Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take X-4

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SYMBIOPSYCHOTAXIPLASM: TAKE X-4

by

BARBARA PAULUS

A master’s capstone project submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts,
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Barbara Paulus

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the capstone project requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take X-4

by

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Advisor: Edward Miller

*Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take X-4* is a zine that analyzes and responds to Williams Greaves’s 1968 experimental documentary film titled *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*, in which Greaves performs the role of a bad director in order to compel his film crew into rebelling against him. As a Civil Rights Activist, Greaves was interested in exploring the relationship between authority figures and the oppressed, particularly how this dynamic operates on a film set. The film consists of three channels of footage: the fictional script being filmed; footage of the film being filmed; and footage of everything else occurring on the set. The fictional channel consists of a pair of actors performing the same, awful dialogue between Freddie and Alice. The film crew and audience remain unaware that Greaves intended for the bad script and multi-channel action to frustrate and provoke the crew and audience. The film crew ultimately rebels against their director, by stealing film equipment to film their own conversations about Greaves and his lack of adequate direction.

*X-4* is designed to represent and address the various themes of the film in printed form and address the various themes of the film. My own personal response to the film is also incorporated in *X-4*, to mirror the film crew’s recording of their private reactions to Greaves and the film, and as a response to Greaves’s insistence that everyone should express their opinion on how structures of power operate in society. *X-4* is a zine that currently exists in a printed run of 50 copies and is
distributed for free.
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A Brief Analysis of *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*

*Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* is a 1968 experimental documentary film set in Central Park in which the director, William Greaves, plays the role of an inept filmmaker, in order to coerce the film crew into revolting against him. The film consists of three channels of footage: the fictional script being filmed, footage of the film being filmed, and footage of everything else occurring on the set. There are moments in the film where viewers see two or three channels simultaneously and other moments where we see just one of the three channels. The fictional channel consists of multiple takes of a pair of actors performing the same dialogue between Freddie and Alice, in which Alice confronts Freddie about being a homosexual. The film crew unaware of Greaves’s concept and believes they are on the set of a film titled *Over the Cliff*, a title Greaves used as a kind of decoy for his actual intentions. The bad script and Greaves’s lack of direction ultimately provoke the film crew into rebelling against their director by stealing film equipment and filming a conversation amongst themselves where they discuss the film and criticize Greaves. Greaves remained unaware that the crew filmed themselves until after shooting completed and Bob Rosen, a member of the film crew, gave him these tapes, acknowledging that Greaves might need them if he wants to have a movie. Prior to viewing the film crew’s conversation, Greaves thought his social experiment had failed.

William Greaves began his career in film as an actor working predominantly in black-casted films. Greaves wanted to direct, but found there were no opportunities for him to do so as an African American. The racism and discrimination inherent in the American film industry of the 1950s compelled Greaves to move to Canada where he felt there would be more opportunities for him to continue his career in the film industry. He was particularly interested in working for the National Film Board (NFB), founded by John Grierson, because as he stated, “I
wasn’t interested in just making movies, I was interested in social issues and corrective social action. I was particularly interested in the denigration of black people on the screen, and I realized I could make films that would counter some of this adverse propaganda” (MacDonald 48). In Canada, Greaves began working on documentaries, and directed the documentary film *Emergency Ward* (1958) under the NFB. Greaves would not have the opportunity to make films about the African American experience until he returned from Canada in the early 1960s. He was convinced to come back after *Emergency Ward* (1958) caught the attention of the United States Information Agency (USIA), and Greaves was hired as a director for the USIA, “[allowing] him to turn his camera increasingly towards the issues, culture, and politics relevant to Black America right as the civil rights movement was gaining momentum” (Griffis 10). In 1968, the same year that *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* was filmed, Greaves became the producer of *Black Journal*, a television program that was dedicated to covering issues relevant to African Americans’ experiences. Greaves encountered discrimination as a black man, but also as a filmmaker who ultimately felt compelled as a Civil Rights activist to portray issues pertaining to African American communities. His own struggle with oppressive authority within the film industry and American society at large informed his conceptual approach to *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*. I was particularly drawn to the themes of authority and rebellion in the film, which informed my own creation of a zine in response to *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*, titled *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take X-4*.

Rebellion occurs in *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* in two distinct ways: by the film crew resisting their director and by Greaves resisting the norms of the filmmaking industry. Greaves did not take on the traditional authoritarian role of the director, but instead employed a democratic filming technique by allowing the film crew the opportunity to be creatively involved
in the making of the film. In the opening credits, Greaves is not credited as director, but editor of
the film, a move that suggests to viewers that there were others given creative authority. The
roles of each film crew member extend beyond their traditional role of, for example,
soundperson or camera operator. For example, Barbara’s role as soundperson extends in the film
crew meeting scene has she removes her headphones to describe her own interpretation of
Greaves’s direction.

Part of Greaves’s democratic approach to directing a film is his focus on spontaneity,
which is heightened by the placement of Miles Davis’s experimental jazz album, In A Silent
Way, on the soundtrack. Like jazz, the film is filled with mistakes and errors, or spontaneous
behavior; and as with jazz, these mistakes are incorporated into the final recording, or cut.
Symbiopsychotaxiplasm is improvisation within a particular well-thought out structure that is
open to things happening. Greaves’s insistence on spontaneity aligns it with the genre of cinéma
verité. In his essay on Emile de Antonio, Thomas Waugh summarizes the history of cinéma
verité: “With the introduction of the handheld cameras and portable recorders in the late fifties,
there was a sudden burst on both sides of the Atlantic of nonfiction films celebrating the new
accessibility of ‘truth’—truth in the surface of textures of audiovisual reality, in the immediacy
of the present time, and in the nuance of spontaneous behavior” (Waugh 95). Along with his
focus on spontaneous behavior and lack of intervention, Symbiopsychotaxiplasm is aligned with
cinema verité in its use of handheld camera equipment throughout the film. Greaves' focus and
insistence on the spontaneous action or moment is apparent, as he tells the actors that the film
crew is geared to film whatever happens at any moment.

The film’s reflexive elements emphasize Greaves’s democratic style of filmmaking. In an
interview with Greaves, film scholar Scott MacDonald addresses how “there’s a long history of
self-reflexive filmmaking as a political intervention to disengage the traditional power of the director...self-reflexivity functioned as a way of disengaging from certain power relations to make way for more utopian ways of working in the world. The scene where you are sitting with your multiracial, mixed-gender crew seems to encapsulate this” (MacDonald 56-57). Here MacDonald is referring to the scene where the crew expresses to Greaves their dislike of the script while they are all sitting on the lawn in Central Park. Greaves listens to the crew and even encourages Jonathan to “surface with a better script.” MacDonald went on to declare, in the documentary Discovering William Greaves (2006), that Symbiopsycotaxiplasm is perhaps the most multi-ethnic film of the era. To use MacDonald’s mention of utopia, what is perhaps utopic about Symbiopsycotaxiplasm is that the people on set, who normally would not have any creative input or power, are given the chance to make creative decisions, placing them on par with their director. On top of that, the multicultural film crew directly opposes the white dominated film industry that discriminated against Greaves. The film upset not only power relations within the film industry, but also the norms of staged sets, as it takes place in the very public arena of Central Park.

Part of the film’s reflexivity is its employment of direct address which functions to bring the audience into the film as responders to the action. There are moments where the cameras point at the audience and where the film crew, particularly Bob Rosen in the crew meeting scenes, address viewers directly. For viewers, the film crew are "[their] surrogates on-screen reacting the way that the audience is reacting” (MacDonald 61). The film crew articulates the experience of the viewers by pointing out the faults in Greavs’s direction, his underexposed shots, and the bad writing in the script. The opening scene of the film of Freddie and Alice followed by a split screen of another pair of actors performing the same character roles, was
meant “to push the audience into a state of annoyance” (MacDonald 51). As viewers, we are analogous to the film crew because we are also unaware of Greaves’s actual concept and are often as confused or frustrated by what we see occur in the film as the crew is by the events on set. Greaves intended not only to push the film crew into a state of frustration in the hopes of creating a rebellion, but also that the audience would also become frustrated and thus encouraged to react and respond to the film as well.

Greaves’s insistence that the film crew have creative input and that the audience respond to the film is indeed representative of his democratic filmmaking technique. Greaves’s film is a collective, collaborative process. Greaves’s approach represents Roland Barthes’s notion of the death of the author, whereby the writer of a text, or in this case, the director of a film, is not the sole author of the work. For Barthes, the author(s) of a text include the readers, who complete the text by reacting to it and thereby concluding it (cite). In regards to Symbiopsychotaxiplasm, the film crew can be understood as contributors to the creative process of Greaves’s film, while the viewers are the final authors of it. The film demonstrates that in order to employ a democratic approach to art-making, the director (or writer) has to surrender a certain level of autonomy by declaring themselves no longer to be the sole author of the work.

In addition to the film crew and audience, it is also worth mentioning the appearance of Victor, a homeless man in Central Park, at the end of the film. Victor voices his antagonism towards political figures such as Mayor Lindsey and Nelson Rockefeller, whom he claims he would fight, if he had the money. Victor critiques modern society and declares that “we need changes.” Greaves’s decision to include Victor again goes against norms because Victor would normally not be given a media platform from which to critique society. Greaves does not set out any particular requirements for authoring the film; anyone’s opinion on the film, whether it be
from a crew member on the set, a bystander like Victor, or an audience member, is considered legitimate and may be included in the final cut. Indeed, including the film crew’s critique of the film, and concluding the film with Victor’s input on society, epitomizes the notion that “anyone at any level of society can have fundamental insight into the way society works, especially into the way structures of power work in society” (Discovering William Greaves).

Yet, Greaves’s style of direction presents one of the paradoxes of the film, because even though he gives up some his authority in favor of a democratic process, he is ultimately still in control, not just as editor of the film, but also in the method by which he executed the film’s concept, which was, simply, by not telling the crew members or actors about the concept. Instead, Greaves tells the crew and actors that the theme is sexuality, but to also not take him seriously when he says such things. The concept that was read by Maria and Phil, both of whom are a part of the film crew (though their particular crew roles are unclear), did not reveal Greaves’s ultimate motive, which was to uncover when and how a group of people rebel against authority; nor did it explain his employment of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, the Second Law of Thermodynamics, or that the actual title of the film was derived from Arthur Bentley’s concept of symbiotaxiplasm. For this reason, according to Akiva Gottlieb, Greaves non-direction is as manipulative as micromanagement (173). Additionally, even though the film crew’s actions were not scripted one wonders if the film crew actually rebelled if Greaves intended that they would all along and purposefully developed a scenario in which they would.

In the same interview with Scott MacDonald, Greaves explains how he became inspired for the concept of Symbiopsychotaxiplasm. Greaves was interested in social scientist Arthur Bentley’s term symbiotaxiplasm, which is described in his book An Inquiry into Inquiries. According to Greaves, a symbiotaxiplasm “referred to all those events that transpire in any given
environment on which a human being impacts in any way” (MacDonald 50). In his film, the symbiotaxiplasm is the film set in Central Park. Greaves added ‘psycho’ to Bentley’s term because as he states “I felt the longer term more appropriate to my idea, which was to explore the psychology of a group of creative people who would function as an entity in the process of making a film” (50). Greaves was also interested in the Second Law of Thermodynamics, “which describes the distribution of energy in a given system” (56). Greaves applied this law by using the cameras to track the flow of spontaneous energy on the set.

In the same interview, Greaves gives his own interpretation of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, which was developed by Werner Heisenberg and is also referred to as the Uncertainty Principle, or Indeterminacy Principle. Greaves claims that when a microscope is pointed at any object the microscope emits electrons that will push the electrons of the observed object out of orbit. For this reason, the observed can never be documented as it is. Greaves saw the camera as analogous to the microscope (56). Greaves’s application of the Uncertainty Principle misunderstands (deliberately or not) the original definition, which states that “either the position or the momentum of an electron can be measured with accuracy but the accuracy with which we can measure both simultaneously is limited” (McKerrow & McKerrow 19). In other words, the Uncertainty Principle does not state that we cannot record truth at all. Instead, it claims that we always encounter a natural limit in our observations because we cannot measure momentum and position simultaneously with accuracy. Though Greaves was inspired by Heisenberg, his application of the theory is a misinterpretation.

Watching the film, none of these aspects of Greaves’s concept are presented to viewers either. In the creation of X-4, I explain some of Greaves’s motives, but like the director, leave some parts unanswered and open for the reader's (mis)interpretations.
Making a Zine to Parallel *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*

In 1930, the term "zine" first appeared in reference to self-published magazines. Zines vary in terms of topic and why they are created. People may decide to self-publish because they feel constrained by traditional publishing, their point of view goes unheard, and/or they are misrepresented in mainstream media. Zines are used to foster community engagement by those resisting societal norms. In chapter two of *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism*, Alison Piepmeir explains how zines are able to foster community and connection by creating physical objects that are passed from one individual to another, and are either free or purchased from the maker at a very low price. Piepmeir points out how individuals (in her case, feminists), through self-publishing, can be “agents of their own representation. They can either be produced for members of [their] own community or offer an easily accessible way to enter the larger public sphere” (Cella et al. 404). Within *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*, we see evidence of how articulating individual views and ideas on and about an issue can foster community engagement, as the crew spontaneously unites to discuss issues they have with their director. To embrace this type of accessible engagement, my own zine will be given out for free.

One outgrowth of zines was the establishment of artists’ books in the 1960s. According to the Printed Matter (an organization dedicated to the promotion and distribution of artists books) website, “the term ‘artists’ books’ refers to publications that have been conceived as artworks in their own right. These ‘projects for the page’ are generally inexpensive, often produced in large or open editions, and are democratically available.” Many zines are artists' books, though not all are; the distinction is whether or not the zine is considered a work of art by the maker. A pamphlet created to convey information may be considered a zine, but without a certain level of creative input would not be labeled an artists' book. I feel that it is necessary for
me to discuss the distinction between these two self-published genres because while $X-4$ exists as a zine, it may also exist as an artbook due to its creative elements.

While Greaves did not make zines or artist books, his work as a Civil Rights Activist who made films about African American culture was similar in that it was done outside normal (i.e. Hollywood) channels. Greaves resisted the norms of his society and sought to foster change through producing films that centered around the African American experience. With the help of his wife, he created his own production company in order to take matters into his own hands, in the same way a creator of a zine might do so through the act of self-publishing. Self-publishing can be understood as creating a work in opposition to and resisting the dominance of major and corporate publishing houses. This includes being in opposition not only to the linear form in which text is printed in books, but also the way they are distributed and circulated. In this way, zines can be understood as a form of criticism that, because they are cheap to produce and are available for critique by the general public, can challenge the hierarchy and authority of publishing institutions and the legitimacy they seem to confer. Zines are still relevant today because they open up a space where one can pose a challenge against dominant structures of power. Self-published works are parallel to independently- or self-produced films that are made outside of major film production houses, outside of the dominance of Hollywood aesthetic.

*Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* represents a democratization of art that is similar to what appears in artists' books and zines. In the essay titled “NO-ISBN as a Political Strategy” the authors discuss how the emergence of independently published artist books were viewed as a way to democratize art. They state, “Strategies to accomplish such democratization include, foremost, the involvement of recipients into the creative process” (Cella et al.). In this way, the film crew and I both play a role in completing, or authoring, the film by responding to it. In the same essay,
the authors go on to reference Roland Barthes’s “The Death of the Author” in which Barthes claims that the active viewer of an artwork, such as a film, or reader of a text creates or finishes the work through any response one may have to the work. *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* is created through the actions of the film crew, but also through my own act of making a zine in response to the film.

Greaves rejected the normal structure of the film industry, where crew members execute only a particular job on a set, through his democratic approach in which crew members became a part of the creative process. He decided to keep the film crew’s own takes in the film’s final cut, and, particularly for Larner and Terry (camera operators), gave them freedom to film whatever they felt was interesting, including their own conversations. With this in mind, I invite the readers into my own zine by posing rhetorical questions, and, at times, address readers directly by asking them for ideas. Through reflexivity and direct address, viewers of *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* are invited into the film, and readers are invited into *X-4*.

While in the process of developing this zine, I was thinking particularly of fanzines, which can be understood as a subgenre of zines. Fanzines are generally made by an individual for a particular community of people with interest in the same cultural artifact. In other words, something that someone is a ‘fan’ of. Within punk culture “fanzines disseminated information about gig schedules, interviews with bands and reviews of new albums alongside features on current political events and personal rants” (Triggs 70). Fanzines have also been created about films. While anyone can read *X-4* and, hopefully, gain something from it, those familiar with the film might have greater interest in it. The openness in the zine and its lack of conclusion resemble the film; but as a result of my creative decisions those unfamiliar with the film might not grasp hold of why I made certain creative decisions, as compared with those who
are already familiar with the film making X-4 akin to fanzine culture. To sum up, X-4 is, in a way, an artists' book that is also a fanzine, as it is about a particular film.

In the same chapter of Girl Zines, Piepmeir points out how every zine is unique and that “The visual aesthetic of zines can cover a wide spectrum, from neat to messy, from flowery to plain, but most zines do offer evidence of the creator’s hand” (67). Working by hand allowed me to use a particular visual and graphic aesthetic to represent Symbiopsychotaxiplasm. The film does not always look visually pleasing, and neither does my zine. Certain scenes, or takes, in Symbiopsychotaxiplasm are either under- or over-exposed and out of focus; the sound is sometimes filled with static or noise. Robert Stam, author of Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard, points out, “the film is built on signifying ‘mistakes’,” or errors (xix). Before the opening credits, Greaves even comments, “That sounds dreadful.” Instead of editing out mistakes, these takes are left in the final cut of the film. Working by hand caused unintentional imperfections within X-4. For example, the edges of some cutout texts and images are not straight or even. Also, creating this art object lead to unintentional errors in either grammar or citation, which ended up being incorporated into the final printing. Perhaps if there were no grammatical errors at all, then the project would be too neat, too perfect. Similar to the film, there is a lack of consistency in the images: some are sharp and in focus while others contain scan lines. Additionally, using analog methods allowed me capture the essence of zine making. If I had done the same project on a computer, I would have lost a democratic component because publishing software requires a certain level of knowledge and money to use. It was easier for me to visualize the finished form by physically cutting and pasting, as I could see the actual size of the page.
Within some zines, “The reader’s eyes are forced to move around in different ways than the normal linear print narrative demands. It’s unclear what follows what” (Piepmeir 68). While each section of *X-4* has a concrete, sequential response to the film, there are moments that veer off from this prose, such as text in the margins. It is up to the reader of the zine to determine what to read first: the text in the margins or the prose. Or they may go back and forth between the margins and responses. By not using a linear typescript found in traditional print media, throughout my discussion of *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* I was able to represent the film’s lack of linearity. The film does not follow a particular sequential order in its narrative and viewers cannot determine a concrete beginning, middle, and end; nor could the film crew. When two or three channels are displayed simultaneously, no channel is given more importance or prominence over the others, and viewers of the film are forced to pick which channel to focus on and, thus, determine for themselves what is of importance. Readers of *X-4* can draw certain conclusions as they read through it, but not everything that occurs in the film is clearly explained.

By placing Miles Davis’s experimental jazz album on the soundtrack, Greaves draws attention to the spontaneous action that appears in his own film. While there is a fictional script, the crew’s actions are unscripted and are therefore aligned with the music we hear. Greaves also experiments with the script itself by inviting a pair of actors to sing their lines. In an attempt to represent the spontaneity in *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*, I chose to work against the traditional formats and layouts of published material. Finally, the very act of creating of a zine also mirrors the filming of the film. Phil Lubliner who is a member of the art zine collective The Holster, “regards zine making as an artist’s practice, one particularly favorable for experimentation and spontaneity” (Thomas 34). Again, working by hand and outside of the confines of the traditional publishing industry I was free to experiment with each page, each section.
Methodology and Formation of X-4

One of my goals in creating X-4 was to translate particular aspects of the film into print media. I wanted to expand on the crew’s own response to the film and their meeting scenes, which are labelled X-1, X-2, and X-3. Hence the creation of my own title, 
Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take X-4, which is a combination of the titles of the crew meeting scenes and the extended title of the film.

Again, as stated in my analysis of the film and in X-4, I was particularly interested in the film’s discussion of authority and structures of power. Similar to Greaves creating an independent, experimental film about authority, the zine format allowed me to express myself creatively while challenging structures of power within my own society, such as the publishing industry. My personal response to the film and my addressing the audience was meant to parallel the actions of the film crew, and also open up the possibility of a conversation. Analysis alone would not have provided me with the stylistic tools necessary to engage with the potential audience of my zine. My goal was to relinquish my authority by refusing to appear as if I am talking at my reader and, instead, to talk to and with my readers. However, unlike the film crew, I was not able to collaborate with others in the actual making of the zine, though I originally wanted to invite others into the binding process. I did receive feedback on the prose and obtained materials for free to bind X-4, but no one helped me put the X-4 together piece by piece.

In writing about the Symbiopsychotaxiplasm I wanted to portray the film’s themes and notable moments. Besides rebellion, authority, spontaneity, and the film industry, other themes that appear in the film are gender and sexuality and socio-economic class. Having these themes in mind, I composed each section of X-4. In the zine section titled “X-Freddie & Alice” I briefly discuss gender and sexuality, but do wish I had expanded more on Greaves’s claim that the
theme of the film is sexuality. Indeed, there are several moments in the film where sexuality comes up beyond the fictional script, such as Greaves’s pointing out the breasts of the woman who is riding a horse in Central Park.

There were several particular moments in the film I was interested in conveying. One was the moment when Victor walks on set and poses the question, “So, who’s moving whom?” In other words, who’s in charge? There is no follow-up response. I was also attracted to Greaves’s own sarcasm when he states, “We’re gonna have a picture folks. Hard to believe, but it’s gonna happen.” The moments when Bob Rosen and Jonathan appear to uncover what Greaves’s motive is have always been very exciting and interesting to me. For that reason, these quotes from the film exist on their own pages, rather than being integrated into the prose of each section.

I wanted each section to be unique and to stand out from the others. The different fonts were not chosen for any particular artistic reason; however, I did not want the font of the prose to be consistent, which is Adobe Garamond. Other fonts I used include Adobe Garamond, Arial, and Helvetica for readability. It was easy for me to write some of the asides that are in the margins in a small font in Helvetica while still being able to clearly read the writing. Similar to the cover of the zine, the titles of each section all have handwritten “X-.” This was done to represent the film crew’s own handwritten X-1, X-2, and X-3 on pieces of cardboard before they begin filming each take of their conversations. Whenever I do mention either X-1, X-2, or X-3, I write this by hand. Other parts of the zine that were written by hand were done so to add my own artistic input and design to the zine.

While the content of the zine followed a logical order, the pages of the zine are not numbered, to adhere to the film’s lack of clear order. The actual ordering of the zine was thought of after presenting the sections, in no particular order, to the Liberal Studies Thesis/ Capstone
Workshop class. It was recognized that the order made sense, which was a surprise to me, and that I could potentially place the sections in any order. A random order might serve the film, but I was not interested in presenting something incoherent and wanted to emphasize my own interest in the film’s discussion of authority.

Each section underwent a drafting phase before being considered finished. The paragraphs in each prose section were typed up, printed out, cut, and pasted on a separate page. Images for the zine were taken from the Criterion Collection DVD booklet, the Criterion Collection webpage on the film, and from screen shots of the film. At first, I was not thrilled by how some of the screen shots printed on my home printer, but decided that the different textures of each image represent the different visual textures in the film. Images of Mayor Lindsay, Nelson Rockefeller, and George Wallace were printed from a google search. Images that are square shaped have a black border around them to adhere to how the channels appear in the film surrounded by black framing.

While each section was composed using analog methods, the printing of the zine was done using a computer. After scanning each section (using the scanner I owned), I was able to then order the zine using Adobe Acrobat Pro, and print it using Acrobat’s booklet printing function. The entire zine was printed using the toner printers at the Graduate Center Library. As a student, I was able to print for free making the project financially affordable to produce. The covers were printed separately at the Wyckoff House Museum, using inkjet printers. The cover stock paper was given to me by my friend, John Graziosa.

I was also able to obtain beeswax to bind the printed zines from the caretaker and resident beekeeper of the Wyckoff House, James Scales. I did have to purchase book thread which cost around $7. (Bookbinding is, essentially, sewing with paper.) Before threading each zine together,
they were folded and creased using a bone folder. Holes were then made in the paper using an awl. The thread was put through the dry wax to prevent it from unraveling. I did experience difficulty using the particular book thread that I bought, which was thicker than what I am accustomed to, and that made it harder to thread the need and pull the thread through the zine. The particular book binding stitch I used is called a saddle stitch. Later editions will also have white thread, but I may change to a thinner thread to make the binding process a bit easier. After the zine was bound, I used a box cutter to trim the extra paper.
List of Materials

The following were used (in no particular order) to create and bind X-4:

- Letter sized (8.5x11 inches) copy paper (not brand specific)
- Glue stick
- Sharpie marker
- Stadler Pigment Pens (0.05, 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.5, 0.8)
- Crayola black colored pencil
- Bic Pen
- Hammermill cover stock
- Hemp book thread, white
- Richard Hemming & Son large eye bookbinding needles, Size 1
- Olfa Heavy Duty Breakaway Knife L-1
- Olfa Ultra Sharp Breakaway Blades
- Bookbinders Awl
Circulation

After Greaves finished editing Symbiopsychotaxiplasm, he attempted to have it shown at the Cannes Film Festival. The reels were placed out of order and the film, which is already quite confusing, was rejected. Discouraged, Greaves did not show the film publicly until 1992. An unknown curator at the Brooklyn Museum who was in charge of viewing all of Greaves work insisted on seeing everything. This curator was intrigued by Symbiopsychotaxiplasm and showed it on the opening night of the retrospective. The final version of the film that we have today was edited in 1994 with an additional four minutes of footage “in order to provide contemporary viewers with a clearer sense of the original project” (MacDonald 42).

Since the initial screening in 1992, Symbiopsychotaxiplasm has mostly circulated in academia. Part of my interest in making a zine to represent Symbiopsychotaxiplasm was to introduce the film into a wider audience, especially to those who might not come across it otherwise. My intention is to continue to pass along X-4 for free to individuals. There is a possibility of submitting it to the following bookstores to circulate it: Printed Matter, Quimby’s Bookstore, Book Row, Shoestring Press, Molasses Bookstore, and Topos Bookstore. If I decide to submit it to any of these institutions, and am not permitted to give it away for free, then a price might be attached. If so, the price will be $5 in order to account for possible credit card transaction fees and taxes at the previously mentioned bookstores. As of March 29, 2019, 18 copies have been distributed to individual people, out of a run of 50. The initial run is not numbered to avoid adding economic value to each copy. It is possible that additional edits might be made for a later printing, but at this moment I do not intend to do so. I will continue to print the zine as is if there happens to be a demand or need for additional copies.
Conclusion

I watched *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* for the first time in 2015. It opened my eyes in a way that was unlike any other film I had seen. Afterwards, I wrote two separate essays on it for two separate courses, and neither seemed to satisfy me. I always felt like there was something that I was missing, something that was absent. What I felt was necessary to add to complete my discussion of the film was my own voice; I wanted to respond to an art object with an art piece of my own. There is, of course, more I could say and add about the multi-layered *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*, but for now, I am content with my current take on Greaves’s experimental film.

I was fortunate enough to have grown in the process of making *X-4*, as writing about the film made me question and consider how art making can be viable form of critique and resistance against oppressive structures of power. These structures of power determine whose voice gets heard, and Greaves acknowledges in his film that anyone’s voice has the potential to provide a legitimate form of criticism. Prior to making *X-4*, I would mention the film in class and I was always asked, “How did you see it? Who showed it to you?” It was as if I had been made aware of some buried treasure, one that I felt compelled to show and share. What has made it all the more worthwhile is the impact my own response has since had upon others. I am looking forward to the prospect of continuing to share the film with others by handing out *X-4*.
Appendix

Figure 1 Sample pages from X-4
Central Park was developed in order to give people a break from city life, its monotony, its physical grid. The park was designed in such a way so that people would always have something new to look at so you'd never get bored of visiting. Sometimes things spontaneously appear or happen even if you are walking down the same path every day. No matter what a person could go to Central Park and leave feeling refreshed, ready to go back to work. I joke that if I could not spend my lunch break in a patch of grass overlooking the Hudson River in Tribeca's Rockefeller Park, I'd quit my job. In this way, parks can help to relieve capitalism.

According to Scott MacDonald, Greaves chose Central Park for his experimental film because it is the opposite of spaces that exploit the creativity of the film crew. The film crew can, theoretically, engage with one another and act in such a way outside of the constraints that they are accustomed to within the film industry. For me, the film crew looks like they are playing rather than working on a serious project. There is an essence of freedom in going to a park because they are one of the few places where I can interact with others without having to pay. Parks feel like there are less rules, and I sometimes bring beer with me. Anything can happen. Someone used to run up to me in Tompkins Square Park to see if I want to watch him hammer a nail in his shoe. I always said no, but he did so anyway, asking for a dollar. Then I came to notice surveillance cameras and I got yelled at for picking flowers. What was I going to do with those daffodils? Put them in a jar of water at home?


2 MacDonald, "The Country in the City," 228.
The film opens with the first Freddie showing Alice (Greaves's wife) down a stone staircase in Central Park. The first time I heard Freddie say, "You got me fixed!" for a second time in the same scene as the first time he says this line, I felt like something was going on. After this opening scene, the Freddie and Alice take a walk to the woods. The film crew acknowledges how there isn't one "behold" in the dialogue between Freddie and Alice. Yet, Terry points out how "Human life isn't necessarily well written." While Terry is right, we don't necessarily have good or exciting scripts, the film crew is unable to see how the build in the film is their own discussions about the film.

The script is the same terrible lines over and over again where Alice confronts Freddie in the very public place of Central Park about his homosexuality and how she is being forced to have illegal abortions. At the time of filming, abortion was also illegal in New York.

At the same time, I do also feel bad for Freddie. He's gay and is having trouble coming to terms with bisexuality. He doesn't want to be caught and for his marriage to end because then he will have to admit to being gay. It's really awful that he is living in a world where his sexuality is accepted, but where he doesn't have to be ashamed of it and cover it up by being married to Alice.

But, I'm annoyed with Don Fellows (Freddie). When Don is talking to Greaves about his acting this far he is unsure if he should play a "faggot" or a "beefcake." "Which would you prefer to play?" "In a way, I'd like to play a beefcake." The word "faggot" is an inside joke. Jonathan says this, too, and declares that "faggot is a mentality." For Jonathan Freddie is a faggot not because he is gay, but because "he doesn't know what he wants." Despite everything else that Jonathan says that is eye-opening, I take issue with his use of the word faggot. Also, something about the way Don asks what type of gay brothers he has comes from me. Why me? It is like he is compartmentalizing people and claiming that being gay can only look a particular way. What about being straight? If he were playing a straight character would he walk up to Greaves and ask, "What kind of man should I play?"
Works Cited


Stam, Robert. Preface to the Morningside Edition. *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don

