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COVER SHEET

The Creative Potential of Evolving Constraints in Peer-to-Peer Reciprocal Coaching: A Three-way Investigation

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Abstract:

This exposition reports and assesses the experience of the project 'The Creative Potential of Evolving Constraints in Peer-to-Peer Reciprocal Coaching: A Three-way Investigation' (hereafter 3WI), funded by the Interacting Minds Centre, Aarhus University. 3WI was designed to gauge the utility of evolving creativity constraints — that is, deliberately adopted restrictions (whether self-imposed or suggested by another) to choices in a given creative project — in the development of projects by the three participants: a dance artist and filmmaker, a songwriter, and an academic video-essayist.

The format of 3WI was as follows. At monthly meetings from September to December 2021, each participant presented work in progress and exchanged feedback with the other two participants. Each meeting culminated in the setting of tasks and constraints designed to guide the development of individual projects over the subsequent month. .

After an introduction to the format and aims of 3WI, the exposition begins with a description of 3WI's procedural and theoretical coordinates: the Critical Response Process, a formalised protocol for eliciting feedback on creative projects developed by choreographer Liz Lerman; The Five Obstructions (Lars Von Trier and Jørgen Leth, 2003), a film which models the provision of creativity constraints; and theory and scholarship concerning the utility of creativity constraints. The exposition continues with a description of the projects being developed by each participant (a dance performance and dance film; two songs; two sections of an academic videoessay), and an individual and illustrated account of the feedback meetings and development of those projects over the course of 3WI. These accounts are followed by a discussion reflecting on setting and receiving constraints, and an assessment of the experience of the project. We conclude with some contemplation of the ethics of constraint-setting and the lessons of the 3WI experience for other makers.

Constraint-based procedures are commonly employed and recognised as generative in artistic and design contexts, and they are also used in experimental academic work. 3WI was an attempt to test the utility of constraint-setting as a form of formative peer-to-peer feedback in the development of real creative projects. This exposition will be of interest to artists and academics interested in deploying creativity constraints for the development of creative and creative-critical projects. It will be particularly relevant for those who work in collaborative and interdisciplinary contexts.

Keywords:

creative constraints, Liz Lerman Critical Response Process, contemporary dance, dance film, video essay, songwriting, videographic criticism

The Creative Potential Of Evolving Constraints in Peer-to-Peer Reciprocal Coaching: A Three-way Investigation

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Introduction

This exposition is a report and assessment of the project 'The Creative Potential of Evolving Constraints in Peer-to-Peer Reciprocal Coaching: A Three-way Investigation' (hereafter 3WI). This project, supported by seed funding from the Interacting Minds Centre at Aarhus University, Denmark, investigated the use of *evolving creativity constraints* in the development of individual projects by the three participants (referred to as 'makers').

With the term *creativity constraints*, we refer to deliberately adopted restrictions (whether self-imposed or suggested by another) to available choices in a creative project (Biskjaer 2013). For example: a filmmaker may choose to limit a film to medium or long shots, excluding close-ups (as in Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman* of 1975); a writer may choose to compose in passages of equal length, say of one hundred words each (Berlant and Stewart 2019). Such procedures are commonly employed and recognised as generative in artistic and design contexts, but they are also used in experimental academic work, as in the case of Berlant and Stewart's book, and have obvious relevance for artistic and practice research projects.

The modifier *evolving* refers to the adaptation of a constraint or set of constraints, or the

application of further/different constraints, as a project proceeds, i.e. in response to work-in-progress. Drawing on the Critical Response Process, designed to elicit useful feedback for taking any creative project to its next stage of development (Lerman and Borstel 2003), 3WI employed *peer-to-peer reciprocal coaching* to feed into the development of the three makers' creative projects through the generation of evolving (sets of) constraints. The Critical Response Process offered an adaptable template for encounters between pairs of makers who presented work in progress in alternate meetings, hence *reciprocal coaching*. This reciprocal coaching was *peer-to-peer* because each maker was expert in their own field and engaged in a creative (or creative-critical) project being offered for discussion and feedback even as each offered formative feedback on the other makers' projects.

The format of 3WI was as follows. Each maker met once a month in individual meetings with the other two participants over a period of four months from September to December 2021. At the first such monthly meeting, one maker presented work and received feedback from the other participant, with the roles being reversed in the second meeting. All monthly meetings took place over a single day in bookable rooms in Horsens public library.

Table description: A table showing the monthly meeting schedule specifying in which order work is presented and feedback given. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226732#tool-2229263 to see the table.

The goal of each meeting was to generate the informed setting of a constraint or set of constraints that would guide the maker's work (i.e. they would attempt to work in accordance with, and to 'satisfy', the constraints) over the subsequent month. The structure of parallel meetings/coaching partnerships was designed to provide a way of comparing experiences of coaching and constraint-setting for the purposes of 3WI as a whole. All meetings took place in English (O'Leary's first language, but a second, if very familiar, language for Hallager Andersen and Høybye).

Each maker maintained a reflective analysis of the experience of the meetings and constraints set, as well as documentation of work-in-progress. In addition to maker meetings outlined above and informal catch-up conversations between all three makers, 3WI began and ended with team meetings with project consultant Michael Mose Biskjaer, whose scholarly research on creativity constraints (Biskjaer 2013; Biskjaer and Halskov 2014; Biskjaer and Onarheim 2017; Biskjaer and others 2020) informed the project's design and goals.

Notably, Biskjaer's research and familiarity with scholarship in the field of Design Studies suggests that the question of *evolving* constraints is under-researched. But our purpose in this project was not to generate a theoretical account of the workings of evolving constraints. Our concerns were more procedural than theoretical and revolved around testing and understanding in concrete ways our own practices and those of the other two participants. The design of the project deliberately embraced a certain 'impurity': the character of the pre-existing relationships between the makers (O'Leary was, at the time, Høybye's doctoral supervisor; Hallager Andersen and O'Leary are life partners with two young daughters) was part of the project investigation. It was recognised that these relationships (of power as well as

4

care), along with questions including gender and career status, might impact on the setting and satisfying of the constraints. 3WI was designed to *retain* and *deploy* the complexity of the interpersonal encounter in the meetings of the pairs of makers.

This approach contrasts with experimental research on constraints that tends to posit a neutral set of interpersonal dynamics in artificial (lab-like) scenarios. It was instead part of the purpose of 3WI to register rather than disavow the effects, positive or otherwise, of the pre-existing relationships between the three makers. The differences between the three makers, and the relationships between them, were key to the experience of the project; indeed, one may say that the apparatus of the project was the means to put such differences to productive use. What other artists or academics might glean from the experience of the 3WI project is a lesson in how to value and cultivate the particularity of the encounter with the other in the development of creative or creative-critical practice.

Division of labour

O'Leary led the 3WI project. O'Leary and Høybye collaborated on the funding application that paid for the participation of Hallager Andersen in the project. Hallager Andersen, Høybye, and O'Leary worked equally during the project period (September–December 2021). Each contributed to the discussion and drafting of materials for this exposition, which have been revised, edited, and prepared for the Research Catalogue by O'Leary. Input to the exposition can be expressed as O'Leary 50%, Hallager Andersen 25%, and Høybye 25%.

Structure of the exposition

This exposition continues with a description of the procedural and theoretical coordinates of 3WI, describing the Critical Response Process, the film *The Five Obstructions* (von Trier and Leth 2003), and the creative utility and scholarly study of creativity constraints. Following a description of the individual practices and the projects (or project strands) being developed by the three makers, each maker will then give an individual account of the work on 3WI: the maker meetings and the development of individual projects. The purpose with these accounts (distilled from much longer documentation) is to emphasise the process and the particularity of the 3WI project interactions. These three maker accounts are followed by a discussion reflecting on setting and receiving constraints, and an assessment of the experience of the project. We conclude with some contemplation of the ethics of constraint-setting and the lessons of the 3WI experience for other makers.

Where appropriate, the authors/makers are referred to by their first names in the remainder of the exposition.

Protocols and coordinates

The concerns of the 3WI project were fundamentally procedural rather than theoretical, and we were careful to put in place a framework, based on the Liz Lerman Critical Response Process, for the conduct of the maker meetings, described below. At the same time, we had certain models and conceptual points of reference in mind in the design and running of the project, including the film *The Five Obstructions* and scholarly discussions of the use of creativity constraints, also set out below. We did not think of these as constituting the theoretical 'foundation' of the 3WI project, but rather as a set of coordinates that helped us to orient ourselves as the project was ongoing.

Critical Response Process (CRP)

To provide a clear protocol for the provision of feedback in our 3WI maker meetings, we adopted the ethos and adapted the format of the Critical Response Process (CRP), a method to give and receive feedback on creative work-in-progress developed by American choreographer Liz Lerman. The essence of the method is to create a supportive environment in which an artist (or 'maker' in our 3WI terminology) has 'an active role in the critique of their own work' (Critical Response Process website), and in which feedback serves the creative goals of the artist.

In its original form, the CRP is a four-step process that involves the three roles of artist/maker, responders, and facilitator. In step one, following the sharing of the work-in-progress, responders state what they find striking in the work concerned. In step two, the artist asks questions about the work-in-progress to elicit responses in relation to an aspect they wish to develop. In step three, the audience address neutral questions (questions that do not disguise a value judgement) to the artist. Finally, in step four, the responders may offer to voice opinions about some aspect of the work, but only by invitation of the artist. Trust is built between artists and responders as the steps progress and responders become familiar with the goals of the artist (Lerman 2020a).

For 3WI, we adapted a variation of the CRP called Mutual Coaching that allows a pair to work reciprocally, a format particularly useful in peer-to-peer relations (Lerman 2020b). This reduces the three CRP roles to two: an artist and a coach. Originally developed to facilitate feedback during the practice of dance movement or choreography, here are the steps of Mutual Coaching:

> **Table description:** A table showing the stages, called 'rounds', of the Mutual Coaching variation of the Liz Lerman Critical Response Process. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226866#tool-3244313 to see the table.

Mutual Coaching offered our project a template for working reciprocally and peer to peer. The 'wildcard' in round 3 asks the coach to bring a new idea or a different approach to the work they have witnessed, by challenging the artist to try something they might not have thought of themselves. We exchanged the wildcard in round 3 for the setting of constraints that would guide the work in the month-long gap between 3WI maker meetings.

Here is the protocol for the maker meetings:

> **Table description:** A table showing the three stages of the protocol for the maker meetings in the 3WI project. These stages are: presentation and initial responses; focus on chosen aspect; setting constraints. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226866#tool-3244326 to see the table.

The protocol provided an essential scaffolding for our encounters and helped us to navigate our relative status positions (mentioned in the introduction to the article and discussed again in the conclusion) by clearly stating 'who speaks when' and 'about what'. Following the protocol gave a sense of predictability and ensured that constraint-setting would be achieved. It also meant that the experience of giving and receiving feedback with different partners could be compared, even if in practice the protocol was sometimes simplified (work might not be shown a second time, for example) so that productive conversation could proceed unhindered (Marie observes in her account that meetings could be less useful when the protocol was not scrupulously followed). For the sake of brevity, the protocol is rarely mentioned in the maker accounts of process later in this exposition, but it should be assumed as the setting and framework of the encounters described.

The Five Obstructions

A key point of reference for 3WI was *The Five Obstructions* (*De fem benspænd*, 2003) by the Danish filmmakers Lars von Trier and Jørgen Leth. In this film, the younger von Trier sets his former teacher, Leth, the task of remaking the latter's classic short film *The Perfect Human* (*Det Perfekte Menneske*, 1967) according to five sets of playful and even perverse constraints — these are the 'obstructions' of the title (the Danish *benspænd* has a stronger sense

suggesting a deliberate tripping up). *The Five Obstructions* shows the meetings between von Trier and Leth during which the obstructions are set, extracts from Leth's original *Perfect Human*, the production process of the film remakes (recalling the making-of material found as extras on DVD film releases), and the resulting remakes themselves, as well as interviews with the two filmmakers in which they reflect on their experience or objectives.

Video description: A video with extracts from *The Five Obstructions* showing extract from Leth's *The Perfect Human* and from the remakes of that film, as well as meetings between von Trier and Leth and commentary on the undertaking by both men. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226866#tool-3244352 to watch the video.

The extracts from *The Five Obstructions* annotated in the video clip indicate the playful character of the encounters between the two filmmakers, but also the aggressively didactic and, in intention, therapeutic intentions of von Trier in his setting of challenging constraints.

The Five Obstructions models a ludic and agonistic dimension (Rodriguez 2008) in the encounters between pairs of makers and the provision of evolving constraints in 3WI. This combative playfulness is quite different from standard coaching, which is typically disinterested and neutral, characterised by an attitude of non-judgemental 'holding space'. It is different too from the Critical Response Process described above, which is designed to allow the maker to steer the content of elicited feedback in accordance with that maker's sense of what will be creatively productive. Our project meetings were then a combination of contrasting practices of feedback. But it is important that the trust developed over the course of a meeting through the use of the adapted Critical Response protocol, and the responder's familiarity with the maker's work and goals developed during individual meetings and across the 3WI project, informed the setting of constraints that punctuated the encounters. This trust and familiarity formed set the limits of the constraint-setting.

If the agonistic character of the maker meetings in 3WI was inspired by *The Five Obstructions*, a crucial addition was the reciprocal dimension. In their film, only von Trier sets constraints for Leth: the 'challenge' — or 'serve' in Leth's tennis match analogy — goes in one direction. In 3WI, the makers each set constraints for the other two partners. So, any playful, didactic, or therapeutic interventions in the form of constraints set for one partner might be answered in kind by the constraints set by the other partner in return. Any 'aggression' in the setting of constraints may become part of, and in a sense *necessary* to, the appeal (the fun) of the 'game' — the experimental situation, that is — just as a competitor in a game will 'play to win'. At the same time, the game/experimental situation was also a kind of contained and safe space in which failure was allowed. Although we hoped to see if the evolving constraints would help to take our work to unexpected places, the process was at least as important as the outcomes.

Creativity and constraint

3WI was conceived to investigate the experience for the three participant-makers of setting

and satisfying evolving creativity constraints in the development of the individual maker projects. The term *creativity constraints* refers to deliberately adopted restrictions (whether self-imposed or suggested by another) to choices in a given creative (or creative-critical) project: 'explicit or tacit factors governing what the creative agent/s must, should, can, and cannot do; and what the creative output must, should, can, and cannot be' (Biskjaer and Halskov 2014: 37). It may seem surprising that constraints can further creativity, and it is sometimes assumed that access to a greater range of creative possibilities equals greater opportunity for expression or invention. But the opposite is more likely to be true: constraints on creative action may be the true spur to originality. As philosopher Jon Elster writes, 'sometimes there are benefits from having fewer opportunities rather than more' (2000: 1). And so artists, designers, architects, and even academics have often depended on constraints as an integral part of practice and as a means to produce original insights and results (Haught-Tromp 2017: 10; Keathley and Mittell 2019). As Biskjaer and Halskov put it: 'experienced creative practitioners are well aware of the complex, dual role of constraints: constraints both restrain and impede and enable and advance a creative course such as a design process' (2014: 27).

The use and utility of constraints have been closely studied in the field of Design Studies, for example in the work of 3WI project advisor, Michael Mose Biskjaer and his collaborators. (See Biskjaer and Halskov 2014: 30–35, for a summary of research on constraints and creativity.) In a design project, the solution space (the range of possible solutions to a design or other creative problem) can be intimidatingly broad: the sheer number of possible solutions can be paralysing or can lead to hackneyed (obvious or over-familiar) approaches. Accepting a limitation on the solution space by (self-) imposing an initial constraint, which may be radically counterintuitive, can offer a way into the design problem or process, a first step into the unknown — what Jane Darke (1979) has named a *primary generator*. The application of this primary generator arbitrarily but generatively circumscribes the field of creative action, enabling while forcing a series of subsequent creative decisions.

As the process continues, a whole series of supplementary constraints on creative action may be adopted. Both the primary generator and subsequently adopted constraints can have a determining effect on the quality of the outcome of the design or other creative process: 'Installing seemingly highly inexpedient constraints in expectance of a more original final outcome may at times affect the design process so significantly that this obstructive act leads to an unforeseen, qualitative forward leap' (Biskjaer and Halskov 2014: 28). Biskjaer and Halskov refer to such radically inexpedient but generative constraints as *decisive constraints*, distinguished from trivial constraints that do not significantly affect the outcome.

At the same time, the act of constraining must strike a balance to be most generative. A creative process can become over-constrained, just as it may (initially) be under-constrained: a 'too high level of constrainedness (too little creative freedom) will make it hard for the person involved to initiate a resolution of a creative task, since it is cognitively more difficult to process all the given task constraints' (Biskjaer and others 2020: 6).

Chart description: A simple line chart showing the 'sweet spot' where a task is most productively constrained. The X-axis shows the degree of constrainedness, from

A 'sweet spot' of constrainedness is preferable, where enough constrainedness is present to help generate an effective solution to a creative problem, and where the lack of creative freedom from excessive constrainedness does not inhibit the process.

This conceptual vocabulary of creativity constraints, decisive constraints, primary generator, under- and over-constrainedness and the sweet spot was useful to us in the running of 3WI, in order to express and to reflect upon our experience of setting and satisfying constraints. The terms recur in the accounts and discussion that follows.

Nonetheless, the project participants were not concerned to restrict the instructions issued during peer-to-peer coaching to some normative form or definition of constraint, such as one might find in theoretical literature. Certainly, the 3WI project was designed to investigate what sort of instruction was experienced as generatively constraining for each of the three 3WI makers. In practice, however, as evidenced in the maker accounts of process, it may be possible to interpret the 'constraints' set during meetings as 'suggestions' or 'feedback', conventionally understood (this may also be a question of how they are phrased). Likewise, the firm or obstructive register of the *benspænd* dispensed by Lars von Trier to Jørgen Leth in *The Five Obstructions* was deployed only occasionally in our maker meetings. As such, the instructions issued were not always intended to make the work difficult or frustrating (though they sometimes were), but they *were* designed to encourage an investigative process rather than a particular outcome. What is important is that the three makers thought of what we were doing in 3WI as setting and satisfying constraints: if certain instructions appear less constraint-like in tone or form, this is because practitioners have different 'styles' of constraint-setting and perceive the operation of constraint differently in their own practice.

Three maker practices

On this page, each of the three makers briefly introduces their individual practice, in order to situate the development of the projects taken forward during the 3WI project period, as set out in the following accounts of process.

Marie Hallager Andersen

My background as a contemporary dancer informs my current practice as a freelance performance artist and filmmaker (and facilitator of the Liz Lerman Critical Response Process). The work I (co-)create—often in interdisciplinary collaborations with academics and other artists — always starts with the body and movement. Sometimes it results in lecture performances or workshops, sometimes in film work. I investigate the body through the technology of filming, with the camera as an extension of my body, and when I perform in direct interaction with video projections or live video editing where images and bodies merge.

My work often takes its starting point in the life around me. Alan and I have already collaborated in a year-long project based around task setting, 'Parameters and Practice', which ended with the birth of our second daughter in 2019, and our family life has always been present in my artistic work. Being pregnant with our first daughter (born 2014) guided the creation of my first film while studying at Trinity Laban Conservatoire (London) on the MA Creative Practice, in which the physical restrictions, tiredness, and feelings of being a pregnant and 'grotesque' body were treated as intrinsic constraints that came to determine the structure of the film. (The film, entitled *In Becoming*, is available here.)

The project I worked on for 3WI grew out of a work-in-progress I presented in 2016 towards the end of my MA for a module entitled 'The Body As Archive' (see video clip). It involved a performance in which I stuffed my top with crumpled newspaper, following an encounter with a blue whale skeleton, itself stuffed with newspaper, at the Natural History Museum in London.

The MA work-in-progress became the raw material for the 3WI, developed in two strands. I refer to the strands in 3WI as the 'Whale Performance', developed in dialogue with Alan, and the 'Whale Film', developed with Martin. The first strand was a direct continuation of the MA performance in which I would stuff my top with newspaper. I was particularly interested in investigating the choreographic aspect of the 'Whale Performance' and how I would move as a body stuffed with newspaper. I had already done some initial filming for the second strand in which my two daughters were involved in the act of stuffing. For the 'Whale Film', I wanted to focus on the role of sound and so to work on the film's audio track and soundscape.

Martin Høybye

I have a practice as a recording and performing singer/songwriter, as well as an arts-based research practice in evocative autoethnography and performance. Inspired by evocative autoethnographic writing and performance in which arts-based researchers engage with societal issues through the lens of their own experience (Carless and Douglas 2009; Carless 2017; 2022; Douglas 2019), I explore personal and collaborative songwriting in the context of experiencing environmental impact.

My personal songwriting practice relates to the field of confessional songwriting, in which songwriters write songs that may involve elements of personal experience as exemplified in the singer-songwriter genre of the 1970s and the works of artists such as Bruce Springsteen or Tracy Chapman. The process of songwriting may also teach the songwriter something about certain issues or experiences that they did not know before they wrote the song, as explained by the singer-songwriter Mary Gauthier (2021). In my practice, I navigate by 'feeling ways of awareness' (Blumenfeld-Jones 2016: 322), having to do with how emotional responses to situations create prompts that start the songwriting and create stimuli in the process, while navigating the process from an open, trusting, and sharing phenomenological position through a form of 'naïve' emotional honesty.

In my doctoral work, now completed (Høybye 2023), I developed a protocol for co-writing songs with non-songwriters. Many professional songwriters find that conversations that happen in connection with co-writing are often rich in content (Bennett 2013; 2016), and my hypothesis was that this would also be the case if I invited non-songwriters to co-write with me. I engaged in collaborative songwriting sessions to generate songs that responded to the sense of living with anthropogenic environmental impact. Songs were written using words from the jotted notes of our give-and-take-conversations combined with a melody game in which my co-writer would cast dice across the keys of a simple glockenspiel to randomly create stimuli for

our melody. After finishing the song, I would revisit the transcript of the conversation and write about the processes of the songwriting encounter using both descriptive prose and evocative autoethnography.

At the time of 3WI project, the empirical part of my doctoral work was done, and thirty-three songs had been written. (Ten of the project songs have since been collected as an album, *Songs in the Key of Collaboration*, 2024.) I was therefore working through how to engage with the quite substantial amount of documentation produced in the songwriting encounters of my doctoral project. During 3WI, I developed a different song with each of the project partners. With Marie, I worked on a song about the process of songwriting ('Song To Be Born'). This enabled me to gauge salient qualities of my personal songwriting practice phenomenologically, which was helpful when I came to articulate my approach to personal songwriting in discursive text. With Alan, I worked on a song envisioned as an opener for a live set of co-written songs from my PhD work ('Song To Open').

> **Image description:** A CD cover image showing the converging tops of trees seen from directly below, with a simple human figure in white drawn at the centre. The line of the figure becomes the title of the CD, Songs in the Key of Collaboration. Underneath, in the same font is the name of the artist (Martin Høybye). Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226890#tool-3244038 to see the image.

Continue to *Martin's account of process*

Alan O'Leary

I am an academic filmmaker working particularly in the area of videographic criticism, the audiovisual study of audiovisual and screen media. The videographic critic uses editing software to analyse films, television shows, video games, etc., and typically reports the results in the form of video essays (see the online journal *[in]Transition* for a range of examples). I am particularly interested in so-called parametric approaches to videographic scholarly analysis, meaning the adoption by the videographic critic of more or less arbitrary self-imposed constraints on the selection of elements from the media object(s) or phenomena studied, and on the formal means by which the analysis is undertaken or presented (O'Leary 2019; 2021). This interest has informed the idea and design of 3WI, which also draws on the experience of working with Marie on 'Parameters and Practice', a one-year project in which we set creative tasks for each other on a regular basis.

Parametric approaches are quite widely used in videographic criticism (Keathley and Mittell 2019, Mittell 2019), but video essays tend to be generated using a single set of parameters, or else to use parametric procedures as just one stage of the development of an analysis. In 'Men Shouting: A History in 7 Episodes', the project I chose to develop during 3WI, I aspired to perform a more complex deployment of parametric procedure, in which each section or 'episode' of the video essay was composed in accordance with a different constraint or set of constraints.

The theme of 'Men Shouting' is the way in which cinema typically genders historical agency, and the video essay deals with three films on the 2008 financial crash: *The Big Short* (dir. by Adam McKay, 2015), *Margin Call* (dir. by J.C. Chandor, 2011), and *Too Big to Fail* (dir. by Curtis Hanson, 2011). Each film was allocated a section of the video essay, and then treated in combination with each of the other two films in subsequent sections, as indicated in this diagram of the video essay's simple permutational structure. My goal was to surface aspects of the texture of the films' rendition of historical circumstances that might elude more conventional analysis.

Image description: A composite image showing (from left to right) the posters for the films *The Big Short*, *Margin Call,* and *Too Big To Fail*. The first two have pictures of the main actors while the third contains text only.

Table description: A table showing which of the three films *The Big Short*, *Margin Call*, and *Too Big To Fail* are featured in each episode of the video essay 'Men Shouting'.

Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226890#tool-3244021 to see the images and table.

Marie's account of process

As described above, the work in 3WI grew from a 'Whale Piece', a work-in-progress presented as part of my MA in 2016. The first strand is the 'Whale Performance', developed with Alan, a direct continuation of the MA performance in which I stuff my clothes with newspaper. I was particularly interested in investigating the choreographic aspect of this work. For the second strand — the 'Whale Film' — developed with Martin, I had already done some initial filming with my daughters, and wanted to work on the film's audio track and soundscape.

Developing the 'Whale Performance' with Alan

Meeting 1

I performed eight minutes of material derived from the 2016 work-in-progress. Alan took part in stuffing my top with newspaper and I played with movement that eventually helped me remove the top. His initial reflections gave rise to a discussion of the newspaper as an antagonist and how it could be said that the piece is, in a sense, not a solo. A question about the quality of movement called to mind, for Alan, an image of the ancient sculpture *Laocoön and His Sons*.

It struck me how my choreographic mindset had expected that he would give me feedback that focused directly on the movement of my body. I learned that working on a choreography with an academic filmmaker was going to get me very different answers about movement. We arrived at the following constraints based on Alan's suggestion that that this was not a solo piece, and so the choreography should be elicited through collaboration.

Constraints set:

1. Work with two additional performers for the 'stuffing' part. First performer stuffs, the second one unstuffs.

2. Use permutations:

   - passivity — not resisting or helping but allowing it to happen

   - helping/activity — actively helping with the stuffing

   - resistance — pushing performers away and not allowing the stuffing to happen

   - compliance/indifference — like a rag doll

   - trying to escape — running away or avoiding the stuffing.

The suggestion to work with other performers to elicit the work was a fruitful one. I overcame a discomfort with involving others in the fragile 'early stage' of an idea and the hours with the two performers Anna Penati and Marco Zavarise (theatre performers with HumanLab; see video clip) led to interesting and useful conversations around the topics of motherhood, the changing body, power relationships, and the meaning of working with newspaper.

Meeting 2

I showed Alan a five-minute video recording of the 'Whale Performance' where I work with Anna and Marco. We discussed the different ways of giving directions and passivity/action. For this maker meeting, the protocol flowed with more ease, which meant that that the boundaries between 'who is talking' became more fluid. (Alan lay down on the ground halfway through this session, a sign for me that he was feeling comfortable and at home in the situation.)

Constraints set:

The constraints we set for this meeting directly targeted a difficulty I experience in my work: giving instructions and taking charge. His intention to challenge my working habits suggested to me that Alan was deliberately employing Lars von Trier's playful or didactic intentions as seen in *The Five Obstructions*.

Video description: A video in which Marie's two small daughters interact with her in a carpeted domestic space, with a mirror and two small windows to the rear and a yucca plant to the right. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226982#tool-2227070 to watch the video.

Meeting 3

I was interrupted ten minutes into the session by a missed call. The disruption of the conversation (as I made a quick phone call to check if it concerned our kids) added a slight tension between Alan and me for the following minutes of the meeting. Returning to discuss the work after the phone call, Alan pointed out that I had frustrated the constraints set by refusing to do something that I found difficult, which was to use *my own* instructions for the work. Instead, I had used a voiceover from choreographer Merce Cunningham guiding a class. The impurity of the exchange became very clear in that moment, as I reflected on whether the same degree of tension in the conversation would have arisen had we not been partners.

Video description: A video in which Marie attempts to follow Merce Cunningham's movement instructions while her face is covered with a jumper that is stuffed with newspaper. A voice over contains commentary by Marie in dialogue with Alan. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226982#tool-2227094 to watch the video.

We discussed how my body's archive became visible in the performance through the different types of dance techniques (like Cunningham and Graham) I had trained in. Alan suggested that I look to a variety of performance instructions from different traditions, like that of Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* from 1964.

Constraints set:

1. Make a soundtrack of different archival experiences. The archive should result in a

long set of instructions referencing stuffing a whale (taxidermy), performance art (e.g. Yoko Ono), and dance (ballet, Cunningham, Graham).

2. Think about the score (the set of instructions that guide the activities) of the piece and rehearse it. Perform in different spaces, one indoors and one outdoors, to test how different spaces affect the movement.

This meeting helped me understand the history of my body in the piece and how I could activate the archive and make it tangible by foregrounding my dance training. As I rehearsed and filmed indoors and outdoors, I became aware of the how location changed how I performed the piece and also how the piece communicates.

Meeting 4

I showed Alan short recordings of rehearsing the choreographic scores in an indoor and an outdoor setting. I decided to stick quite closely to the constraints and not refuse to do what was difficult.

Video description: A video in which Marie practices dance movements in a studio space and in a car park. The image is sometimes divided into two horizontal screens. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226982#tool-2227108 to watch the video.

I encountered difficulties with the soundtrack I had created of my own voice giving instructions. The idea of 'speaking an archive that was already an archive' (me recounting the voice of Merce Cunningham (2013) giving instructions for a dance class on YouTube) did not generate interesting material for me. I found myself losing interest in the piece. The constraints did not just push me out of my comfort zone but also away from my curiosity about the work. I felt I had hit a dead end with the 'Whale Performance' despite having passed many useful places along the way.

However, the performance did eventually take shape. In September 2022 the 'Whale Performance' was shown in the pilot programme at Horsens Teaterfestival as a work-in-progress called *Avismave* ('Newspaper Belly') and in October 2022 at the Horsens venue Platform K in a longer version called *Fire Generationer af Kvinder* ('Four Generations of Women'). Both of these integrated aspects of the work I did with Alan.

Developing the 'Whale Film' with Martin

Meeting 1

The first meeting with Martin was delayed by a few minutes as I received a call from my

daughter's school to say she was unwell. After I showed Martin some material of the film work I had done with my kids so far, he stated that his experience of the work could not be detached from the phone call I received. Martin explained that this real-life situation (which, like the film, was about being a mother) became a frame for the showing of the film and indirectly a lens through which to see the work.

We talked about the role of sound with the aim of creating coherence in the film. I wanted to draw on Martin's expertise with music and we discussed how the first sound a fetus experiences in the womb is the sound of the mother's heartbeat.

> **Constraint set:**
>
> 1. Work with sound of heartbeat(s) as external sound to intensify womblike proximity in parts of the film.

My reflections from this first session showed how Martin brought my awareness to beats and layers in sound, utilising the two different heartbeat sounds as interesting, syncopated rhythms. In this session Martin took note of a full-length mirror (which happened to be in the background of the space I had been recording in), which I had not put much emphasis on. His observations of how this mirror reflected what was happening behind the camera became significant in how I later used a mirror when recording new material.

Video description: Short black and white video in which the sound of a heartbeat is superimposed on a moving image of Marie crouching in a large studio. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226982#tool-2227189 to watch the video.

Meeting 2

I decided to focus on two minutes of the film out of the eight minutes created so far. I discovered how powerfully I could manipulate the viewer's experience of the visual material through sound.

Video description: A video montage of black and white sequences showing Marie moving in a studio and in a domestic space, with her two daughters and the offscreen sound of a man's (Alan's) voice and echoing heartbeat sounds. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226982#tool-2227205 to watch the video.

The constraints set for this meeting were similar to the first meeting. In the sound clip from the end of meeting two, Martin and I talk about how to take a constraint on board and how to evolve constraints collaboratively. This way of evolving the constraints in a similar idea seemed useful in the moment.

Audio description: A recording of Marie and Martin discussing working with constraints. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226982#tool-3242175 to listen to the recording.

However, I'm not sure how useful the meeting was. There was a sense of wavering and meandering going on in our conversation. We stuck less to the protocol, which led the conversation in a more general direction. Perhaps as a result, I got sidetracked by my own doubts about where the film was going and thoughts about the piece as a whole. Perhaps also for this reason the constraints were less rigorous and had a similar theme to those previously set.

Constraints set:

1. Work with mixing the sounds, external, internal sound (in recording) and find different layers of piano, heartbeats, etc.

2. Try to put sound before video or have black frames and only sound.

3. Play with pauses.

Meeting 3

I kept working on the same section presented in the previous meeting and showed a new version to Martin (see video). I had now mixed it with footage from the performance work I had done for Alan.

Video description: A video montage of black and white sequences showing Marie moving in a studio and in a domestic space, with her two daughters. The soundtrack is made up of echoing heartbeat sounds and Marie's voice over, expressing exasperation about working with newspaper. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226982#tool-2227220 to watch the video.

It was always my intention that the two strands — the performance and the film — would work in tandem. Footage recorded for the performance now became integrated into the film work I showed to Martin. The 'Whale Performance' and the 'Whale Film' began to cross over in an interesting way.

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Constraints set:

    1. Work with the material you have!

    2. Think about the level of ambiguity in narration.

    3. Make one version of the film without narration but just the sound from the original
       footage.
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This session revealed to me how the constraints of meeting two were too unspecific and therefore led me to work less rigorously with my film. The solution space had been left too open and an under-constrained process meant I had been distracted with new footage and ideas.

Meeting 4

I created twelve minutes of film for our final meeting. The integration of the rehearsal footage produced for the 'Whale Piece' (with Alan) had interesting visual overlaps for me and I decided to play with juxtaposing it with the existing film material from the 'Whale Film' (with Martin). In an intuitive and exploratory way, I decided to place three videos next to each other. What would this triptych format reveal to me about the work?

For this final meeting, Martin and I spent a long time on the first step of the protocol: Martin shared his response to the full twelve minutes of film that I had created (extracted in the video here), giving a detailed account of what he found interesting and evocative.

Video description: A triptych of clips from studio (centre) and domestic space (right and left) of Marie moving with her top stuffed with newspaper, with her own voice giving instructions and echoing heartbeat sounds, sometimes with unusual rhythms. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226982#tool-2227998 to watch the video.

Martin's response to the film work helped me to clarify what I perceived to be the strengths and weakness of my work. The heartbeat (introduced in response to the constraint set in meeting one) had become a clear marker in the film as had the use of the mirror and my own voiceover.

The meetings with Martin were pleasant and very supportive and I came away reassured of my creative voice. Looking at the progression of the four meetings and listening back to the

audio recording from meeting four, I hear myself talk about how spontaneously I make decisions about what to do next. Might this have made the constraints difficult to set? Did my meetings with Martin reveal that constraint-setting is frustrated when the maker is unclear in their intentions? I wondered then what is the relationship between the quality of the material, the working style of the maker, and what constraints are possible.

The 'Whale Film' was subsequently weaved together with the 'Whale Performance'. As explained above, I staged the Whale Performance in Horsens on two occasions and those two performances together with some original film footage from 3WI were edited together into a film named *Arkiv Avis Mor* ('*Archive Newspaper Mother*'), finally finished in April 2023 and currently (November 2024) being considered for publication. The integration of the performance footage from 2022 has meant that *Arkiv Avis Mor* looks very different from the original work for the 3WI project in 2021. What stayed with me throughout its creation was Martin's observation of playing with sound, music, and voice as a way to foreground elements in the film and to change its cadence.

Video description: An image of Marie in an all-white costume standing before a large projection of her daughter Lisa, walking on front of a curtained window. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2226982#tool-2229186 to watch the video.

Continue to *Martin's account of process*

Martin's account of process

As set out above, I wrote two different songs from scratch over the course of 3WI. With Marie I was interested in exploring where songs come from for me: I wanted to write a song about writing a song. With Alan I was interested in writing an opener for a live set of co-written songs from my doctoral work. I call the two projects 'Song To Be Born' and 'Song To Open'. These ideas for song projects arose as responses during conversation with Alan and Marie in my first maker meetings with them.

Developing 'Song To Be Born' with Marie

Meeting 1

A dialogue with Marie let me put words to the experience of writing a song. She asked open questions about my sensation of song creation such as 'where does it sit in the body?' Songwriting for me turned out to be a very bodily experience. I felt 'raw' sharing the song idea, but the coaching and questions immediately produced useful insights into my process.

Constraints set:

1. Begin your songwriting in the tension or relationship between your physical body and the writing a song about a song.

2. Use phrases that have come up in our session.

Transcribing our first conversation I collected my expressions about my experience of songwriting. These I worked into seven sections of source material, seven 'verses' to be boiled down further. I found the constraints to be useful as they yielded rich source material.

Meeting 2

I recited the seven sections, then sang them while improvising some melody. We discussed the developments. The song lacked cohesion for me as well as a melody. Marie was supportive of my ideas but challenged me to go further with them, by insisting that I boil words and music down towards an essence of the experience of songwriting.

Image description: The words of a song about writing a song, divided into seven stanzas. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227250#tool-2227276 to see the image.

Constraints set:

1. Make it yours. Use these sections, reeling off the melody, until they become more guttural. What does it feel like, getting guttural with it?

2. Revisit this work (once a day or twice a week) and let the song evolve. […] Go for a walk with this sentence, until the words change into a feeling in the stomach region, the words that come from that. Distil what is there.

A first cyclical song section was informed by the rhythm of my walking. In a process of 'boiling down' the words from the seven text sections, while walking, humming, and singing, I arrived at three sections: two verses and a chorus.

Later a hummed theme was added (see video). In this way, the constraints helped to turn the source material into a song essence.

Video description: A video of an open notebook with the words of a song being sung by Martin. Only his left hand is seen. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227250#tool-2227284 to watch the video.

Meeting 3

I performed the three sections and the hummed theme that made up a short cyclical song (audio clip).

I thought the song draft was getting close to expressing my experience of making songs.

Marie said something more was needed that underscored the dramatic effect that songwriting can have on a songwriter, the physicality of singing and vocal expression working through the body, sometimes referred to as letting 'the music play you' (Carless 2021, 235).

Constraints set:

1. Double the length. Start it simple, spoken word. Add rhythm later in the song.

2. Something else needs to happen? Find the dramatic line in the song.

Meeting 4

Walking while singing, I moved my way vocally into a form of guttural siren, more of a primal scream than singing, which in turn became high- to low-pitched gliding 'notes' added to the song as a musical part in pitch with the existing sections (this new section now a musical peak that was a contrast to the existing sections). I doubled the song length, first adding different verses, but then repeating existing verses in different sequencing. This became the song I presented in our fourth maker meeting (audio clip). The constraints had been generative adding to the song form.

The evolving constraints were essential to the writing of this song. Otherwise, ineffable processes internal to the non-verbal 'feeling ways of awareness' of the songwriter (Blumenfeld-Jones 2016: 322), such as bodily and kinaesthetic feeling and perceptions as well as emotions, were made explicit through coaching. Walking and singing to work creatively with the source material influenced rhythm, pacing of word, and melody, and helped to structure the song. It made the process very embodied because the landscape

typography and the resulting pace of the walking affected my breathing. It became a practice-phenomenological exploration of how songwriting 'starts' in me, and the sensuous findings are reported in the song and its emotional centre 'I can always sing you | You always sing me'.

Developing 'Song To Open' with Alan

Meeting 1

Coming to the session, I had the intention, as I put it in my work log, to write 'a song that serves as an opener, a prologue, to a catalogue of co-written material with interlocutors'. Alan suggested a reference from the 'Sirens' episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in which a nonsensical introduction to a chapter serves as a sort of overture. Here, motifs and little phrases were picked from the text of the subsequent chapter, and combined into fragmented writing. These elements reappear later in a context that made sense of them, but the overture treats the language not in terms of sense but in terms of musicality. The meeting was a good start, although I felt unprepared as I did not know how to fragment my existing songs.

Constraints set:

Go through the songs written for the PhD:

1. Pick out outstanding motifs, moments, a word, or musical moment, any feature.

2. Take those fragments and start from the fragments to build a song.

I identified a group of songs from my doctoral project I could envision performing as a live set. To break the sequencing in each song I used a word cloud generator. From separate cloud images of each lyric, I chose two to three words or expressions for each song.

Image description: An image of several sheets of paper with word clouds loosely organised on a wooden desk with a small tripod and laptop computer. A hand holds the top sheet of paper. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227250#tool-2227531 to see the image.

Then I ran these outtakes through the generator again, creating one graphic representation that had words from all the songs.

Image description: An image of a diamond shaped and colourful word cloud on a white background, with the most prominent words being 'people' and 'song'. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227250#tool-2227537 to see the image.

To find chords for the song I took a defining chord from the verse and from the chorus of each of the existing songs, two or three chords per song. I listed them all and played them in sequence to find new chord patterns from the existing material.

These elaborate self-imposed constraints allowed 'a way in' (Darke 1979) to working with the constraints set by Alan.

Table description: A table labelled 'Songs I have taken lyrics and chords from' with a list of songs and their defining chords. A section at the bottom identifies a new chord structure based on these. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227250#tool-2227543 to see the table.

Meeting 2

I presented the process and outcome. Alan suggested I keep deferring sense, because the personal and co-written songs of my doctoral project involve how people feel and explore meaning-making processes through songwriting. 'Song To Open' would derive from this knowledge but resist organisation into linguistic sense. I had not tried to defer sense in a song before. I had troubled melodic composition in my doctoral work by using a melody game that used dice and play to find melodic strands to work with. But now I was asked to also take a ludic approach to words (to defer logical sense), and I chose to do this through the randomisation of the word cloud generator, not knowing what would come back, but that it should at least have familiar elements.

Constraints set:

1. Improvise from the word cloud, maintaining a relationship with the songs, but keep conventional sense deferred.

2. Make two versions of the new song: one version spoken word, the other version sung. Hear these two versions in unison next session.

Using the word cloud generator once again, I organised the existing words into a smiley form with seven sections. Treating this as a song form, I added chords found in the earlier session, now adding new ones, and improvised melody on top.

Image description: An image of a colourful word cloud on a white background in the shape of a face. The face is made up of seven smaller word clouds. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227250#tool-2227560 to see the image.

Reconciling the imperative to improvise from the words while keeping sense deferred was

difficult, but the improvisation did yield both nonsensical syntax and the beginning of a melody (video clip).

Meeting 3

I presented a first version of the song, speaking the lyric on top of a pre-recorded video. We discussed how deferring sense, for me, also frustrates the outcome. Open questions about process helped me articulate that it didn't 'feel' like a song to me, more like 'singing the phone book'.

Constraints set:

1. Make it feel more like a song.

2. Keep sense deferred.

3. Pick out something for a refrain.

I think my sense of frustration was in part Alan's intention in setting the constraint, as he said that I could then arrive at something 'in a different register than the semantic sense typical of the other [PhD] material': something that still revealed something about the songwriting practice, because it could communicate in sung form even if in a fragmented or nonsensical way. In the audio clip from the meeting, I explain how my approach to Alan's attempts to frustrate the 'sincerity' in my writing practice led to my applying further constraints, even if, for Alan, sincerity reasserted itself.

Meeting 4

Because sense in 'Song To Open' was fleeting, it was difficult for me to feel or find the song's emotional centre. I would force this process for maker meeting four by re-fragmenting/rewriting the draft. I put the existing fragmented lines together in verse and chorus units, paying attention to emotion but still deferring linguistic sense. I used one fragmented phrase, 'just soul, one big feel', as a chorus hook line to express the song's emotional centre as well as commenting on the inherent sincerity in the songwriting of the source material. The co-written

songs in the doctoral project were about different lived experiences, and I wanted this to be expressed in a way that I could feel — making musical and sensuous, if not literal, sense.

Video description: A video of Martin commenting on song lyrics on a laptop computer screen. The camera is moved to face Martin singing the song on the computer screen, in a white room with bookshelves and a blue painting with a crescent moon. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227250#tool-2227572 to watch the video.

I ended up with a singable song (video clip), although one that was hard to memorise, as there was no logical progression in the lyric to the song. The process taught me that I gravitate towards songwriting as a meaning-making process, not a process that defers (literal) sense.

This is reflected when I play the song now, several months on. The song does not allow me to revisit a certain feeling or sentiment I was dealing with in the songwriting moment. While it successfully defers logical sense, it also defers a sense of gratification that I as a singer and songwriter am used to navigating towards, and which also helps me curate which songs will make it into a live set or onto an album.

However, the continuous addition of decisive constraints to defer the meaning-making elements of my confessional songwriting practice generated a materially new way of working (e.g. by incorporating a word cloud generator). This was interesting, and it could prove useful in future songwriting projects.

Image description: The lyrics of a song called 'Just Soul, One Big Feel', in black print on a white background. The song is divided into five sections with the title and refrains in bold. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227250#tool-2227579 to see the image.

Alan's account of process

As described above, 'Men Shouting' deals with three films on the 2008 financial crash, each treated separately and in combination in the seven episodes (plus coda) of the video essay, while each of these episodes was composed based on different constraints. These sets of constraints are derived from various sources, including experimental literature, such as the work of the Oulipo group (Terry 2019), and the parametric exercises used to teach videographic criticism at the Scholarship in Sound and Image workshops run annually at Middlebury College (Keathley and Mittell 2019). I had already completed drafts of several episodes of 'Men Shouting' before 3WI: I decided to work with Martin on episode five, already substantially developed, and to work with Marie on episode seven, for which I had collected, but not elaborated, materials.

Developing *Men Shouting* episode 5 with Martin

Meeting 1

I showed Martin a draft of 'Men Shouting' episode five, which combines financial vocabulary and the names of financial organisations from the films *The Big Short* and *Too Big To Fail* (video clip). The idea was to compose an absurdist and paradoxically unenlightening glossary.

Video description: A mosaic representing a twenty-five screen multiscreen video of black rectangles and images from feature films with superimposed letters of the alphabet. Audio from the images recites financial terms written in smaller font on screen. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227656#tool-2227711 to watch the video.

At nine minutes, the draft was far too long, and my goals were to make the episode shorter and to give it a greater 'musicality' (whether in terms of the treatment of the dialogue used, or of the overall shape of the episode).

Constraint set:

1. Think song structure in which there are 'verses' and 'chorus'.

Meeting 2

I was able to chop two minutes off the episode duration and formed what I thought of as 'verses' from financial terms, while a notional 'chorus' was formed from organisation names, divided into distinct alphabetic chunks (video clip).

Video description: A mostly sparse multiscreen video with images from feature films, superimposed with letters of the alphabet. Audio from the images recites financial terms in section one and the names of investment banks in section two. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227656#tool-2227730 to watch the video.

The discussion circled around the following questions. Once again, (how) could the material be rendered more 'musical'? Should the alphabetised chunks of glossary terms overlap? Could/should the individual glossary chunks be interspersed with the other episodes of the video essay? Might there be an advantage to eliminating images and restricting certain chunks to audio only?

Constraints set:

1. Intersperse audio chunks from the glossary (no images) throughout the video essay.

2. Make episode five a sort of musical 'solo': a discrete and possibly 'discordant' section that 'leaves the main "narrative" and plays to its sentiment only' (Martin's description of a solo).

Meeting 3

I began by showing examples of the interspersing of audio chunks from the glossary, originally part of episode five, in other parts of the video essay, and two new versions of episode five (now retitled): one audio only (the 'solo'), and a second that accompanied the audio with a mosaic screen I knew to be excessive.

Martin probed the purpose and importance for me of the musical metaphor of the 'solo' and idea of mimicking song structure. I explained that I had several notional musical points of reference for 'Men Shouting': songs such as The Beach Boys' 'Good Vibrations' (1966) or The Fall's 'Paint Work' (1985) represented things like a particular attitude to structure or a given sonic 'feel', respectively, which I hoped to emulate in the video essay as a whole or in certain of its parts. Martin's guidelines for developing the work were couched as questions rather than imperatives, as follows.

Constraints set:

1. Episode five audio and images
   - Could the dynamics of solos in music that you find inspiring inform the dynamics of the audio of section five?
   - How would the resultant changes influence whether and what images should accompany the sound?
   - How can the images help to give structure to the 'solo'?
2. The interruptive glossary sections
   - Where should these be placed?
   - Should they be treated similarly or identically, or should the treatment evolve? If the latter, what should be the logic of change?

Meeting 4

I found it hard to make the dynamics of my section five 'solo' follow an existing piece of music because it felt to me that the piece already had its own distinctive musicality ('prosody' might be a better term). But working with Martin's questions encouraged me to compress the sequence even more for intensity or variation in pace, and to introduce (brief) moments of silence.

I played the audio composition that I had arrived at, explaining that the story of the Lehman Brothers collapse was the centrepiece and climax of the 'solo', and that I had constructed a 'chord' — a choral bark made up of ten voices — to emphasise the name Lehman when it was

enunciated in the dialogue outside the main Lehman section.

> **Video description:** A video with a title card, short black and white multiscreen and black screen with audio listing financial terms and the names of investment banks and other financial organisations organised alphabetically. The name Lehman (Brothers) is emphasised. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227656#tool-2227776 to watch the video.

I chose to place the glossary interruption chunks according to several criteria: to replace female voices (suppressed in the video essay until the coda); to separate episodes; to emphasise moments of contrast or similarity. I later decided that the treatment of the glossary interruptions did not need to evolve across the video essay, with the exception of the credits at the end, the only time the interruption is accompanied by text.

Beyond the 3WI project, I added visuals in a split screen format, and the video clip shows the final published form taken by the episode (O'Leary 2023).

> **Video description:** An extract from the finished version of episode five of 'Men Shouting' video essay, with split screen images and audio listing financial terms and the names of investment banks and other financial organisations. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227656#tool-2227804 to watch the video.

Developing *Men Shouting* episode 7 with Marie

Meeting 1

The plan for episode seven of 'Men Shouting' was to combine elements from all three films in a kind of toxic masculine crescendo. My initial idea was to forge a fictional link across the three films by showing characters speaking on telephones as if in conversation and I had already collected phone scenes from the three films on the editing timeline. Dialogue with Marie helped me to recall other moments in the video essay in which phones appear and raised the possibility of a focus on objects rather than characters. This appealed to me because men in cinema are often connoted by their proximity to or deployment of objects (e.g. weapons, cars, and computers — and phones).

Constraints set:

1. Focus on the telephone (not man).

2. Keep the phone at the centre of the frame — or at least keep it *seen.*

3. Consider the question: can following these constraints reveal blind spots in the

Meeting 2

To centre the phone objects, I used dynamic stripes to segment the screen. This recalled the angular lines of share index diagrams and was technically challenging. The material was short, so I thought of extending the sequence with a quotation adapted from Paul Willemen (1981) that I already planned to use as an epigraph to 'Men Shouting', about the pleasure of watching the male in action and history films. In this context the quotation could have an ironic tinge, because the focus was shifted to the agency of objects rather than men.

I presented a possible brief transition from episode six and indicative moments from the work on episode seven (video clip).

Video description: In this video extract images of a men in executive washrooms and financial offices give way to multiple images of men on phones divided by white diagonals. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227656#tool-2227843 to watch the video.

We talked about how the work done seemed to foreground a lack of a structure for the episode. We discussed a scene from *Too Big To Fail*, a montage of telephone calls with multiple characters, which might be used as a foundation for the episode.

Constraints set:

1. Use the phone call montage from *Too Big To Fail* as the structural basis for a montage of the three films.

2. Play with sound, with attention to (privileging) the 'telephone line' voice and dial tones.

3. Mix in the quotation taken from Paul Willemen.

Meeting 3

The work done was preliminary in nature and I admitted to ignoring the instruction to structure the material in accordance with the montage scene from *Too Big To Fail*. On the editing timeline, I organised images of phones from the three films based on where they were placed on screen (left/right, top/bottom/diagonal/moving, etc.). I imagined combining these images using multiscreen, although I wasn't enthused by the idea. The audio clip records how I categorised phone voices by content (money talk, etc.) or mood (exasperation, etc.). How could I give some form to these phone voices, I wondered.

I knew I wished to combine and intercut the images and phone voices with the quotation I had been working on, which featured text, speech, and dial tones (video clip).

Marie admitted that it was hard to give feedback on the material because it was so fragmentary. But she noted its *intensity*: would this be consistent across the video essay and might it be too much? This led to a suggested constraint:

Constraint set:

1. No visuals. (I resisted this constraint in the short term but followed it in the version of the episode (see below) completed beyond 3WI.)

Listening back to our knotty and detailed conversation in meeting three, it's clear I was casting about for an approach to organising the material that was at once arbitrary *and* motivated. Effects that were merely interesting (or virtuoso) weren't acceptable, and the treatment of the material in episode seven had to differ from and elaborate other episodes.

Further constraints set:

1. Make three or four chunks of voices to be interspersed with epigraph section, organised by sound quality or aural 'texture' rather than content.

2. If I insist on using images: isolate phone objects; use freeze frames only and use the slideshow facility on a photo app to generate the image combinations.

Meeting 4

The video clip shows the brief material I managed to put together for meeting four, with the quotation text and its provisional audio intercut with multiscreen freeze frame chunks, to which audio hadn't yet been added.

Video description: White text on black screen accompanied by audio of dial tones, keypads, bells, and men speaking alternate with images of a man walking through a busy city speaking on his mobile phone. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227656#tool-2227888 to watch the video.

I was frustrated with the work and wanted to use the session to understand why I'd had such an unproductive experience. I sound combative in the meeting recording, as in this audio clip in which Marie defends her approach to constraint-setting.

Audio description: Recording of an emotional discussion between Alan and Marie about constraints and trust. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227656#tool-2227903 to listen to the recording.

Marie elicited from me my sense of the trajectory of the work over the course of the meetings, and so a way forward based on previous ideas and the materials collected for the episode. Ultimately (in the version completed and published beyond the 3WI project), I restricted the visual track to the quotation text as Marie had suggested, and mixed dialogue from phone conversations with a witty composition of mouse clicks by Nicholas Britell from *The Big Short* soundtrack.

Video description: The finished version of episode seven of 'Men Shouting' video essay, with white text on black screen accompanied by audio of mouse clicks and men speaking on telephones, sometimes vehemently. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2227656#tool-2227911 to watch the video.

Continue to *Reflective discussion*

Reflective discussion

In this discussion, the three makers build on the testimonies in the previous three sections to reflect on the experience of the 3WI process — the four meetings between September and December 2021 and the setting and satisfying of constraints — based on three guiding questions:

1. How did you experience the process, i.e. the conduct of the meetings and the setting and receiving of constraints?

2. How generative was the process in the development of your project(s) or for your practice more broadly?

3. How can this process be useful for other practitioners?

Marie: There was a definite difference between working with Alan and Martin on the development of my projects. The work with Alan was impacted by the familiarity we have as life partners and setting and receiving constraints ignited the intimacy between us that we had experienced in our previous work together on 'Parameters & Practice'. We know each other's working habits, so I felt both nervous and excited about entering a space together that confronted these. In moments I had the impression that Alan deliberately frustrated my process, because of his impatience with my tendency to work intuitively and without many self-imposed limitations. For this reason, I found aspects of the imposed constraints challenging.

Alan: There's no doubt that my and Marie's relationship as life partners and parents, and our previous experience of working together, affected our encounters in the 3WI meetings, both when giving or receiving coaching and constraints. Partly this was very positive: it made for some knotty and intense dialogues on the differences between our individual poetics and concerns. But as Marie says it also generated some discomfort: a sense that the other's opinion of your work might intersect with their personal regard for you.

Marie: What made it feel safe and non-confrontational was the meeting protocol we had

derived from the Critical Response Process. We complied scrupulously with the protocol steps (the initial response and feedback). This shared space where the roles were clarified from the outset helped override potential unequal power relations (the senior academic and the freelance artist) and prevented us from falling into habitual patterns of how we discuss our respective work.

If the meetings with Alan were sometimes tense, those with Martin were very pleasant and the conversation proceeded without friction. The advantage of not having a pre-existing working relationship meant that Martin approached my work fresh. We arrived at the constraint-setting through dialogue and an agreement about what might be interesting and useful. That said, maybe the character of the constraints made it easy for me to fall into my tendency of under-constraining my work and so the solution space remained very wide. I had maybe too many options to work with and this led to frustrations with my own capabilities.

Martin: Setting constraints for Marie seemed intuitive, as she wanted to draw on my experience with sound. But in setting constraints, a balance had to be struck where the sound editing would not give her days of unnecessary work. I did sense about her way of working that she was inclined to leave the solution space open in her projects as long as possible, and so my constraints were set mainly to further elements within an ongoing exploration that she might not necessarily intend to have a specific outcome, because the exploration was the purpose, or ending, in itself.

Marie: Before 3WI, I didn't know much about Martin's work or methods. Martin was starting from scratch with the writing of a new song, which was an opportunity for me to guide him and follow his work from the beginning. He came with a very open proposal for writing this song ('Song To be Born'), which left a very open invitation to approach the work using the tools that I have. So I took my cue from my own expertise, as I also did in my work with Alan — body and movement. Over the course of the project, I found myself more confident in trusting my intuition to set constraints.

Martin: Receiving from Marie the constraints of walking while singing, and walking while working on lyrics, melody, and rhythm, alerted me to a sensitivity to internally felt prompts that may lead to a songwriting process. The structured coaching process made my simultaneous pursuit and monitoring of the practice-phenomenological process possible, as I set out to write a song about writing a song.

The constraints set by Alan, on the other hand, forced me to draw on approaches to lyric writing that were not part of my existing repertoire. They forced me to defer sense, frustrating my embodied expectation of songwriting outcomes. I met that challenge by adding elaborate self-imposed constraints, and to an extent the 'Song To Open' project became over-constrained: I felt it missed the sweet spot where constraints are most generative, and during much of the 3WI process I felt like I was 'singing the phone book'. Alan's constraints were challenging what is at the core of my usual practice, influenced by confessional songwriting. Perhaps Alan had a similar approach to constraint-setting as Lars von Trier did in his approach to setting obstructions for Jørgen Leth in *The Five Obstructions*, a playful destabilising or 'unmaking' in order to create. However, I think that if the song had been cleansed of all sincerity, a destabilising would have happened towards an 'unmaking' of me as an artist and therefore as a person, as the two are deeply entwined in my work. Whether that would have been interesting as an experiment I don't know, but I expect that it would have been very

uncomfortable for me not to be able to recognise myself in a song I had written and was perhaps to sing to others.

Alan: The model of *The Five Obstructions* was important to me in the encounters with both Marie and Martin. I like the idea that a playful aggression is part of respect for the other, and the testing of the limits of the other maker's practice and poetics is also an act of appreciation of their work. Von Trier plainly holds Leth in very high regard, but the obstructions he sets are intended to challenge Leth's aesthetic and even his ethics of making. For the purposes of 3WI at least, I wanted to make Martin do the opposite of what he was used to, to work like a writer interested in language rather than meaning. (I think he enjoyed the process but maybe not the result….) In the agonistic process of responding to the constraints, Martin was able to find again an 'emotional centre' in a song I had hoped to evacuate of sincerity, and this allowed him to reassert his own poetics against my didactic intentions.

Martin: I had to feel my way when giving constraints to Alan, as I had no experience of making video essays. As Alan was interested in thinking with musical form and motifs as structuring principles, I could quite intuitively help set constraints, although less intuitively 'read' how they had been implemented, and whether they were congenial for the work. If Alan was playful or didactic in his constraint-setting for me, in my constraint-setting for him I definitely leaned more towards the Critical Response Process and its avoidance of value judgements. I looked for types of constraint that might be useful towards reaching goals that seemed already to be set for a project ('Men Shouting') that was ongoing. I wonder if there is a continuum between constraint and obstruction, and whether it might have been more generative for Alan if my constraints had been more obstructive?

Alan: I found that Martin's patient questioning in the four meetings encouraged me to articulate my poetics of making and plans for my video essay, and particularly the meaning or implications for my work of musical models and metaphors. He was hesitant to provide constraints, narrowly defined, preferring to propose guidelines or questions. This might be an aspect of Martin's personality, but perhaps also the character of our relationship impacted on the tone and form of his suggestions…. Did he feel any anxiety, I asked, given that I was his doctoral supervisor? He said no, because our exchanges focused more on artistic than academic topics, and on the pragmatics of making, which meant that he was not conscious of any difference in status.

Marie: My approach to the constraint-setting for Alan was to rely on my expertise as both filmmaker and choreographer and with a conscious decision to try not to be put off by potential resistance on his part: a response I had met from him in the past! But I did find it tricky to give constraints. Alan is very sure and articulate about the work he does, and it can be intimidating to intervene in his process. Should I be directive or responsive? But he was receptive to my suggestions and interested in my perspective even if he had well-formed ideas of where he wanted the work to go. I got the impression that he was sometimes struggling with the constraints, and I wonder if our meetings were successful for him.

Alan: I definitely struggled with the constraints set by Marie, but I didn't doubt that this struggle *was* the process. Although, within the timescale of 3WI itself, I was frustrated with the lack of progress made with the episode of 'Men Shouting' I worked on with Marie, in the long run the process was extremely generative and took the work to a place I don't believe I would otherwise have reached. I do wonder if I didn't make deliberate enough use of Marie's

expertise, as I did of Martin's. Maybe his expertise was more directly relevant because so much of the video essay was to do with voice and sound, but I wonder what the video essay might have become if I had consciously worked with Marie to think more in terms of embodiment.

Marie: I agree with Alan that unsuccessful experiments and the feeling of struggling with a task are essential for generating new material and new ways of thinking about your work. But I also want to think about which constraints make me want to go back to work, as Liz Lerman says is the goal of the Critical Response Process. Here I invent two constraints for the sake of contrast. In both cases I imagine working in the studio to achieve a score with instructions for moving while being stuffed with newspaper.

First, the 'concrete' approach. The wording of the constraint is: 'Work with the sensation of newspaper against your skin'. I start from the materiality of the newspaper. The practical interaction gives me a starting point from which to investigate and develop the score. I then experience an urge to continue with a task, a bodily curiosity, a concrete pleasure/displeasure with the task at hand. I find that this type of constraint helps me to continue to be interested in what I do.

Second, the 'abstract' approach. The wording of the constraint is: 'Play with the relationship between newspaper and your body'. I start from a more abstract thought where I can investigate the material more freely. But the activity opens up a wider solution space with little specificity about where to begin or end. I simply have too many options of how to work with my body and the newspaper. I will get fixated on how something looks, or the meaning of what I do, and stop being present in my body.

I have come to understand my own preferred working method from defining these different strategies for formulating constraints. Looking back at the constraints from Martin and Alan it is clear that the 'successful' moments happened when the instructions were specific and concrete because it allowed me to be curious in the moment of working. These constraints clarified in which direction I wanted to take the work, even if they generated 'failed' or rejected material.

Alan: Martin's two songs were the most obviously achieved and finished outcomes of 3WI within the frame or timescale of 3WI itself. The fact that Martin was starting both songs from scratch, and the fact that they were composed in contained and recognisable song formats, meant that the constraints could be very focused and the outcomes obvious. The intersection of 3WI with both my and Marie's projects was less 'clean': our projects were already well under way, and already had a particular character and set of concerns. In the case of my 'Men Shouting', the project was itself concerned with applying constraints to scholarship, and to elicit further constraints might have been to over-complicate and over-constrain.

Martin: Deferring sense in the song developed with Alan also meant deferring sincerity, but emotional honesty became a strength when working on 'Song To Be Born' with Marie. The evolving constraints involved walking, singing, and 'getting guttural' with the material. And this 'walk'n' song' approach opened a new door to working with the songwriting, which was even more embodied and vulnerable, which I thought was fitting in relation to the metaphor of a song being born. The 'walk'n song' approach naturally shapes the song because the breathing constrains how long the song lines can be, and the tempo and topography of the walk

influence what is possible — in this way the landscape becomes part of the songwriting. Other practitioners might adapt the 'walk'n song' exercise for their own purposes. I would then recommend starting with a coaching session or interview to generate source material and focus the topic of the song to be worked with.

Marie: A key aspect of 3WI that persuades me of its value is how regular meetings, an agreed protocol for non-judgemental feedback, and a clear direction for the project through the constraints held me accountable for getting work done. The quality of the feedback and the depth of the conversation was to a large degree dependent on how much time and effort I put into working with the constraints between the maker meetings. I also enjoyed getting feedback from two interlocutors who were not embedded in the choreographic discipline (their different use of vocabulary, noticing aspects of the work I had not paid attention to, or guiding me to take on tasks I found difficult). The initial response stage in the maker meetings helped to establish trust and confidence in my responder's constraint-setting. On the other hand, moments in meetings when the formality of the protocol was loosened or lost resulted in a lack of rigour with the steps, and took conversations in less fruitful directions. But the constraint-setting gave the meetings a clear frame and purpose and helped drive the work forwards. For that reason, in my work as a facilitator of the Critical Response Process, I will add constraint-setting to my toolbox.

Martin: Working on 'Song To Open', I supplemented Alan's constraints with my own elaborate constrained procedures, and this led to over-constraining as the radical fragmentations generated an unfamiliar creative space that I found unpleasant to dwell in. The self-imposed constraints were necessary for me to obtain a defamiliarisation of fourteen of my own songs. Working with fewer songs would have reduced the complexity, but the over-constraining did not only stem from the scale of the source material. It stemmed also from the destabilising of a familiar songwriting process that occurred on several levels at the same time: meaning, content, form, intention, and ontology. Where does a confessional singer/songwriter position himself in a song devoid of (literal) meaning? There isn't really a single answer to that question, but the song result 'Song To Open' is perhaps one sort of answer.

Alan: As Marie mentions, part of the ethos of the project was not to exclude all the messiness of the people we were and the relationships we already had, although our perceptions of the degree to which this messiness affected the process (or the degree to which we wanted it to) probably differs. I think Martin, setting constraints for me, adopted a more disinterested role, while Marie has talked about how her concerns as a parent sometimes impacted on the tone or conduct of meetings. I never took off my PhD supervisor hat in setting constraints for Martin. Even in the meetings where my own work was being discussed I wanted to take forward with Martin an intense dialogue between us about aesthetics and value, and so the development of my own video essay project had a didactic purpose. Our distinct temperaments and creative preferences led to different expectations and perceptions of the 3WI process. What we experienced as under- or over-constraining, say, remained individual to each of us, and might be different again for another person who undertakes a similar process.

Martin: I take several lessons from 3WI. The Critical Response Process and Marie's familiarity with it was crucial. The combination of the structured coaching process, evolving constraints, and a collaborator keen to co-discover what explorative songwriting process could yield about the songwriting process itself was very productive and meaningful. The coaching sessions

with Alan had a deconstructive character from the outset, and it was part and parcel of the process that I would be working in ways that were antithetical to me as an artist and therefore also as a person. This required an openness from me as a maker to trouble my own practice and its outcomes, but also led to an over-constraining of the project, at least for a while. The lesson though is that while over-constraining a creative process can be uncomfortable, it can also inspire new approaches. Other practitioners might find it a useful exercise to be open to over-constraining their process as an experiment, perhaps with the goal of reflecting on the steps then taken to arrive at a form of consensus with the material.

Marie: What I think needs to be in place is a conscious balance between over- and under-constraining. The over-constrained process can feel inhibiting and inflexible, but an under-constrained process might lack direction and clarity, but where the 'sweet spot' is found will vary for each individual and creative situation. Constraints should be doable in an agreed timeframe and space. They should be interesting/inspiring for the maker and make them excited about going back to work. And they should be worded in a clear, concise, and concrete way.

Continue to *Conclusion*

Conclusion

The 3WI project asked how the use of evolving creative constraints in interdisciplinary peer-to-peer reciprocal coaching can contribute to the effective development of creative and creative-critical projects. We won't attempt here, in closing, to offer a definitive answer to that question because the experience of the 3WI project was different for each of us, and the individual creative undertakings reached different stages of completion or achievement within the project period. We also don't wish to disguise the distinct perspectives of the three participants, and when we reflect, say, on the best form or tone that constraints should take in order to be generative, we find that we agree on some characteristics but not on others. Consider, for example, this alliterative list, derived from the reflective discussion above, of desirable characteristics for constraints: concrete/concise/constructive/capricious. Note that the last two features, 'constructive', taken from Marie's account, and 'capricious' (meaning obstructive or destructive), from Alan's account, may very well be opposites. Our distinct temperaments, creative preferences, and aesthetic objectives mean that our perceptions of the process — what we experience as under- or over-constraining, say — remain individual to each of us, and would be different again for another person who undertakes a similar process.

It is, moreover, important for us not to pretend that we have undertaken a scientific or even social scientific experiment. The experimental design or apparatus of 3WI was intentionally porous and its results 'compromised', in a sense, by the fact and the messiness of the participants' pre-existing relationships, something that gave a particular cast to the encounters in the monthly meetings. That said, we feel that the messiness or impurity of the project is part of its value, because relationships of power and care are always present, but in 3WI they are registered rather than disavowed. As suggested in the introduction, it was part of our purpose to *deploy* the differences and existing relationships between the three makers: the apparatus of the 3WI project was the means to put such differences to productive use.

We acknowledge, though, that to describe 3WI in this way is to raise ethical questions that have been implicit in the conduct and account of the project. A first question concerns the element of risk that one is exposed to in the receiving of constraints that might be artistically, mentally, or physically challenging (or dangerous) to satisfy. What are the limits on the nature

of the constraints set, and how are those limits arrived at? In the 3WI project, the setting of constraints was strongly guided by the use of the meeting protocol derived from the Liz Lerman Critical Response Process. Following this protocol over the course of four meetings allowed a respondent to understand the character of the creative goals of the maker presenting work, and facilitated the building of trust between maker and respondent. So, while there was no *explicit* limit set, there was an understanding built into the protocol and project design that constraints were at the service of a creative project and maker practice.

To say 'at the service of' is to raise another question, however: one with special relevance to the 'capricious' or 'aggressive' approach to constraint-setting mentioned by Alan in the reflective discussion. In certain understandings, to be 'at the service of' a maker practice may be to *attack* that practice. This is an attitude modelled in *The Five Obstructions*, in which Lars von Trier aims to frustrate the habitual detachment of Jørgen Leth's filmmaking. As Hector Rodriguez comments:

> In this context, questions of ethics naturally come to the foreground, because of the obvious possibility that one person might take advantage of the other. Von Trier's obstructions often have an element of sadistic aggression. The line between hostility and compassionate care is difficult to define with any degree of certainty. [… T]he boundary between aggressivity and kindness is often blurred. (2008: 52)

What makes such a blurring generative and not merely problematic is the fact that von Trier has a genuine respect for his mentor, and that Leth himself gives ongoing consent to the experiment, even as he in turn tries to frustrate von Trier's intentions; but it is also of course that the two men have an equivalent status as respected white male Danish film auteurs. The question, then, for any activity of constraint-setting where the interlocutors do not share a status is whether the blurring of the boundary between aggressivity and kindness is in effect an expression of the power of one maker over another.

Such a question can also be asked of the 3WI project. Our answer is that the interdisciplinary and peer-to-peer ethos of the project meant that the three participant-makers started from a position of mutual respect and equal if distinct expertise, and that each aspired to make themselves equally vulnerable. Discussing the experience of 3WI while revising this conclusion for publication, we spoke of 'opening up the creative process for someone to intervene in quite an intrusive way' (Marie), 'no risk, no gain' (Martin), 'accepting failure in front of an interlocutor' (Alan). There remains in our discussions, despite the project having taken place several years ago, a sense of the irreducible complexity of the encounters with the other during 3WI: a sense of how agency and authority constantly circulated from maker to responder, and of how the values and assumptions of one's own practice were challenged in the activity of setting as well as receiving constraints.

Given this 'irreducible complexity', it would be wrong to extract any straightforwardly generalisable takeaways or standardised method from the 3WI project. Instead, what others might learn from our experience concerns the particularity of the encounters between participants. Certainly, an ongoing relationship between peers (a series of meetings rather than a single one) allows an interlocutor to learn what constraints and feedback might be productive for an individual practice. A maker might choose a peer coach because of that coach's expertise — you might ask to work with a musician for their knowledge of sound, for

example, or with a dance artist for their expertise on embodiment. This would be a deliberate and, as it were, instrumental choice and deployment of the peer-interlocutor. But you might, conversely, choose an interlocutor precisely because of the *absence* of certain defined sorts of expertise: you might, potentially, experience their feedback as clumsy, but it might also be surprising, emerging from 'left field'. What seems essential is the unpredictable and unreproducible character of the actual encounter. That which is valuable, challenging, generative, or destructive emerges in the uniqueness of the encounter with the other in the reversible roles of coach and creator: this unpredictability and particularity is what is to be cultivated in order to take the work to unexpected places.

To cultivate this unpredictability and particularity is to allow oneself to be vulnerable and open to challenge in the encounter with the interlocutor and the tasks they set you, or indeed in the tasks you set for them. Your sense of your project, even of your practice, might be destabilised in the process, but you may also become more familiar with that practice: 'Working with constraints means I know myself better as an artist and that I have a deeper understanding of my craft and its processes' (Martin). 'Dictating constraints seems to mean making your poetics explicit and so open to refusal' (Alan). 'Since 3WI, I attack my work more, I'm less afraid of confronting it and failing with it. The project has encouraged me deeper into the rigour of being in a process where I accept that I will sometimes feel sore, frustrated, and dissatisfied, because working with constraints has taught me that I will come out of it again' (Marie).

Writing of *The Five Obstructions*, Rodriguez has suggested that the encounters in the film between von Trier and Leth are 'the occasion for a rich interpersonal interaction, at once playful and profoundly serious' (2008: 39). We believe that the experience of the 3WI project offers a model and testimony of a series of rich interpersonal interactions of this complex sort. The project offers a lesson in valuing and cultivating the particularity, the irreducible complexity, of the encounter with the other in the development of one's own practice and that of one's collaborators.

Image description: A 'selfie' photo of, from left to right, Marie, Alan and Martin taken by Martin on his mobile phone outside the entrance to Horsens library. Click on https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2226731/2228702#tool-2229258 to see the image.

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Margin Call, dir. by J.C. Chandor (2011)

The Perfect Human (*Det Perfekte Menneske*), dir. by Jørgen Leth (1967)

Too Big To Fail, dir. by Curtis Hanson (2011)

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The film materials we draw on in section two and section six are used in accordance with fair use principles for non-commercial, critical, and research purposes, as set out in Mittell 2019b and in the section on exceptions in the Learning On Screen resource, 'Copyright Considerations for Video Essays'. This understanding of re-use in found footage and essay filmmaking is now established by more than a decade of international practice, and several peer-reviewed journals now publish video essays, including *[in]Transition*, where the finished version of 'Men Shouting: A History in 7 Episodes' (O'Leary 2023), discussed in section six, has been published. The use of clips from *The Five Obstructions* in section two fall under the exception for illustration for instruction purposes; it is believed that the clips demonstrate the points more effectively than prose description.