

Editor Entering Screen Left

BY KERSTI GRUNDITZ BRENNAN

It matters who edits. In the article *Creating character in editing*, we claim that expert editing is a “complex cocktail of embodied, embedded, enactive, culturally assimilated, implicitly developed, and explicitly trained cognitive processes” (Brennan and Pearlman 2023). And while the article shows that a lot of this implicit editing expertise can be articulated, it also recognizes that there is more to it.



Kersti Grunditz Brennan improvising "The girl waits ashore", 1994. Photo: Ylva Olsson

It matters who edits. Not only based on the editing expertise the editor brings to a project but on the personal experiences, cultural conditioning, disposition, accumulated learning, impressions, and exposure to art that affect their creative decisions and intuitive associations in paths that may never be possible to disentangle. The artistry of the individual editor is a combination of explicit skills and traits and those that are difficult to articulate in a taxonomy of editing expertise. It includes the intangible qualities that distinguish one good editor from another – their personal artistic voice.

“The personal is political!” – an echo of feminist history and its battle to claim authority for domestic experiences. I say: “The personal is artistic!” Read as personal perspective or artistic voice, it can be found in the style, authorship, content, and choice of genre – part of the individual handprint each collaborator leaves on a project. The short memoir essays in this collection move through the weave of my personal perspectives and artistic voice. They have been written at different points through my research education, and in them, I share my tastes, ethics, and biases, as well as the conditions and experiences that have shaped me. Hopefully, what I reveal about myself can be traced as my handprints on the films that have come out of this research project, and, in extension, illuminate the level of personal impact all editors leave on films beyond what can be directly attributed to articulated expertise or a particular editing decision. To claim the personal as artistic and publish these memoir essays is my way of speaking to the artistic impact of individual editors.

In these essays, I reflect on different artistic practices I have moved through; playing the piano, working with dance and choreography, singing in choirs, teaching, making films in many capacities, performing, and most of all, editing. I also write about artists that have been important to me: Jeanette Winterson, Derek Jarman, Trinh T. Min-ha, Kerstin Ekman, and about my collaboration with Annika Boholm.

I am a filmmaker. I am a dancer. I am a woman. I am a skier. I am an editor.

Who I am cannot be contained in professional roles, and I am not what I create, but who I am effects collaborations, my co-creators, and the practice. And no matter what my role in a creative process is, what I bring to it leaves traces on the artwork – for good and bad. It is time for me to introduce myself: editor enters screen left.

Friend, foe, and inescapable ruler – reflections on time

October 2020. My daughter turned 18 this year and my son moved out. Both my children are now adults and I have no legal say in their lives. My mother is 86 with a heart condition. For risk of infecting her with Covid-19 I haven't seen her in over six months, but we talk more now than we have since I moved out at 18. I am 54 years old. My jowls are sagging, I have arthritis in my hips, and can no longer bear children. The skills and insights I have accumulated as the years pass are on a reverse trajectory from my body functions' decline with age. I think I am past the point where those trajectories intersect.

The month I started my PhD-studies, U.S. president #45 was inaugurated. He and his administration's aggressive promotion of the terms "alternative facts" and "fake news" immediately had strong political repercussions. The idea of facts as relative had a real impact on people's lives. His reign also seemed to embolden authoritarian movements worldwide and give credence to fringe groups like anti-vaxxers, climate change deniers, ultra-nationalists, and religious fundamentalists. Gaslighting techniques paved the way for blind following.

That year, 2017, was also the year of #MeToo, which exposed the abuse of power made possible by genius worship and cultures of silence and obedience. No field was exempt, but it was in my field, the film industry, that the international fuse was lit with the fall of a big-shot film producer.

My long love affair with the gray zones between truth and lies and with Rumi's 'field out beyond the ideas of wrongdoing and right-doing' (Rumi, 1300) rests on my belief that it is possible to hold different perspectives simultaneously. For example, I trust it to be a scientific fact that there is far more empty space than matter in the atoms that make up the physical world. However, in my everyday life I make choices based on experiences of solidity; I don't walk into traffic believing that there is so much empty space that matter won't collide and cause bodily harm. I have no trouble reconciling these two perspectives. But in the past couple of years, I've felt myself losing faith in society not to regress into dogmatic ideology fueled by whatever version of facts fits a simplified narrative of 'either/or.'

I am getting angrier with age. When I was in my twenties, my friends stood on the barricades while I felt uncomfortable reducing the complexity of an issue to an angry argument or catchy slogan. In the causes of the day, nothing was truly at

stake for me. Those barricades were about fighting on behalf of somebody else and I sensed that it wasn't always doing the good it intended. It was possibly because my barricade friends, young Swedish future intellectuals, weren't all that aware of their positions of privilege. A bit like Swedish documentary filmmakers who traveled around the world to capture stories of other people's struggles for rights and resources and then went home to Sweden when they got into trouble, leaving to their fate those whose struggles were inescapable. Back then, privilege wasn't talked about like it is now. In my circle of progressive friends, I don't remember much talk about the damage done by the privileged helper/outsider. In hindsight, this is perhaps justification for my reluctance to take firm political action. There was also some cowardice in me and a sense that my limited experiences in life gave me little credibility.

After I had my kids, my body started failing me. I had major surgery three times in four years. Three times I faced skepticism from the doctors about my innate understanding of the site of my troubles. They claimed it was either gynecological when I knew it wasn't or that it was constipation when I knew it was gynecological. My ailments had to reach the levels of decimeter-sized cysts or violent fevers and vomiting for my (female) body and my (female) voice to be taken seriously. Decades of feminist struggle hadn't achieved nearly as much as my younger self had believed.

Early in my teens, I had decided to live like one of the boys, refusing to accept that anything was out of reach because of gender limitations. Refusing to admit the existence of any structural resistance to my endeavors, I plowed ahead. Crying over the men I had crushes on who loved hanging out with me but fell in love with the "girlie" girls.



Kersti improvising in "The girl waits ashore", 1994. Photo: Ylva Olsson

Getting all the stereo-typical gender flack when I went after ideas or art- making opportunities. I was too aggressive, bossy, scary, rough, odd, and not quirky or cute enough. And I took it to heart. I accepted the choice between staying aggressive or getting only half of what I wanted, staying bossy or letting the idea go. But I rarely thought (those 30 years ago), ‘wait a minute, if I were a man, I wouldn’t have to deal with this. I would be considered assertive, ambitious, a leader...’. Instead of seeing this blatant sexism, I took it upon myself to prove that I was as good, strong, and smart as the boys.

In my 30’s I left dance for my second career in film. I had accumulated enough skills and knowledge to look at my interactions with a bit of perspective. I noticed that I had to know my tech twice as well as the ‘boys’ and that I was allowed fewer drafts that didn’t hit it out of the park before I was replaced as a creative collaborator. Having very diverse skills but no name brand was a liability for me and not the asset my male colleagues could claim. “Oh, the young (man) is so multitaled! A Leonardo of our time!” – the renaissance man, a role model that was never mine. As a woman, I was offered the choice of being an administrator or an isolated role from the casting gallery of male-defined norms; successful by honing one talent; definable, categorizable, and worthy of distinction.

Structures of inequality that my younger self had decided wouldn’t affect me became a target of my anger. As I faced setbacks, my anger was no longer only directed at myself or my immediate opponent or obstacle. And once my female body malfunctions resulted in those frequent hospital visits, I stepped up to the barricades of feminism, ready to chant slogans and mean every word of them. I needed to start telling my stories, not hide behind other people’s stories in order to address what I found important.

A year or so before I went into artistic research, my friend and colleague, Annika Boholm, and I talked about making a film or a play from our experiences with female health issues. The idea was fueled by our anger with the general invisibility of our perspectives. While we developed the research project BLOD (which also deals with unhealthy relationships and disproportionate responsibility for emotional labor, childcare, and household chores), menstruation and menopause became popular topics in comic strips, plays, and TV programs. The #MeToo revelations and movement followed this in 2017. Being a genius (artistic or other) no longer meant a free pass to abuse power. And power was now understood beyond ‘being in charge’; power exerted by fame, age, race, wealth, status... The trajectory of my accumulated insights coincided with what was happening around me. Time was catching up with me, and I saw my youth and all the things I had put up with as a young woman with a new perspective. And got even angrier. It was an energizing anger, in step with the movement’s solidarity and hope for change.

In the 20 years of my career in film, as a documentary director and even more as an editor, I’ve thought that my contributions were a bit invisible. And because of that, I have wanted to point them out; to make all the time and effort I had spent

[1] I am borrowing that last sentiment from my teaching colleague Synne Berndt talking about her reasons to compile her artistic contributions through the years and frame them for a PhD-degree in dramaturgy.

on them count¹. I went into artistic research partially to push the importance of the editor into the foreground by bringing attention to some unique contributions of the editing. I see a parallel in this era of political movements led by strong, willful leaders and genius cults in arts and entertainment. In many parts of the world, the glorification of individual achievements (endless talent shows, artists identified as brands, success measured in the number of followers) seems to be reaching new highs. I start to sense that my quest to elevate the role of the editor and render it more visible is based on a false premise. Maybe it is not the editors that are invisible, but the collective nature of film making; too often obscured by the brands of directors or stars used for film marketing. Maybe it's not the skewed distribution of individual artistic credit that is the issue, but the idea that the creative process could be neatly separated by preassigned professional roles and credit distributed accordingly.

I recognize the deep specialization of individual skills and practices and the unique perspectives that different members of the filmmaking collective bring to the process. It's the once-the-film-is-finished extrapolation of who contributed exactly what that is a construction to appease the cultural value of individual point scoring. A need I, too, was addressing when I started this research project. But thinking back, my most satisfying creative moments have always occurred in collaborative efforts. A bunch of people with different practices creating together. Or, collaboration in relay style where people enter and leave the process and hand over material for others to keep working on and with. The editing situation feels like a central vantage point to investigate collaboration from since it is an intersection where individual contributions cannot be untangled from each other and where something can emerge that surprises all the collaborators. That's my high and that's what I love about editing. Call it film-making magic, distributed cognition, or collaborative practice – either way, more of it could take place in the editing room if the creative role of editing was allowed to expand. Advocating for it, practicing it, and sticking to it feels like my best response to my physical decline and this era where I need to cultivate and model alternatives to genius cults and authoritarianism.

2020 was an anomaly in many ways. Covid-19 and social distancing have multiplied the presence and consumption of the medium I work in. Never have so many people watched so much film, television, and internet clips. The disease starkly revealed structural inequity when it comes to race, class, etc. People staying home led to increased drug abuse and domestic violence, as the isolation kept people away from the public eye and neighborly care. Film and media have become increasingly powerful tools for change of attitudes and raised awareness – new stories, shifts in distribution, body-cams, cellphone cameras – and my hope for an antidote to the mostly bleak prospects for the future lies with global movements like Fridays for the Future, End Ecocide, Black Lives Matter, and MeToo. I know that progress is not halted or reversed yet. The world is both larger and smaller with the internet, unlikely allies will find each other, and a lot of it is happening online and in the form of media-based or cinematic storytelling.

So, what now. What to spend my time doing? Well, right now – as a teacher and researcher at a film school, urged by my awareness of the ticking clock of mortality and my recurring anger flashes over the state of the world – I'll use my position to focus on editing and collaborative film practices sprung from feminine experiences.

Out from hiding

September 2020. I sit on a stone structure by Kungsholm's square waiting for the bank to open. I watch the flower and fruit vendors set up for the day. They must have raised their canopy before I got here. Now they are placing buckets of flowers on the ground, arranging crates with fruits, berries, and mushrooms for display on portable wooden racks. I sit with my back to the street and face the square. I remember more than see the edge of the greens that define the other end of it. Thirty-five years ago, this was the view from my window across the street behind me. On the very spot where the vendors now apply the final touches to their temporary stall, there was a small wooden kiosk hut where I bought my cigarettes and wine gums. I liked one of the guys who worked there, and from my window I would watch the kiosk to catch him when business was slow for a chat with purchase. I often failed. The glare in the kiosk window made it hard to discern who was behind it, especially from diagonally across the street and three stories up. And even if he was working, my timing was often off; right as I would launch into my rehearsed post purchase chat, another customer would appear behind me to demand his attention. I think we did talk once or twice. I tried to muster up the courage to ask his name, but I don't think I did. He had great tattoos on his forearms. And now the hut is gone.

I moved out of the apartment I shared with three other girls in the fall of '86. The apartment filled an entire floor. I have passed the building and this square but have not stopped to revisit this view since then. Time becomes blurry where I sit. I become blurry. I remember stories I've told about the parties we hosted in that huge apartment, the daily conversations in the bathroom with one of us in the tub, the drinking bouts masquerading as study sessions for my philosophy class in the restaurant on the corner. But the stories don't seem connected to me. My memories of how I felt are vivid, but what I did or said is opaque, distant. Was I even there?

I recently saw a friend of one of my former flat mates on the bus. I thought this friend was so cool. When I'd hear her in the kitchen, I would find some excuse to leave my room and linger on the outskirts of the conversation. I have a great recollection of faces. An observer since childhood: "What are you looking at?" This girl inhabits my stories from that year. I feel I could imitate her way of biting her lip when she talks and her slightly clipped speech to the T. But I don't recall any details of interactions with her. In my mind, she never noticed me – just some girl who happened to be my friend's flat mate.

On the bus our eyes meet, and she says hi. I am surprised. She has aged but I recognize her clearly. I assume she mistakes me for somebody else, but she walks up to me and asks how I am, what am I working on now, how she enjoyed my last film and, oh, my god, it was a long time since we hung out in the kitchen on Hantverkargatan...At the moment I attribute this surprising turn to youthful

insecurities now redeemed. Thinking she had been somewhat aware of me back then, but now that I have made films she has seen, she's augmented my role in those kitchen talks. But as I sit here and watch the first customer buy a bag of chanterelles, I probe the idea that maybe I was only invisible to myself. The more I think about it, the more that idea fits. I hid behind a lie, a character I created and played. Maybe it is so hard to recall what I said or did because I shared so few traits with that character – I could not store it to memory because it took all my mental power to keep the web of lies intact, to not leak through the construction or reveal its fuses.

The water on lake Mälaren glitters through the green beyond the square. Traffic was slow getting here and I am pleased I was early. I feel a need to write this down. The details of what I am looking at, its connection to a section of the past that is like a rift in the timeline of my life. What a cliché – the lost year...

I was in ballet school from age six to fourteen. Then we moved to a town where ballet class was offered only once a week. I thought jazz dance was shallow and no one taught modern dance in Västerås. In high school I made a couple of dances based on my ballet training, inspired by Kate Bush and the Cullberg ballet and in my mind, I was as sharp at 18 as when I left ballet school at 14. When I moved to Stockholm after high school, I auditioned for a full-time BA preparatory program in dance. Ballet was the final part of the try-out but first up was jazz dance. I was completely lost through that whole section of the audition and didn't make it past the first cull; a reality check and a half. I knew how far off I was, but I didn't see how I'd ever get there. When a high school friend, just starting her dream education, offered me a room in the apartment, I had a temp job in an office but no direction. I did a semester of philosophy. I drank bourbon. I worked at Burger King. I pined for unattainable guys. I sang in a choir.

I wore red pants, chain-smoked, ate crappy food, and existed next to the life of the apartment, the philosophy class, and my friend's Academy of Music crowd. In the summer of '86 the choir went on tour. A ski day on a glacier was suggested. As my family is from a big ski resort town, downhill skiing is as second nature to me as walking. But that day on the glacier I could barely get down the slope. Like being back in that jazz dance audition. Not from lack of ever having done it, but from a year of self-abuse and a complete withdrawal from my body. I was not in me. The made-up character I hid in had detached from my physical self.



Kersti with Mom, 1977

I moved out in the fall of '86. Changing subleases every three months, I found new paths to dancing and began to slowly move back into my body.

The bank appointment has to do with my work on the board of the Swedish Directors' Association. I step into the bank, still in blurry time, half back in the eighties, half in the now. In the particular now where I am a film director (not the starting point for my research). In another now I am trying to find a way to write about my research in film editing. Or write my research. A text keeps coming to mind – Women and Honor, Notes on Lying by Adrienne Rich (1977). My collaborator Annika Boholm talked about it over sushi the day I proposed we make a go of our film idea BLOD as part of my research project. It was the day she told me she had cancer. A week later, when she returned home after her surgery, she sent me the text. I read it and wrote her a reply.

Thank you. We have to talk a lot about this text. Thank you. I have to digest what the reading set in motion. About my upbringing, my relationships, my need to express myself through body and not words even though words come to me more easily. More later.

Shaping characters through editing. Connecting with other people. Understanding myself through the process. Untangling and re-tangling the web of collaboration, content, aesthetics from a feminist stance. Not trusting words as much as movement, posture, behavior. Looking to reveal the fuses in the construction. Staying in the room. Creating story together. Revealing my bias. Could writing deal with any of these concerns?

I am done with the bank. Back at work I bump into a colleague getting off her bike. "It seems unlikely, but were you sitting by Kungsholm's square this morning?" "Unlikely, yes, since I haven't been there for years, but it was me." "I didn't look closer 'cause I didn't want to disturb you. Thought you were meditating or doing some kind of performance." I laugh. I was neither. Not even hiding in plain sight.

Winterson getting me going

I've only met her once. Not even a meeting, more a sighting. She did a book signing and reading at a book store in Berkeley, CA, in the mid-90s. I sat in the front, starstruck, as she read from *Gut Symmetries* (Winterson 1997). Or was it *Art & Lies* (Winterson 1992)? Two different venues are competing for my visual memory of this occasion. And two different books. Was she in the Bay Area twice? If she was, I was in the front row at one venue and standing by the back door at the other. One was two flights up, with dark wood panels, more lecture hall than bookstore. Or was that above the bookstore? And was the other venue – a white walled large room with big windows – across the bridge in San Francisco, close to Union Square? I have a signed copy of *Art & Lies*. My copy of *Gut Symmetries* is missing. Or did I not get it that day she was signing? Did she read something from it that was not published yet? There is a hint of 'secret treat' associated with that dark paneled room. Enjoyed with bookshelves in the foreground. A dark night outside, an evening stretching into the night and me absorbed by her reading:

'There is no such thing as autobiography, there is only art and lies' (Winterson, 1994)

I've read that quote too many times to tell if she actually said it there in the bookstore. Or in that bright San Francisco room. Or if I never heard her say it...

This obsession with memory. Does it really matter where I saw her? Well before that event I knew her writing. *Really* knew it, having had the experience of it fundamentally shift something for me, in me. I can't say what, but I know it shifted. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (Winterson 1985), *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), and *The Passion* (1988) – books that took me places and returned me different. Her wildness in form and content, the anachronisms, the unapologetic playfulness, the irreverence, her outsider-ness that was neither cynical nor victim. Through her writing I saw an uncharted path waiting for me. In hindsight, I can discern its mark on my choreography and later in my filmmaking. I read her first three books around the time I encountered films by Derek Jarman. I saw *Caravaggio* (1986), *The Last of England* (1987), and *War Requiem* (1989) when they premiered in Sweden, around the time I read her books hot off the presses. I reverted to the 12-year-old me who happened to hear Kate Bush's *Wuthering Heights* the first time it played on Swedish radio and then waited in line for every new record of hers. With Winterson and Jarman I was that kind of fan again, eagerly awaiting the next book or film, dreaming up dances inspired by them. I recognized his films in her writing and her writing in his films and it bothered me gravely when people couldn't see that. Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* had primed me for the film experience that would push my choreography towards the camera – Derek Jarman's film adap-

tation of Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* (1991). To this day, that is the film that has had the strongest impact on my artistic ambitions. Without having marinated myself in her writing, I don't know if I would have been ready to embrace it. Her literary worlds are not made of what they describe; they are made of how they are described. Anything is possible – not because there's magic or alternate gravitational fields, but because she writes the incompatible into cohesion. The leaps of thought and the turns of phrases fire up new connections in my reading mind. Those early books, with their keys to a reinterpretation of past experiences and historical events, became friends I'd revisit for comfort and motivation.

When her next novel came out, I had choreographed my first-evening length piece, unapologetically inspired by *Edward II* and Anna Theresa de Keersmaker's *Quartur no 4* (1987); anachronisms, mixed dance styles, and cocktail dresses with combat boots. My inner compass for the choreography was calibrated on Winterson; I went for wild swings between a multitude of expressions in a less- than-definable form. Recalling the choreography from memory, I now see it as “all over the place”; neither very inventive nor a great achievement despite my most sincere and considerable efforts. Adding extra pressure to those efforts, my private life was an emotional roller coaster during those months of production.

Once the shows were over, my 'friend', Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1992), waited for me. And she did it again. Shifted something in me. This time her writing stitched my body and my movements to my attempts to understand the world. Through the reading, I could process what I had been through. As a choreographer and a person with private emotional trauma. Winterson placed the loss of love in the traces left on the narrator's body by the main character Louise. She expanded the concept of 'a novel' to include trains of memory, poetic structuring, essayistic dialogue with other works, and leaps back and forth in time, still anchoring my physical presence with the book. Her writing invited me to inhabit the un-gendered, never described narrator and physically experience their loss and its measure of their love. Living with that book was one of the things that saw me through that summer.

In the fall I decided to take a section of my stage piece and create a version for the camera, still holding hands with *Edward II*. I had never worked with a camera or editing. I had only a vague concept of the number of steps involved to get to a flow of images juxtaposed over time (each image filled with juxtaposing stylistic elements). That was my aspiration. My choreography already existed, I had secured permission to film in an upscale mall and now I had to make choices on where to place each part of it, from what angle to film it, exactly what would be in the frame – a detail, the whole space, the point of movement impulse. I had no tools for imagining how I would work with the filmed material, so we ended up filming the entire choreography from a lot of different angles, details, wide shots...

My first time in an edit room, the videographer who did the filming showed me the technical set-up and told me the best time to cut between camera angles was in



Kersti, Annika Boholm, Lisen Gustafsson, Peo Hedengren, Sturegallerian 1992

the middle of a movement. And then he left. I drew stick figure storyboards of all the recorded takes so that I would know where to find each angle of each movement in the choreography. Pages and pages of choreography cartoons for each tape of footage. It was filmed on VHS and edited tape to tape through a video mixer with no digital memory, leaving very little room for regrets or backtracking once the edit was done. The only way to change something was to go back to the place of change and then redo everything from there from memory and, as I soon learned, from the meticulous notes I needed to take on every edit.

Early on, I had a brief fling with the idea of a future in journalism, but any writing ambition never went beyond that. Immersing myself in the writing of Jeanette Winter-son never sparked a desire to do what she did. I didn't read her with any thought of her writing process but sensing the care she must put into every sentence, every word choice, and length of a paragraph was part of my appreciation of her work. She didn't try to hide the writing process, even in her early books. That dual attention to the story and the story making was one connection I perceived between her work and that of Derek Jarman. In my early choreographic works, I started with movement but quickly envisioned a structure for the final piece. Wanting to make the story more layered, I often sought to reveal the construction of the work – patterns, themes, variations, etc. But I mistook the structure for the process (of story making) and ended up with a lot of construction hiding the story. I was not trusting the movement I created to lead me from each moment to the next. I had difficulty staying focused on the movement creation if I didn't regularly interrupt myself to assign the movement a function in the overall story structure.

Getting completely absorbed in video editing was my first true experience of artistic flow – losing track of time and place – riding the wave of an evolving creative vision in every piece of slow editing minutiae. I was in touch with the story as I was making it, but, in a way, that was new to me. The story was not preconceived, not a clear end goal for which I envisioned parts to fit and planned steps to reach. Instead, I was slowly shaping a story by creating each step and allowing that process to reveal the next step. The story kept changing on me with the steps, but I didn't feel the need to construct it beforehand. Working away in that edit room was taking me on a ride that resembled reading *Written on the Body* and I think that familiarity opened me to go all into this new medium – filmmaking. I felt like I was channeling Winter-son to get to my *Edward II*.

Later, my artistic tastes and endeavors seemed to develop in tandem with her literary output. I found dance that had a similar effect on me as *Edward II* in the choreography of Ohad Naharin. I discovered the art of dance for camera and got inspired by *Strange Fish* by DV8/David Hinton (1993) and video work by La La La Human Steps (Lock 1991). I moved to California to pursue my MFA in choreography and included courses on filmmaking in my study plan. The combination of these inputs emboldened me to push my vision and my movement vocabulary further into territories unknown to me.



Kersti in Janice Garrett's "Figuratively Speaking", 1996

It made me a better dancer, dancing with Joe Goode, Janice Garret, and Scott Wells, and it made me a choreographer who could attract invested collaborators. While I was in California, Winterson went on to write *Art & Lies*. Critics blasted her for being too difficult to read and I loved her for defending her right to ask her readers to make the effort. I made choreography and dance videos with ambitions that seemed to always exceed my resources. Her writing was my ally as I doggedly released work after work that showed promise but not quite reaching its potential – obscured by too many components not yet fully formed. I both cared and didn't care; I got my feelings hurt but wouldn't change. Movements and edits were my words, and reading Jeanette Winterson string words into sense-making gave me hope that if I kept staying with the shaping of details, I would figure out how to make sense of their relation to each other, to myself, and to a world I need art to make sense of.

Lying and stories

When I was a child, I told stories about abilities I didn't have, things I hadn't done, and people I hadn't met. I think I told them to try out roles and behaviors and attempt to figure out who I was. I also embellished accounts of what I had actually done to shape them into a story to make sense of it. Or to justify a chain of events and my role in it to the story recipient. Basically, I lied; flat out or by exaggeration or omission. Sometimes my body told a different story. And sometimes I wasn't sure what was fantasy and what was memory. I created story worlds to be able to stand the inexplicable; how to grasp that the universe had no end (which gave me a sick feeling of vertigo whenever I tried to approach infinity in my mind), and who I would be if I had been born in China and spoke Chinese or had at least one different parent, why the street names in our 1950's neighborhood were a mix of mushrooms, forest types, and dog breeds, and what had been the name-system-creating thought process of the person naming them.

Once I learned to read, I'd lose myself in stories of worlds beyond my neighborhood. Our mobile library, the 'book bus,' was my Wednesday portal to other times and places and invitations to inhabit living conditions other than mine. I had found another way of trying out roles and behaviors to figure out who I was. Reading stories, telling stories, peaking behind Bilbo's back (Tolkien 1962), or speaking "Chinese" to our neighbor – stories filled the same function whether I was the maker or the recipient.

As I got older, I learned there was a difference between lying, making things up, and creating fiction, but I wasn't always that sure about the distinction. Living in books seemed as real as walking to the neighborhood square to buy candy. But I could sense the difference between quickly stringing words together into a white lie and a story created with effort and thought. The story making. The description of fantasy or memory that actually makes its way to other people.

In the books I devoured from age eight, the story was made of words put together into sentences. Somehow someone had managed to fill white pages with letters that I could decipher, that conjured images and sounds of people, actions, and places in my mind, altering my perception of my surroundings. The stories did something. And every choice going into making them did something to the stories.

I was a fast talker. Words in my head often tumbled faster than I could write, and my written stories came out flat. Sure, I didn't have much complexity due to my youth, but there was more to my oral fabrications than to whatever stuck to the page. When I was dancing, I could keep pace. As a fairly natural athlete but not a gifted dancer, making dances required a lot of time, attention, and effort. There was no way I could imagine a movement and then do it. I had to create movements by doing them myself and then figure out how to put them in an order that made sense to me. I didn't think of it as story making, though.

It wasn't until well into my dance making life at age 26, that I somehow connected dancing to my story making. Jeanette Winterson's novel *Written on the body* (1992) geared me towards thinking of a story as a map. Whatever experiences, thoughts, or dreams stayed with me – like the touch of a lover lost to cancer in that novel – those were the topographical ridges that I could navigate by. The story making was about connecting those ridges, defining their relation to each other, and plotting a path through memory and fantasy. Moving across the floor in a dance sequence left traces in my body just like my experiences of human connection and loss. Sensations or insights that affected me from other people's stories left other traces. I started to pay closer attention to what stayed with me, but often missed how I defaulted to shortcuts and simplifications in my effort to make sense, draw maps, and construct a story. It took time before I could stand that some paths needed to remain obscured, that the past does change, that the story of it requires constant revision, and that it is not only the future that is unknown.

At age 42 I made a film about Swedish author Kerstin Ekman, a thinker and writer of epic-scale novels whose stories I had lived in since I was young. At age 52, to establish my chosen research context for my first formal PhD-seminar, I started my presentation by showing the film's final scene. Kerstin Ekman and her husband are in a small sailboat on the sea. I cut between close-ups of her looking sternly into the camera and wide shots with no other boats in the frame. In a voice-over, she says:



Still of Kerstin Ekman from "The Queen of Blackwater", 2007. Photo: Anders Bohman

"To bring order to our lives we need to not see them as splinters and fragments and meaningless stuff we leave behind and forget. I don't think that is good. We need to create a story of our lives. And we need to constantly revise it. Realize that we've let ourselves off the hook too easily. And that can be very painful. But I still believe that the story is of help to people."
(Grunditz 2008, min 56)

I am a maker of film stories. A process that, just like dancing, has a slowness and resistance built into it by its technical shroud. The storytelling at the core of that practice goes beyond making the film's story as I use storytelling to make sense of both the story and the story making in an endless meta loop. In the edit room the conversations about artistic choices with the director, producer, or other co-creators, are rarely confined to the detail choice at hand. We talk about the options in terms of back story, how it will change the subtext and the later unfolding of the story – 'if she looks up quickly, that implies that she already knew what he was going to say.' We start creating a story about how she could know that, and that might involve everything from a story of her relationship with a brother to what TV-shows she liked in her 20s to her first kiss. To create this backstory, I use my own experiences and imagination. I base it on things I've done myself, gossip I've heard, films I've seen, and books I've read. Everything I remember melded to one reservoir of fodder for creating. Once we've made a story where it makes sense to choose the take where she looks up quickly, we talk about how that changes what comes next, and what choices we make for the next edit. How fast should he react? Is the next line expected too.... storytelling to make sense of a story as it is being created from thousands of choices of images and sounds of people doing things, saying things, places, and spaces. The same story telling method goes into picking narrator sentences apart in the edit room of a documentary; if the wording in the voice-over goes like this, what does that say about who the narrator is, how do they know this, what does this phrasing imply about its subject, how does that make sense with whatever else is conveyed, with the story of this film, with its characters, audience, time...

I use storytelling when I teach. On the spot, the fabulator in me comes up with hypothetical scenarios to use as examples. I facilitate fantasy experiences for the students to learn by doing. I often invite the students to co-create the story of the situation with me in the classroom or by themselves in groups. The fictitious situation has no given outcome, but actions leading to consequences make technical and creative problems arise. Making up the story characters' reasoning and finding methods for solving the made-up problems, becomes a lived experience for the students. The story (map) of these trials and tribulations leaves traces in them, hopefully accessible when they come up against future situations that resemble that story. And if they are like me, if the story made sense, they will remember details in relation to other details as they were experienced by the story characters, and that will help them connect new information to something familiar – the story as felt memory. I may be completely off the rocker, but I know (can't point to how) that experiences of stories leave traces that share the space with lived experiences as a lifetime of experiences accumulates into knowledge, skills, insights and intuition, and the basis for a constant revision of the stories that make sense of it all.

Given my relationship to words (easy access, questionable accuracy), I am a bit weary of them. In my filmmaking words are important, but they are not the sole carriers of the story. I consider words spoken by characters in films, fiction, and documentaries, as actions, just as movements are. Based on my incomplete knowledge of the term performativity, I understand this as an uncontroversial view. But storytelling using only words differs from stories that are (also) told through image, sound, or enacting. Text differs from speech and that affects both the content of story and how it is told, particularly how it deals with time. With movies, the story may or may not connect immediately with my previous experiences. If it doesn't, whatever space there is for reflecting on that connection is of a duration set by the filmmaker. And I like that feeling of being swept away by the story itself and the experience of being brought along on its ride. If it's good, it will leave traces in me as the recipient, whether I am given time to reflect on them in the moment or not. Traces that interact with the rest of my bank of experiences to create my unique version of that story. And the full impact of the experience may not hit me until long after – the story getting created backwards, nuances and depth felt in the aftertaste rather than savored throughout a slow-paced film. And I prefer the flow of motion to the moment of image.

My filmmaking practice is storytelling made of images and sounds of people doing things, saying things, being places, and images and sounds of places and spaces on a sliding scale from fiction to documentary. The people, their actions, and the places might be completely made up, or they may be completely consumed with what they are doing, regardless of being filmed. I have a very generous notion of storytelling – dancing, painting, writing, talking, playing music, etc. – where the story emerges between the storyteller and the recipient, in story worlds that are amalgamations of myriad traces of experiences – of memory, fantasy, and other stories. Telling stories, hearing (reading, watching) stories, making things up, and remembering. Through storytelling, I hide and reveal truths and sometimes it is in the intricate fabulation of a complex lie that something unbelievable makes the most sense.

Cut and Join

– reflections on editing

IMPROVISATION

Being in sync. Being in the now. As a dancer, being ‘there’ was my trademark and my reward. I worked with improvisation as a tool for creating choreography and in performances. I did improvisation concerts with musicians, with electronic feedback loops, and in site-specific settings. When I think back to the mid-nineties, I can still feel the itch of bodysuits with contact mikes, cable ends from sensors and triggers, bald caps, and unwieldy body-extending props. It was about staying open to impulses, wherever they come from.



Kersti in Tom Brennan's "Legg Farmaceutical", 1997

I often point to my search for feeling absolutely present as an explanation of why I transitioned from dance to documentary film rather than fiction film. When I edit documentary film material, I can find moments when the unexpected creates traces of an abandon into the very now in which it is happening. It can be an unconscious reaction in front of the camera, the camera reacting with spontaneous framing, or a sudden observation or juxtaposition of image and sound that reveals something that suspends time for just an instance. Those moments of presence and life get more precious as I get older and no longer feel immortal. I have been in my current teaching and research position long enough to do things

for the second or third time – teaching a particular course, going through the admissions process, and presenting the PhD-project-cycles of repeated formats that have become familiar to me but are new to the other participants. I treat the known processes like an improvisation score. I can ensure all the elements will fit in the given time while leaving room to respond to unknown specificities of new students or different audiences. But with each repetition, the energy, excitement, and rawness of doing something for the first time wears off, and the possibility for skin-tingling improvisational presence lessens. Improvisation is a lot like editing. Too much reliance on familiar formats and predetermined selections and it goes flat. But with no direction, the improvisation turns into a string of moments that seem to lead nowhere. With editing and improvisation alike, there is a sweet spot where the ‘familiar to unknown’ ratio in a structure or situation provides optimal conditions for sharpened insights and inspired performances.



Kersti and Dad, 1978

I feel myself receding, slowly moving out to the periphery, not quite here. Or there. Watching from afar. This outside position feels familiar; maybe it's where I have always been, so what does this sense of shifting toward it mean? A shift implies change. Further out? A lateral move? Or consistency with a wave pattern discernable through my life. Going for full immersion, then retreating to a point of observation from a distance.

Space around me empties as I withdraw. Fewer collisions, less interference. I slow my breathing down and let myself sink into a resting position, absorbing the quiet on the outskirts of the fray. This detachment makes me hyper-aware of sensory impressions. I have always been an observer. When I was younger, I could almost photographically remember every face I encountered and in what context. That made me an oddball aloof and a bit creepy as a kid. I was too interested in watching to be a participant. But I also dove into states of true presence through movement when I was a child. Doing the jitterbug and foxtrot with my dad taught me to listen for impulses and to respond.

Improvising in front of an audience is being an observer who performs, simultaneously detached and present. It's being aware of the audience and the score while staying attuned to impulses from music, co-performers, and inner movement. Impulses bouncing through a three-dimensional space, reverberating through the fourth dimension of time.

When I edit, I recognize the same mentality. Here the three-dimensional space expands backwards through my body as I sit in front of the screen and forwards through the screen as a membrane to the story world. I am attuned to my own

moment-to-moment reactions as a viewer and as an editor in relation to the story we are constructing. Being present in the frames of the footage I am working with; I follow impulses and associations. I am thinking but not thinking. Rather, I am editing thinking – which includes thinking with technology, material, collaborators, my experiences, and my body.

MORE IS MORE

September 2020. On my way to the city, I listened to Trin T. Minh-ha's Wattis Institute talk, *The Voice of Multiplicity*. (2019) I found parking and finished listening before getting out of my car. I was picking up my sewing machine from a repair shop on the same block as The Greasy Spoon brunch restaurant. As I crossed the street, I had both establishments in my view, visually connecting the restaurant where I first met my secondary supervisor Karen Pearlman the one time she was in Sweden, and the now repaired sewing machine on which I made the costumes for the research project BLOD. Trin T. Minh-ha had just talked about different voices speaking through different modes, and, as I understood her, by the end of the talk she had equated tears, walking, and text fonts in their capacity as modes of communication. I listened to this talk since her name had been repeatedly mentioned as a potentially good reference for my research. The title – *The Voice of Multiplicity* – led me to believe she would discuss different storytelling perspectives. What I got instead was reflections on how actual means of communication are integral to both maintaining the different voices' integrity (she used the example of using different fonts for the inner voice, the essayist, the storyteller, etc. in her book) and giving the voice compounded agency (an example is Tibetan monks delivering their message while crying). She didn't bother to do an academic spelling out of the segue from one section of her talk to another. She let a story about her book, a story about the monks, and a story about her walking project exist next to each other. I am not even sure if she used the words voice or multiplicity. But the composition of her talk suggested multiplicity, and the voice I heard the loudest was the unspoken gap between stories. She performed the voice of multiplicity. And to me, the composition of her talk mirrored the part of her book story where she emphasized the importance of how text was placed on pages, the blank pages, the empty space around a framed text, the need for each voice to resonate in its own time.

Crossing the street, I drew an actual spatial connection between sewing and talking about my research. Including sewing of costumes for BLOD in the research allowed me to embody the characters wearing them. Since my co-researcher, Annika Boholm and I played all the parts and she wrote the dialogue, I saw sewing as my opportunity to approach and inhabit the characters through a hands-on creative act before playing them in film scenes. Deciding to do it, I had thought less about the considerable amount of time I would spend cutting and sewing. The costumes keep taking up a lot of space. They hang all around physical exhibitions of BLOD processes. Images and films of them as objects fill a large portion of the BLOD website exposition. I've had plans to write about the costumes to justify their omnipresence, but it keeps slipping lower on the list of priori-

ties. Maybe that is because there is no explanation needed. The time and effort spent making them correlates with the amount of space they occupy in rooms and digital expositions, and that presence alone signifies their importance in the project. They are sprawling through the project, and with them, the labor I put into them. I am interested in taking up space. As a feminist action, I claim 'more is more,' as opposed 'less is more', which, in my opinion, only applies when the 'less' is in a context where the 'more' is already embedded, or where the intended recipients already know the implications of what's said. 'More' asks more of its interactors. And it poses a more significant challenge to edit, especially if aiming for multivocal ambiguity and active audience co-creation.

My relation to time is different than my relationship with space. Where I want my space expansive, I want my time swift. I am interested in time as a time medium and film editing as a time shaper. But I am not interested in every moment in time or even in looking back at them all to discern which ones were important. I am interested in what stays when I am not paying attention.

PAIN

The blue is just a shade darker than the leotards we wore in ballet school before we were old enough to wear black. It's a blue that is neither dark nor light; rich, clear, and a hint deeper than the color of cornflowers. The blue is a thick and slow-moving liquid, and if I concentrate, I can make it pour out of my skull through the temple. I lie dead still on my side and will the headache into the form of blue gel so I can guide it away from the point of searing, sharp pain behind my right eye. The pour is slow. Dripping into the mattress. It dilutes the pain along this path from the point of origin and through my head. But it doesn't diminish it. It's from a bottomless well, and all I can do is stay focused on the blue movement and trust that the pain will subside eventually.



Kersti, 1978

A couple of weeks ago I was accused of hyper-productivity. I heard an accusation, but it may have been meant as a compliment. Abundance. Outpour. But lurking underneath was that dreadful dismissive term; 'dilettante.' The one who dabbles in too many practices to ever get past superficial. Accusation or compliment; hyper-productivity as a sign of appetite, generosity, curiosity, and ability. Making visible all the labor involved; showcasing the hand that wipes the counter, pins the seams of the costume garment, carries that last bag from the film location to the car, lifts the phone to arrange the when and where, does everything it takes to bring an idea from words to action to existence. The power of production is exerted not by controlling money and people, but by literally taking it into your own hands, with your skill, effort, and time.

The practice of editing is manual, a skill of the hand. And it is a practice of imagination and memory. Imagination. A matter of mind. Memory. A matter of mind. Is the mind located in my brain? That walnut-looking wrinkly thing in my skull? I've seen pictures of brains. During my brief stint at the School of Physical Therapy I even saw real ones in jars of formaldehyde. I think. Or maybe that's a memory of a movie scene now mixed in with my memory of bending knees by pulling actual muscles on human cadavers for anatomy 101. My brain. The home of a recurring debilitating blue-colored pain that has been my companion since my teens. After menopause it shape-shifted and turned; the searing point dissolved into a scattering of tiny amorphous radiation points for chills, fatigue, dull and nauseating clouds of pain. My hyper-productivity is related to the unpredictable occurrence of my migraine spells. I work when I can. I work as much as possible when I can. Because who knows when the next blue pain hits so that I can't. Ironically, working in front of a computer, which editing entails these days, can trigger headaches. So, I am not always sure how to prioritize; do I want to work a lot as I seize the opportunity of not being in pain and pay the price, in pain?

It may also be the cost of doing it my way, of not conforming, not complying, not being neat. Of taking up space, reflecting light, and showing the effort. My pain is blue. Not black like the ballet school leotards we started to wear when we hit our teens. The black that would hide our curves, absorb the light, and make us draw lines through space with our bodies rather than claim our right to take up all the three-dimensional space our existence required. My blue pain gives me substance and volume, reminding me that there are always embodied consequences of ideas, decisions, and struggles.

In movies, supporting characters and environments easily become collateral damage to the plot, with no apparent attention paid to their hurting bodies. The dead and the wounded get cast as set pieces; backdrops to the main characters' valiant endeavors where the combatants' collisions generate advances or retreats. And the bodies of central characters can come back from punches and push through injury without limits. The pain associated with the vulnerability of skin, of internal organs, of nerve endings, doesn't necessarily make its way into images of atrocities, images of bleeding – the depicted suffering can be observed from the distance of time, as what took place in front of the camera has already happened. As a viewer I can feel shock or shame for watching, but I don't have to deal with the consequences for the person hurting at the time of filming. To account for the vulnerability of bodies (human and more than human) when I interact with others, I need to consider that a bleeding cut has a corresponding sensation of pain, felt through my own body. It requires thinking of the pain caused by a collision rather than the combat gains from it.

Susan Sontag wrote that "Photographs tend to transform, whatever their subject; and as an image something may be beautiful—or terrifying, or unbearable, or quite, bearable—as it is not in real life." (2003) The film image feels no different to me. The aesthetic qualities often hide the real costs of what happened at the

time of filming. Or the real implications when the fictional event forms people's ideas about the world and others, as James Baldwin so eloquently describes the impact of Hollywood stereotypes.²

[2] In *I am not your Negro* (Peck 2016)

In editing, there are lots of theories on meaning-making through montage. Eisenstein (1949) was enthralled with the ideological potential of collision, where the juxtaposition of opposing images or ideas generates new meanings in a dialectic Marxist tradition. The concrete application of this as an editing practice is to focus on what elements to juxtapose and how to collide them; developing strategies for narrative combat that generates lines from the collision points to the new ideas. Making a point or narratively planting a conceptual reason for the next cause of action, vulnerabilities be damned.

The pram careening down the Odessa steps in Sergei Eisenstein's *Potemkin* juxtaposed with the close-ups of soldiers' boots makes the peril of the baby more symbolic than felt. These editing choices are collisions of disparate image content, ideas that combat each other to make a point. This point-making has precedence over any other concern.

I propose an editing practice of collision from the perspective of pain rather than combat. Allowing the blue pain that has volume and takes up space to be compressed and affected by the impact of the collision, to feel the consequences and implications of the collision for characters, filmmakers, and viewers.

THE BEYOND

The first dress I made was for my moment in the spotlight as class speaker at my middle school graduation. I learned sewing basics in 5th-grade home economics. For this occasion, I got a store-bought pattern and pink fabric with tiny white dots. I burnt my hand when I placed the iron on my wrist during a complicated fold-and-press maneuver. The finished dress I wore had three-dimensional qualities. For both viewer and wearer, it was a single unit, a flowing pink form that gave away few hints of the labor involved or its relation to the roll of fabric and the flat packet of construction paper pattern. If I unpicked the stitches, the flat fabric pieces would correlate with the pattern pieces, but without all the fabric that was cut away, there would be no way



Kersti, 1979

of knowing from which part of the fabric each piece was cut. The dress carries in its very construction a mystery of time (how long, in what order) and space (how much, from which parts). Its existence tells a story of selection and creation but the how is hidden with the seams.

I often encounter perspectives on research in cinema that are camera-centered, revolving around the image, the performance in front of the camera, and the events to be filmed. After a conference on artistic research, I vented to my collaborator Annika: “But it is not all about the camera!” She suggested thinking of the camera as the sewing machine. Inspired by the metaphor, I thought, what if I extend that to cinematic practices: scriptwriting draws the design, directing constructs the pattern, and acting and cinematography create the fabric with the camera as a loom. Editing then puts the pattern on the fabric, cuts out the pieces, and sews them together into an outfit. However, it is a “haltande metafor,” which means “limping metaphor” in English. Filmmaking is much more complex and fluid with its many creative decisions and different creator handprints, which shape the pattern and fabric and reshape the design even before any footage reaches the edit room. And the more layered and nuanced the fabric, the more variation and finesse the editor can achieve through placing, cutting, and sewing.

The editing process is filled with selection and rejection – what to keep and what to discard. What, when, and where to make the cut and what to cut to. The cut itself may be a hard shift from one clip to another or a soft dissolve where two clips have a transitional moment of merging. Reflecting on cuts, I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention some famous conceptual cuts like the Cartesian cut (distinguishing mind from matter, subject from object), the Heisenberg cut (distinguishing an object from its environment), and Barad’s agential cut (enacting a causal structure among components of a phenomenon)³. While these conceptual cuts influence science practice, academic discourse, and my ability to reflect on editing, I don’t think they deal with matters relevant to the cut in cinematic practice.

[3] My understanding of the different “cuts” draws from Karen Barad’s descriptions. (2007)

As the site of the actual edit point, the cut reveals that something is left out. It points to a mystery, an unknown realm. And there is no limit to what times, spaces, events, actions, and reactions could have been omitted. I risk vertigo letting my mind take a trip beyond each unchosen option, to another and another in an endless loop, much like when I was a child and would imagine space and get dizzy with thoughts of endlessness and the concept of there being “nothing” beyond a certain point. I would have been undone by the Toy Story (Lassiter 1995) cry “to infinity and beyond” had I been a kid in the ‘90s. The older I get, the more I relish not knowing, sensing something fluttering just outside my view, shadows in the periphery never to be grasped. I find comfort in the presence of mystery I don’t need to solve, endless possibilities left to explore. The cut reminds me that I will never arrive, that my interpretation is specific and not general that there is a lot I don’t grasp in encounters with others.

The edit point is also a join, a bridge, and a connector. It entices me to reconcile the gaps, to build the narrative from what is left in the clips. The joining action is supported by the jolt of energy released with the friction of a cut, enhanced when the cut is felt as a disruption. The join operates on the anticipation built up before the edit point and the reactions to what comes after it. And, by virtue of placement, the edit point claims a relationship between what is on either side of the cut, which is at the same time a join. Ambiguous and contradictory – the edit point perceived as a cut-join has mystic qualities and offers unstable properties, closer to Barad's intra-active agential cut (2007) than to the seam in my dress. *Beyond Cut and Join* is not only pointing towards unknown omissions, but it is my invitation to think *Cut* and *Join* together in order to challenge binary duality, simple causality, and narrative logic. *Beyond* is my spiritual entry point to the artistic practice of editing.

Coda

Being in relationship with others and my environment is how I evolve. I continuously find out who I am by how I relate to what is around me. I seek contexts I can affect while being affected, like the choirs I've sung in since I was a teenager. It is important to me what kinds of contexts and collaborations I associate with, where I work, what projects I take on, and who profits from my endeavors. Through art I catch glimpses of the intangible and sense my relationship to the weave of everything. My art experiences can be immediate and defy explanation, or they can be felt through the lens of theory and contextualization. I think of art as portals to connecting undercurrents, to experiences of ecologies, to felt sensations of (invisible) four-dimensional structures. And whether I am the art maker or the art viewer that portal seems located in a sweet spot between zooming so far out that the weave of connections looks opaque as a solid sheet of fabric and zooming so far in that the threads of the weave are outside of the frame, making the individual details seen through that gap seemingly exist independent of everything else.

My art practice and my personal life are separate but intertwined. As I develop my practice, I change as a person, just like my editing is affected by how I evolve. These are fundamental truths, but they need repeating until the editor's impact, skills, and handprints are fully recognized. If nothing else, to change the perpetuation of norms and bias that comes from lack of diversity and representation across cinematic practices, particularly the so-called technical ones like editing. The industry calls for greater diversity have mainly been limited to designated authors and the people on screen, but it's time to also look at the impact of the rest of the creative team. Through this research project, I've been returning to questions of how editing matters and why it matters who edits. When I edit, I bring more of what has shaped me than my craft skills and artistic sensibilities to the collaboration and resulting artwork. By inviting you into my world, my background, my tastes, and my ethos I hope you can see both the person and the artist in my editing.

PERSON - PERFORMING THE DEER – JUNE 3, 2021

“On high ground in the mountain range between Sweden and Norway, I can reach out and touch the third peak over. As I descend it gets obscured. Every ridge reveals another winding river to follow before crossing. The peak appears further away the closer I get. I keep moving. Down and up, towards the peak but in constant renegotiation of how much ground is left to cover and which direction to take since that particular peak is mostly out of sight. Adapting to obstacles and detours, surrounded by mountains I talk to as friends. My father has introduced them to me by name.



Kersti, 1980

Born on skis. Know that snowstorm means no up, no down, no hand visible, not even my own and I might get lost, give up, and freeze to death mere feet from rescue. Still guided by the child lured to love the expanse with promises of orange slices. To follow my instincts, read the signs – when to stay and when to make that sudden jump and run away.

The snow carries me, and I fearlessly speed down the slopes. The snow melts, and the spring flood cuts me off for days. The snow renders me blind, but I know how to dig for shelter.”

PRACTICE - ARTIST STATEMENT – SEP 3, 2017

I see myself first as a musician. Not a professional one, but still a musician. That was my introduction to any kind of artistic expression, that is what I always start from and return to when stuck.

In the mindset of my inner musician, I access all my tools: the timeless abandon of an absolute now, the physicality of the execution, the immediacy of the creation, the rhythm and the flow and the dynamic waves that carry emotion and create undercurrents.

On another level, I see myself as a reader. It was through literature my world first expanded and words are still my allies when trying to make sense of where I am heading and why.



Kersti, 1975

The point of living – to me – is honoring life. For the past 30 years a big part of my life has revolved around making dances, performance, and film in various forms. There is always an aspect of my art-making concerned with how I honor life as ever evolving, life as ongoing creation. Life as the opposite of stagnation.

So I seek resistance, the friction that sparks change and forward motion. Perhaps that's why I chose dance as my first professional artistic expression – because it didn't come easy to me. And perhaps that is why the hard to breach, technological shroud that surrounds filmmaking makes it so appealing to me, and why I tend to stray from whatever I start to feel comfortable doing.

I also seek connection. Physical flows, converging energies, and permutations of thoughts in collaborative processes. I connect directly to the tangible in the craft. And through my body and the themes I explore, connection to the world outside of me – society, other people, and conditions different from my own.

Seeing myself as a musician, I ride the inner sound wave an idea sparks in me. Honoring life through whatever question offers the next possibility to expand my world further, adding another perspective to the fabric of shared thoughts.

For me, the editing phase of filmmaking is a vibrant intersection of artistic expressions, the editing room a hotbed of collaboration. As a film editor I am both musician and reader, soloist and ensemble player. I am on-my-toes present in the middle of a whirling current shaped by the density of the filmmaking process and the fluidity of time as its medium.

And there I play.

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