

Faking It: Authorship, Gender, and Capital in the (Wellesian) Documentary Form

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Abstract

This thesis will take a comparative and dialectical approach in analyzing *F for Fake*, asserting new claims in concert with existing criticism in the hopes of meaningfully contributing to what is a relatively small body of work on the Welles film. It will engage with two main texts, Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935) and "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939). Jackson Ayres in his essay "Orson Welles's 'Complicitous Critique': Postmodern Paradox in *F for Fake*" calls for the comprehensive exploration of Welles' film in relation to Benjamin's 1935 seminal work, as well as a feminist interpretation of *F for Fake*, a scholastic entreaty this thesis will attempt to satisfy in part. The trajectory of the documentary film's status in popular culture, including the legacy of Welles' treatment of the form, will be explored via the IFC television series *Documentary Now!* (2015), which parodies iconic documentary films. This thesis is largely experimental, employing not only film, but also literature, music, and the philosophical treatise in order to emphasize both medium specificity and hybridity, as well as the importance of place and time to intangible images, feelings, and memories so crucial to works of art and life itself.

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— Chapter One —

A Benjaminian/Frankfurt School Reading of *F for Fake*

“Les Films du Prisme Presentent,” reads the white text against a black screen, as a sonorous voice introduces its “next experiment.” The voice, of course, belongs to Orson Welles, not only an actor in this quasi-documentary endeavor, but also the writer and director of the filmic venture that is *F for Fake* (1973). Welles begins the film with a magic trick he performs himself, warning us to “watch out for the slightest *hint* of hanky-panky.” When he transforms a key into a coin, he quickly dismisses any possible metaphorical meaning of the object, claiming “the key is not symbolic of anything; this is not that kind of movie.”

Our director, writer, and actor promises us, as lights behind him turn on and off, apparently being tested prior to the filming of the illusion that lies ahead, “during the next hour everything you’ll hear from us is really true, and based on solid facts.” In that next hour, Welles unfolds the tale of Elmyr de Hory, an infamous Hungarian art forger operating in the 1940s – 1960s worldwide, and of Clifford Irving, de Hory’s biographer who turned out to be a forger himself, penning a supposedly sanctioned autobiography of movie mogul and millionaire Howard Hughes without, as it became apparent later on, Hughes’ consent or guidance.

Up to this point, scholarly discussions of *F for Fake* in relation to Walter Benjamin’s seminal 1935 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” have engaged in only surface level comparisons. Catherine L. Benamou in her article “The Artifice of Realism and the Lure of the ‘Real’ in Orson Welles’s *F for Fake* and Other T(r) eas(u)er(e)s” maintains, “...for Welles, as for Benjamin, once art begins to circulate and become accessible to more than one set of viewers at one time, there is a shift in emphasis from tangibility and localized control over phenomenal objects toward mediation and the broadening of art as a form of social

experience.”¹ She mentions “...Welles's neo-Benjaminian reflection on the effects of the marketplace on artistic practice,” providing a base on which this chapter will expand.² Jackson Ayres in his essay “Orson Welles’s ‘Complicitous Critique’: Postmodern Paradox in *F for Fake*” declares, “the oft-mentioned relationship between Welles’s film and Walter Benjamin’s [essay] still needs to be comprehensively explored,” and I agree with Ayres, but I also contend that this exploration — especially in regard to the last twenty minutes of the film which defy the categorization of *F for Fake* as documentary, consisting of pure fiction and illusion — requires the addition of two other Benjamin works, “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire” (1938) and “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” (1939).³ The ideas put forth in the latter essay suggest that Benjamin, had his tragic and untimely suicide not stopped him, might have rethought his thesis in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”

“The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” probably Benjamin’s best-known work, is often employed in analysis of *F for Fake*, and perhaps too expediently, for rarely is it acknowledged that the theoretical text’s rather staunch commitment to communistic principles is in some ways incompatible with Welles’ goals in *F for Fake*. However, everything Benjamin sees in Baudelaire’s poetry, presented in “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” — a transformation of his earlier essay “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire” and a move away from the ideas put forth in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” — also occurs in Welles’ film.

¹ Catherine L. Benamou, “The Artifice of Realism and the Lure of the ‘Real’ in Orson Welles's *F for Fake* and Other T(r)reas(u)er(e)s,” in *F is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing*, ed. Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 145.

² Ibid, 165.

³ Jackson Ayres, “Orson Welles's "Complicitous Critique": Postmodern Paradox in *F for Fake*, *Film Quarterly* 40 (2012): 17.

This fact distorts the unwavering opinion of Benjamin and the Frankfurt School as a whole that cinema under capitalism is incapable of performing as meaningful a critique of prevailing socioeconomic conditions as poetry, the medium most suited to the opening and reimagining of concepts à la Kant. Kantian concepts will also be discussed in chapters two and three. *F for Fake* shows that cinema can achieve the same ends as poetry, Welles utilizing the concept of the documentary form and twisting it to challenge the authenticity of the medium, despite the fact that unlike poetry, film is not inherently built upon what for the Frankfurt School is the mind's main and most natural mode of cognition: language. While *F for Fake* is certainly in dialogue with the ideas presented in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Welles' intentions for the film better correspond with those of Charles Baudelaire as described in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." The poet Baudelaire and the filmmaker Welles each critique capitalism from its depths, superficially championing the expression of the commodity, but more importantly criticizing it from within its perspective.

It is tempting to read *F for Fake* purely through the lens of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." The film itself makes it easy enough to do so with the value it places on the depiction of the mechanical qualities of cinema and photography. The ringing of a cash register at the beginning of the film starts us off in this realm, progressing to a mechanized clicking like that of film looping through a projector as we go from one name to the next in the opening credits. The film is paused and a still of a photographer and his camera provides the background image to the appearance of the credited photographers' names, accompanied by the quiet snapping sound of an unseen shutter. Welles the magician cranks a screen down on a mechanical contraption that he uses to make his co-writer/co-star Oja Kodar disappear, the grinding, metallic sound and Welles' physical labor emphasized. In the beginning of the film,

Welles exhibits the artificiality of the set and presents workers wheeling away furniture, carrying off lights, and adjusting microphones.

When the filmstrip loosens on the reel and we lose the picture we have been viewing on the moviola with Welles, he chuckles amusedly and says, “Let’s start again. We’ll patch this film together and we’ll try to patch together Elmyr’s version of this story.” The director is filmed cutting and watching footage at the editing table⁴ throughout the first half of the film, the mechanical process of the film’s making being shown to us after the fact. Or during. It remains unclear, demonstrating *F for Fake*’s strange, non-sequential conception of time.

Benjamin argues the authenticity of a work of art lies in its “substantive duration” and its “historical testimony,” and that because the latter “...rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter,” an example being Welles’ editing.⁵ The director in many scenes uses footage from another film (a never-realized BBC documentary by Francois Reichenbach⁶) of interviews with de Hory and Irving as his base, utilizing the filmic technique of shot-reverse-shot to assemble a fake conversation between the two men that never actually occurred. Here, the medium of film and its technical possibilities of reproduction assist Welles in counterfeiting an event, evincing the untruth and the inauthenticity of the documentary film form.

⁴ It is interesting to consider how the impact of *F for Fake* would be altered had Welles not worked with celluloid but edited digitally. What would be lost in the absence of the physical process of cutting, splicing, and gluing, with the diminution of manual labor in mechanical reproduction?

⁵ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 221.

⁶ This blurring of authorship is comparable to that in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* in which authors Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno do not clearly accredit chapters to each other, instead blending together the text as Welles blends Reichenbach’s footage with his own.

Welles undermines Benjamin's concept of "substantive duration" by disrupting real time through the use of film time, stringing together de Hory and Irving's words as if they were responding to one another's comments and arguing back and forth, despite the obvious fact that the two are in separate rooms. In doing so, he threatens the authenticity of his work by falsifying historical testimony, but Welles is well aware of this fact; he makes no attempt to feign verisimilitude or authenticity, even exploiting the falseness of the scene to create a more entertaining film. Have we forgotten so soon his warning at the beginning of *F for Fake* to watch out for trickery and deception?

Benjamin writes, "for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. ...But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics."⁷ What are we to do, then, with *F for Fake*, a mechanically reproduced work of art that upholds ritual as much as it does the political? Ritual is synonymous with magic in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," and magic is what Welles constructs *F for Fake*'s entire narrative around – beginning with the magic trick that opens the film, progressing to the aforementioned moment in which he makes Kodar disappear, and ending with the levitation of a human body – while simultaneously objecting to and making a mockery of the market's monetary valuation of what is inherently subjective – the work of art.⁸

⁷ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 224.

⁸ It is worth noting that cinema since its inception has been predicated on the notion of magic, some of the earliest silent films such as Georges Méliès' "Decapitation in Turkey" (1904) using the cut and other formal techniques to create occult situations and mystical occurrences – in the case of the Méliès short, the severance and subsequent reapplication of heads – not possible in the real world.

Benjamin's argument in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," which essentially descends from Karl Marx's *Capital*, is that society's standard socioeconomic valuation dispenses with subjective forms of valuation that are not completely and immediately calculable and consequently present. Personal, reflective judgments cease to matter under capitalism, replaced by the concept of labor time. The aura within a work of art makes present that which is absent to the immediate senses. Aura is not objectively known, but rather ephemeral and fragile. In a sense, aura makes the invisible visible. Benjamin asserts that this first began with ritual practices in which those who were absent were presented symbolically. Welles practices such ritual throughout *F for Fake*, ventriloquizing the words of people not present, including those of the living like de Hory, the recently deceased such as Pablo Picasso, and the words of the dead, among them Marcel Vertès, a Hungarian painter who (like Welles in this film) called himself a charlatan, and the fictional grandfather of Kodar.

The aura's indication that something absent in immediate experience could play a role in the making of meaning within society is suppressed by capitalism and its mode of valuation. Aura, stemming from the realm of the ritual, has been and continues to be made irrelevant by prevailing capitalist ideas of worth. In modern terms, the beautiful or the aesthetic sensing of something for which we do not yet have a concept is an extension of what the ritual, the religious, and the magical have always been felt to accomplish — their search for truth, or another "pompous word for [it,]" as Welles relates, "is art." Welles confronts the religious in *F for Fake* in a meditative scene at Chartres Cathedral.

Benjamin, too, explores architecture in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction":

Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into the progressive reaction

toward a Chaplin movie. ...Painting simply is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience, as it was possible for architecture at all times, for the epic poem in the past, and for the movie today. ...Although paintings began to be publicly exhibited in galleries and salons, there was no way for the masses to organize and control themselves in their reception. Thus the same public which responds in a progressive manner toward a grotesque film is bound to respond in a reactionary manner to surrealism.⁹

Welles complicates Benjamin's theory by not only exhibiting paintings for a simultaneous collective experience, but also in revealing to us the process of the making of these works of art, filming de Hory's hand as it composes Matisse's and Picasso's. De Hory, in an act of capitalistic iconoclasm, then burns these drawings in his fireplace, bidding them a lighthearted farewell of "bye bye, Matisse." This elicits from the audience unbridled laughter,¹⁰ and from an Adornian perspective perhaps this "...laughter of a cinema audience ...is anything but salutary and revolutionary, ...full of the worst bourgeois sadism instead."¹¹ To take this perspective, however, would be — as Theodor Adorno suggests to Benjamin in their written correspondence about the latter's first essay on Baudelaire — to not give the audience, Welles, or de Hory proper credit, a point which will be considered momentarily.

To return to architecture, Welles, as indicated by his aesthetic insertion of the contemplative Chartres Cathedral scene, shares Benjamin's belief that architecture's "...claim to being a living force has significance in every attempt to comprehend the relationship of the

⁹ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 235.

¹⁰ At least this was the case when I saw *F for Fake* on the big screen for the first time at Kino Ponrepo in Prague, spring 2015.

¹¹ Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence, 1928–1940* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 130.

masses to art.”¹² Benjamin writes, “A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. ...In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. This is most obvious with regard to buildings. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction.”¹³ This distraction “...finds in film its true meaning of exercise,” a medium which “...with its shock effect meets this mode of reception halfway, ...mak[ing] cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention.”¹⁴

This, however, is not the case with *F for Fake*, for while we do function as critics, the abrupt cuts and rapid form of the film actually require immense concentration from the viewer who wishes to follow the documentary proceedings, which Welles purposely muddles; we are concentrated in our distraction and distracted in our concentration in our attempt to assemble a sequence of events, to distinguish truth from fiction. Furthermore, cult value never fully recedes into the background of *F for Fake*, always present on the surface in the form of magic tricks or play-acting. Cult value is emphasized in the scene of Chartres Cathedral, where our concentration is even more finely tuned, the unhurried pace of this pensive slowdown drawing our attention and standing in stark contrast to the whirlwind speed of the last hour. The images of Chartres are still like photographs, the only movement coming from the camera as it leisurely pans across or zooms out from carved faces, flying buttresses, and steeples.

The director’s monologue in this scene echoes the words of Benjamin, the latter writing that architecture’s “...history is more ancient than that of any other art” and Welles in turn (after

¹² Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 241.

¹³ *Ibid*, 239.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 241.

de Hory has just explained to us that if forgeries hang in a museum long enough “they become real”) says of Chartres Cathedral, “now this has been standing here for centuries.”¹⁵ This is not to say, however, that forgeries or the religious/ritual in the form of architecture are lies; rather, both exist as illusion, and there is critical value in their aesthetic fictions that Benjamin, as Adorno conveys to him in their written correspondence,¹⁶ does not recognize in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Critics who denounce *F for Fake* for what they consider to be arrogant self-indulgence commit this same error. To them I would say the same thing Adorno tells Benjamin: “be careful! I am not entirely happy about the characterization of [Welles] in terms of the petit bourgeois class.”¹⁷

About Chartres Cathedral, Welles says:

The premier work of man, perhaps, in the whole western world, and it's without a signature. Chartres. A celebration to God's glory and to the dignity of man. Well, all that's left, most artists seem to feel these days, is man. Naked. Poor, forked radish. There aren't any celebrations. Ours, the scientists keep telling us, is a universe which is disposable. You know, it might be just this one anonymous glory, of all things, this rich stone forest, this epic chant, this gaiety, this grand, choring shout of affirmation which we choose when all our cities are dust, to stand intact, to mark where we've been, to testify to what we had it in us to accomplish. Our works in stone, in paint, in print, are spared, some of them, for a few decades or a millennium or two, but everything must finally fall in war, or wear away into the ultimate and universal ash. The triumphs and the frauds, the treasures and the fakes – a fact of life: we're going to die. ‘Be of good heart,’ cry the dead artists out of the living past. ‘Our songs will all be silenced. But what of it? Go on singing.’ Maybe a man's name doesn't matter all that much.

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 241.

¹⁶ Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence, 1928–1940* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 304.

One could interpret this message in a pessimistic way similar to Benjamin's "Mechanical Reproduction" treatment of Baudelaire in his first essay, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire." Such a person would see Welles' attitude as defeatist in its acknowledgement of our subjective experience's lack of importance to prevailing systems and in its crucial absence of resistance to this fact. To "go on singing" is to maintain the status quo. It is easy to construe Welles as *flâneur*,¹⁸ a prime example of "the cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry [which] preserves not the unique aura of the person but the 'spell of the personality,' the phony spell of a commodity."¹⁹

In the first essay "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," as Adorno asserts, Benjamin limits Baudelaire's brilliance by relegating it to only the commodity and showing that lyric poetry is nothing but the demonstration of our commodity character. In his commitment to Leninist creed, Benjamin does not grant Baudelaire's refusal to be bound by concepts, perhaps fearing that to do so would be too bourgeois. Welles, in contrast, does not fear the bourgeois character of his work, but actually exploits it in his ironic self-importance – ordering lobster feasts and telling a waiter to "take this away and bring [him] the steak au poivre," partaking in dinner parties and positioning himself in "the world of the jetsetters among us beautiful people" – in order to indicate the absurdity of our capitalist system.

To take Welles at face value as only bourgeois, to believe he really is the liar and charlatan he claims to be, would be to omit the inherent judgment he is making in the display of himself as such. It is the same mistake Adorno believes Benjamin makes in "The Work of Art in

¹⁸ Walter Benjamin, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1971), 55.

¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 231.

the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” and “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire” in which Benjamin restricts Marx’s notion of the commodity to labor power itself and excludes the pivotal judgment of labor power.

Welles is more deserving of the attitude that Benjamin adopts in his second essay “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” in which he accepts the poet and his works to be more than just commodities, and allows Baudelaire to be a critic within the work of art.²⁰ The scientists Welles references who tell us our universe is disposable are akin to the few under capitalism²¹ who make decisions about the dominant modes of valuation, and do not take into consideration the subjective experience of the masses. In this monologue, Welles moves toward Kantian subjective universality. Although his aesthetic work is engaged in determining concepts (those of the culture industry, of the art market, of his trademark countenance and appearance), *F for Fake* plays with these concepts rather than being determined by them.

²⁰ There are many similarities between Welles and Baudelaire, the two artists representing the height of modernity. Just as with Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal*, “...a book which from the very beginning had little prospect of becoming an immediate popular success,” Welles’ difficult documentary *F for Fake* was from the start never going to be a blockbuster (Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” 155). Benjamin’s claim that “what Baudelaire expresses ... could be called the metaphysics of the *provocateur*” is also an apt description of Welles’ idiom in *F for Fake* (Benjamin, “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” 14). Just as “...creditors pursued” Baudelaire, rendering him “...[un]able to move through the streets of Paris as a stroller,” Welles evaded the IRS, “...owing a tax debt that would take years to escape — and which, at length, would be the major inducement for Orson to remain in exile from his own country for as long as he did” (Benjamin, “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” 70, and Barbara Leaming, *Orson Welles: A Biography*, 398). In Baudelaire’s later years, Benjamin cites “...strife between [the poet] and his mistress,” and a similar situation can be observed in *F for Fake*, Welles’ last completed film in which he ostentatiously displays his often near nude mistress Oja Kodar despite the fact that he was still married at the time to his wife Paolo Mori (Benjamin, “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” 70).

²¹ The few in *F for Fake* are art experts/appraisers, who Welles, de Hory, and Irving all considerably lambaste. De Hory even conveys an opinion in line with Marxist/Frankfurt School doctrine when he says in the film, “It should not exist that one single person makes a decision about what’s good or what’s bad.”

Benjamin identifies this quality in Baudelaire's poetry in his second essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" as *correspondance*, which can roughly be conceived of as modern art's refusal to accept that which capitalism instills in us from a very young age: our subjective experience is useless in socioeconomic valuation. Benjamin contends *correspondances* within Baudelaire's work, which "...record a concept of experience which includes ritual elements," make the reader feel as if the relations and connections capitalism draws for us in a (falsely) predetermined way are not already decided, that the making of meaning is always open in the work of art.²²

Correspondances recreate ritual in a "crisis-proof"²³ form, existing as an attempt in the face of capitalism to have the artwork give some semblance of what experience in pre-capitalist society was like. This, however, is an illusion (the concept on which *F for Fake* is established), and is done under the meaning of "beauty." It is this shared sense of truth that the beautiful gives us which Welles taps into, claiming, "maybe a man's name" (and all its monetary repercussions as determined by the art market and the culture industry) "doesn't matter all that much." Maybe the anonymous beauty of Chartres Cathedral, the beauty of thousands of united hands and minds in the creation of one building, is the ultimate truth.

In "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Benjamin understands the painting we look at as "...reflect[ing] back at us that of which our eyes will never have their fill."²⁴ This is opposed to the cinematic image, which satiates the eyes, and "the crisis of artistic reproduction which manifests itself in this way can be seen as an integral part of a crisis in perception itself."²⁵

²² Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 181.

²³ The crisis is the fact that one's subjective experience does not matter.

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 187-188.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 187.

Benjamin remarks,

What prevents our delight in the beautiful from ever being satisfied is the image of the past, which Baudelaire regards as veiled by the tears of nostalgia. ...Insofar as art aims at the beautiful and, on however modest a scale, 'reproduces' it, it conjures up (as Faust does Helen) out of the womb of time. This no longer happens in the case of technical reproduction. (The beautiful has no place in it.) ...[P]hotography is decisively implicated in the phenomenon of the 'decline of the aura,' ...since the camera records our likeness without returning our gaze. ...Experience of the aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return."²⁶

F for Fake at once adheres to and defies Benjamin's theory about photography, for while Welles does look into the camera and meet our gaze at times, he is more often than not staring just above, a touch below, or a little to the side of the camera. Yet in the stillness of the Chartres Cathedral scene (the images of which are essentially still photographs) there exist the most auratic moments of the film, Welles' nostalgic speech and the gaze of stone figures piercing us, testing Benjamin's belief that the photograph cannot stare back. Within Baudelaire's lyrical poetry, the destruction of aura that occurs in society is made to have an aura, and "this occurs in the form of a symbol which we encounter in the *Fleurs du mal* almost invariably whenever the look of the human eye is invoked."²⁷

Baudelaire deploys "...the expectation roused by the look of the human eye [when it] is not fulfilled, [and] ...the deeper the remoteness which a glance has to overcome, the stronger

²⁶ Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 187.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 189.

will be the spell that is apt to emanate from the gaze.”²⁸ Baudelaire gives us the experience of non-experience “in eyes that look at us with a mirror-like blankness [in which] the remoteness remains complete.”²⁹ This remoteness remains complete in Picasso’s fictional, peeping-tom gaze at Kodar, conveyed by photographs of his eyes through venetian blinds and those of his unmoving portraits, and also by the character Don Miguel Retana in Ernest Hemingway’s short story “The Undefeated” (1927).

Welles references the story after watching footage in the editing room in which de Hory expresses his trepidation at the prospect of going back to jail, declaring, “Hemingway wrote a great short story about an old bullfighter called ‘The Undefeated.’ Well, all of the heroes are out of the bullring.” The principles of watching, the notion of aura, and the non-experience that permeate Baudelaire’s poetry can be observed in Hemingway’s work. The aura’s feeling of the presence of absence is established straightaway when the protagonist “Manuel, standing in the hallway, [feels] there [is] someone in the room. He [feels] it through the door.”³⁰ When Manuel haggles over compensation with boss Retana, the latter responds, “you can take it or leave it,” ...lean[ing] forward over the papers.”³¹ Retana is “...no longer interested. The appeal that Manuel had made to him for a moment when he thought of the old days was gone.”³² Retana is no victim of “...the image of the past, which Baudelaire regards as veiled by the tears of nostalgia.”³³

Retana as one of the few under capitalism who determine value “...would like to get him

²⁸ Walter Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 189–190.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 190.

³⁰ Ernest Hemingway, “The Undefeated,” in *Men without Women* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1972), 6.

³¹ *Ibid*, 7.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ Walter Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 187.

to substitute for Larita because he could get him cheaply. He could get others cheaply too,” the economic rather than the subjective experience of his bullfighters his primary concern.³⁴ We explore the inner thoughts of Retana via Hemingway’s employment of free indirect discourse, which finds its filmic equivalent in *F for Fake*, weaving in and out of the heads and words of various subjects, introduced by Welles, while always returning to the overarching narrative of his voiceover. Manuel asks, “how much do I get?,” ...still playing with the idea of refusing.”³⁵ Manuel “...[knows] he [can]not refuse,” however, for he has learned that capitalist systems do not take into consideration his own reflective judgments, Hemingway (like Baudelaire) giving us the experience of non-experience.³⁶ Manuel reasons, “all I want is an even break,” but “he [is] talking to a man who [is] no longer listening.”³⁷

“The Undefeated” also stresses the crowd, a concept crucial to Baudelaire’s poetry and to *F for Fake* as well, crowded city streets and the *flâneurs* and *badauds* that occupy them central to the film. The first mention of the crowd occurs as Manuel exits the bar, on the streets seeing “...no one he knew in all the people he passed.”³⁸ Hemingway faithfully records the state of the crowd at the bullfight. The ritual, too, is present in “The Undefeated” in the form of the bullfight and the traditions of the ceremony it maintains, which for Manuel still retain their pre-capitalist beauty. This can be observed in the dialogue between Manuel and Hernandez, the latter saying about the bulls, “they’re regular elephants we’ve got tonight ...you drew the worst lot,” to which Manuel responds, “that’s all right. The bigger they are, the more meat for the poor.”³⁹

³⁴ Ernest Hemingway, “The Undefeated,” in *Men without Women* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1972), 7.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, 8.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid, 12.

This is opposed to the majority of the other fighters who are “...back in the corrals fighting about who gets the beautiful horses,” the aesthetics of the act now constituting the beautiful.⁴⁰ This capitalist fact is well known to the critic of *El Heraldo* who sits in the stands writing “...in his notebook, ‘large and with enough horns to satisfy the cash customers, Campagnero showed a tendency to cut into the terrain of the bullfighters.’”⁴¹ The critic may be distracted in his state of reception, but the viewer of *F for Fake* has a more complex experience. Manuel is “...betrayed by [his] last allies [...(most notably his companion Zurito) as was] Baudelaire, [who] battled the crowd ...with the impotent rage of someone fighting the rain or the wind.”⁴² Manuel channels this rage into the bull as the crowd looks on unsympathetically.

The insistence on the eye and its gaze in “The Undefeated” exists as the “experience of the aura ...[which] rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man.”⁴³ This occurs in the exchange of glances between Manuel and the subject-made-into-object that he is to ritually kill: “The bull looked at him. Eyes watching, horns straight forward, the bull looked at him, watching.”⁴⁴

What Hemingway, Baudelaire, and Welles achieve is their conveyance to their readers and viewers the experience of non-experience. Each finds a form — the bullfight in the short story form, the lyrical *correspondance*, and the film respectively — to open their audiences’ eyes to the Benjaminian shock-experience through which they protect themselves from the stimuli of

⁴⁰ Ernest Hemingway, “The Undefeated,” in *Men without Women* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1972), 12.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 14.

⁴² Walter Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 193.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 189.

⁴⁴ Ernest Hemingway, “The Undefeated,” in *Men without Women* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1972), 16.

the everyday.⁴⁵ The ritual and aura in *F for Fake*, do not wither, but rather take on a new form that Benjamin could not have anticipated in 1935. It is necessary that the form of a work of art such as *F for Fake* be difficult because only through these rigors will the masses be made aware of the denial of their own subjective experience by predominant forms of the film, which *F for Fake*, by virtue of its discontinuous, sudden cuts and its accelerations and decelerations, lashes out against.

⁴⁵ In *F for Fake* this shock-experience is discernable in the attitude of Francois Reichenbach after he suspects he has purchased a forgery from Elmyr de Hory. Reichenbach tells Welles, “I didn’t try to investigate too much,” to which Welles responds, “Why didn’t you?” Reichenbach replies, “like everyone else,” which Welles laughs at uproariously, exclaiming, “you didn’t want to know!”

— Chapter Two —

“Pablo Picasso Never Got Called an Asshole”: “Girl Watching” and the Power Relations of Gender and Sexuality

The title of this chapter is derived from lyrics of the proto-punk group the Modern Lovers’ “Pablo Picasso,” a song on their eponymous 1976 debut album, released on Beserkley Records in Berkeley, California.⁴⁶ Most of the tracks, including “Pablo Picasso,” were recorded in 1972, making them contemporaneous with the production of *F for Fake*.⁴⁷ In fact, upon hearing the Modern Lovers’ “Pablo Picasso” (though it is an impossibility in terms of linear time), one would almost swear that songwriter and lead singer Jonathan Richman composed the song in a fit of inspiration after seeing the last few minutes of Welles’ film in which Picasso ogles the director’s girlfriend Oja Kodar. This scene, along with the camera and narrative’s treatment of Kodar throughout the film, will be this chapter’s focus.

“Pablo Picasso” begins:

Well, some people try to pick up girls
And get called asshole
This never happened to Pablo Picasso
He could walk down your street
And girls could not resist his stare and
So Pablo Picasso was never called an asshole

Orson Welles never calls Pablo Picasso an asshole, though he might suggest it at times. Welles does not take issue with the artist’s lecherous gaze, “girl watching” as he calls it, directed at Kodar through Venetian blinds. Pablo Picasso in this instance does not walk down the street as he does in the Modern Lovers song, constructed only through still photographs in Welles’

⁴⁶ Making it particularly poignant for the author.

⁴⁷ “1972: This year, OW begins work on an essay film that will eventually be called *F for Fake*” (Peter Bogdonavich, *This is Orson Welles*, 441).

film, but Kodar does – all day, every day – and Picasso makes sure to never miss her as she passes. For Welles, Picasso’s being a Peeping Tom is as natural and innate a quality in him as the artist’s creative talent; the objectification of women is part of manhood. We are meant to understand as much in the first scene of *F for Fake*, a film within a film entitled *About Fakes* in which the camera surreptitiously captures men’s open-mouthed, gesticulatory gawking at Kodar, examples of the *badaud* in whom the “...joy of [the *flâneur*’s] watching ...stagnate[s,] [devolving into that of the] gaper.”⁴⁸ Whereas, “the simple *flâneur* is always in full possession of his individuality, ...the individuality of the *badaud* disappears ...absorbed by the outside world... which intoxicates him to the point where he forgets himself.”⁴⁹ The *badauds* in *F for Fake* who are “acting their heads off for us and not even being paid for it” are absorbed by Kodar. The *badaud*, “under the influence of the spectacle which present[s] itself to him, ...becomes an impersonal creature; he is no longer a human being, he is part of the public, of the crowd.”⁵⁰

Rather than taking umbrage at the attention Picasso pays to his girlfriend, Welles’ objection takes the form of a jibe at Picasso’s masculinity. When Kodar enters Picasso’s house, Welles addresses the camera, saying to us, “I can’t tell you what happened in there, but Picasso is a fast worker, by which I mean to say, you understand, the results of this encounter, to say the least, were extremely fruitful.” He, of course, did not mean to say that at all. Welles’ quick yet insincere qualification of his statement and feigned concern over his viewers’ potential misconstruction of his turns of phrase are obviously not intended to hide the fact that what he

⁴⁸ Walter Benjamin, “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1971), 69.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Victor Fournel, *Ce qu’on voit dans les rues de Paris*, Paris, 1858, 263, in Walter Benjamin, “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1971), 69.

really means to imply is the great Picasso's premature ejaculation. A close-up on what we assume to be a peach, especially after being cued by Welles' utterance of the word "fruitful," is revealed to be Kodar's buttocks. She is only legs, only stomach, only breasts.⁵¹

Of course Kodar becomes one of the "girls [who] could not resist his stare," as Jonathan Richman sings, because as a woman she is destined to be looked at by Picasso and all men. This power relation is the expression behind the Modern Lovers song as well.⁵² Kodar's body is segmented, divided into parts by the camera for our viewing pleasure, seen by eyes – either those of Picasso or those of his portraits – divorced from a face. The momentum of the narrative halts in a montage whose existence is solely predicated on the exhibition of her body. The image superimposed for a moment, Kodar passes through herself and permeates both time and her double. She runs in slow motion wearing a see-through electric blue gown of tulle. It floats in the breeze behind her as the montage floats, detached from the film as a whole, one of many poetic insertions Welles makes that decelerate the whirlwind speed of the document with the dream states of fiction and the ruminative spheres of subjectivity.

⁵¹ Welles' treatment of Kodar in *F for Fake* is downright tame compared to the behavior with which he presented her in real life. Once Welles hired a private detective to track Kodar down following her uncommunicativeness after he had failed to respond to her letters and, having located her, "...bang[ed] on her door until he actually broke it down" (Chris Welles Feder, *In my Father's Shadow: A Daughter Remembers Orson Welles*, 257).

⁵² Jonathan Richman in an interview with *Boston Groupie News* in 1980 was asked, "Who do you get your direction from in life and music? Does your song 'Pablo Picasso' give us an idea? Do you love his paintings so much... [at which point Richman shook his head] ...no you don't love his paintings so much. He was just not an asshole?"

Richman replied, "I read about him when I was 18. I moved to New York and was intimidated by these girls who [I] thought were attractive. I was afraid to approach them. I didn't have too high a self-image. I was self-conscious and I thought 'well Pablo Picasso, he's only 5 foot 3 but he didn't let things like that [b]other him.' So I made up this song right after I saw those girls. You can picture it; I had this sad little look on my face and I was thinking 'Why am I so scared to approach these girls?' That was a song of courage for me." A song of courage, perhaps, but one might also say an establishment of dominant male authority.

Kodar in her subjectivity within the Picasso tale, however, fundamentally lacks agency. Though she may dupe the artist in the end, her cunning is relegated to a stereotypical act of gold digging by Welles' narration. One might object that Kodar's co-writing the screenplay (a matter which will be discussed presently) and her input in the construction of her own (often near if not completely nude) image suggests a level of involvement that negates the previous claim. The problem now becomes the very fact that Pablo Picasso was never called an asshole; never was he told that there exists no intrinsic, biological imperative which requires his tactless staring at women, as Welles' portrayal and Richman's participation within the gendered hierarchy⁵³ might suggest. The passivity of Kodar's performance, despite her claim to authorship of the film, may be elucidated by the feminist theory of Simone de Beauvoir.

In her work *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir maintains, "...the passivity that essentially characterizes the 'feminine' woman is a trait that develops in her from her earliest years," but is not a "biological given."⁵⁴ Rather, it is "...a destiny imposed on her by her teachers and by society," and also by the film industry in its fabrication and perpetuation of the image of the ideal woman and her Mulveyean "to-be-looked-at-ness."⁵⁵ De Beauvoir notes, "the great advantage for the boy is that his way of existing for others leads him to posit himself for himself,"⁵⁶ and Welles did just that, positing himself from his *enfant terrible* beginnings through the autumn of his life, advancing an image and construction of his own identity continually in *F for Fake* and constantly throughout the entirety of his career.

Kodar posits no such identity for herself in the Picasso tale, nor in the credits; her name is conspicuously absent under the title "a film by," despite the fact that she wrote the film with

⁵³ See footnote 52 on page 23.

⁵⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), 305.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Welles, whose name appears unaccompanied in the opening credits. Francois Reichenbach *presents* the film, and the film is *by* Orson Welles, but no such active verb is afforded Kodar, no possessive preposition given to her.⁵⁷ Rather, the film acts upon her, “introducing” Kodar and thereby stripping her of her authorship and making her a passive figure.⁵⁸ This passivity for de Beauvoir is a quality of the woman that results from her conditioning in childhood, during which she was given a “...doll [– or for our purposes the filmic image of the ideal woman – which] represents the whole body and ...is a passive thing. As such, the little girl will be encouraged to alienate herself in her person as a whole and to consider it as an inert given.”⁵⁹ This perhaps provides rationale in the face of the aforementioned potential objection one might raise regarding Kodar’s agency; she displays herself as a sexual object because she has been taught to do so, this exhibition of her body an inert given. She has been shown “...that to please she must try to please, must make herself object [and] ...therefore renounce her autonomy.”⁶⁰

Even in Kodar’s most powerful moment in which she and Welles act out the fictional account of her grandfather’s creation of a new period in Picasso’s oeuvre, she lacks individual authority; she plays a man, ventriloquizing Picasso, and is made to adopt Welles’ dress, donning the same black hat and coat as the director. Kodar as Picasso, exclaims, “she’s stolen my pictures!” Welles, as Kodar’s grandfather, responds, “she made you a gift, señor, she gave you a

⁵⁷ Similarly, discourse on *F for Fake* often refers to “Welles’ editing” or “Welles’ cuts,” but in fact, three women – Anne-Marie Engerer, Dominique Boischot, and Elisabeth Moulinier – are credited with editing the film. My own thesis at times is guilty of this impreciseness in attribution.

⁵⁸ Kodar, however, was anything but passive in the creation of the film. Apparently, Kodar showed to Welles her story “F for Fake,” “...about a painter inspired by a beautiful young girl he had been observing from afar” (Chris Welles Feder, *In my Father’s Shadow: A Daughter Remembers Orson Welles*, 256). Kodar recalled, “Orson said he liked it and found it very amusing, ...but I didn’t really believe him, because it was obvious that he liked me and found me attractive. You know, you can be young, but you don’t have to be a fool” (Ibid, 257).

⁵⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), 304.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 305.

whole summer,” which she paid for with her body, posing nude for Picasso’s portraits. Picasso (Kodar) snaps back, “it’s not more than the price of twenty Picassos and where for God’s sake are they now?” With this line, Kodar’s individual subjectivity is relegated to the commodity.

At this point, Welles (Kodar’s grandfather) says, “Pablo, may I call you Pablo?” His appeal brings a flash of despondency across Kodar’s face, for though she has become Picasso in this moment, inhabiting the cares of a man – money, artistic and material property – she can never really be Picasso, can never possess the power a man yields. This is simply another instance of make-believe, a world she knows all too well from her childhood when she “...trie[d] to resemble an image [and] ...disguise[d] herself” as she does now.⁶¹ Fleeting pain and anger is visible in her countenance, residue of the same grief she experienced “...when her acquaintances, studies, amusements and [in this instance her play acting] [tore] her away from [the qualities of a woman as prescribed by society], [forcing her to realize] that it is not women but men who are the masters of the world.”⁶² De Beauvoir contends “it is this revelation ...that imperiously modifies her consciousness of herself.”⁶³

In Kodar’s play as Picasso, she partakes in the aesthetic form of the illusion Immanuel Kant identifies in his work *Critique of Judgment* (1790), many of the tenets of which form the foundation of the Frankfurt School’s collective theory. Kodar’s play, like poetry as Kant contends, “...strengthens the mind by making it feel its faculty — free, spontaneous, and independent of natural determination,” this natural determination being the preexisting notion of femininity to which she is held and through which she is displayed.⁶⁴ Kodar in acting out the

⁶¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), 304.

⁶² *Ibid*, 311.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 312.

⁶⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, in *Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992) 393.

role of a man “...plays with illusion, but without deceiving by it,” for she knows as well as we do that she is not Picasso, that this story is false; the power she appropriates and exercises as the male is not given to the filmic image of the woman, “...[the authority afforded Kodar in this moment] declar[ing] its exercise to be mere play.”⁶⁵

Kodar sees what it is like to have her subjective experience matter, but this possibility is stripped from her as a woman who exists merely to be represented.⁶⁶ These concepts rule Kodar beyond the boundaries of cinema as well, her portrayal in the written form of the biography also fundamentally denying her agency. For example, in Barbara Leaming’s *Orson Welles: A Biography*, the language suggests a kind of frivolity in her authorship, Kodar “...[trying] her hand at script writing.”⁶⁷ A palpable inequality among genders⁶⁸ can be felt when Leaming writes, “from the first [Kodar] came to [Welles] as an equal — and so he accepted her. ‘He’s very impressed that she doesn’t need him to exist,’ says producer Dominique Antoine, who has known them both for more than a decade. ‘He worships her, he really worships her, because it’s the first intelligent woman he has had in his life.’”⁶⁹ Surely Antoine’s slip in referring to Kodar as an object, as an “it,” is unintentional, but it is telling nevertheless.

⁶⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, in *Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 393.

⁶⁶ It is worth noting Kodar’s personal philosophy, which is feminist in its principles. She claims, “...she had always been a little against marriage and more than a little mistrustful of men, especially after her own sister’s ugly divorce. As soon as a woman signed a marriage contract, Oja believed, the relationship changed, and in a way, the woman became her husband’s property. ‘Much as I loved and trusted Orson, I preferred to keep my independence so I could always say, ‘I’m Oja Kodar, not Mrs. Orson Welles, and I’ll go my own way’” (Chris Welles Feder, *In my Father’s Shadow: A Daughter Remembers Orson Welles*, 262).

⁶⁷ Barbara Leaming, *Orson Welles: A Biography* (New York: Viking, 1985), 561.

⁶⁸ It can also be observed in the following: “Before long the press had spotted Oja. Orson’s openly traveling about with a woman of such exceptional beauty could not go unnoticed. But Oja’s presence did not mean that his marriage to Paolo [Mori] was finished as some observers mistakenly presumed. Orson needed both relationships. Paolo and Beatrice continued to mean *home*. He might wander far afield, but he always came back” (Leaming, 577).

⁶⁹ Barbara Leaming, *Orson Welles: A Biography* (New York: Viking, 1985), 561.

This independence of Kodar about which Antoine speaks is robbed of her in her depiction as “...merely dependent beauty,” the second type of beauty Kant names. The first type is “...free beauty, [which] ... presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be; the second does presuppose such a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance therewith.”⁷⁰ Whereas “the first is called the (self-subsistent) beauty of this or that thing, the second, as dependent upon a concept (conditioned beauty), is ascribed to objects which come under the concept of a particular purpose,” in this case Kodar’s embodiment of society’s notion of the ideal woman as manifested in the cinematic form.⁷¹ In reality, there is no essential femininity, though the predetermined concept of the female tries to convince one otherwise, a fact that de Beauvoir acknowledges in her remark, “one is not born, but rather becomes, woman.”⁷²

In literature, mythology, and stories, de Beauvoir contends “male superiority is overwhelming: Perseus, Hercules, David, Achilles, Lancelot, de Guesclin, Bayard, Napoleon – so many men for one Joan of Arc; and behind her stands the great male figure of St. Michael the archangel,” just as Welles looms behind Kodar, as do Clifford Irving, Elmyr de Hory, Francois Reichenbach, and Howard Hughes.⁷³ Names to be added to this list in the next chapter are Fred Armisen, Bill Hader, and Seth Meyers, who capitalize (quite literally) on their authority and celebrity in order to challenge the documentary form in their television series *Documentary Now!*

⁷⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, in *Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 383.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), 293.

⁷³ Ibid, 313.

— Chapter 3 —

N for Next – Where this is All Headed: The Legacy of Orson Welles and *Documentary Now!*

Jackson Ayres in his essay “Orson Welles’s ‘Complicitous Critique’: Postmodern Paradox in *F for Fake*” outlines the argument of *Postmodern* (1991) author Frederic Jameson, who identifies “...the ‘cultural logic of late capitalism’ in postmodernism ...[and its chief attributes, including] ‘depthlessness,’ ‘weakening of historicity,’ ‘a whole new type of emotional ground tone,’ a deep relationship to ‘a whole new economic world system,’ and entanglement with ‘late or multinational capital,’” all of which can be discerned in IFC’s *Documentary Now!*.⁷⁴ Though *Documentary Now!* continues the critique of capitalism and the documentary form that began with *F for Fake*, it refuses its critical stance in favor of popular success, which lessens its impact in comparison to the ambition of Welles’ work.

Each episode of the first season of *Documentary Now!* is worthy of interpretation and analysis, but this paper will focus on one in particular – “*Kunuk Uncovered*,” a spin on the 1988 documentary film *Nanook Uncovered* which chronicles the history of Robert Flaherty’s canonical 1922 documentary *Nanook of the North*. This episode was selected because it demonstrates a commitment to mimesis of form, a tendency that runs throughout the series as a whole, and for the creative (and contentious) character of its adaptations. It should also be noted that while *Documentary Now!* parodies prominent documentaries, its imitation (in the case of the pilot “*Sandy Passage*” especially) also qualifies as adaptation – as significant elements of the originals are reworked and altered, and outside works and films included – for the creators’ and viewers’ purposes. While *Documentary Now!* gives the underlying impression of a critical view

⁷⁴ Jackson Ayres, “Orson Welles’s “Complicitous Critique”: Postmodern Paradox in *F for Fake*, *Film Quarterly* 40 (2012): 8.

of the documentaries it parodies, the series is ultimately more concerned with its own favorable economic reception and aesthetic credibility (i.e., its perfected mimesis of original documentaries) than it is with its implied critique of the ethical issues surrounding the documentary form. *F for Fake*, however, largely relinquishes its economic potential (by way of its difficult form and highbrow idiom) in order to unabashedly critique the conventions of documentary filmmaking, a fact that becomes even clearer in Welles' 1976 trailer.

Lindiwe Dovey in her essay "Fidelity, Simultaneity and the 'Remaking' of Adaptation Studies" identifies within the discipline "a struggle ...at play – one in which a certain tradition of Adaptation Studies, in which the formal close analysis of particular adaptations is central, comes into contact with a different, newer tradition of Adaptation Studies, in which the wider sociological questions raised by concepts such as adaptation, appropriation, and transculturation are explored."⁷⁵ This exploration of *Documentary Now!* is congruent with the newer tradition of Adaptation Studies, but is complicated by the interests of the former tradition cited by Dovey, as the structure of the series requires that a comprehensive analysis account for the formal elements of documentary cinema and their fictionalized translation into the medium of television. This is a concern of the creators themselves, too, who "...went as far as tracking down the original camera lenses used in the 1920s" in order to lend authenticity to their televisionary adaptation of the filmic.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Lindiwe Dovey, "Fidelity, Simultaneity and the 'Remaking' of Adaptation Studies," in *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation*, ed. Pascal Nicklas and Oliver Lindner (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 167-68.

⁷⁶ Nardine Saad, "Hader, Armisen, Meyers comedy 'Documentary Now!' spoofs their favorite docs," *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 2015, accessed April 20, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/showtracker/la-et-st-documentary-now-ifc-bill-hader-seth-meyers-fred-armisen-tca-20150731-story.html>.

F for Fake adheres to the former, more traditional approach described by Dovey in its method of adaptation, rather formal and direct in its allusions to and quotations of short stories such as Ernest Hemingway's "The Undefeated" and poems including Rudyard Kipling's "The Conundrum of the Workshop." It is this kind of ceremoniousness that *Documentary Now!* eschews in favor of pure comedy and the absurd, removing from the original sources (at least from the surface level) the kind of solemnity with which the texts in *F for Fake* are overtly endowed. This is indicative of "...a move away from the privileging of literary source texts [that is] among the notable features of [the] revolution [of simultaneous adaptations]," whereas in *F for Fake*, textual adaptation still largely relies on the literary and its elicitation of emotion and memory.⁷⁷

Documentary Now! in a doubled move, however, also upholds the prominent status and historical worth of the documentaries it adapts for parodic sake while simultaneously bringing into question the prestige and importance its sources have developed over the years, even if its creators do not readily admit this.⁷⁸ *F for Fake* makes a mockery of the documentary form itself and its questionable capacity for truth, lambasting the formal components that compose the documentary film by exploiting them for its own use. *Documentary Now!*, on the other hand, recreates in order to critique (or at least entertain).

Both works, however, share a common interest in the effects of capitalist economy and the value of artworks, as well as a curiosity for inter-mediumism; the intention behind the decision to record forgeries which we witness Elmyr de Hory bring to life in *F for Fake* can be seen as synonymous with that of the makers of *Documentary Now!* in their reproduction of well

⁷⁷ Lindiwe Dovey, "Fidelity, Simultaneity and the 'Remaking' of Adaptation Studies," in *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation*, ed. Pascal Nicklas and Oliver Lindner (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 170.

⁷⁸ More will be said on this topic presently.

known documentaries for television. The same ideological issues surrounding “the original” (for Welles its position in fine art, for Armisen, Buono, Hader, and Thomas its status in documentary film) concern each work. Also essential to *F for Fake* and *Documentary Now!* is the celebrity of their respective creators, a point which will be discussed further.

F for Fake is intertextual, incorporating literary works and allusions to paintings in addition to Welles’ own creations, encompassing his past films as well as radio broadcasts and stage plays. *Documentary Now!*, too, is intertextual, combining with the documentary popular forms of media such as the ubiquitous genre of handheld camera horror that began with *The Blair Witch Project* and continues with the *Paranormal Activity* series, which the episode “*Sandy Passage*” adapts into the weave of the document for its own comedic purpose, making it an example of “...an emergent form of adaptation [called ‘simultaneous adaptation,’] [which] could perhaps be read as an attempt by practitioners to meet everyday audiences of adaptations halfway.”⁷⁹ Welles also commits a sort of simultaneous adaptation of his own in *F for Fake*, including poetry, short stories, and other literary forms within the medium of cinema, uniting both his film and his viewers in these interrelationships.

Documentary Now! also prompts intertextual associations that the mind makes quite freely, examples of Proustian “involuntary memory” which Dovey sees as “...the daily, common responses to [the adaptation –] ... embodied rather than rational responses – whereby individual memories and experiences (which in some cases connect with collective memories and experiences) are ignited” (Dovey, 166). Such involuntary memory occurs in the episode “*Kanuk Uncovered*” whereupon seeing actor John Slattery playing *Nanook of the North* director Robert Flaherty, we think to ourselves, “it’s Roger Sterling from *Mad Men!*,” one of many examples of

⁷⁹ Lindiwe Dovey, “Fidelity, Simultaneity and the ‘Remaking’ of Adaptation Studies,” in *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation*, ed. Pascal Nicklas and Oliver Lindner (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 169.

the inextricable connections between contemporary media that *Documentary Now!* solidifies. While simultaneous adaptation “...invoke[s] [such] an embodied and rational response, [it] does not require of the audience a long and protracted engagement after the event to experience the pleasures of adaptation.”⁸⁰ This is perhaps the main difference between the series and *F for Fake*; the latter makes us work for it, requires that we concurrently interpret its adaptations and think about them afterward, whereas the former necessitates no such (re)cognition at all.

Rather, it is a happy accident if the viewer has seen, for example, *Grey Gardens* – the original documentary parodied in the pilot “*Sandy Passage*” – or if s/he picks up on the *Paranormal Activity* spoof within the episode, though presumably the latter possibility is more likely due to the film saga’s cultural ubiquity, a probability for which *Documentary Now!* accounts. Though Dovey refers specifically to the adaptations within African filmmakers’ art installations that are involved in postcolonial rhetoric, her analyses can be applied to the makers of *Documentary Now!* who are also working within a postcolonial perspective in “*Kunuk Uncovered*,” “...turn[ing] to adaptation due to its mimetic potential ...in [the] radical updating of historical sources.”⁸¹

Simultaneous adaption’s mimetic potential, however, “...does not necessarily require a knowledge of the adapted sources,” a fact *Documentary Now!* uses to its uproarious advantage, inserting physical comedy and aberrant plot lines for viewers unfamiliar with the original documentary, and mimetically recreating shots within “*Sandy Passage*,” “*Kunuk Uncovered*,” and “*The Eye Doesn’t Lie*” (which parodies Errol Morris’ *The Thin Blue Line*), for well versed

⁸⁰ Lindiwe Dovey, “Fidelity, Simultaneity and the ‘Remaking’ of Adaptation Studies,” in *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation*, ed. Pascal Nicklas and Oliver Lindner (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 169.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 172.

viewers.⁸² This is opposed to the adapted sources within *F for Fake*, in which, for example, a knowledge of the Hemingway short story Welles references only by name is not required to enjoy the film *per se*, but is necessary if one wishes to be “in on it,” marking *F for Fake* with a sort of elitism that is absent from *Documentary Now!*.

In *Documentary Now!*, “...intellectual exertion is encouraged in viewers by the juxtaposition of the two or more distinct sources within one single [episode, but because of its incorporation of multiple works, its] status as [adaptation] is tenuous at best, raising questions about what exactly is being adapted.”⁸³ The answer in the case of “*Kunuk Uncovered*” seems to be “...the fact of colonialism and its associated discourses, [which the episode] represents [as] the rewriting of bowdlerised colonial narratives that erase ...non-Western histories.”⁸⁴

Though *Documentary Now!* purportedly avoids the political in a way that *F for Fake* does not, the former (despite its creators’ claims or lack thereof) is still engaged – if only by default – in the ethical issues and moral questions that surround the original documentaries it adapts and parodies. One of the most significant of these matters regards the legacy of ethnographic film in the episode “*Kanuck Uncovered*.” Multiple scholars have commented on the problematic appropriation and rewriting of indigenous culture that occurs in *Nanook of the North*. This discussion concerns many of issues raised by Fatimah Tobing Rony in her essay “Taxidermy and Romantic Ethnography: Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North*, including the colonial impulse to document, romanticize, and “preserve” indigenous culture via the cinematographic apparatus, as well as the loss of agency and control over one’s image and narrative that indigenous people experience when documented by white (male) filmmakers.

⁸² Lindiwe Dovey, “Fidelity, Simultaneity and the ‘Remaking’ of Adaptation Studies,” in *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation*, ed. Pascal Nicklas and Oliver Lindner (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 172.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Added to the complexity is the fact that Fred Armisen who plays Kunuk participates in what might be thought of as (please forgive the crudity of the term) “Inuit-face,” and this is not the first time the actor has engaged in such “representation.” In February 2008 Armisen played President Barack Obama on *Saturday Night Live* in what was essentially blackface, though Armisen described his makeup as a “...honey color, ...something I would wear when I play Prince.”⁸⁵ Executive producer of *Saturday Night Live* and also of *Documentary Now!* Lorne Michaels claims, “‘it’s not about race. It’s about getting a take on Obama, where it serves the comedy and the writing. ...Believe me, when we read 40 or 50 pieces [for the show] on Wednesday, no one says, ‘This is a very good way of getting our political points across.’ We’re simply asking ourselves: Is it fresh? Is it funny? Fred just had best take on Obama.’”⁸⁶

These are probably the same questions Michaels and the creators of *Documentary Now!* asked themselves about “*Kunuk Uncovered*.” The politics behind Armisen’s playing an indigenous person, if one believes Michaels, are unimportant, but considering the fact that the erasure of cultural identity is so central to discussions of *Nanook of the North*, the matter deserves further consideration. Armisen is of Japanese and Venezuelan descent,⁸⁷ does his multiracial ancestry mitigate his transgression? Why was an Inuit actor not hired for the role? *Documentary Now!*’s decision to use Armisen lies on tricky ground that can quickly backslide into appropriationist or racist territory, especially given the professed lack of intention by Michaels.

⁸⁵ Bennett Marcus, “Fred Armisen Performs in ‘Honeyface,’” *New York Magazine*, March 13, 2008, accessed May 1, 2016, http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2008/03/fred_armisen_does_not_wear_bla.html.

⁸⁶ Farhi, Paul, “Did ‘SNL’ Go Beyond the Pale with Fauxbama?,” *The Washington Post*, February 29, 2008, accessed May 1, 2016, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/28/AR2008022803988.html>.

⁸⁷ “Fred Armisen,” Internet Movie Database (IMDB), accessed May 1, 2016, http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0035488/?ref_=nmbio_bio_nm.

Despite its makers' purported disinterest in *Documentary Now!*'s potential as a platform for social critique, the series nevertheless comments on race, gender, and the history of cinema in a critical way. Given the creators' intimation that the series is not intended as criticism but rather praise of the documentaries it parodies,⁸⁸ perhaps my observations of *Documentary Now!* are guilty of what Dovey identifies as "...rarefied scholarly practice [of Adaptation Studies in which] ...scholars laboriously [work] out, in retrospect, the relationships between sources and adapted texts in a way that no lay viewer ever would."⁸⁹ I grant that, but proceed with my analysis in any case.

In "*Kanuck Uncovered*," writer Seth Meyers seems at times to be in tune with the contemporary dialogue of censure surrounding *Nanook of the North*, revising within his new narrative the original documentary's problematic history by implicitly acknowledging it and at the same time utilizing it for farce. For example, director of *Kanuck the Hunter* William H. Sebastian (the equivalent of Robert Flaherty), in a scene straight out of a Chaplin silent, uses physical violence and pulls a shotgun on Pipilock (the equivalent of Nanook) in order to get his subject to perform as desired. With this insertion, Meyers, at least tacitly, evokes a colonial history of brutality, oppression, and fear, though to the average viewer this segment may be perceived as pure slapstick.

Aglatki Qamaniq, a fictional Inuit woman who worked as translator for Sebastian and his crew, ventriloquized by Meyers, also remarks, "Sebastian would brag to the women that he was making a real film with real people, but everything they did was fake," a nod to the fabrication

⁸⁸ Nardine Saad, "Hader, Armisen, Meyers comedy 'Documentary Now!' spoofs their favorite docs," *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 2015, accessed April 20, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/showtracker/la-et-st-documentary-now-ifc-bill-hader-seth-meyers-fred-armisen-tca-20150731-story.html>.

⁸⁹ Lindiwe Dovey, "Fidelity, Simultaneity and the 'Remaking' of Adaptation Studies," in *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation*, ed. Pascal Nicklas and Oliver Lindner (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 165.

committed by Flaherty in the 1922 documentary which calls to mind Welles' falsifications within *F for Fake*. Welles claims, "In *F for Fake* I said I was a charlatan and didn't mean it ...because I didn't want to sound superior to Elmyr, so I emphasized that I was a magician and called it a charlatan, which isn't the same thing. And so I was faking even then. Everything was a lie. There wasn't anything that wasn't."⁹⁰ For Flaherty, on the other hand, appearing superior to his subjects was not a concern, as his patronizing intertitles make abundantly clear.

Similarly, Meyers lightheartedly ridicules whiteness itself and emasculates the white male in his dialogue for Qamaniq; she tells the camera, "Sebastian had to leave in the dark of the night [when the men returned from their months-long hunt.] The women gave him some blankets and some food, but assumed he would just die in the woods. That was okay. At first, it was fun for them to be sleeping with a fancy white man, but they told me he needed a lot of positive feedback sexually. That got tiresome." Likewise, Welles emasculates Picasso in the "girl watching" scene in *F for Fake*, the measuring of virility clearly important to these Hollywood moguls. The critique of whiteness becomes even more blunt when Pipilock, upon firing a white woman acting in the film, tells her "[I am] making a film with realism and truth and ...a white woman ha[s] no place in it."

Meyers also seems to tackle with the erasure of indigenous authority and identity that occurs in *Nanook of the North*. When Pipilock expresses a desire to direct, assistant cameraman Barnabas Scott laughs in his face, but the joke is on him, as Pipilock goes on to mount the camera on a sled, thereby inventing the first tracking shot in the history of cinema. Pipilock also devises sync-sound when an anthropologist with a gramophone enters the scene, as well as the point-of-view shot, about which Qamaniq reflects, "Pipilock felt strongly that the camera should see what he was seeing. He kept calling it his point of view."

⁹⁰ Peter Bogdonavich, *This is Orson Welles*, 442-43.

Documentary Now! turns on its head the authority with which *Nanook of the North* is endowed as the quintessential prototype of the documentary film, reassigning Flaherty's control to the ones most directly harmed – the Inuit people he misrepresented – by crediting Kanuck with the innovations responsible for cinema as we know it. These amusing narrative choices constitute a witty effort to rewrite the historiography of *Nanook of the North*, the episode reclaiming the negation and deletion of Inuit selfhood and agency that occurs in the original documentary, and positing a humorous, yet ethically informed reassertion of power on behalf of the colonized “other.”

Kunuk recoups this power via his cinematic authorship. *Documentary Now!* reverses the condition of the original *Nanook of the North*, formulating a narrative in which the documented becomes documenter. Kunuk *himself* appropriates the culture of Hollywood, “insist[ing] that [there be] a table with coffee and other craft services to enjoy in the downtime between shooting.” Star culture corrupts his “indigenous primitivism” as he adopts the attitude of a Hollywood diva, refusing to work more than four hours a day. The vanity of Western cinematic representation overcomes him, Kunuk declining to shoot additional footage because he believes he appears too old on camera. As the narrative progresses, his stardom develops into his role as director of a new film, a position he exercises tyrannically, screaming in his native language, for example, at Barnabas Scott, “what are you doing? Gonna walk off my set? Sit your ass down!”

Meyers creates a situation which somewhat parallels that of the original *Nanook of the North* in which shots were recreated artificially because the original footage was lost in a fire. In Meyers' narrative, however, filmmaker William H. Sebastian purposely burns footage that Kanuck had filmed himself, keeping only the shots that were his own. Barnabas Scott in response to Sebastian's action comments in *Kanuck Uncovered*, “here was a film not a tenth as

good as the one we could have shown them, and they ate it up. Audiences – they’re fucking useless.” This brings us to the topic of commercial audiences and the reigning economic and capitalistic principles that dictate cinema’s (as well as television’s) purpose and direction, issues which *Documentary Now!* and *F for Fake* take up. Most notable in relation to this matter is the fact that without the pre-established celebrity of stars/creators Fred Armisen and Bill Hader, the pitch for *Documentary Now!* would never have left the roundtable.

James Naremore recognizes that “...postmodernism and the entertainment industry are bent on a busy crossbreeding between the media (thus satisfying the aims of late capitalism),” and this fact is clearly discernable in *Documentary Now!*, which combines not only various filmic forms – both documentary and fictional – in its adaptations and parodies, but also translates cinema into the medium of television.⁹¹ The creators are highly aware of these qualities in their work, as evidenced by commercials for *Documentary Now!*; one entitled “*Documentary Now! – The Definitive Collection*” spoofs the film buff’s beloved Criterion Collection as well as the three-hour long blocks of programming that occur at three in the morning in which compilation discs are sold to night owls. Another called “*Documentary Now! – Pledge Drive*” parodies the pledge drives of publicly funded television channels, and is absurd in its anachronisms (the series is sold on “high fidelity VHS tapes”) and in its blatant product placement (a case of Sam Adams Boston Lager sits on the table and is actually mentioned by the host, an obvious joke that works on two levels, as Sam Adams must have actually paid for this sardonic, late-capitalist advertisement).

While *Documentary Now!* seems to be critically inclined, it effectively renounces its political tendencies because it *must* if it wishes to be commercially successful. My and other

⁹¹ James Naremore, “The Reign of Adaptation,” in *An Invention Without a Future: Essays on Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 43.

film fans' knowledge of the history of documentary film and its ethical issues which *Documentary Now!* tacitly contains cannot be conveyed to the average viewer without research on their part, and that is emphatically *not* entertainment. After all, as the creators of *Documentary Now!* know, it (quite literally) does not pay to be too political.

While *Documentary Now!* continues on the path paved for it by Welles in *F for Fake*, criticizing tenets of the capitalist system of which it is inextricably a part, as well as the stock conventions of the documentary film form, it refuses its analytic angle and instead upholds amusement and a favorable economic outcome as its most important objectives. Welles expects, indeed demands more from his viewers than Hader, Armisen, or Meyers, whose provocations manifest in the exploitation of their celebrity status and in the television series' mimesis of form, rather than the shocking realizations that *F for Fake* imparts to the viewer about not only the art world and capital, but about his/her own position within them.

— Appendix —

An Interview with Clifford Irving

This project, by virtue of its subject matter, never stopped expanding. It morphed into different ideas, branched into new territories, and opened into so many avenues (for example, a close reading of the Rudyard Kipling poem “The Conundrum of the Workshops” which continually surfaces in *F for Fake*, or the incorporation of writings by other Frankfurt School theorists in my analysis) that at some point I had to contain the thesis’ seemingly insatiable desire to mutate into a book of discrete though interconnected essays on *F for Fake*.

In the process I inevitably had to abandon much of my initial research, but one endeavor, despite its lack of substantial inclusion in my thesis, is significant – my interview in July 2015 with author Clifford Irving, who is featured in *F for Fake*. He accomplished one of the biggest hoaxes of the 20th century, the purportedly sanctioned autobiography of Howard Hughes, which the millionaire in fact had no knowledge of, an undertaking that ultimately put Irving in prison for seventeen months. Mr. Irving’s answers to my questions in our telephone conversation open up interesting notions of the voice of the author/narrator, the work of art’s dubious responsibility toward historical accuracy and originality, the lives of painters versus the lives of writers, and capital and art-making. Irving’s insights may be of interest to future scholars of *F for Fake* or of the works of Irving himself, so published below is a transcript of our discussion.

I have edited only for the sake of clarity and brevity, omitting the inessential yet naturally occurring repetitions of casual conversation and excluding some digressions, but never touching the content or intention behind the words transcribed. However, as Mr. Irving would tell you, you will just have to take my word for it.

Scarlet Cummings: After that whole ordeal, do you have any respect for experts or authenticators?

Clifford Irving: Oh no, I really don’t, to put it very simply and bluntly, no. I mean, experts are people who make a living pretending they know everything. And they know a lot, but they’re wrong many times and unfortunately you can’t rely on them. I study a lot of science – scientists are very quick to acknowledge that they’re just theorizing based on what’s available to them they think they know x, y, and z, but they’re not 100% sure. Now an expert is always 100% sure, so that’s obviously absurd.

...

CI: “Experts always labor under the belief that they’re talking factually. We knew we weren’t. ...there’s a big difference.”

SC: Are scruples a dispensable part of the job description of a writer/artist?

CI: I don't know what you mean by scruples. I'm assuming you mean an ethical framework. I think so – I think if you read work by someone whose ethics are subpar you start to feel it and you start to distrust what you're reading, even if it's fiction. I read many novels and don't finish them because I don't like the voice I'm hearing – and I don't mean the voice of the character, I mean the voice of the author through his or her characters – and that often has to do with the framework they start out with. Call it scruples, call it ethics, call it morality, I think it's important.

...

CI: Anybody who writes non-fiction takes liberties. I mean, what else can you do? History is based on first-person accounts, right? And we know that first-person accounts are totally unreliable. That's what non-fiction writers are, they're pretending to be witnesses. They weren't there so they have to make it up, and that's where the ethics come in handy."

...

CI: The dialogue I use is what I think expresses the truth of the moment.

SC: Have you read Mark Forgy's book *The Forger's Apprentice*?

CI: "Yes, I have – well, let's put it this way – I skimmed through it. There were two parts of it – one was a paraphrase of *Fake!*, which he doesn't acknowledge, and the second part of it is the story of his relationship with Elmyr. Some of it's true, some of it's not. Mark adores Elmyr and his memory, and thinks he can do no wrong. I think that's naïve. For the most part, I didn't like the book and I don't recommend it to anybody.

SC: Forgy implies your endeavors in forgery were inspired by Elmyr's. Is there any truth in that?

CI: Yes, there probably was some truth to it, but it's hard to say. I certainly didn't believe at the time that I was creating the Howard Hughes hoax because I had learned so much from Elmyr and it was all so wonderful. I thought it was an original idea – that doesn't mean I wasn't subconsciously or unconsciously influenced by Elmyr, by his successes and his failures. I've been asked this question many times, and the only truthful answer I can give is "I don't know."

On changing the plot (and thereby the historical accuracy) in the 2006 film adaptation of *The Hoax*, based on Irving's non-fiction book recounting his experience writing the fake Howard Hughes autobiography:

CI: "Do they have the right to [change the plot]? Yes, but they also have the responsibility that their changes make a better movie."

SC: Are you comfortable with the way Orson Welles cut the interview footage in *F for Fake*? There's a section in which he makes it seem like you and Elmyr are having a conversation that never occurred.

CI: I don't mind that at all. He's trying to make a point and if it's a valid point, he can use whatever continuity he wants – that's art. That's the way movies are made.

SC: How does the experience of painting compare to that of writing, especially in terms of authorship?

CI: In each instance it's an act of creativity, so what's the difference? I don't understand your question.⁹²

SC: I don't understand it either, that's what I'm writing about!

(shared laughter)

CI: I love to paint, I love it especially because it's so physical, and writing is not. I always feel I could easily have made painting my profession and done well at it. I didn't, that wasn't the choice I made, but I certainly enjoy painting as much as writing. My painting is as much me as my writing is me. Maybe more because there's no editor involved. Although there are a lot of painters who paint because they think this particular style will sell, or their gallerist tells them, 'give me more of these landscapes or geometrical abstractions.' So I guess they are being edited even though you don't call that person the editor, but I'm lucky, I've never had anyone who told me how to paint.

SC: What's it like to write for Hollywood as opposed to writing your own novels?

CI: That's always torture and hell. Almost every writer will say that. I'm involved in Hollywood at the moment with a screenplay based on *Fake!* You never know whether you're being told the truth or not. There's an old Hollywood saying– when someone in Hollywood says, "Trust me," what they really mean is "Fuck you."

On producers of films:

CI: They're in the business and you're not. You're trying to write a work of art, a movie, but they're trying to produce something that will sell a lot of tickets and do well internationally. Your aims are not the same. You're trying to do the best you can and they're trying to make a lot of money. In the end it's going to be their movie, you have to keep that in mind from the beginning.

⁹² Walter Benjamin in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" contends, "what distinguishes photography from painting is therefore clear, and why there can be no encompassing principle of 'creation' applicable to both: to the eyes that will never have their fill of a painting, photography is rather like food for the hungry or drink for the thirsty" (187).

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