

## Watching *Time:Distance*

### i. Noticing

I can see a home. Or I can see a garden, from within a home.  
 There's wildlife within the garden. Maybe a pheasant.  
 There's a domestic quality, if that means anything?

The footage feels pastoral, if you like. With warm sunshine  
 shining consistently. Most of the shots hold some form of the interior and the exterior.

Now we're inside the home. There's a TV in the background,  
 showing punditry from a sports thing. A marathon. It has a grainy quality.

Now the mother, or someone, is draped in a shawl with symbols.  
 I think that's too vague. Plus signs? Crosses? This person is sitting with their eyes closed.  
 Moments of birdsong.

I want to take us back to the start  
 of the film. Outside now, there's a body holding some garden cuttings.

A body?

We can see him from the hips down –  
 it's a fraction of a second.

Now some imagery referring to the nighttime,  
 where a lapsing moon passes overhead.

I should've said before, this is sixteen-millimetre film. And throughout,  
 the film is interspersed with digital colour floods.

What are digital colour floods?

So the colour floods are these intense,  
 saturated washes of colour  
 that have been added later, digitally.

The mother has chronic fatigue. She might not go beyond the garden.  
Which brings the world into a closer frame. She notices things. Smaller things.

Like?

All the colours are interpreted through the warmth of the low sun. And the garden cuttings,  
they're loose, they seem to outsize the body that's holding them.

Now someone's running the marathon.  
Or we're watching someone filming someone  
running the marathon on TV.

## ii. Bodies in Green

Back to the first shot.  
This is a view through a window. Low evening sun is passing over the lawn.  
A body, that same body from before, is carrying an enormous bundle  
of garden cuttings towards the edge of the frame, right to left.

We understand we're watching someone  
going about their garden work.  
It's a gardeny garden.

Is the camera handheld? Is the frame moving?

No, it's fixed here.

Is there any degradation? Any visible grain?

The filmic quality means there's a softness. There are softer layers of green  
in the distance. There's a lighter, papery rendering of the image, unlike digital.

What we're seeing has been recorded on film. Sixteen-millimetre Fuji film.  
Did I say that already? There's already a green tonality to it.  
The image also captures the reflections  
on the window it's being filmed through.

So there's an even stronger sense of division  
 between the body that's filming  
 and the body that's moving outside.

### iii. Process and Judgement

The same short clip. Two seconds or so. A view looking out  
 of a kitchen window.  
 And the figure moves across the garden. Again, right to left.

Does this shot have a broad depth of field? Or  
 what do I mean? A deep focus?

The depth of field is sharp. Deep.  
 At the fore is the top edge of some daffodils  
 inside the kitchen window. Outside the window,  
 the first object you see is a garden fork  
 thrust in the ground.

And as the scene retreats spatially,  
 there are three layers that become clearer.  
 So it's kitchen flowers, fork, figure on the lawn.  
 And then a distant slope of the road and bushes.

Tell me more about the figure on the lawn.

The figure hovers in the frame on the right and moves across to the left. There's something familiar,  
 familial, fatherly about him. A sense of comfort, steady pacing.

How do we assume gender?

I mean, how would we know it's the father?

We can see the lower half of the figure.  
 I see a Wellington boot. They're wearing what appears to be black  
 or dark blue trousers and a loose, grey-blue shirt.  
 It could be seen as a kind of sage green.  
 I'm not sure there are any identifying characteristics.

You can't see the body's skin. The body is obscured by the greenery.

Often, my brain is translating quickly; it goes straight to  
*the father is wearing a grey-blue shirt.* But it's like,  
what comes before that? As in, how has this image been made?

Literally?

Sure.

Well,  
I would say, a strip of film  
is coated with light-sensitive emulsion.  
It's usually made of silver halide crystals suspended in gelatin.  
When the camera shutter opens, light hits the film  
and the emulsion receives that light  
as a latent image – like  
an invisible imprint  
of what was seen.

What does latent mean in this context?

Well, the image is present but not yet visible to the eye. We've got to process it.  
In a darkroom, the film is submerged in chemical baths.  
Developer, stop bath, fixer.

What are–

So this is interesting.  
The developer is what brings out the image,  
from invisibility to visibility.  
The stop bath stops the development.  
The fixer makes the image permanent  
and then you have to wash and dry the film.

Only then, slowly slowly  
does the image become clear.  
It's not immediate or definite.  
But revealed, through

reaction, time.

I like this.

Yes. The mother would love it.

So back to the figure in this shot – the father – how does he move?

It's an easy gait. A very, very slight carefulness.

Slight, hesitant footfall.

Not overly careful.

Can you give me a sense of the soundtrack? What can we hear?

We are hearing the tail-end of a piano chord. So you don't actually hear the strings being struck, but you hear the after tone. And that feeds into what follows in the next shot which is a telephone discussion, with television noise in the background.

We understand the piano chord is on top of the visual.

I think it's meant to make us feel sad.

There's not actually a piano in the kitchen or the garden, if you see what I mean.

This is just the first six or seven seconds of the film, by the way.

Shall we move on?

Let's do it.

#### **iv. On Finding Words**

I'm unclear on where to go now.

So there's this big shift in lighting.

Then a shot of the marathon runners which is very, very brief.

Now there's a small wooden kitchen table with a candle on it. No, you wouldn't know that. It's some kind of small light source. A shadowy space.

Then there's a pavement, some greenery.

And then a pan lid.

Pen lid?

Sorry no, pan lid.

Ahh. It's a tricky thing, listening.

In terms of speed, it's fast.

Within a second, you see a shot of the sun, a street scene with marathon runners.

Wait, no. It's a street scene with marathon runners on the television. Maybe the London marathon?

And then we go to the table, almost in darkness, with that candle – or small light source.

We're held on that image for a tiny bit longer. Maybe three or four seconds.

Then we cut to a lane. The lane goes round and round, down a hill with lots of trees coming into leaf. There's a bit of film flurry from the sixteen-millimetre. Then we have the pan lid, filmed in close crop. So from the top edge of the right-hand corner of the frame to the bottom left is the curved swoop of the pan lid.

Wait, can you go back to the film flurry? What is that?

Yeah, so when you load film into the camera, the bit on the outside edge of the roll is exposed to light. So it leaves this effect, like orange and yellow.

Sometimes reds. That bleeds into the incoming images.

So you often lose the first bit of your film because it may have been exposed to the light.

## v. Framing

Now there's a country lane with a dead tree that's been taken over by ivy. Followed by a view to one side of it with distant hills. This is a classic framing of landscape: we can see the furthest layer is a soft blue and the mid-ground is a pale green and the foreground we can see is a more fresh green.

I keep saying *we can see*, please, you know, bear with my language, my habits that I carry from my life.

I'm with you, don't worry.

Now a colour flood.  
 Blue. Or a better colour.  
 Aquamarine.  
 This is me getting tired. I'm gonna keep going.  
 Then sky blue. A long-lasting colour flood.

## vi. Anomalous Objects

Here's something – a green column with a wick and a little flame at the top.  
 But the object isn't too obvious just yet. We'll come back to that.  
 Cut to a dot of light. An orb, which is distant.

Then there's semolina, set into little squares  
 like you might get in Greek or Indian desserts.  
 There are small pieces on a plate. Cut back to the orb,  
 which we can now see is the moon.

And that's the end of the roll of film. So we get the orange-yellow flurries  
 moving into the next image. And here is that table again, at a lower angle,  
 revealing its blue legs and a cleaned-up arrangement on the table.  
 The pink flower, the green column of the candle, a sense of daylight.

We can see the objects clearly. It's not grainy anymore. And then the sun – it's now this triangular  
 shaft of light – it begins to move across the table. This is a time-lapsed sequence. And so  
 the triangle of sun is moving across the wooden table with its blue legs  
 and its pink flower and its green candle.

Can you give any more detail about these objects?  
 Their mood, their purpose?

These feel like anomalous objects, unconnected.  
 We feel their purpose isn't going to be made clear.  
 Sometimes a candle is just a candle.

## vii. Eyes Closed

home; garden; pheasant; home; the mother; digital colour flood; television set; sunshine; lapsing moon; chalk mark; aqua-blue; window; body; cuttings; marathon; moving body; cuttings; not-quite golden hour; pheasant; fresh green; big loose garden cuttings; window; cooker; kitchen; daffodils; figure; garden fork; the father; parallelogram; moving shadow; road; bell; square of sun; flash of orange; overwhelming green tones; sunken lane; elderflower tree; digital colour flood; small light source; pheasant; pan lid; London marathon; evening light; candle light; swinging bell; married couple; crystal; kitchen; pheasant; garden; flowers around the edge of a lawn; crystal on the wall; early Spring; dot; orb; semolina squares; orange yellow flurries; blue table legs; flower; green column; triangle of sun; blue legs; pink flower; green candle; country lane; dead tree; top of a cooker; rectangle of light; the longest lasting colour flood.

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NOTE: 'Watching *Time:Distance*' was written in response to the film *Time:Distance* (2012) by Holly Antrum. This text forms part of a blind-led description process produced by DesCript, incorporating contributions from the remote body and the filmmaker.