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Documentary Authenticity

Perspectivism and ecstatic truth in Werner Herzog's cinema

Master's thesis in Film and Video Production

Supervisor: Ilona Hongisto

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Abstract

In this thesis, I look at how different perspectives and ecstatic truth affect authenticity in documentary cinema. I look at the cinema of Werner Herzog while elaborating on the concepts of 'the creative treatment of actuality', 'perspectivism' and 'ecstatic truth'. I will also reflect on my own practice as a cinematographer on a documentary short in order to consider the definitions and extensions of authenticity in documentary cinema.

Documentary films are the filmmaker's interpretations of reality. Their perspective cannot be removed. Instead of insisting on objectivity when making a documentary, filmmakers can be more truthful when they are open about their perspective and how they arrive at the truth through that perspective. This includes incorporating the perspectives of the portrayed subjects into the documentary. The perspective of a protagonist can intertwine or clash with the perspective of the filmmaker, which produces a creative tension that contributes to authenticity.

According to Werner Herzog, ecstatic truth is a deeper stratum of truth in cinema, which is reached through fabrication or stylization. Herzog stylizes his films to illuminate his viewers with this poetic dimension of truth. I argue that the stylizations Herzog uses in his cinema can be viewed as authentic even though they are not factually true. Consequently, documentary authenticity is not and should not be solely judged on how well documentaries correspond to actuality. Documentaries are in one way or another a creative treatment of actuality, and as such they illuminate the viewer and produce true emotions in ways that do not depend on factual verification.

Sammendrag

I denne avhandlingen ser jeg på hvordan forskjellige perspektiver og ekstatiske sannhet [ecstatic truth] påvirker autentisitet i dokumentar film. Jeg tar for meg Werner Herzogs filmer samtidig som jeg utdyper konseptene 'den kreative behandlingen av aktualitet', 'perspektivisme' og 'ekstatiske sannhet'. Jeg vil også reflektere over min egen praksis som filmfotograf for en kort dokumentar for å vurdere definisjonene og graden av autentisitet i dokumentarfilm.

Dokumentarfilmer er filmskaperens tolkning av virkeligheten. Deres perspektiv kan ikke fjernes. I stedet for å insistere på objektivitet når en dokumentar lages, kan filmskaperen være mer ærlig når en er åpen om perspektiver og hvordan de oppnår sannheten gjennom disse perspektivene. Dette inkluderer å inkorporere de portrettede subjekters perspektiv inn i dokumentaren. Perspektivet til en protagonist kan flettes sammen med eller stå imot filmskaperens perspektiv, noe som skaper en kreativ spenning som resulterer i autentisitet.

Ifølge Werner Herzog er ekstatiske sannhet et dypere lag av sannhet i film, som man når gjennom fabrikking eller stilisering. Herzog stiliserer sine filmer for å belyse hans seere med denne poetiske dimensjonen av sannhet. Jeg påpeker at stiliseringen som Herzog bruker i hans filmer kan bli sett på som autentiske selv om de ikke er faktabaserte. Konsekvent, så bør ikke dokumentar autentisitet bare bedømmes på hvor godt dokumentarer korresponderer med aktualitet. Dokumentarer er en kreativ behandling av aktualitet, og på denne måten opplyser den seeren og skaper ekte følelser som ikke er avhengig av fakta.

Preface

First and foremost, I want to thank Ilona Hongisto for her guidance, wisdom, and motivation.

I would also like to thank my crew members Mads Sterri Nilsen, Daniel Nilsen Bjørneraas, Jonathan Sundt Rosland, and Magnus Lillemark for helping me grow as a filmmaker.

Last but not least, I want to thank Artemis Kjøllmoen Aarø for allowing us to make a film about her.

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1. Introduction: the creative treatment of actuality

The more I have learned about documentaries over the years the more I have figured out that they are not just made of moments happening in our world captured by a camera and then edited together in a way that best represents our reality. Documentaries are so much more. They show us different perspectives, they make us laugh and cry, they educate us and entertain us all the while addressing the world in which we live. I am curious to learn more about how documentaries engage with reality, and how creativity affects authenticity, especially from the point of view of the cinematographer. This is why I chose to write about documentaries.

One of the key elements that separates documentaries from fictional films is that documentaries convey an impression of authenticity. That impression starts with the appearance of photographed movement that is indistinguishable from actual movement. According to Bill Nichols, "*[w]hen that movement is the movement of social actors (people) not performing for the camera and not playing a role in a fiction film, it appears to attest to the authenticity of the film*" (Nichols, 2017, xii). In the Oxford English Dictionary authenticity is defined as "*[t]he fact or quality of being true or in accordance with fact; veracity, correctness. Also accurate reflection of real life, verisimilitude*" (Authenticity, 2019). What this means is that for example documentary reflections of real life are authentic if they are true to the original and are based on facts.

In documentary scholarship, authenticity has been defined with the concept of indexicality. This refers to how strictly a photo corresponds to what it refers to, but also to how the characters and the events in a documentary film correspond to actuality (Nichols, 2017, 24). Bill Nichols writes:

"A documentary is more than indexical images, more than the sum of its shots: it is also a particular way of seeing the world, making proposals about it, or offering perspectives on it. It is, in this sense, a way of interpreting the world. It will use evidence to do so. Unlike the individual shots or sounds, an interpretation does not have an indexical relation to reality; it is unique to the filmmaker, not reality" (Nichols, 2017, 24).

In this thesis I intend to find out how the filmmaker affects authenticity in documentaries with their choices. I will mainly be looking at the perspective of the filmmaker and their creative choices to see how they contribute to or affect the authenticity of a documentary. I will also look at how documentaries are told from the perspective of the subject. I ask how documentary authenticity comes to be at the crossroads of multiple perspectives and creative choices. In answering my research question, I will use and elaborate on the concepts of 'the creative treatment of actuality', 'perspectivism' and 'ecstatic truth' to discover how authenticity is not always reducible to the factually true. I will use John Grierson's definition of documentary as 'the creative treatment of actuality' from the early

1930s as the starting point to my discussion¹. Grierson never fully explained the meaning of the phrase, but my interpretation of it is this: actuality is the world we live in and creative treatment is the recorded interpretation of it (see also Nowell, 2017; Kerrigan, McIntyre, 2010, 112).

I intend to answer my research question and elaborate on Grierson's definition by looking at Werner Herzog's films, as well as by reflecting on my own experience as a cinematographer on the documentary film *My Friend Artemis* (2020). I will analyze some of Herzog's films and compare my own thoughts about them to scholarly books and articles written by established academics and film professionals. One of the benefits about writing about Herzog is that there is no shortage of material to look at. He has made a lot of films, and films and books have been made about him and his work. He is also a public persona and appears in interviews and podcasts quite frequently. I intend to take advantage of that and bring bits of it into my discussion.

My key sources, besides the films of Herzog, are the article "Perspectivism in Nietzsche and Herzog: The Documentary Film as a Perspectival Truth Practice" (2013) written by Katrina Mitcheson; *Introduction to Documentary* (2017) by Bill Nichols; *Herzog on Herzog* (2002) by Paul Cronin and *Ferocious Reality: Documentary According To Werner Herzog* (2012) by Eric Ames. The article by Katrina Mitcheson sparked my interest in looking at perspectives in documentaries. Her article discusses perspectives in documentaries while comparing Herzog to Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche was a German philosopher, born in 1844, who has profoundly influenced modern thinkers on the definition of truth (Magnus, 2020). Mitcheson's article serves as my main source in the chapter on different perspectives in documentaries. *Introduction to Documentary* is, as the title suggests, a great source on what a documentary is and how it came to be. Nichols explains the history of and how documentaries have developed over the years. He also talks about different traditions in documentaries and what separates documentaries from fiction films. Bill Nichols has written several books and essays on documentaries cinema. It is written on San Francisco State University's website that: "*Professor Nichols is perhaps best known for his pioneering work as founder of the contemporary study of documentary film*". (William Nichols, n.d.). In my writing, Nichols and Mitcheson will be my main guides into documentary scholarship.

Herzog on Herzog consists of an interview conducted by Cronin with Herzog. In the interview, Herzog talks about his films, and how they were made. He also goes in detail about some of his creative choices. *Ferocious Reality* explores Herzog's relationship with documentary cinema. In the book, Ames analyses some of Herzog's films as well as talks about and explains how Herzog's films have challenged the documentary tradition. These books have helped me understand both Herzog and his cinema better.

My Friend Artemis is a short documentary film that I worked on as the director of photography. The film, directed by Mads Sterri Nilsen, was our final project at NTNU's Film

¹ The original quote is: "*Documentary, or the creative treatment of actuality, is a new art with no such background in the story and the stage as the studio product so glibly possesses*" (Grierson 1933: 8). Kerrigan and McIntyre (2010, 112) point out, the phrase has become entrenched in documentary discourse and is most often used without attribution.

and Video Production Master's program. In the film, we follow Artemis who is a male to female trans person. When we followed her in the film, she had legally changed her gender but not yet started on hormone therapy. One of the main themes of the documentary is how long it takes to start on hormone therapy in Norway, and the mental strain it put on our protagonist. We followed her on and off for about eight months. In the beginning, we used the fly on the wall approach, but as the film progressed, we got more invasive. Being more invasive made me think about questions of authenticity in the documentary. The film crew consisted of Mads as director, me as director of photography, Daniel Nilsen Bjørneraas as producer, Jonathan Sundt Rosland as sound person and Magnus Lillemark as editor. My own creative practice as the cinematographer of the project only made me more interested in the practices of making documentary films. I feel like I learned a lot during production, both as a camera person but also as a documentary filmmaker in general. This motivates me even further to write this thesis. My methodology consists of film analysis, reflection on my own work and evaluation of documentary theory and film scholarship. I will bring these together to explore perspectivism and ecstatic truth in Herzog's cinema.

1.1. Contested authenticity and the urgency of truth

Since Herzog made his first film in 1961, he has written, produced, and directed more than sixty feature and documentary films (wernerherzog.com). I find Werner Herzog an interesting character, and his take on documentaries and films in general is compelling. Herzog pushes the boundary between truth and fiction in his documentaries with stylization and with what he calls ecstatic truth. Ecstatic truth is a term that, for Herzog, describes a deeper truth in documentary cinema. He explains this in his Minnesota Declaration from 1999, where he says that ecstatic truth is a poetic truth, a truth that illuminates. Ecstatic truth can only be reached through fabrication, imagination, and stylization (Herzog, 1999). In 2017, Herzog made an addendum to his declaration. In the addendum, he further explains his view on truth and facts in documentary films. The first article of the addendum is as follows:

"I. With the arrival of the new term "alternative facts" in the political arena, the question of facts and the question of truth have acquired an unexpected urgency" (Herzog, 2017).

I agree with Herzog that the question of truth is very timely. It has often been said in recent times that we live in a post-truth era, where we rely more on emotions and opinions instead of cold hard facts. This I believe is especially true for politics. "Alternative facts" is a phrase that was used by Kellyanne Conway, a counselor to the president of the United States. In an interview she was asked about Sean Spicer's false claims about the crowd size at Donald Trump's inauguration. Chuck Todd, the interviewer, pressed her to answer why Spicer would utter a provable falsehood, to which she replied: "You're saying it's a falsehood. And they are giving -- Sean Spicer, our press secretary -- gave alternative facts" (Bradner, 2017). Todd responded that alternative facts are not facts, they are falsehoods.

Authenticity is such a timely subject because experts are being dismissed and alternative facts are being offered instead. There are other examples of how authenticity is being contested today. For example, there are a lot of pictures and videos flooding the internet. Those pictures might look to be authentic at first glance, but if you look closely you might find out that they are in fact constructed or treated in a way that they no longer accurately represent our reality: *"The distinction between fact and falsehood has been overtaken by the battle for earning more clicks and "likes" on social media"* (Hennefeld, 2017.)

Social media feeds are full of pictures of people that appear to be happy and beautiful. Many influencers on Instagram have gained a great following from posting appealing pictures of themselves. But as Rachel Hosie puts it in her article, *"[i]nstagram is the highlight reel of life"*, meaning that it only shows the best sides of life. In the article she talks about the trend 'Instagram versus reality' and shows pictures of influencers that post side by side pictures of a moment made for the camera, and *"the reality behind Instagram"* (Hosie, 2019). According to Hosie, this trend was started to remind people that everything they see on social media is not as real as it appears. Even though some of those Instagram pictures are of real people out in the real world, they are not necessarily authentic in the traditional

sense, as they have been constructed, both in the mise-en-scène and with image technology. Yet they pretend to be accurate instances in a person's life.



Figure 1 A picture from Kim Britt's Instagram that was featured in Hosie's article. Britt often displays a side by side picture of 'Instagram vs Reality'. Picture from article.

What I mean by this is that if we were present alongside the camera, we would not see the moment as it is displayed in the picture. Let us use the picture of Kim Britt holding her dog as an example and see why it feels less authentic than the picture next to it, where she is cleaning up after the dog. For the first part, the picture looks completely leveled and it is a nice composition with a nice background, which hints that the photographer took some time to choose the framing and selecting what should and should not be in the shot. The second part is the pink sky, a typical look that can be achieved by using color grading or by applying Instagram filters. Her hair, clothing and make-up look to be on point, and the moment chosen to post on social media looks like a joyful moment of the person enjoying her life. This picture, like many others on social media, has been heavily manipulated both on scene and in post-production. It is often not about what is shown in these pictures, but more what is left out on purpose. We often only see the perfect dish, but not the messy kitchen that is just out of frame.

On the other side of the spectrum we have the work of photographer Nan Goldin. Goldin is famous for taking photos of things as they are. Her photographs give us a sense of authenticity. The pictures feel authentic because they do not look constructed at all, but

instead look like genuine moments caught on camera. Goldin is probably most famous for her photo series *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*. According to O'Hagan:

"When the book was published, it defined what came to be known, somewhat reductively, as "the snapshot style". Shot in often saturated colour and flash-lit, it was initially dismissed, she says, mainly by male photographers. "I didn't really care about 'good' photography," she once said, 'I cared about complete honesty.'" (O'Hagan, 2014)

Many of her shots break the compositional rules, have bad lighting, have soft focus and are slightly blurred due to slow shutter speed. But none of that matters, as Youtuber Jamie Windsor says in his video essay, because they feel more real and they have an added level of intimacy (Windsor, 2019). Another interesting thing when thinking about Goldin's pictures in relation to authenticity is not just the pictures themselves, but also how Goldin has talked about how she takes the pictures. For example, in an interview with *Moca*, Goldin said that:

"The camera was like an extension of my hand. And I just shot all day, I never moved anything. For me it was a sin to move a beer bottle out of the way. Because it had to be exactly what it was. And that was really the bottom line about photography for me; to show exactly what it was." (Moca, 2013.)

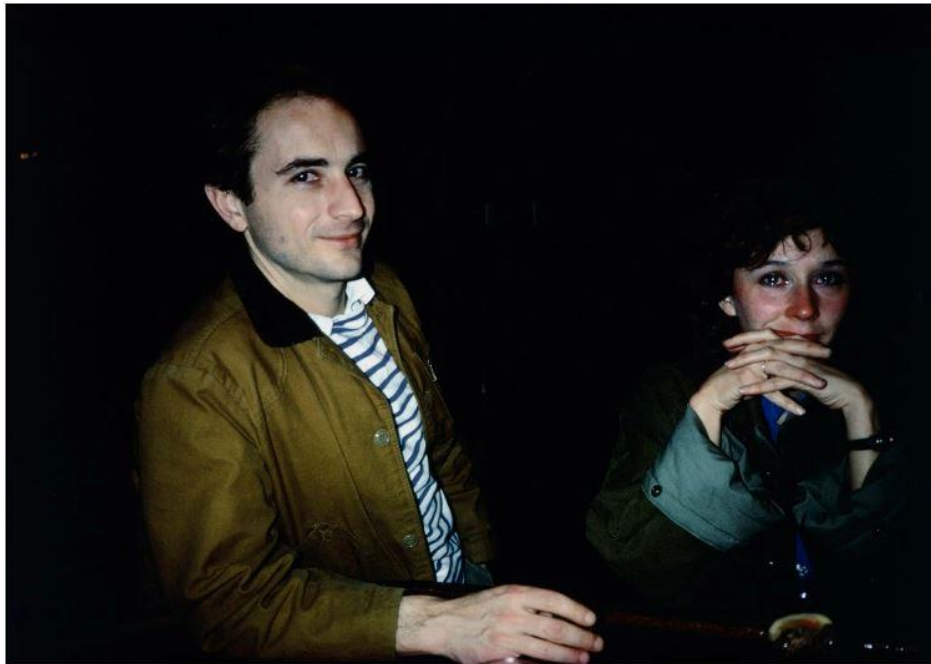


Figure 2. Nan Goldin's "David and Butch Crying at Tin Pan Alley" (1981). Screenshot from the article Bleak Reality in Nan Goldin's 'The Ballad of Sexual Dependency'.

She underlines what we see in the pictures. That she does not treat the mis-en-scène to make her pictures more aesthetically pleasing, but rather relies on the beauty of the moment. With her approach to take photos she achieves authenticity that so many instagrammers fail to do. She keeps true to the original and her photos do not look

constructed, especially since they are not perfect in terms of composition and lighting. However, even though I am sure Goldin's pictures are an honest representation of reality, it is possible to mimic imperfections to create something that feels more real than it is. For example, a video that was uploaded to YouTube showed a golden eagle snatch a kid, fly with it for several meters before dropping it again. The video that appears to be filmed on a smartphone is very shaky, giving it a more authentic feel. The video got over five million views in one day and made it to the news around the globe. However, the video was not as real as it was made out to be; it was in fact a hoax created by digital animation students. They had been given the task to create a viral video, and by using computer-generated images they created a video that looked real. (CBC News, 2012.)

It has become easier to create computer-generated images and videos, which has resulted in situations where "[u]nreal images may be referentially fictional but perceptually realistic" (Prince, 1996, 32). That is to say, it is possible to make pictures and videos that may look real but have no direct indexical relationship to the world we live in. Authenticity is not the same as what can be considered perceptually realistic, even though what we see and hear on the screen has a great effect on what we might consider authentic, but it is more about what the image is referring to. In his essay, Prince used the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* (1993) as an example. The dinosaurs have "no basis in any photographable reality but which nevertheless seemed realistic" (Prince, 1996, 28).

Another more recent example is the recent casting of James Dean in a new film. What makes this interesting is that Dean has not been alive for 64 years: "*The digital Dean is to be assembled through old footage and photos and voiced by another actor*" (Coyle, 2019). Even though the recreated Dean is different from the recreated dinosaurs, since we have photographs and videos that show us how he looked, walked and moved, both are referentially fictional. The recreated Dean will be perceptually realistic, but his actions are fictionalized. He might look authentic, when in fact he has just been constructed like the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park*.

According to Bill Nichols, computer generated images can bear "an extraordinary fidelity to familiar people, places, and things" (Nichols, 2017, xii). Nichols also wrote that "certain technologies and styles encourage us to believe in a tight, if not perfect, correspondence between image and reality" (2017, xii). He also states that the high-resolution media appears to guarantee the authenticity of what we see. Just as well they can give the impression of authenticity to totally fabricated things. In other words, it is possible to make something look and feel real, even though it is totally fabricated.

I am not saying that computer generated images cannot be used to tell an authentic story. Quite the contrary, they can indeed be used to enhance stories and help engage the audience. It is up to the filmmaker to choose the form and style and tell the story from their own perspective, but, as Nichols pointed out, the story has to correspond to known facts and actual events (Nichols, 2017, 8).

In 1982, Herzog's film *Fitzcarraldo* was released. The film is about a man who is determined to move a steamboat over a steep hill in the middle of the Amazon jungle.

In a podcast interview, Herzog was asked if the film was made with today's technology available, would he consider using CGI to move the boat instead of having his crew manually haul up the heavy boat. Herzog answered that he would not do it. Firstly, because people could see it was not real, and it would not offer an equal experience. Secondly, Herzog said that when *"moving a ship over a mountain means you are exposing yourself to things that are unthinkable and unexpected"* (Weinstein, 2019). He stated that the unthinkable invades you, and that leads you to create an authentic story from an authentic event. He meant that CGI images could not be equally as good as photographically produced images since the latter is created with an authenticity from the event: *"Because the experience of a thing rooted in reality cannot be replaced, substituted and cannot somehow be paralleled in a way by an artificial world by digital effects"* (Weinstein, 2019).

In *First Principles of Documentary* (orig. 1934), John Grierson makes a distinctive difference between a documentary and a lecture film. The latter lacks all dramatization, they just describe natural materials, while documentaries are *"arrangements, rearrangements, and the creative shapings of it"* (1979, 36). Nichols states that documentaries have never had a precise definition, but that today's definitions revert to some version of Grierson's definition of documentaries as 'creative treatment of actuality' (Nichols, 2017, 5).

Brian Winston argues that there is a contradiction in Grierson's phrase. Winston notes that any "actuality" left after "creative treatment" can at best be seen as naïve (Winston, 1995, 11). Winston's point is critiqued by John Corner. Corner states that creative treatment of non-fiction does not make the project fiction (Corner, 1996, 18). His argument is that non-fiction can be treated creatively without jeopardizing actuality or truth of the content (see also Kerrigan, McIntyre, 2010, 114). I agree with Corner's point. Documentaries should not be judged solely on their fidelity to the original, like some documents, such as passport photos or medical X-rays. Those documents and documentaries serve different purposes. Nichols offers a usable definition:

"Among the assumptions we bring to documentary, then, is that individual shots and sounds, perhaps even scenes and sequences, will bear a highly indexical relationship to the events they represent, but that the film as a whole will go beyond being a mere document or record of these events to offer a perspective on them. Facts will become evidence, and evidence will support a point of view. As an audience, we expect to be able both to trust the indexical linkage between what we see and what occurred before the camera and to assess the poetic or rhetorical transformation of this linkage into a commentary or perspective on the world we occupy." (Nichols, 2017, 26.)

Based on the statements above, it is hard to define exactly what authenticity in documentary is. There are a lot of factors to consider when thinking about how documentaries produce authenticity and how authentic the end product is. Authenticity comes from more than the indexical quality of the shots that make up the film. For me, it is about honesty, the filmmaker trying to give an honest representation of actuality. The filmmaker also has to be honest about the choices he or she makes, and that the filmmaker

is telling the stories from their chosen perspective. That will be my focus in the following chapters.

In the first main chapter I will look at perspectives in documentaries. I will talk about how perspectivism has been discussed by other scholars before talking about the perspective of the filmmaker and the perspective of the subject. In the second main chapter, I will focus on ecstatic truth in documentaries. I will look at what Herzog means by the phrase and how he uses it in his films.

2. Different perspectives in documentary

In this chapter I will look closer into perspectivism. There are a lot of different perspectives when it comes to documentaries. Documentaries are always told from someone's perspective, and they often incorporate other perspectives as well. How a filmmaker chooses to tell a story and which perspectives the filmmaker chooses to include has an effect on documentary authenticity. My aim is to discuss perspectivism in order to think about authenticity beyond the ideal of objectivity. For me, the most interesting perspectives, in addition to the perspective of the audience, are those of the filmmaker, the camera, and the subject. All of these perspectives intertwine and come together in different ways in different moments of cinema. In the following subchapters I will be focusing on the perspectives of the filmmaker and the subject.

Perspectivism in philosophy, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is defined as: "*Chiefly with reference to the work of Nietzsche (1844–1900): the theory that knowledge of a subject is inevitably partial and limited by the individual perspective from which it is viewed, or that objectivity is impossible*" (Perspectivism, 2019). In the first half of this chapter I will be looking closer at Nietzsche's view on perspectivism and how that relates to documentaries. I will do so by reflecting on an article written by Kathrina Mitcheson, who is a senior lecturer in philosophy at the University of West England. Her main research specialisms are European philosophy and the philosophy of art (Mitcheson, n.d.). In the article, she talks about perspectivism in documentary. The article, called *Perspectivism in Nietzsche and Herzog: The Documentary Film as a Perspectival Truth Practice*, compares the work of the philosopher Nietzsche to documentary films made by Werner Herzog. Mitcheson uses Nietzsche's ideas about truth to look at perspectivism in documentaries. After I talk about that article, I will look closer at a few additional aspects of perspectivism and use some of Werner Herzog's films as an example.

2.1. Perspectivism in documentary theory

In her article, Mitcheson starts by giving an example from the film *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (1997). The documentary film is about a German-American Navy pilot and Vietnam veteran, Dieter Dengler. In the film, Dengler discusses how he got captured in the Vietnam war and how he managed to escape from the hands of the Viet Cong. In the film, Dengler revisits a few of the sites he talks about in the film. Very early in the film we hear a voice-over from the filmmaker himself, Werner Herzog. Then there is a transition from Herzog's voice-over to Dengler's voice, who also has a German accent.

According to Mitcheson, "*from the start of this documentary film the presence of perspective announces itself*" (Mitcheson, 2013, 348). What Mitcheson is saying is that right from the beginning we know that the filmmaker's perspective merges with that of the subject. Furthermore, Mitcheson states that there is a blurring of the literal and figurative voices. I believe that the filmmaker and the subject have each their own figurative voice, or rather perspectives. Those perspectives can exist simultaneously, but at times they can be hard to distinguish from each other. For example, in this film, Herzog does not simply observe Dengler's perspective, but he asserts his own and at times he adapts to the subject's perspective. This film, like many others made by Herzog, does not strive for an ideal of objectivity. Mitcheson points out that the film is also highly stylized and directed. What she is pointing out is that Herzog does not film with a fly on the wall approach, where the camera just rolls on Dengler telling his story from his own perspective. Instead Herzog directs and stylizes Dengler's perspective.

There is one scene in the film that Herzog talks about in his Masterclass series (Herzog, 2016). In the scene Dieter sits on a carpet on the bank of the river Mekong. Dieter faces the camera with the river in the background. He talks to the camera and recalls how he and his friend Duane Martin escaped from the Viet Cong and tried to make it to and over the river to reach safety in Thailand. Dieter talks in a very theatrical way, making gestures with his hands and even acting as Martin when he got hit with a machete. Dieter's monologue seems finely honed, and he does not focus on too many details. One of the details he does however focus on is that of a sole from a tennis shoe. Dieter and Martin had found a rubber sole when escaping through the forest barefooted. They used to alternate wearing it, tying it to their feet. Dieter then explains that after Martin's head had been chopped off, he took the time to grab the sole off Martin's feet before running away.

Herzog tells in his Masterclass video that he filmed that scene multiple times (Herzog, 2016). The first time Dieter told his story it was 35 minutes long, and as Herzog recalls he told Dieter that nobody would listen to that. They try again, and Dieter tells the story in 30 seconds. Reflecting on this, Herzog says that there was not anything left in the story and that "*there was a little detail which was important in his account. They had found a sole of a tennis shoe. [...] It is a very significant detail for me, and then we filmed it and he forgot it. And I said, Dieter, I have to do it again. Do not forget this detail.*" (Herzog, 2016.)

That scene in *Little Dieter Needs To Fly* is a great example of how the perspective of the subject and the perspective of the filmmaker intertwine. Dieter tells his story from his

perspective. Herzog then comes in and sharpens Dieter's story and puts a focus on the things he finds most interesting. In this case, the rubber sole. By choosing what to focus on and what not to include in Dieter's recollection, Herzog inserts his perspective. Actuality could here be viewed as the multiplicity of simultaneous perspectives. Dengler tells the 35-minute story by inhabiting Herzog's perspective in a much shorter time. How Herzog molded Dieter's monologue into something that captivates the viewer, yet keeps true to the original story, is a creative treatment of actuality in the Griersonian sense. Since Grierson did not define 'the creative treatment of actuality', it is impossible to say if he meant that actuality comes before or after it is perceived by a person. Montague had an idea on what Grierson may have meant with actuality, and it is a definition I agree with. Kerrigan and McIntyre quote Ivor Montague on Grierson's idea of actuality:

"In a sense every art work is the creative treatment of actuality. Actuality is the raw material that, as experience, must pass through the consciousness of the creative artist [or group] to become transformed by labour and in accordance with technical and aesthetic laws into the art product. Presumably Grierson is referring not to actuality in that sense but to actuality in the sense that the raw material which the documentary film worker composes is the cinematographic record of visual aspects of reality." (Montague, 1964, 281, quoted in Kerrigan, McIntyre, 2010, 116)

As I will point out in the following pages, you cannot remove the perspective when viewing the truth, and the same goes for actuality. But as Montague points out, Grierson presumably did not refer to actuality in that way, but rather that the raw material filmed by the filmmaker is a visual representation of reality. The filmmaker's perspective can be, if they are as firmly asserted in the films as Herzog asserts his, viewed as a creative treatment of actuality.

Documentaries have a linkage to real life and their authenticity is often judged on how accurately they stick to facts. The audience expects that the documentary and the filmmaker are giving an honest representation of actuality. However, the audience will always see the filmmaker's interpretation of actuality. Some filmmakers, like Herzog, do push the boundaries of what is considered a documentary. Herzog often inserts fictional elements into his documentaries. Interestingly enough, he also brings actuality to his fiction films. For example, *Fitzcarraldo*, is about a man that hauls a steam ship weighing over 300 tons over a steep hill. The film was made by Herzog, who actually pulled that heavy ship over the steep hill. Another fiction film by Herzog is *Family Romance, LLC* (2019). In that film Yuichi Ishii stars as a man willing to play the role of a friend, coworker, father or whatever the clients want him to play. In real life, Yuichi Ishii actually works for an agency called Family Romance. The film has been described as a: "*Hybrid narrative that positions non-fiction elements in a narrative context*" (Kohn, 2019). What Kohn means is that it can be viewed as a mix between a documentary film and a fiction film.

Many of Herzog documentary films could also be viewed as hybrids. He has himself said that he is not really a documentarian and that most of his documentaries are "*feature films in disguise*" (Deadline Hollywood, 2019). I personally would not go as far as to call his documentaries feature films in disguise. He surely does work within the frames of what

constitutes a documentary. He uses stylizations and fictional elements to tell his stories, but the motives for his choices usually have a linkage to actuality, and Herzog has the idea that factual truth is surpassed by a poetic one. Dieter's relationship with doors is an example of that, and I will explain it better in the chapter called 'The perspective of the filmmaker'.

Little Dieter still works within the audience expectations of documentary when compared to *Rescue Dawn*, a fiction film based on the same story, and thus reinforces my belief that Herzog's stylized documentaries can still be viewed as such. Herzog challenges the dichotomy between truth and fiction, and in doing so, he underlines that the truth of the project is not abandoned because of perspectives. Mitcheson points out that "*there is no objective standard of truth free from any perspective against which we can measure the veracity of an account*" (Mitcheson, 2013, 349).

Mitcheson looks at what truth means in the context of perspectivism by looking at documentaries and Nietzsche's philosophical autobiography *Ecce Homo*. She talks about how Nietzsche agrees with Kant on how the human contribution cannot be removed to reveal the object as it really is. We have no access to objects free from the contribution of our own intellect according to Nietzsche. That is to say, it is impossible to look at an object from a totally neutral point of view. Objects, or the truth, is always seen from someone's perspective. Nietzsche stated that all things are perceived by the human head, and the head cannot be cut off. Mitcheson quotes Nietzsche: "*There is only perspectival seeing, only a perspectival 'knowing'*" (Mitcheson, 2013, 351). This quote sums up Nietzsche's argument that everything that we see and know is seen from someone's perspective, and that perspective cannot be removed.

Nietzsche, just like Plato, looks at truth as an activity that individuals have to undertake. Truth is a practice that affects those who practice it. Instead of trying to be free from any perspective he would rather inhabit more perspectives. He argued that looking at the world from as many perspectives as possible would result in a more modest truth (Mitcheson, 2013, 362). Nietzsche claimed that truth is always the interpretation of perspectives. However, as he points out, not all interpretations are equal. Some interpretations are more truthful than others, but the problem is that there is no standard truth that can be used to measure truthfulness against. In documentaries there are no rules that govern what the filmmakers do or how true to actuality documentaries must be. "*There aren't even any formal ethical guidelines for documentary filmmaking, though there are common practices that play a similar role*" (Nichols, 2017, 11). The definition on what constitutes a documentary is always changing. However, like Nichols points out, filmmakers should uphold certain ethical guidelines. If you sway too much away from what constitutes as truth, your film might be seen as inauthentic work.

2.2. The perspective of the filmmaker

Documentaries do not simply present the world to us. Documentaries are made by filmmakers and it is not just that they are told from the perspective of the filmmakers, but they are also the result of the intrusion of the filmmakers onto the situation being filmed. The fact that there is a camera present, and usually a film crew has an effect on what the camera is witness to. There are a lot of perspectives in a film crew. The cinematographer, for examples, has a different perspective than the sound person. The cinematographer captures the visual material he or she believes is the most important to tell the story while the sound person's main focus is on the audio. Their perspectives, as others within the crew, are incorporated in the director's perspective. The director, whom I will refer to as the filmmaker, incorporates the perspectives of his crew members to tell the story from his or her perspective.

Little Dieter Needs to Fly is presented as a documentary and therefore sets the expectations for the viewer's experience. The film also has stylistic traits that are associated with documentaries. For example, the use of archival footage, narration through voice-over and handheld camera. This leads the viewer to believe that the film tells the truth about its subject matter, even though Herzog might be challenging the distinction between fiction and documentary films. When I say that Herzog pushes the boundaries between fiction films and documentary, I mean the way he inserts his own perspective into the documentary film and therefore intensifies the filmed moments. This is his creative treatment of actuality. For example in the beginning of *Little Dieter Needs To Fly*, Dieter walks into a tattoo shop to look at a new tattoo that was inspired by a hallucination that he had. In the hallucination lots of horses came galloping towards him from an enormous door. The horses were not driven by death, he said, they were driven by angels. Eric Ames points out in his book *Ferocious Reality: Documentary according to Werner Herzog* (2012) that when comparing that scene to Dieter's memoirs there are some differences. In the memoir Dieter talks twice about golden doors in the sky opening up. Only when mentioning the second image, were there horses coming through the open door. "Drawing on the second image alone, Herzog adds the supernatural figures of death and the angels (which are nowhere mentioned in Dengler's memoir) and renders the image visually as the design for a tattoo" (Ames, 2012, 189). Herzog also said it himself in *Herzog on Herzog*, that it was true that Dieter had hallucinations when he was near death, but he never intended to get a tattoo. That idea was all his (Cronin, 2002, 266). By opening the film on this scene, Herzog sets the tone of the film. Dieter talks about how close to dying he was but still death did not want him. The dialogue, as the whole scene, was scripted by Herzog to show what Herzog believed was an important part of Dieter's story. Death is also something that Herzog features in a lot of his films, and therefore might have chosen to include it.²

² <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/apr/14/werner-herzog-into-the-abyss> In this article the author talks about few films in which Herzog features a person close to death.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/04/24/the-ecstatic-truth> In this article Herzog talks about the film *La Soufrière* (1977) where he said that: "What I had heard was that there was one man who had refused to evacuate. That is what fascinated me—to explore a human being whose view of death is so different, who does something inexplicable."

In the same article the author points out that Herzog has a "penchant for jaws-of-death metaphors".

There is another scene in the film where Dieter is also talking about death. In the scene Dieter is standing in front of a water tank trying to explain what death looks like. The water tank is full of jellyfish. As Herzog describes in *Herzog on Herzog*, Dieter had talked to Herzog about a dream he had. The dream made Herzog immediately think of a jellyfish. Herzog says:

"It was almost dancing in a kind of slow-motion transparent movement, exactly the image that was needed to enable his dream to be articulated on screen. Dieter could not express it, so I did it for him and had him stand next to the water tank. I just took his words and enriched them with images, much like a scientist enriches uranium. He then has a bomb." (Cronin, 2002, 270).

The way Dieter had imagined death, was probably not exactly like a jellyfish. But probably something more unearthly. However, the way he described it made Herzog think of a jellyfish. Instead of letting Dieter describe directly to the viewer how he saw death, we get Herzog's view of it. In the film Dieter points at the jellyfish in the tank behind him and says that this is how death looks like to him. Even if the film is about Dieter talking about his own life it is also told from the perspective of Herzog. Not only through his voice-overs and occasional questions to Dieter, but also through his audio-visual choices.

Both Dengler and Herzog grew up in post-war Germany. Dengler, in the film, talks about how he knew hunger growing up, something Herzog also has talked about after the film was released: *"We were constantly hungry and looking for food, and this is one reason why I felt such a connection to Dieter Dengler many years later"* (Cronin, 2002, 7).

Herzog also said that he felt a connection to Dieter because of how they at an early age needed to take charge of their own lives (Cronin, 2002, 265). Herzog shares a lot with his subject and therefore has a different point of view than a complete outsider when it comes to Dieter. I believe that because of his connection to his subject the filmmaker made a different film than a filmmaker that did not connect with Dieter on the same level would have made. For example, the decision to film in Germany and talk about growing up there could have been taken because Herzog identifies with that part of Dieter's life. The story of Dieter also serves to tell the story of Herzog's life.

Herzog has stated that everything in the film is authentic Dieter, even though scenes were scripted and rehearsed (Cronin, 2002, 265). He stated that he was very careful when editing and stylizing Dieter's reality, but at the same time, according to him, it was his job to translate and edit his thoughts into cinematic images. For example, in the beginning of the film when Dieter opens and closes doors several times, that is not something Dieter normally does. However, Dieter had mentioned to Herzog that he has a relationship with doors. Herzog stated, in *Herzog on Herzog*, that:

"Dieter repeatedly opens and closes his front door, a scene I created from what he had casually mentioned to me, that after his experiences in the jungle he truly appreciated the feeling of being able to open a door whenever he wanted to" (Cronin, 2002, 266).

Herzog intensified that relationship to signify Dengler's appreciation for freedom and how he is marked by his past experience. It can be challenging to show in a visual way the inner struggles and conflicts of a person, so here Herzog, just as he did with the opening scene at the tattoo shop, found a way to render Dengler's feelings as images.

Herzog said that "*It was my job as the director to translate and edit his thoughts into something profound and cinematic*" (Cronin, 2002, 265) In other words, Herzog treats actuality with creativity when making his films. The actuality seen from Herzog's perspective is intensified and made visual for the viewer.

Herzog's voice in the documentary is not limited to his voice-overs. Bill Nichols talks about the voices of documentary in his book *Introduction to Documentary* (2017). The voice of documentary can be all means of communication both verbal and nonverbal. Nichols states that these means can be summarized as the selection and arrangement of sound and image. He means that this entails at least the following decisions:

1. *When to cut, or edit, and what to juxtapose.*
2. *How to frame or compose a shot (close-up or long shot; low or high angle; artificial or natural lighting; color or black and white; whether to pan, zoom or out; whether to track or remain stationary; and so on).*
3. *Whether to record synchronous sound at the time of shooting, and whether to add additional sound, such as voice-over translations, dubbed dialogue, music, sound effects, or commentary, at a later point.*
4. *Whether to adhere to an accurate chronology or rearrange events to support a point or mood.*
5. *Whether to use archival or other people's footage and photographs or only those images shot by the filmmaker on the spot.*
6. *Which mode or mix of modes of representation to rely on to organize the film (expository, poetic, observational, participatory, reflexive, performative or interactive).* (Nichols, 2017, 52)

Of course, he did not have a say in how Treadwell framed his shots, or how he performed in front of the camera. Herzog did however choose to use Treadwell's footage, which was the core of the film. An interesting choice by Herzog was to not let the audience hear the audio from when the grizzly bear killed Treadwell and his girlfriend, Amie Huguenard. Herzog chose a more ethical approach. What he did was that he used a sequence of scenes to give the audience a good idea what was on the audio tape. First scene in that sequence was when the coroner described in detail what had happened. The coroner had examined Treadwell's body and Huguenard's body as well as listened to the audio from when they were killed by the bear. So the coroner could paint a verbal picture of what had happened, as well as share what Treadwell and Huguenard were saying in their last moments alive. In the next scene, Herzog is facing away from the camera, towards Jewel Palovak. Palovak, who is Treadwell's ex-girlfriend, reads Herzog's face while he listens to the tape and mirror his reaction to the camera. This scene gives the viewer a chance to see the emotions, tied to the horrible event that was caught on tape. The next scene is a scene of two bears fighting. That scene shows the brutal strength grizzly bears have, and how viciously they

tear at each other. That scene gives the viewer a sense of how helpless the two human beings were against a fully grown grizzly bear. By not letting the audience hear the tape, but instead showing these scenes in this order, Herzog manages to describe the content of the tape in a more ethical way.

In his films Herzog does not attempt to hide his perspectival character, or how he uses various artistic techniques to present his viewpoints. The same can be said about Nietzsche's perspectival character in *Ecce Homo*. It is clear that it is present. Chapter titles such as 'Why I am so Wise' and 'Why I am so Clever' advertise this loudly. Films that admit and understand perspective, according to Mitcheson can "*be viewed as more truthful or honest than one that tries to cover over perspective*" (Mitcheson, 2013, 361). To sum it up, a documentary film that is open about its perspectives and how it arrives at the truth it tells, can be viewed as more truthful and more authentic than a film that sets up our communal beliefs as objective truths.

When we started filming our documentary about Artemis, we tried to keep our distance and be as objective as possible. We thought that would result in a more authentic film. We soon figured out that it was not working for us for a couple of reasons. One of the reasons was that the film is just as much about Artemis' inner struggles as her outer struggles. It can be difficult to show visually what is going on in a person's mind, and it is especially difficult if we only stick to the fly on the wall approach. I am not saying it is impossible, but it can take a long time. We were not seeing the emotions we wanted early on in the process, so we decided to change our approach to the film. We came up with using *poi*, a style of performance art where the artist spins tethered lights around him or herself in a rhythmic pattern, as a way to show Artemis escaping the struggles of real life and finding solace in her mind. *Poi* is something Artemis has been practicing for years, and something that she enjoys. Usually she just practices *poi* at home, and occasionally, as she mentioned in one of the interviews we did with her, she goes into the woods and swings *poi* there alone. We did film her doing *poi* in the woods, but we also decided to bring her into a studio, where we could set up lights and have full control of the surroundings to get a more visually pleasing *poi* practice.

The second reason for changing our method was that we were not getting the material we wanted. For example, there was a conversation we filmed Artemis having with her friend. The conversation did not get deep enough, and it felt like she and her friend were talking around the things we wanted for the film. Those were very personal things that can be difficult to talk about, even if the director had asked them to talk about the subject before we started to roll the camera. It was not before the director started to participate in the conversation that things started to get interesting. The director, while staying out of frame, started to direct the conversations to the talking points that we were interested in getting for the film. Even though his perspective in that scene is not as obvious as Herzog's perspective in his films, it is there.

The director of the film, Mads, is one of Artemis' closest friends. He sometimes appears in the film, as a friend, interacting with Artemis. In the early edits of the film, it was unclear to the viewer who he was in relation to Artemis. We wanted people to know that he was not

just a friend, but also the director of the film. At the same time, we did not want to put too many scenes with him in, to explain to the viewer that he is indeed the director. We were afraid that it could result in the focus to shift from Artemis and her story, to him and his friendship with Artemis. We also thought it was more ethical to let the audience know that Mads was both the director of the film and a friend. It is interesting that he has two perspectives when it comes to the film. Both that of a friend and a filmmaker.

The plan in the beginning was not to have Mads on film, but soon after we started filming we found out that the best way to direct this particular film and to get the most out of certain scenes was to have Mads interacting with Artemis. Not only did he know, as Artemis' friend, how to get through to her so that she would open up in front of the cameras, but he could also take the role of the devil's advocate. Most of the people in the film share her thoughts about trans-people and their rights, including Mads. However, knowing that it could benefit the film he brought up other perspectives on how people view trans-people and asked difficult questions about the process of changing genders. It was always the intention of the director to create a film that shows the everyday struggles of his friend Artemis and inform the public about trans-people. By getting people to relate to Artemis as a character and sympathize with her, we hope that people will be more understanding of trans-people in general. Artemis had similar reasons to partake in this documentary.

2.3. The perspective of the subject

Documentaries are classified as such for example through marketing, distribution and audience approach. There are also internal stylistic features and conventions used in documentaries that support the assertion of the work to be nonfiction. Mitcheson does not go deep into what defines a documentary, but rather talks about the expectation that a documentary offers a truthful account of its subject. She talks about how Bill Nichols in his book *Introduction to Documentary* argued that documentaries try in some sense to show us the world and give us an impression of authenticity. Documentaries film actual people, and actual places and events, instead of actors on set. This leads the viewer to believe that there is a transference of reality:

"The belief that the film involves a transference of reality allows the film to be taken as evidence that the subject matter was the way it appears to us in the film and as part of the overall evidence that the film is offering us a truthful account of the way things were" (Mitcheson, 2013, 353).

Despite Herzog's stylization and creative treatment, *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* is also told from Dieter's perspective. For example, as Eric Ames points out in *Ferocious Reality: Documentary according to Werner Herzog* Dieter provides practical information to the viewer. Practical information such as how to build a fire and how to pick the lock on handcuffs. Dieter observed his guards when he was prisoner, learnt from them, and in the film, he displays these skills to the camera *"using direct address and still in the context of his own recounting"* (Ames, 2012, 197). Even though these scenes were part of a reenactment, it is told from Dieter's perspective.

There is another scene in which Dieter's perspective is obvious to the viewer. In that scene Dieter has his hands tied behind his back and is being followed by five Thais armed with rifles. Dieter then says to the camera: *"This feels a little bit too close to home"*. This scene is fraught from Dieter's perspective, as Ames points out. *"Herzog's approach to reenactment ushers in the possibility of inciting a 'secondary trauma' as a result of having the survivor not just recount but also in a sense relive his experience on camera"* (Ames, 2012, 196). We hear Herzog's voice-over as Dengler is being led through the jungle: *"Of course Dieter knew it was only a film but all the old terror returned as if it were real."* Herzog's voice-over is followed by Dieter's voice-over: *"I thought you guys behind me with your camera can only see my back but you cannot know how my heart is thumping inside. I told myself, OK, play along with them, running like this might chase the demons away."* Here, Dengler, by addressing the presence of the camera, confirms what Herzog said about him knowing it was 'only a film'. However, having been a prisoner of war in real life, his perspective of this reenactment is very different from that of the filmmaker. He sees the terror that he once experienced. In an interview with indieWire Dieter said that during filming he had said to Herzog that he was not comfortable with the scene. According to Dieter, Herzog had replied: *"That's exactly what I want you to say"* (Stone, 1998). Herzog wanted Dieter to tell the story from his perspective, and share his own feelings and thoughts on screen, resulting in a more authentic story.

Herzog has said that he only stylizes his documentaries when the subject agrees that the stylization aptly illuminates his character. *Grizzly Man* (2005) is a film made by Herzog after the death of Timothy Treadwell who is the main subject of the film. The film therefore contains no fiction, because, according to Herzog: "*there was no possibility of collaboration*" (Zalewski, 2006). I want to point out that there was some stylization in the film, but it did not involve Treadwell, but other subjects. I will go more in depth into those scenes in the Ecstatic Truth chapter.

Grizzly Man is about Timothy Treadwell, who was an American environmentalist and a bear enthusiast. The film is about his life and death. Most of the film is from footage Treadwell filmed while spending his summers in a national park in Alaska. He claimed that he was protecting the bears in the national park. Werner Herzog, who directed the film, had more than 100 hours of footage that Treadwell shot. In addition to that footage, he filmed interviews with Treadwell's family and friends, park rangers, a coroner and bear experts. By incorporating more perspectives, we come closer to the truth according to what Mitcheson wrote about Nietzsche: "*For Nietzsche, to do justice to the world, or approach a new kind of objectivity, is to see through as many eyes as possible. This involves learning to occupy different perspectives and attuning oneself to the many different perspectives of our multiple drives*" (Mitcheson, 2013,362).



Figure 3. Screenshot from the film *Grizzly Man*.

The film opens with a shot of Timothy Treadwell stepping in front of a camera. It is a static shot with mountains in the background, a couple of grizzly bears in the midground and Treadwell in the foreground. Treadwell talks to the camera and sets the tone of the film. This shot is very typical of this film. It appears that Treadwell is alone, and he talks to the

camera as if it were some kind of diary. Treadwell describes how the grizzly bears will chop him into pieces if he shows weakness, *"but so far, I persevere"*. Treadwell continues, stating that he sometimes is like a kind warrior, and that he is *"like a fly on a wall"* and *"noninvasive in any way"*. Only if he is challenged, he will not act as the kind warrior but become a samurai, and act formidable, stronger, and more powerful than the bears around him. He also said that he would become one of them. He then talks about how his life has been on the precipice of death, and that he is willing to die for the bears. Treadwell gets up and proceeds to walk out of frame, but before he exits the frame, he looks at the camera and points at it and says *"Give it to me baby. That's what I'm talking about, that's what I'm talking about"*. He does that with a different energy than he displayed before. As if he was trying to act cool in front of the camera. When he is out of frame, we hear him say *"I can smell death all over my fingers"*.

This scene is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, it sets the tone by introducing us to the main character, showing us the particular style it is filmed in and Treadwell's words on how dangerous it is to do what he is doing. With his words, Treadwell sets up what is revealed to us later in the film, that he was killed by grizzly bears. We also get to know how Treadwell views himself, his self-assigned mission and how he views the bears. We also get to know the subject's perspective from the perspective of the filmmaker.

For example, there is a scene where Herzog uses voice-over and points out that Treadwell sees the universe in balance and in harmony. Treadwell, appearing to be very sad, is sitting next to a dead fox, saying that he does not understand and that it is a painful world. Herzog does not share Treadwell's view of the universe and makes it clear to us with voice-over:

"Here I differ with Treadwell. He seems to ignore the fact that in nature there are predators. I believe the common nominator of the universe is not harmony but chaos, hostility and murder."

Treadwell's view on the world is completely different from Herzog's view of the world. While Treadwell views the bears as his friends, Herzog sees no kinship, understanding nor mercy in all the faces of all the bears that Treadwell filmed.

It is interesting to look at Treadwell's perspective in this film because not only does he talk about how he views things, but he shows us what he is interested in by operating the camera. Treadwell's perspective of both the animals and himself is different from Herzog's perspective. While Treadwell sees the bears as his friends and himself their savior, Herzog views the bears as merciless animals and Treadwell as a somewhat naive person. Throughout the film we see Timothy Treadwell film the animals around him as well as himself. His main focus is on the animals, but what we get to see from his footage, is that he also films himself a lot. In the film we get to know that Treadwell is a failed actor, and always wanted to become famous. When Treadwell is in front of the camera, we get to see two sides of him. One side where he is talking about the animals, and how he's trying to help them. The other side is more about him, and how he is acting like an action star in his own film. In *Grizzly Man*, we see sequences of shots where Treadwell is acting for the camera. This gives us an insight into how Treadwell sees himself and how he wishes for others to see him. Herzog addresses this in the film and says in a voice-over: *"Treadwell*

saw himself as the guardian of this land and stylized himself as Prince Valiant, fighting the bad guys with their schemes to do harm to the bears". Treadwell believed he was protecting the animals from humans. He liked the wilderness far more than 'the people's world'. Herzog read a sentence from Treadwell's diary where he had written: "*How much I hate the people's world*".

How Treadwell viewed himself and the animals is not shared by other subjects in the film. Other subjects in the film believe that Treadwell had a wrong view of the bears and that he even viewed himself as a bear. Sam Egli, a helicopter pilot, said that Treadwell believed that the bears were "*big, scary-looking, harmless creatures that he could go up and pat and sing to they would bond as children of the universe or some odd*". Marnie Gaede, an ecologist, believed that in some sense Timothy wanted to become a bear. Sven Haakanson, the curator of Kodiak Alutiiq museum thought Treadwell tried to act like a bear and by doing so, Treadwell disrespected the bear and what the bear represents.

Seoung-Hoon Jeong and Dudley Andrew wrote an article called *Grizzly Ghost: Herzog, Bazin and the cinematic animal* (2008). In the article they talk about the metaphor of Treadwell becoming a bear. They argue that Treadwell's footage is the best material to showcase Treadwell's bear-like inside:

"Treadwell's video is the authentic cinematic kernel, the uncontrollable outside, lodged inside the film, a trace of the Real which Herzog tries vainly to envelop in his well-formed film language. But no set of interviews, no psychoanalysis, could ever bring to light Treadwell's completely inscrutable bear-like inside" (Jeong, Dudley, 2008, 8).

I agree with them. Treadwell did talk about becoming 'one of them' and he often filmed himself next to the bears. Almost as if he was one of them. I do not think Treadwell viewed himself as a bear, but at some level I think he wanted to become one.

Treadwell filmed what was most important to him. That is, the animals and himself. It was a particular version of himself that he filmed. A version of himself that he wanted other people to perceive him as. A peaceful warrior, savior of the bears, living at the brink of death alone in the wilderness. Treadwell decided where to put the camera, and what to have in the frame. But since *Grizzly Man* was made after Treadwell's death, he had no say in how it was edited. Therefore, we get a different perspective on how Treadwell was. For example, he tried to make it look like he was there always alone, but since Herzog had access to all of Treadwell's material, Herzog found bits of footage that showed that Treadwell spent a few of his summers there in the company of his girlfriend. *Grizzly Man* is about half Treadwell's footage and half Herzog's footage. According to Eric Ames, Treadwell's footage had to "*pass through Herzog's film and, consequently, becomes part of it*" (Ames, 2012, 244).

Grizzly Man, like so many other documentaries, introduces the viewer to its social actors. The viewers get to know the characters and their perspectives. The perspectives of the characters are important to the authenticity of the film. Imagine if *Grizzly Man* did not include Treadwell's perspective. It would have been a completely different film where the viewer would only know about Treadwell from other characters in the film and the

filmmaker. If we only got to know Herzog's perspective, and not Treadwell's, we might think that they shared their views on the animals, and that would not correspond to actuality. As I mention earlier, Treadwell's perspective on the bears is completely different from Herzog's perspective. The viewer would see Treadwell differently and not have the same compassion for Treadwell. Most importantly, in relations to authenticity, the film would not be concurrent with Treadwell's beliefs. In a documentary film that is about a certain character, I would argue that his or her perspective is an important part of the character, and if their perspective is either misrepresented or not included, the film could be viewed as less authentic.

3. Ecstatic truth in documentary

In this chapter I will talk about ecstatic truth, poetic illumination and performative truth. In the first sub-chapter I am going to write about the Minnesota Declaration in order to distinguish between the truth of accountants and ecstatic truth in Herzog's films. In the second sub-chapter, I will extend the discussion to poetic illumination, that is, how Herzog illuminates his viewers with a deeper stratum of truth. Finally, I will consider the performative nature of ecstatic truth and reflect on ecstatic truth as a kind of a performance. This includes a reflection on my own film, *My Friend Artemis*.

3.1. Herzog's Minnesota Declaration

"There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization" (Herzog, 1999)

The quotation above is taken from a manifesto that Herzog read before a public in 1999 at the Walker Art Centre in Minnesota. The manifesto, a 12-point declaration, was dubbed the *Minnesota Declaration: Truth and Fact in Documentary Cinema* by Herzog. Before Herzog started to read from the declaration, that he subtitled *Lessons of Darkness*, he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, before we start this dialogue, I would like to make a statement. It is something that I have reflected upon for many years in the frustration of seeing so many documentary films. [...] There's something ultimately and deeply wrong about the concept of what constitutes fact and what constitutes truth in documentaries in particular." (Herzog, 1999)

Herzog has often been vocal about what he dislikes about many documentaries. He has talked about how documentaries are too often too close to journalism and are lacking in poetic elements. In an interview at the Sheffield International Documentary Festival, Herzog addressed the crowd when he said that too many documentary films were extensions of journalism and that was not filmmaking. He told the audience that National Geographic might not want stylized films and therefore you had to *"roll up your sleeves and make your own stylizations, your own filmmaking your own way to decipher the world"* (Sheffield Doc/Fest, 2019).

This is exactly what Herzog does himself, he stylizes his material and deciphers the world in his own way. After Herzog read the Minnesota Declaration, Roger Ebert (1999) wrote that for the first time, Herzog fully explained his theory of 'ecstatic truth'. I do not agree with Ebert that the declaration fully explains Herzog's theory on ecstatic truth, but it does however give a good idea of what it is Herzog is trying to convey. The fifth article of the Minnesota Declaration, the one quoted at the start of this chapter, is the only article that mentions ecstatic truth. In that article, Herzog writes that you can only reach the deeper strata of truth, that is, ecstatic truth, through fabrication, imagination and stylization. It does not define what ecstatic truth is, only how you can reach it. Herzog has not provided a better definition for ecstatic truth, but he has given a lot of examples of what it is, both in his own work, and in works by other artists.

In 2017 Herzog was invited to reconsider his Minnesota Declaration in commemoration of the document's 18th anniversary. Herzog (2017) responded with a six-point addendum to the original Minnesota Declaration. Here are the last three:

*"IV. Patron Saints of the Minnesota Declaration:
William Shakespeare: "The most truthful poetry is the most feigning."*

V. André Gide: "I modify facts in such a way that they resemble truth more than reality."

VI. Michelangelo:

Taking a good look at his statue of the Pietà, we notice that Jesus taken from the cross is a man of 33, but his mother is only 17.

Does Michelangelo lie to us? Does he mislead us? Does he defraud us?

He just shows us the innermost truth about the Man of Sorrows, and his mother, the Virgin."

Herzog uses the work of other artists to highlight how what he does is art, and that it can be viewed as more truthful than something solely based on facts. I especially like the last article of the addendum, where he asks if Michelangelo is lying to us. Herzog does not believe that Michelangelo was trying to mislead us, but rather that he intensified what we normally associate with both Jesus and his mother, that Jesus was the Man of Sorrows and his mother was the Virgin. With his choices, he shows us the innermost truth. If Michelangelo would have chosen to be more factually correct, the statue would have displayed Jesus much younger than his mother, but it would not convey the same feelings. It's not possible to verify feelings as you can verify facts, but that does not mean that they cannot be viewed as truthful.

Herzog quotes the French author André Gide in his fifth article of the addendum. The deeper strata of truth, which Herzog calls ecstatic truth, can be reached by modifying facts. Herzog gives an example of what he means by this in a podcast interview. Herzog talks about, in relation to a drama film he made called *Family Romance LLC* (2019), how an imposter was interviewed by a Japanese television station. There is a real company in Japan that rents out actors who have to take on different roles for the people hiring them. They are hired to play a friend or a family member, for example. The owner of the company was interviewed by a Japanese TV station as well as one of his clients. The client had in his solitude rented a friend. But as it turned out, the client was not a client at all, but he too was also a rented actor from Family Romance. NHK, the Japanese television station apologized profoundly according to Herzog. They apologized because they thought they had interviewed a client, not an actor. The founder of Family Romance said that he believed that the imposter told more truth than a real client would have told. Herzog stated that in Japan it is not acceptable to openly talk about being lonesome and that you rather cry in your pillow, and therefore a real client would have lied. However, an actor who has comforted solitary people over 200 times would tell you the truth. So, according to Herzog: "*The imposter has more truth in him than the real person who wants to keep a facade of well-behaved behavior in public*" (Weinstein, 2019).

There is a big difference between facts and truth for Herzog. Herzog believes that poetry and the task to illuminate are part of the filmmaker's job, he believes that filmmakers should go for a deeper vision and go beyond journalism (Sheffield Doc/Fest, 2019). He preaches what he practices. Same as Michelangelo in his art, Herzog seeks to tell the

deeper truth in his films. He goes deeper than facts and through stylization achieves what he calls ecstatic truth. In the fourth article to his original declaration, he summarizes:

"4. Fact creates norms, and truth illumination" (Herzog, 1999).

Herzog said that he wrote the manifesto because he wanted to write a manifesto on his thoughts about fact and truth in filmmaking, ecstatic truth, and rant against cinema vérité (Cronin, 2002, 239). Herzog explains that one night, jetlagged in Italy, he could not sleep, so he turned on the TV. On the television was a documentary that he described as very stupid, uninspiring, and excruciatingly bored. Later that night he turned on the television again. Herzog told Cronin: *"But then at 4 a.m. I found some hard-core porno, and I sat up and said to myself, 'My God, finally something straightforward, something real, even if it is purely physical.' For me the porno had real naked truth"* (Cronin, 2002, 239). The same night Herzog wrote the manifesto. According to Herzog, the manifesto contained everything that had angered and moved him over the years (Cronin, 2002, 239). One of those things is cinema vérité. The first article reads:

"1. By dint of declaration the so-called Cinema Verité is devoid of verité. It reaches a merely superficial truth, the truth of accountants". (Herzog,1999)

What Herzog means by this is that there is a paradox with cinema vérité. Translated to English, cinema vérité is truthful cinema. By drawing the attention of the audience and the subject away from the camera, you are in a way lying to both, since there is a camera present³. Accountant's truth is the opposite of ecstatic truth. Herzog believes that the accountant's truth only relies on facts and it is only a superficial truth. Herzog criticizes cinema vérité because it is a kind of truth of accountants because it disguises perspectives.

So instead of trying to act like there is not a camera or a filmmaker present, Herzog does the opposite and clearly establishes himself in his films. *"Whatever Herzog's intentions and own view of truth, his films show how the inevitable presence of perspective does not mean we have to abandon truth. Rather, if all truth is perspectival, as Nietzsche claims, then the demonstration of the presence of perspectives and the exploration of perspectives is precisely that in which truth consists"* (Mitcheson, 2013, 361). So, by being open about his own perspectives in his films, Herzog's style of filmmaking can be viewed as more truthful than films who use the cinema vérité approach.

Michelangelo was not trying to lie to anyone about the true age gap between Jesus and his mother, but with his artistic input he tried to illuminate the viewers of the statue. Herzog approaches his documentary films in a similar way. By being open about his stylizations and his artistic approach to his films, instead of trying to hide his input, the films can still be viewed as authentic pieces of art. Authenticity in documentary isn't only about how well the film corresponds to known facts, but also the feelings associated with the facts. Just as Herzog said in the addendum:

³ It is worth noting that by cinema vérité Herzog does not mean the French movement of the 1950s associated with Jean Rouch. He is referring to the American brand of observational cinema. (Ames, 2012, 9).

"II. Facts cannot be underestimated as they have normative power. But they do not give us insight into the truth, or the illumination of poetry. Yes, accepted, the phone directory of Manhattan contains four million entries, all of them factually verifiable. But do we know why Jonathan Smith, correctly listed, cries into his pillow every night?" (Herzog, 2017)

Jonathan's telephone number might be correctly listed in the phone directory, but it tells us nothing about who Jonathan is and how he thinks and how he feels. To shed light on those things is what is important for Herzog.

3.2. Poetic illumination

"Cinema, like poetry, is inherently able to present a number of dimensions much deeper than the level of the so-called truth that we find in cinema vérité and even reality itself, and it is these dimensions that are the most fertile areas for filmmakers." (Cronin, 239, 2002)

This quote above belongs to Herzog. He talks about dimensions in cinema that are deeper than what can be found in cinema vérité. It is in these dimensions that he operates. He does not shy away from stylizing his films, to take leave of what can be thought of as facts to illuminate his viewers with a poetic truth. In this chapter I am going to look at how Herzog stylizes his own films in order to illuminate his audience.

The film *Lessons of Darkness* (1992) opens with a quote from Blaise Pascal: *"The collapse of the stellar universe will occur - like creation - in grandiose splendor."* Those words are actually not written by Pascal but were invented by Herzog. Herzog's idea was that the pseudo-quote would lift the audience to a level that prepared them for something momentous. Herzog stated that he did that with the confidence that he was not manipulating the audience in any way (Cronin, 243, 2002).

At first, I did question the authenticity of this particular stylization. I understand that he wanted to set the tone for the film in the very beginning. However, in my opinion he could have just as easily had those words but without associating them with Pascal or, found another quote that served the same purpose. Or, so I thought, until I examined the quote closer, and what Herzog said about this stylization. Herzog explains the opening quotation: *"We are immediately in the realm of poetry - whether or not the audience knows the quote is a fake - which inevitably strikes a more profound chord than mere reportage"* (Cronin, 243, 2002).

Herzog is right. The quote does what he describes, it elevates the viewer. Herzog has picked his words carefully. When you read the words stellar universe, creation, and grandiose splendor, you expect something great to follow. Whether or not Pascal wrote these words does not change the viewer's experience. Herzog gave a speech in German after a screening of his film in Italy, where he defended his choice to use this pseudo quote: *"To acknowledge a fake as fake contributes only to the triumph of accountants. Why am I doing this, you might ask?"* (Herzog, 2010, 1). Herzog said that he did this as means of making possible an ecstatic experience of inner deeper truth (Herzog, 2010, 9). I will explain this better by viewing Herzog's stylization as pathos.

In *Introduction to Documentary* Nichols writes about Aristoteles and the two types of evidence he proposed. Inartistic proof and, the one I am interested in here, artistic proof. Ethos, pathos, and logos are the three modes of persuasion. Nichols said that they can be described as the three C's. Nichols (2017, 59) writes:

- *"Credible or ethical proof (ethos): generating an impression of good moral character or credibility for the filmmaker, witnesses, authorities, and others.*
- *Compelling or emotional proof (pathos): appealing to the audience's emotions to produce the desired effect; putting the audience in the right mood or establishing a frame of mind favorable to a particular view, this "proof" has its basis in emotion rather than logic.*
- *Convincing or demonstrative proof (logos): using real or apparent reasoning; proving, or giving the impression of proving, the case."*

These rhetorical types of artistic proof can be used as a guide to generate an impression of conclusiveness to the viewer. These modes can also be seen as how the filmmaker communicates with the audience. Herzog uses pathos to engage his audience. His ecstatic truth has its basis more in emotion than in logic. In using the pseudo-quote in the beginning of *Lessons of Darkness* he elevated the viewer so that they will be more favorable to accept the stylizations that followed. Herzog says:

"With this quotation as a prefix I elevate [erheben] the spectator, before he has even seen the first frame, to a high level, from which to enter the film. And I, the author of the film, do not let him descend from this height until it is over. Only in this state of sublimity [Erhabenheit] does something deeper become possible, a kind of truth that is the enemy of the merely factual. Ecstatic truth, I call it." (Herzog, 2010, 1)

Lessons of Darkness is heavily stylized in other ways and I believe that the film can be viewed as an authentic piece of art, despite the pseudo-quote and other stylizations. I view the film as authentic because it stays true to the events it is seeking to illuminate: the film shows the disaster of the Kuwaitian oil fields after the Gulf War. The stylizations Herzog uses in the film are for example that he does not show or tell that this is in Kuwait. Herzog says that *"[t]his could be any war and any country"* (Cronin, 2002, 246). For him, it was not important to show that this film was the aftermath of that particular war, but war in general. Besides, according to Herzog, the whole world had seen images of burning oil wells in Kuwait on CNN during and after the war and the war was still on people's mind when the film came out. So people knew where the film took place.

Herzog uses voice-over in the film and the first sentence he speaks is: *"A planet in our solar system."* His voice-over and the choice to film the majority of the film from air distances the audience from Kuwait. The audience looks at the planet, that looks more like hell than what we are used to seeing our planet look like, almost as aliens. Herzog says that the film is a requiem for a planet that we ourselves have destroyed and that *"[t]he film progresses as if aliens have landed on an unnamed planet where the landscape has lost every single trace of its dignity, and (...) these aliens see human beings for the first time"* (Cronin, 2002, 249).

By using this stylization, giving the film a science fiction feel by decontextualizing the oil fields, and with his choice and use of music Herzog manages to create a poetic film that shows the oil fields of post-war Kuwait in a very aesthetically pleasing way. For Herzog, the stylization of horror penetrates deeper than the CNN footage ever could (Cronin, 2002, 245). The CNN footage only reveals; it does not illuminate. John Grierson wrote that lecture

films, including news stories, did not dramatize, they only describe (Grierson, 1979, 36). Like Grierson, Herzog wants documentaries to separate themselves from news stories and lecture films by not only revealing but also illuminating.

In *Herzog on Herzog*, Herzog talks about how his idea of the deeper stratum of truth became clearer when he made *Bells from the Deep* (1993) and *Lessons of Darkness* (1992). Before that, his approach to stylize and fabricate to achieve ecstatic truth was not so conscious as it was an instinctive attitude (Cronin, 2002, 240). Herzog provides an example from his third feature length documentary *Land of Silence and Darkness* (1971). The film is about deaf-blind people and how they experience life. Herzog says:

"The line that is quoted at the end of that film - 'If a world war were to break out now, I would not even notice it' - is not something that Fini ever said. This is something I wrote that I felt encapsulated, in only a few words, how someone like her might experience the world. And the lines at the start of the film when Fini speaks about the ecstatic faces of the ski-flyers whom she says she used to watch as a child are also written by me. It is all pure invention. She had actually never even seen a ski-jumper, and I just asked her to say the lines that I wrote. Why? Because I felt that the solitude and ecstasy of the ski-jumpers as they flew through the air was a great image to represent Fini's own inner state of mind and solitude." (Cronin, 2002, 241)

Herzog also adds that when making the film, it was all done in cooperation with Fini and she did not speak any lines she did not want to. Herzog uses ski-jumpers to represent Fini's solitude, and we actually see ski-jumpers flying through the air in the beginning of the film. This stylization has a lot in common with the stylization in *Little Dieter Needs to Fly*, where Dieter was looking at a tattoo and describing his hallucinations. In both films, he finds images that he believes represent the inner minds of his subjects and shows it to the viewer.

Herzog's stylizations are not always well received. Nick Fraser writes in his article *At the Heart of Werner Herzog's Brilliance, an Uncomfortable Relationship with Truth* (2019) that Ian Buruma questions what is true in *Little Dieter Needs to Fly*, since so much of the film is invented by Herzog. Fraser quotes Buruma: *"If so much is invented, how do we know what is true? Perhaps Dengler was never shot down over Laos. Perhaps he never existed. Perhaps, perhaps"* (Fraser, 2019). Buruma raises a good question. It is possible to verify what is true in *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* by comparing the film to Dieter's diaries. Or by reading *Herzog on Herzog* where Herzog talks about the stylizations and fabrications in the film. But what if you are watching *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* and you have no prior knowledge of Herzog and his approach to make documentaries. Do you take everything in the film as truth since it is labeled as a documentary? No, you do not. It is important to remember that documentaries are always in one way or another creative treatment of actuality and that there is no standard for truth that documentaries must uphold. That is to say there is always some creativity involved, whether it is the choice of framing or a stylized scene. For me, it does not matter if Dieter really opened and closed doors as he is portrayed doing in the film. It might not be factually true, but it does give an insight into what is

important for Dieter. At the same time as I respect and understand that the director makes choices like these, I need to be able to trust that the film as a whole is an honest representation of Dieter's experience. It is, and therefore I can view the film as authentic despite its stylizations and fabrications.

The stylization in *Lessons of Darkness* was not well received by the audience when the film was shown at Berlin Film Festival in 1992. Herzog told that around 2000 people rose up in an angry roar against him. They accused Herzog of aestheticizing the horror and said that the film was dangerously authoritarian. Herzog said that in response, he decided to be authoritarian. Herzog told Cronin: "*I stood before them and said, 'Mr Dante did the same in his inferno and Mr Goya did it in his paintings, and Brueghel and Bosch too'*" (Cronin, 2002, 245).

The stylizations in Herzog's films are not always as obvious as they are in *Lessons of Darkness*. Herzog said that his stylizations of truth in documentary films are in fact generally very subtle. He said that "*[y]ou probably would not know about most of them unless you were paying close attention to the films, and even then you might need to have some background to the subject matter*" (Cronin, 2002, 242). That is definitely the case in *Grizzly Man*. Since Timothy Treadwell, the main character in *Grizzly Man*, was not alive when the film was made, Herzog did not have any stylization involving that character. However, there is some stylization in the film involving other characters, and it is quite subtle.

One of the very last scenes of the film where the pilot Willy Fulton is singing along to Don Edward's *Coyotes* is stylized. Herzog had already chosen the song to be in the film. Herzog asked the pilot to sing along with the song but where the lyrics in the song are 'and the red wolf is gone' the pilot sings 'and Treadwell is gone'. Herzog says: "*And because it is staged it becomes more truthful and it is not trying to give you fake news. The pilot is very laconic and wonderful because he is very, very well staged, very well directed. That is what I do in documentaries, I direct, I direct them.*" (Sheffield Doc/Fest, 2019.)

There is another scene that is very subtly stylized. It is the scene where Dr. Franc Fallico, the coroner, gives Timothy's wristwatch to Jewel Palovak. The scene starts by Fallico pulling the watch from a desk drawer. Fallico sits down by a table next to Palovak, and cuts open the evident bag that the wristwatch was still in. Fallico tells Palovak that he knew that she and Timothy used to be very close, and therefore he wanted to give her the watch. He also points out that the wristwatch is still running. Palovak signs some papers after receiving the watch. After Palovak signs the paper she looks off camera. I can only speculate that she is looking at Herzog and waiting for him to call cut. Fallico also looks in the same direction. Both of them look a bit uncomfortable, not knowing what to do. Herzog does not, however, cut. The camera person notices that Palovak is looking deeply at the watch and tracks in with the camera. Palovak gets emotional, looks up at the camera and says about the watch: "*It is the last thing that is left.*"

The first time I saw the film I did not notice the stylization. But now that I have viewed the film more often and more critically, it has become more obvious. Firstly, the whole scene is

probably scripted. I do not see why the coroner should give the watch to Palovak. I do not think it was his to give away, and if for some reason Palovak was to get the watch, why would it be in an office with the coroner himself. Another thing that suggests the scene is scripted is that they both look off screen as to either receive further instructions from Herzog or hear him call cut. The scene might be a stylization, or rather fabrication, made by Herzog, but it has some truth to it. We get acquainted with both Palovak and Fallico who are real people. But more importantly, the affection for Timothy and emotions Palovak shows are true. The fact that Palovak is receiving the watch is not important to the story per se, but it is rather the feelings and reactions associated with receiving the watch. Robert McKee writes:

"Many of the actions in any story are more or less expected. By genre convention, the lovers in a Love Story will meet, the detective in a Thriller will discover a crime, the protagonist's life in an Education Plot will bottom out. These and other such commonplace actions are universally known and anticipated by the audience. Consequently, fine writing puts less stress on what happens than on to whom it happens and why and how it happens. Indeed, the richest and most satisfying pleasures of all are found in stories that focus on the reactions that events cause and the insight gained." (McKee, 1997, 173.)

The scene may revolve around a wristwatch, but I believe Herzog was trying to achieve something more by orchestrating this scene; ecstatic truth. The scene may have been fabricated, but the feelings are true. Herzog abandons the facts to illuminate the viewer, and to show the viewer the authentic feelings of the characters. Authenticity is not only about true facts, but also true feelings.

In *Herzog on Herzog*, Herzog also talks about stylization in *Bells of the Deep* (1993). He says that he wanted to film pilgrims crawling around a frozen lake trying to get a glimpse at a lost city that some people believed was at the bottom of the lake. But when he was about to film, there were no pilgrims around. So, what Herzog did was that he hired two drunks from the next town to act as pilgrims. Herzog says that *"[o]ne of them has his face right on the ice and looks like he is in very deep meditation. The accountant's truth: he was completely drunk and fell asleep, and we had to wake him at the end of the take"* (Cronin, 2002, 252).

Cronin asked Herzog what he thought about those who feel that his kind of filmmaking is cheating. Herzog responded:

"It might seem like cheating, but it is not. Bells from the Deep is one of the most pronounced examples of what I mean when I say that only through invention and fabrication and staging can you reach a more intense level of truth that cannot otherwise be found. I took a 'fact' - that for many people this lake was the final resting place of this lost city - and played with the 'truth' of the situation to reach a more poetic understanding. We react with much stronger fervour and passion to poetry than mere television reportage, and that is the reason why Lessons of Darkness struck such a chord. We have known for a long time the poet is able to

articulate a deep, inherent, mysterious truth better than anyone else. But for some reason filmmakers - particularly those who deal in the accountant's truth - are unaware of this as they continue trading their out-of-date wares.” (Cronin, 2002, 253.)

Herzog takes creativity further than most other documentary directors. He does not shy away from fabricating and stylizing his films to illuminate his viewer with this poetic dimension of truth he calls ecstatic truth. Ecstatic truth for me can be viewed as authentic since it deepens our understanding or illuminates us, even though it might not be factually true. Herzog’s stylization in his films is his creative treatment actuality. According to Chantal Poch, Herzog’s poetic truth expressed both aesthetically and narratively in his movies, surpasses factual truth (Poch, 2019, 123).

3.3. Performative truth

Ecstatic truth can be viewed as a type of performance. The cinematic techniques used by Herzog in his documentaries indicate that the majority of his films are created in the performative mode. According to Nichols (2017, 22), the performative mode “[e]mphasizes the subjective or expressive aspect of the filmmaker’s own involvement with a subject; it strives to heighten the audience’s responsiveness to this involvement. It rejects notions of objectivity in favor of evocation and affect.”

Stella Bruzzi, in her book *New Documentary* (2006), has a similar definition of performative documentary. She writes that this mode emphasizes the aspect of performance, which is often hidden, whether it is the performance of the documentary subjects or the filmmaker (Bruzzi, 2006, 185). Bruzzi distinguishes her writing from Nichols when she quotes him for the sake of argument: “Supposing that the more a documentary ‘draws attention to itself,’ the further it gets from ‘what it represents’” (qtd. in Bruzzi, 2006, 186). Bruzzi (2006, 187) then disagrees with Nichols’s idea that the more performative a film is, the less authentic it is and continues by offering her view on performative documentaries and the need to view them more honestly:

The fundamental issue here is honesty. The performative element could be seen to undermine the conventional documentary pursuit of representing the real because the elements of performance, dramatisation and acting for the camera are intrusive and alienating factors. Alternatively, the use of performance tactics could be viewed as a means of suggesting that perhaps documentaries should admit the defeat of their utopian aim and elect instead to present an alternative ‘honesty’ that does not seek to mask their inherent instability but rather to acknowledge that performance – the enactment of the documentary specifically for the cameras – will always be the heart of the non-fiction film.

Herzog performs in his documentaries, whether on-screen or off-screen, because he is interested in less formal restrictions to show the essence of his subjects.⁴ Herzog’s degree of participation varies, and, often, his participation can only be seen through his directing. For example, in *Encounters at the End of the World* (2007), the viewer does not see Herzog on the screen; however, he is present through the use of voice-over, providing a figurative reflection of his character. This audio effect happens in a scene where a scientist talks about how horrible it would be to live in the ocean. Replying to a question asked by Herzog, the scientist says that he thought that the horrors of the ocean caused the human race to evolve and escape onto land. In this way, Herzog (1999) prompts the scientist to paraphrase the twelfth article of the Minnesota Declaration:

Life in the oceans must be sheer hell. A vast, merciless hell of permanent and immediate danger. So much of hell that during evolution some species—including

⁴ Bruzzi talks about the approaches of Michael Moore, Molly Dineen, and Nick Broomfield documentaries in a similar way on page 198.

man—crawled, fled onto some small continents of solid land, where the Lessons of Darkness continue.

In this manner, Herzog establishes his presence by asking questions while also drawing attention to his Minnesota Declaration. Therefore, if viewers see the film through a performative lens, their attention focuses on the filmmaker and his view of truth in his documentaries.

A similar performance can be seen in *Caves of Forgotten Dreams* (2010). In this film, Herzog interviews an archeologist about how scientists have scanned and mapped every millimeter of the Chauvet Cave. The archeologist, Julien Monney, talks about using the map's precision to create a new understanding of the cave. The main goal, Monney adds, is to figure out the stories—what could have happened in the cave thousands of years ago. Herzog then replies: *"It is like you are creating the phone directory of Manhattan. Four million precise entries, but do they dream, do they cry at night, what are their hopes, what are their families? You will never know from the phone directory."*

Monney responds: *"Definitely. We will never know because the past is definitely lost. We will never reconstruct the past. We can only create a representation of what exists now, today."*

Monney was talking about how data from the cave could provide an impression of life thousands of years ago. Yet, he agrees with Herzog that such data could never offer insight into the mind and thoughts of the people occupying the cave all those years ago. For viewers who see this film without the background of Herzog's beliefs on documentary making, this scene would be interpreted as described above. However, from a scholar's point of view about the performative aspects, one can see how Herzog borrows the scientist's perspective of truth and makes it his own. As an archeologist, Monney's perspective about scientific facts can help viewers recreate Herzog's thoughts about truth in documentary cinema. Herzog uses the Manhattan phone directory in his argument of truth versus facts, which is something he has done multiple times in interviews and later wrote about in an addendum to his declaration⁵.

The drawing of the audience's attention to the presence of the filmmaker also highlights the process of documentary making, including the creative choices involved in that process. In *Caves of Forgotten Dreams*, Herzog draws attention to filmmaking by talking about the restrictions necessary to be allowed to film in the cave. Near the end of the film, Herzog interviews Jean-Michel Geneste, the director of the Chauvet Cave research project. Geneste describes the paintings in the cave as a preferred way of communicating the past, as opposed to language. He says that the invention of communicating with pictures is still available today through the use of cameras.

The next shot in the film is of a drone returning to its pilot. The drone shot shows the drone pilot with Herzog standing next to him and the entire film crew standing behind them. This

⁵ Herzog paraphrasing his second article of the Minnesota Declaration can be seen in these two articles: *Werner Herzog Fesses Up To The Fake "Mutated" Albino Crocodiles In 'Cave Of Forgotten Dreams'* and *Werner Herzog Is Still Breaking the Rules*.

drone shot serves a double purpose. It underlines Geneste's correlation between historical cave paintings and the current use of cameras while drawing the audience's attention to the construction of the documentary film. After the drone shot, the final sequence is entitled "Postscript."

In this sequence, Herzog goes to a greenhouse that is heated by runoff water from a nearby nuclear power plant. Albino crocodiles live in the greenhouse. According to IndieWire: "*Herzog attempts to use the crocs to form some sort of absurd and tenuous correlation between the animals and the cave dwellers — their dreams, their aspirations and their unknown ambitions*" (Davis, 2011). In an interview with Stephen Colbert, Herzog offers his reason for this science-fiction type of fantasy in the postscript: "*I want the audience with me in wild fantasy in something that illuminates them*" (qtd. in Colbert, 2011). Thus, Herzog's perspective and performance, along with his choice to show his process of filmmaking, attracts the audience's attention to his stylized films, thereby allowing them to be viewed as more authentic.

3.4. Ecstatic truth in *My Friend Artemis*

In the early stages of editing our documentary film *My Friend Artemis* we felt that the film was missing the depth we wanted. In the early edits we had a lot of Artemis explaining with words what she was going through. In a way it felt a bit like we had more of a reportage than an actual documentary film on our hands. It was lacking the emotion and the poetic elements we wanted in our film. We were getting all the facts out there, what Artemis had been up to, and what she was going to do next. What we were lacking in the edit were the reasons and emotions behind Artemis's choices.

One example of this is that Artemis had missed an important appointment at Oslo University Hospital due to a delayed airplane. The appointment at the Hospital in Oslo was very important for Artemis because it was one of the appointments that she had to go to to get started on hormone therapy. While Artemis was stuck at the airport in Trondheim, she called the hospital in Oslo to see if it was possible to postpone the meeting for a few hours, or until she would be in Oslo. That was not possible, if she would miss her appointment, she would have to wait for another 3 months for the next appointment. Artemis decided to go to Oslo with her plane, even though she would probably not be at the hospital in time for her appointment. Artemis arrived at the hospital half an hour after her appointment was supposed to start. She asked the receptionist if it was possible to meet the doctor, even though she was late. The receptionist told her that it was not possible since the doctor had already started the appointment with the next patient and was busy the rest of the day. This had happened before we started filming. So, we did not have any footage of this. We only had an interview where Artemis explained this in words to the camera. This event I just described was important to our film, since it revolved around one of the main themes in our short film: how long the process of changing your gender takes. Artemis missing her appointment meant that her whole process was delayed by three more months.



Figure 4 A screenshot from our film My Friend Artemis.

What we wanted to do was to show how the events unfolded instead of just telling the viewer about it. Both because the event was important for the story, but also because it gave us the opportunity to focus on the many emotional moments that would help the viewer better connect with our protagonist. We made the necessary arrangements and filmed a reenactment at the Trondheim airport. Our approach to filming this reenactment was similar to Herzog's stylized scenes with his subjects. Just like Herzog's subjects, Artemis agreed to partake in this reenactment and the stylizations involved. She agreed with the director that even though this was not exactly how things had unfolded, it did honestly represent the frustration and the emotions she had experienced.

At the airport, we filmed Artemis standing in front of a monitor that displayed the arrival and departure times. She sees that her departure time has changed. In the next shot, we film her pacing back and forth while calling the hospital. When a person answers her call, she tries to walk away from the camera and crew. The camera lingers on the background as she tries to distance herself from the camera. The camera lingers on a billboard for a travel company. On the billboard, it is written in big letters 'Her?', which in Norwegian means 'Here?'. It is a subtle hint at what might be going on inside her head. If she does not reach her appointment, it might prolong the process of more fully become 'her'.

The camera follows Artemis from a distance but gets closer as her conversation on the phone progresses. Artemis finishes the phone call. She turns and tries to shield her face from the camera, the camera tries to catch up and film her face. After a small dance between the camera and subject, we see Artemis's face. She looks upset. If you were seeing this film for the first time and had no prior knowledge that this scene was reenacted, I am sure you would not think it was. This raises the question of authenticity. Are we lying to the viewer by trying to pass this scene as recorded evidence of what actually occurred? I would argue this scene can be viewed as authentic, and in a way it can be viewed as even more truthful than if we had filmed the original event. I believe so because we knew what was going to happen, and we knew in what context we were going to use this scene, so we could focus on the moments that best represented the original event as well as the emotions that Artemis was feeling. I believe Artemis showed her true feelings in the reenactment, and by scripting the scene, we could intensify her feelings. Herzog has talked about intensifying truth in this way. In *Herzog on Herzog* he says: "*In my 'documentaries' I have constantly explored the intensified truths of the situations that I have found myself in and of the characters I have met*" (Cronin, 2002, 241).

With our stylization and intensification, we reached what Herzog calls ecstatic truth. That is, it might not be factually true, but there is a poetic truth that illuminates Artemis's world to the viewer. The scene gives the audience a glimpse of what is going on inside Artemis's mind by showing her reactions and emotions, something we might not have been able to do without the stylization.

4. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have elaborated on the concepts of “the creative treatment of actuality,” “perspectivism,” and “ecstatic truth” to discover how authenticity cannot always be reduced to what is factually true. In the process, I discovered that documentaries are told from the filmmaker’s perspective, which cannot be eliminated. Therefore, it is more truthful and authentic if a documentary is open about its perspectives and its view of truth compared to a documentary that sets up communal beliefs as objective truth. This authenticity includes incorporating the perspectives of the portrayed subjects in the documentary. The perspective of a protagonist can intertwine or clash with the perspective of the filmmaker, which produces a creative tension that contributes to authenticity.

When the audience is aware of a filmmaker’s perspective and involvement in making the film, they can deduce that documentaries are a filmmaker’s interpretation of reality. Consequently, the audience is more cognizant of the stylistic and artistic choices that such an interpretation entails.

Thus, documentary authenticity cannot be judged solely by its correspondence to reality because these films are creative interpretations of a given reality. Werner Herzog uses stylization and fabrication in his films to establish what he calls ecstatic truth, which is a deeper stratum of truth that illuminates the viewer. In my experience, while Herzog’s stylizations are not factually accurate, they are still authentic since they illuminate the viewer and produce genuine emotion.

In reflecting on my work and comparing it to Herzog’s approach to documentaries, my understanding of documentary authenticity has broadened. More importantly, Herzog’s work has influenced how I will approach documentaries as a filmmaker.

In *Ferocious Reality*, Eric Ames (2012, 4) talks about how scholars of the documentary have overlooked Herzog due to his irreverent attitude and penchant for staging and fabrication. Nevertheless, Ames (2012, 9) identifies an ongoing shift in documentary theory and practice that gives Herzog’s work new relevance. I agree with Ames, and I believe my research supports the relevance of Herzog’s career and can help others to understand the concept of authenticity in a broader context in documentary theory.

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