Preferred Citation: Henderson, Brian, and Ann Martin, editors.

In the last two decades, the documentary medium has been transformed, and yet it is only now that we are beginning to absorb the full implications of this change. The traditional reliance on short takes, which were once necessary to accommodate the limits of film form, has been supplanted by longer shots that can capture the fullness of an event or conversation. However, this does not necessarily imply a realist aesthetic in the way that Bazin envisioned it. The long take is often used to create an oral narrative, and its ability to extend time and space is evident in films such as Godard's "A bout de souffle," where the time and space relation is left to the viewer to discern. Godard observes the time and space relation and lets the viewer make the social relation. . . . He does not necessarily imply a realist aesthetic of the kind championed by André Bazin and many of the other practitioners of the French new wave. Indeed, Bazin's emphasis on the importance of the shot-and-cut is now seen as outdated, and film scholars are increasingly focusing on the internal contextualization of shots.

There are several reasons why the long take has become the predominant form in documentary. First, it allows for a more detailed and nuanced portrayal of events, as opposed to the predigested institutional product that Bazin and others believed was the hallmark of documentary. Second, the long take tends to be focused more upon developments within shots than upon linkages between them. This is in contrast to the way in which documentaries have traditionally been edited, where the rhythm and pace of the film are determined by the director. In the case of the long take, the rhythm is more organic, and the film is often left to the viewer to create their own sense of pace.

However, the long take is not without its limitations. For example, it can be difficult to maintain the viewer's attention over long periods of time, and it can be challenging to convey the context of an event without the use of voice-over or other forms of narration. In addition, the long take may not always be the most effective way to capture the essence of an event, particularly if it is short-lived or contains rapidly changing elements. Nevertheless, the long take has been used to great effect in recent documentaries, such as Amos Gitai's "The Occupation," which uses the long take to convey the slow and oppressive nature of occupation. Claude Lanzmann's "La GrandeΘjard," which is a series of long takes that capture the daily life of a Jewish community in Nazi-occupied France, is another example of the long take being used effectively to convey a complex and nuanced narrative.

Films may emerge which require greater retrospective reconstruction in the mind. Against this current backdrop, there is a need for a more thoughtful approach to editing that takes into account the viewer's experience of seeing the film. The long take may not always be the best solution, but it is certainly one that deserves consideration. The key is to find a balance between the need for narrative coherence and the desire to create a more immersive and realistic experience for the viewer.