Standing Ground: the index in the landscape of the digital

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Abstract

This paper explores the intellectual background and production methodology behind the video Standing Ground (2019), a practice as research work that brings analogue and digital images into juxtaposition in a portrait of a derelict farmhouse. The accounts of three key theorists centred on the definition of photochemical photography and/or film through the indexical sign are discussed: André Bazin, Peter Wollen, and Roland Barthes. The paper then considers the work of scholars who have considered the implications of the transition to digital imaging for the indexicality of the image, including Lev Manovich and William Brown. In the light of this theoretical context, the paper reflects on the creative decisions made in the conception and production of Standing Ground, and considers the outcome of these decisions in the finished work. The paper concludes with an assessment of the methodology of the work in attaining the research aims of the project.

Keywords: Index, Indexicality, Photography, Film, Landscape.

Introduction

Analogue, photochemical images have been defined, in the work of some theorists, by their relationship to the physical world. The emergence of digital processes in the later decades of the last century led to an apparent transformation, and resulting theoretical reconsideration, of photographic and cinematic images. How had their relationship with the physical world been reconfigured by the arrival of digital technologies, which measured light on electronic chips, and stored the image as digital data? My practice-based research work is centred on landscape and is concerned with the representation of the physical world; as such, it has been a useful method through which to explore the issue. In conceiving *Standing Ground* (2019), a video portraying a derelict coastal farmhouse and its environs, I intended to produce a work that would bring into focus the indexical status of digital and analogue images, their connections to the world in front of the camera. Before considering this video, we should consider the notion of the index.

The index

In seeking to define photography, and from that to define the cinema, certain theorists of the last century repeatedly emphasised the type of sign known as the index. They sought the medium specificity of photography and film in that particular relationship to the physical world we call indexicality.

This approach conceives the photographic image as an imprint of the material world, a mark left as a consequence or outcome of physical contact between that world and the receiving medium. We can explain the indexical understanding of photography as follows. The photographic process begins with light reflected off the physical world in a configuration that is shaped by that world (or, sometimes, with light directly emitted by sources within the captured scene). In the moment of photographic exposure, light strikes the light sensitive chemicals mounted on the photographic strip or paper, causing changes to silver halide crystals. After development processes, the changed chemicals are converted into a visible image of the scene from which the light had been reflected.

Conceived in this way as index, the photographic image has a physical and causal relationship with the material world, with the scene before the camera. The relationship is physical, consisting of a movement of light photons from world to the photosensitive chemicals. The connection can be called causal, because the image possesses its form as a result of the scene's own form; the shape of the scene shapes the light it reflects, and thus shapes the recorded image of the world. This approach puts aside, of course, the other shaping forces: the photographer's intervention, the influence of the particular photographic technology, and so on.

André Bazin famously advocated the indexical understanding of photography. In 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' (1945), Bazin compared the photograph to a fingerprint or death mask, both of which are created through the imprint or physical impression of the material object onto a receiving medium. Due to its origins in this moment of contact, the relationship of the photographic image with the world goes beyond mere resemblance. In Bazin's well-known words:

> Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation, a kind of decal or transfer […]. The photograph as such and the object in itself share a common being after the fashion of a fingerprint. (Bazin 2005, 14-15).

Bazin proposes the photograph as something like a 'decal' or 'transfer'; in creating a photograph, we take the surface of the world, a surface captured in the light it has shaped and reflected, and 'allow' it to transfer onto film. The image does not merely resemble the world, but has been created by it, in the sense that its form has been determined by the shape and texture of the world; as such, they share a 'common being'. From the nature of photography, Bazin extrapolates the essence of film; film however can go further than still photography, and capture the scene's development over time, what Bazin calls its 'duration', encased as 'change mummified' in the moving image (Bazin 2005,

15). The relationship of photographic and cinematic indexicality is not subjected to prolonged examination, in Bazin's work, however.

Bazin does not use the words index or indexicality in his essay, though he is widely regarded as using the concept to understand cinema (for example, see Brown 2013, 24-25). It was Peter Wollen who in *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* in 1969 (enlarged edition in 1972), read Bazin's analysis in terms of the concepts and language provided by American semiotician Charles S. Peirce. Peirce proposed a three-part taxonomy of signs, with each type of sign distinguished by its relationship of signifier and signified; the symbol is a conventional sign, coded through cultural use, while the icon is a sign that connects to its referent through resemblance (Wollen 1998, 83).

The remaining type of sign identified by Peirce, the index, is as Wollen says, 'a sign by virtue of an existential bond between itself and its object.' (Wollen 1998, 83). As we have established, the indexical sign is a physical consequence of a material object or force in the world, which the sign signifies; as such, it has an existential 'bond' with that signified, and exists because of it. Peirce provides resonant examples: a symptom is created by the illness that it signifies; the pointing of a weathervane is physically produced by what it signifies, the wind blowing in a particular direction. As Wollen notes, Peirce himself placed photographs in the class of indexes; despite their resemblance to what they represent, which might mark them as predominantly iconic signs, for Peirce photographs 'belong to the second class of signs, those by physical connection' (in Wollen 1998, 84). Wollen reads Bazin through Peirce's concepts, noting that 'His conclusions are remarkably close to those of Peirce' and that Bazin stressed the existential bond between sign and object which, 'for Peirce was the determining characteristic of the indexical sign.' (Wollen 1998, 86). Indeed, he claims that 'almost all' those who have written on cinema have made the mistake of over-emphasising one of the three types of sign in their theorisation of photographic and film images, and we assume this includes Bazin (Wollen 1998, 97). In Wollen's account, Bazin's emphasis on the index motivates his advocacy of realist aesthetics (in the films of Roberto Rossellini for example) and drives his construction of film history, which places realism at odds with the expressionism of those directors who foreground the formal aspects of the image (Wollen 1998, 86-7). In both Bazin's and Wollen's texts, however, the substance of the relationship between indexicality and realist film style or realist approaches to filmmaking could be more fully interrogated or argued. That the indexical link of image and world should be more fundamental to realist approaches - involving use of non-actors, location shooting, improvisation, decentring of narrative and so on - than to expressionist aesthetics is not thoroughly argued. This conflation of indexicality and realism seems to connect the supposedly automatic quality of the indexical transfer and the filmmaker's limited intervention in the diegesis or pro-filmic, but this could be more thoroughly explored. Surely the indexical link of image and scene can be equally strong whether the scene (the pro-filmic) is 'found' and 'authentic' or constructed.

For Wollen himself, the cinema utilises the three types of signs, although '[…] it is clear, indexical and iconic aspects are by far the most powerful. The Symbolic is limited and secondary.' (Wollen 1998, 97). For Wollen, theorists like Metz and Barthes strongly undervalue the role played by the symbol in the cinema, even beyond the secondary place he himself gives to them (1998, 105), and he describes films in which the symbolic sign, coded through convention, is important (1998, 102). Reading this account, one wonders about the relationship of the iconic and indexical signs, identified by Wollen as the primary and predominant signs in photography and cinema. Where precisely do the two diverge, and where overlap? We could imagine a photographic image that is indexical without being iconic, for example in the case of abstract images that render a filmed object unrecognisable. But one struggles to imagine an iconic image that would not be indexical, which resembles its object but which is not a trace of its presence before the camera – excluding, of course, the case of images involving computer generated material.

A third major theorist took a broadly similar approach to Bazin in his emphasis on the photograph as index. Roland Barthes begins his later text *Camera Lucida* (1980) by stating his desire to define what photography is, 'in itself' (Barthes 1981, 3). Barthes notes that:

> It seemed to me that the *Spectator's* Photograph descended essentially, so to speak, from the chemical revelation of the object (from which I receive, by deferred action, the rays) […]. (Barthes 1981, 10).

As a consequence of this disclosure or manifestation of the object in a chemical form, the 'referent adheres' in the image, in Barthes' well-known phrase. He writes furthermore that, unlike other images:

> A specific photograph, in effect, is never distinguished from its referent (from what it represents), or at least it is not *immediately* or *generally* distinguished from its referent […]. (Barthes 1981, 5).

It is difficult for us, as spectators, to perceive the photographic signifier, because the photographed object, the referent, is so prominent in our experience it overpowers the image itself, and the effects of focal length, framing and its other characteristics. In a sense, we struggle to distinguish the photograph from the subject, as is clear when we point at a photograph of a loved one and state, 'look, it's him' rather than 'it's a photo of him'. Barthes continues that the photograph and the referent are 'glued together' and that the 'Photograph belongs to that class of laminated object whose leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both' (Barthes 1981, 6). In one of his clearest and most poetic statements of indexicality, Barthes notes that, 'The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent' (1981, 8). The creation of the image in the light that has reflected from the object means

that for Barthes, the image is emitted by or emanates from the object that it shows, a beautiful recasting of the process. In *Camera Lucida*, then, Barthes seems enamoured by the indexical origins of the photograph, bringing his approach close to that of André Bazin, as Philip Watts has noted (Watts 2016, 35). Of course, in the influential essays earlier in his career, he focussed more on the coded and rhetorical aspects of the image, as in 'The Photographic Message', for example (Barthes 1977, 15-31).

Barthes does not carry his analysis of still photography as index straightforwardly over to cinema in *Camera Lucida*. For example, the onward flow of film means there is no time for the operation of the punctum in the cinema, the contingent detail which strikes the viewer and to which she brings her personal interest and meaning, which is so key to his conception of photography (1981, 55). The photograph and the cinema also differ in terms of the status of the frame; if the frame operates *as* frame in photography, as the outer edge or container of a composition, in the cinema the frame is experienced as mask over the real, which continues outwards from the space shown in the image, uninterrupted but concealed (1981, 55-6). Indeed, the lack of spatial continuance beyond the still photograph is mirrored by a lack of temporal extension. For Barthes, while the photograph has no protensity and projects no future for the events it portrays, the film literally flows onward in time (89). This is significant for the indexicality of the film image.

> In the cinema, whose raw material is photographic, the image does not, however, have this completeness […] Why? Because the photograph, taken in flux, is impelled, ceaselessly drawn toward other views; in the cinema, no doubt, there is always a photographic referent, but this referent shifts, it does not make a claim in favour of its reality, it does not protest its former existence; it does not cling to me; it is not a spectre. (Barthes 1981, 89).

The cinematic image is drawn on to other shots, other camera positions; as such it lacks the completeness, what we might call the crammed pregnancy of the photographic image. With the onward flow of film the referent 'shifts', we suppose with each cut or movement in the shot, and the film does not 'make a claim' in support of its reality (89). Its progression in time, then, weakens the indexical power of the cinema, which is being understood phenomenologically, as part of the experience of viewing. Barthes also comments that the index of the cinematic image in the fiction cinema is a double trace – of the actor, and of the fictional role (79). While Barthes is forthright in his claims of the indexical status of the photograph, then, his conception of the cinematic index is more hesitant.

Indexicality and the digital image

These writers are, of course, theorising the photochemical image prior to the emergence of the digital era. The development of digital imaging in the last decades of the twentieth century was regarded by several commentators as having disturbed the indexical status of the image that had been so prominent in the analyses of Bazin, Wollen and Barthes. In the digital era, the filmstrip has, of course, been supplanted by the camera's light sensitive chip, which converts light levels into voltages, and the Analogue-to-Digital Converter (or A-to-D) Converter, which transforms the electronic signal into digital data (bits) as described by Blaine Brown (Brown 2015, 2).

In his early discussion of *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era* (1992), William J. Mitchell summarises the pre-digital situation in a familiar manner: 'A photograph is fossilised light, and its aura of superior evidential efficacy has frequently been ascribed to the special bond between fugitive reality and permanent image that is formed at the instant of exposure.' (Mitchell 1992, 23). Here indexicality is encapsulated in the metaphor of fossilisation; just as the light reflected from the world is fixed into a negative or transparency, soft tissue or ephemeral tracks are transformed into the resistant, enduring material of a fossil, which retains the form of the original. Mitchell sees this indexical process as lying at the base of the photograph's relationship with truth; as the process is considered to be more causal than intentional, and as the resulting image is difficult and time-consuming to convincingly alter, the photograph had a status of truthfulness greater than other types of image: it shows what is, or was (Mitchell 1992, 23).

However, with the emergence of the digital image, the status of the photograph as index dissipates, due to the artist's ability to radically, easily and discreetly re-shape the image, for example by combining elements of different images (Mitchell 1992, 31). We can no longer assume that the image is in most cases the outcome of the causal, indexical process, because of the ease of editing after capture. Without the assurance of indexicality, the image offers limited documentary guarantee. Mitchell is most interested in the shaking of the image's association with truth that occurs when viewers know it *may* not be purely the outcome of an indexical process. He is less concerned with the complexities of the adjustment of indexicality that occurs, for example, when an image is captured digitally in a photographic process that might resemble analogue capture.

While Mitchell does not discuss film, Lev Manovich takes a comparable approach to cinema in his book *The Language of New Media* (2002). He again roots the pre-digital analogue cinema in indexicality, using language reminiscent of Bazin's. Manovich writes: 'Cinema is the art of the index; it is an attempt to make art out of a footprint.' (2002, 294-5). For Manovich, the proliferation of digital technologies for capturing, manipulating and originating moving images means that cinema 'is no longer an indexical media technology but rather, a subgenre of painting' that cannot be clearly distinguished from animation (Manovich 2002, 295). Manovich provides four principles of digital cinema, the second of which relates to the indexical nature of the image. He writes:

Once live-action is digitised (or directly recorded in a digital format), it loses the privileged indexical relationship to pre-filmic reality. The computer does not distinguish between an image obtained through a photographic lens, [or] an image created in a paint program, since they are all made from the same material – pixels. […] Live-action footage is thus reduced to another graphic, no different than images created manually. (Manovich 2002, 300).

In a digital production, live action footage, whether of analogue or digital origins, becomes just another potential visual material, no more primary or predominant than other material including computer generated imagery. Converted into pixels like the other source materials, indexical live action footage is subject to manipulation (and is not simply the result of the original shaping force of the pro-filmic). It is subsumed under the 'logic of digital cinema', which for Manovich is closer to that of animation or painting than that of the dominant analogue cinema of the past. For Manovich, then, even images that are captured using photochemical means lose their indexicality when digitised, because they can be subject to the same post-production re-shaping as any other material.

William Brown agrees in his *Supercinema* (2013), noting that the 'loss of the indexicality' 'pertains to images recorded with digital cameras as well as to digital images animated on a computer.' (Brown 2013, 24). In converting the light hitting a camera's sensor into digital data, which must then be converted back into a visual form for display, an extra stage has been added 'between capture and production', as Brown puts it. He continues that:

[…] light in a digital photograph is transmuted via computer into 1s and 0s and is then given an output format ([…] pixels) that conforms to the conventions of photography. (Brown 2013, 24).

The transformation of the image into data, and back, is seen by Brown to sever the indexical link of image and world. This is because the data (0s and 1s) are symbols of the qualities of each point in the image (pixels), describing luminance and hue, rather than indexical analogs of these qualities. James Verdon goes further in this direction, suggesting in his 'Indexicality or Technological Intermediate? Moving Image Representation, Materiality and the Real' (2016) that in converting the image received on the sensor into digital data, the information must be recorded as discrete values, necessarily approximate, rather than continuous representations. This quantisation or sampling of the image, breaking down the image into pixels and quantifying the levels of luminance or chrominance of each, necessarily involves discrete and approximate values rather than continuous and exact analogous mirroring of the scene (Verdon 2016, 199). The digital image is not an imprint of the pro-filmic world, but the approximation of that imprint, consisting of the quantified light and colour values of particular points, stored in a symbolic form (the 0s and 1s).

A number of scholars, then, have perceived the weakening of the indexicality of digital photographic and film images; this can refer to the loss of indexicality due to the manipulation of the image after capture (the image is no longer a trace of the material world but the outcome of later editing); or the fact that the image, because it has been stored in intermediary forms, symbolic and quantitative, is no longer a direct trace of the scene before the lens. Mitchell and Manovich focus on the mutability of the digital image as the reason for the decline in the indexicality of the image. Though image editing was always possible with analogue photography (and Mitchell offers a substantial account of this), in the digital era it is more discreet, rapid, and accessible. By contrast, in the accounts of Brown and Verdon, it is not simply the mutability of the digital data that weakens the indexicality of the image. They consider the nature of the capture process, and note the intermediary conversion stage that intervenes between the light falling on the chip and the digital image as constituted. These conversions help to sever the indexical relationship of the digital image and the scene.

Developing *Standing Ground*: a reflection on methodology

As a researcher working through creative practice, I have sought to explore the issue of the index through the production of a video work, *Standing Ground* (2019), to which I will now turn. In general, my practice consists of the production of landscape videos; as a form of production that takes the physical environment as subject, it offers an appropriate means through which to explore the indexical relation of world and image. When I began developing *Standing Ground*, I was already considering making a portrait of a ruined farmhouse and its environment on the coast of mid-Wales. This farmhouse was a promising focus for the project. The battered building with its crumbling stonework, standing exposed in the open landscape, had the strong sense of materiality I needed for a work exploring the link of the physical and its image. The precarious farmhouse, surrounded by encroaching cliffs, suggested on a poetic level the threatened analogue or material world. Finally, the boxy farmhouse, with its darkened chambers visible through its windows, would rhyme with the objects appearing in the piece (various cameras, a negative scanner).

This video piece consists of three interwoven strands. In one strand a series of digital video landscape images shows the dilapidated farmhouse and its environs, threatened by cliffs. After a moment, a figure (myself) enters each image, and operates a small pinhole camera, which is directed in a different direction depending on the particular landscape image. In some images the pinhole camera is aimed in the same direction as the digital video camera, towards the scene that we ourselves gaze at (as in image 1); in others, the pinhole camera is directed back, towards the position of the digital camera and viewer (as in

image 3); in those remaining, the pinhole camera points left or right, into the off-screen space outside the frame of the digital image. After the exposure of the pinhole camera is complete, the figure walks back in the direction of the digital camera and out of frame, and the landscape image fades to black. After a short pause the exposed image, a rough analogue still, fades up onscreen (images 2 and 4 are examples).

As is evident from this description of one strand of the piece, a key element of my research methodology was to incorporate, within the work, both photochemical and digital images of the farmhouse and surroundings. By including analogue and digital images of the same location, I intended to produce a juxtaposition of their different relationships to the referent. Including the two images was intended to manifest to the viewer the differing strength of the images' indexical relationships to the physical world.

Image 1 - Digital video still, paired with image 2 (*Standing Ground,* O'Sullivan).

Image 2 - Analogue still photograph (*Standing Ground,* O'Sullivan).

Image 3 – Digital video still showing the activity of photographing. Paired with image 4 (*Standing Ground,* O'Sullivan).

Image 4 – Analogue still photograph, also showing the activity of photographing. The digital camera stands in the centre, recording image 3 (*Standing Ground,* O'Sullivan).

However, as I developed the piece I was concerned that a simple juxtaposition of images, in isolation, might not foreground the particular notion of the index with sufficient force or clarity. This approach might generate a contrast between the images simply in terms of their visual qualities of resolution, focus, exposure, and so on; in short, in terms of their qualities as iconic signs rather than in terms of the index. As such, I decided to portray in the video the activity of photographing the images. As stated, the video images of landscape show the filmmaker operating the pinhole camera's view, producing the analogue stills that appear onscreen (as in images 1 and 3); while in certain cases the analogue stills show the digital camera recording the video images of landscape (as in image 4).

I believe this reflexive footage implies to the viewer the connection between camera/image and world, and the indexical link that forms across the space between them. In viewing the digital landscapes, the filmmaker operating the pinhole camera within them, we are made aware of the digital camera's own view onto the environment, at times only subtly different and at other points divergent from the pinhole camera, and its own reception of that view as image. We become conscious of the digital camera through which we see the scene, its own alignment to the space before us, by seeing the analogue camera at work. This is also true when the analogue image itself appears onscreen. The work does create a contrast between two camera technologies, and two media, facing onto and receiving the scene.

This material, showing the activity of photographing, also served to give emphasis to the particular moment or instant of exposure – to a greater extent, I believe, than the images of the scene alone would have done. Indeed, the temporal has been acknowledged as a characteristic aspect of the indexical sign. The index is a trace not simply of the physical connection between world and medium, but of the moment at which that contact took place. Indeed, Mary Anne Doane notes in her article 'The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity' that:

The index as trace implies a material connection between sign and object as well as an insistent temporality - the reproducibility of a past moment. The trace does not evaporate in the moment of its production, but remains as the witness of an anteriority. This understanding of the index necessarily aligns it with historicity, the 'that has been' of Barthes's photographic image. (Doane 2007, 136).

By showing the seconds leading up to the exposure of the analogue image, and the seconds after, the digital video footage foregrounds the status of the analogue still image as the rendering of a particular instant between a past and a future. Similarly, the analogue stills show the digital camera as it records without an operator, and we understand that the operator has just left that space to enter the video camera's field of view, in order to use the pinhole camera, and will shortly re-enter it; again, temporality becomes present.

The portrayal of the image production, the activity of photographing, has some complexity in *Standing Ground*. As explained above, and as you can see from images 3 and 4, it is the analogue stills that are used to capture the production of the digital images (image 4), and the digital video footage that captures the exposure of the analogue still (image 3). The analogue images show us, often from a frontal position, the digital camera as it records (image 4); while the digital image shows the creation of the analogue still, again often from a frontal position (image 3). When these images are placed together in sequence, a shot/reverse shot configuration results, with the two cameras, rather than two characters, facing each other, sutured together. The shot/reverse-shot pattern serves as evidence of the two cameras' presence in that place and that moment in time; the two images substantiate each other's content, forming a double index. Their reflexive aspect consists in the fact that the production of each image is captured in the other; each image is a record of the other's production; in each image, the camera we see is recording the other image in the pair. The shot/reverse-shot arrangement also offers a particular articulation of space, in two adjacent fields; each portrayed space forms the off-screen space of the other. Not all of the image pairs involve a shot/reverse-shot arrangement, of course (see image 1 and 2).

In aiming to produce a video juxtaposing the analogue and the digital, I needed to digitise the analogue stills to incorporate them into the piece. I felt that the process of digitisation should itself be included in the piece, acknowledging the pressure and necessity of convergence, and becoming part of the meaning of the work. Thus, in *Standing Ground*, we see the scanning of the negatives captured at the farmhouse, their conversion into the digital files that become elements in the video itself (image 5). This is another element of the work's self-reflexivity.

Image 5 – Negative scanning (*Standing Ground,* O'Sullivan).

The inclusion of this footage allows the work to address Manovich's second principle of digital cinema, which I have mentioned: 'Once live action is digitised […], it loses the privileged indexical reference to pre-filmic reality.' (Manovich 2002, 300). Certainly, the piece raises the question of whether these images can in any sense be considered analogue or photochemical after their digitisation. Throughout this paper, I have referred to them as the analogue or photochemical stills because of their origins; but after digitisation, these origins may no longer matter. The inclusion of the scanning process in the piece does generate a particular insight. While the video can show us the analogue negatives, there is no digital equivalent that it can offer us – only the visual representation of the digital data, the 1s and 0s, as reconstructed on the laptop screen.

Along with the material I have discussed, the process of photographing and the scanning of the stills, the video contains a third strand. We also see the construction, from a cardboard kit, of the pinhole camera used to capture the analogue stills. The inclusion of this material serves to juxtapose an intuitive analogue technology, with the elusive, esoteric digital technology in the form of the film scanner. As with the negative, the analogue technology makes possible a more haptic experience, while the digital process fixes the subject before an immaterial image on a screen.

Assessment of the methodology

I'll conclude by reflecting critically on the research methodology behind *Standing Ground*, and considering the insights that have been gained from the production process, and from the completed video work.

In designing the work, I chose a particular type of analogue technology: a basic, handmade, pinhole camera. This resulted in some rather blurred, overexposed images, with a ragged frame. The visual qualities of these images tends to heighten their 'sense' of indexicality; the loss of representational detail, along with the cloudy overexposed areas of the image, for example, tend to suggest the image's origins as an inscription or marking by light (see image 6). As such, we can say that the particular analogue technology utilised was more likely to make present, to make visible, the indexical origins of the image.

Image 6 – Visualising indexicality (*Standing Ground,* O'Sullivan).

The digital images by contrast are higher resolution, with sharp focus and mostly correct exposure, offering detailed renderings of the scene. As such, the origin of these images in the action of light is less evident, and the medium supporting the image is less present. The digital images register more as transparent windows on to the scene than the fall of light from the scene onto the sensor. As such, a 'sense' of indexicality is less strongly present in the digital images. We might say that the digital video images have a stronger iconicity or resemblance, while the analogue images have a heightened or more visible indexicality. For the viewer, in fact, the digital video image portrays the farmhouse environment, while the analogue still image registers as a photograph of that environment.

One might suggest, as such, that the project's methodology has been problematic, in that it contrasts the results of a particular kind of 'low-tech' analogue technology, and a digital instrument capable of high quality images, and as a result may hardly be said to offer a meaningful or fair comparison between the two in terms of the index. Perhaps more importantly, the project assumes that indexicality is something that can be meaningfully examined, or should best be examined, phenomenologically; that indexicality is something that may be ascertained by considering our experience or perception of the image. This may be a misconception; indexicality may only be a fact of the origins or ontology of the image, and not an aspect of the image that can be meaningfully ascertained through its visibility, or otherwise experienced. If the project attempts to make visible the indexical relationships of different media, the question is whether indexicality is a quality of the image that we may experience, or simply a fact of the image's origins or nature. If we consider the theorists of the index discussed earlier, it seems that, while Barthes in particular discusses indexicality as part of his experience of the photograph, for Brown and Verdon, indexicality is treated as an aspect of the technical basis of the medium, lost with the digital turn, rather than something that might be manifest experientially.

One can say that in designing this project I made a further choice that complicates the research methodology. In *Standing Ground*, the analogue image is still, while the digital image is a moving image. As such, the work may function as a consideration of the contrasts of moving and still images as much as

the analogue and digital. In hindsight, 16mm or 8mm film images might have replaced the analogue stills, for example, to strengthen the appropriateness of the project's methodology to its stated research agenda. One is reminded watching the completed piece of Barthes' insistence on the heightened indexicality of the still photograph, over the cinematic image (Barthes 1981, 89). In *Standing Ground*, the 'weight' of the trace in the still image might be due to its stillness, especially as it appears in the context of moving video images, rather than anything else.

Conclusion

Indeed, *Standing Ground* could be seen to speak about issues quite apart from the digital and analogue. If we consider the still or static image to be pictorial, and as such to 'belong' chiefly to art forms or media other than film, and the moving image to be cinematic or filmic, then *Standing Ground* can be said to stage the transition between the pictorial and the cinematic. Each of the digital video images begins, for several seconds, as a 'pictorial' image: carefully composed landscapes, with static framing, and little onscreen movement. As the figure enters the frame to operate the pinhole camera, bringing movement, compositional instability, and a heightened temporality, the image becomes filmic or cinematic. The transition between the pictorial and the filmic is visualised. Indeed, the analogue stills in themselves might be regarded as pictorial interlopers in what is primarily a moving image work, also making the video as a whole a confrontation between still photography and the moving image or film.

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