel unnaturally slow or too rapid to the audience, then perhaps the rhythm has been disturbed.

Eye trace: This relates to the audience's viewpoint. The edited sequence leads the viewer across the screen.

2D Plane: This essentially relates to "crossing the line". That is, the imaginary line that exists between components on screen. Simply put, if, in a wide-shot character A, left of screen, is talking to character B, right of screen, then in close-ups of each character, A should be looking to the right of screen and B looking to the left.

3D Space: Similar to "crossing the line" in a 2D space, this relates to the awareness of where components of a screen image refer to each other across the 3D space through an edited sequence.

In my experience, Murch's six rules or criteria for an edit form the basis of any film edit decision and are an integral part of my Planes of Meaning concept. I have experience in using all or some of these criteria guiding the edit decision. As an extension to these, I refer also to Sergei Eisensten's theory of "fragments" in relation to film editing considerations (Aumont, 2004, p. 61). Combining Eisenstein's "fragments" and Murch's six "rules" of film editing underscore my work during editing. Whilst previously I would never have gone through a "checklist" of criteria before I made a cut, most of these considerations would be part of my thinking process. I now see these various criteria being the centre of my Planes of Meaning concept as particular attention to any of these facets in the edit decision process affects "meaning". I will briefly list a few of these "fragments" as per Eisenstein's "checklist" explaining how meaning may be affected (Aumont, 2004, p. 61): my additions follow each on the list.

2.5.2. Eisenstein's fragments

Luminosity: Relating to the illumination of a shot, its brightness or darkness. A series of shots becoming progressively darker or lighter may imply a passage of time or a foreboding or an awakening.

Contrast: Not just in terms of contrasting luminosity but also working in a contextual way i.e. visual of a large crowd cutting to a single person, a busy street to a quiet back alley or a very large object to a very small one.

Colour: Montage can be constructed with a colour preference, featuring subjects within shots that are of the same hue and colour so the colour "flows" through the sequence, giving a continuity of narrative, for example French filmmaker Albert Lamorisse's *The Red Balloon* (1956). In Chinese Director Zhang Yimou's epic *Hero* (2002) vivid colour is used to illustrate the same narrative throughout sequences but told from different character viewpoints where each character's version of the story is delivered in a different colour.

Shot duration: By altering the durations, quicker or slower editing can accelerate or ease tension. Alternatively, a very long shot intercut with very rapid short shots can deliver an interruptive or disturbing intervention.

Shot scale: Edited sequences are made with a combination of wide shots, medium shots and close-ups. Shot scale is linked to context. For instance a series of close-ups edited together delivers a sequence devoid of physical context that a establishing wide shot would add.

Murch's six rules of editing and those samples of Eisenstein's "fragments" may be considered to be guiding a singular edit decision. Yet there are other editing techniques that may form part of an editor's toolset. They involve various methods of combining shots into sequences to achieve a particular effect, i.e. montage, and cutting styles that shape the presentation and perception of any film narrative. They are also part of the 'joy of the cut' because they all extend from and embrace the meaning generated from the simple combination of two shots. What follows is a list of specific techniques from the practitioners and film theorists that will be discussed later in this chapter in order to foreground my assertions around the Planes of Meaning, featured at the end of this chapter

2.5.3. Montage

In *Aesthetics of Film* (1999), film theorist Jean Aumont described two types of editing: 1) editing following a narrative of some kind, and, 2) montage where joining shots produces aesthetic shocks or collisions (Aumont, 1999, p. 47). Whilst I have tended to use a predetermined narrative form, montage style editing is of great interest to me. In my experience, montage refers to a form of movie "collage" consisting of a series of short shots or images that are rapidly put together into a coherent sequence to

create a composite picture; a montage usually suggests and conveys meaning or a larger idea or theme, or denotes the passage of time (Dirks, 2010).

I can recall many notable montage sequences in contemporary cinema, for instance the intercut flashback sequence of the bombardier's death in Mike Nichols' *Catch 22* (1970); the final shoot out sequence of Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967); and the finality of the motorbike riding sequences in Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969). In all incidences, montage has been used to condense time and affect meaning through strong imagery and editing, occasionally driven in style and pace by a soundtrack that amplifies the dramatic visual scapes present within the vision of the director.

Montage has also been used effectively to often bring visual and audio relief within a developing dramatic scenario. The bicycle riding sequence accompanied by the song *Raindrops Keep Fallin' on my Head* (David and Bacharach 1969) in the movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) is a good example. It is a sequence of shots that conveys a developing love story. The two characters, Paul Newman and Katherine Ross ride a bike, Newman controls the bike, Ross is on the handlebars as they ride through an idyllic countryside. The images are soft and romantic, backlit by a setting sun. This edited sequence, with its mix of wide and close shots, frames their relationship in an uncomplicated and simplistic way, unencumbered by the drama broiling around them in the rest of the story. The sequence brings emotional relief to the audience, and a respite to the story, but still links to the overall development of the film's narrative.

There is an alternate style of montage that was developed in the period between 1924 and 1930 that is referred to as Soviet montage where meaning stemmed from precise juxtapositions of images, where shots were referred to as building blocks of a particular narrative (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 268). There was a physicality attached to shots that enabled the realisation of sequences and the development of meaning.

Soviet montage: The films of the aforementioned Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein (active 1923–1946) typify this Soviet montage editing style, (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 467) and more effectively reflects Aumont's description of

montage being a combination of 'aesthetic shocks or collisions' (Aumont, 1999, p. 47). As a student at Swinburne in the 1970's I became aware of the films of Eisenstein and his particular theories of montage. Watching his films, *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *October: Ten Days That Shook the World* (1928) I was inspired by his use of dramatic angles and lighting, sharp cutting style and juxtaposition of images contrasting content, frame size and framing, to name but a few of the criteria. In some sequences a "beat" or rhythm would emerge through the cutting. Eisenstein delivered powerful stories by using inspirational technique. To further my understanding of Eisenstein's film theories of editing I looked to his book *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* (1977) in which he described the various methods of Soviet montage in his work.

Metric montage: Whose form is dependent upon regulated lengths of each individual shot (Eisenstein, 1977, p. 72).

This may be where shots are cut at identical lengths and through repetition, they generate a perceptible "beat" or "pulse", i.e. longer shots deliver a slower beat, shorter shots deliver a faster "beat", perhaps heightening the energy and tension/drama of the scene.

Rhythmic montage: Where the editing from one shot to another is based on the rhythms generated within a single shot (Eisenstein, 1977, p. 73).

I can best describe this as a sequence of horses' legs galloping, intercut with shots of railway carriages whizzing past camera. A visible "rhythm" is generated by the content of each shot and the editing back and forth is propelled by that rhythm. The rhythm is the reason for the edit occurring. Once again, slowing or shortening the edits according to that rhythm can increase or lower the responses of the audience. Interrupting this built rhythm at any time can also "shock" or unsettle an audience, their momentary discomfort perhaps contributing to the filmmaker's intent at that particular part of the developing story.

Tonal montage: Based on the characteristic emotional sound of the piece, if it is dominant (Eisenstein, 1977, p. 75).

Eisenstein, when referencing this mode of montage, indicated variations of light and luminosity being the "emotional sound" of the shot and the edit decisions within a montage of shots were influenced by degrees of light. He also cited the fog sequence in his film *Battleship Potemkin* where the thickness of the fog changed from shot to shot, revealing and concealing elements critical to the story (Eisenstein, 1977, pp. 76-77).

2.5.4. Editing styles

During my period working as a film editor in Hong Kong (1978-2005), for each ensuing film project, there was always an aesthetic challenge, particularly within the advertising genre where clients were always looking for startling visual and audio "breakthrough" methods. Cutting styles, as previously noted were sometimes influenced by developments in the cinema, or with the advent of MTV. Upon reflection, the way we cut in advertising became more sophisticated parallel to movie industry movements.

Jump cuts are an example of a cutting style that originated in the very birth of the art of film editing (see below) and delivered an immediate and sometimes abrupt break in a narrative, transcending preconceptions of time and space. Below I have indicated some cutting styles that I have employed which I believe add to an editor's toolset.

The Jump Cut

Film theorist David Bordwell described how there is a parallel between the development of film techniques and making, and the evolution of film editing practice (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010). Numerous techniques and styles of editing developed as technological advancements in filmmaking occurred. Seeing French film director Georges Melies' *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) and *The Impossible Voyage* (1904) again after so many years, I noted how the use of jump cutting created such a magical effect with objects popping onto the screen seemingly from nowhere.

Parallel cutting

Early American filmmaker DW Griffith is regarded as a pioneer of parallel cutting, as demonstrated in his *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916). As evident in his films' parallel cutting is the technique of intercutting scenes, supposedly occurring simultaneously, or within the same temporal space. The cutting style generates a sense of immediacy, as contrasting stories evolve concurrently, heightening the dramatic tension of the developing combined stories (Dancyger, 2011). It is a common way for films to construct a variety of spaces (or scenarios) within any film narrative (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010) that allow an audience to perhaps "position" those scenarios, within their own perception of a presented visual experience, as separate occurrences but still imagine them as occurring at the same time.

Parallel cutting enables that perception and is a technique I have employed numerous times where I want to inject a sense of urgency and immediacy. American film editor Thelma Schoonmaker (*Raging Bull* 1980, *Goodfellas* 1990, *The Departed* 2006, *The Irishman* 2019) edited the rock documentary *Woodstock* in 1970, a film about the infamous music festival. In the film she used a form of parallel cutting by using visual split screens where different festival events were shown on the cinema screen at the same time. The overall impression was that these events were happening within the same temporal space, creating a sense of immediacy (Prigge 2014). Consequently I have used split screen techniques in documentaries, particularly those that centred on a specific event.

Cross-cutting

Cross-cutting is similar in a sense to parallel cutting but the intercutting actions or scenes do not necessarily have to exist within the same temporal space, it is just through the particular juxtaposition of images (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010) that the dramatic effect of intercutting develops compelling narratives not necessarily linked to the chronological explanation of the intended narrative. Diverse elements can collectively deliver a message or specific meaning that contribute to an intended narrative or specific outcome.

Match cutting-on-action

This is also known as “continuity editing” and is the standard editing practice pioneered in Hollywood and common throughout the film industry (Bordwell, 1984, 2010; Bordwell & Thompson, 2010; Dancyger, 2011, p. 460). Continuity editing can follow a traditional assemblage of a) *wide shot*, to establish location, scale, time of day, CUT TO b) *medium shot*, to identify characters and their physical relationship to each other, CUT TO c) *close-up*, for dialogue or a significant action or highlight of the sequence. An editor may also edit on action, as an example in one shot something or somebody exits screen right, in the next shot something or somebody enters screen left. The example I present here is intentionally simplistic in its description but represents the concept of the “continuity” aspect of this form of editing.

Graphic editing

Occasionally, in my career as a film editor, there arose the opportunity to edit a film without prescribing to any traditional editing technique. I could edit following a different set of principles. Edits might be determined by colour coordination across a sequence, shapes within shots continuing through edits, edits decided by action elements or size variables. Bordwell refers to this style of editing as “graphic editing” (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, pp. 225-226). Whilst this form of “graphic” editing might seem to suggest a sense of freedom in juxtaposing images without constraint, in my experience the editor still has an underlying responsibility to create meaning through creative combinations of imagery and sound to deliver a specific message. So, in a sense, this style of editing could be considered slightly more challenging because it requires a depth of thinking and imagining outside the traditional realm of film editing. I have always used a combination of these previously discussed techniques.

2.6. Resolving theory: Interpretations of practice

Upon reflection upon my past works, particularly those where I did use a “graphic” form of editing, I recognise an emerging “poetic” sensibility that, although primitive in its formation, triggered visual and audio ideas that assisted in the editing of those films. This poetic sensibility I now understand most probably grew out of an aesthetic awareness that I had learnt over time – or was indeed present within me through continuous practice. One aim of this study is to look closely at the origins of

my own aesthetic sensibility and also that of my creative participants and their relationship to the art and craft of film editing.

In 1997 I edited the documentary *The Homecoming* for the Hong Kong government. It was a portrait of the city on the cusp of a major transition, the transfer of power back to the mainland Chinese government. The documentary was filmed by five film crews and controlled by one director. They filmed events that were happening simultaneously around the city leading up to the Handover, including the actual Handover ceremonies. I had a wealth of material I could use. Initially, I edited the material following a chronological format, attempting to tell the story of the Handover. In preparation for the reviewal of any first assembly of the edited material I found that I must first "detach" myself from the editing process, as previously described, and assume the role of the first audience. As I sat back and watched the film play in front of me I felt that, while the imagery was strong, the film was about a process and lacked what I would describe as having a "soul". I decided, without the director's knowledge, to pull the film apart and restart the editing process.

I began by regarding each individual shot as a single entity and not as being part of a sequence. I proceeded with the notion of making a piece situated within the idea of a graphical edit without traditional constraint: – an ethnopoetic interpretation of the material that presented itself across my editing table. I looked to the visual and audio strengths of each individual shot that appealed to my "aesthetic sensibility", and then began juxtaposing shots according to those strengths. Once again, I considered colour, shape, tonal aspects, and the "emotional sound" (as per Eisenstein) of any single image when re-editing the film. When I joined two shots together, I looked at creating contrasts that became impactful "collisions". I did retain the idea of maintaining a reference to the intended narrative in the back of my mind but continued following the concepts of "graphic editing" and the principles of montage.

This particular example (The Homecoming) was used to demonstrate my emerging poetic sensibility regarding how I constructed the film that has no clear narrative. Bill Nichols (2001) refers to this the "poetic mode" of documentary "it emphasises visual association, tonal or rhythmic qualities, descriptive passages, and formal organisation. It bears close proximity to experimental, personal, or avant-garde film-making" (33-34).

Upon completion of my revised edit I presented it to the director and production crew. Their collectively very positive response was reward enough. I now describe the editing of this film as a "joyous" experience, each edit being a "thrill" to execute. The film *Homecoming* presented an optimistic outlook for Hong Kong following the Handover in 1997. Upon review, after so many years, the editing of this film does I believe deliver the idea of how reading and translating the emotional sound of any single shot and how the juxtaposition of previously unrelated images can create significant meaning related to that time. Consequently, upon recent events in Hong Kong (2019) and review of this film it is evident that these edited images and their presentation in this film reviewed in a current context may be interpreted differently. The film and its editing construction is understood and appreciated by events that were current, so therefore I would deduce that meaning created within editing is affected by the context, in terms of documentary, that surrounds that issue. Below is a link to the documentary *The Homecoming*:

https://youtu.be/eq4fZ-2ycSE?list=UU2iePbM9CUPnVTkvNCgSmTQ

In reviewing this film, some 20 years later, it is now evident to me, as a film editor, that there is another layer that inhabits my concept of Planes of Meaning and that is meaning (or altered meaning) within film editing that materialises over time. While the *Homecoming* film maintains its relationship to its initial contextual placement and time frame when viewed as an historical piece, its underlying message of "hope" may be perceived upon later viewing as being misconstrued or condescending. Those messages I initiated at the outset of the editing of this film, established through considered juxtaposition of images and sound, could now be viewed in a critical framework set by the criteria of a contemporary context. In summary, the contextual editorial decisions of the past are sometimes deemed irrelevant by future audiences, meaning through editing evolves and is altered by the audience, a concept that may need further investigation.

Certainly I make edit decisions based upon all the possibilities afforded me by the filmed material and the constraints of an intended narrative that I need to create. My thinking and considerations extend across all permutations of an edit, as per those listed above, and many more. I am aware that I can affect meaning by "sliding the scale" on any of those criteria and I believe that understanding that capability and

flexibility of method enhances my own practice and possibly the future film editing practice of others.

The key object of my research project has been to "unpack" my work as a film editor over time and afford myself a more effective and articulate analysis of what have been the "layers" of consideration in my film editing processes. The review of the above literature, practitioner influences, and technical concepts have helped me to establish and assert my own sense of this as the *Planes of Meaning*.

2.7. Planes of Meaning

During the course of this study and in the process of the construction of this literature review I have looked to the literature that aims to identify the nature of the aesthetic that is attached to film editing practice and also the impulses or elemental factors that direct or inform film editing practice. As part of that investigative process I have also considered films that have influenced and impacted me over the years as being part of the "reading material" for this work. Together they helped me to form the basis of my emerging theory Planes of Meaning that will be used to analyse the creative work in the Conclusion chapter.

I will now set out to review all the theoretical and practical information that I have experienced over a 40 year career. This will clarify the concepts encompassing the theory behind Planes of Meaning. This is not part of a methodology but more a foundation upon which I will ground my assertions towards the art and craft of film editing.

In the late 1980's, I was initially reticent to make the shift from the comfortable physicality of film and a tape splicer to the comparatively innocuous computer mouse, and yet, I soon converted to the speed and ease of editing on a computer screen. In the analogue domain I conceived of the film and editing process as being "layered", particularly during the final compositing of the film work where various elements were combined to generate a specific visual effect. These took place in a dedicated film laboratory, which gave extra gravitas to the layering process, as it was a highly physical phenomenon.

In the analogue space I worked with long reels of film, accessing material by first scanning through those reels, usually on a flatbed editing machine such as the Steenbeck. Later in the digital, nonlinear editing environment I could visually and physically access material at any point in the assembled material, experimenting with multiple versions of edits without the wear and tear on the film stock as was common in the analogue space. As the technology advanced, so did the numbers of accessible layers within the digital editing interface. Working in the digital domain, I soon discovered the ease of manipulating visual layers of image and sound, unleashing a new way of thinking and imagining in my film editing practice.

This expanded use of layering within the digital editing interface and the learning over time of how to use layers effectively in film editing became the "seed" that grew into the concept I now call Planes of Meaning in film editing practice. I use the term "planes" as in layers, not just the on-screen and visible manipulative layers of a film editing computer interface, but also the layered thinking and imagining I believe is required during film editing practice. In my undergraduate studies, I became aware that this idea has been elaborated upon by theorists in the photography sector such as Roland Barthes.

In his book *Camera Lucida* (1981) Roland Barthes posited his theory of the "studium" and "punctum" of the photographic image: the *studium* being what is understood about an image, the *punctum* being the visual "prick" that disturbs and unsettles, revealing additional meaning within a still image as cited by David Bordwell in *Film Arts: An Introduction* (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 460). Looking at photography through a Barthes-related lens, it is possible to visualise a still image as being comprised of layers of intent and meaning that parallel my concept of Planes of Meaning in film. I interpret this in an editing context with Barthes' *studium* becoming what is immediately visible in a film sequence, and the *punctum* as being audio-visual clues and subtext that underscore the intent of any film edit, or series of film edits.

Even though Barthes argued that "filmic meaning only appears when one stops the film, when one refuses the way in which narrative flow converts signifiers into inescapable signifieds", (Barthes, 1981, pp. 26-27) a challenge of this research has been to best manifest and convey my concept of Planes of Meaning in a film documentary.

Over the course of this creative process the concept of introducing layers of intent or meaning during the practice of film editing or developing Planes of Meaning is central to my practice as a film editor and also in the execution of my Thesis. As my doctoral studies engaged an elongated "making" process, I re-visited this process of Planes of Meaning and discovered that it made sense to deploy this as a method-for-making and for reflecting upon my emerging creative work. Translating this concept into my creative work, a documentary and a written coherent text, whilst a challenge, acts not only as a critical reflection of my life's practice, but more importantly gives attention to the contributions made by the film editor as practitioner, I feel this contribution has been often overlooked and misunderstood.

In order to facilitate this work, I have employed a form of reflective practice, metaphorically travelling back in time and reassessing the learning and gaining of experience in the art and craft of film editing as I progressed through my career. The Conclusion chapter of this Thesis will discuss this method and how it expanded during the creation of the documentary.

2.8. Conclusion

I learnt to edit film over time, but I feel there has always been an inherent desire within me to edit, never direct, that began in my early school years driven by a passion for the cinema. Looking back at those writers, film editors and film directors that inspired and influenced me then, I see the importance of understanding the history and theory behind my creative practice as a film editor. My craft has developed and benefitted from exposure to all the progressions in film making and having a "sense" of where it all begun has enabled me to work on my craft proactively. This study has also enabled me to develop the concept of Planes of Meaning in order to make aesthetic sense of the cut and perhaps lead to a more focused approach to film editing. In Chapter 3 Methodology I will outline how I went about achieving that outcome.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will outline the methodology that I employed to execute this research and activate the creative work, the documentary, *Planes of Meaning*. This study is best described as being a qualitative work that is a practice-led research project. I have drawn upon my practice as a film editor, in the creation of the documentary, *Planes of Meaning* underpinned by the practitioners and theories discussed in the Literature Review. My methodology employs the key area of reflective practice as a merger of the reflective strategies required to make and edit my documentary, as well as the practice components of data collection through an initial online survey followed by person-to-person filmed interviews.

The principal guiding methodology for this project is critical reflection described as "enhancing learning by focussing on experiences at a deeper level" (D. J. Baker, 2017, p. 4). Following on from the work of Donald Schön, particularly his insights in *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987), I examine his concepts of "reflection upon practice" and "reflection within practice" and their relevance to my project (Schön, 1987). To give greater depth and broader context I enlisted the assistance of many film colleagues residing in Hong Kong, as my interview participants. My intent was to reference their shared experiences and reflections about editing and filmmaking over the period of the mid 1970's to the present day in order to gain deeper and richer meaning as related to film editing practice and expression. This essentially created a "mutual collaboration" form of the reflective process (Finlay, 2008, p. 6) leading to a "reflective conversation" (Ghaye, 2000a, 2000b) which instilled a firmly grounded insight and context to the project.

Initial approaches to the participants were made, via Facebook and email, to invite them to engage them in an online anonymous survey answering a string of questions that revolved around their creative practice of film editing. Their answers to these questions lead to the development of a series of questions that were posed in filmed interview sessions. This filmed content was assembled and edited together to create a film documentary that constitutes the documentary *Planes of Meaning* for the

Exegesis. I filmed additional material, on location in Hong Kong and here in Australia, that is juxtaposed with these filmed interviews.

Unlike the situations I described in the Literature Review where I often edited film work from a narrative or director's vision, I began the making process with no definitive predetermined narrative to express my journey as the film editor/film maker undertaking a specific film execution. Instead, I let the material and the process of the making emerge to drive the formation of a narrative through my consistent reflections "upon" and "within" the action. This methodology chapter will address this emerging practice and establish my own practice in the application of my notion of the Planes of Meaning deployed during the film-editing/making process. In short, this chapter chiefly explores my making process developed for the making of the documentary.

3.2. Key research questions

My initial research questions are set out below.

1. How might I articulate my editing decision process in a scholarly fashion so that I may contribute to the knowledge of film editing practice?

2. Where might my aesthetic originate from and during film editing practice, and how is this applied by my contemporary film editors?

3. To what extent does critical reflection, "looking back" at previous practice, the transition from analogue to digital editing and sharing current practice enhance the film editor/makers skills and knowledge?

3.3. The researcher's practice

As stated earlier I am approaching this study through the lens of critical reflection. I have set out to look back across my career spanning 40 years and attempted to identify the shifting parameters and paradigms that enabled my learning of film editing over time.

At the time that I graduated from the Film and Television degree at Swinburne Institute of Technology (1975), films were edited on upright Moviola systems, and, as a film editing assistant, I handled the processed 35 mm film stock, which I sorted and

assembled for the film editors. In the late 1970's, generally, the film editing community shifted to editing on flatbed editing machines, primarily the Steenbeck which continued to engage with the physicality of the film medium. This involved very large rolls of film, positioned in a horizontal plane across the "flatbed" of the editing machine, propelled by motors at a set speed (24 or 25 frames per second). These would rush past a glass prism set before a screen that replicated the projected image, similar to the cinematic experience. I worked with this system until the late 1980's, continuing to work with physical 35mm or 16mm film. After a brief period editing with videotape in 1989, I made the change to the digital format, editing on a Macintosh computer using the breakthrough nonlinear editing software, Avid.

My transition from analogue to digital was a gradual one; in the beginning, projects were still shot on film and then transferred to a digital medium for the editing and postproduction process. Celluloid film, with its fine grain enabling deep detail, depth of field and lighting tolerances, tended to deliver an image that provided a richer, sophisticated aesthetic compared to the early digital methods of image capture. By comparison, at the time of transition, digital was overly sharp and "brash", sometimes described by my colleagues and I as being bereft of "soul". It did not have the subtle tones of celluloid film (Bramesco, 2016).

Over time, the technology advanced and the nuance of film became part of the digital landscape particularly with new lighting techniques and use of camera lenses. Film editing practice, therefore, was dramatically transformed with the emergence of the internet in the late 1990's. YouTube, an online video sharing site offering a creative and expressive outlet for filmmakers of all abilities across the globe was launched in 2005 (Cayari, 2011, p. 2). Today, it features innumerable hours of original video content which is uploaded every minute (Chau, 2010, p. 68). YouTube provides an alternate entertainment outlet and has led to the development of YouTube stars, young filmmakers who create their own works and instantly share them in this online arena (Sato, 2012).

Online tutorials from such companies as Ripple Training (https://www.rippletraining.com/) cover all aspects of the filmmaking craft and are now available to beginners and professionals alike, covering professional editing programs like Avid, Final Cut Pro, Lightworks and Adobe Premiere Pro. Recently

online editing programs have emerged, such as *Magisto*, which is presented as a mobile app for “automated video editing and production aimed at consumers and businesses” ("www.magisto.com," 2009). The accessibility to relatively inexpensive film editing software is directly enabling a new generation of filmmakers and film editors, shaping their own captured visual material, via iPhone or otherwise, into serviceable creative audio and visual productions.

Understanding the easy availability of film editing systems online has brought my relevance as a 40-year veteran film editor into sharp focus. My purpose for investigating the role of the film editor in this Thesis and the making of the documentary is to articulate the editing techniques that I have adapted from analogue to digital film. The distilled techniques applied in consciously designing a documentary about editors and others directly correlate to the film editing craft working in film today. It is necessary, therefore, to offer further insight into my actual editing practice, as this underpins my methodology and is investigated throughout the practice of making the documentary (*Planes of Meaning*) that is the subject of this Exegesis. My bias is to my preference for celluloid and analogue, and how this has manifested itself in the necessity of using digital equipment. The transitions have greatly affected my aesthetic choices during the making process and practices that culminated in the making of the documentary.

3.4. Methodologies: Preparing for and reflecting on the making process

Critical reflective practice is the cornerstone methodology of my approach to my creative project. Reflection, as a process, has been presented as “telling your professional story” (Makkreel, 2006, p. 521). Donald Schön in his seminal work, *The Reflective Practitioner* (1995) observes how some professionals believe “my kind of knowledge is indescribable, I will not try attempt to describe it lest I paralyse myself” (Doncaster & Thorne, 2000, p. 395). Baker in *Critical Reflection in the Creative Arts* {Baker, 2017), stated that “critical reflection (or reflexivity) enhances learning by focusing on experiences at a deeper level… reflexivity reveals how we are engaging with that culture (creative arts) and how that engagement transforms us” (D. J. Baker, 2017, p. 4). Similarly, Paul Hibbert wrote that: “if our foundational assumptions change as a result of reflexivity then our thinking changes” (Hibbert, 2013, p. 807).

Alternatively Linda Finlay posited that critical reflection resides somewhere between "thinking about something" and "reflexivity", describing reflexivity as a more dynamic process which involves continuing self-awareness (Finlay, 2008, p. 6).

I understand my emerging methodology of practice to be informed by the above through a process of; looking backwards, becoming more self-aware, telling my professional story, using critical reflection with some trepidation and also a sense of excitement. Giving a visual component to this reflective process I have chosen Marilyn Higgins, citing the work of Donald Schön, who wrote that the paradox of Schön's reflection is like driving a vehicle forward and adding depth by looking in the rear view mirror (Bertolini et al., 2010, p. 603). Appreciating Higgin's viewpoint, I understand that looking backwards to previous lived experience, whilst still moving forwards in career or otherwise, provides value to current practice by way of a reflective process. I know now that, while still learning from the past, my memories of film editing practice, through initiating the reflective process, have bubbled to the surface influencing the choice of methods and film making practice I employed in the execution of the making of my documentary *Planes of Meaning*.

Certainly, a challenge in undertaking my research is in creating an effective application of the above methodology, through a reflective process, that results in a clear description of the artistry and craft of film editing, as well as the realisation of my concept of Planes of Meaning in both the written work and filmed documentary. In the online *Journal of Research Practice*, writers Mäkelä et al, (2011 p.6) describe a situation where the artist, buried in the "riddled space of practice" does not lend itself to easily formulating research questions and that the "not quite knowing" stage in art making is usually disorderly, not having a clear direction and is unable to articulate the ongoing process clearly. Whilst I have occasionally experienced such introspective dilemmas of thought, in contrast, it is fair to say that my articulation of the Planes of Meaning has emerged from this heightened reflection undertaken prior to and during the making of the major creative work. The reflective practice, as evident in the process so far, has provided a methodology that is directly related to the emerging practice as well as allowing me to engage in and find strength and insight from, my previous 40-year history as a film editor.

3.5. Reflection for action

In *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987) Donald Schön described two types of reflection: "reflection-on-action" as reflection on practice and on one's actions and thoughts, undertaken after the practice is completed and "reflection-in-practice" as one's spontaneous ways of thinking and acting in the midst of action (Schön, 1987, p. preface iii). Killion and Todnem (1991) described a third type of reflection, "reflection-for-action" as the desired outcome of both previous types of reflections. For my research project I have undertaken reflection for action to produce this new work.

Reflection therefore is not so much to visit the past or to become aware of the metacognitive process one is experiencing, but to guide future action. For me, it is a process that encompasses all time designations, past, present and future simultaneously (Killion & Todnem, 1991, p. 15). Killion and Todnem continued by positing that "in order to tap the rich potential of our past to inform our judgement, we move backward in time, reflect on our experiences, then face each new encounter with a broader repertoire of context-specific information, skills and techniques" (Killion & Todnem, 1991, p. 15). I intend to use this definition as my key reflective strategy to audit my previous work: to "move backward" by creating a timeline of past film making events tied to phenomena such as the analogue to digital transition, and those shared with other fellow practitioners. When revisiting these events I will "look" around me in an attempt to determine what was going on. My intent is that this "revelation of practice over time" will become self-evident across the breadth of the Thesis as an underlining guiding principal and also actively reveal itself within the completed documentary. I do this with a toolkit of experience and accumulated knowledge that provides some advantage in valuable critical reflection.

The reflection in, on and for action are my analytical methods throughout this research. There are five phases I have used across the duration of the project. They are:

1) Reflection-in-action method across the duration of the project actioned by the keeping of reflective journals,

2) Reflection-for-action method with the publishing of an online anonymous survey,

3) Reflection-for-action by maintaining contact with my participants,

4) Reflection-on-action during the interview filming period analysing material as filming proceeded, and finally

5) Reflection-on-action during the editing period analysing material at each stage of assemblage.

These are discussed in more detail in Table 3.1 below.

The reflective process-in-action has many permutations as is evident in all the readings cited so far. The reflective process I have employed, at this point in time, that best describes my overall approach, is collaborative in nature and noted as "mutual collaboration", further described as being a participatory dialogical approach (Finlay, 2008, p. 6) or as Tony Ghaye described in *Into the reflective mode: Bridging the stagnant moat*: a "reflective conversation" (Ghaye, 2000b). The word "conversation" and the creation of an ongoing occurrence of a "reflective conversation" amongst practitioners has always been a major aim of this research. This will be further discussed in 3.7 Methods below.

The phases of reflection undertaken over the course of this research and creative project are best described in a table, so that the methods used to collect data can be detailed in the next section.

Table 3.1: The Reflective Process

Phase of reflection	**Type of reflection, (how this informs data collection)**	**Data collected methods**
Phase 1: September 2017 until now Research Q #1	Reflection-in-action method used across the entire project in order to inform the developing of the project over duration of the project.	1. Reflective Journal Keeping a log of patterns as they emerge, reflections on the making (in-action and on-action) developing in the creative work
Phase 2: December 2017- June 2018 Research Q #1 and #2	Reflection-for-action and used to inform Data Method 2, 3, and 4	Online Questionnaire Establishing a baseline of participant insight Using aspects of the Delphi Model Adapted the Lime Survey tool (USQ)
Phase 3: December 2017 until present	Reflection-for-action. Used to inform the participants of updates and allow for their input and advice	2. and 6: Facebook - Interface and Feedback methods used to keep in touch with the participants who agreed to be interviewed for this creative work. Used to receive participant feedback on the emerging creative work
Phase 4: January 2019- February 2019	Reflection-on-action After filming each day captured material was previewed and assessed consequently informing the possible adjustments to the interview process for the following day.	4. Filmed interviews of practitioner colleagues in Hong Kong.
Phase 5: February 2019- November 2019	Reflection-on-action The entire editing process is guided by the reflective process. Creative choices determined by constant daily analysis of the edit stages.	5. Film techniques: Making the creative work up to release of draft edit.

3.6. Ethical clearance

Initial ethical clearance (H17REA207 (v2) for the project was granted by the USQ Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) on the 23rd March 2017 but a modification was made to incorporate a Chinese component to the survey and that was granted 12th March 2018. Another request to include the request to participants to supply a short biography to add the Thesis was made on the 9th September 2019 and granted on 18th September 2019.

The Ethics Clearance enabled me to conduct:

- An anonymous online questionnaire addressed to participants that were known to me and whose responses would contribute to the formation of filmed interview questions integral to the research outcomes.
- To conduct filmed interviews according to standards set by the ethical demands of the process.

In terms of the relevant ethical standards and requirements associated with ethical clearance, this study included the following considerations in the conduct of the research:

- Understanding and making allowances for some participants as spoken and written English was not their first language.

(This was addressed by having the survey translated into Chinese and during the filmed interviews taking time to explain the nature of the questions.)

- Scheduling of the filmed interview sessions in Hong Kong was critical to gathering as much data as possible in the shortest period of time

(Advance notice of arriving in Hong Kong and pre-booking interview sessions and locations was conducted via Facebook and email resulting in interviews being conducted over 10 days).

- Ensuring the comfort of each participant prior to the interview session to provide the environment for a relaxed, open and honest conversation.

(This was achieved by briefing each participant prior to turning on the camera and being involved in a general conversation, a “catch-up” to make al feel at ease).

3.7. Methods of data collection

The six methods described in detail below were incorporated into the Phases of Reflection (above) in order to provide an evidence base and enable the creative work to emerge over time (2018 – 2019). These featured data collection in the form of the reflections of participants and my own historical reflections on my work as an editor. These qualitative strategies were used to not only reflect and analyse my process, but were also essential in making the creative work component of this project. Five key methods detailed below are used to guide the development (phases) and reflection upon the creative work using my personal networks established over time and detailed in the table above. Through the archival and communication interface of Facebook I embarked upon seeking a data set of specifically unique creative participants, who are detailed below.

3.7.1. Online questionnaire

This survey process adopted is a hybrid of the Delphi Method of collating data using online survey software (Lime Survey) as the mechanism for delivery. The Delphi Method, originally developed as a research tool to advise the American military by Norman Dalkey of the RAND Corporation in the 1950's–60's (Skulmoski, Hartman, & Krahn, 2007, p. 2) essentially assembles a team of "experts", familiar with the research topic. The researcher poses a series of questions relating to the research subject that the team of experts then answers without knowing what the other experts' responses are. These responses, the data, are then collated and analysed by the researcher and the resultant analysis leads to a refined set of questions, which are then resubmitted to the original participants. This process is repeated until a consensus has been reached answering the initial research enquiry (Landeta, Barrutia, & Lertxundi, 2011, p. 1630).

A key benefit of participation in the Delphi Method is the ability of individuals to participate in a group communication process asynchronously at times and places convenient to them, while assuring them of anonymity (Linstone & Turoff, 1977, p. 1712). In the instance of my study, participants were unaware of who else was partaking in this initial stage of enquiry. The subsequent questions that emerged at this point were not re-shared with the team, as the second stage of enquiry, until ethical clearance was obtained. These questions would then form the basis of the actual in-

person filmed interviews. Overall, this helped to initiate a sense of a developing 'conversation' amongst creative practitioners, a key component of this method, which was then able to influence the interview methods below.

The questionnaire used for this study was designed within, created by and delivered via an anonymous online survey system promoted by USQ; Lime Survey. In preparation, I attended a workshop on how to use the software and manage its various intricacies. I used the software to create an initial audit of current creative practitioner colleagues where I could encourage participants to reflect on their filmmaking histories and experiences through a series of questions relevant to their own creative practice and personal experience/knowledge of film editing.

The questions were arranged so that they might take the participant on a chronological journey through the different phases of film editing practice over time, and refer to my concept of Planes of Meaning in film editing. The questionnaire was designed so that questions could be bypassed depending on relevance to the individual participant. I was confident that most respondents could adequately address most questions posed. I have not explicitly used the word "editing" in all the survey questions as I was trying to cast a wider net across filmmakers and those others related to the film business and not just to editors. The intention here was to create better questions, particularly targeting reflection within the film creative process, for the filmed interviews that would be done at a later date.

3.7.1.1. Survey questions

1. What is your gender?
2. Under what category would you place your profession?
3. What is your location?
4. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
5. How would you classify film editing?
6. Would you classify film editing needing to be ‘invisible’ to considered effective?
7. How would you describe effective and creative film editing?
8. Could you please rate your personal experience of the transitional period from the analogue space to the digital domain.
9. What personal creative practices that originated in the analogue domain do you continue to employ in the digital domain?
10. Please describe your personal experience of the transition from the analogue domain to the digital era.
11. How important are ethical considerations in relation to aesthetic choices?
12. Have you ever had to adjust your ethical concerns to accommodate your aesthetical considerations?
13. Have you ever had to adjust your aesthetical concerns to accommodate your ethical considerations?
14. Is there a trade-off between ethics and aesthetics or can they coexist?
15. Do you have any anecdotes to share that involve ethical/aesthetic considerations in the creative decision making process?
16. Provide a seven point or less trajectory of your career path.

17. How would you describe your creative practice?
18. What part can understanding theory have in creative practice?
19. Would 'theory-based thinking' during the 'doing' process enable better creative practice?
20. Are you able to describe your creative practice through a theory lens?
21. Is understanding theory of creative practice important to the execution of efficient creative practice?
22. How would you describe the importance of understanding theory to creative practice?
23. What are your strategies for reflection on your creative practice and what are they influenced by?
24. Do you use reflective practice in your creative practice?
25. Would you consider yourself as an 'invisible' creator?
26. Is visibility important?
27. What is more important, the creation or the artist?

Consequently I analysed the responses, the first set of data, identifying consensus of opinion, issues of conflict of opinion and any unusual response that may warrant further investigation. I categorised these results under three headings:

i) Overall consensus,

ii) Developing themes, and

iii) Outliers, characterised as being unusual responses that could lead to some tangential investigation that may reveal some previously unconsidered approach to the method of investigation.

Doing so expedited the overall process where analysis of the qualitative survey results facilitated the basis of the second level of extended questions that would be posed in the filmed interviews (see below).

3.7.2. Facebook interface

The Facebook page was intended to generate an introduction to the project. The link to the page was added at the end of the online anonymous questionnaire. Facebook, therefore, provided a more informal, yet potent method of establishing an ongoing point of connection for all of the participants and a source of observation of the conversation related to the topic.

After obtaining ethical clearance, I created the Facebook page to collate sections of relevant articles, conferences and events related to the subject of film editing practice. My current reading suggests that Facebook has been used by some researchers, citing that it provides a network, through messaging, instant chat, photo/video sharing, and public posting areas, that connects participants together, no matter their locale or time zone (S. Baker, 2013, p. 133). Certainly, Facebook has been used extensively by my group of participants to stay in touch wherever they are in the world. By sharing new experiences, occurrences and creative ideas we have become a particular community with a broad range of creative talent that I am able to draw upon for my study.

3.7.3. Reflective journals

As suggested above, I applied the reflective practice methodology through the recording of the emergent creative process in my own reflective journals. This allowed me to take particular notations throughout the period of my study and during the filming and consequent editing process. I anticipated that this would lead to the development of ideas through a reflection in action and reflection upon practice process evidenced in the production of the journals.

Throughout my career it has not been my usual routine to keep a journal of my thoughts and actions regarding my practice as a film editor. Nor has it been, as far as I am aware, a regular activity of my group of participants. As a large part of my study relies on the previously undocumented collective memory of my participants, I was

confident this would be brought to light, drawn out from the initial survey and then the subsequent filmed interviews. My own practice of keeping a reflective journal, throughout, enhanced the results of my study, because it encouraged my critical engagement in the making and reflection process. I established the habit of recording the many decisions engaged in my making, in order to observe developing ideas, concepts and emerging themes that would resonate in the final Thesis and documentary.

3.7.4. Filmed interviews of practitioner colleagues

As stated above, data gathered through the online anonymous questionnaire as data collection method were utilised to form a series of questions that I posed in a (mostly) face-to-face filmed interview format. Questions were formed that provided clarity to and anchored my concept of Planes of Meaning. The interviews also provided a greater insight to the art and craft of film editing and some greater understanding of the role the editor plays in the filmmaking process.

From 25th January 2019 to 3rd February 2019 I digitally, (video and audio), recorded interviews with the group of creative participants in Hong Kong which took place prior to the current ongoing conflicts and tensions in that region. Participants were asked to reflect upon their practice, as well as past and current influences. Initially I devised specific questions that I intended to build upon during the interview process, each response leading to a greater introspection of creative practice and an expanded 'conversation' towards the notion of Planes of Meaning in film editing practice.

Generally, I asked my group of participants to reflect upon their creative journeys over their career in order to contribute to a discussion surrounding the notion of the reflective artist and specifically their knowledge of film editing. I devised my questions to 'lead' them through the enquiry process, to a greater sense of introspection and, hopefully, deeper revelation regarding creative practice. Those eight questions were:

1. *Please describe your particular creative practice.*

   The reasoning behind this question stemmed from my understanding of Donald Schön's assertions about professionals and their sometime inability to effectively describe their own practice.

2. *To what extent do they use reflective practice in your own creative practice?*

   The whole notion of reflective practice, I believed at the time, was a foreign concept to many of my participants with respect to their own practice. I hoped to elicit some understandings of reflection in practice within the workplace and the role it plays in developing practice.

3. *Where do you think your particular sense of "aesthetics" had originated?*

   It is my general observation over time that any perceived sense of "good taste" and "artistic sensibility" certainly adds to the success of any individual film practitioner in such a severe economic and competitive environment as Hong Kong. Where this "artistic sensibility" originates is of interest to me because it's a question I have often posed to myself during the course of this enquiry.

4. *Please describe your own experience in the era where we as a creative group of film practitioners shifted from the analogue space to the digital.*

   The analogue shift to digital experience was as crucial a time for most participants as it was for me. It is a time-orientated phenomenon that all of us had shared and it was a defining moment for many editors and filmmakers. It also was a convenient historical point in time for my study, because we had all shared that moment and it provided a pivotal point for my enquiry regarding reflective practice, particularly in regard to looking backwards. Concentrating on that period, 1989–1994, enabled my participants to spend time looking backwards and engaging in an

effective form of reflective practice. This consequently developed into a deeper conversation.

5. *What is your understanding regarding "theory" underlying practice?*

   Here I was looking for any personal motivations driving practice that may originate in a theoretical sensibility akin to my own recent rediscovery of the significance of the role of theory behind practice.

6. *Could you please relate your own personal observations of film editing practice?*

   All participants, whether from the advertising sphere or music production, film directorial profession had had some connection with film editing, generally through association with myself as a film editor.

7. *What are your views regarding whether the artist and their artistry, namely here film editing, should be invisible to be effective?*

   Film editing practice has been of prime interest to my research and a controversial one in terms of the visible contributions of the artist in any art form.

8. *How would you describe the value of the "cut"?*

   The aim here was to unpack the reasoning behind any film edit and add to the understanding of the concept of Planes of Meaning in film editing.

3.7.5. Film techniques

To form the final documentary *Planes of Meaning*, I concurrently captured a pastiche of images of my context, as an editor, in Toowoomba, Australia and also while visiting Hong Kong. I did this during the survey and filmed the interview data collection process. Specifically, what I sought to capture, audio visually in this initial creative phase, were images, which at face value may imply a specific meaning but when layered or juxtaposed against other images may present another meaning. As already explored in the Literature Review, I was inspired in this pursuit by the seminal

work of John Berger and particularly his BBC television series and book *Ways of Seeing* (1972).

When I edited these preliminary images into the emerging substance of the overall creative work, I aimed to test the term "ethnopoetic execution" described by Eliot Weinberger in *The Camera People* (Weinberger, 1992, p. 49), cited by George Karpathakis in his Aspera 2009 conference paper *"*Creative Practice as a research tool: benefits and pitfalls" (Karpathakis, 2009, p. 4). Weinberger states that ethnopoetic execution is a series of "concrete and luminous images arranged by intuition rather than prescription, and whose shifting configuration – like the point of and between the constellations – map out a piece of the world" (Weinberger, 1992, p. 49). This is an apt description of my emergent approach to making this film, letting the created and analysed images fall into place, creating a story, taking a shape, driven by an overall arching theme. As an editor who has worked within a structured format of editing over a long period of time, the ethnopoetic execution provides a "way of seeing", free of executional practice expected in a traditional documentary narrative.

This freedom to express myself in a work I have created challenged my ability to free myself from previous methods of thinking and working but I looked forward to it with great anticipation. The overall analysis of the data and creative processes, to be featured in the Conclusion chapter, will interrogate the oscillation between the imagined and intellectual processes that I engaged in to create the work.

3.7.6. Feedback on the creative work

After several edits of the film, I made it available on the online platform YouTube towards the end of June 2019. A link to the uploaded film was forwarded to various anonymous respondents. A link to the film, sent via email, was accompanied by a short list of questions that relate to the formation of the film, its context and its ability to communicate my ideas and concepts as the researcher. This feedback, the answers to the questions, was collated and analysed and thus contributed to further editing of the final documentary. With all consideration given to the various feedback and together with my decision to address or not address all concerns, the final edited film was then be re-uploaded to Youtube again for viewing by the examination panel

in December 2019. I will also forward a link to the final film to all the creative participants for their perusal.

3.8. Conclusion

Throughout this methodology of approach to my study I have attempted to follow a thoroughly rigorous and authentic process in arriving at my conclusions. I believe I have responded correctly and efficiently to the effectively designed data sets I have acquired through the investigative part of my study. I also believe I have incorporated the "voices" of those who agreed to participate in this Thesis and consequent film documentary. Their opinions and heart-felt and introspective reactions contributed to what is largely a qualitative study borne out of critical reflection over time in the formation of a significant creative work, the documentary, *Planes of Meaning*.

At this point I would ask the reader to view the final documentary, *Planes of Meaning*, that is the key outcome of this doctoral research.

https://youtu.be/MHFPW8tMiVo

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

4.1. Introduction

The documentary (*Planes of Meaning*) was created through a process of deep critical reflection upon my practice as a film editor. Reflective processes, as described in the Literature Review and Methodology chapters, are the foundation of this research project. I set out to rediscover my roots as a film editor; to identify those things that propelled me and inspired me. I decided to do this by attempting to look back across a career spanning four decades, to introspectively and reflectively re-examine those forty years through an academic lens in order to critically interrogate my practice in a "contemporary" or "relevant" sense. The key has been to initiate, accept and act upon the process of reflection to motivate and shape my practice in making a documentary that manifests these learnings.

Chiefly, what has emerged alongside this creative work (the documentary *Planes of Meaning*) and Thesis is a formula/diagram (Figure 4.1, presented at the end of this chapter) that, from my perspective, provides an insight into the art and craft of film editing. Drawing from discussions about this phenomenon in my Literature Review and Methodology chapters, I developed a more applicable version of what I refer to as the Planes of Meaning within filmmaking and editing. I enlisted the input of film practitioners I have worked with extensively in both Asia and Australia. Together, the assembled group presented a formidable resource of which I believed I could draw upon to add weight and gravitas to my own practice, and to realise the creative outcome. My experience of the collaborative and relational method I used to manifest the Planes of Meaning was through drawing together and initiating a "conversation" about my participants' own creative practice and particularly the art and craft of film editing.

In this chapter I will relay the investigative process I undertook in order to create a new work, and also develop the Planes of Meaning as a process of making and editing film work. For me, this is the best way to do it because it is how I experienced the "journey" of this process, and each step forward informed the next part of the process and the ultimate making of the film documentary and the writing of this Thesis.

I will discuss my overall reflection/reflective practice during the making of the documentary following the insights gained through the deliberation (through practice) of a combination of the literature and methods of gathering data. I will outline how these insights assisted in determining the approach I enlisted to realise the Thesis and the documentary, *Planes of Meaning*. I knew that my documentary had to be grounded in sound research methods and I wanted to avoid the final film being perceived as simply a "personal opinion or vanity piece", so it would have some academic relevance and import (Reflective Journal POM 1, p 23).

To frame my aims and intentions for this project I devised three assertions around which I would build my argument, each of which appear below, leading to a depiction of my emergent concept towards film editing; the Planes of Meaning. During the course of my enquiry the following overarching insights emerged that helped me to inform the constructions of the assertions: i) development of the idea of a Reflective Conversation between peers, ii) leading towards informed insights regarding film editing practice and iii) creative practice in general that directly relate back to my initial research questions. The following details these insights in order to prepare for the assertions.

4.2. The reflective conversation: A reflective method of making

Undertaking this project through a deeply critical reflective process has been occasionally an unnerving but often exciting process. Building upon the advice of John Killion and Geoff Todnem in their journal article *A Process for Personal Theory Building* (1991) and Donald Schön's book *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987), I set out to approach my research project by looking back in time. This necessarily meant searching for those key occurrences that resulted in my now being in an academic environment, unpacking my creative practice of film editing and giving sense to my concept of Planes of Meaning in film editing practice.

The process of establishing a reflective method that assisted me in making the documentary was deeply enriched by reflection on aspects of the literature, and the application of my methods for gathering data (specifically the interviews/survey and use of collaborative and relational media). I was aware of the rich potential of looking backward, reflecting upon experiences, learning and thereby enhancing skills and

techniques (Killion & Todnem, 1991, p. 15). Conversely this reflective process also brought memories of professional missteps to the surface, but with this hindsight, I was able to rationalise those as part of a learning process by looking back at them through the particular theoretical lens of where I am now. I found myself in a position where I was able to reflect in both directions.

In *Approaching Reflexivity Through Reflection: Issues for Critical Management Education* (2013), Paul Hibbert outlined his concept of "levels of conversation" around which he structured his own study (Hibbert, 2013, pp. 807-808). Hibbert identified his initial stage of enquiry as being an "internal conversation" where the enquiry centres around his own practice, just as I began my process by examining my own practice as a film editor. Next, he discussed an "external conversation" that involved the input of colleagues; this is a key parallel to my own methodology, which appeared quite evident (p. 808). Finally, he suggested that a further "theoretical conversation" involved a connection with the literature (Hibbert, 2013, pp. 807-808). Whilst my own process began with an examination of the literature, the collaboration with peers, my final conversation differs as my theoretical conversation aimed to connect everything together. Therefore, my initial hunch at the start of the project was that the reflective nature of my work would hinge upon developing a discrete reflective practice for the work. What has emerged through reading and applying Hibbert's ideas is a way to describe my reflective approach, which consists of:

a) internal discourse,

b) colleague contribution, and finally

c) engaging with what is already known in order to discover something new.

My concept of initiating an overall reflective "conversation" amongst my peers regarding their practice reminded me of an extensive conversation between film editor Walter Murch and novelist Michael Ondaatje that formed the basis of Ondaatje's book, *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Film Editing* (Ondaatje & Murch, 2002). In this book, Murch and Ondaatje discuss at length the peculiarities and commonalities of each other's practice. As a point of reference in their discussions, they included the making of feature film *The English Patient* (1996), based on Ondaatje's book of the same name written in 1992. The 2002 publication between them was also

a reflective piece where the two men met face-to-face at different times to have "conversations" that Ondaatje dutifully noted and included in the book. Inspired by this approach, I set out to duplicate this format and in-depth interaction between myself, and my filmed interview participants.

As indicated in my Methodology chapter, I decided to enlist the participation of a group of my Facebook friends who had remained in contact with me and whose initial interactions with me was as a film editor in Hong Kong (1978-2005) and continuing when I moved to Australia (2005-2019). I looked forward to the relating of their shared experiences of the film editing process and their years of experience working in various creative fields. I also looked forward to continuing the online conversations (via Facebook) that had preceded Phase 2 of the Reflective Process, and that had laid the groundwork for the questionnaire that was to follow in Phase 2. Generally, my participants were curious as to the nature of what I was undertaking and upon visiting with them I anticipated, what I termed as, those "reflective conversations" extending into some in-depth responses adding insight and gravitas to my study; as noted early on in my journal:

> *I hoped that deeply personal experiences, related in the filmed interviews, may provide particular insights into the subject of film editing and the critical reflection process (Reflective Journal POM 4, p. 43-8).*

I regard the notion of "reflective conversations" as being a key application and finding of my study. This is similar to the concept of "collective memory" where the argument is: "individual memories are only understood within the context of a group, unifying the nation or community through time and space (Halbwachs in Garcia-Gavilanes et al, 2017, p. 1) In my case, "reflective conversations" existed between my participants and myself, during the filmed interviews as well as, more largely and collectively, on my editing bench via the art and craft of film editing.

Conducting the conversations with a) other artists and b) and assembling them together with my own reflections, contributed to a risen collective awareness and therefore a shared memory that I referred to as being a collective memory.

As I juxtaposed interview content during the editing phase (Phase 5), following themes that emerged out of the survey results and during the filmed interviews, I aimed

to reveal these "reflective conversations". Because of the sequential order I placed them in, I aimed to collectively generate a narrative that would not need any other voice to "explain" events. I did worry how this would present itself later to an audience though, as often expressed in my journal: "How do I find my voice (personal agency) without (literally) using my own voice? (Reflective Journal POM 3, p. 10).

I had initially set out to resist the "norms" of traditional documentary filmmaking and not use a narration over pictures to "explain" or "link" content to test if this was possible and also to present an alternate method of representing the film editor and film editing. I had looked to the: "Possibility of creating a visual abstract that encapsulates the idea" (Reflective Journal POM 1, p. 18).

That "idea" being that the revealing of the film editor and the craft of film editing in the documentary in a non-traditional form and creating a style of editing reminiscent of those ideas I had rediscovered during my reading and upon deep reflection on my practice.

> *After reviewing some of my previous films (that I had edited) I noted a style of (captured) moments emerging (forming the basis of an edit). (Reflective Journal POM 2, p. 83).*

Deciding upon my approach to the making of my documentary, its style both visually and editorially, how to present a non-traditional execution but still deliver the "idea" was all grounded in a deep and ongoing reflective process. The notion of "reflective conversations" was fully deployed between my participants, in the lead up to the survey, in the survey and consequent filmed interviews and ultimately across my editing bench, but also within myself as the creator. As I proceeded with the project, I constantly questioned and re-evaluated my process and methodology in order to refine my outcomes and deliver a creative work that would exemplify my creative practice as a film editor.

> *"Going over previous notes, transcribing relevant thoughts, this being the physical part of the reflective process…précising and paraphrasing, expanding thoughts with new ideas generated by the making and reading (Reflective Journal POM 4, p. 3-4).*

This constant reflective process enabled the methodologies I would apply throughout my research project.

The Survey: Interrogating my internal discourse

As described in the Methodology chapter, I adopted a two-tier approach in drawing input from my group of participants. Firstly, I set out designing a survey that would be delivered in an anonymous online format using the University of Southern Queensland's recommended software: Lime Survey. The data would be primarily qualitative. The content of the questions posed in the survey were derived from the readings I had done and also my own personal experience, that is, from my own internal discourse. The survey was a manifestation of my own thoughts and assumptions about my emerging topic (see Methodology chapter for a list of questions). The survey results, after analysis, were used to establish the criteria for the later filmed interviews, this being what I am calling the "colleague contribution", I would "treat their responses as qualitative data leading to a consensus and developing themes" (Reflective Journal POM 4, p. 66). I determined that this approach would give me a clearer vision of how to proceed.

I also used the survey to pose questions about the participant's direct knowledge and understanding of film editing as a creative practice because their answers would give me a clue towards the approach I might use with each individual participant during the filmed interviews. When I previously worked with many of these respondents in Hong Kong, there had been a connection for us all to the craft of film editing that was established through collaborating with me on film projects. The survey responses to questions regarding film editing generally indicated a broad understanding across the responses of the creative practice of film editing.

> *Understanding the rhythm of the film is essential to editing. This understanding does not come easy and can take years of experience to truly feel what genre, style and pace the film is about (Survey Response ID 25, 2018).*
>
> *Similarities and comparison can surely be made to editing poetry or a novel, what is essential to the storyline, what carries the flow, where do I breathe for a moment to feel what I just saw? (Survey Response ID 25, 2018).*

> *Editing can hardly be unscrupulous but it can turn dirt into something else (Survey Response ID 12, 2018).*

From these responses, and others it appeared I would not have too much trouble expanding these initial responses into a deeper "conversation" about the art and craft of film editing.

The choice of invisibility or visibility of film editing practice emerged as a contentious issue during the initial survey findings, as several participants articulate their sense of the invisible nature of the editor:

> *I have always thought that every discipline in the art of filmmaking should be "invisible". The audience can choose to ignore the individual creative roles of the film making process and instead experience the "collective synergy" of a completed film. Perhaps it is this collective synergy that defines the true worth of a completed film or creative work (Survey Response ID 17, 2018).*

> *Editing has to tell the story in as clear a way as possible, help create the ambience and not add anything that can confuse the storyline. It should be creative/exciting, BUT you should not really be aware of it (Survey Response ID 19, 2018).*

This is also an observation drawn from my extensive reading for the Literature Review. Ken Dancyer asserts that editing should be invisible to be considered effective. In the journal article *The Art and Craft of Film Editing* (2009) numerous American film editors were asked about the topic of invisibility of practice. The consensus from my readings was that, in a modern context, it really did not matter if the editing was visible to the audience. I set out to interrogate this with my survey participants; their responses indicated that this was a theme that would need further examination during the filmed interviews.

This was the aspect of film editing that I intended to feature in the documentary. To go against the collective expectation that the craft should be invisible and to make the editing, "the show". I understood the concerns of some of my participants but I

wanted to test my vision of revealing the editor and therefore the craft. I looked forward to developing my argument during the filmed interviews.

4.3. A question of "theory" as absent in practice

The first set of survey questions were used to establish a pattern of questioning for the interviews; most participants were unused to partaking in such a questionnaire, so it was important to gently ease them into participating in the survey (which was created in both English and Chinese). Early questions dealing with gender, business type and geography helped me to categorise the participants. It also reinforced the choice of Hong Kong as the best place to conduct the filmed interviews as many participants were situated there and would be there at the time I had proposed for filming the interviews.

I posed the question: "Describe your creative practice?" to test the assertion by Schön (1987) of the difficulty professionals have describing exactly what they do, lest they don't present themselves adequately (Doncaster & Thorne, 2000, p. 395). Given the survey responses, I believe I should have instead presented the question as "Please explain your job?" because it seems the term "creative practice" was elusive for them. I investigated this further during the filmed interviews, but found that the notion of talking in depth about "practice" again proved difficult for many of my participants to understand and articulate. To address this I cited my own experience since undertaking the DCA and how I now looked to my profession as a film editor as being a "practice" and I as a practitioner. This seemed to clear up any confusion they may have had.

Similarly, in the survey, I broached the subject of theory behind practice. This stemmed from my own recognition of film and aesthetic theory, with Baumgarten (2006), Barthes (1981) and others, influencing my own practice which had come about through writing my Literature Review. I already possessed some theoretical "sense" from my time at Swinburne in the 1970's, and because of this doctoral study, I understood the significance of having some theoretical grounding to enhance my practice. I wanted to question my assembled group of creative practitioners regarding their attitude towards "theory behind practice".

> *The pursuit of great creative ideas is informed by what has gone before, so it's important we observe and learn from past masters (Survey Response ID 14, 2018).*
>
> *Understanding theory is critical to the creative process/practice. It adds subtext and meaning...especially during the post-production process. Plus knowing theory allows you to break the rules in a meaningful way when appropriate (Survey Response ID 34, 2018).*

The responses to these questions indicated that not all my participants understood what I was really talking about in terms of "theory" supporting "practice". It seemed that "theory" meant different things to all participants; I considered that they may have rested their understanding of "theory" upon methodologies promoted by advertising icons of the past such as the work of David Ogilvy (1911-1999).

Another theme that emerged from the survey was the issue of aesthetics. Whilst the survey did not explore this subject in great detail I was keen to understand where my own "sense" of aesthetics had originated and I wanted to question my participants as to where they believed their "sense" or "taste" stemmed from. I knew from experience that working within the Hong Kong film world and having an appreciated "sense" of film and "sensing" "what looked and felt good" was synonymous with a rising status and economic success. In the filmed interviews I would attempt to draw this information out of my participants through a deep introspective discourse that I considered, when edited together, would assist me in realising my own enquiry into the personal origins of aesthetic judgment.

As previously noted, critical reflective practice was the cornerstone methodology of my research project. In an attempt to ask my participants to question their own practice through a reflection upon practice process, I devised a series of questions about the reflective process, which also began to apply the "colleague contribution". By asking them to trace their own career track over time I hoped to initiate them into thinking about how they had arrived at their current position in their professional careers and how they had used what they had learnt over time within their own practice. I would parallel this line of questioning with my interrogation of my own practice over time. Through this approach I also hoped to elicit from them a deeper understanding of the reflection upon and in practice processes.

By doing this, I collectively invited participants to “look backward” in time to create a synergistic outcome. To achieve this, I picked a point in time when all my participants and myself had shared an experience together. This was the transition from analogue filmmaking/editing to digital filmmaking/editing (around the end of the 1980’s and during the early 90’s). In my survey I asked participants to relay their own experience and attitude towards this shared critical moment to prompt the process of critical reflection.

> *Many people I see today grab a piece of technology which has an "auto" function and call themselves filmmakers. Invariably they dig a hole, which requires someone with actual training and knowledge to pull them out from in order to finish the product they have invested themselves into (Survey Response ID 53, 2018).*

The overall survey responses indicated that this subject would become the most important issue for further enquiry. Whilst most appreciated the advantages that the digital domain afforded them and recognised the need to change and adapt to remain relevant, there were considerable negatives expressed by some participants.

> *If there is a creative drawback to digital, it is the ease at which changes can be made. As a result, there is a greater degree of playing with an edit, which can waste time. In analogue, due to the sometimes cumbersome process, one would likely commit to a creative decision earlier (Survey Response ID 28, 2018).*

This critical argument was further realised later in the filmed interviews, where the responses suggested that creative decision-making in film editing had diminished in the digital domain and there was a “laziness” of practice associated with digital film work.

In summary, the key themes that emerged out of this survey process, and the ones I would concentrate on in the film interviews were;

1) the nature of reflective practice,

2) what is the value of film editing,

3) invisibility of practice,

4) the analogue to digital transition,

5) where the root of individual aesthetic awareness is located for the editor and how it influences practice,

6) theory informing practice.

These six themes go some way to illuminating (not answering) key parts of my overall Research Questions (as outlined in the Methodology chapter).

4.4. Beginning the Making-Journey: Preparing to engage with what is known to discover the new

The journey of deep reflection has occasionally been disturbing and uncomfortable, but overall has been revelatory in identifying those influences that propelled me further to undertake this deep investigation of my practice through the DCA.

Prior to my data collection phases, and while the survey was being undertaken, I was digitally filming material around Toowoomba (where I reside), slowly building a "repository" of images and sound that I might use in the final documentary. I was guided in part by my extensive reading of film theory and film editing practice and also my "sense" of what I wanted to cover in the final documentary. I was not yet concerned about developing any specific narrative through these captured images but with constructing a "pastiche" of imagery that could be assembled or "manipulated" in any order to complement what I might film in Hong Kong when I arrived there to do the filmed interviews (Phase 5).

When filming material, I was conscious of the possibilities of montage that I had rediscovered in my reading of Eisenstein (1977). I looked to shapes, colours, context, framing and sound to forecast editorial possibilities that may arise when I had the material before me on the editing table. I had no pre-plan in mind about what visuals I would focus on before filming, apart from the location I chose to visit on the day. When sitting upon the Star Ferry crossing on Hong Kong Harbour I looked for images and sounds that conveyed the graphic and audio qualities I wanted to feature in my

documentary. Some of these were patterns in the water as the ferry cut its way through the sea, the announcements made across the ferries speaker system in Chinese and the silhouettes of people, seated and moving, going about their daily business.

In doing so, I would be presenting my own point of view (POV), my POV as a film editor, now filming. I chose images that I hoped would reflect my aim in presenting a final documentary that would feature editing, and ultimately the editor. When I had hit the record button on my camera and images were whizzing past on the camera viewing screen, I could already "see" cutting points, in and out, I could "feel" building tempos of movement, I could "hear" sounds overlapping across an edited sequence. I would turn the camera off when I knew I "had" it.

In this largely informal, pre-documentary phase, I gave myself the task of manifesting Barthes' concept of the "studium" and "punctum" in still photography (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 460), but applied as a moving image. Barthes pointed to peculiarities in single photographs that indicated deeper or hidden meaning, the "punctum" with the "studium" being the way the photograph largely presented itself. I did sense that these particular images may need to stay onscreen for a longer time in order for the viewer to absorb the total impact of a particular image, returning to Barthes' original concept.

During these early stages of filming I never considered myself as being the documentary's director, I was always the film editor building a bank of images and sound that I would edit together later to form a documentary that was about film editing practice. I determined that I would remain in that "space" throughout the course of the production so as to stay true, as I believed, to my concept of the documentary being a film editor's point of view (POV). I was also concentrating on depicting my Planes of Meaning (see Literature Review for emergent expressions of this concept) within the documentary by trying to capture layers of meaning in the imagery. I was busy remaining faithful to what I wanted to achieve and also busy filming and reviewing as the production proceeded. A further test would be to see if these layers "translated" for the viewer as I edited the imagery together into the final documentary

As I filmed throughout Toowoomba, I was concurrently inputting filmed material into my computer, and building a "repository" of imagery and sound. I would

occasionally review the material, noting shots that "worked" well and others where I might need to retry an idea. This constant "reflection on practice" process enabled me to "narrow" my field of vision and to consequently capture imagery and sound that would better suit the direction I had intended to take with my documentary. I was still determined not to follow any particular narrative at this point but accepted that I needed to be reasonably clear in the type of imagery and sound I subsequently filmed.

In a sense, I was also embedding my own revelatory personal journey, experienced whilst undertaking the doctoral study. Indeed, there had been the reoccurring physical journey from my workplace in Toowoomba city to the University for meetings and back again. In preparation for the creation of the documentary there was the journey of deep personal reflection, of "travelling back in time" as it were, prompted by extensive reading. Later, there would be the literally physical journey from Australia to Hong Kong.

During this early filming, I also experimented with combinations of imagery, making short "poetic" (Weinberger, 1992, p. 49) assemblages that I hoped would be compelling viewing, devoid of any predetermined narrative but still delivering some sort of "meaning" for the viewer. These early experiments in editing small "filmlets" gave me an inkling into what I could achieve using my own camera and editing software with next to no budget. They also helped me to refine my thinking and imagining for the next session of filming. The resultant imagery I was filming was dynamic and energetic, and without being censored by me. Occasionally, a visual blur of colour revealing avenues of massive trees would materialise and I imagined these shots as becoming the "glue" that might drive the documentary forward. Additionally, I hoped that the portrayal of the editor as an integral character in the filming process, would add to the understanding of the editing process, as this was one of my primary aims during this study. By the time I was able to travel to Hong Kong I had hundreds of individual shots catalogued and grouped into "themes", I had almost established a visual "style" of editing that I would pursue and I had questions derived from the survey to present to my participants in the filmed interviews in Hong Kong.

4.5. The filmed interviews: Engaging in the collegial contribution

For many years Hong Kong has been associated with financial opportunity and economic success. The international perspective of the city had been partly defined by the consumer brands that positioned themselves within the city's recognisable persona as a profitable place to do business, to shop, eat and as a gateway to China. Buildings in the major districts are emblazoned with moving logos of popular brands, at night massive neon signs illuminate the streets and the throngs of people constantly on the move. From my experience of living in Hong Kong I know that beneath this cluttered façade lies a soul and a richness that stems from its people. I have always regarded Hong Kong as being a "pastiche" of ideas, sights and sounds. Whilst I did intend to capture some of the visual strengths of Hong Kong for my documentary, I did set about looking for imagery of an abstract nature or that had layers of meaning and that reflected my aim as I had done in Toowoomba.

While still in Australia I had arranged an interview schedule for the filmed interviews with my Hong Kong participants. Most had confirmed a day and time, others would confirm after my arrival (Reflective Journal POM 4, p. 179). Upon arriving in Hong Kong, I contacted other possible participants and reviewed my question content, confirming that my aims and intentions towards the making of the documentary were on course (Reflective Journal POM 4, p. 184-8). After ten days of filming I had interviewed twenty-four people of different professional persuasions, gender and ethnicity. This rich diversity led to the production of a documentary that has exceeded my anticipated result.

Entering this film interview stage encouraged me to genuinely look backwards and increase my reflection in-and-on practice coming from the survey questions. I wanted to develop a deeper "conversation" that might build into some overall revelations about film editing practice that would be of great benefit to my study. From the survey, though, it became evident that questions regarding reflection upon practice or within practice were not fully understood. I determined that the word "practice" was unknown to them, so I provided each participant with examples of critical reflection as related to each individual's "craft" or "practice". Each responded with descriptions of process and practice that, after comprehensive discussion, resulted in each respondent noting the role of reflection within their own individual craft now recognised as practice.

As I set out each day to locations across Hong Kong, I considered how I might initiate those conversations, getting my interviewees in the right mindset and how I might lead them towards consideration of my concept of Planes of Meaning (Reflective Journal POM 4, p. 190). I began each filmed interview with a "catch-up", as not having seen each other for years, we could re-familiarise our conversation and I could provide each interviewee with a brief overview of my project. I noted that in my first group of filmed interviews, participants had not fully understood my research intent or aim. So after reviewing the material I had filmed on the first day I adjusted my approach for the later interviews by citing how I was deeply examining my own practice as a film editor. I was learning through my own reflection-on-action (Schön 1987) as I proceeded through the making process.

My long-held relationships with each participant inspired responses to questions that, I believe, went beyond what might be expected from a documentary based purely on interviews about a certain subject. The "colleague conversations" were necessarily reflective in their nature, and I was not a documentary maker unbeknown to them; I was a collaborator, a peer, and a friend. Consequently, I believe the responses given had a gravitas that extended into a personal shared space of understanding of craft and practice, each answer revealing a connection to a common guiding concept of creative excellence and ambition. I believe, the documentary, *Planes of Meaning*, created through this exercise, captures this uniqueness.

As I undertook Phase 4 I considered the possibility of bringing some participants together as a group to observe how they might "bounce" off each other, leading to a deeper "reflective collegial conversation". I was only able to achieve this in a couple of instances where the participants' available time permitted it. Having two people in front of my camera at the same time answering questions led to some very telling interactions, as evidenced by this section of a filmed interview recorded on 1st February 2019 in the Hong Kong Conrad Hotel auditorium.

> *Polly: "we can say we can develop creative concepts but we cannot call ourselves creators".*
>
> *Helen (interrupting): "yes we are, we are!"*
>
> *(both laugh) (Planes of Meaning documentary 2019, 47.05.24)*

Polly and Helen have a very successful events company in Shanghai noted for the spectacular design and execution of their shows. I was asking them to describe their own creative practice – as I had done with all of my participants. Their responses reinforced my hunch that all participants would have some problem with describing their own practice in the filmed interviews yet, all the filmed interviews ultimately revealed deeper thoughts and observations from all the participants across the gamut of the questioning. The editing and making of the final documentary would be challenging and exhilarating at the same time. The following three assertions represent the key findings framed from the making process of the final creative work: *Planes of Meaning*.

4.5.1. Assertion 1: Manifesting the editor

Approaching the first edit of the documentary I knew I wanted to defy the traditional conventions of what a documentary should look like, concentrating on making it more of a personal statement about film editing. As evidenced in the preparation filming, I undertook in Toowoomba, I wanted to continue to experiment with changes in environment, time and space. I aimed to disorientate, manipulate and engage the viewer in the abstract ideas that I wanted to pursue. I wanted the documentary to compliment the Thesis and operate as a standalone piece of art, as noted in my journal:

> *It's always about creative choice, trying to draw a link between the Thesis (which is about the practice) and the actual practice of editing (Reflective Journal POM 4, p. 207).*

Overall I wanted this Thesis to go some way to answering my research questions together with the resultant documentary, *Planes of Meaning*, and for the film to be appreciated in an academic light as well as being an informative and entertaining creative work. The process of selection and assembly of material, both interviews and "B" roll material was a lengthy process given the amount of material I had recorded. I was "categorising content according to the questions asked but still adding additional categories that could best be described as (being) random(ly formed)" (Reflective Journal POM 4, p. 204a). As I worked I was tempted to initiate a definite narrative by assembling material in a particular way but I resisted as best I could.

> *I'm not sure where my narrative is heading as I continue the selection and assembly process…new categories continue to emerge, occasionally at a tangent to the initial aim of my questions but they may still yet prove relevant in the final analysis or may complicate the overall direction of the piece (Reflective Journal POM 4, p. 204a).*

When selecting the best of the interview material I was careful not "to alter the original context of the interviewee's reply to my question (remaining loyal to the nature of our relationship over many years) but still bearing in mind the context I was creating in developing my film narrative" (Reflective Journal POM 4, p. 208). As I headed into the second and third stages of refinement of selection and assembly, certain themes began to emerge more strongly than others so I decided to concentrate on those developing themes.

From the survey results it was clear that the period of time of transition from the analogue to the digital era was a key moment for all of the participants. The gradual shift between the two was also a key and important moment for myself as an editor because: a) I had to adjust my practice in order to stay employed and relevant, and, b) I also adjusted my ways of thinking and imagining during the editing process as with the digital interface, "layering" of imagery and the thought processes involved, expanded in an unfamiliar nonlinear environment.

When it came to the filmed interviews, I approached this subject knowing that whilst many of my participants reveled working in the digital domain, others still harboured reservations about "going fully" digital, and approached aspects of their work with what I would call an analogue mindset. An example of this mindset would be: resisting the temptation to over-shoot material, in order to concentrate on what they are shooting, even though the digital format allows for creating large amounts of material images. In terms of Research Question 3 (Section 3.2, page 34), this knowledge about my participants' views assist in understanding how the transition from analogue to digital has affect their individual approach to practice. Further analysis of my participants' interviews revealed a consensus that the benefits of digital filmmaking/editing were: ease of operation, instant, fast, accurate, immediacy, the cameras are lighter, easier to edit, infinite possibilities, improved skills.

In my own experience, all of these are accurate. Digital editing software has enabled me greater flexibility in creating edits where not only can I edit but also do visual optical work; adjust colour and do sound mixing of music; voice and sound effects, all within one digital editing software. It would have been very difficult for me to undertake this documentary, *Planes of Meaning*, if I was restricted to working in an analogue environment and filming on celluloid film. In the interviews, some participants expressed the opinion that analogue film editing systems, although cumbersome at times and with limited "undo" opportunities, forced the editor to be more committed to creative decision making particularly in respect to making an edit. There was also the suggestion that having worked in the analogue domain may have provided a "grounding" to creative practice in the digital domain (Filmed Interviews, Pete and Eddie, Hong Kong 28/01/2019).

This stimulated my own thinking about my training as an editor; perhaps it "was better to learn (your practice) in the analogue era because the physicality of the editing process, sound or picture, enabled a better understanding of practice and a particular connection to practice" (Reflective Journal POM 4, p. 204b). I do believe that while now working digitally has enabled me, particularly in the making of this documentary, having begun my editing career in the analogue environment has contributed to my creative practice of film editing. This is particularly so with making edit decisions and recognising the commitment that is required when making an edit.

The interviews revealed that the participant-practitioners did rely heavily on digital technology and that many could not create an analogue solution if the technology failed. Many participants lamented this as they sensed that the technology was taking over the creative process and some filmmakers/editors had lost track of how to effectively produce a film concept or idea. They suggested that because of the ease of current digital editing systems and the increased accessibility of those systems, there had been a rise in the notion of "laziness" of operation, thinking and creative processes within the digital editing communities, particularly amongst those younger members who had no knowledge of the formative years of film editing.

Below is some feedback from a wide variety of people who are very well paid for the quality of their work and who are highly regarded in their own particular field of creative practice: "the one thing about digital…is that it does allow a certain amount of

laziness", "on my recent shoots I found, a lot of the youngsters who have joined the business after the advent of the digital age, they are less careful in many ways, because everything can be replayed and be reviewed on location, on set, and people have started to be relaxed", "sure I think digital makes people dumb and lazy", "people don't think… and they don't prepare for what they film… they just turn on the power", "all the young editors, they just, if they don't have much sense about film, they just cut, cut, put the film together" (Filmed Interviews, Hong Kong 2019).

Given the above comments towards the perceived negatives of the digital domain, those participants with extensive experience in both domains did not overtly begrudge those newcomers their approach to the art of film editing but, in their practice, did reach out to them attempting to instil a greater regard to the foundations of the art of film editing and making. They also recognised that to remain relevant in a constantly evolving marketplace they needed to be readily adaptable to advancing film technologies, methods of communication and audience expectations. In all instances they accepted the huge benefits the digital era afforded their craft while still trusting their creative prowess, based upon years of acquired knowledge.

I look to the comments above, collectively assembled, as resembling a "reflective conversation" that only emerged through the film editing process. Throughout my editing of the documentary I sought to replicate and represent these instances where I could create "reflective conversations" about film editing practice. As I sat each day editing the material, I was consciously building these "reflective conversations" as theme-driven sequences with an overriding guiding concept of manifesting the editor and presenting the craft of film editing through this process. As I went about this preliminary editing phase, the digital editing interface offered me the opportunity of creating alternate groupings of material to realise alternate "meaning" generated by juxtaposing shots. This process greatly enhanced the way I could approach my documentary as editor and enabled me to concentrate my intentions on manifesting the art and craft of film editing throughout the documentary. Although I could not depict this "shuffling" process in its full complexity visually in the documentary, I did editorially suggest in some sequences the nature of the physical juxtaposition of images altering meaning. By revealing in the documentary that the editor was manipulating

images and sound and therefore manifesting the editor as a "character", I was challenging the traditional methodology of documentary filmmaking and editing.

The question of visibility of the editor's practice was a subject I first encountered during the reading phase of this research project. In Phase 2, my survey results largely indicated that the editor and the process of editing a film did not need to be invisible to be considered effective. There were a few who expressed the idea that editing should be invisible, arguing that being aware of the craft would interfere with relating of the overall message of the film or documentary. Upon reflection I particularly like the comment of one of my participants who suggested that contemporary:

> *… audiences accept what they see (on the screen, whether it be the cinema, television or their phones) they let the images "wash" across them… invisibility is not an issue (Filmed Interviews, Pete and Eddie, Hong Kong, 28/01/2019).*

I subscribe to this assertion after observing the Hong Kong masses on board the underground train network with their faces buried in their phone screens in an almost trance-like mode as images, occasionally reflected in their eyeglasses, flashed across their screens. During my introduction to the interview participants about the subject of invisibility, I cite films like the *The Bourne* series (2002-2016) where the editing is rapid-fire and a signature of those films. Participants generally agreed that the editing was highly visible and surmised that possibly the contemporary audience, particularly young viewers, may expect this kind of rapid-fire editing to maintain their interest. I believe the visibility of film editing is not really an issue for most of the general audience. In my own experience, and as noted in the abstract of this exegesis, the art and craft of film editing is largely misunderstood, and I reiterate the comments in the above quote by aforementioned film interviewees, Pete and Eddie, that most general audiences are unaware of the impact of good or bad editing practice. In After the shooting the cutting begins (1986) former renowned American film editor Ralph Rosenblum (Annie Hall, 1977) notes "most viewers, aficionados included, had no way of spotting it [masterful editing]. The purpose of editing was to cover its traces" (Rosenblum 1986, pp68). In my documentary I set out to address the ideas of visibility in editing practice and present my editing as being completely visible – as is the editor

It was liberating to have all of my participants making their ideas "visible" to me in the filmed interviews. They presented themselves as vibrant characters, sharing genuine opinions and enthusiastic responses, which brought my documentary to life. In short, they made themselves visible by allowing me to capture them in the digital format of film, forever. I captured their honest viewpoints through the techniques of filming I employed and the editing styles I chose. One participant, when asked about the question of visibility of practice, noted that:

> *Being aware of the process (editing) in the presentation of the final work (documentary) is okay: if the process (editing) is the show itself (Filmed Interviews, Polly and Helen, Hong Kong, 01/02/2019).*

I wanted the editor (which is me in this case) to be considered by the reader/audience as a character in the film. Nichols discusses this as the "participatory mode" of documentary, "it emphasises the interaction between film-maker and subject. Filming takes place by means of interviews or other forms of even more direct involvement" (Nichols 2001, 33-34). In this instance I positioned myself as being part of a "reflective conversation" between filmed participants and viewers of the final documentary, being visible and identifiable as the instigator of that conversation. I determined that I would portray my onscreen presence not only as a link between sequences, but also as assuming the role of the "fulcrum" around which everything within the process, pivots. I reasoned that by adopting this approach I would illuminate the role of the editor in filmmaking and by making myself completely visible on screen, would lead to a better understanding of the film editor's position and import within the film production process. By revealing myself onscreen as the editor within a discourse so deliberately, I aimed to create a precedent that might challenge the preconceptions related to the traditional role of the film editor within the film production.

4.5.2. Assertion 2: Challenging the traditional role of the editor

Traditionally, the film editor sits before reams of material produced by the production team, at their editing table, and is tasked with bringing it together to follow either a predetermined script or with an open brief to deliver a "concept". When I decided to undertake this project and produce a documentary that reflected my intentions with this research, I resolved to make a documentary that was devoid of a "coherent narrative" and to test this emerging example with an audience. It was part of my purpose to present the film editor as an integral component in the filmmaking process; to demonstrate the ultimate "power" that lay within his/her craft to shape/manipulate content, a role I believed to be largely misunderstood or not recognised beyond the reaches of their own peer groups. I reasoned, by producing a documentary that did not follow traditional audience expectations (only measured by what is readily accessible on current cable and television outlets), I may be able to highlight and challenge the editor's contribution to filmmaking.

In my own experience to date I believe my creative editing decisions originated in a "sensibility" that have accrued over a lifetime and was largely based on lived experience. In determining the way I would move forward with my project I was keen to interrogate my participants as to their beliefs about the origins of their own "sensibilities" of practice.

4.5.2.1. The origin of the "gut" feeling

In the discussions involving the reflective process, career paths and personal motivation, the interviewees contemplated questions on the origin of their personal aesthetic sense. My overall reflective process had resulted in my composing several questions that asked whether their aesthetic sensibility or "taste" was inherent, or a sensibility developed over time – and whether it was linked to experience and observation. I extended the questioning to identify the origins of their own particular "artistic" skill, taste or sensibility. Once again, the questions opened up a realm of the "very personal", something most of my participants had never really discussed at any level with anybody else. Considering themselves as primarily "doers" for most of their careers, identifying the source of their aesthetic sense was neither any easy task nor a paramount concern, they just "got on with it".

Once I switched the conversation using words, like having a "gut" feeling towards creative decision making or relying on instinct or intuitive reasoning to guide the

process, the responses became animated and thoughtful. Answers to topics such as the origin of creative motivation and the nature of "instinct" and "intuition" within that process provided for some critical reflection on the part of the interviewees. I got answers that included:

> *Their particular aesthetic was inherent, it's gained over time through experience and making mistakes, it's a gift from God (Filmed Interviews, Hong Kong, 2019).*

It appeared that having a gut feeling was something that was perceived as being an invisible, but important reasoning force that was valued as being a critical advantage in making creative decisions. Issues of instinct, aesthetics, intuition and experience towards creative decision-making were also all focused by the collaborative and relational input from my participants. For some, it took a long time, and through follow up questions, to arrive at what they believed to be the root of their creative self. In post-interview sessions, when the camera had been turned off, some participants even lamented the lack of creative discussion and cross-communication amongst creative peers in the Hong Kong film and advertising industry, looking to their previous experiences abroad where discourse or "conversation" amongst practitioners was both constructive and enlightening.

As part of my journey of discovery looking "backwards", I found their responses offered insight and guidance into my own introspective search for answers as I proceeded with the making of the documentary. Once again, I was conscious that I was editing another "reflective conversation" through the juxtaposition of interview content. As editor, I was not only shaping these conversations, delivering their thoughts in a coherent form towards the subject matter, but I was also participating in that conversation through the act of editing that particular juxtaposition. This was an important revelation about my practice as a film editor, something that I had set out to depict in the realisation of the final documentary. All the time I was conscious that as I assembled the material, I was challenging the preconceptions of the film editor's function within a traditional production process.

Noting the gut instincts of my participants toward their own practice that underpinned their creative decision making, I was inspired to re-examine at a deeper

level my own impetus and reasoning for editorial decision making. I sensed that my "instinct" or "gut feeling" towards creative decision making was borne of experience and exposure to external elements that I had encountered over my career span. I have noted though, that throughout the duration of this research project that "instinctive reasoning", in my case grounded in lived experience, underpinning editorial judgements in a contemporary environment, may not be considered common practice or as being recognised as part of an editor's toolkit in the editing process. So I am equally challenged in presenting my own particular approach as an editor and also what is expected from an editor in a contemporary environment.

In the process of critical reflection and re-examination of film editing practice I have identified elements of my practice that can be framed in a not so "instinctive" sense, but as an overreaching, instructive guideline to aspiring film editors. As indicated previously I have referred to this as being the Planes of Meaning concept in regard to filmmaking and editing. In order to test my ideas and to demonstrate the craft of film editing to an audience unfamiliar with the practice of film editing, I felt I not only needed to visually portray my craft on screen so that all could understand it, but also to challenge any preconceptions attached to the art and craft of film editing that may be prevalent amongst that audience.

4.5.2.2. Applying challenges to the editor in the documentary

When I imagined, and finally filmed and edited the opening of the documentary, my aim was to create interest and intrigue, and introduce the character of the editor. I wanted the opening to be disorienting, unsettling the viewer, and to stylistically set up the abstract ideas that were to follow. This was part of me wanting to create a documentary that was largely devoid of a coherent narrative but still delivering a creative work that presented a personal expression of my creative practice. I also wanted to demonstrate the incidence and importance of repetition (multiple versions) that is part of the process of film editing.

In an analogue domain, repeated scrolling of film material across a flatbed editing machine familiarised the film editor with the material, enabling a recollection of film instances that would later contribute to the advancement of an edit. Constantly reviewing available film material no matter whether in an analogue or digital environment, conditions and informs an editor to all the editorial possibilities that the

filmed content may present. I wanted to illustrate this phenomenon in my documentary: The opening sequences are purposefully repetitive with the intention that the viewer, whilst experiencing the same material over and over, learns something new with each repetition. I expanded the "developing storyline" of each repetition, altering the context, leading the viewer on a "journey of discovery" (not unlike my own journey) and eventually revealing the location and physical body of the film editor.

This is not unlike the "flashback" sequence in Mike Nicol's film Catch 22 (1970). Editor Sam O'Steen employed a "flashback" method of editing by, throughout the film cutting to a sequence of the lead character, Yossarian finding the body of a dead airman in the forward gun turret of a WW2 bomber. In each flashback the sequence is extended revealing a little more of Yossarian's discovery until in the final flashback the full gore of Yossarian's situation becomes evident. In this film the flashback is a powerful device and a technique that I drew upon for my documentary. At several other instances in the documentary I set out to mimic ideas from other feature films that had impressed me at the time of viewing and had remained as a strong and influential memory.

Particularly the end sequence of John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) featuring the solitary figure of John Wayne standing in a doorway facing away from camera before he walks off into the distance, spoke to me as a depiction of myself as an editor. The image of John Wayne in the last shot of the film, it is an emotive image standing alone in a doorway with his back to the camera after the completion of his mission…there is an ambivalence…similarly I have re-created this by standing in my own doorway to represent a moment of indecision and uncertainty, which is very much a part of all artists working through a creative process. As a film editor, there are indelible images from my film-watching research that find their way into my own creative work.

I knew I wanted to make the film appear as a pastiche of ideas, not following a traditional narrative with narration and onscreen titling. This intention stemmed from a) my desire to make a documentary that championed film editing, b) my readings, namely those that featured the ideas and theories behind "montage" and c) accruing images and sound and then in the edit letting those "texts" shape and form into sequences and those sequences ultimately form the final documentary. In both the

survey and the filmed interviews, the issues of "invisibility", "the joy of the cut" and "the role of the film editor" were dominant.

As I had begun my editing process in my earlier work, I looked for ways to represent these dominant themes: their commonalities as recurring shapes and colours, rhythmical patterns and audio links. I began by creating "montages" of imagery and sound. I knew that this wasn't a traditional approach to creating a documentary. I had applied this approach before on documentaries for the Hong Kong government and tourism bodies. In each instance the experience was revelatory and exhilarating. I edited without conventional expected boundaries of storytelling principles and conventions, I experimented with montage concepts grounded in visual connections and contextual interconnections derived from experience and from my readings for my Literature Review. I felt a freedom of practice that was both excruciating and liberating. This was a freedom from creating a documentary that would fit within the "norms" of documentary as recognised by an audience but still demanding in delivering my intention of making a documentary that challenged all filmic aspects of documentary. I recognised that the use of montage as indicated in the literature review was the key.

4.5.2.3. The explicit use of montage: Creating the new from the known

Film montage has always been an integral component of the film technique I set out to use in the execution of this documentary.

Eisenstein's ideas of montage (Eisenstein, 1977) first influenced me when I was at Swinburne University of Technology in the mid 1970's. His ideas of composition of elements within the film frame also intrigued me because they presented an idea of framing and layering of components to the film image that delivered additional meaning. Mimicking these ideas during the filming of the interviews, I had occasionally pushed the camera off centre, the result being, my interviewee would sometimes drift in and out of shot or only half their face would be visible as they answered my questions. This was all part of the "strangeness" and "abstractness" I wanted to create within the film in order to challenge the accepted "norms" of filmed interviews.

Even though I was editing interviews together trying to maintain the flow of ideas being discussed by the interviewees. I was also looking to create a "montage" effect

with the interviews, cutting on movement within a frame. The action of a hand movement or the shrug of a shoulder or the abrupt movement of a head suggested multiple opportunities to cut. The action within the frame made the cut possible. This is not a traditional approach to editing interview content. I looked beyond my participants' answers and to their on-screen presence and actions as an impetus for the edit decision, continually challenging the norms of film editing practice while still endeavouring to deliver a coherent argument, but still respecting my participants' opinions and judgements regarding film editing practice.

Using commonality of shape, colour, size, content and audio links had always been a favourite editing style of mine. Images that might usually bear no direct reference to each but are linked by an underlying sensibility, when edited together generate a flow of their own. Throughout my documentary I created montages that epitomised this style of "graphical" editing (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010) or what Weinberger referred to as "ethno-poetic execution" (Weinberger, 1992) to generate a visual and audio "style" for the documentary. I used montage to portray abstract ideas of unrelated imagery and sound, forming new mini narratives that could be appreciated almost on their own, but when seen in the context of the overall film would continue a sense of strangeness that I intended would be enduring and captivating. I used visuals of natural elements like water, wind and light (*Planes of Meaning* documentary 2019, 14.34.19) to link shots in homage to Eisenstein and his theories of tonal and rhythmical montage (Eisenstein, 1977). When filming earlier in Toowoomba I had attempted to capture images and sound, themes that I might expand upon once I had arrived in Hong Kong in order to create a symmetry of ideas and sensibility that I felt extended across my personal experience.

Another purpose of the montages I created was to link scenes and themes and build the developing narrative of the documentary. In one instance using quiet, languid, thoughtful shots inter-cut with interview content where the interviewee was considering his answer to a specific question, conveys a period of deep contemplation (*Planes of Meaning* documentary 2019, 18.44.15). When he suddenly answered the question, I increased the speed of the cutting so it appears as a release from the tension built up through the sequence and a trigger to the next sequence. This, in effect, enhances the proposition of making the viewer conscious of the presence of the filmmaker/editor

within the documentary. I looked for shots that brought the viewer back to the filmmaking experience so that they were witnessing a constructed image. An interviewee in a reply to a question uses the word "photo". I then cut to a series of shots that could well be perceived as a series of photographs, which then becomes another montage leading to the next subject (*Planes of Meaning* documentary 2019, 21.52.05).

As I was filming in Hong Kong, I looked for shots where I could generate a "symmetry of ideas". In Toowoomba I had filmed a helicopter flying overhead. On board a ferry crossing Hong Kong Harbour a helicopter flew overhead. I filmed this and when edited in close proximity to each other there emerged another "symmetry of ideas" that extended my idea of corresponding imagery that would bring a connection to my two locations, Toowoomba and Hong Kong, two cities so diverse but still connected via the juxtaposition of imagery that I had created.

Walking the streets of Hong Kong at night filming, I followed shadows of people, walking rapidly, crossing the road and evading traffic. I swung my camera around catching the headlights of cars and buses in a blur. When I edited the sequence together, I wanted to create a sense of urgency and danger, which at the end of the sequence I would resolve peacefully (*Planes of Meaning* documentary 2019, 30.46.19). As I review this montage now, given the recent upheaval in Hong Kong, it could be interpreted as depicting an under-swell of discontent and grave foreboding for Hong Kong because of the rapid style of editing and the use of a frantic camera. This illustrates how there is additional meaning that can be applied to film editing when seen in a later context.

To reinforce the presence of the film editor, in some montages I repeated imagery but in different contexts. This was to build the idea of repetition being a critical part of the editing process. Repeating images in a "reality" in the streets, then later I had the same shot on my editing interface on my computer. Still my intention was to disorientate the viewer as I shifted time and space. All the time I was maintaining an intrigue for the viewer and pointing back to the role of the film editor (*Planes of Meaning* documentary 2019, 35.40.10).

Throughout the full period of investigation and examination of my practice as a film editor I resolved to refer back to the familiar notions of film editing, as indicated

in my Literature Review, to ground my practice. I set out to create the documentary and write this Thesis to challenge those perceptions that define film editing and to offer up an alternative viewpoint towards film editing practice because I wanted to present the art of film editing in a larger and more accessible sense. I used montage in my documentary to illustrate what the editor does, because montage, when executed effectively, is a visible and symbolic indicator of a particular narrative that the editor may pursue via abstract means but that still delivers a message or meaning cognisant with the intended intention of the original filmmaker. Montage descriptively demonstrates how an editor may combine images to project an intention or a narrative in a random formation or by a predetermined prescriptor. In my instance I was both the filmmaker and the editor. I took shots based on my editing eye first, knowing that later I could manipulate (edit) the material to create montages and relevant narratives that were developing across my digital editing interface as part of this intensive journey to realising the concept of Planes of Meaning.

The journey afforded me by doing the DCA has enabled me to "re-visualise" my practice through a theoretical lens. In the process I have realised there is a wealth of information, when drawn together, that can present an outline of an approach for an aspiring film editor. Over the years of this DCA I have experienced reflections on and realisations of practice that I was unaware of. I have learnt a lot about my own practice and the frameworks that encouraged me to be an editor as well as make my art more conscious through reflection. I realised that throughout my career, I have occasionally embraced a foolishness of practice that disregarded the importance or significance of learning and experience within practice. I have reasoned, upon reflection, that I may have been always too "busy" and therefore missed the "opportunity" of improving practice through an introspective process. This current process of critical reflection upon practice inspired by this DCA has revealed to me, not only successes enjoyed along the way but also certain inadequacies that emerged that have affected my practice as a film editor. Due to the process of this DCA I now feel I am "improved" and "realised" through this reflective process and can contribute to the craft of film editing, through my personal experience. This has given rise to my notion of Planes of Meaning in regard to film editing.

4.5.3. Feedback on the documentary *Planes of Meaning*: A final reflective conversation

As part of the process of gathering data for this project the documentary was shown to a group of creative arts students and academics, chosen randomly at the end of my first draft (Phase 5). The feedback was mixed yet very informative. Some thought I should introduce the interviewees at the beginning of the documentary; they wanted to know how these individuals were placed within the realm of film editing and filmmaking beforehand so they could evaluate with context what each participant was saying. However, I was determined to defy the traditional documentary format and keep the identities and professions of my participants hidden until the very end of the documentary. The responses I attained from the feedback reasserted this intention as being a successful approach because all respondents assumed, throughout the film, that my participants had something to do with the film business. Though initially frustrated by the exclusion of onscreen identifying titles or audio descriptors, they were eventually rewarded when the participants revealed their position within the film business at the end of the documentary. So I had created a level of suspension, intrigue and engagement with the audience from the very beginning of the documentary, that was a key intent of making the documentary, highlighting the role of the film editor and film editing through the abstractness of my approach. Generally, most feedback indicated that the abstract nature of the film worked well and that the portrayal of the editor was well placed. Some examples:

> *The emphasis on editors speaking and giving editors a "visible face" is an excellent strategy.*
>
> *The film almost collapses as a collage.*
>
> *It's a necessary disruption/discomfort because it conveyed the feeling of confusion and speed that an editor must feel sometimes (email response: POM 5th draft questions. Feedback 20.6.19-06.07.19).*

The responses indicated that I had achieved my objective of creating a documentary that a) explored the nature of film editing, b) broadcast the role of the film editor and c) added to the knowledge and understanding of film editing practice. I was very pleased that my use of montage throughout film was generally deemed very

successful. After my own review of the documentary I believe "overlaying" some of the montage material across interview content will add another dynamic layer of meaning, make the documentary shorter and more concise in its messaging and bring relief from some of the interview content.

The feedback responses also illustrated the development of another form of an important "reflective conversation" that participants are unaware of but that do formulate within the viewing of the final edited documentary, *Planes of Meaning*. I may therefore assert that thoughtful film editing in a documentary where the integral ingredient is interview segments may lead to the notion to the development of a "reflective conversation" that contributes to the overall knowledge pertaining to film editing practice.

However, there was one response that suggested that a deeper personal reflection upon practice is what I may need to consider in the future.

> *There was strong symbolism that at sometimes raises the question; is the editor, as artist, comfortable with where he is at? Is he comfortable with the "art behind the art" of which he is part? (email response: POM 5th draft questions. Feedback 05.07.2019).*

I surmised that I may have inadvertently revealed a personal inadequacy at this point in my career or I had laid bare a questionable aspect of my creative practice that I may unconsciously project within the making of this documentary. Certainly, the process of critical reflection has been disturbing and occasionally uncomfortable but at the same time revelatory and refreshing. Making the film and engaging with my participants in both the survey and the filmed interviews has been an exciting and thrilling experience. At the editing stage each phase of assembly and editing has been "joyous". I am proud of the documentary and I intend to revise it to reflect some of the feedback I have received as well as meeting some of my own critical observations as how to improve it.

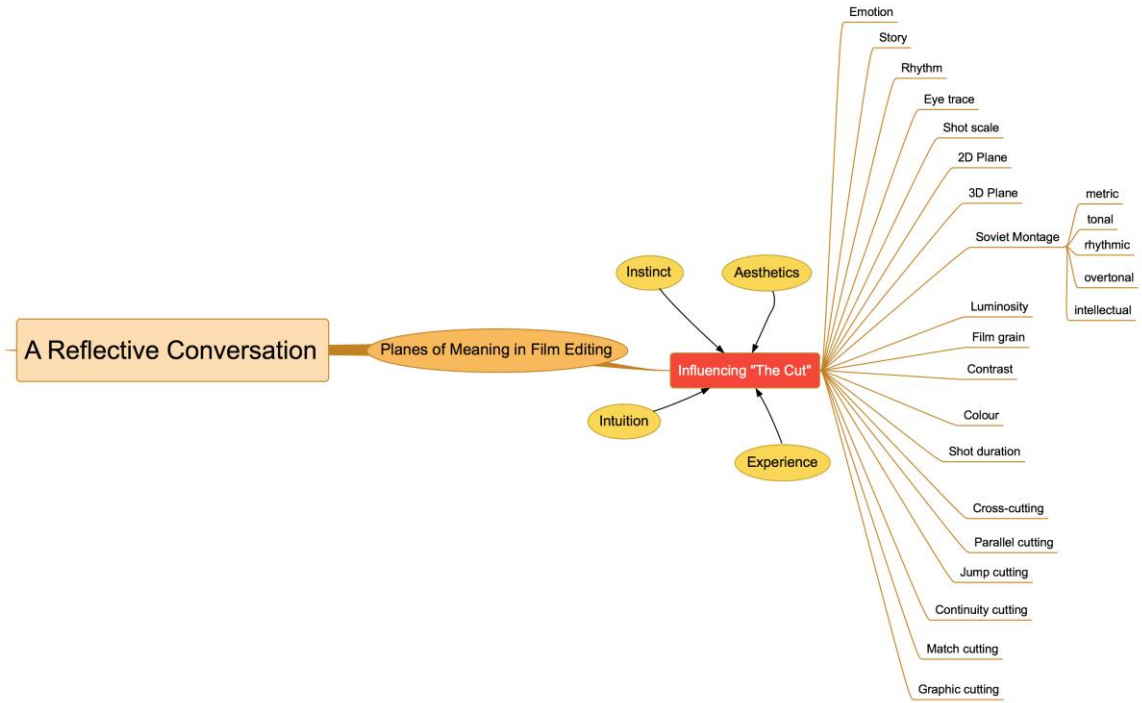
Throughout this project I have sought to interweave the role of the "art" of film editing as being the phenomenology of the aesthetics of editing, extending from my own lived experience and the "craft" as the techniques utilised in the making processes. I believe viewing the documentary together with reading this Thesis will contribute

positively to a film editor's knowledge, no matter the level of their expertise and to the understanding of the art and craft of film editing. I look forward to any additional feedback on this project and I intend to take what I have personally learnt from the making of Planes of Meaning onto the next project I undertake.

4.5.4. Assertion 3: The *Planes of Meaning* model

This schematic illustrates the Planes of Meaning concept in film editing. Emerging from "A Reflective Conversation" which is the key finding of this research paper, Planes of Meaning in film editing is the combination of critical criteria learnt through lived experience and guided through an accrued aesthetic sensibility and a sense of intuition and instinct.

Figure 4.1: Schematic: A Reflective Conversation



My Planes of Meaning concept has emerged out of a reflective process that I have engaged in throughout the course of my DCA experience. I view reflective practice now as an ongoing conversation, and in a sense, returning to the initial stage I identified early on: that this process came back to my internal discourse where I could experiment and apply, extend and merge all the conversations I had into a visible medium: the documentary *Planes of Meaning*. I see the documentary as a culmination of all these conversations and as a being a discrete practice with a definitive beginning, end and single purpose.

To further my intent towards the portrayal of the practice of film editing I included many scenes of myself as the editor of the documentary, within the documentary. My purpose was to add to the viewer's knowledge of film editing practice. At the same time I wanted to add a visual understanding of my concept of Planes of Meaning in film editing/making. In one instance I added a shot of myself, at night, sitting in front of my computer editing, framed through the open window blinds of my editing room (*Planes of Meaning* documentary 2019, 35.31.09). Each slat of the blinds dissects the image horizontally creating an impression that the image is made of layers, or at least that was what I was trying to imply. I had pre-empted this shot with a shot of my editing digital interface featuring a close-up of layers of audio and visual "tracks" on screen (*Planes of Meaning* documentary 2019, 35.27.21). The "match cut" of blinds and tracks that I employed to deliver that meaning may have been a too subtle "nod" to my overriding concept of Planes of Meaning for a general audience to appreciate.

I placed these "hints" throughout the documentary to build, as if layering "meaning", an impression that may realise the concept to a viewer at some point.

In my Literature Review, I outlined the genesis of my concept of Planes of Meaning, which initially emerged from my experience of the physicality of the film editing workstation and the way film was manipulated in layers on the workbench and the film laboratory in the analogue era. This continued to inform my practice during the digital domain where the editing interface had been "lifted" from the analogue workflow and inserted into digital film editing software. Those interfaces have now expanded to multiple layering, enabling manipulation of imagery and sound in all dimensions. In my documentary, *Planes of Meaning*, I cut back to my editing interface

at numerous times attempting to reify, to manifest and realise my concept of Planes of Meaning in the viewer's mind (*Planes of Meaning* documentary 2019, 41.47.14).

In the filmed interviews I broached the subject of Planes of Meaning with all of my participants. I found I needed to explain my concept in detail before they grasped the overall idea of Planes of Meaning. This was probably because they went about their work physically: manipulating "layers" on a screen; mentally: directing performers or designing a show without cognitively recognising that they were constantly working with layers of intent or meaning. Once I gave my participants examples of how I now referred to my own practice in terms of layering meaning through manipulation of various elemental creative considerations they "cottoned" on to my idea and were then able to relate verbally and physically how they used layers in their own practice.

Generally, having reflective conversations with my participants about their own particular craft in such detail and with great introspection was an unfamiliar exercise for many of them. As we talked in greater depth engaging in (without being specific) a reflection on and in practice process examining the nature of their craft, there emerged a recognisable realisation of how their creative actions altered meaning.

I began and approached these "reflective conversations" and the making of the documentary neither as a director nor cinematographer, but as a film editor assuming the role of a filmmaker but still retaining the critical sense of a film editor's eye and perception, keen to examine creative practice through a reflective process that was enabling their own creative practice. My participants may have known that they were engaging in a reflective process anyway but by way of these "reflective conversations" with myself on camera and off, was the first time they had spoken about this phenomenon of creating meaning so openly.

Unfortunately, my time with my participants and the consequent editing phase occurred on the eve of the rising tensions in Hong Kong. Here, there has risen, amongst my participant group, the desire to continue the process of engaging in "reflective conversation or discourse", by protesting the situation in Hong Kong. This situation may now have extinguished further immediate reflection on discourse, as, many of my

practitioner participants are now focused on being politically active in fighting for their city and their freedoms.

In offering the schematic of my Planes of Meaning concept, as presented above, I do not intend Planes of Meaning to be interpreted as a "checklist" of what must be considered before editing. Rather, I present Planes of Meaning as a guide, or example, to the "thinking" and "imagining" that accompanies the editor at all times through their craft and as a physical embodiment of the practice of film editing, as well as an intellectual and aesthetic one.

The editorial process may appear simplistic to those who are unaccustomed to the craft, but, there is a great depth of consideration present when an editor contemplates the work in pieces and as a whole. In outlining Planes of Meaning I "cite" my own film editing process, grounded in the analogue era and now flourishing in the digital domain.

As I sit before my editing station with the raw filmed material stored in a digital "bin" within the editing software, I am about to be engaged in a "conversation" with the material as I position each digitised "clip" in the viewing digital "window" for playback. I was reminded recently of an editor friend of mine from Hong Kong who previewed the raw footage of any film project several times before doing any editing stating that an editor should "let the rushes (raw footage) speak!" (email response: film documentary. Feedback 12.11.19). I usually let the material run without stopping at least once, taking in all those ideas that emerge at the first viewing, engaging in a "conversation" with the material. This particular practice of "preview" heralds from the process I employed in the analogue era, letting the film, prepared in ten minute rolls, run continuously on the flatbed editing machine.

It was important that I "saw" the film footage in its "raw" state so as to give me time to think and for the footage content to be retained within my memory as it spoke back to me. The initial "conversation" became "reflective" as I previewed the material again and again and new thoughts and ideas occurred to me, building upon those I had already mentally retained. Editorial opportunities sometimes present themselves at speeds greater than the speed of the film passing before my eyes. I found myself mentally juxtaposing and insinuating images over others, all the time bearing in mind

the intent of any narrative that needs to arise out of the material. As I began the selection process I considered technical aspects of the footage as well as story components. Ranges of light, colour, framing, action within a frame, focus are all reflected upon and judged, impacting the final selection. Performance, emotional responses, story, rhythm of action and movement were also considered. I look to these "criteria" as being single base "units" of the Planes of Meaning model where the degree of each unit denotes its own specific individual meaning. Combined they become part of the "whole" that is the practice of the Planes of Meaning.

During the editing process, there were other considerations such as editing style and montage use that I also viewed as being "units" of the "whole" which with their usage can deliver specific meaning. All of these "criteria" were inherent in the raw filmed material and their potential can be realised by the editor as he/she crafts a film together. The primary influences of the Planes of Meaning model and the underlying, grounding sensibilities that guide the editor, are a sense of the aesthetic, and the instinctive or intuitional motivations that grow out of experience. Throughout this entire process, I have been re-examining my own practice through a reflective process and internal conversation, the experience has sometimes been disturbing and, conversely, revelatory.

As I indicated earlier, I am making aesthetic judgements based upon a "sensibility" that has accrued over many years. This "discovery" I have come to accept and appreciate as I have undertaken the journey that is the DCA. I know that "instinct", hunch, and "intuition" play a huge part in film editorial decision-making and should be noted and be part of Planes of Meaning. From what I have encountered and practised in this study, I challenge emerging editors to examine their practice and motivations early on.

4.6. Conclusion

The visual portrayal of the editor within the documentary *Planes of Meaning* was a particularly, deeply personal and moving experience. I was reluctant at first to do so, but upon reflection, due to the input of my participants and the concentration upon "self" and my practice, I felt I needed to do so to extend the understanding of film editing. I began the documentary with a visual introduction of the editor and his

craft by introducing elements of repetition and altering time and space (*Planes of Meaning* documentary 2019, 00.33.19).

By the end of the documentary, *Planes of Meaning*, I returned to the imagery I used at the beginning of the film (*Planes of Meaning* documentary 2019, 47.30.17). This time, the editor did not enter the frame. This image of me walking up the driveway, unseen but hopefully recognised, is to introduce the relative obscurity of the editor: to see the editor, I wish to encourage the viewer to assume the role of the editor. In the cinema the spectator reaches out to the film and in return the film reaches out to the spectator. It's a two-way "reflective conversation". At the very end of the film the mouse curser hovers over the "delete" button (*Planes of Meaning* documentary 2019, 48.11.15). My intention here was to illustrate the fragility and also conversely the strength of the work

The documentary, *Planes of Meaning*, without any major changes to the technology, will exist online, beyond my own lifetime. In this way I may have extended my role as a film editor to one of a film historian or even curator by bringing together a group of artists who have collectively spoken deeply about their art, that will live on as long as the Internet exists. I also hope that I have, through the filmmaking and this Thesis, contributed to the knowledge of film editing practice and to the important role the film editor plays in the filmmaking process.

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APPENDIX 1

Planes of Meaning Script

By: Mark Norfolk

8·12·2019

As part of "A Film Editor's Point of View (POV): Exploring planes of meaning in film editing/making"·

Sc 1. I/E. BLACK SCREEN - ANYTIME

Sc 2. EXT. Landscape - EVENING

CUT TO:
Black screen

CUT TO:
Sunset over landscape

CUT TO:
Clouds drift across screen

CUT TO:
Dry grass at sunset

CUT TO:
Black screen

CUT TO:

Sc 3. EXT. HOME - MORNING

Sun across roof. Camera's POV through shrubbery
Wide shot marching man enters frame with the house in the background. He walks towards the house.
Medium shot
The house doorway.
We hear the man approach, hear him shuffling for his keys.
Closeup keyhole. The man's shadow crosses the keyhole as he pushes the key into the lock. The door opens.
Keys thrown onto table.

Fade to black

Sun across roof. Camera POV through shrubbery.
Man enters frame and walks towards house.
Door opened, keys into lock, keys thrown onto table.

Cut to black

Computer light through blinds, overhead fan in the darkness.
Sequence of man walking towards house, entering house playing back on the computer screen.
Camera POV across partially lit floor moving towards a room.
Entering the editing room, the "man entering house" sequence is playing on the computer within a film editing interface.
Finger hits mouse, the sequence stops playing.

Cut to black

Title on screen...planes of meaning.

Sc 4. EXT. SYDNEY AIRPORT - DAY
A montage of aircraft on the tarmac at Sydney Airport.
POV through the aircraft window as aircraft takes off.

Fade to black

Title "a film editor's point of view...POV"

POV Through the aircraft window as the aircraft prepares to land.
POV Travelling through the streets of Hong Kong. The imagery is blurred and hectic.

Sc 5. INT. EDITING ROOM - ANYTIME
The same "travelling through Hong Kong" sequence is playing on the editor's computer.

Sc 6. EXT. HONG KONG - ANYTIME

Travelling sequence continues.
Cross cutting between editing room and Hong Kong travelling sequence with intercuts of filmed interviews.

Sc 7. INT. EDITING ROOM - ANYTIME
CU. Editor editing sequence of Hong Kong shots.

Fade to black

SC 8. EXT. HONG KONG WATERFRONT - DAY
Montage of boating and shipping activity in the harbour.

Fade to black

Fade up to:

Sc 9. I/E. FILMED INTERVIEWS - anytime

Francis (to camera)
Well hello Mark...

First "filmed interview" sequence
Subject matter…an introduction to film editing.
Intercut photographs of the editor through his career.
Filmed interviews continue about film editing experience.

SC 10. I/E. HK/TOOWOOMBA - ANYTIME
Cross cutting scenes of Hong Kong streets and Toowoomba.

Sc 11. I/E. FILMED INTERVIEWS - ANYTIME
Subject matter, the analogue to digital transition.

SC 12. EXT. HONG KONG SREETS - DAY

Montage travelling sequence travelling through streets of Hong Kong.

Sc 13. I/E. FILMED INTERVIEWS - ANYTIME
Subject matter, digital leading to laziness etc.

SC 14. EXT. TOOWOOMBA - DAY
Elemental focus leading to water to…

Sc 15.EXT. HONG KONG - DAY
…water in Hong Kong to Hong Kong scenes.
Montage built on colour and shape.

SC 16. I/E. FILMED INTERVIEWS - ANYTIME
Subject matter, the origins of personal aesthetic awareness.

Sc 17. EXT. HONG KONG WATERFRONT - DAY
Montage of random shots of Hong Kong

Sc 18. I/E. FILMED INTERVIEWS - ANYTIME
Subject matter, aesthetics continued.

Sc 19. EXT. TOOWOOMBA - DAY
Montage of random shots of Toowoomba

Sc 20. I/E. FILMED INTERVIEWS - ANYTIME
Subject matter, aesthetics leading to experience, intuition, instinct argument.

Sc 21. INT. HONG KONG - DAY
Interview with Angie Chen

Sc 22. I/E. FILMED INTERVIEWS - ANYTIME
Subject matter, "process" and "reflection within process".

Sc 23·EXT· LANDSCAPE - EVENING

Sun goes down over the horizon·

Sc 24· INT· EDITING - NIGHT

Sound of "chatter" heard in the darkness·

Light is switched on·

Dissolve to:

Doorway in darkness, camera approaches·

Hand enters frame opens door slowly·

The "chatter" becomes louder·

Revealing the computer with editing interface operating by itself·

Camera moves closer to the computer, images on the screen are moving at fast motion, the "chatter" is the voices of the film's interviewees·

Table top with computer mouse, a hand enters frame clicks the mouse, silence·

Cut to black

Sc 25· INT· HONG KONG· - DAY

David Tsui interview

Sc 26· EXT· HONG KONG STREETS - NIGHT

POV Montage rapidly moving through streets and people, the image is blurred, frantic, the camera following footsteps into a building·

Sc 27· I/E· FILMED INTERVIEWS - ANYTIME

Subject matter…film editors·

Sc 28· I/E· FILMED INTERVIEWS - ANYTIME

Subject matter…the joy of the cut·

Title on screen…"planes of meaning".

Sc 29. I/E. FILMED INTERVIEWS - ANYTIME
Sequence of interviews and editor intercut.
Subject matter, the film editor and defining "Planes of Meaning".

Sc 30. EXT. OCEAN SHORELINE - DAY
Waves crash against a rocky coastline

Sc 31. EXT. HONG KONG/TOOWOOMBA STREETS - DAY
POV from vehicle travelling through Hong Kong streets cross cutting with travelling through Toowoomba streets.

Sc 32. I/E. FILMED INTERVIEWS - ANYTIME
Subject matter, film editing…visibility of practice

Freeze frame.

Sc 33. INT. EDITING ROOM - ANTIME
Closeup written transcripts of interviews.
The editor at his editing table editing last sequence.
Click of mouse and sequence on the screen and the film continues.

Sc 34. EXT. HONG KONG STREETS - DAY
Montage of people on Hong Kong streets.

Sc 35. I/E. FILMED INTERVIEWS - ANYTIME
Subject matter, editing accessible to anyone.

Sc 36. EXT. HONG KONG - DAY
It begins to rain in Hong Kong.

CUT TO:

Sc 37. EXT. TOOWOOMBA - DAY

Raining heavily in Toowoomba.
The editor stands in doorway back to camera (ala "The Searchers"-1956)
It is raining outside.

Sc 38. INT. EDITING ROOM - DAY
Editor stands up from chair in front of computer screen.

Sc 39. I/E. TOOWOOMBA - DAY
Toowoomba train station sequence intercut with participant personal introductions.

Sc 40. EXT. TOOWOOMBA - DAY
Repeat of opening sequence of film. (Without man)
POV from camera walking up driveway

CUT TO:

Sc 41. INT. TOOWOOMBA - DAY
Computer mouse on table.
Closeup computer screen showing film "clips" in a digital film "bin".
Mouse selects the MASTER file of the complete film.
Closeup of "delete" button on keyboard.
Out of focus mouse on desk, finger enters frame.

Cut to black.

End

Title sequence to be added.

Appendix 2

Planes of Meaning Documentary Participant list in order of appearance in the Documentary.

Angie Chen…Film Director

David Tsui…Film Director

Stanley Orzel…Writer/Film Director

Alfred Hau…Film Director

Rob Nicol…Visual Effects Supervisor

Nelson Ng…Film Editor

Michael Chu…Film Editor

Duc Luu…Film Director

Charles Cho…Film Director

Dalbag Khaira…Producer

Brett Free…Deputy Director HKSARG Information Services

Eddie Chung…Music Composer/Producer

Chris Kyme…Advertising Agency Creative Director

Chan Chun Yat…Film Editor

Karin Wong…Film Director

Polly Wong…Events Producer

Morton Wilson…Music Composer/Producer

Peter Millard…Music Composer/Producer

Peter Ming Wong…Online Composite Editor

Helen Chui…Events Creative Director

Francis Ko…Film Director

CC. Mak…Producer/Photographer

Darren Richter…Film Editor

Paul Wong…Film Director

Kitty Lun…Advertising Agency Creative Director

Ayden Roberts…Music Composer/Producer