# INTERPRETING URBAN SPACE AND THE EVERYDAY THROUGH VIDEO PRACTICE

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**Abstract**

This dissertation investigates formative films and more recent contemporary films in the tradition of British Structural/Materialist films for the purpose of the theoretical and practical development of an urban documentary practice in video.  Beginning with an inquiry into the counter cinema polemics usually associated with films in the tradition of British Structural/Materialist film, I consider the notion of materialist film practice, which is usually defined as a concern for artisanal and medium specific practice, as the true subject or reality of a film.  In relation to this longstanding polemic, I reconsider key films in the tradition such as: Malcolm Le Grice's *Little Dog For Roger* (1967) and Peter Gidal's *Room Film* (1973), in terms of how each filmmaker structures the viewer's subjectivity through their methods of film, and therefore, how these films are actually experienced by the viewer. This analysis also deploys Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theory of memory as a function of our perceptions,[1] as well as Martin Heidegger's theory of the function of moods in everyday being,[2] in order to qualify how these films engender non-representational, qualitative and affective routes to knowledge, which can be characterized as historical and documentary.  What is found is that such knowledge is the result of a gestural system of practice, which is not necessarily the result of a medium specific practice of film, therefore suggesting that this could also be accomplished in other moving image formats such as video.

In terms of the contemporary practice of urban documentary, which I identify as a sub genre of the Structural/Materialist film tradition, I look at the limits of reflexive practice that is characteristic of this dominant sub genre, and especially techniques of disjunction between sound, voice and image deployed for a counter documentary practice.  The conclusion I come to is that, such techniques invariably create a distance between the viewer, in terms of the profilmic urban content on screen, thereby maintaining classical subject-object boundaries.  In this way, these films are less about the lived experience of urban space, as they confirm a bifurcation of social subjects in space.  This creates a gap for an urban documentary practice within this tradition, which can begin to decode and interpret the lived experiences of urban and everyday reality.

The final and practical portion of this dissertation, considers Le Grice and Gidal's methods of film practice as rhythm producing, in terms of the deployment of sound in relation to moving images, which gives rise to an interplay of subjective and objective experiences for the viewer. Correspondingly, the French sociologist, urban theorist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre also specifies that the user/inhabitants of space live and experience

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[1] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "'Association' and the 'Projection of Memories'," in *Phenomenology of Perception* (London; New York: Routledge, 1962; reprint, 2003).

[2] Martin Heidegger, *Being in Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1962).

space – which encompasses urban space, cities and everyday life – through a perpetual interplay of subjective and objective relations. Because of this, Lefebvre asserts that the analyst of space must also engage space relationally and rhythmically through his/her medium of practice.[3] Based upon this comparison, a method of practice of rhythmanalysis is adapted from Gidal and Le Grice's rhythmic Structural/Materialist film practice. For example, Gidal's rhythmic and ambivalent method is adapted for a rhythmanalysis of the London Underground while Le Grice's rhythmic gestural method is adapted for a rhythmanalysis of an urban neighbourhood in Brighton, UK.

      The contribution this PhD seeks to make is both theoretical and methodological, in terms of re-considering the underlying principles and aesthetic practices of British Structural/Materialist films, and in adapting and developing other applications for such practice, which extend into the areas of urban studies, documentary and inter-media art and design practice. This PhD therefore seeks to contribute to recent dialogues concerning artists' approaches to documentary practice.

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[3] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, OX: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).

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Permission to publish the video footage of the London Underground shot in the period from January 2005 - July 2005, was granted in 2010, by the London Transit Authority. In addition, permission to video in Kemptown Brighton, in a neighbourhood bordered by Edward St., James St., High St., and Dorset Gardens, was granted in the summer of 2006, although most of the outdoor footage was not used.

Last but not least I wish to thank my family.  If not for their unconditional love and support, it would not have been possible to undertake this endeavour, and finish it.

## Author's Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material submitted for a degree.

Sandra Eileen Lim

May 2013

**Brief Forward**

This dissertation includes accompanying DVD copies of the short video's that constitute the practical work of this dissertation. The DVD's are meant as a supplement for the reading of the PhD, and not intended as the actual presentation format.  If viewing these videos on a laptop/computer, I would like to kindly direct the examiners to view these video's with a good pair of stereo headphones in an undistracted environment, in order to optimize the experience of image and sound relations developed in the theory and practice of these works.

# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## Towards An Urban Documentary Practice

What about the camera then?  What's its role in my assault on the visible world? .... I abolish the usual sixteen frames per second. Together with rapid filming, animation filming and filming with moving camera, etc. are considered ordinary filming techniques.

-Dziga Vertov, The Birth of Kino Eye[1]

Nearly a century has passed since the Russian Constructivist filmmaker Dziga Vertov engaged with the idea of "a communist decoding of the world" through cinema, and set out to make the invisible world visible through film.[2]  In 2006, events such as *Truth or Dare*, an international documentary art symposium which took place at the *Whitechapel Gallery* in London, brought together artists, documentary theorists and filmmakers in the UK, in order to address in many ways what Vertov began in his modernist and anti-illusionist experimental documentary work; this being, a recent tendency in the documentary genre towards "increased experimentation" and creative practice, much of which has been located in the field of contemporary art.[3] While events such as this point to the increasing role of art and creative practice in documentary making, there are also indications of an interest in the methods employed by artists in the making of documentary, as evident in an international survey put forward by the New York based avant-garde cinema

journal *Millennium Film Journal,* which recently asked a number of prominent international film and video artists making documentary work, to comment upon how they experiment with the documentary genre.[4]  There has also been the unmistakable presence of film and video made by artists within recent documentary film festival circuits, presented and programmed as experimental documentary or simply documentary film and video.[5]

Some of this recent activity may in fact be located in the work of artists grounded in the institutional base of contemporary British Artists' Film and Video, and especially a sub category of work within this, which outwardly draws upon and in many ways continues and extends the tradition of British avant-garde co-op film of the sixties and seventies into the terrain of documentary practice.[6]  In addition, a common feature of much of this documentary film and video work made by artists may be observed to be the deployment of cities, urban spaces and everyday life, and while much of this work is referred to as documentary and/or assumes a documentary label within recent cultural context of gallery and film festival programming, and may therefore be tentatively thought of as forms of urban documentary film and video; this category of work may also be said to be shaped more obviously by the conceptual links it makes to the tradition of Structural/Materialist film, which originated in Britain with the Co-op film movement, and its anti-illusionist art polemics and practices of the sixties and seventies.

The avant-garde film tradition of British Structural/Materialist film was never considered to be a form of documentary or historiographic practice in a conventional sense, but instead, emerged as a form of counter cinema made

independently and in opposition to commercial studio based filmmaking and

broadcast television, amidst a culture of minimalist and conceptualist art

movements in the sixties and seventies.[7]  Coincidentally, the early

development of British Structural/Materialist film was also concurrent with

French Structuralist film theory, which arose out of the French film journal

*Cahiers du Cinéma* and editors Jean-Louis Comolli and André Bazin in

France, during a heated period of anti-capitalism and anti-authoritarian

government protests by students and workers, which resulted in the strikes of

May 1968 in Paris.[8]  While the French film Structuralists took issue with the

technology of cinema as an apparatus which was argued to promote the

dominant ideology of the commercial narrative film industry and subsequent

control of a viewer through its various mechanisms;[9] British

Structural/Materialist filmmakers also took issue with dominant narrative

cinema, identifying the institutional form as exclusionary to alternate modes of

non-commercial independent experimental film practices, production and

distribution.[10]  According to David Curtis a filmmaker and avant-garde film

historian of this period, this sense of exclusion in the UK lead to the

establishment of the London Filmmaker's Cooperative in 1966 (LFMC), an

artist run center of production which supported an egalitarian base of shared

ideas and practices, equipment, training, and opportunities to screen

members work and the work of artists from other countries.[11]  As a result, the

LFMC became the setting for the development of British Structural/Materialist

films, which in turn found practical ways in the Co-op setting, to subvert the

effects of dominant cinema through a concentrated effort to adopt anti-

illusionist and anti-narrative strategies, which would in theory, create a space for the viewer to be less of a consumer, and more of an active participant in the viewing process.[12]

For Peter Gidal and Malcolm Le Grice, key theorist-practitioners and pioneers of early British Structural/Materialist film, a counter approach to dominant narrative cinema took shape in different but related ways. For Gidal, an anti-illusionist and anti-narrative approach meant a break with film time structured through continuity editing, believed to be a repressive element within hidden filmic codes of dominant cinema, which was thought to ultimately condense and shape time as illusionistic.[13] By way of example, the passage of night to day can occur in a matter of seconds through transitions such as a fade to black or a cross dissolve, creating a sense of linear but condensed time.[14] Instead, Gidal called for a real time equivalence, and actual duration of filmed events for the camera, as well as an emphasis upon the formal operations of the filmstrip or a "film as film" approach, where the represented content would subsequently take a secondary function in a film; the purpose behind such tactics being, to bring forth a filmic event. As Gidal theorized, this could be achieved in part by adopting the more analytical processes of speculation, structuring, and reflexivity, in opposition to the passive viewing experience believed to be inherent with the experience of viewing dominant cinema.[15] For Le Grice a "film as film" approach also recognized that the "cinematic process is a reality in it's own right," resulting in the treatment of film as material to be transformed through such procedures as re-filming film off of the screen, and in the case of *Little Dog For Roger*,

"film printer based work."[16]  In this case, the aims of the early

Structural/Materialist film were fairly straightforward for Le Grice:  a "tendency

to consider form before expression," a "recognition of the special conventions

and materials of the medium," a "shift away from romantic individualism," in

order to follow an "ethic opposing the subjugation of the spectator to the

personality of the artist," in addition to opposing "subjugation to the authority

of the state or corporate cinema."[17] Le Grice's concern with finding an

alternative to film illusionism led instead to his concern for developing

cinematic forms of language, that would also become the content of the film,

and therefore an alternative to the pre-constituted cinematic codes of

dominant cinema.[18]

This emphasis upon the theorization and practice of film as a medium

and a material in both artists' films may be said to stem from the fact that both

Gidal and Le Grice were trained artists.  For example, Gidal's creative

background was informed by studies in psychology and literature and his

involvement in film and art came in part from the time he spent in New York in

the art scene of the sixties, in the sphere of activity around Andy Warhol's

studio *The Factory*, during a period in which Warhol developed conceptual

and minimalist approaches to both painting and film.[19]  Born in Switzerland,

Gidal came to the UK to study at The Royal College of Art (RCA), and

subsequently taught there from 1971-1983.[20]  Le Grice was a painter and

artist educator, who became active early on in the London arts and

experimental film scene of the sixties, as a key figure in the development of

the Drury Lane Arts Laboratory and the LFMC. Fellow filmmaker Curtis

recalls Le Grice's formative years as follows:

> Le Grice's workshop was initially associated with the Drury Lane Arts
> Laboratory, an artists-run space for experimental film, theatre, poetry
> and performance founded by Jim Haynes in 1967, where I another
> Slade-trained painter, was cinema-programmer. As its name suggests,
> the Arts Laboratory placed emphasis on making as well as presenting,
> and it was this combination that attracted Le Grice, who was looking for
> a base for production and exhibition for himself and his Saint Martins'
> and Goldsmiths' students, among them Fred Drummond and Roger
> Ackling, and later William Raban and Gill Eatherley and Annabel
> Nicolson. He began with hand-built equipment, a converted projector
> as a film-printer, wooden processing tanks and drying racks
> constructed from wooden discs and dowel rods. By 1969, his
> workshop group and the LFMC had joined forces and were housed at
> the second, Robert Street Arts Laboratory – the Institute for Research
> in Art and Technology (IRAT 1969-71).[21]

Considering the emphasis upon formal and material practice, it seems

an unlikely hypothesis to suggest that Structural/Materialist films might also

serve as a base for much of the recent documentary practice in film and

video, suggesting that the avant-garde film tradition might also be considered

to be a latent form of documentary practice in and of itself.[22] In fact, an early

criticism of British Structural/Materialist films by the eminent British film critic

and filmmaker Peter Wollen points away from these ideas. For example, in an

early assertion, Wollen claimed that the minimalist palette employed in the

British Structural/Materialist aesthetic, with the emphasis upon material and

essentialist film practice as the true subject of a film (a carry over from the

minimalist and essentialist concerns of painting in the sixties), was too

reductive to be anything but an exercise in "extreme purism," with an over

emphasis upon the visual field of the picture track. Wollen further added that,

the idea of cinema as a multiple system "employing more than one channel, more than one sensory medium…affinities with almost all the other arts," should be the basis of experimental practice, which engenders a cross fertilization of these systems.[23]

In hindsight, Wollen's criticism is appealing in it's promotion of greater diversity of form, however at the time, his view rested upon the understanding that visuality and representation go hand in hand.  As a result, he failed to recognize the potential of the visual field, also as a source of sensory and qualitative data in these films, and elements, which potentially contribute to non-representational or performative documentary practice.[24]  In fact, Wollen's conception of British Structural/Materialist films, which at the time covered the early formative period of its development including early materialist films by Le Grice and Gidal, points to a longstanding tendency that continues into the present, which is to view the tradition as a whole, as a set of formal strategies which include: extended duration, time lapse, superimpositions and "direct filmmaking."[25]  In this regard, these film strategies serve to foreground the material base of film as the true subject of a film, and as such, stand as a form of counter film practice, which decodes and deconstructs dominant cinema and its hidden techniques of representation.   As will become apparent, Le Grice's *Little Dog For Roger* (1967) and Gidal's *Room Film* (1973), to name two formative examples of early British Structural/Materialist film, may alternatively be argued to be the products of two very different methods of materialist film practice, which engage the viewer in a more direct and perceptual experience of the audio visual phenomena of the film.  As Gidal

puts it, "each film is a record (not a representation, not a reproduction) of it's own making…such a film is at once a viewing of a film and viewing the 'coming into presence' of the film…"[26]

In fact, these films may be argued to engage the viewer directly in a process of audio visual spectatorship, in which subject-object boundaries dissolve and become interdependent instead of oppositional, as is often required of the reflexive form.  In the experience of Le Grice and Gidal's films, the viewer is drawn in close to the presented reality on screen, rather than being asked to invalidate it, thereby creating the possibilities for intersubjective and affective routes to knowledge.  As an example of this non-representational documentary potential of early Structural/Materialist films, Gidal's *Room Film* can be said to be a document in the first person of the movements of the filmmaker through a very dark and obscurely defined room, as his subtle actions and presence unfolds and comes into being on the screen, through the deployment of an embodied camera technique.  The filmmaker's subjective movements and control of the camera are also mediated in this situation by ambivalent and more intentional actions, and are simultaneously experienced by the viewer, as a struggle with and against the filmmaker's subjective camera, which progresses into a feeling of anxious struggle.  Similar to *Room Film*, Le Grice's *Little Dog For Roger* can also be argued to engender affective documentary knowledge through spectatorship. This is possible in the way that the fragmentary historical images of a home movie of a woman, a boy and a pet dog, are re-observed by the artist and re-composed through different frame rates and compositions.  These images,

and sounds are optically re-printed such that, the perceptual spectatorship of the audio-visual phenomena unfolding, results in the experience of a gestural play of images and sounds across the screen, which engenders the sensations of childhood play.  In fact, encountering these images and sounds in movement, and the overall sense of rhythm that is experienced and embodied through the body's sensory apparatus, may be said to contribute to a larger sense of nostalgia, and the loss and recovery of the experiences of one's own past childhood.

In light of the oversight, of the phenomenal and documentary potential of key films in the tradition of early Structural/Materialist films, the first proposition this dissertation enters into in Chapter Two, is that the anti-illusionist, anti-narrative, materialist film practices developed by Malcolm Le Grice and Peter Gidal, in the films *Little Dog For Roger* and *Room Film,* are in fact the source of what makes these films latent forms of non-representational documentary practice in their own right.  This is because these films have the potential to engender affective knowledge relating to moods, embodied physical memories and the sense of contrary relations in the viewing subject. They also have the potential to implicate the viewer within the perceived audio-visual sonic and cinematic reality, and expand the viewer's sense of social space beyond the audio-visual display presented on screen.  Two phenomenological frameworks which seem especially useful for a theoretical reassessment of early Structural/Materialist films, and a re-consideration of their phenomenal and non-representational documentary potential include: the French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of our

perceptions as a source of nascent logos, as theorized in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), and the German existential and phenomenological philosopher Martin Heidegger's theory of *Dasein's* everyday being in the world, in *Being in Time* (1927)*.*  For example, Merleau-Ponty conceives of the body as a perceptual apparatus, which is interconnected with the everyday environment, becoming an innate source of embodied knowledge.  In this way memories and moods such as nostalgia, are not conjured as a result of conjuring images of the past within ones mind, but instead, engendered in the body as the lived experience of familiar sensations and perceptions that we have already experienced.  As example, in *Little Dog For Roger*, Le Grice can be said to conjure the phenomena of an embodied archive of sensory and affective experiences of childhood play, that are re-experienced through the perceptual experience of Le Grice's gestural techniques of re-observing, re-composing and the optical printing of a home movie.[27]

In Heidegger's theory of "being in time," Heidegger proposes that a "Dasein," or essentially, a social subject, is a spatial entity whose everyday way of being in the world is defined by living between an individualized and collective status quo existence.  This in turn necessitates an existential and immanent process of disclosure, through the assimilation of moods, or states of being such as anxiousness and anxiety.  Anxiety according to Heidegger is a primal mood, which serves to guide a Dasein or a social subject towards an authentic existence in the world, when this mood is intuitively/actively acknowledged and reflected upon.  Correspondingly, Gidal's *Room Film* may also be said to encourage a similar process of disclosure in the viewer.

Moreover, this process may be said to be engendered by Gidal's materialist method of film, which creates an alternating sense of struggling with and against the filmmaker's subjectivity, through the perception of screen surface and screen depth, and in the effort to actualize and enact our own subjectivity within the parameters of the experience of the film which Gidal subsequently engineers through various effects.  In fact, the experience of struggle in viewing *Room Film*, may even be argued to progress into a sense of anxious struggle, which leads to a contemplation of one's own spatiality and sense of place in the world, similar to Heidegger's theory of how Dasein or a social subject experiences his/her everyday being in the world.  Both *Little Dog For Roger* and *Room Film*, may therefore be argued to be documentary in method in that, the phenomenal effect of these films promotes a form of spectatorship, which positions the viewer within the horizons of knowledge of the past, the present and future possibility.

The re-assessment of materialist methods of practice and the spectatorship of key films by Le Grice and Gidal, serves as a base for the proposition made in Chapter three, which is that the phenomenal and documentary potential of these methods are also overlooked, in terms of a tendency to bring forward and re-formulate these artists' methods, as reflexive practices, which inevitably counteract the phenomenal, embodied and existential spectatorship, and subsequent routes to non-representational knowledge, which Le Grice and Gidal's earlier methods promote.  This can be evidenced in the urban documentary films of a second wave of Structural/Materialist film practitioners, as well as the films of recent

Structural/Materialist documentarians who include British artist filmmakers: John Smith, Brad Butler & Karen Mirza, and William Raban.  For example: in Smith's films, a reflexive counter documentary approach manifests in adopting Gidal's concern for equivalence in time and film, through the use extended and unedited takes.  Yet, this Structural/Materialist method is employed in conjunction with the technique of an unreliable narrator, whose virtual presence in the text discloses an increasingly improbable narrative, which discredits his direct relationship to the urban spaces presented on screen through the actuality of the extended takes.  As a result, the viewer disconnects from the phenomenal experience of the urban images and sounds, in order to interrogate the authorial claims to truth that the filmmaker's performance draws attention to.

Mirza and Butler also employ Structural/Materialist film techniques including extended and unedited durations, as well as the method of optically re-processing and printing film.  Similar to Smith, they also deploy the soundtrack as a disruptive device, in terms of presenting a bricolage of conflicting voices and narratives overlaying the visual content, which constantly disrupts the ability of the viewer to phenomenally engage in the space, time and continuity of the presented content.  Additionally, in Raban's urban documentary films, modifications to the original methods of practice of Le Grice and Gidal include: the adoption of a fixed frame viewpoint, and the adoption of a long lens perspective, which has the effect of immersing the viewer voyeuristically in space (urban space) as the space unfolds.   Yet as a counter to this, Raban also applies the disruptive technique of turning the

viewer's gaze back onto himself/herself, through the returned looks back into the camera of social subjects in space, who catch the camera out and reveal the filmmaker's technique of hiding and revealing the camera in social space. As a result of the combination of these techniques, a reflexive and pragmatic form of spectatorship results, in which the viewer is compelled to interrogate the idea of their own condition as a spectator viewing an authored reality, as well as being asked at the same time, to synthesize meaning through a technique of intellectual montage, based upon the actuality of the audio-visual urban content, which unfolds from one scene to the next.

The current tendency for a reflexive practice of urban documentary, stemming from the tradition of Structural/Materialist films, represents a strategic way of deploying the urban and everyday content before the camera, in order to bring forth an anti-illusionist polemic that critically engages with the truth claims that are more generally associated with documentary making and representational practice. While important, there is still the question of how an urban documentary practice might also be shaped, in terms of deploying Le Grice and Gidal's gestural methods of practice, as methods for interpreting the filmmaker's actual relations to the urban and everyday environment. How for example, might Gidal's ambivalent and controlling camera method, and Le Grice's observational and gestural re-compositions of moving images and sounds, be deployed as methods for encountering, documenting and interpreting the filmmaker's existential immersion in urban and everyday space? Just as importantly, how might these methods be synthesized for new media practice such as digital video, in order to relay knowledge, whether

presenting the filmmaker's relations in space, or even possibly an urban and everyday condition?

The potential of Le Grice and Gidal's gestural methods of practice for a critical practice of urban documentary becomes more obvious, in Chapter four, when compared to the French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre's theory of space and rhythmanalytical method for decoding space, since both approaches promote the direct experience of phenomena, from a first person or individual point of view, while also acknowledging a more objective ground from which to situate and consolidate such experiences. For example, critical to both Le Grice and Gidal's methods of practice, and methods of recent Structural/Materialist documentarians in fact, is the dependence upon the interplay of subjective and objective experiences for the viewer. For this reason, Gidal and Le Grice's films are not experienced solely in terms of sensation and sensory experience, since their methods of practice create an objective space through the experience of momentary gaps, in which the viewer's subjectivity emerges into conscious and objective awareness, and the opportunity to consolidate the experiences of the phenomena of the audio-visual moving images. This is also the case in the films of recent Structural/Materialist documentarians, however these filmmaker's open up objective spaces in their films, in order to encourage the viewer to critically reflect upon the truth and authority claims embedded in the practices of the filmmaker, rather than the filmmaker's lived relations in urban and everyday space.

The actual idea of documenting the filmmaker's immersion in urban

and everyday space therefore suggests that the urban and the everyday is not only a matter of observing and representing a location, but also of conveying a set of relations and experiences in urban and everyday life. These might be characterized as chance encounters, the relations of family, the lived and performed, or the taken for granted, over-rationalized structures in day-to-day routines. Chapter 4 therefore begins with the idea of an urban documentary practice as might be conceived, if the urban and the everyday were considered in terms of the filmmaker being interconnected with his/her environment. For the French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre, the integration of subjective and objective experiences in an analysis of such relations is imperative, for the formulation of knowledge of urban and everyday reality. For example, in *The Production of Space* (1974), Lefebvre theorizes that space, instead of being associated with a bifurcation of subjects and objects, as is the case with a classical container paradigm into which objects are placed, can alternatively be conceived of as, an infinite number of social spaces which are in constant motion and interaction. Whether produced by nature or society, these social spaces exist in great rhythms, and movements similar to the analogy of hydrodynamics and liquids in movement. For Lefebvre, the urban and the everyday form part of the larger problematic of simply "space."[28]

Moreover, since space is dynamic, rather than static, Lefebvre also theorizes that social subjects are better understood as the user - inhabitants of space, who live, and practice spatial relations, through a continual process of deciphering and enlightenment, or a continual interplay of subjective and

objective relations.[29]  Therefore, any attempt at documenting or analyzing

space in terms of the filmmaker's immersion in space or his/her existential

relations to space, must begin to address this interplay of subjectivity.

Furthermore, in order to "decode space," subjectively and objectively,

Lefebvre calls for a rhythmic method, which incorporates the body subjectively

and objectively.  For example, in *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday*

*Life* (2004), Lefebvre writes that the "rhythm analyst" must be able to give

oneself over to, and to be grasped by a rhythm, but also at the same time to

be able to get outside of a rhythm, in order an analyze it. [30]  As Lefebvre,

further theorizes, such methods are to be found in the practice of music and

art. [31]

Taking a closer look at the gestural practices of Le Grice and Gidal's

methods of film in relation to Lefebvre's theory of space, Chapter 4 further

proposes that, these artists' methods of practice are also rhythmic, in terms of

engendering an interplay of subjective and objective experiences for the

viewer, and that this quality is dependent upon on each artist's ability to

inscribe in the space and time of their films through gestural movements,

timing and the spacing of sounds and images, an alternating sense of real

and imaginary space, which is not unlike what Lefebvre proposes in terms of

the phenomena of space, and our relations within space.  For example, Le

Grice's method of re-observing and re-composing the images of the filmstrip

through optical printing, engenders not only a visual experience for the viewer,

but also an audio experiences as well, which results in embodying and

incorporating the sensations of skipping and skidding and coming to a halt,

which correlate to the embodied memories of one's own past experiences of childhood play.   Moreover, this experience is only possible, with the additional experience of audio-visual gaps, since these moments arguably function as moments of slippage between subjective and objective awareness, and therefore create a space in which to consolidate the embodied and subjective experiences of the audio-visual phenomena.  These moments of slippage therefore serve to expand the temporal and historical dimensions of the experience of these films beyond pure sensation in the here and now.

In the spectatorship of Gidal's *Room Film*, a similar interplay of subjectivity and objectivity can also be observed, which is enacted through a gestural method of hand held camerawork that alternates the viewer's experiences between three perspectives.  For example, the first perspective offers a sense of the filmmaker's exertion of control over the camera's movements, which are subsequently incorporated by the viewer through perceptual spectatorship.  The second perspective entails a more ambivalent and less controlled chance action in the camerawork, which is also incorporated by the viewer, in the way of giving oneself over to the feeling of accompanying the camera's movements.  These alternating experiences, also engender a sense of struggle in the viewer since the experience of these two perspectives, tends engender a struggle with and against the filmmaker's subjectivity.  Arguably, it is in the moments of slippage or blankness in the audio-visual track, similar to the audio-visual gaps experienced in Le Grice's film in which we hear the sound effects of the actual projection, that the viewer is brought into a more objective awareness of their own presence in watching

the film, and also, a moment or opportunity for consolidation and expansion beyond the present act of struggling, to engage in the problem of an existential struggle in and of itself.  In other words, to ask oneself the question – why am I struggling?

The idea that it is through the perception of a combination of audio and visual phenomena in movement in both Le Grice and Gidal's films, which creates the subjective and objective interplay of experiences, which in turn engenders affective knowledge and embodied memories for the viewer, also correlates to the sound theory of French experimental sound practitioner and theorist Michel Chion in his work *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (1994). According to Chion, the audio track in a film relates to the moving images spatially, such that together the two elements come together as an interplay of subjective and objective experiences for the viewer, such that, the possibilities for meaning encompass both real and imaginary spheres.[32]   Yet these spatial and rhythmic possibilities of audio-visual moving images, is arguably not specific to film, since the phenomena of audio-visual images in movement, can also be experienced through a whole host of new media screens including digital video. This raises the question of how these artists' analog methods of film practice, might also be located in a medium such as digital video, and also serve as methods for decoding or interpreting urban space and the everyday, as an urban documentary practice.  Moreover, in Lefebvrian terms, how these methods might be deployed for the rhythmanalysis of the user-inhabitants subjective and objective relations to space?

The final part of Chapter 4 details an alternate rhythm analytical and

interpretive approach to an urban documentary practice, based upon the

Structural/Materialist methods of film of Le Grice and Gidal.  A study of the

spatial relations of three urban locations throughout Brighton and London was

undertaken from 2005 – 2010, employing digital video, digital editing and

compositing techniques, as well as a technique of close immersive

observation.  The first study was set on the London Underground in 2005, and

coincidentally overlapped with the terrorist bombings of the tube during the

summer.  This was meant to be the primary location of study for the practice

based PhD, but because of these events, it became necessary to find an

alternate location for study.  Nevertheless, one study was made in this

location during that period. The second location chosen for study included an

urban location in the neighbourhood of Kemptown called Dorset Gardens in

Brighton.  The perspectives chosen included a view overlooking a derelict

hidden walled terraced gardens and a view facing the main street overlooking

a public park (Rainbow Park).

Each study began with close observations through camerawork paying

attention to the Structural/Materialist concern for the equivalence of time and

duration, therefore allowing for the actuality of events and their durations to

unfold in real time.  In the study of London Underground, the method of

practice entailed working with Gidal's method of ambivalent and controlled

camera work, as an immersive observational practice, at once controlled and

chance like, brought into relation with the ways in which the architectural form

and structure of the transit space also organizes the transit users movements

throughout these spaces.  This study further engaged in a re-processing of

the images and sounds captured on video, through stages of analysis and re-processing of the captured footage, through the application of digital compositing techniques such as reduced rates of speed and looping in both the audio and visual tracks. This served to further isolate and magnify certain experiences and bring others to light including moods as well as create the auditory gaps in order to alternate between subjective and objective experiences for the viewer.

A method of close observation was also followed in the rhythmanalysis of the second location, also staying true to actual duration of events but from the perspective of a fixed frame camera position, allowing the camera to pivot on the tripod head, in order to follow from one naturally occurring event to another in the context of this setting. I also aimed in this camera setup for a level of transparency and participation, by adopting a camera perspective of being simultaneously inside and outside of the space, through the placement of the camera within the perimeters of the open window. Although the camera was fixed to a tripod, I often moved this apparatus in and around the ledge of the window. This allowed for a degree of disclosure of the camera position for anyone within the landscape to see and therefore interact with, which actually occurred in the study of the terraced garden setting. The weaving of subjective and objective relations in this film occurred primarily through alternating rates of speed between the audio and visual tracks, alternations between actuality of sound and treated sound and music. A slowing down to stillness effect, and the use of the still frame, also provided momentary spaces of rest or the gaps for more objective awareness to open up.

In the third setting, the camera was placed inside the window frame, and set-up to capture the projected audio-and visual phenomena, which emanated from the street and through the window into the interior setting. This was made possible in terms of the environmental conditions on this day, which coincided with the summer solstice, and included intense sunshine, and wind, creating a projection of solar images, as an equivalence of the outside reality entering into the interior space along with the sounds, which drifted through the window. The decision to not film out of the window in this setting was made, since it was difficult to make the camera's presence more obvious and transparent from the perspective of passers by on the street below the window.  Therefore, the immersive sensibility of this film is emphasized through the audio track in relation to visual correspondences to the natural occurrences at street level being projected into the interior space.  In each of these studies, another level of observational practice was also performed at the stage of editing the footage. In this case, it was not possible to edit film in the way of Le Grice's method of optical printing.  However, it was similarly possible to re-process the captured footage in another sort of way, in terms of working on the captured footage on a timeline and working into the time line, to reconfigure the timing and frame rates of the footage, and to loop sections of the captured images, or even create stop frame effects.  It was also possible to reverse the images - which was the case in the Underground study, as a way of magnifying the sense of apprehension in being in and moving through this space during this time period.

The weaving of subjective and objective relations in this film also occur

between sound and visual track in a similar way to the previous study, however the momentary objective gaps in this film, are created through more transitional moments in allowing the images to cut to black along with the sound.   Moreover, since the audio and visual timelines in digital editing can be linked or disconnected at any point on the overall timeline, it was therefore also possible to isolate, alter or magnify, as well as weave the sounds and images from both timelines together, in order to alternate between actual and more abstract and imaginary sounds.  Moreover, these were not random actions, but prompted by the occurrences within each setting, in relation to the physical and psychological experiences of being in a certain time and place.

As each study drew to a natural conclusion, it became possible to interpret an underlying narrative in each of these contexts.  For example, in the Underground setting, this amounted to a sense of the contradictory moods of the time during the period of the terrorist attacks, in terms of a more official and government position of carrying on as usual, to the sense of anxiety felt on a more personal level.  In effect this study documented a sense of trauma. In the case of the study of the dilapidated terraced gardens, this became a contradictory narrative about the different codes of looking in a seemingly innocuous space - from surveillance and unsanctioned looking, to looking as creative or restorative act, therefore becoming a document about urban alienation.  In the study overlooking the park on Dorset Gardens, the narrative, which unfolded, became one of social divisions and desolation amidst a seemingly vibrant and cohesive neighbourhood, which also amounted to an interpretive documentary study of urban alienation.

In summary, the contribution that this PhD seeks to make is theoretical and methodological. For example, this PhD begins with a theoretical re-consideration of formative films by Le Grice and Gidal in the tradition of British Structural/Materialist films, aiming to fill a gap in the literature, in addressing the spectatorship of these films or how these films are actually experienced by the viewer. This is accomplished through an analysis of films employing phenomenological frameworks and theories of subjectivity not previously applied to these films, in order to better understand how these artists' methods of practice engender subjective and objective responses in the viewer. Subjective and affective responses are experiences not usually subscribed to in this genre, or acknowledged more commonly in the literature. As a result, new dimensions and possibilities for the aesthetic practice of audio-visual moving images such as documentary making, based on this avant-garde tradition of film become apparent. In addition, the possibilities for expanding the original aesthetic into other mediums of practice also becomes apparent, since one finding is, that the affective and emotional experiences which these films engender, are not entirely dependent upon the specificity of film, but rather, upon the observational and gestural practices of these artists, which are in theory, equally possible in new media and digital moving image formats such as digital video.

Furthermore, in the identification and analysis of films, which follow in the tradition of British Structural/Materialist films, what also becomes apparent is how artists in the recent past and more recently, have more predominantly developed the original aesthetic practices of the two formative filmmakers

towards documentary filmmaking, and especially a form reflexive urban documentary practice, which challenges the truth claims normally associated with documentary representation.  In making this identification, it also becomes apparent that little work has been made in terms of developing the phenomenal, affective and non-representational potentiality of Le Grice and Gidal's earlier methods, for a more interpretive based documentary approach. This dissertation therefore argues that Le Grice and Gidal's methods can also serve as a base for an equally important form of documentary making, or even a form or urban research, which addresses the experiential and lived dimensions of urban and everyday life.  This is important for example, in the documentation of memories, moods and affect, related to conflicts and traumatic events, or the overlooked and alienating experiences of everyday life in cities, which are important lived experiences to be acknowledged and critically reflected upon, in the progress of any egalitarian society.  As for the possibilities of rhythm analysis, documentary making and the interpretation of space, through a range of new media options including: mobile phones, tablet/desktop/laptop computers, or multi-screen environments and projections in urban settings?  This requires further study and perhaps the adoption of a more comparative approach to media practice, which asks – what can be learned, applied, expanded upon or even re-invented and combined in practice, from one medium to the next?

**Chapter 2 – The Phenomenological and Documentary Potential of Early British Structural/Materialist films**

**2.1 Counter Cinema Polemics and Practice in Early British Structural/Materialist films**

The avant-garde, co-op film tradition of Structural Materialist film came to prominence in Britain in the late sixties and early seventies through the theoretical writings and films of two of its formative practitioners Malcolm Le Grice and Peter Gidal.   According to Gidal, the formative period of the tradition covered a period of roughly ten years from 1966-76, "emanating from the London Film-makers Co-operative, " and distinguished by the pursuit of "the empirical 'real,' " the focus of which was upon non-representational and materialist film practices, which foregrounded the procedures and processes of making a film; thereby involving the spectator's subjectivity, as subject to the conditions of viewing a film.[33]  For Le Grice a "film as film" approach similarly meant, an emphasis upon the reality of the cinematic process and the treatment of film as material, to be transformed through such procedures as rephotography of the original filmstrip.[34]

Yet it seems that before the impact of materialist film practice could be fully registered, for example in terms of the spectator's subjectivity and the effects of perceptual and phenomenal spectatorship for the viewer's actual experience of the film, the tradition was subsequently relegated to an obscure corner of purist and formalist film practice.  At least this seemed to be the

case in1975, when the eminent British film theorist Peter Wollen, wrote in an article entitled *The Two Avant-Gardes*, that the minimalist palette employed in the British Structural/Materialist aesthetic, with the emphasis upon material and essentialist film practice as the true subject of a film, was too reductive to be anything but an exercise in "extreme purism," with an over emphasis upon the visual field of the picture track.  Wollen further added that, the idea of cinema as a multiple system "employing more than one channel, more than one sensory medium…affinities with almost all the other arts," should be the basis of experimental practice which engenders a cross fertilization of these systems.[35]  In hindsight, Wollen's criticism could be viewed as worthy for it's promotion of greater diversity of form, coming at the time from a new approach to film, grounded in structural and semiotic analysis as part of a larger wave of French Structuralism, which made it's way into British films studies at the time, placing an emphasis upon the signs and signification of the representational elements and structures of cinema.[36]  However it should also be noted that his view suggests the understanding that the visual experience of film offers only empirical data.  In more recent theories of cinema spectatorship, Canadian Media theorist Laura Marks illustrates how this isn't necessarily the case, in theorizing that moving images whether in film or video, can also be experienced visually, but also perceptually, through haptic spectatorship.  For example, perceptual and haptic spectatorship involves the experience of moving images in a different way to the spectatorship of optical moving images, which promote clarity and resolution.  This is because, haptic cinema tends to promote a sensory and tactile

spectatorship, in foregrounding film grain and/or video decay video over resolution, in which the eye tends to traveling across and almost touch the screen as a texture, rather than to be submerged within the illusionistic depths or realism of optical images.  As a result, haptic images often become the building blocks for engendering qualitative data and experiences for the viewer, which can lead to the incorporation of affective knowledge such as, feelings of dissociation, or the embodiment of memories.[37]

Soon after Wollen's critical piece appeared, which at the time covered the early formative period of Structural Materialist films, including the early materialist films by Le Grice and Gidal, the conceptualization of a Structural and/or Materialist film by British filmmakers could be observed to adopt a decidedly anti-illusionist counter cinema polemic, in relation to a more commercial narrative and therefore dominant cinema, thereby circumventing the vacuous label of an essentialist film practice.  As Gidal wrote in 1976, in setting out a definition for the practice of a Structural Film grounded in materialist film practice: "Narrative is an illusionistic procedure, manipulatory, mystificatory, repressive."[38] Le Grice also came to similar conclusions about the practice of Structural and/Materialist film, when he concluded that the aesthetic entailed such considerations as "form before expression," a "recognition of the special conventions and materials of the medium," a "shift away from romantic individualism," in order to follow an "ethic opposing the subjugation of the spectator to the personality of the artist," in addition to opposing "subjugation to the authority of the state or corporate cinema."[39]

From it's early beginnings, the practice of Structural/Materialist film

went on to embrace and integrate a number of other forms including narrative and documentary in the succeeding generations of film practitioners, many of whom were fellow co-op filmmakers and students of the two pioneering artists,[40] and for the most part, the heated discourse surrounding the aesthetic in the early years, observably receded from view.  Since then, a recent surge of interest in British artists' film and video has brought some of the formative films and the tradition of Structural/Materialist film back into the spotlight.  This can be evidenced by such exhibitions as *A Century of Artists' Film in Britain* (2003-4), a survey exhibition at the Tate Britain of film and video spanning the history of moving image in Britain from its beginnings to the present, which also included a program of Structural films.  There was also an international traveling exhibition *Shoot Shoot Shoot* (2002), which featured a retrospective of British avant-garde films of the late 60's and early 70's, inaugurated at the Tate Modern, in London, and culminating in a DVD publication with curatorial notes and essay in 2006.  In addition, a number of book publications have also ensued recently, which address the formative period of Structural Materialist films to varying degrees, including: *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age* (Malcolm Le Grice, 2001), *Film Art Phenomena* (Nicky Hamlyn, 2003), *Experimental Film and Video* (Jackie Hatfield, 2006), *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain* (David Curtis, 2007) and *A History of Experimental Film and Video* (A.L. Rees, 1999 & 2011).

Yet surprisingly, little has been written about the formative period of the tradition of Structural Materialist films within this recent flourish of attention, in ways which otherwise reinforce a tendency to view the tradition as a whole, as

a set of unique formal strategies, which function to foreground the material

base of film as the true subject of a film.  In other words, standing more often

than not, as an anti-illusionist counter film practice, which serves the means

for decoding and deconstructing dominant cinema, and its hidden techniques

of representation.  Correspondingly, this is a similar observation to the one,

which the Swedish film theorist Sundholm also makes.[41]  For example, Le

Grice himself has attributed the nostalgic effect of his film *Little Dog For Roger*

(1967), to the personal nature of the elements of the home movie, which

comprises the film, as the source of nostalgia in the film,[42] thus inferring that

the nostalgic emotion generated through spectatorship of the film, is not a

result of the phenomenal experience of materialist film practice and its

perceptual images, but rather of a more personal nature, which in any event

seems to be designated as secondary to the empirical reality of the film-strip

and its images. A similar view is also confirmed in the curatorial program

notes for the DVD *Shoot Shoot Shoot* (2006).  As the notes describe of Le

Grice's film:  "Little Dog For Roger is, in essence, a Materialist project – an

exploration of the physical or visual possibilities available to the filmmaker –

but because of the personal nature of its raw footage, it has now taken on a

nostalgic quality."[43]

As this chapter will argue, a key to understanding the nostalgic

sensibility of *Little Dog For Roger* begins with an understanding of Le Grice's

materialist approach to film, which may be argued to be, not in fact as Wollen

indicated, an exercise in reduction and minimalist film practice grounded in the

minimalist and conceptual art movements of the 60's, but rather, drew from

examples of modernist avant-garde film, in the development of a method of

materialist film practice.  This is evident for example in comparing Le Grice's

method of film practice for *Little Dog For Roger*, to the anti-illusionist counter

cinema methods of film deployed by the Russian Constructivist filmmaker

Dziga Vertov, in his modernist documentary film *Man With a Movie Camera*

(1929), and especially in relation to Vertov's technique of participatory,

observational, documentary practice.  Additionally, one way of exploring the

phenomenal effect of Le Grice's materialist film practice as the source of the

nostalgic sensibility or emotion which results in viewing the film, can also be

realized through an application of the French phenomenological philosopher

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea that our memories are a result of the qualities in

the object which we recognize in ourselves, as relived in their temporal

setting.  For example, as Merleau-Ponty asserts:

> When we come back to phenomena we find, as a basic layer of
> experience, a whole already pregnant with an irreducible meaning: not
> sensations with gaps between them, into which memories may be
> supposed to slip, but the features, the layout of a landscape or a word,
> in spontaneous accord with the intentions of the moment, as with
> earlier experience.[44]

In this way, Merleau-Ponty's theory suggests that the emotional effect

of nostalgia experienced in viewing *Little Dog For Roger*, is actually the result

of a seemingly arbitrary, yet personal, intersubjective and historical set of

phenomenal relations at work.  This can be evidenced for example, in the way

that the different gestural and rhythmic movements sensed and experienced

through viewing the film, and experienced in the sonic elements such as the

application of a musical soundtrack, also seem to correspond to similar

physical and playful experiences in childhood, which subsequently engage the

viewer in reliving and embodying these experiences to nostalgic affect.

Another formative film in the early tradition of Structural/Materialist films,

which is also more commonly viewed as an example of anti-illusionistic

counter cinema is Peter Gidal's *Room Film* (1973). Simply described *Room*

*Film* is a film, seemingly composed of a series of single long duration takes

over the course of about fifty minutes, which trace the barely perceptible

grainy outlines and dimensions of a dimly lit room and its contents, through a

first person hand held camera perspective.  Recent writings which affirm the

film's counter cinema, film as film status include, Hamlyn's recent analysis of

the film, which ascribes the function of *Room Film's* pared down aesthetics

and the sense of struggle which ensues with the experience of viewing the

film, to a subversion of dominant representational cinema's goal of

completeness, with such assertions as:

> But Gidal's project is equally a critique of film's supposed efficacy in
> representing three-dimensional space convincingly or exhaustively.
> Film is turned against itself, becomes its own worst enemy in its
> demonstrable inability here to represent anything adequately (that it
> appears to be able to do so is an illusion).  But if it could, it would
> render itself redundant, for what would be the point of a perfect
> simulacrum of reality, other than to delude or divert?[45]

However, in relegating the function of *Room Film* 's aesthetic method to

that of a critique of representational practice, Hamlyn neatly bypasses the

problem of how the film is actually experienced by the viewer and what kind of

knowledge this experience might engender through spectatorship, especially

in relation to the sense of struggle, which builds throughout the experience of viewing the perceptual phenomena of the film.  In other words, how for example, the sense of limited movements and constraint, which the filmmaker's first person camera subjects the viewer to, becomes embodied and enacted by the viewer as an actual struggle, and an aesthetic and potentially meaningful experience in and of itself.   As this chapter will also argue, another way of approaching the spectatorship and experience of *Room Film*, begins with an understanding of Gidal's materialist approach to film, which did in fact draw from minimalist art of the 60's as Wollen argued, but primarily in relation to the Structural films of American artist Andy Warhol, and films such as *Blow Job*  (1967), but not in the way of reducing the film to it's essential components in order to reduce the cinematic experience for the viewer, as implied by Wollen's early criticism of British Structural/Materialist films,  or, in order to make a counter cinema statement as Hamlyn suggests, but rather, as a way to expand the viewer's subjectivity in order to precipitate what Gidal refers to as a mental experience of film, but for all purposes may be argued to be an existential non representational experience  beyond the screen. This is evident for example in the way that Gidal may be said adopt Warhol's idea of a documentary performance unfolding in time, while revising aspects of Warhol's method including the fixed frame camera, employing instead a hand held camera, and minimizing and obscuring the content.

From a phenomenological perspective, one way of exploring the sense of struggle that is engendered in the spectatorship of *Room Film*, as an aesthetic and a potentially meaningful experience in and of itself, can be

realized through a application of the German phenomenological philosopher

Martin Heidegger's theory of Dasein's – a being, or human being's everyday

being.  For example, in his phenomenological study *Being in Time* (1927),

Heidegger (1889-1976), proposes that moods are the primary way in which

*Dasein* comes to know in a visceral way, his/her state of mind and being in

the everyday, and therefore having a mood or finding oneself in a mood, may

be thought of as a form of disclosure.  As Heidegger says: "A mood makes

manifest  'how one is, and how one is faring' ["wie einem ist und wird"].

Moods therefore bring one into an awareness of one's own being or presence

in the world.[46]  In this respect, Heidegger asserts that moods are a function of

Dasein's everyday being, which is characterized by a being, which is always

in relation to each other, and because of this, enables Dasein to engage in a

phenomenological interpretation of his/her state of everydayness, which can

ultimately serve to guide a Dasein towards an authentic or meaningful

existence in his/her everyday lived experiences.  As Heidegger characterizes:

> The phenomena have long been well-known ontically under the terms "affects" and "feelings" and have always been under consideration in philosophy.  It is not an accident that the earliest systematic Interpretation of affects that has come down to us is not treated in the framework of 'psychology'.  Aristotle investigates the π á θ η in [affects] in the second book of his *Rhetoric.*  Contrary to the traditional orientation, according to which rhetoric is conceived as the kind of thing we 'learn in school', this work of Aristotle must be taken as the first systematic hermeneutic of the everydayness of Being with one another. Publicness as the kind of Being which belongs to the "they" (Cf. Section 27), not only has in general its own way of having a mood, but needs moods and 'makes' them for itself.  It is into such a mood and out of such a mood that the orator speaks.  He must understand the possibilities of moods in order to rouse them and guide them right.[47]

What Heidegger's theory suggests therefore, is that moods in the context of the experience of a film, especially a film which structures spectatorship in terms of the viewing subject as object of the film – such as the case with Gidal's *Room Film*, serves as a reflexive device, which facilitates an examination of one's state of being.  This also suggests that the sense of struggle and anxious struggle, experienced through the spectatorship of *Room Film* is not a meaningless effect, but perhaps the result of a similar existential process of engagement, which the perceptual spectatorship of the film sets in motion.  This can be evidenced for example, in the way that the experience of the film unfolds and alternates between perceptions of screen depth and screen surface, in which the viewer's subjective eye actually strives and struggles to actualize itself within the room in relation to the filmmaker's subjective lens.  In this way, the spectatorship of *Room Film* engenders a sense of struggle, which involves a coming to terms with a shared subjectivity between ourselves/the viewer, and that of the filmmaker's perspective, which manifests in the room of *Room Film*, as a felt presence, which the viewer embodies.  Moreover, the filmmaker's presence is at the same time paradoxically, an ambivalent presence and controlling presence, in that, within this structuring one has little control over how one may move in the room, and also how one may apprehend the contents of the room, except intersubjectively and through the filmmaker's perspective.   This feeling of struggling is subsequently broken by the perception of the screen surface (in the way that the reel of film naturally comes to an end and another reel transitions into frame), which becomes a feeling of being released from

the constraints of being in the room of Gidal's *Room Film*.  As the film

progresses, the repetition of these alterations of experience can be argued to

intensify, becoming something of an anxious struggle, the effect of which lasts

beyond the viewing of the film.

Similar to *Little Dog to Roger* then, *Room Film* may also be said to elicit

an emotional and meaningful response in the viewer, in the way that the

experience of the film has the potential to initiate an interpretation of one's

state of being, having the potential therefore, to engage the viewer in the

production of qualitative and even documentary knowledge relating to lived

everyday experience.

## 2.2 Encountering the Counter Cinema of Malcolm Le Grice's *Little Dog For Roger* (1967)

The anti-illusionist counter cinema polemic was in fact a similar

intention at the heart of the avant-garde documentary films of the Russian

avant-garde filmmaker Dziga Vertov, almost half a century before the advent

of British Structural/Materialist films.  *Vertov's Man With A Movie Camera*,

was in fact a source of interest for Le Grice's early formulations of materialist

film practice, and especially as the artist has described, Vertov's technique of

editing, and his ability to weave together a complicated web of relations and

forms into movement and patterns, based upon elements such as bodies in

motion and the machines and processes of industrialization, all with a

thematic consistency.[48]  For Vertov, commercial narrative films entailed a form

of anesthetization, with their portrayal of film dramas and idealized life. As

Vertov has often been cited as saying: "Three fourths of the human race is

stupefied by the opium of bourgeois film-dramas."[49] To this end, Vertov

theorized an anti-illusionist counter cinema approach, which strove to make

the viewer an active participant in the viewing process. In this regard, Vertov

theorized that the true subject and starting point of a film should be the

spontaneous documentation of everyday life. As Vertov describes of his

intentions:

> The actual theme of today's debate, "Art and Everyday Life," interests
> us less than the topic, say of "Everyday Life and the Organization of
> Everyday Life," since, I repeat, it's precisely in this latter area that we
> work and consider it proper to do so…To see and hear life, to note its
> turns and turning points, to catch the crunch of the old bones of
> everyday existence beneath the press of Revolution, to follow the
> growth of the young Soviet organism, to record and organize the
> individual characteristics of life's phenomena into a whole, an essence,
> a conclusion – this is our immediate objective.[50]

Furthermore, based on the intention to break with the illusions of

narrative films, Vertov went on to develop a participatory technique for

documenting everyday life through the *Kinok Observer* an extension of the

organizing principles of Vertov's *Kino Eye* film method. For example, in

Vertov's system, the *Kinok Observer* is responsible for the gathering of 'film

facts,' as a first level of organization of the raw material of reality into themes,

accomplished in part through the cameramen-observer who as Vertov

describes: "...closely watches the environment and the people around him and

tries to connect separate, isolated phenomena according to generalized or

distinctive characteristics"[51] In *Man With A Movie Camera* the *Kinok-Observer*

manifests as the cameraman Mikhail Kaufman, Vertov's brother, who puts himself for example in the precarious position of filming an ongoing train in the spirit of being an on the spot observer.  He is also simultaneously captured on film by another cameraman, as a testament to the *Kinok-Observer's* immersion in space.  As such, the *Kinok-Observer* is always on the scene and traveling through a composite of Russian cities in the thick of things, encountering and interacting with people at every turn in urban and everyday space.  There are even moments in *Man With A Move Camera*, where the camera is set aside and we see the cameraman emerge to take a dip at the beach, wherein he becomes an object in the film.

In another famous sequence can be seen the eye of the cameraman in a reverse shot through the camera lens, creating a reflexive moment where the viewer is made aware that they are watching a film.  In these ways Vertov's camera technique and method of participatory documentary observation, promoted not only the anti-illusionist counter cinema polemic in favouring actuality over drama, but just as importantly, can be said to energize the film with a sense of being there, which was passed on to the viewer.  As the American documentary theorist Michael Renov has recently commented: "Vertov stakes a claim for the entirety of the cinematic apparatus: its mission is to be an infinitely perfectible prosthesis to the human sensorium, on a mission inherited by Virtual Reality and other current technologies."[52] In this way *Man With A Movie Camera* may also be said to achieve at times the dissolution of subject – object positions, or what the French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty would describe

as an inherently intersubjective way of being in the world, conditioned by the

immersion of the body in lived time and space.

> Immersed in the visible by his body, itself visible, the see-er does not
> appropriate what he sees; he merely approaches it by looking, he
> opens himself to the world.  And on its side, this world of which he is a
> part is not *in itself*, or matter.[53]

Interestingly, the actual idea of documentary or documenting lived

experience, was an aspect of the theory and practice of Structural/Materialist

films, which was denied in the original polemics, and especially the writings of

Peter Gidal.  As Gidal asserted: "An avant-garde film defined by its

development towards increased materialism and materialist function does not

represent or document, anything."[54]  And while Le Grice was not against

Vertov's definition of materialist film practice, he conceived of it in a similar but

somewhat different way, with a focus towards foregrounding the experience of

a film and it's material conditions, as the true subject of a film, rather than the

urban and everyday reality of *Vertov's Man With A Movie Camera*.  In this

regard, Le Grice's own descriptions of the methods and intentions behind

*Little Dog For Roger*, is worth taking a look at, in order to better understand

the actual process involved in foregrounding film as film.  As Le Grice

describes of his materialist film process:

> Not only are the films concerned to include cinematic elements basic to
> it as a mechanism, like the sprocket holes, the celluloid support, and
> the emulsion as material, but also to include elements which are
> usually considered as error, fault or in cybernetic terms, noise.  This is
> particularly true of *Little Dog For Roger* and *Roh Film* which, as well as
> referring to the physical aspects of the film strip, also refer to material
> aspects like the act of splicing and to the functioning of the projector.

> For example, in *Little Dog For Roger* there is a long section of image slip, where the material is disengaged from the printer claw, deliberately simulating the skidding of film in the projector, deliberately simulating the skidding of film in the projector.
>
>  ….
>
> In Little Dog For Roger, much of the material was produced on a primitive printer converted from a projector, and long sections were produced by direct printing of an original 9·5 mm home movie onto 16mm in short strips under glass.  Sometimes the resultant 16mm strips were similarly treated in a second generation, creating an image of film-strip on film-strip – the film edges and sprockets of both generations interacting.[55]

Yet in terms of method, *Little Dog For Roger* may be said to have just as much in common with the technique of observation deployed by *Vertov in Man With A Movie Camera* and therefore a style of immersive practice, which can be said to be at the core of the nostalgic response engendered in viewing *Little Dog For Roger*.   As mentioned above, Vertov's *Kinok Observer* was that of a participant observer, resulting in a documentary mode of practice, which favours a sense of direct and immersive experience for both the filmmaker and the viewer.  Comparatively, Le Grice's film may be said to consist of two moments of observation – both equally immersive.  The first moment may be said to originate in a form, similar in method to that of the *Kinok Observer*, and the second instance originating with the artist as he closely observes the filmstrip.  In this respect, the actual filmstrip which *Little Dog For Roger* is composed of, is an actual fragment of a home movie which depicts the artist as a boy/his brother and mother playing with the pet dog in a bucolic setting, presumably originally filmed by another member of the family – this film clip in turn becomes a element of *Little Dog For Roger*, which is subsequently

reworked into a film of several minutes in length.

Because of the original observational practice which is part and parcel of the footage which accounts for *Little Dog For Roger* , the film can be argued to be first and foremost, the product of another individual's participatory observations and filming, since it is not difficult to imagine that the original cameraperson was a family member, intimately connected and physically immersed in the playfulness of the moment caught on film, between the figures of the dog, boy and mother.  This is not unlike Vertov's *Kinok Observer* who closely observes in *Man With A Movie Camera*, the sense of which may be apprehended in the way in which a hand held camera may be perceived to closely observe and follow the figures at play, a boy, mother and dog.  This is especially noticeable for example, in the repeating sequence of the film, in which a dog runs quickly across a footbridge and into the immediate scene in which the camera never seems to loose sight of the energetic little figure of the dog in the landscape.

However, in addition to this first layer of observations, another layer of observations can be sourced in Le Grice's own practice of observing and rephotographing the filmstrip.   In this instance, a second moment of participatory observation may be said to occur, in the form of re-observing the filmstrip, the act of which can be said to engender an equally immersive sensibility for the viewer, who inevitably detects the gestural movements and presence of the filmmaker, as he makes his observations and decisions which become actualized within the film.   In effect, this layer originates with the artist himself, as he re observes the filmstrip in motion, as a series of still and

moving images.  Evidence of this comes in the form of a sense of being present alongside the filmmaker through his observations and structuring of the film, actions which manifest as movements, which become perceptible on screen.

For example, a sense of the artist's handiwork in the film is apparent in the reoccurring sequence featuring the dog running over a footbridge and into the immediate scene. At first there is the sense of following closely on the tail of the dog, not only through the original cameraman's first observational trajectory, but also through Le Grice's camera view, which seems to entail a movement which follows the original cameras movements by panning slightly to the left and right, as he re films the dog on the filmstrip and the filmstrip in motion.  On the other hand, another possible explanation for this sensibility, may actually be a result of the artist simultaneously combining the motions of pulling the filmstrip left and right (a disengaging of the filmstrip from the printer claw), and photographing the actual filmstrip in movement through more of a fixed frame camera, as a way to observe and follow the original trajectory of the running dog on the filmstrip, more closely through the control of the filmstrip trajectory by hand.

In either case, whether it is through the sense of a second camera re-observing and re-photographing the filmstrip, or through a sense of the artists hand pulling/guiding the filmstrip left and right, and filming the moving filmstrip, or both actions combined, the resulting perception of movement of the filmstrip for the viewer to the left and right, seems to be a way of tracking the dog's original movements within the filmstrip through the artist's own

observations.  Moreover, this may be perceived as an intentional movement, which has a sense of force and direction.  This sensibility of the artist's presence within this movement is in fact most obviously felt, in the subsequent apprehension of a more forceful pulling to the right, which results in a skidding past and outdistancing of the running dog on the filmstrip, which results in a feeling of being ejected out of the cellular enclosures of the film frames, where we come to rest upon a short succession of freeze frames and frozen images of the dog suspended in mid air. At this point, the obviousness of the filmstrip as still image with it's sprocket holes, technical markings and edges, could be argued to be the moment where Le Grice makes his counter cinema statement of 'film as film,' by letting us know that it is a film that we are watching. However the way in which the sequence actually skids and skips, suggests a feeling of arrhythmia – a halting palpitation or an irregular beat, which instantaneously flips the image of the dog and the filmstrip upside down on a fourth syncopated beat.  In viewing this sequence, which repeats several times throughout the film, the sensation of arrhythmia and out-of-breath-ness, can be argued to be equal to, if not more pervasive than the rationalizing process of asserting that it is a film that we are watching as the sequence continually repeats throughout the film.

Another example of Le Grice's close observational technique, which testifies to a sense of the presence of the artist through his actions as sensed in the film, also occurs in the interrelations of music and moving image, which occur at the beginning and end of the primary sequence of loops featuring the dog running over the footbridge.  For example, at the beginning of this

sequence, a musical gesture breaks into a fragmentary, cheerful, whistling and skipping tune, such that we also feel like skipping along with the trailing rhythm.  These clips give the sense that the artist is almost physically repositioning the arm of a record player at different points on a record, serving to stop and restart the music at different points on a record – the effect of which is as if the words and music touch down and lift up and off the image like a kite or a stone being skipped across water. This sensibility is especially apparent between moments where the music seems to land on an instant of blackness, with the fragments of song cut off in mid sentence such with clips of song such as 'hand in hand,' 'they kiss and say good bye,' 'you in love, understand,' 'he sailed away to find the boat.'  In this way, these alternations of image and music and picture also build up a sense of anticipation, as we flash through the story of two lovers, only to dissipate as the loops become more established, and regular in their pattern.  The music re-emerges once again at the end of the sequence with a more contrary, slowed down and settled tone, seeming to fall more definitely upon the words and music 'until we meet again.'  The two elements together, one signifying in the actual literalness of the words as they are sung, and the other more qualitative, seem to be as much signals of the beginning or end of something in the literal sense, as they are felt through their movements, as an active form of presence in the film by the artist, who physically combines music, words and images into identifiable movements and sensations which pause, slow down, dissipate, skid and skip along and become heavy in feeling, resulting in a set of ubiquitous sensory experiences which any viewer might relate to.

As previously accounted, the nostalgic sense in *Little Dog For Roger*

has been attributed to the personal nature of the images themselves.  So for

example while Le Grice attributes the nostalgic effect of the film to the

personal nature of the images which is correct from his own perspective, there

still remains the question as to why the viewer would feel a sense of nostalgia

when the images are not sourced from the viewer's own past.  Another

explanation for this effect which has been offered by Sundholm, is that the

nostalgic mood and memory attributable to *Little Dog For Roger* is a result of

an overlapping sense of time in the film which is generated from the

juxtaposition of still and moving images or the contrast between "material

used and material mediated," which simulates how memory works, through an

alternating sense of being brought back and forward in time.  In this sense,

the effect of nostalgia is a result of the image of dog being revived in the

present through movement and moving image, juxtaposed with the frozen still

image of the dog which projects the temporal reality of the past and of loss. As

Sundholm offers:

> But the interaction between material used and material mediated
> makes the film unique; the repetition of slowing down, speeding up and
> stopping both picture and music do not only stress the material used
> but also the object that is displayed. For example, the looping of the
> shot of the dog running and the freezing of an image from the same
> shot, simulates memory at work where one image or memory collapses
> in time and becomes a condensed figure which has two temporalities;
> the present (the projection of the moving image) and the past (the still
> image, or photogram) and we may thus be brought both back and
> forward between the past and the actualized presence of the projected
> movement.
> ...

Malcolm Le Grice's technique of looping and repeating; of positing two

strips of film parallel to each other; of showing the sprocket holes and so forth, also strips the historical and personal material of its potentially nostalgic content. But that does not rule out the sense of a loss of what is shown, as for example with the image of the dog that is represented both as an object that has been lost and that is revived when the projection of the film is fully synchronized.[56]

Yet Sundholm's explanation still doesn't account for the fact that a sense of nostalgia implies a personal and subjective emotion, a sense of loss and the desire for recuperation of something from one's own past. Another possible explanation for the sense of Nostalgia engendered in viewing *Little Dog For Roger*, might be in considering how the phenomena of the perceptual and haptic images and sounds, which result from Le Grice's tactile re-observations of the film strip, are actually experienced and embodied by the viewer, and how this embodied experience might actually engender a sense of nostalgia as a personal emotion, which the viewer is subsequently invested in. In this case, another explanation which can be offered in terms of the nostalgic effect of the film, is that, the apprehension of the alternations of music and images in movement throughout a range of subtle variations within the film, or certain gestures, and actions felt in viewing the film, may also be said to approach and approximate the sensations and experiences of childhood. So for example, the looping sequence of the dog running over the bridge and into the foreground of the frame, which suggests the sensation of arrhythmia and out-of-breath-ness of running and skidding and of outdistancing oneself, feels like the sensations of childhood play. In this case, this qualitative experience, is not dependent upon alternations of stillness and movement of the image of the dog, as it is upon experiences, which we can

subjectively identify with in the experiences we have already had in our body, the element of sadness, loss and the desire to get back what is lost, or the sense of nostalgia coming into play, as these experiences are in a way the fleeting embodied reminders of the irreconcilable sensations of our own past childhood experiences.

In fact, the phenomenal effect or experience of this re-surfacing of past sensory experiences is characterized by Merleau-Ponty as a kind of inherent physical embodied archive, which we hold within us and take with us through our perceptions, which constantly accumulate and build up from our lived experiences.  As Merleau-Ponty characterizes, our perceptions are a source of *nascent logos* which originates within our being, as: "…a thought which recaptures itself as already possessing an ideal of truth (which at each moment it cannot wholly account for) and which is the horizon of its operations." In this way, perceived knowledge according to Merleau-Ponty is not formulated or rationalized by the intellect alone, but transpires at the level of the cogito, or within ones innate sense of existence, and moves through the experiences of thought that is aware of itself, which "feels itself rather than sees itself, which searches after clarity rather than possesses it, and which creates truth rather than finds it…" For this reason, Merleau-Ponty asserts that perceptual knowledge is different from knowledge derived from psychological conceptions or knowledge, which is a product of a rationalizing.  Perceptual knowledge is innate. As Merleau-Ponty describes: "…I somehow find myself thinking and I become aware of it.  In this sense I am certain that I am thinking this or that as well as being certain that I am simply thinking."[57]

*Little Dog For Roger* has more often than not been recognized as a work of anti-illusionist counter cinema. Yet from a phenomenological perspective, the film can also be regarded as a latent form of non-representational, historical and even documentary practice, in the way that *Little Dog For Roger* is also able to draw from an embedded, historical human archive of collective embodied experiences. Based on this understanding, one question which comes to mind is whether or not, the effect of the film is entirely dependent upon a notion of "film as film" or an essentialist film practice, as it is upon an embodied and felt sensibility, which is engendered through a variety of nuances in tones, gestures and movements, which practically speaking, might be equally possible through a variety of media and moving image formats. However, the best place to begin with a project of uncovering and engendering memory, is perhaps with the phenomena of lived experience. As Merleau-Ponty asserts:

> …Joy and sadness, vivacity and obtuseness are data of introspection, and when we invest landscapes or other people with these states, it is because we have observed in ourselves the coincidence between these internal perceptions and the external signs associated with them by the accidents of our own constitution.[58]

## 2.3 Being in Peter Gidal's *Room Film*

At the outset, Peter Gidal's early theorizations of Structural/Materialist film did not exactly acknowledge Warhol's films as influential to his practice, and as far as can be told, Gidal and Warhol seemed to be formulating their own theories and/or practice of film, distinct from one another in very different

environments between New York, and London.  For example, Gidal was a

student at the Royal College of Art in London from 1968-71, approximately

three years after *Blow Job's* first screenings in New York.  Gidal made *Room

Film* in 1973, and therefore, nearly 10 years after Warhol's *Blow Job*.  During

this period, Gidal was also active in the early development of the London

Filmmakers Cooperative, programming films for the LFMC cinema, and also

teaching film at the Royal College of Art in London, from the later seventies

onwards.  Similar to Le Grice, Gidal was also active in a community of art

practitioners grounded in a tradition of fine art, along with students and

instructors between film co-op, film lab, art/independent cinema, and

university/art academy.[59]  In this way, Gidal's environment would seem to be

very different to the spectacle of Warhol's *Factory*, and the figure of Warhol as

creative agent and auteur, with the colourful figures, dropping in off the street,

and the general atmosphere of happenings in New York's Greenwich

Village.[60]

Taking a step back however, Gidal did actually see *Blow Job* in one the

first screenings in New York, since he was also a student in Boston at the

time, just prior to moving on to London.  And while his recollections of his

younger self's interpretation and experience of the film, and of Warhol's art at

the time were premature by his own account, Gidal does acknowledge more

recently, the lasting impression of the experience of viewing the film in an

almost empty theatre,[61] and also perhaps the experience as a critical moment

in his early development as an artist, and the development of British

Structural/Materialist films.  The tradition of American Structural Films took off

in mid sixties around the same time as British Structural/Materialist films.

According to the American avant-garde film historian P.A. Sitney, the

American Structural film exhibited a distinctive set of formal qualities, which

were found in different permutations throughout the different films of the

American and Canadian filmmakers. Within this conception, Sitney also

acknowledged Andy Warhol's films of the sixties, as the precursor to this

tradition, in terms of the spatial and temporal strategies, which Warhol

conceived of in his films, and specifically in the way that Warhol made the

idea of time and stasis a central concern in his films. As Sitney characterized:

> The roots of the three or four defining characteristics of the structural film can be found in Warhol's early works. He made famous the fixed-frame in *Sleep* (1963), in which half a dozen shots are seen for over six hours. In order to attain that elongation, he used both loop printing of whole one hundred foot takes (2 ¾ minutes) and, in the end, the freezing of a still image of the sleepers head. That freeze process emphasizes the grain and flattens the image precisely as re photography off the screen does. The films he made immediately afterwards cling even more fiercely to the single unbudging perspective: *Eat* (1963), forty-five minutes of the eating of a mushroom; *Empire* (1964), eight continuous hours of the Empire State Building through the night into dawn; *Harlot* (1965), a seventy minute tableau vivant with off-screen commentary; *Beauty # 2* (1965), a bed scene with off-and on-screen speakers lasting seventy minutes. Soon afterwards, he developed the fixed tripod technique of reconciling stasis to camera movement. *In Poor Little Rich Girl: Party Sequence* (1965), Hedy (1966), and The Chelsea Girls (1966) he utilized camera movements, especially the zoom, from the pivot of an unmoving tripod without stopping the camera until the long roll had run out.[62]

In addition to the apperceptive technique of the returned gaze, and the

use of extended duration, another aspect which has also been more recently

attributed to Warhol's Structural films, is that they are also highly performative

and documentary. For example, according to the American avant-garde film

historian Callie Angell (1948-2010), Warhol began making films in the early

sixties, wherein *Blow Job* was one of Warhol's earliest films marking the

conceptual beginnings of a series of *Screen Test* films, made between 1964-

1966.  As Angell accounts, these informal and silent film portraits were made

of the individuals who wandered into Warhol's NY art studio the *Factory* on

different occasions. Moreover, Warhol formally organized these portraits

around the idea of using moving pictures to create an almost still image, and

in this respect, were made using a 16mm film format with the formal restriction

of 100ft reels of black and white silent film (about three minutes of film time

per reel).  Yet these film portraits were anything but straightforward, since, as

Angell has also observed, it was the psychological and physical constraints of

sitting still for long periods of time, often under extreme conditions of lighting,

which put extreme demands upon the sitter.   For example, when the films

were projected as silent films, and viewed at 16fps, a little slower than

standard speed, the effect and experience for the viewer, was that of an

enlargement of both voluntary and involuntary performances of the actors on

screen.[63]   In this way the actors' self- consciousness and eventual inability to

remain perfectly composed, becomes an unpretentious documentary

performance, which unfolds before the camera and viewer alike, as a form of

performance, which Warhol himself describes of as a blurring of the

boundaries between the real and something faked.[64]  Correspondingly,

Warhol's *Screen Tests*, and *Blow Job* also fit documentary theorist Anna

Jerslev's definition of performative documentary realism, in the way that these

films can be characterized as both, mediated and self-conscious, as well as

authentic in their unfolding.[65]

In Gidal's early writings on Warhol's films, it is apparent that Gidal also viewed the primary function of Warhol's early still films such as *Blow Job* to be the manipulation of time, but as a way to enlarge or elongate a filmed event. For example, the longer the film event took to unfold, the more transformational the film experience would become for the viewer, and therefore something to aspire to in filmmaking, in terms of following an anti-illusionist polemic through practice. Moreover, in looking to Warhol's films, Gidal concluded that this elongation could be accomplished in at least two ways. The first, being, a reduction of the actual frames of film projected per second, thereby slowing the action down on the screen. As Gidal observed of Warhol's technique: "With one flick of the switch, the sense of time is changed. An action although 'real' in that a real kiss is portrayed, becomes an event more minutely watchable, clinically observable, with the slowing down of time."[66] The second way of manipulating time, which Gidal observed in Warhol's films, was through the use of extended duration. Observably, Gidal was initially drawn to Warhol's technique of filming an event over an extended amount of time, as a way to de-condition the viewer, who is used to the conventions of time in dominant cinema. As Gidal observed:

> Viewing the 'same; image for eight hours heightens (through use of such an extreme) the capacity to view the three minutes. Also, the physical and retinal reaction to eight hours is so different from the reaction to three minutes that in that difference one learns, hypnotically, about change (one's own and that of an 'other'). One can take the idea aspects of the early Warhol films a step further; even reading about an eight-hour film alters one's capacity to respond to the three-minute one, let alone to one of eight hours' duration. Such facts have tremendous implications in terms of one's deconditioning, wakening one from bad

(film) habits, one's useless, demented, 'sane' reactions to what is different.[67]

In fact, in his 1976 theory of Structural/Materialist film, five years after his initial writings on Warhol's films, Gidal went on to make the assertion that a film is a function of it's temporal duration, and that the filmstrip is a material piece of time, concluding that in addition to whether a film consists of represented content (such as the documentary performances which unfold in time in Warhol's portrait films), or simply consists of blank acetate running through the projector, that real time consists of material pieces of film or "clearly defined segments."[68]  In *Room Film,* this assertion observably manifested in much in the same way as the technique of extended duration that Warhol deployed in *Blow Job*, in terms of filming a subject for an entire take, lasting the length of a complete reel of film, and allowing the reel or segment of film to play out to it's conclusion.  This included the end bits of overexposed film, which flared out into a bright whiteness, and subsequently offered a way of transitioning to a new segment of film.  In *Blow Job* this has the observable effect of creating a sense of momentary gaps in the action on screen and of being brought back into an awareness of one's own immediate environment, and of the actual screen and the surface of projection – thereby serving as a respite from the intensity of the unfolding drama of the man sitting and facing the screen, who is engaged in a sexual act off screen.

In *Room Film* the effect is similar in that, the film can be divided into the experience of being in the dimly lit almost imperceptible room of *Room Film* and also of being brought out of this experience with the transition points

between the end of one reel of film and the beginning of a new reel. Yet in as much as Gidal's earlier writings praised the way in which Warhol was able to reveal the extreme details of the reality and performances of his social actor/performers up close through an expanded sense of time, through the technique of slowing down the action in terms of frames of film projected per second, Gidal turned around in his theory of Structural/Materialist film, and proclaimed that the content just got in the way of what he referred to as the true project of film, which was the "non-hierarchical, cool, separate unfolding of a perceptual activity."[69] In this case, the emphasis for Gidal shifted to the pure experience of film as a perceptual activity. As a result, *Room Film* and the earlier film *Clouds* (1969), can be observed to contain no human figures or human performances, and almost no content, in terms of what may be looked at one screen. Instead, Gidal may be observed in these films to resort to unfixing Warhol's fixed frame, and adopting a hand held camera, thereby fusing the viewer and filmmaker's perspectives intersubjectively.

In the early set up of the *Room Film*, Gidal's alterations to Warhol's technique become evident with the introduction of a subtle movement within the density and space of a barely lit room, within the opening ten minutes of the film, suggesting a hand held camera. Moreover, the experience of this movement is felt as the movements of the filmmaker who is not so much navigating the room, as he is aimlessly moving within the barely lit space, which soon becomes the viewer's own experience as well. What is more, this is not an easy experience or a "cool separate unfolding," for the viewer/viewer such as myself, but rather, initiated in a struggle to apprehend and navigate

the darkened rooms' space, and the barely there contents of the room, through the sense of another's aimlessness movements - in effect two conflicting purposes locked into the same movement, wherein the sense of struggle ensues.

In Gidal's more recent reassessment of *Blow Job* in 2008, it becomes possible to see evidence of how Gidal's thinking about materialist film practice has since evolved, to consider the ways in which the spectatorship of *Blow Job* entails what Gidal refers to as a mental experience for the viewer, or in other words – it is clear in his more recent writings, that Gidal is wanting to overcome the counter cinema label attached to Structural/Materialist film practice, in order to get at the heart of the spectatorship – the mental experience of materialist film practice.  Not only does this result in an expansion of Gidal's earlier definition of materialist film, but also helps us to see how he potentially formulated these ideas into his method of film for *Room Film*, even though this more recent theorization arrives more than thirty years after the fact.  As Gidal proclaims:

> Materialist practice in avant-garde film is often misunderstood as a dry academic thesis about material, whereas, in fact it engineers a dialectical, contradictory and endlessly fractious relation with the subject-as-viewer, and with his or her philosophical, sexual and poetic metaphysics.  And it is precisely in this fraught relation that a Materialist process inveigles itself.[70]
>
> ...
>
> The examination of the material process of the film is one that looks at more than a film's physical material; it includes the 16mm acetate as much as the pressure of hand, the eye and the mind.[71]

The mental experience of film which Gidal identifies as key to Warhol's *Blow Job*, is in fact due to a technique of displacement/disjunction which leads to a sense of "invisible presence," or what Gidal elaborates as, some element perceived by the viewer, as existing or taking place elsewhere, such as in off screen space.  For example, this is what Gidal perceives with the element of sound in many of Warhol's films including *Blow Job*, even though *Blow Job* has no soundtrack in the conventional sense of characters speaking or music.  For example, Gidal concludes that the way in which the invisible presence of sound manifests in *Blow Job*, is through the actions of performers, who seem to respond to directional cues in the form of looks and gestures, that originate from the off screen space and behind the camera.  As a result, these actions according to Gidal, serve to extend the illusionist space from on screen into off screen space, and are as real in their absence as they would be, in their actual presence.[72]  According to Gidal, where this technique of displacement begins to intensify the mental experience into more of a metaphysical experience for the viewer, actually occurs in the moments when De Verne's face/head is thrown back, distorted and obscured, becoming something almost inhuman.  Moments such as this occur in *Blow Job* around the midpoint of the film and again near the end of the film, and entail a moment of horror for Gidal.  As Gidal says:

> It's a fearful image.  The fear of death doesn't need more than a moment.  Until the head moves down a few frames later – around 18 frames, or one second in silent speed projection – or long enough to recognize once again the visage of one man standing framed by the camera in light and shadow staring out at you.  At times, of course, he is staring away from you; at times, he is listening to something off-screen.  Without hearing anything, you can tell (by the way he reacts)

when some order or instruction is given to him. *Blow Job* is anything but fourth-wall realism, and the seen space includes (mentally, for the viewer) the off-screen space of sound and image, however invisible both may be.[73]

Yet Gidal offers no clues as to the mental experience, which *Room Film* potentially engenders in the almost content-less configuration of the film, which would potentially engage the viewer in more than a counter cinema statement, in relation to the spectatorship *Room Film.* Perhaps the earliest analysis of the film to recognize that *Room Film* actually exceeded the anti-illusionist counter cinema polemics in this respect, can be evidenced in the British art critic Deke Dusinberre's early analysis of *Room Film*, which openly acknowledged the importance of the technique of first person hand held camera, as an experiential element taken on by the viewer in the spectatorship of the film. In this case, Dusinberre argued that Gidal's camera functioned to privilege a "subjective eye" rather than the "objective lens" (of the fixed frame camera technique), and that this subjective eye became an arbitrary rather than intentional movement. This observation led Dusinberre to ask whether or not this technique as a result, functioned to intensify the viewer's fascination with the actual objects in the dimly lit grainy obscurity of the room on screen, to the point that the film therefore brought into focus an alternate variable in the issue of representation, this being that, in creating a sense of what can not be seen through the intensity of a subjective eye, an analysis of a negative space of representation was initiated, thereby superceding the problem of representation and illusionism, in terms of what could be seen.[74]

While Dusinberre's analysis may be true, his analysis fails to consider how the experience of the intensity of the viewer's subjective eye, actually strives and struggles to actualize itself within the room, in relation to the filmmaker's subjective lens.  Alternatively, it may be argued that the spectatorship of *Room Film* engenders a sense of struggle, which involves a coming to terms with a shared subjectivity between ourselves/the viewer, and that of the filmmaker's perspective, which manifests in the room of *Room Film*, as a felt presence, which the viewer embodies.  Moreover, the filmmaker's presence is at the same time, paradoxically, an ambivalent presence as Dusinberre accurately describes, but also a controlling presence, in that, within this structuring one has little control over how one may move in the room, and also how one may apprehend the contents of the room, other than intersubjectively and through the filmmaker's perspective.   This is evident for example within the first ten minutes of the film, in which there is the sense that the conditions of light throughout the film are being manipulated to disorientating effect, while at other moments we feel in symbiosis with the filmmaker's perspective and his subtle movements through the hand-held camera.  In this regard, we therefore struggle against and with the filmmaker's subjectivity.

For example, *Room Film* takes approximately forty-five minutes to unfold, and begins with the film strip running through the projector, essentially nothing in terms of represented images, except the random projection of debris on the surface of the film, which becomes blown up and agitated as if the projector has taken on the function of a microscope to reveal a hidden

microcosmic world of debris. Yet under this surface, another layer slowly

makes it's way into view.  This layer is difficult to make out at first, but

eventually the dust gives way to darkened room and it's contents, in which

can be made out just barely, crinkled sheets on a bed, the edging of a wall

and a plug, a fireplace and a viscous light bulb hanging from the ceiling.  This

is brought into focus in a limited way within the first ten minutes of the film and

initiates a desire to make out the room's dimensions and contents and our

place within it, but this is only possible in as much as the subtle movements of

the camera and the conditions of light allow for, and just as quickly the room

disappears into blackness, leaving only the faint sound of crackles, the effect

of dust and debris on the film as it is projected onto the sense.  And with this

there is the sense of being brought out of the room, and back into an

awareness of our current apprehension of the projection of film onto a screen

surface, and our own condition of viewing.

A pattern is soon established as the film opens again into the room, but

this time offering a sense of being immersed into the ambiguity of a barely lit

room – a bedroom perhaps, in terms of the sense of time passing. But the

sense of ourselves within this room feels odd, in that there is a feeling of

movement to the right in the dimly lit space of the room, not our own

movement, but a feeling of moving, but which soon becomes our own

tentative movements in the room as we take on the filmmaker's hand held

camera perspective's subtle and purposeless movements.  This embodied

sensibility also happens to overlap and contradict our own attempt to actualize

the contents of the room and for example the position from which we originally

entered into the frame, which seems to have subtly changed, making the whole experience that more difficult and contrary to our will, in terms of the way we might want to navigate the room, and the way in which the camera directs our sensibility. With this, the film suddenly flares out into a burnt orange colour and patterns of punched light, as if a light were turned on in the room for a fraction of a second, to chaotically reveal all of its objects too quickly to be taken in with our eyes, which fail to adjust, and subsequently fall quickly back into dimness and near blackness of the room. As a result, this experience gives rise to a form of disjunction in the way that Gidal describes of *Blow Job*, but in this case rather, arising from the sense that our subjectivity is in the room of *Room Film*, with the filmmaker's subjectivity, but at the same time we also occupy a disembodied presence, which is not in control of it's own situation.

As the film progresses, it is also possible to say that this feeling of struggling against and with the filmmaker's perspective, becomes intensified as the film progresses, to become a feeling of anxious struggle. This seems to be largely due to the structure of the whole experience, which is that of a series of sequences much like the one previously described, which seem to take the viewer within the limits of a breaking point, wherein the room gives way not only to the temporal limits of the length of a reel of film's duration, but also a tangible sense of emerging from the room as if coming up for air, into an awareness of the screen surface and projection, and the concrete reality of viewing a film – a reprieve which is short lived. In this way, it is not a sameness of the experience of struggling in the room with and against the

filmmaker's point of view, which makes the experience into an anxious struggle, since the same experience over and over would arguably, eventually dull the senses and detach the viewer's subjectivity.  Instead it is the promise of disclosure, which never seems to arrive, and therefore the possibility that this experience of struggling has the potential to become a perpetual state of being, which engenders an anxious struggle.

About half way into the film, the space that was previously occupied, is taken up again and resolved with a bit more light, and this time, it's just possible to make out a disheveled bookcase with crumpled newspapers, and a kitchen countertop.  There is more of a sense now, that there might be a form of resolution on the horizon while there is the embodied sense of groping around within the constraints of the limited movements of the filmmaker's perspective, that is, until our sense of moving within this space, begins to perceptibly change, becoming ever more still, counter to the instinct to keep trying to find our own way.  At about twenty-five minutes into the film, a sense of fixedness takes over.  At this point, it is as if the film were frozen and our awareness of being in the room, has been ejected out of the moment and into one's own sense of the present time and space, of sitting and viewing a film. The effect is reflexive and anti-illusionist, in that our awareness at this moment is not that of being in the room, but of only a film and obscured, grainy representation of a room.  The focal length of the lens the appears to adjust at this point in small staggers on an object, a picture or a photograph even, in which the only thing perceptible are faint orange outlines of objects.  In this way, the mechanism of the lens and our view keeps adjusting, by tilting and

zooming in small increments, as if to emphasize the act of focusing and picture taking.

The result of the switch over in perception, from that of an embodied sensibility in the room, to the viewing of an almost representational image (if it were not for the slight agitation perceptible in the image), places us at a distance to the room and not quite outside of it – in a neither here nor there state of uncomfortable existence, which lasts for several long minutes it seems, until the image becomes almost black, which subsequently takes on the sense or feeling of being absorbed into a form of black matter, and the feeling of struggling anxiously against a movement towards an unknown region.  This also lasts for several long minutes, which serves to intensify such feelings.  Eventually this episode transitions into a different perspective. In this new configuration, a door and a coat hanging on the back of it can be just barely made out.  The room gives away more of its contents such as a bed in the corner of the room, and a desk lamp overhead.

The last part of the film offers more by way of things to see, in terms of a bed in the corner of a room, the outlines of a plant which sits atop of a mantle piece, a desk lamp overhead, which shines a spot of light down on an open book and a picture frame with a figure in it.  A disembodied sensibility persists however, in viewing these objects, as if floating in the depths of a murky submerged shipwreck, and of coming across a once inhabited personal space, which has been left undisturbed for a long time.  However there is always the reminder that it is the filmmaker's camera and subjectivity, which is in control, as a tug-o-war ensues, bouncing us back and forth between the

lamp and the objects, which we struggle to make out in more detail against such intrusions.  Yet, the filmmaker's subjectivity eventually wins over control, and returns us back to the perpetual state of being in the room and of struggling, suggesting that there are an infinite number of permutations, in which this experience could potentially unfold and continue on, to anxious effect.

Yet as the realization of a potentially endless struggle begins to set in, the grainy blackness suddenly and unexpectedly flares out into a bright, burnt orange light, which succumbs to a white field, and the noticeable cracks and pops of the filmstrip being projected.  With this, there is the apprehension of the coming into being of screen surface and an awareness of being taken out of the room and back into an awareness of viewing a film and screen surface. By the end of the film, it is possible to say that the experience of struggling has taken on the dimensions of anxiousness and discomfort.  In this way, the spectatorship of *Room Film* does not engender a sense of fear, nullity or boredom, or bring about a sense of cathartic release as Gidal describes of the experience of viewing *Blow Job*, but rather, engenders more of an anxious uneasiness of mood, which seems to last beyond the viewing of the film.

The distinction between the type of mood that *Room Film* engenders through its spectatorship is an important one to make, since as mentioned previously, moods are the primary way in which *Dasein* – a being, or human being, comes to know in a visceral way, his/her present state-of-mind.  In Heidegger's conception of being-in-time, anxiety or a state of apprehension is the most primordial of all moods to have.  This is because through this feeling,

*Dasein* comes face to face with his/her 'own most' state of being and existence.  As Heidegger says:

> Being-anxious discloses, primordially and directly, the world as world. It is not the case, say, that the world first gets thought of by deliberating about it, just by itself, without regard for the entities within-the-world, and that, in the face of this world, anxiety then arises: what is rather the case is that the *world as world* is disclosed first and foremost by anxiety, as a mode of state-of-mind.
>
> ...
>
> That which anxiety is anxious about is Being-in-the world itself.[75]

Anxiety also serves another more interpretive function, in that this mood opens up the possibility for Dasein to take a step back from his/her absorption in the everyday, and the tendency to submit to the status quo way of being with one another, in order to assess what Heidegger refers to as one's own potential for authentic and inauthentic existence – which usually evades Dasein's grasp.  Anxiety therefore, is the moment when according to Heidegger, *Dasein* becomes "individualized" in relation to the everyday. As Heidegger says:

> But in anxiety there lies the possibility of a disclosure which is quite distinctive; for anxiety individualizes.  This individualization brings Dasein back from its falling, and makes manifest to it that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its Being. These basic possibilities of Dasein (and Dasein is in each case mine) show themselves in anxiety as they are in themselves – undisguised by entities within-the-world, to which, proximally and for the most part, Dasein clings.[76]

On one level then, *Room Film* can be understood as a content-less, non-narrative, anti-illusionist film, which through the conditions of perceptual

spectatorship becomes an environment, in which the viewer struggles to actualize his/her own subjectivity within the room of the film.  This is due largely to the struggle which ensues in relation to the viewer's subjectivity – working with and against the filmmaker's subjectivity, in striving to actualize itself within the room as a free agent, while embodying the movements of Gidal's hand held camera, which asserts its own form of control over the situation.  However, what Heidegger's phenomenology points to in relation to this experience, is that, on another level this experience can also be considered to be a form of existential encounter with the factical reality of one's own everydayness, which Heidegger theorizes is a necessity of *Dasein's* being.   In this respect, the spectatorship of *Room Film* entails not so much of a mental experience then, in the way of thinking and rationalizing about the medium of film itself, as it becomes an interactive and existential encounter with oneself – the viewing subject who becomes the object of the film.  As a result, the knowledge, which is engendered through the spectatorship of the film, can be said to be affective, individualized, personal and non-representational, and perhaps dependent upon further interpretation by the viewer himself/herself, in order to situate this knowledge within a broader context.

The phenomenological and documentary potential of *Room Film* can be said to stem from a promotion of knowledge of oneself, in relation to the lived experience of one's environment.  While Gidal accomplishes this through the medium of film, practically speaking, the hand held camera, which initiates much of the struggle in the context of the dimly lit room of the film, would be

equally possible through video, by deploying a first person hand held camera, and by exploiting the electronic pliability of the medium through digital compositing.  As Laura Marks asserts, video as an electronic medium, also shares in the capacity to promote a cinema of perceptual and haptic engagement.[77]

## 2.4 Initial Conclusions and Further Questions

Both *Little Dog For Roger* and *Room Film* are without question important examples of an avant-garde and experimental film practice, which developed in Britain, in the context of a counter culture art and cinema of the 60's and 70's.  However, these anti-illusionist and anti-narrative films can also be considered to an aesthetic practice, with the potential to promote a subjective and objective interplay of experiences through spectatorship, which in turn engender affective knowledge and embodied memories for the viewer, which relates to the viewer's own lived experiences past and present.  It therefore becomes possible to envision how these methods might form a base for a documentary making practice, which is constituted in the more imaginary and experiential dimensions of lived reality.   This raises the question of what progress has been made, in terms of the evolution of the early aesthetic practices of British Structural/Materialist films towards documentary making, and how a blending of the codes of early British Structural/Materialist film with

documentary film practice, could be further developed in the direction of a

more interpretive or performative based practice of documentary?

**Chapter 3 – The Limits of Reflexive Practice in the Urban Films of Structural/Materialist Documentarians**

## 3.1 Art and Documentary Making in British Artists' Films

This chapter sets out to review a sample of contemporary artists' films by British artist filmmakers John Smith, Mirza & Butler and William Raban, which can actually be characterized as a form which blends the codes of early Structural/Materialist films, with the codes of documentary filmmaking. A review of these films provides an opportunity to address the question of what progress has been made, in relation to the evolution of the early aesthetic practices of Le Grice and Gidal British towards documentary making. Therefore, the aims of this review are to not only to better understand how documentary form is shaped in relation to the aesthetics of British Structural/Materialist films, but also the kinds of spectatorship that these documentary films entail, and as a result, the kinds of knowledge these films engender through spectatorship. What is found through an analysis of a sample of prominent films, is that a primary method of documentary making takes shape as a reflexive form of practice, situated in the contexts of urban and everyday space. Moreover, the primary goal of these films is to call into question the impossibility of the truth claims, which are usually associated with the procedures of representation, which are associated with conventional documentary filmmaking techniques. This form of documentary practice may therefore be thought of as a form of reflexive or anti-illusionist urban

documentary practice.

Arguably, the methods of these artists entail a number of variations to the gestural methods of practice of Le Grice and Gidal. For example, a primary alteration to Gidal's method, is the replacement of the hand held camera, in favour of a camera on a tripod in a fixed position. Alternations to Le Grice's method include a form of observational practice, which is less dependent upon close observations and the active engagement of re-observing and re-processing of film, and more dependent upon the forging of indexical connections between profilmic and filmed reality, similar to the way in which the original theory and practice of British Structural/Materialist films aimed to promote the indexical reality of film as film. However, a dismantling of the truth claims entailed with the production of documentary texts then proceeds. This occurs in terms of the juxtaposition of the illusionism that is promoted in the use of a fixed frame camera and extended durations, which stand on the one hand as a correlation to an authoritative and conventional technique of documentary observation, with more ironic inversions of other documentary conventions, which function as an anti-illusionist counter. As a result, Le Grice and Gidal's gestural approaches, which were previously found to engender perceptual and a more experiential form of spectatorship, tends to be de-emphasized throughout these artists' documentary practice. Chapter 3 therefore provides additional support to Chapter 2, for the claim that Le Grice and Gidal's original gestural methods of practice have been overlooked, in terms of their phenomenological and documentary potential both theoretically and methodologically. This leads to the question of how Le

Grice and Gidal's gestural methods of practice might also be deployed

towards an urban documentary practice?

To begin with, the recent confluence of art and documentary in the UK

has resulted in a number of media artists reassessing their work as

documentary and more significantly, a platform for experimental documentary

film and video practice, as evidenced in recent events such as *Truth or Dare*,

an international documentary art symposium in 2006 and subsequent

publication which brought together artists, documentary theorists and

filmmakers in the UK, in order to discuss the practice of non traditional and

creative forms of documentary practice.[78]  Another indication of the rise of

documentary film and video made by artists, is also evidenced in a recent

international survey put out by the New York based avant-garde cinema

journal *Millennium Film Journal*, which asked a number of prominent

international film and video artists making documentary work, to comment on

how they experiment with documentary forms.  Surprisingly, the concerns and

methods employed by artists surveyed, ranged widely from one artist to the

next.  For example, the American film artist Sue Friedrich detailed her own

ethical concern to remain objective as an artist documentarian.  She explained

this position as more of an attempt to 'not do the thinking for the viewer.'

Moreover in her own films, this stance takes shape in practice through the

deployment of techniques such as extended durations/the long take, as a way

to achieve a non-compositional, or non interpretive documentary text.   The

viewer is then assumed to be the one who completes and authors the

documentary text.  Another position voiced by film artist and documentarian

Michele Citron, is the belief that it is almost impossible to objectively

disconnect oneself from what one films, and that although any documentary

practice can never fully capture the full extent of lived experience,

documentary practice should be an expression of the filmmaker's internal and

external relations of lived experiences within social space.  This stance

therefore requires the deployment of a range of compositional and aesthetic

techniques in order to convey such relationships, which the viewer is then also

encouraged to connect with as well.[79]

Another instance of this recent interest in the confluence of art and

documentary is to be found in the unmistakable presence of documentary film

and video made by artists within documentary film festival circuits, which push

the perceived boundaries of traditional documentary with creative practice.[80]

Some of this recent activity may in fact be located in the work of artists

grounded in the institutional base of contemporary *British Artists' Film and*

*Video* and especially a sub category of work within this, which draws upon

and in many ways continues and extends the tradition of British avant-garde

coop film and the tradition of Structural/Materialist film of the sixties and

seventies.[81]  A common feature of these artists' films may be observed to be

the deployment of cities, urban spaces and everyday life, and while much of

this work is referred to as documentary, and assumes a documentary label

within recent cultural context of gallery and film festival programming, and

may therefore be considered to be a form of urban documentary made by film

artists,[82] this category of work may also be said to be shaped more obviously

by the connections it makes to the tradition of Structural/Materialist film, and

its anti-illusionist art polemics and practice's, which gave rise to the institutional base of British Avant-Garde and Coop film of the seventies. Recent Filmmaker-artists, who may be said to exemplify this form of Structural/Materialist documentary practice include, the Jarman nominated artists such as Luke Fowler and Mirza and Butler.[83]

In fact, the blending of the aesthetic practices of Structural/Materialist film with the codes and conventions of documentary is not a recent phenomenon. From the seventies onwards Structural/Materialist film under the auspices of the co-op film in the UK, could be said to have developed into a number of strains of practice including an expansion of the early Structural/Materialist film aesthetic into both documentary and abstract film practices, also grounded in image based content drawn from the urban and everyday environment. According to Rees an expansion of the early Structural/Materialist film aesthetic was epitomized in the hybrid of Structural/Materialist and documentary film practice of 'Structuralists' such as the British film artist William Raban (b.1948). In addition, filmmakers such as John Smith (b.1952) and Guy Sherwin (b.1948) may also be considered to be representative of this second generational offshoot of Structural/Materialist film – with the connections of John Smith, being a student of Guy Sherwin's at the Royal College of Art in London in the seventies where Gidal also taught, pointing to the likely contact these filmmakers must have had with the aesthetic practices of the formative Structural/Materialist filmmakers. These filmmakers also commonly draw upon the spaces and places of the urban and everyday environment, as the material grounds from which to formulate a

reflexive/conceptual documentary film practice, and may therefore also be said to representative of this sub genre of Structural/Materialist urban and documentary film.

       More recently, the function of documentary from an artists' film perspective has put forth by Anna Abrams, a programmer of experimental documentary artist's films, for the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA).  According to Abrams, the practice of blending art and documentary may be considered to be a "*Para documentary*" form or "*Paradoc*," which she defines as: "...films that show that they are films, they are films that maybe bring you to another place and time, a there and a then, but they will always let you know that it is a construction that you are looking at, that it is something that exists only in your mind, and it is only in the moment that you are watching it here and now, that the film is completed."[84] The term *para documentary* is also perhaps just another way of referring to reflexive film practice, and therefore not a new strategy or method of film in the wider context of fiction and non-fiction cinema.  For example, reflexive film practice in the context of documentary as Chapman characterizes it, "...aims to engage with the audience rather than the historical world...Reflexivity enables the filmmaker to inform the audience about the process of making a documentary statement."[85]  While Abrams acknowledges the inherent ambivalence that this particular notion of documentary entails, she also observably locates the documentary function of these *paradocs* within a utopian sphere of political engagement, which rests entirely with the viewer to make the form complete.   However, in assigning the function of documentary

outside of the social spaces, which these urban and documentary films paradoxically enter into when the camera is turned on, a number of issues come to mind including the potential bracketing off, of the actuality of the filmmaker's material encounter with lived space.

As it happens, supplanting the concern for the lived and the material realm, with a concern for the conceptually framed, is what the Marxist and postmodern literary critic Fredric Jameson is critical of, in the foregrounding the style or the manner of making an object over the content, which Jameson argues is the primary characteristic the cultural objects produced by postmodern culture situated in a period of late capitalism. According to Jameson, Cultural production in this context, becomes integrated into late capitalisms' productive forces, and a "frantic economic urgency of producing fresh new waves of evermore novel-seeming goods," a process which itself becomes institutionalized within it's own self-supporting economic base. Because of this, artistic production becomes a form of consumption, which can be characterized in terms of a revolt against the aesthetic productions of modernism and high modernism, in the goal to produce the ever more novel, new and innovative. Ironically, this revolt according to Jameson also includes a reaction against what has come before, and often in relation to what was once deemed to be revolutionary, and difficult in its time, including hermeneutic traditions of art. According to Jameson, postmodern strategies such as pastiche, and a kind of schizophrenic fragmentation, blank parody and an emphasis upon surfaces as opposed to depth, come to signal the end of 'the work of art," of figuration and individual style, as well as affect and

expression, which are the hallmarks of "the distinctive individual brush stroke."[86] As Jameson observes, in this way, the hermeneutical model of the "work of art" becomes supplanted by "texts" to be read.

> It is of course, of course, no accident that today, in full postmodernism, the older language of the "work" – the work of art, the masterwork – has everywhere largely been displaced by the rather different language of the "text," of texts and textuality – a language from which the achievement of organic or monumental form is strategically excluded. Everything can now be a text in that sense (daily life, the body, political representations), while objects that were formerly "works" can now be reread as immense ensembles or systems of texts of various kinds, superimposed on each other by way of the various intertextualities, successions of fragments, or, yet again, sheer process (henceforth called textual production or textualization). The autonomous work of art thereby – along with the old autonomous subject or ego – seems to have vanished, to have been volatilized.[87]

Yet, from a social sciences research perspective, which includes the disciplines of anthropology, ethnography and documentary, adopting a postmodernist perspective for a documentary practice is not necessarily a negative frame of reference. A postmodernist perspective in this context could be argued to inflect representational practices with an awareness of the polysemic qualities inherent to culture, of different voices, subjectivities, and lived experiences but also, an overall distrust of universal narratives, and ideology, which can suppress plurality. In order to promote the voices of the suppressed, the emphasis in researching and documenting cultural and social space, is placed upon the significance of how these realities come to be shaped and framed through actual discourse.[88] For example, one of the more notable examples of this search for plurality through documentary practice, is

evident in the films and videos by Vietnamese American experimental ethnographer, and documentary filmmaker Trinh T Minh Ha, whose de-centering strategies simultaneously expose hegemonic documentary practices, while creating a new form to disrupt and replace the old.  This practice is evident in the formative experimental ethnographic documentary film *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* and for example, the dreamlike episodes, which run parallel to the documentary interview sequences in the film, in which Trin employs a collage technique of sounds and images and text, which allows the viewer to perceptually engage in the textures, sounds and images of another culture, as an open ended form of engagement.[89]

Accordingly, what can be extrapolated from these opposing lines of thought in the context of blending art as in Structural/Materialist film aesthetics with documentary practice, is that while it is important to acknowledge the subjectivities of the material realm of lived experience, there is a danger in the bifurcation of thinking that is required, in order to relegate the social spaces in front of the camera, into an immaterial realm of constructed reality, the focus of which becomes a deconstruction of the methods of representation that documentary practice entails. On the other hand, straddling a purely subjectivist position, while being attentive to differences, can also be foreseen to have its own drawbacks, with the potential to take a too limited and insubstantial view of a full and given situation.  Correspondingly, the idea that a completely objective mode of documentary practice is even possible, also presents another sort of dilemma in the assumption that the filmmaker can be completely free of his/her cultural biases.

Taking the above ideas into consideration, the sample of artists' urban films which I want to focus upon for this analysis include both long-standing and more recent published films: *Girl Chewing Gum* (1976) and *Worst Case Scenario* (2003), by John Smith, *Non Places* (1999) and *The Exception and the Rule* (2009) by Mirza and Butler, (1972) as well as *Sundial* (1992), *A13* (1994), and the relatively recent documentary film *MM* (2002) by William Raban.  Through close analysis, my aim is to demonstrate how the more commonly associated techniques of the British Structural/Materialist film such as: extended duration and the effects generated from optical printing and processing of film, become blended with conventional documentary techniques such as voiceover narration, and observational practice, and how this fusion has the effect on spectatorship of, on the one hand, allowing the profilmic spaces of the social and historical world to enter into the frame and viewer's field of vision, but in such a way as to never fully allow the viewer to gain access to this space as an embodied viewer, thereby maintaining a bifurcation of subject-object positions. This is because the very element of authorship and agency becomes a primary site of contestation in these films, or becomes displaced for a more conceptually driven form of documentary practice.

While this list of films is not exhaustive in terms of each filmmaker's filmography, it is meant to be illustrative. In addition, other filmmaker artists whose oeuvre's may also be observed to contain this form of Structural/Materialist blending of art, urban film and reflexive documentary practice, and to which this argument could equally be extended include British

artists' filmmakers: Luke Fowler, Guy Sherwin and Patrick Keiller.  My

intention with this analysis is to introduce a methodological gap for a blending

of Structural/Materialist film practice with documentary film practice, as a

means for activating existential and embodied routes to knowledge as a way

to address the problem of how we live in the urban and the everyday – a form

of engagement which these films in a large part tend to deflect our attention

away from in the pursuit of a reflexive, counter documentary practice.

## 3.2 Reflexive Film Practice as Counter Documentary Strategy in the Urban Films of Structural/Materialist Documentarians

### 3.2.1  The Unreliable Narrator in the Urban Films of John Smith

> If I am forced to put a label on my films, I'm happy to call many of them documentaries, especially if you go back to Grierson's definition of documentary as "the creative treatment of reality." A number of my films are entirely documentary in their source material but they always construct stories from these sources. Something that is fundamental to me in any film I make is that the information it presents should be made suspect and its construction should be made evident.[90]
>
> - John Smith, *Talking Films With Cate Elwes*, 2002

In the historical context of the seventies, film theorizing, filmmaking and

film education in Britain could be said to have come under the transforming

influences of French structuralism, semiotic theory and psychoanalysis, the

result of which shifted the idea that a film is the result of the creative vision of

an auteur, or an autonomous work of art, to that of a language with specific

codes and conventions, especially in the case of 'dominant narrative cinema'

of the time, therefore constituting a film as an open text to be read.[91]  Such

influences were in fact openly disparaged in the early theoretical writings and

practice of Le Grice and Gidal.  For example, in a debate in 1978 with his

American counterpart, filmmaker artist Stan Brakhage – on the topic of

"Structural versus Personal Filmmaking," Malcolm Le Grice made a point of

remarking upon the confusion with which the term 'structuralism' had come to

be defined in relation to Structural/Materialist film, citing semiotic and

anthropological perspectives and more specifically a mechanistic

interpretation of the term 'structural' as being adopted into art schools.  In Le

Grice's words:

> The things that came out of Lévi-Strauss and people like Roland
> Barthes and so on, I always found it extremely difficult to make
> some link between that and the work of cinema.
>
> ...
>
> And one of the main areas which I've tended to oppose quite
> strongly is the area which has, in a sense, replaced either
> narrative or, as it were, the existential, personal, co-ordinator,
> behind the camera and behind the editing, by the use of some
> kind of mechanistic system.  I think a large part of what I see
> going on in art schools, under the sort of guise of 'structuralism',
> is for me a very easy route towards a structural concept, which
> is the use of some sort of definable mechanistic system, either
> by which to shoot a film – like taking a number of frames as a
> basis for a system, or by, after shooting, editing a film.  And this
> broad direction, which I think is the thing most identified with
> 'structuralism', is I'm sure equally uninteresting to me as it is to
> Stan. [92]

In 1976, Gidal also warned of this tendency towards a certain way of approaching structuralism in film, as a form of deconstructive practice. In his words:

> A study is urgently needed on the theme of narrative versus non-narrative form and on the inadequacy of the mechanistic deconstruction approach which ends up illustrating rather than being, which ends up static, time denying, posited as exemplary rather than relative, contradictory, motored into filmic, durational transformation through dialectic procedures."[93]

As a student at the Royal College of Art in London in the mid seventies, John Smith's early film development was within this same context, the influences of which upon his creative film practice, can be observed in his early films right through to his most recent urban films.  The primary characteristic of Smith's method of film can be said to be the way in which he brings the viewer within peripheral view of the real and the urban and the everyday, through the Structural/Materialist concern for temporality but holds it at a distance, and just out of reach from the viewer through a conflicting treatment of voiceover narration, which neither supports or confirms the content, but instead constantly draws our attention away from it.  For example, *Girl Chewing Gum* consists of two single takes over twelve minutes in total, the final shot taking up only a couple of minutes of the whole film, the premise of the film being, that in the first shot of the film, which is staged on a busy street corner in Hackney London, the narrator of the film directs the actual movements of objects and people on screen.  This does not seem altogether out of the ordinary except when the camera pans up to a clock tower and the narrator also begins to direct how the actual clock will tell time.

There are a number of moments like the one above, in which a disjunction is created between what the viewer sees and how the viewer is directed to see by the narrator throughout the film, thereby calling into question the veracity of the narrator. The apex of the film's anti-illusionism occurs in the second and final shot of the film when the director/narrator actually reveals that he has been all the while "shouting into a microphone on the edge of a field at Letchmore Heath..."[94] and not actually on the street corner where our attention has been directed the whole time and where we are led to believe that the narrator/filmmaker is actually located. In some ways, this comes as no surprise, since a number of signals such as this pop out throughout the film, alerting the viewer that the narrator's perspective seems to be in conflict with the actual images and even sounds of the film. Another striking example of discontinuity being a ringing bell throughout the film, which we are told is robbery in progress, with the culprit getting away before our very eyes in the figure of a man hurrying across the street.

According to Mary Anne Doane, in cinema, vision and hearing work together to manufacture the "hallucination" of a fully sensory world. In terms of Lacanian theory, Doane argues that the voice has greater command over space than the look – because one can hear around corners and through walls, the voice is reversible and its sound is simultaneously emitted and heard by the subject. The filmic voice is deployed in ways, which guarantee a binding of a voice to a body by controlling such attributes through the technology of the cinema. Moreover this binding is critical to maintaining a sense of harmony and unity, which is at stake in classical cinema[95] (and by

extension, the documentary film as well).  This sense of continuity between

voice and the present but out of sight presence of the narrator's body

somewhere in the street views that we are viewing is what *Girl Chewing Gum*

works against.  In 'unbinding' the voice of the narrator from the narrator's

body-location in the final minutes of the film, the voice overrides the look or

the viewer's gaze, and the sense of having known the filmmaker/narrator's

location all along.  Arguably, this severs the viewer's connection with the

filmmaker as an authority figure, a sense of which has been building

throughout the film, in the cumulative effect of a number of these moments of

disjunction.  In other words, these disjunctions become a way to direct the

viewer's attention towards the 'ironic mode of telling,' which subsequently

becomes the focal point of the film.[96]  For this reason, it also becomes difficult

to reconcile the images and content, with the mode of presentation, and we

therefore learn little about actual content that appears on screen.

As Smith describes, the inspiration for *Girl Chewing Gum* came from

the revelation of the extent to which narrative films deploy and direct extras as

background material in shots, down to the smallest details in order to promote

a cinematic illusion of reality.

> In the *Girl Chewing Gum* I wasn't really thinking about the
> director, I was thinking about the audience.  The director is an
> impotent character and in some ways incidental.  I made the film
> after seeing Truffaut's Day For Night.  There is a winter scene in
> the film within the film in which the main protagonists meet
> against a background of extras doing things on the street.
> Believe it or not, I was really surprised to discover that the
> people in the background were being directed in their actions.
> Even the dog was instructed to piss up a lamp-post.  Until then, I
> had assumed that extras in street scenes were real passers-by
> going about their business.  I was already a filmmaker and

thought to myself how naïve I had been about the 'realism' of fiction films.  The Girl Chewing Gum came out of the shock I felt at the power of the illusion of cinema.  I made it for myself – just to make sure I understood that all these things were being controlled.[97]

- John Smith, *Talking Films With Cate Elwes*, 2002

While *Girl Chewing Gum* could be said to function as a documentary record in its visual presentation of the material culture of a specific time and place, it functions more obviously as an extension of the anti-illusionist polemic (which Structural/Materialist films are more commonly associated with), into documentary. *Girl Chewing Gum* as A.L. Rees points out, also sets the stage for a number of films in which Smith continues to 'explore' the urban location of East London, the artist's own locale, while continuing with the project of deconstructing the apparatus of cinema and the director's control of his material.[98]  Films such as *The Black Tower* (1985), and *Blight* (1994) come to mind.  Another more recent example of Smith's *para documentary* Structural/Materialist film may be equally observed in the digital film hybrid *Worst Case Scenario* (2001-2003),[99] an eighteen minute frame by frame stop motion animated film, which is composed entirely of 35mm black and white photographs, thus keeping with the Structural/Materialist concern for remaining true to temporality and 'material pieces of time' albeit in the smallest unit of film time possible with the single frame.

Similar to *Girl Chewing Gum*, *Worst Case Scenario* also suppresses the real or keeps it at a distance and reinforces a separation between the viewing subject and object (the profilmic), in order to demonstrate that what we see is an illusion controlled by the filmmaker.  This is achieved moreover,

through a division of the film into two parts, the first part of the film immerses

the viewer into a presentation of the profilmic content, while the second part of

the film initiates a paradox between the reality that is presented on screen,

and the corresponding presentation of reality of the soundtrack.  For example

in the first 8 minutes of *Worst Case Scenario* Smith transposes his usual

locations in London to a busy urban intersection in Vienna.  The extended

takes are replaced with the jittery stop motion images of pedestrians on street

corners – eating sandwiches, reading books, waiting around.  Their

movements due to the stop motion animation technique seem mechanical and

puppet like.   For example, a man slams a truck door again and again in an

endless loop, or, an older woman throws the same trash away repeatedly.

This is amidst a swarm of cars and trolley cars, which feed their way through

the tangled intersection.  Overlapping these scenes is a soundtrack of

growling and revving cars, and shrill horns being sounded.  The combination

of these images and sounds, lends the film an animalistic and aggressive

quality, in which the traffic comes upon people crossing the street suddenly

and from nowhere, barely halting for the pedestrian traffic, which can't seem

to cross the street fast enough, and therefore being in state of constant peril.

About eight minutes into the film, something unlikely happens with the

soundtrack, in that it abruptly halts and with this, Smith reveals his virtual

presence in the film, not by anything he says, or an action felt in the cameras'

movements, but rather, through a perceptible alternation which takes place in

the soundtrack.  Up to this point, the filmmaker has been an invisible

presence manipulating the images of the figures in the street below.  In this

case what we hear and what alerts us to his sudden uncanny presence through the soundtrack, is the fidelity of the sound of a creaking chair – as if someone is sitting and shifting in a seat and flicking a lighter and lighting up a cigarette in a room somewhere in offscreen space – in a space between the our own viewing position and onscreen.   Soon after this, a cell phone rings and a man's voice can be heard to blandly put the caller off, indicating his business. The effect takes us immediately out of the busy street scenes.

According to Michele Chion, "The film spectator recognizes sounds to be truthful, effective, and fitting not so much if they reproduce what would be heard in the same situation in reality, but if they render (convey, express) the feelings associated with the situation."[100]  In this way the first part of the film promotes a sense of control and aggression through a correspondence between the images and sounds. In the second half of the film, the effect of the out-of-place non diegetic sounds – the bland tone of the man's voice overlapping incongruously with same images is shattering, and functions to refocus our attention towards the sounds of the clandestine entity, which is producing this new soundtrack – which for all purposes is at once ourselves, and the filmmaker somewhere in the off screen space.  From here on in, the film shifts it's focus from the urban and everyday reality of the street scenes to an intense awareness of our own conditions of viewing, and a number of realizations quickly fall into place which support this new frame of reference including: our oblique angled long lens view of the street corner immediately suggesting that what we are watching is akin to a form of surveillance footage, thereby solidifying the distinction and distance between viewer and object of

the film. The overall effect of this sense of bifurcation, shifts the whole dynamic of the film from that of an initial sense of the contingency of the dangerous street, to a sudden awareness of our own viewing situation, from which our perspective subsequently becomes bound within, the effect of which diminishes the sense of what was experienced before this.

### 3.2.2 Disjunctions Between Voice and Image in the Urban Films of Mirza and Butler

> This is an approach to filmmaking that recognises that complex multiple layers of control, authority and manipulation are embedded in all aspects of any film post/production including its projection, the camera apparatus and the cultural bias of the filmmakers. That said we do not consider 'cultural bias' easy to define. It is after all one of the most important realities of late modernity and modernism that we all share conditions of modernity with each other. That in our local global world there is a great deal of complexity of cultural movements that cross physical and mental borders in a complex multilayered process of repetition and feedback. This is in the end how the film works also, using different immersion levels to both pull the viewer in and to hold them out. This play with (film) language reflects the barriers faced in life, the sense that there are situations we can access and also many more that we cannot.[101]
>
> - Mirza & Butler, *Texts: Images I Wish I Had Filmed But Couldn't*, 2010

Mirza and Butler's *The Exception and The Rule* (2009) is another example of a counter documentary method of film, in which the filmmaker enters into urban and everyday reality, but for the purpose of foregrounding the constructed nature of documentary text. As artists and filmmakers whose work draws directly from the tradition of British Structural/Materialist film,

Mirza and Butler came into prominence with the establishment of the

*No.w.here* film coop in 2004, after graduating from the Royal College of Art in

London in the late nineties.  From the outset they have asserted their

allegiance to artisanal film practices and the Structural/Materialist film tradition

in the film co-op setting.[102]  Mirza and Butler's film practice can also be

characterized by the crossing of disciplinary boundaries between art,

ethnography and documentary film, in an effort to deploy the aesthetic

practices of Structural/Materialist film in the development of an experimental

documentary and ethnographic film approach, which finds new forms to

upstage dominant authority and the constructed nature of the film text.  This

approach can be observed in their first film collaboration *Non Places* (1999),

and a very recent film *Deep State* (2012), and for the purposes of analysis

and illustration, best evidenced in the film *The Exception and The Rule*

(2009),[103] a forty-five minute film, which formed part of an Artangel

commission for a larger project entitled *The Museum of Non Participation* in

2008, which was undertaken in Pakistan,[104] as well as fulfilling a practical

component for a practice based PhD, in which Butler asked "How can

structural film expand the language of experimental ethnography?"[105]  In

addition, the film has been screened as a stand-alone work, winning a best

experimental film award at the Onion City Experimental Film and Video

Festival in Chicago in 2010.[106]

  Similar to Smith's method of film, Mirza and Butler also deploy the

soundtrack, and specifically the element of voiceover narration in order to

disrupt the taken for granted realist aspirations entailed in documentary

making.  In this respect the soundtrack becomes a mash-up of conflicting voices, which constantly disrupts the ability of the viewer to formulate continuity between different sequences in the film and a profilmic reality occurring in front of the camera.  The beginnings of this technique is evident in an earlier film *Non Places*[107] which overlaps and layers multiple narrators and their stories sometimes broken and difficult to distinguish from one narrator to the next, over a succession of still unpopulated scenes of derelict urban environments such as tunnels and passageways.  The disjunction between image and voice in this film becomes apparent in the violence implied in the disembodied voices, which we do not hear but read in the form of narrative text off the screen and in our minds, and subsequently fail to connect to the images on screen, since these are not spaces in which the viewer is embodied within experientially through another, so much as kept at a distance from, in the emphasis upon stillness and lack of movement and emptiness within shots.

A further clue to the method of film employed in *The Exception and the Rule* is indicated in the title itself, which is an actual play of the same name by Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), the German Marxist playwright and theatre director.   As film theorist Robert Stam observes, Brecht developed an approach to theatre which purposely alienated the audience, in order to make the audience aware of their own taken for granted passive consumption and assumptions about social reality.  Moreover, some of the characteristic techniques employed by Brecht included: the creation of deliberate

discontinuities through the deployment of sound and music within a play.   For

example, Stam offers that:

> Music and lyrics were designed mutually to discredit and complement
> each other. Bitter lyrics coincided with saccharine melodies and vice
> versa.   Or there was discontinuity between the content of the lyrics and
> the tone of the singer.  Senseless melodic accents and distortions of
> declamation contributed to a feeling of disorientation.  The music itself,
> especially that written by Hans Eisler and Paul Dessau, shocked by
> deliberate out-of-tune effects and sudden dissonances.  Formal
> caesurae fractured the continuity and forced the listener to change his
> train of thought.[108]

*The Exception and the Rule* also requires the viewer to 'constantly

change their train of thought.'  Jarring mismatches between narrator's tone

and corresponding images, and a sense of fractured continuity from one

scene to the next, is characteristic of the kind of spectatorship that this film

requires, and becomes a way in which to foreground its mode of telling as

problematic, therefore alerting the viewer to larger issues of cultural

representation between cultures.  For example, disjunction is apparent at the

outset in two parameters which are set with the entry of two narrators, the

first, a non European male voice detailing his difficulties in being able to film in

Pakistan, which we are led to believe from the corresponding images of news

footage on screen, is in the historical context of just after the assassination of

the Prime minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto in 2007, and around the time of

the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in 2008.  This narrator speaks about how he is

interested in divisions as a form of political cinema, with the image on screen

correspondingly dividing between top and bottom, as if to illustrate this point.

He also speaks about the "people" who have asked him to collaborate in

making a political film, the idea of which he is somewhat puzzled by, but his tone indicates he's happy enough to collaborate. The sequence following this is characterized by a female narrator, who speaks in English with a British accent, who does not acknowledge the ideas of the preceding narrator, but proceeds in an enlivened tone, with a rationalization of what it means to make a political film. She concludes that this is down to the adoption of a point of view, which she naively interprets to be in the choice between whether to shoot in film or video, which she then assuredly decides that her part from here on in, will be the one who shoots in film, while "Raj Kumar" will shoot in video. This kind of demarcation makes no sense at all in light of the context and subject that the film seems to establish in the beginning of the film as introduced by the first narrator, who seemingly has no choice in the matter. In this way the viewer's initial assumptions about what the film is about are immediately derailed. In terms of image, the narrator's tone in this sequence also seems entirely incongruous with the image sequence, which amounts to a grainy, non-descript night time scene, filmed from the perspective of an oblique angle, looking down from what might be a window view of a gathering of people in the distance, caught through a fixed frame long lens composition, the effect of which carries a clandestine undertone. In this way the film switches gear, from looking at something, to a concern for how one is looking.

Other episodes which create similar disjunctions between voice over narration and image, and therefore further antagonize the viewer includes; the introduction of yet another narrator who appears in the form of intertitles text on screen, his words reading "to the woman with the mobile phone...You will

simulate normal walking but you will be conscious that from this day forward I

have taken possession of every third step that you take.  It is not necessary

for you to obsess yourself with this."  This inter title is proceeded by a street

scene in which the sense is, that the cameraperson is filming an unknowing

woman, who is talking on a cell phone walking past the camera (an

unmistakable reference to John Smith's *Girl Chewing Gum*.  In fact episode

after episode the sense that a new narrator is being reinvented with each new

set of accompanying images, is disconcerting to say the least.  The only

moments of reprieve from this being, in the form a few scenes which take a

decidedly poetic turn with depictions of landscape, a man's voice luxuriating in

the composition of a love letter, only to trail off self consciously into a list of

details about the table he is sitting at in a café, his pen, his cigarettes, the

ashtray – while the camera tracks over a graffiti filled wall.  Another more

inhabited sequence also occurs when a female cameraperson (Mirza) comes

out from behind the lens and interacts with some children in a street.

> For me one of the main issues was about how to deal with the
> complexity of what we were experiencing. In particular in
> Karachi, we came to feel that we were being saturated with
> politics throughout the everyday. Of course, in the UK we also
> experienced this, but you can't miss direct political questions
> when you're in a place like Karachi, where you encounter these
> quite amorphous and abstract geopolitical forces all the time.
> This led us to think about our relationship to the issues we were
> experiencing, including how we could make visible our situation
> in relation to our (postcolonial) conditions of production. The
> idea that *what* we see is a condition of *how* we see became a
> significant in both *The Exception and the Rule* and 'The Museum
> of Non Participation'. This led Karen and I to start working, not
> so much with what was inside the camera frame, but rather with
> what we couldn't capture, and our discussions became about
> getting a sense of the boundaries and the limits of our inclusion
> and exclusion.[109]

Paradoxically, the impossibility of the filmmaker's existential immersion in the spaces and situations that account for the urban images on screen is as much withheld by the chaotic bricolage of narrators and disjunction with images, as it is in the particular way in which Structural/Materialist film techniques (optical printing motion effects and extended sequences), are deployed in almost every sequence, to confirm a sense of distance rather than immersion into the urban and the everyday reality before the camera. A sequence in particular which confirms this sensibility, includes an episode on train filmed from the characteristic oblique angled fixed frame view that the film has come to adopt in a large number of sequences – the camera seemingly hidden in the overhead compartment luggage racks looking down upon the unknowing occupants of a train carriage. While one immediate observation that this scene presents is that all the occupants seem to be young men, the content of the images soon takes a back seat in light of the way in which this scene is further treated. In addition to the strange perspective, the images are also composited and sped up, there is also a sense that the accompanying soundtrack is looped and sped up as well, the overall effect gives the sequence a feeling of transgression. The overall sense is also of a mechanical wind up toy in the movements of the people, lending these figures of the men on the train an inhuman feel. This striking situation immediately raises a number of questions about the conditions of filming and the question as to why the filmmakers chose to adopt such a clandestine approach to this situation, equally deflecting our attention away from the content.

### 3.2.3 Reflexive Observational Film Practice in the Urban Films of William Raban

> I didn't' think I really set out to make a political film as such in that the basic idea of Island Race was that I wanted to make a film that recorded over a period of time ordinary events taking place on the streets of Tower Hamlets – that is what interested me. And the main interest became in editing the film together – what happens when you contrast all these different events – local election campaigns, V.E Day, street parties, London marathon, what happens when you inter cut them and string these events together without putting a commentary over it telling people what they are supposed to think about these things, but rather trying to construct meaning through the juxtaposition of different sequences together. There may be a difference in terms of how it looks on the screen, but fundamentally I think that how I worked on that film and all the other films in a sense, is informed by my initial approach to filmmaking through Structural Filmmaking, experimental film, the kinds of choices that are available to me in framing and setting up shots. I can't turn my back on those earlier films. I think they look as they do because of the earlier films, and they are not a rejection of that earlier work. [110]
>
> – William Raban on *The Under the Tower Trilogy*

William Raban is also a filmmaker whose roots stem from the British tradition of Structural and/or Materialist coop film. As an early but divergent practitioner of the form, he has produced a varied and expansive oeuvre of films which stretch back to his days as a painting student at Saint Martins School of Art in the late sixties; his work at the London Filmmaker's cooperative and his participation in the Filmaktion group with Malcolm Le Grice in the seventies; as a senior lecturer in film at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design through the eighties; as well as a Reader in film at The University of the Arts and The London College of Communication

thereafter.[111]  It should also be mentioned that he supervised the practice

based PhD of Brad Butler, whose practice also shares Raban's counter

cinema concerns.  Additionally, many of Raban's films are categorized in the

LUX Moving Image Artists Catalogue under the themes of *Urban*, *London* and

*Architecture*, while others have also recognized his films as documentary

practice.[112]  This being said, compared with John Smith or Mirza and Butler's

distinct methods of urban film and documentary practice, which allow the

profilmic spaces of the social and historical world to enter into the frame and

viewer's field of vision, but only in so far as to make the act of documenting

suspect, Raban's films are not as easily characterizable.  This is because his

films incorporate a number of formal concerns and themes which weave their

way throughout his work including: experimentation often in camera with film

as material, the temporal and spatial possibilities of film projection across

multiple screens (expanded cinema), the capacity of film to reveal the rhythms

and changes in the natural environment from one season to the next, the

collisions of the urban with the natural environment, the environs of East

London and its social historical contexts.

However, one grouping of Raban's films in particular, which do stand

out in terms of method, are the films: *Sundial* (1992),[113] *A13* (1994)[114] and

*Island Race* (1996),[115] a series of films which compose what Raban refers to

as *The Under the Tower Trilogy* of city films/documentaries, which take as

their theme the urban regeneration of East London's Isle of Dogs and the

Canary Wharf, the artist's own locale.  Linking with these in method and

theme is also the relatively recent film *MM* (2002).[116]  Together, I want to

propose that *Sundial*, *A13* and *MM* in particular, are illustrative of two

particular kinds of methods of documentary practice, characteristic of Raban's

oeuvre, in which the profilmic becomes the raw material with which to frame a

conceptually driven form of spectatorship.  In doing so, these films derive

knowledge about the urban and the everyday – less from the filmmaker's

existential immersion in urban space and embodied spectatorship, as they do

from more rationalized routes to knowledge which are dependent upon

classical subject-object viewing divide which maintains the viewing subject as

the central means of organizing and disseminating information.  As example,

one of Raban's documentary methods of film can be observed in the trilogy

films: *Sundial* and *MM,* which can be said to deploy a method of "intellectual

montage," after the Russian constructivist filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's

(1898-1948) technique, in order to generate conceptual knowledge about the

urban and the everyday.  This is one of four types of montage editing, which

Eisenstein theorized, in which knowledge or meaning is synthesized by the

spectator through an accumulation and framing of shots, and the structuring of

meaning from the signs and signification of elements within. [117]   As Eisenstein

explains of this method:

> The point is, that the copulation (perhaps we had better say
> combination) of two hieroglyphs of the simplest series is to be
> regarded not as their sum, but as their product, i.e., as a value of
> another dimension, another degree; each, separately,
> corresponds to an object, to a fact, but their combination
> corresponds to a concept.  From separate hieroglyphs has been
> fused – the ideogram.  By combination of two "depictables" is
> achieved the representation of something that is graphically
> undepictable.
>
> ...

> Yes it is exactly what we do in the cinema, combining shots that are depictive, single in meaning, neutral in content – into intellectual contexts and series.[118]

Moreover, this system of montage can be observed in these films, in conjunction with a Structural/Materialist emphasis upon equivalence and duration of shots and framing techniques, such as the still and fixed frame camera position, the combination of which becomes, as the Russian constructivist filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's (1898-1948) term suggests, an intellectual and rationalized route to knowledge.  In this way, Structural/Materialist film and intellectual montage can be observed to be working in conjunction in *Sundial* and *MM*.  For example, in *Sundial*, Raban assembles more than seventy images of the Canary Wharf tower, from multiple positions around East London over one minute.  This technique in itself amounts to little conceptually, except to say, where ever you go, there is this curious tower in the skyline from all these disparate views, which range from the rubble of building sites, riverside views and other buildings.  How Raban actually builds a conceptually driven mode of documentary spectatorship from the variety of views of these shots, is with the added application of the by now characteristic fixed frame camera technique, which is positioned at a relatively oblique angle looking up at the tower in every shot, so that no matter where you turn, you can't escape being observed by the tower.  This idea is also emphasized by the accompanying soundtrack, which commandingly clips the sounds of street life in mid flight, as if to say not only is the tower all seeing but can also hear you, wherever you are.  In this respect with each new shot, the tower becomes an ever-pervasive eye (and

set of ears), staring back at the viewer in his/her seat, to make the viewer uncomfortably aware of their viewing situation, but it also signifies something awry about the urban condition and lived space. This plus the fact that people are omitted in *Sundial*, consequently creates a panoptic effect – of the singular fixed frame perspective of the spectator looking out, only to be surveilled by the tower.

Raban continues the metaphor of alienating architecture in *MM*, a film, which isn't included in the *Under The Tower Trilogy*, but can equally be argued to fit in with this cycle of films both formally and conceptually. In *MM*, the Millennium Dome the subject of the film, does not stare back at you like the tower in *Sundial*, so much as take shape before your eyes to quite literally to devour the city. *MM* begins where *Sundial* left off, with the last shot of the blinking tower framing the beginning of this film. From this point, the film proceeds to detail the changing derelict urban landscape of southeast London over the course of the construction of the Millennium Dome. As such, the Dome is also treated in a similar way to the tower in *Sundial*, from a number of distinct fixed frame camera positions, through a less dense progression of shots, which take their time documenting the form through extended durations taking shape before our eyes, as a kind of while egg shell mound topped off with iron tower spikes. Raban also adds a new association into progression of shots, in the form of people as workers building the structure. In *MM*, people emerge briefly into the picture not only as construction workers bringing the building into being, but also from history, with the insertion of black and white photographs, still frames of the building site, which depict

another time when the site was located for another type of building.  The

suggestion by these shots is that the local population peering curiously into

the camera from the still photographs have always been supplanted by

unexplainable and perhaps capitalist force, which emerges in the form of

monstrous buildings to consume the urban landscape.[119]  As confirmation of

this idea, the final shots take a decidedly materialist turn with in-camera

dissolve and motion effects, an energetic and synergistic departure from the

previous fixed frame shots.  The idea conferred here is that the Blackwell

tunnel and highway, seemingly feed the streaming cars into the monstrous

dome.

In fact, the shots and framing of *Sundial* and *MM* could also be read as

Structural/Materialist inversions of the kinds of shots, framing and meaning,

characteristic of the early modernist documentary city film genre, and

formative films such as Charles Sheeler and Paul Strands *Manhatta* (1921).[120]

Comparatively *Manhatta* may be observed to romanticize the structures of the

city, in this case New York City and it's skyscrapers and daily commuters,

through a progression of picturesque shots, which survey New York from

above as a commercial entity of progress.  At the same time these views are

taken from oblique camera views, which alternatively angle down from the

extreme perspective of skyscraper height, to survey the city and it's people as

if it is a perfect system.  As Horak perceptively observes, *Manhatta* reads as

both modernist and romantic in that "...the subject is positioned in the oblique

perspectives of the modern skyscraper, but is simultaneously asked to view

technology as an event ideally in tune with the natural environment."[121]

However Raban doesn't romanticize the advent of urban regeneration in either of *Sundial* or *MM*, this is because his fixed-frame durational holds angling up, tend to defamiliarize the Millennium Dome and the tower from shot to shot, from the perspective of a long lens looking from a safe distance away, thereby adding to the idea of an alienating and dystopian architecture.

*A13* can also be observed to employ a similar method of intellectual montage combined with the Structural/Materialist durational long takes, which progressively builds from one shot to the next into an overall theme, which can subsequently be read as a critique of urban space and the project of urban regeneration going on in this location (themes introduced in *Sundial* and *MM*). For example, *A13* begins with the highway sequences that *MM* left of with, through a progression of shots over twelve minutes, which takes a closer look at the people and everyday life teeming in and around the development and building of the Lime house Road link in east London. Raban's camera takes us through this landscape, first stopping at a CCTV traffic control booth in which the stacked video monitors offer a dizzying cross section of rush hour traffic. This opening suggests that these views are constantly monitored and controlled, as a series of shots cut back and forth between the video views, and the more tangible live action street views of the roadway and rushing cars. Raban's camera then proceeds to take us through the urban and the everyday of East London, mounting a critique, from one shot sequence, to the next. In one sequence of shots, his car is stopped in traffic, we can see from inside the car looking out as from Raban's camera's perspective, which catches the top of his face, his eyes sometimes seeming to look into the

camera from his rear view mirror to detract our attention.  But as he more often looks out, we look and we watch the windshield cleaned by street kids, the last wipe of soap, revealing the tower in the distance – ever present.

In fact there is often a sense that Raban's camera is held very still in addition to being fixed to a tripod in many of these shots, being steadied by hand and standing back and out of the way, in a way confirming the filmmaker's immersion in social space, but also implying that the filmmaker's tentative camera keeps a distance between himself and what is in front of the camera, in a way creating a mental picture of being careful, which adds to the initial idea of being watched by the tower in the opening shots.  The technique of an intellectual montage of shots in dialogue from one shot to the next, is however most obvious in another sequence of shots, in which Raban takes us to a construction site where one sequence of shots show us a wrecking ball smashing an old brick building to bits.  This is closely observed and inter cut with shots of a large and strange architectural object made of steel being hoisted slowly upwards and into a place off screen.  Furthermore, this sequence of shots is cut together alternated with the wrecking ball shots, as if to imply that the wrecking ball has forcibly made a space for the monstrous architecture.  In the final shot in this sequence, the tower comes into view as the element is hoisted up, as if presiding over its placement.  In yet another sequence of shots, the tower looms over in the distance as a funeral procession of dated cars and horse and buggy pass into view and off screen, again under the looming eye of the tower.  Other shots include a group of men fishing by a riverbank.  The idea, which begins to accumulate with the

progression of these shots being that, in the shadow of the tower the lived and the material realm, gives way to a dystopian and alien construct.

In addition the technique of *intellectual montage*, Raban can also be observed to deploy a reflexive counter documentary technique – of turning the cameras gaze back onto the viewer, (picking up from *Sundial* and the tower staring back at the viewer), to make the viewer as much the object of the gaze as the viewing subject of the film – a disruptive gesture reminiscent of Warhol's *Screen Tests* and *Blowjob*,[122] which has the uncanny effect of making the viewer intensely aware of their own body outside of the filmic reality.  For example, in the opening shots set in a fish market, Raban's camera abruptly comes across a worker who does a double take looking directly into the camera, in part startled and wanting to avoid the camera and our gaze.  Not only are we made aware that we are watching a documentary in the making, but also of our own location within this scene as identified by the worker.  In another sequence of shots in an alleyway black market, Raban's camera can be observed to take a low angled perspective of the pop up stalls, its market goers, and sellers peddling goods.  A baby can be heard from our perspective behind the camera, and the association with this is that the camera is looking out from a baby carriage, and our own position, is always behind this and separate from what we hear and see.[123]  As if to reinforce a sense of transgression, again linking back to the theme of control and surveillance, a man spots the hidden camera and lunges angrily towards our view. In these shots, our attention immediately turns to interrogate our own condition of viewing.  In such instances however, Raban can be argued

to deploy this technique for a different purpose beyond simply foregrounding *film as film* and apperceptive spectatorship. This is because in the context of the other shot sequences, and the way in which these shots continuously lead us to the idea of an urban dystopia, the idea of the gaze turned back onto the viewer is not inconsistent with the idea that the tower represents a form of social control being exercised in the urban and the everyday. In other words, the looks back at the camera tend to reinforce an alienated urban condition rather than speak about an embodied awareness of our own alienated condition as connected with this reality.

## 3.3 Initial Conclusions and Further Questions

There are several issues, which come to light, in relation to the current blending of Structural/Materialist film practice and documentary. For example, at the time of writing this dissertation, the film medium occupies a precarious position in relation to the emergence and prominence of digital video technologies over the last decade. The connections between technology, style and history therefore pose an interesting set of questions including: how the theory and practice of film or video may be dependent upon the political stances taken by artists, but also interdependent with the emergence of new digital media and technology. Why for example do more artists prefer to work in film rather than video? How does this decision further impact upon the development of the original aesthetic practices of British Structural/Materialist film? In relation to the historical conditions of practice, another question, which

comes to mind is, how the conditions of actually filming in urban environments and cities such as London affect the mode of practice? For example, London is a city, which is ubiquitously known as one of the most surveilled cities in Europe, which raises the question of how these urban documentary projects are actually undertaken, in relation to the constraints of a surveillance society? What ethical, technical, legal or other considerations need to be made in order to accommodate practice, and how do these factors impact aesthetic development and style of these films? Questions such as these are beyond the scope of the PhD, but offer potential avenues for further research.

The goal of this chapter was to answer the question of how the aesthetic practices of the formative Structural/Materialist filmmakers namely, Malcolm Le Grice and Peter Gidal, have been developed towards documentary practice, since the emergence of the form in the sixties and seventies. In a sample of noteworthy films made by contemporary artist filmmakers who follow in the tradition of British Structural/Materialist film, what was found was, that there is a strong tendency in more recent work, towards a reflexive or anti-illusionist form of urban documentary practice. Some of the key differences between the formative filmmaker's methods and the methods of more recent practitioners are dependent upon variations in camerawork and editing. For example, Gidal's camera method is handheld and does not defamiliarize the object, in that way of Warhol's fixed frame camera. Le Grice's re-observations of the filmstrip are also not dependent upon the fixed frame, in that Le Grice's re-observations of the filmstrip entail observing in and around the cellular enclosures of the filmstrip, and therefore entail a form of

encounter with his material, or a form of participant observation/re-observation of the filmstrip, rather than a classic form of observation dependent upon the filmmaker maintaining an observational distance from his/her subject.  As a result, Le Grice's method engenders a lively and lived quality in the perceptual experience of his film.

Additionally, some of the methods employed by filmmakers in this reflexive form of urban documentary practice also bare further investigation. This includes, Raban's apperceptive and reflexive technique of hiding and revealing the presence of the camera and the filmmaker's position in social space.  For example, this technique is evident in the returned looks into the camera of social subjects in space.  In this way, Raban's deployment of the technique in *A13*, simultaneously foregrounds the act of documenting in the making, and furthers the overall thematic and conceptual development of his film, but at the same time, reinforces a separation between the viewing subject and object of the film.  Therefore, how might this technique be deployed as a means for collapsing these viewing positions, in order to convey a sense of urban and everyday collectivity or reflect back upon or interject a critical position in relation to lived urban and everyday experience? Another reflexive method worthy of further investigation is the audio track.

As illustrated in the analysis of Smith's *Girl Chewing Gum*, the element of sound can be deployed to suggest simultaneity of spaces, such as the entity of Smith the filmmaker/director making his presence known at once behind the camera, but also, the one who is in a field miles away. This technique was deployed for reflexive purposes, to make the viewer aware of

the filmmaker's authorial control over the process of representation.  In

hindsight, this technique entailed the viewer to shift between subjective and

objective positions.  In Gidal's *Room Film*, a similar effect was also achieved

in alternating spectatorship between onscreen and offscreen space, where the

onscreen experience entailed a form of subjective and immersive experience,

and the offscreen space offered an object break, and a space for

consolidation.  Comparatively, with Smith's technique, we are brought into

another place, time and urban reality, but we are also given an objective

space in which we are also encouraged to critically reflect upon the

filmmaker's role in constructing the reality before us.  This leads to the

question of how a similar subjective and objective approach might be shaped,

in order to bring us into an awareness of an urban and everyday reality, but

also create a more objective space from which we might also critically reflect

upon that experience, and our own spatiality or lived experiences in the urban

and the everyday?

The deployment of stillness and movement also calls for further

investigation.  The sense of movement either by being initiated by the

filmmaker through his camera, or as movement of the filmmaker's eye within

the film frame, tends to indicate a sense of the presence of the filmmaker in

his own film, engaged in the lived experience of an encounter with the object

of his practice.   For example Le Grice implies this as characteristic of his own

practice, when he refers to the filmmaker as the existential co-ordinator of the

film.[124]  For example, the reflexive mode of Structural/Materialist documentary

practice involves filming from the perspective of a fixed frame camera

position.  In this instance camera movement is rare.  The train carriage

sequence in Mirza and Butler's *The Exception and The Rule* comes to mind,

as does Smith's fixed camera position looking down into the street in *Worst*

*Case Scenario*, or the multiple shot fixed frame perspectives of the tower in

Raban's *Sundial*.   In a way, these shots involve the filmmaker creating a

distance between himself/herself and the filmed object, and therefore a

different experience to the idea of an existential coordinator as the operating

principle of the film.  Comparatively, Le Grice and Gidal's more gestural

methods of practice translate on screen to embodied modes of spectatorship

for the viewer.  In the context of an urban documentary practice, this

observation raises the question of how, either in the frame, or through camera

movement, an overall sense of movement can convey an embodied

epistemology, and even critical knowledge of urban and the everyday reality?

Overall, the identification of this reflexive blending of the codes of

Structural/Materialist film with documentary practice is important to make,

since in the context of this PhD, this identification signals a major way in

which the early British Structural/Materialist film aesthetic has been developed

into the present towards a form of documentary practice, which still maintains

close ties to the counter cinema polemics that characterized the theory and

practice of the early films.   However, it also becomes apparent that little

headway has been made in relation to the gestural practices of Le Grice and

Gidal, as another potential route for urban documentary practice, the potential

of which, would take the idea of a blending of Structural/Materialist film codes

and documentary in the direction of a more phenomenal based form of

documentary making.  For example, this form might entail another kind of

critical practice, which consolidates knowledge of the urban and the everyday,

based upon an accumulation of sensory, subjective and affective experiences,

which relate back to the existential relations of lived space.   Yet it is also

important to acknowledge that sensory and affective data is not knowledge in

and of it self, and requires further interpretation and assimilation, and

therefore, a level of objective practice as well, in order to make meaning.  This

is perhaps what Merleau-Ponty means, when he asserts that:

> ...perception is a nascent *logos*; that it teaches us, outside all
> dogmatism, the true conditions of objectivity itself; that it summons us
> to the tasks of knowledge and action.  It is not a question of reducing
> human knowledge to sensation, but of assisting at the birth of
> knowledge, to make it as sensible as the sensible, to recover the
> consciousness of rationality."[125]

A primary question, which then comes to mind is, how a more

interpretive based urban documentary practice might proceed, in terms of the

shaping of subjective and objective experiences for the viewer, through the

more gestural Structural/Materialist methods of Le Grice and Gidal?

## Chapter 4 – Interpreting Urban Space and The Everyday Through Video Practice

> The theoretical error is to be content to see a space without conceiving of it, without concentrating discrete perceptions by means of a mental act, without assembling details into a whole 'reality', without apprehending contents in terms of their interrelationships within the containing forms.[126]
>
> - Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 1991

The potential of Le Grice and Gidal's gestural methods of practice for an urban documentary practice, becomes more obvious when compared to the French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre's theory of space, which encompasses notions of urban space and the everyday, as well as a theory of rhythmanalysis for the analysis of space, since each promotes the direct experience of the phenomena of space, from a first person or individual point of view, while also acknowledging a more objective ground from which to situate and analyze such experiences.  In the case of Le Grice and Gidal's methods, this space involves the subjective and objective spatial relations, which result for the viewer, in the experience of the audio-visual phenomena of projected film.  In Lefebvre's theory of space this entails the theory that space is constituted in many social spaces, which offer a complex matrix of both subjective and objective experiences for the user inhabitants of space. This chapter therefore sets out to relate how Le Grice and Gidal's gestural methods of practice might also be deployed, for a documentary study, analysis and interpretation of this interplay of subjective and objective

experiences in the urban and the everyday, from the perspective of the filmmaker, but also incorporating the viewer as well. This chapter therefore begins with a discussion of the many facets of space according to Lefebvre including: the different kinds of spaces constituted in social space, the body's potential for spatial practice, the dynamic characteristics of space, as well as the conflictual and differential tendencies, that are required for the production of space.

A discussion of Lefebvre's theory of space then turns to, Lefebvre's practical theory of how to analyze space through a method of 'rhythmanalysis,' which Lefebvre articulates as a more conscious incorporation, interpretation and analysis of the rhythms of space, or the subjective and objective interplay of the lived relations of space, which are normally taken for granted, since these relations are practiced as they lived in the everyday. Since Lefebvre suggests that the methods of artists offer a viable way for interpreting the rhythms of space, the potential of Le Grice and Gidal's methods of practice, as potential methods for the rhythmanalysis of space is therefore examined. What is found is that Le Grice and Gidal's gestural methods of practice encourage both subjective and objective experiences for the film spectator, which are dependent upon an interplay audio and visual moving image experiences rather than the specificity of the film medium. Yet audio-visual moving image practice is also theoretically possible in other moving image mediums such as digital video. The final part of this chapter therefore engages in a documentary study through video practice, of the relations of space in two different urban locations (the London

Underground, and a neighbourhood in Brighton), by employing Le Grice's

close observational and participatory technique of re-observing and

processing of audio visual material, as well as Gidal's ambivalent camera

technique which entails control and chance actions with the camera while

being situated in and moving within an urban environment.

## 4.1 Lefebvre's Many Spaces

For the French Marxist sociologist, urban theorist, phenomenologist

and philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991), a relational conception of *space*,

which encompasses notions of *the everyday*, *everyday life* and *urban space*,

entails a number of social spaces.  As example, Lefebvre offers that upon

deeper analysis, the simple event of a woman buying a pound of sugar, can

disclose a whole host of relations and complex forms, which can't be grasped

through mere description alone.  In this way, the "social phenomena" of *the*

*everyday* and *everyday life* as Lefebvre characterizes it, has many sides – the

familiar taken for granted surface appearance of things, as well as what can

be disclosed in peeling back the layers of that surface.[127]  Lefebvre's notion of

the everyday therefore, is not a matter of perceiving the relations between

subjects and objects.  To this end Lefebvre emphasizes that what inevitably

constitutes the everyday, are a whole host of activities considered together,

not in isolation, and always coming back to a human element.

> Everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by 'what is left over' after all
> distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out

by analysis, must be defined as a totality. Considered in their specialization and their technicality, superior activities leave a 'technical vacuum' between one another which is filled up by everyday life. Everyday life is profoundly related to *all* activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human – and every human being – a whole takes its shape and its form. In it are expressed and fulfilled those relations which bring into play the totality of the real, albeit in a certain manner which is always partial and incomplete: friendship, comradeship, love, the need to communicate, play, etc.[128]

For Lefebvre, the idea that *the everyday* and *everyday life* includes not only rationalized structures but human ones as well, can be said to contribute to the larger problem of what he refers to as a: "unitary theory of space" and of "...exposing the actual production of space..."[129] which Lefebvre further develops in writings such as *The Production of Space* (1974). As Lefebvre asserts in this work: "Our chief concern is with space. The problematic of space, which subsumes the problems of the urban sphere (the city and its extensions) and of everyday life..."[130] In this context, Lefebvre challenges the idea of *space*, *urban space* and cities, as viewed in terms of a classical perspective or a container paradigm, into which objects are placed to introduce the idea of a relational theory of space. As Lefebvre asserts:

> Space is social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure. To picture space as a 'frame' or container into which nothing can be put unless it is smaller than the recipient, and to imagine that this container has no other purpose than to preserve what has been put in it – this is probably the initial error. But is it error, or is it ideology?[131]

Lefebvre therefore conceives of *(social) space* as not one space but many spaces, which are dynamic and in constant motion, and constantly

interacting, and aptly illustrates his theory with the analogy of hydrodynamic processes which correspond to an infinite number of *social spaces*, which exist in as he says: "...great movements, vast rhythms and immense waves colliding and interfering with one another, with lesser movements merging or being absorbed."[132]  Because of this, Lefebvre asserts that *social space* is: "...everything that there is *in space* everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation or through their conflicts."[133]  He also adds to this conception that, *(social) space* also implies *centrality*, and this is never more evident for Lefebvre, than with *urban space*, which he views as a culmination or a: "...nexus of social spaces as it gathers in crowds, products, acts, and symbols and concentrates them into a dialectical centrality."[134]  Therefore, in Lefebvre's conception of space which includes urban space and the everyday, no one element defines the whole, and because of this Lefebvre asserts that: "... space is neither a 'subject' nor an 'object' but rather a social reality  - that is to say, a set of relations and forms."[135]

In addition to identifying space as relational, Lefebvre also concludes that because space is relational this understanding must also allow that social reality entails correlations between natural, social, practical, and symbolic forms, which coexist in harmony, but also interfere and conflict.  From this understanding, Lefebvre's goes on to incorporate and categorize as many possible forms of social reality into a triad of space, consisting first of all of what he refers to as the: "spatial practice" of social subjects or the users/inhabitants of space, which amounts to a practical everyday realm

governed by routines and daily urban reality and everyday life.  For example,

Lefebvre offers that daily life in a tenement block apartment would entail a

kind of spatial practice.  Another category of space in Lefebvre's spatial triad

is constituted in what he refers to as: "representations of space."  For

Lefebvre, this is an abstract or conceptualized space for example, the space

of scientists, planners and technocrats, and artists of a "scientific bent."  It is

also a space of established relations, which strive towards uniformity.  As

such Lefebvre views this space as the dominant space in a given society.  A

final category of space which Lefebvre identifies is constituted in what he

refers to as: "representational spaces."  This is an historical space, the space

of the individual, whose origins are in a society.  As such, Lefebvre

characterizes this space as a space of imaginary and symbolic elements,

which are directly lived by the user/inhabitant, who strives to make this space

their own through social practice, and always in the context of the space of

representations.  As such, this is a dominated space for Lefebvre.  Together,

the relations of *spatial practice*, *representations of space* and *representational*

*space*, for Lefebvre form social reality.[136]

Lefebvrian scholar Christian Schmid, also aptly points out that

Lefebvre's approach to space is really a "two pronged approach" – on the one

hand linguistic and semiotic and therefore symbolic and representational, as

well as phenomenal, experiential and lived.[137]  As Schmid observes, it is

through the realms of the *perceived*, the *conceived* and the *lived,* whereby the

phenomena of the production of space are actively engaged, as both

individual and social processes.  In this way Schmid relates that for Lefebvre,

*perceived* space is the: "sensuously perceptible aspect of space (that) directly

relates to the materiality of the "elements" that constitute "space." " Moreover,

Schmid offers that *conceived* space prefigures *perceived* space in that:

"space cannot be perceived as such without having been conceived in thought

previously." In other words, language and symbols, allow us to name the

things we experience. As for *lived* space, Schmid points out that for Lefebvre:

"...this is the dimension experienced by human beings in the practice of

everyday life" and as such, it always holds a human residue which can't be

rationalized or theorized but as Schmid observes of Lefebvre: "only expressed

through artistic means."[138]

## 4.1.1 The Spatial Body

Lefebvre also qualifies that, from the perspective of the user/inhabitant,

the relations of *spatial practice*, *representations of space* and *representational*

*space*, are also experienced from one moment to the next, through another

set of relations across "three moments of space," as interconnected realms of

"perceived", "conceived" and "lived" experience. To give an example of what

Lefebvre means by these *three moments of social space*, he offers that it is

helpful to consider the body – that "*social practice* presupposes the use of a

body: the use of hands, members and sensory organs, and the gestures of

work as of activity unrelated to work." But added to this moment of social

space, must be the consideration that while this space is experienced through

the realm of *perceived* experience "with a practical perception of the outside

world..." the body also exists in a space of *representations*, the more

dominant space of experts and "accumulated scientific knowledge" which

Lefebvre goes on to delineate further as "a peculiar admixture of ideology:

from scientific knowledge of anatomy, of physiology, of sickness and its cure,

and of the body's relations with nature and with its surroundings or 'milieu'."

As for the lived experience of the body, Lefebvre further adds that *lived* bodily

experience also comes under the influence of culture and its "symbolisms."

So for example, Lefebvre offers that: "The 'heart' as *lived* is strangely different

from the heart as *thought* and *perceived*."[139]

Another consideration is that of the body, which Lefebvre refers to as

an element that is as much produced as it produces.  For example, Lefebvre

asks:

> Can the body with its capacity for action, and its various energies, be said to create space? Assuredly, but not in the sense that occupation might be said to 'manufacture' spatiality; rather, there is an immediate relationship between the body and its space, between the body's deployment in space ad its occupation of space.  Before producing effects in the material realm (tools and objects), before producing itself by drawing nourishment from that realm, and before reproducing itself by generating other bodies, each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space.[140]

In other words, this "spatial body" is as much a product of a kind of

energy as it is capable of producing and reproducing its own kinds of energies

in its general environment.  It is as much susceptible to change and process

as it is of creating such effects.  One has only to think of Lefebvre's analogy of

hydrodynamics and ripple effects, in order to understand the *spatial body* in

*social space – space* as an infinite number of *social spaces*, which exist in

"great movements, vast rhythms and immense waves colliding and interfering

with one another, with lesser movements merging or being absorbed."[141]

Because of this, Lefebvre asserts that *social space* is "everything that there is

*in space* everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either

through their co-operation or through their conflicts."[142] Space includes then,

the *spatial body*, or what may also be thought of as the user/inhabitant.

### 4.1.2 Conflicts in Space

While the idea of a number of *(social) spaces* colliding and interacting

implies homogenized space, Lefebvre also specifies that *(social) space/space*

harbours spatial contradictions that arise from the conditions of abstract space

– the space of representations, which is also a given.  However, by the same

token, abstract space is also a necessary condition for a differential and new

space to emerge. As Lefebvre says:

> The reproduction of the social relations of production within this space
> inevitably obeys two tendencies: the dissolution of old relations on the
> one hand and the generation of new relations on the other.  Thus,
> despite – or rather because of – its negativity, abstract space carries
> within itself the seeds of a new kind of space.  I shall call that new
> space 'differential space,' because, inasmuch as abstract space tends
> towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or
> peculiarities, a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it
> accentuates differences.  It will also restore unity to what abstract
> space breaks up – to the functions, elements and moments of social
> practice.[143]

For this reason, *space* is not homogenous.  As Lefebvre says: "A

homogenous and utterly simultaneous space would be strictly imperceptible.

It would lack the conflictual component (always resolved but always at least

suggested) of the contrast between symmetry and asymmetry."[144]  In fact,

Lefebvre goes on to say that abstract space tends to break up space towards a kind of homogenization which "misapprehends the social practice of the 'users' and the ideology that it itself enshrines...forging the unity into which all the programmed fragments must be integrated, no matter what the cost."[145] In this way *space* gives rise to conflicts when "two disconnected contents each from its own angle of approach, tend towards a single form (organization)."[146] Conflicts in space might therefore be understood to make *space* transparent, or to reveal *space* for what it is.  Yet in spite of this fragmenting and reconstituting and rationalizing of *space,* which abstract space entails, spatial contradictions are not anomalous or meaningless forms that simply assert themselves and then dissipate.  When it comes to an urban condition, Lefebvre theorizes that the tendency is towards "...a measure of democracy"[147] or, a reaction on the part of users or inhabitants against lived experience which is primarily lived in terms of the precepts of abstract space. Interestingly, Lefebvre also observes on a more dystopian note, that there is also the potential inability for a differential space to emerge.  As Lefebvre says, "...one of the deepest conflicts immanent to space is that space as actually 'experienced' prohibits the expression of conflicts."[148]  For this reason, the apprehension and decoding of space is vitally important to the process of democracy, and therefore an important basis for an urban documentary practice, which engages in the problem of how we live in the urban and the everyday.

### 4.1.3  The Phenomena of the User/Inhabitant's Subjectivity in Relation to Lived Space

One final consideration in Lefebvre's theory of space, which has importance for the development of a method of documentary practice is, that in addition to the idea that space entails a number of social spaces, is not homogenous, can harbour conflicts, and involves an overall triadic tendency; that it is also as much in our nature to structure ourselves as a subject in our immediate environment, as it is in our daily existence to be designated as such, through the apparatus of the state and society.  In relation to this, Lefebvre acknowledges that the actual lived experience of space or the way in which space is apprehended by its user/inhabitants can also be dualistic in nature.[149]  Yet, Lefebvre does not mean this in the classical sense of a bifurcation of space into social subjects and objects from the user/inhabitants perspective, but offers that some separation is necessary for language and apprehension to take place.  In this way Lefebvre offers that space plays a mediating function in terms of consolidating our apprehension of a-something-else.  In this way, Lefebvre describes the user/inhabitants apprehension of space in terms of a going back and forth between what he refers to as: "two sensory fields", rather than divisions of subject and object, through a continual process of deciphering and enlightenment, much like the contrast between experiencing the reflection of a mirror reflection and mirage effect.  According to Lefebvre, the user/inhabitants of space apprehend space through an implicit everyday practice, which entails the interplay between subjective and objective relations.  As a result, the meaning or consciousness of space can't be determined prior to the lived experience of space, but rather is a result of

this interplay.  As Lefebvre describes of this process:

> Were it not for this dual aspect and natural/social space, how could we understand language itself? 'Nature' can only be apprehended through objects and shapes, but this perception occurs within an overall context of illumination where bodies pass from their natural obscurity into the light, not in an arbitrary manner but according to a specific sequence, order or articulation. Where natural space exists, and even more so where social space exists, the movement from obscurity to enlightenment – the process of decipherment – is perpetual.  It is in fact part and parcel of the way in which the existence of space is established.  This incessant deciphering activity is objective as much as subjective – in which respect it indeed transcends the old philosophical distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. It becomes more acute as soon as concealed parts of space (the internal portions of things and things outside the field of perception) come to have associated with themselves symbols, or corresponding signs or indices, which are often tabooed, holy/evil, revelatory or occult. It is in this sense that it cannot be properly described as either a subjective or an objective, a conscious or an unconscious, activity" rather, it is an activity which serves to generate consciousness: messages, by virtue of space and of the interplay of reflections and mirages within it, are intrinsic to lived experience itself.[150]

### 4.1.4  Space as Rhythmic, and the Rhythmanalysis of Space

Moreover, because of this perpetual interplay of subjective and objective relations, Lefebvre therefore characterizes space as rhythmic, incorporating the body as an equally rhythm producing form, and draws an analogy to hydrodynamic process in order to illustrate this idea of the interrelationships of forms in space.  As example Lefebvre submits:

> Rhythms in all their multiplicity interpenetrate one another.  In the body and around it, as on the surface of a body of water, or within the mass of a liquid, rhythms are forever crossing and recrossing, superimposing themselves upon each other, always bound to space.[151]

Moreover, since space is rhythmic in nature, Lefebvre also concludes

that an equally rhythmic method is required, in order to address as he says:

"...the concrete reality of rhythms and perhaps even to their use (or

appropriation)."[152]  In this regard, Lefebvre proposes a form of  "rhythm

analysis" is required in order to decode space, which isn't really a method in

the way of an analytical and structured process of thought, but rather,

incorporates what he refers to as a: "polyrhythmic body" in which all manner

of rhythms, rhythm production and their effects as he says: "...interact as the

'ether' is traversed by waves."[153]  In other words, Lefebvre does not imagine a

one-sided analytical project in which the body becomes a focal point of space.

For example, in the example of dance, Lefebvre sees the possibility of a

method of rhythm analysis which incorporates a "gestural system" of the

codes of the dancer and the spectator who become interrelated through what

Lefebvre refers to as: "evocative (paradigmatic) gestures [which as they recur,

become] integrated into a ritually linked gestural chain"[154]  In this way, the

lived and conceived are proximal for Lefebvre, as he asserts:

> What we live are rhythms - rhythms experienced subjectively.  Which
> means that, here at least, 'lived and 'conceived' are close: the laws of
> nature and the laws governing our bodies tend to overlap with each
> other – as perhaps too with the laws of so- called social reality.[155]

Another example of a form of rhythm analysis which Lefebvre's offers,

can be found in the approach to drawing and painting by the Swiss German

painter Paul Klee  (1879-1940).  As Lefebvre says of Klee's anti-classical

approach to space: "...for Klee thought, guided by the eye and projecting itself

onto the painted surface, actually revolves around the object in order to

situate it."[156]  As Lefebvre's example demonstrates, Klee's method entails a

lived practical immersion in space with objects (or one another) but also simultaneously the situating action. In fact Lefebvre consolidates this method of rhythm analysis, in his portrait of the "rhythmanalyst." As Lefebvre further conceives:

> The rhythmanalyst calls on all his senses. He draws on his breathing, the circulation of his blood, the beatings of his heart and the delivery of his speech as landmarks. Without privileging any one of these sensations, raised by him in the perception of rhythms, to the detriment of any other. He thinks with his body, not in the abstract, but in lived temporality.[157]

Yet in addition the immersion of the analyst's body as a polyrhythmic body in space, Lefebvre also recognizes the perpetual interplay of the subjective and objective relations of lived space, such that he specifies that one does not give oneself over fully to experience and sensation. Lefebvre therefore qualifies that in practice, rhythmanalysis also requires exteriority. As Lefebvre further describes of this method:

> In order to grasp and analyse rhythms, it is necessary to get outside them, but not completely: be it through illness or a technique. A certain exteriority enables the analytic intellect to function. However, to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been *grasped* by it; one must *let oneself go*, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration.[158]

**4.2    The Rhythm Producing Potentiality of Structural/Materialist Methods of Film**

**4.2.1   Le Grice's Re-observation and Re-processing of the Filmstrip as a Method of Rhythmanalysis**

As evidenced in Chapter 2, the boundary between subject and object positions were found to be dissolved in at least two ways in the films *Little Dog For Roger* and *Room Film*.  For example, In Le Grice's method of practice, the filmmaker's subjective re-observations and optical re-processing of the film strip, resulted in rhythmic and arrhythmic movements, gestures and sounds, which become embodied by the viewer, thereby forging an intersubjective relationship between the viewer and filmmaker. Comparatively, this may be said to be similar to the way in which Lefebvre theorizes how space is lived by user/inhabitants, as a perpetual interplay of subjective and objective relations. For example, as the image of the dog running on the filmstrip skids and skips and flips over, with the frozen image of the dog suspended in mid air, the viewer comes to live and embody these gestures, which are also echoed in the soundtrack, as the sense of childhood experiences long past.  But this experience is not only about sensory experiences or sensation alone.  The objective relations which the viewer also engages in, are experienced in relation to embodying these gestural movements in tandem with moments of slippage, where we hover between an awareness of the actual filmstrip and it's projection, in those moments that occur between the frozen image of the dog suspended in mid air, just before

the next variation of movements and gestures occur. In this way the whole experience avoids a stream or flow of sensory and purely subjective data, and each experience accumulates from one experience to the next. The culmination arrives in the sense of nostalgia, or a utopian desire to recuperate those lost sensations of our own childhood, accompanied at the same time by the objective knowledge that our existence is always transient.

From the practical side of things, how Le Grice actually performs this method of "rhythmanalysis" in relation to the filmstrip, can be said to be similar to the way in which the film is actually experienced by the viewer subjectively-objectively. In this regard it is possible to imagine the filmmaker "grasped" in observing and re-photographing each cycle of the dog running and grasped by the phenomena of the material of film and the elements of this material including the images in movement. Perhaps the evidence of this is in the way that, we as the viewer, also become grasped and entangled within the gestural movements in the chain of repetitions of the sequence of the dog running in the film, which it should be noted, are not entirely identical in terms of how they are composed from one sequence to the next. Yet there is also the idea that somehow Le Grice must be structuring these sequences together while making certain (objective) decisions as to how many sequences the film should actually entail. But is this a before hand decision or a decision based upon the codes of Structural/Materialist film practice and the axiom of treating film as a material piece of time? In this way, the temporal outcome of these repetitions being dependent upon the actual length of the filmstrip which Le Grice works with and therefore an event structured by

another set of circumstances or reality.  More than likely this also comes into play as part of the whole process.

As previously seen, Le Grice has tended to downplay the nostalgic effect of the film, suggesting that the artist did not try to program the sense of nostalgia into the film experience beforehand. Because of this, the culmination of decisions that contribute to the gestural rhythms of the film, which include the rhythmic sequences and the moments of transition between sequences, are perhaps the result of what Lefebvre refers to as the perpetual interplay of subjective and objective experience, which the filmmaker established during the process of the lived experience of making the film.  In this case, these repetitions may be said to become the sort of gestural chain in the way of the rhythms of dance, which Lefebvre speaks of, which in this case, engenders a blending of the codes of the filmmaker with the codes of the viewer, or in other words, an intersubjective connection between filmmaker and the "object" of his practice which is the filmstrip and the content on the filmstrip, which is then experienced/lived and embodied by the viewer, intersubjectively between filmmaker and viewer.  These are in fact a set of conditions, which Lefebvre deems are necessary for a rhythm analysis and the lived experience of space in addition to a measure of objective distance.  Le Grice's method of practice could therefore accommodate the interplay of objective and subjective spatial relations, which Lefebvre theorizes as inherent in our lived experience of space.

### 4.2.2  Gidal's Equivocal Hand Held Camera as a Method of Rhythmanalysis

As also evidenced in Chapter 2, Gidal's method of practice was found to dissolve subject boundaries in a similar but different way to Le Grice's method and can also be said to involve a perpetual interplay of subjective and objective experiences for the viewer much like Lefebvre's user/inhabitants experiences of lived space.  In *Room Film* this transpires in a different way to Le Grice's approach in the way that Gidal adopts an ambivalent system of camerawork positioned in relation to a content-less environment in the space of a poorly lit room.  In some ways this is the antithesis of Le Grice's system. It might be said that in Gidal's system, the filmmaker's immersion in space is constituted in inaction, which is arguably as much an intentional action rather than a non-action, and therefore a different kind of rhythm production.  This rhythm becomes evident as the film progresses and the subtle movements of the camera take shape as an ambivalent neither here nor there presence on screen, which the viewer embodies, therefore forging the shared subjectivity between filmmaker and viewer, which is essential to Lefebvre's idea of rhythmanalysis.  However this shared subjectivity is characterized in Gidal's film in a different way to Le Grice's film, in that instead of freely giving oneself over to the lived experience of the overall movements of the film, what ensues is a struggle for the viewer against being entirely absorbed into the filmmaker's perspective, which is especially felt during moments in the film when the filmmaker produces effects of light, which sever the bond between in allowing the viewer brief opportunities to apprehend the room for him/herself

through brief moments of illumination or flashes of light. This is followed quickly by a return to a reduced field of vision, in which we fall back into the shared subjectivity and control of the filmmaker through the embodied experience and struggle, with those aimless movements in the near dark room.

The alteration between subjective and intersubjective experience is a re occurring pattern in the process of viewing the *Room Film*, as is another experience which occurs at moments of transition between beginning and end of film reels, which call to mind similar transitions in *Little Dog For Roger*. The result in this case being an apprehension of screen surface, functioning to bring our awareness back to our present condition of viewing the film, and of being outside of the room of Gidal's *Room Film*, to some relief. In Le Grice's film, such moments contributed to the accumulation of instances and experiences of perceptual memory. In *Room Film*, the accumulation of these instances of struggling and release if anything, accumulate through their repetitions and moments of release, to a point where the experience becomes an anxious and existential struggle. In comparison to *Little Dog For Roger*, the rhythms of *Room Film* are not easy, in terms of giving oneself over to the experience and perhaps this is the point, which suggests that much like Lefebvre's assertion that space has the potential to harbour spatial contradictions, the experience of a film in this way through this interplay of subjective and objective relations, can also engender such contradictions, especially in relation to the lived experience of abstract space. However as Lefebvre also says, by the same token, abstract space is also a necessary

condition for a differential and new space to emerge. What Gidal's method of film shows us then, is another kind of circumstance of rhythmanalysis – and the potential of a form of rhythmanalysis which can draw out or decode the lived experience of the everyday, in order to recognize and change it for the better.

Practically speaking, how Gidal accomplishes this interplay of subjective, intersubjective and objective relations can be conjectured to be a result of at least four variables at work in his technique, set into opposition and in relation to momentary breaks or ruptures which take us outside of the audio-visual experience. These are: the intentional hand held camera versus an unintentional hand held camera, indeterminate lighting conditions versus determinate light through the appearance of momentary bursts of light equal to the sense of a light being switched on, and/or the control of the film exposure in the camera being increased. In the first oppositional pairing of techniques, there is a sense of a tentative and exploratory hand held camera immersed into an indiscernible environment/the room, in which we formulate more of a perceptual understanding of the space, rather than an optical and clear view of the room and it's contents. This is not so much a method of close observations as it is an unplanned encounter, as mediated through the movements of the camera linked to the body, and the conditions of light or a lack of light in the room. The feeling this generates for the viewer is a feeling being submerged into the confines of a recently inhabited or once inhabited personal space. In opposition to this technique is a more controlled sense of the camera, as if the hand on the camera forcefully changes its mind in terms

of direction or movement.  This results in a feeling of being pulled in a direction, which is not entirely under our own control.

This tug-o-war of subjectivity is also apparent in the treatment of light or lack of light in the environment.  Whether the lighting conditions are enacted by the artist switching a light on and off in the room, or a result of the flare out of a film reel as it comes to an end, or an over exposure of film in the camera, these alternations also result in sense of working with and against the filmmaker's subjectivity.  However, a moment of reprieve or rupture actually occurs when the film flares out to an empty whiteness, which usually signals the end of a film reel, alongside this, the crackly sounds of projection become apparent.  The sounds have the effect of bringing our attention back to us in the place that we are viewing the film, and provides a moment to collect one's thoughts in order to consolidate the previous experiences. This moment also ensures that the entire experience is not reduced to a singular sensory experience of struggle.  Therefore, in a way, these techniques enact Lefebvre's assertion that lived space is not homogenous, but always in the process of becoming a differential space.  Gidal's method of practice therefore seems especially apt as a method for decoding conflictual nature or experiences of space.

### 4.2.3 The Rhythmic, Subjective and Objective Interplay of Sounds and Images in Le Grice and Gidal's Methods of Film

As a gestural practice, which is dependent upon immersive observation, movement and timing, I have suggested that Le Grice's method

of film, and the observation/re-observation and photography of the film strip, is not entirely dependent upon the specificity of film for it's overall effect on the viewer. The same argument can also be made in relation to Gidal's method of film and the immersion of the filmmaker and ambivalent hand held camera technique in this being a physical action (or inaction), and therefore also not dependent upon the specificity of film. Yet there are also alternations in subjectivity, which occur in each film, which are as is the case in Gidal's film, apprehended during moments of flashes of light, which are accompanied by crackly sounds. In fact the crackly sounds are more noticeable during these moments in the film, but can always be heard throughout the film, seeming to emanate at times from animated dots and steaks of light that scatter across the screen. There are even moments in *Room Film* where the audio level seems to be turned up, as if to emphasize the crackly sounds, but other than this the sound is consistent throughout the film, with our perception of the sound it seems altering in relation to changes in the image. In *Little Dog For Roger*, moments of alternation in our perception occur during moments of a kind of silent frozen black to white double pause, which sometimes occurs after the music transitions out, or when there is no music to accompany the images, but the sound is always present most times as a low barely audible hum, which persists throughout the film, and is more noticeable when the music is absent. Similar to *Room Film*, these two sounds in the film seem to alter in relation to what is occurring in the image. In both films, the treatment of sound in relation to the perceptual content and images must also be considered as integral to each artist's method – a convergence of sound and

images, which creates a kind of rhythm in alternating our sensibility between subjective and objective perspectives, which wouldn't be present if the images in movement and the sounds together remained homogenous.

In other words, the rhythmic interplay of subjective and objective relations that stems from Gidal's technique can be said to be a result of the ambivalent hand held camera immersed in an environment from which the perceptual images emerge, in relation to the ambient sounds of film projection as experienced by the viewer. The rhythm of Le Grice's technique involves a gestural practice of re-photography of the filmstrip in conjunction with music, as well as the ambient sounds of film projection experienced subjectively-objectively by the viewer. In one way, it could be argued that these alterations function to bring the viewer into an objective awareness of watching a film, thereby alternating the viewer's experience of the film between subjective and objective experiences – between the experience of being in the room and being taken out of it into our own present moment and space in the cinema – or simply that of an experience of moving between real and imaginary space.

Such moments of interplay between subjective and objective experience are arguably not exclusive to film, but rather appear to be the product of a technique, which exploits the spatial and rhythmic possibilities of sound and image together. For example, the French sound theorist and experimental sound practitioner Michel Chion asserts that the image "magnetizes sound in space." In this way, Chion proposes that sound enters into a direct relationship with the film frame and the content, but is simultaneously not bound spatially in the same way that the images are to the

frame. In this way sound can take on a number of characteristics. For

example, it can be "synchronous and onscreen" or "wander at the surface and

on the edges as offscreen" or it can exist outside the frame as is the case with

nondiegetic music and voice over.[159]  But this perceived movement of sound

is more of a psychological, or mental phenomena, rather than a result of the

sound actually being physically moved around the screen and outside the

screen.[160]  As a result, this spatial potential of sound in relation to the moving

image, results in the possibility for movements or shifts in our perspective

between the "past, present and future," between the "objective and

subjective," or "real and imagined," in the apprehension of oppositions

between non-visualized and visualized sound on screen.[161]  According to

Chion, the element of sound with the most spatial pliability is music with the

potential to "[communicate] with all times and all spaces of a film even as it

leaves them to their separate and distinct existences.[162]  If anything then, the

treatment of sound in each of these films, whether it is derived from the

projection of film, or in the addition of music in conjunction with the content in

the frame, leads to our apprehension of sound in relation to the content in the

frame, where each artist's method of film can be said to become a rhythmic

method of film, in the way that the viewer enters into a perpetual interplay of

subjective and objective relations through the relations of sound and image.

### 4.2.4  A Theory of Rhythmanalysis for Video Practice

Since film is not the only moving image format which can incorporate

sound and moving images, it goes without saying that the possibility of

deploying sound and moving images together, so as to engender this rhythmic interplay of objective and subjective relations for the viewer which relate back to the lived experience of space should also be possible in other moving image formats. To recall, Lefebvre asserts that, "rhythmanalysis" requires a rhythm producing form, in order to interpret/decode the rhythms of space rhythmically, to which he has offered the examples of drawing/painting, dance and even the spoken word. Chion's theory also suggests that the spatial phenomena and experience of sound in relation to moving images, as a mental/cognitive or psychological factor is not a phenomena, which is specific to film. This means that the moving images and sounds possible with video as a time-based medium, should also have the potential to incorporate sounds and images rhythmically, and to be perceived rhythmically, and would therefore also be equal to the task of a rhythmanalysis of space, by way of an application or transposition of each of these artist's rhythmical methods of film practice into video practice.

A rhythmanalysis of urban and everyday space – or simply space, was put into practice in this dissertation in the context of three urban settings by adapting the methods of Gidal and Le Grice's rhythmic Structural/Materialist film practice. For example, Gidal's gestural technique was adapted for a rhythmanalysis of the London Underground through video practice. The first study entailed recording video on location, and adapting Gidal's ambivalent camera technique, which included walking through and observing Westminster Tube station with a video camera, and alternating this Gidal's less controlled method of camerawork, in allowing for the space and the

conditions of the structural layout of the tube station, to direct the walking and the camera's observations.  In 2010, I came back to the captured footage, and re-observed and re-processed a section of the original footage, highlighting and looping one sequence of escalators.  This also included a similar way of working with the ambient location sounds.  I also altered the digital frame rate to slow the footage down about half speed.  Moreover, these processes were not randomly applied, but applied as ways to access the memory of the moods of the time, and therefore as ways to engender a similar experience for the viewer through spectatorship.  A second edit also entailed the addition of musical content as a way to also encourage a similar experience.

In addition, Le Grice's gestural practice was adapted for a rhythmanalysis of an urban neighbourhood in Brighton, UK.  This culminated in two studies.  The first study was set within a view of private walled terrace gardens, bordered by domestic lived space, an office building, car park and tower block located in Kemptown Brighton.  This was worked from 2006-2009. The second setting was the reverse side of this garden view, positioned from the front of the terraces, and overlooking a street and public park (Dorset Gardens). This study was worked on from 2008-2010.  Together, these studies entailed a similar approach to the Underground studies, in terms of observing an environment and capturing footage, however the observational process in the terraced garden study was aligned more closely with Le Grice's method, and did not involve a traveling camera.  Instead, these studies involved a number of instances re-observing and re-processing of the footage and audio-visual content through digital editing, as a method for isolating,

analyzing and interpreting the events and experiences of each setting, as directly observed and then re-observed.  Moreover, throughout this process, it eventually became possible to decode/interpret each of these spaces.  In this way meaning in each of these locations was not pre-determined ahead of the observational process, but was arrived at through the process of practice.  A discussion of the methods of practice for each location study is detailed in the following sections.  The accompanying video work on DVD discs, and the visual documentation, are included at the back of this dissertation.

## 4.3  The Rhythmanalysis of Urban and Everyday Space: Practical Work and Documentation

> From my window overlooking courtyards and gardens, the view and the supply of space are very different.  Overlooking the gardens, the differences between habitual (daily, therefore linked to night and day) rhythms blur; they seem to disappear into a sculptural immobility. Except, of course, the sun and the shadows, the well lit and the gloomy corners, quite cursory contrasts.  But look at those trees, those lawns, and those groves.  To your eyes they situate themselves in a permanence, in a spatial simultaneity, in a coexistence.  But look harder and longer.  This simultaneity, up to a certain point, is only apparent: a surface, a spectacle.  Go deeper, dig beneath the surface, listen attentively instead of simply looking, of reflecting the effects of a mirror.[163]

### 4.3.1  Study 1 – Dorset Gardens: back view, terraced gardens

This first urban setting studied, was set in Kemptown Brighton, in a neighbourhood block bordered by a public park to the west, St. James Street to the south, Edward Street to the north, and High Street to the east. Google Maps (2013), in the documentation represents the location of Dorset Gardens

in relation to these streets.[164]  Also Google Maps (2011) in the documentation presents a view of the urban setting from a perspective, which looks back at the camera view from Ardingly Court.[165]  From a third floor window looking out to the west, can be seen an office block and the workers sitting at their desks behind open blinds. On very bright and sunny days the windows are like mirrors, which reflect sky and clouds and landscape.  I imagine the office workers can see out into the derelict gardens below, just as I can with some degree of anonymity.  On gloomy overcast days, there is little privacy in looking out the window, and most curtains are drawn.  Looking to the east, a tower block of apartments looms in the distance.  Its façade is in constant repair, with scaffolding and workers climbing up and down its geometrical surface.  The noises of tapping hammers, drills and a mechanical lift, which crawls up and down the side of the apartments, are all carried over the landscape and in through open windows.  In the foreground, a strip of parking garage rooftops creates a landing strip for the resident seagulls – this location being only steps from the sea – they plod back and forth like the cardboard cutouts in a fairway shooting gallery. On any given day it's hard to find any of the gardens in use by people, some of which are overgrown and tangled, spilling over the confines of the walls.  In fact most of the human activity seems to be centered on building work, and the maintenance of the precarious state of things.

Most of these everyday occurrences were captured from a fixed frame tripod camera, with omni directional sync sound recorded simultaneously to videotape.  The method of observation involved observing the landscape from

an un-obscured and open window overlooking the terraced gardens and urban setting. Also, the duration of everyday events was closely observed, often linking from one event to the next through the occurrence of natural transitions within the landscape, whether this was due to conditions of light or some other activity or occurrence. A number of observations were made over the course of the spring and summer of 2006, and amounted to a small archive of videotape, which then became source material for a "gestural method" of closer re- observations, compositing and editing together of sequences. Based on the re-observations and re-listening for that matter, to the source material, a number of different rhythms became more apparent. In particular the earlier noted occurrence and effect of light conditions on the landscape and buildings. The task then became to weave together the objective and subjective relations I experienced in being in and living in this place - the concrete, sensory and affective dimensions and feelings or mood of the place.

For example, the normally derelict garden setting would become activated on certain days, when a combination of bright sun and sky, clouds and wind generated an effect (more than likely due to the proximity of this setting to the sea), of enlivening the setting in a number of ways, from a more noticeable pick up in construction activity, to the overgrown garden vegetation taking on a teeming quality, to more sharp and alternating contrast in of light and shade passing over the landscape and buildings. The whole effect, lending a day, a long and drawn out feeling. Yet in contrast to this, it could also be said that, as the outdoor setting came to life under such conditions,

the buildings, which bordered the setting, took on a monumental feeling, and a feeling of withholding their inner contents and the human activity, behind the rows of blank reflecting windows.  Because of this, my engagement with the landscape through the camera, through the window, became a simultaneous position of being part inside and outside the two spaces at once.  One space defined by being able to look out into the landscape with a degree of anonymity, the other by being revealed in the act of looking, to anyone in either of the buildings or in the urban landscape setting, but at the same time not knowing who was actually watching me.  As it happened, this paradox, which could have been accounted to the weather, the mixed use urban layout, the culture of construction workers, the culture of surveillance in the UK, or all of these things and more, quickly led to an altercation involving a few angry construction workers issuing screaming threats and rants of being surveilled. This event naturally concluded the fieldwork observations in this location, and led to an uneasy feeling about ever opening my window again.

As I began to edit the sounds and images together, these occurrences began to figure into the process of editing together images and sounds.   In order to convey the objective - subjective relations experienced in this environment, the sense of time drawing out, and a feeling of being watched, I applied motion effects to the images and sounds simultaneously.  This involved a working into the timing of an action or event, sometimes looping and repeating small sequences of movements as was the case with one figure on the building, sometimes slowing a movement down near the end of it's completion, as was the case with a flying bird, or creating a stop motion freeze

frame effect on a single figure. The natural or ambient sounds of the

environment were also worked with in a similar way.  Correspondingly, I also

blended these rendered sequences of image and sound with the real sounds

as recorded, so often the soundtrack slips between objective and subjective

experiences of the soundtrack, through a musical flourish or tone.

Through the process of re-observing editing and compositing, the

interpretation of space or the decoded space, which I came to in this study,

was that this derelict and uninhabited space, was actually highly charged, in

terms of it's code of looking, where unsanctioned and hidden looking, seems

to preside over the human desire to engage in looking as a creative and

restorative act. For this reason I tried to balance these two sensibilities in the

practice.

**(Please view disc one).**

### 4.3.2  Study 2 – Dorset Gardens: Street View With Park

> He who walks down the street, over there, is immersed in the multiplicity
> of noises, murmurs, rhythms (including those of the body, but does he
> pay attention, except at the moment of crossing the street, when he has
> to calculate roughly the number of his steps?).  By contrast, from the
> window, the noises distinguish themselves, the flows separate out,
> rhythms respond to one another.[166]

The second study took place on the opposite side of this strip of terraced

gardens, from the front view of the buildings looking onto a busy street and

public park.  Google Maps (2009) in the documentation represents the camera

location from 10 Dorset Gardens in relation to the street and park.[167]  Facing

west, with the seaside and busy seafront down the road, off of a main

shopping street, this urban setting is never quiet or still.  Because of the

proximity of the window to the street, there seemed to be less of a barrier

between the outside sounds and noises of people and cars passing by, with

that of the interior space, the two spaces often fusing sonically into one.  From

the north, west and east, the public park is the dominant element in the

landscape, which becomes a centre of activity on the bright and sunny days.

The voices of weekenders in from London and tourists who find their way to

the seafront are often in search of day parking creating a clash for spaces

with the local apartment dwellers.  The park also becomes a hub of activity,

with people playing ball games and walking dogs, even though there are all

kinds of signs around the park prohibiting just those activities.  Most of the

people engaged in these activities observably occupy the south end of the

park, while the north end of the park corner is where the homeless people

tend to set up tents or roll out a sleeping bag.  On hot days this corner

becomes somewhat crowded and noisy.  In this way the middle of the park

could be said to be a contentious zone.  Mothers pull their children back from

crossing an imaginary line.  Whenever, a homeless or drunk person enters

this zone, there is always a police officer there to take that person aside for a

disciplinary, yet polite talk.  From the sidewalk below, people assemble and

disperse regularly, with snippets of their conversation entering through the

window, punctuated by the startling interruptions of angry traffic.  Closing the

window doesn't help much to filter out the cacophony of noise that emanates from the park, street and sidewalk, especially on bright and sunny days.  At night a different atmosphere noticeably takes over.  The park empties, the side street parking spaces fill to capacity, the children are tucked safe inside, and the noises which emanate from the street and park below, become more aggressive and desperate as the night wears on.

This urban setting was also approached from the perspective of a gestural and rhythmic method of practice, which entailed observations with a fixed tripod camera and re-listening and re-observations and compositing of the resulting footage. However in this case, the public-ness of the setting, the presence of children, the ethical consideration of videotaping people without their knowing, and general safety concerns, led to the decision to not point the camera out the window. The logic in this decision to conduct a cinematic study in which one does actually not see what one is studying will become apparent. In this case, video footage and sync sound was captured on two consecutive days, which corresponded to the summer solstice, and as it happens these were very bright, sunny and windy days, which fell on a weekend. As was observed in the terraced back landscape, such environmental conditions have a way of activating the urban setting, but in the way of drawing out crowds of people – people in the flats lining the sidewalk, opening up their windows to the sidewalk to catch the breeze, in the process dissolving the boundaries of inside and outside.

It became possible to capture a representation of this exterior world through the phenomena of the light passing through the agitated leaves of the

trees lining the park, which led to ideal conditions for a pinhole camera effect, and a back projection of the phenomena of the day into the window and kitchen area of this flat. While faint, this shadow play on the walls lasted throughout the day until early evening.  If anything, the day-to-day observations of the urban setting outlined above, were on this day, intensified under these conditions, such that the interior space often seemed to blend with the exterior space in terms of soundscape.  The stark contrast of the lived experience of this urban setting from day to night, might be explained in terms of the homeless population in the park, the proximity of the setting to the local bars and nightlife, the itinerant and high turnover of apartment dwelling population, the rundown condition of the neighborhood and the apartments which the landlords sorely overcharged, the excessive street garbage problems, or a mixture of these factors and many more.   These factors just begin to explain a desolate feeling, which seems to take over the night.

In order to convey these subjective-objective lived experiences, I separated out the sound and images in terms of the durations of naturally occurring sound events.  For example, the sounds of people getting into their cars, a commotion in the park, or a muffled conversation from the sidewalk below the window – as events occurring throughout the day.   As the day progressed to evening, I reversed the focus to the interior space in the sound design, moving from exterior to interior sounds and noises, to reflect a sense of the observed contrast in urban reality from day to night.  In this way, I tried to convey the interplay of subjective and objective experiences, through the relations of hard identifiable real sounds to softer muffled rendered sounds.

As a result, the interpretation of space or a decoding of space, which I came to as a result of a process of observing and re-observing, listening and re-listening, editing and compositing – was that of a socially divided neighbourhood with it's own internal set of rules, designating zones for certain ways of living, each going their own separate ways.

**(Please view disc two).**

### 4.3.3  Study 3 - The London Underground: Westminster Station

No camera, no image or series of images can show these rhythms.  It requires equally attentive eyes and ears, a head and a memory and a heart.  A memory? Yes, in order to grasp this present otherwise than in an instantaneous moment, to restore it in its moments, in the movement of diverse rhythms.  The recollection of other moments and of all hours is indispensable, not as a simple point of reference, but in order not to isolate this present and in order to live it in all its diversity, made up of *subjects* and *objects*, subjective states and objective figures.[168]

Westminster station from the start is very different to the previous stations studied, being very deep, with a succession of long escalators perpetually descending down into a maze like amalgamation of industrial components, wire cables, heavy grey pillars, which simultaneously press down upon and bolster the array of beams up from every direction – lending the whole place a feeling of being stretched to it's limits and at any given moment ready to snap.  At the start, there is a hurry and buzz of human activity as people rush to catch trains and chatter amongst friends, but this soon gives way to a kind of silence and otherworldly feel, in stepping onto the

first of many escalators, which progress down and still further down.  As I travel downwards with those around me, I sometimes catch myself thinking about the possibility of escape from a variety of scenarios.  There is a quiet to the environment, which at times gives way to the mechanical folding of the metallic stairs, which becomes obvious each time I come into contact with the escalators.  Sometimes muffled or sharp announcements can also be heard with information relating to maintenance works and weekend diversions.  At other times, no sense can be made of the voice being emitted from the upper reaches of the station.  In walking through this station, it becomes apparent that it is not really possible to deviate too much from the singular paths, which have been programmed into the daily commute, which lead from one escalator to the next, via what seem like suspended causeways suspended over nothingness. To this end, the structure of the station can be said to determine to a large degree the duration of a walkthrough, from start to finish, similar to the way in which airport terminals post signs indicating how long it should take you to walk from one point of departure to the next, except here there are no indications of how your time should be experienced in relation to walking, the pervasive logic seeming to that one should just keep moving as everyone is moving.

In this study, I adopted Gidal's ambivalent hand held camera approach in the way of allowing the confines and the structure of the station to determine the overall general movement and duration of walking through from beginning to end, just as Gidal's camera was confined by the dimly lit room through his technique of an uncommitted or objective hand held camera in

that environment. I also allowed for a space of interaction and engagement, in terms looking at things and people and even pausing here and there, or turning around – not so much as preplanned but rather, spontaneous gestures. Most of the people I encountered seemed ambivalent to the presence of the camera, most ignoring it and carrying on as usual. Sometimes I found myself turning away from people, uncomfortable in confronting them face to face, camera to face.  Sometimes through the timing of escalators, I also caught people unawares coming upon people spontaneously.  Overall, there was always a perpetual sense of movement in this setting, sometimes hurried and frantic, sometimes plodding and serious, with hardly anyone ever taking the time to stop or standstill.  At other times the spectacle of the architecture itself would cause me to stop and capture a view, but this was always with a sense of being hurried on.  In this way the structure/architecture could be said to control the larger movements of my body walking through this space – for the most part as an objective movement that I was mostly not aware of.

The "filming" in this location was carried out with a handheld video camera with sync sound and always out in the open for anyone to see.  There was only one incident where I was confronted, but this was in relation to being too close to an approaching train while using the camera, and as a result, a train attendant waived a black paddle in front of me, to let me know I was too close.  This small event appears near the beginning of the video. I made only two trips to this location, which happened to be just before the transit bombings, after which I set this project aside.  I came back to edit it a first time

in 2008 and a second time in 2010. The video piece, which resulted from the first edit, entailed a method of re-observing and editing sound and images together. Two techniques in combination, which I deployed in order to convey the imposing feeling of being pressed down, and of always descending into an unknown element, was a motion effect, which reversed the action. This was to engender the feeling of the downwards decent that seemed to go on and on in this space. The backwards motion adding a feeling of instability, as one descends effectively offscreen space, and therefore an imaginary space. In addition I also applied motion effects to slow down the footage to create a dance like movement, to the movements of people, to further convey the perpetual sense of movement of the place, which one enters into in alighting the first escalator.

Sounds in relation to the images, were treated first of all by deploying the ambient sounds of the landscape, where the principle sound of the whole piece is that of the escalators mechanical churning, which I segmented and then looped into a reoccurring pattern, the idea of which being to engender a sense of imaginary sense of un-realness under the imposing weight of the structure. There are two real clips of sound, which bracket the video, one clip occurring at the beginning of the film, which introduces the real environment, and a more clamorous sound of the hectic rush of people getting onto trains before the doors close. This sound is also looped to correspond to the spinning of image. The idea of which being that, of a spinning top and it's energies either coming to the natural conclusion of it's spinning energy or revving up to start the whole process over again. The notion of perpetual

movement and force or pressure, which causes the people to constantly move, seemed to be an underlying code of the lived experience of this space.

A second edit or analysis was also made with the intention of revisiting the original rhythmanalysis, in order to explore the contradictory moods of the time – from the more official government position of carrying on as usual in light of the terrorist attacks and loss of life – to the sense of anxiety felt on a more personal level in relation to the lived experience of urban and everyday space. These were pervasive and contradictory moods felt at the time, but which in hindsight is more apparent historically after the fact, than it was at the time. In fact, this was a time period in which Britain and the US were barely two years into the coalition led Iraq war, and it was only a few years after the World Trade Centre bombings. It was a time of daily colour coded terrorist threat alerts on the nightly news, which suggested that terrorist attacks were immanent, being just a matter of time and where, and how prepared everyone would be. After the bombings the mood became charged with a nationalist tone in Britain, of carrying on as usual without question and a similar rhetoric in the US without an apparent analysis in a larger sense, of the instigating factors.

The soundtrack was entirely re explored in terms of generating these two contradictory moods through music for which I designed and wove together two themes one military and march like, to convey the sense of carrying on employing a hard percussion beats, and the other theme being composed of a more dreamy and anxious orchestral flourishes, to accompany the downward moments on the escalator, as moments of anxiousness. The

beginning and ending sounds from the first edit were kept intact in this edit, as were the ambient sounds originating in the space, since these sounds helped to convey a sense of the lived experience of the space as well. Upon reflection, whether these ambient were given less emphasis or masked through the application of music bares further investigation. Since this was an initial engagement, in the use of the rhythmic possibilities of music to incorporate and engender an historical rhythm into the analysis, further work is definitely required.

The final study set on the London Underground/Westminster Station was screened at The London International Documentary Festival in 2011, as well as the Female Eye Film Festival in Toronto in 2012, for which it was nominated for best experimental short film. The first study was screened at the Brighton Cinecity festival in 2006, and version of the second study was screened during the White Night Festival in Brighton at the Phoenix Gallery in 2008. Included in the documents are pictures from two other station walkthroughs, illustrating the handheld camera and unplanned movements.

**(Please view discs three and four)**

### 4.3.4  Conclusions and Further Questions

The intention of this study, was to look beyond the longstanding counter cinema polemics associated with the original theory and practice of early British Structural/Materialist films, in order to ask the question of how these films are actually experienced by the viewer, through the phenomena of perceptual and haptic spectatorship, and to subsequently formulate a form of documentary practice based upon the overlooked phenomenological and documentary potential of the methods of practice of key artists such as Malcolm Le Grice and Peter Gidal.

The history of the aesthetic development of British Structural/Materialist films was discussed in Chapter's One, and Two. In these chapters an analysis of the historical and theoretical writings that have appeared more recently, especially in relation to key films such as Le Grice's *Little Dog For Roger* and Gidal's *Room Film*, establish that little headway has been made in terms of attempting to analyze these films from other perspectives which look outside of the original counter cinema and anti-illusionist frameworks which initially contributed to the shaping of the form.  Additionally, in a review of films in Chapter Three, the identification of a form of reflexive counter urban documentary practice based upon the methods of Le Grice and Gidal was also identified. This review served to illustrate the close alignment of this reflexive form with the original counter cinema polemics associated with formative Structural/Materialist films, and therefore confirms that the original polemics are still very important to the development of the original aesthetic in

contemporary art practice.

What was found through a phenomenological reconsideration of Le Grice and Gidal's films in Chapters Two and Four, points to a different reading of the actual aesthetic practices of the early Structural/Materialist film artists, and that these artists' materialist methods of film practice, could also be considered to be gestural and performative documentary practices, as well as forms of rhythmic practice, in terms of engendering an interplay of subjective and objective experiences for the viewer. This correlation was made based on the sound theory of Michel Chion, and Henri Lefebvre's theories and methods for the analysis of space. This phenomenal re-consideration of early Structural/Materialist films, therefore makes it possible to look beyond the original counter cinema assertions of these films and for example, assertions that these films provide an exclusively objective experience of the empirical and visual reality of the filmstrip. It is also possible to move beyond similar anti-illusionist and counter cinema assertions made of these films, in more recent theatrical presentations.

Chapter Two found that the actual spectatorship of Le Grice's *Little Dog For Roger*, sets in motion an interplay of sound and images together, which engender embodied memories of childhood experiences long past. In the spectatorship of Gidal's *Room Film*, the actual experience of the interplay of sounds and perceptual images of film was found to engender the lived experience of an anxious struggle. Based on Chion's sound theory, the specificity of film was not determined to be the primary factor in engendering these experiences, but was rather a result of each artist's gestural approach

to film practice.  For example, Le Grice's gestural approach was found to be contingent upon a form of close observation and re-observations, while Gidal's gestural approach was found to be a result of the polarities of control and inaction within his hand held camera technique.  The effect of these artists films was actually found to result in an interplay of subjective and objective experiences for the viewer, to both incorporate and consolidate.

The idea of the potential of Le Grice and Gidal's gestural methods of practice for a more experiential and interpretive based form of urban documentary practice, was developed through a comparison of these artists methods of practice with the French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre's theory of space, and method of rhythmanalysis.  Since Le Grice and Gidal's methods of practice, and Lefebvre's theories of space and rhythmanalysis promote the direct experience of phenomena of space (cinematic space and urban space respectively), from a first person or individual point of view, as well as a more objective perspective from which to situate and analyze such experiences, it seemed likely that Le Grice and Gidal's methods could also be adapted for the method of rhythmanalysis as theorized by Lefebvre.  A rhythmanalysis of three urban environments was therefore undertaken through video practice, the first of which entailed a study of a row of terraced gardens bordered by a variety of different purposed buildings and structures.  The approach taken was based on Le Grice's rhythmic re-observations and photography of the filmstrip, and his incorporation of music and the ambient sounds of the projection of film.  This method was adapted as a method of close immersive observation of the

environment, from a fixed frame position. In addition sound was also recorded directly through an omni- directional microphone as part of the camera setup. The images and sounds were then re-observed and re-listened to, and edited together with applied motion effects to bring about the kinds subjective and objective relations actually experienced. The decoding or interpretation of the lived experience of this environment was that of a highly charged space in which a code of unsanctioned and hidden looking prevails over the human desire to engage in looking and being in a space as a creative and restorative act – in a way explaining the emptiness of the gardens. A similar study was also made from the front view of the terraced housing, as bordered by a public park and busy streets in close proximity to the seafront and main shopping area. The decoding or interpretation of space which was arrived at in this study was that of a socially divided neighbourhood, with it's own internal set of rules, and zones for certain ways of living, each going their own separate ways and therefore less of a community in the sense of collectivity, than a place of assemblage and disbursement.

A final rhythmanalysis was undertaken on the London Underground. For this study, Gidal's ambivalent method, entailing a constrained yet sporadic hand held camera, and the incorporation of ambient sounds of film projection was adapted for an analysis of Westminster station. The analysis proceeded first as an observational walkthrough of the station with the handheld camera recording sync sound. The constraint in the camera movements was determined in the actual walkthrough, swithout much need to consciously

apply Gidal's ambivalent camera technique, since this walk entailed both control and chance in relation to the way in which the architecture organized the movements of pedestrians in transit. The first analysis produced a decoding of space that involved the experience of this environment in a day-to-day context. This resulted in an interpretation of an imposing force and weight pressing down and creating a kind of energy, which spurred people setting them in motion. This feeling in a way confirms what the Marxist philosopher David Harvey asserts about the forces of capitalism in connection to transportation, and that when things stop due to events such as terrorist attacks, capitalism stops, so the forces of capitalism strive to keep things in perpetual motion.[169] This raises the question of how a study of movements and rhythms of urban space, as both subjective and objective relations, might also be deployed for an art and documentary approach in the analysis of other urban environments including the spaces of air transportation or highway networks.
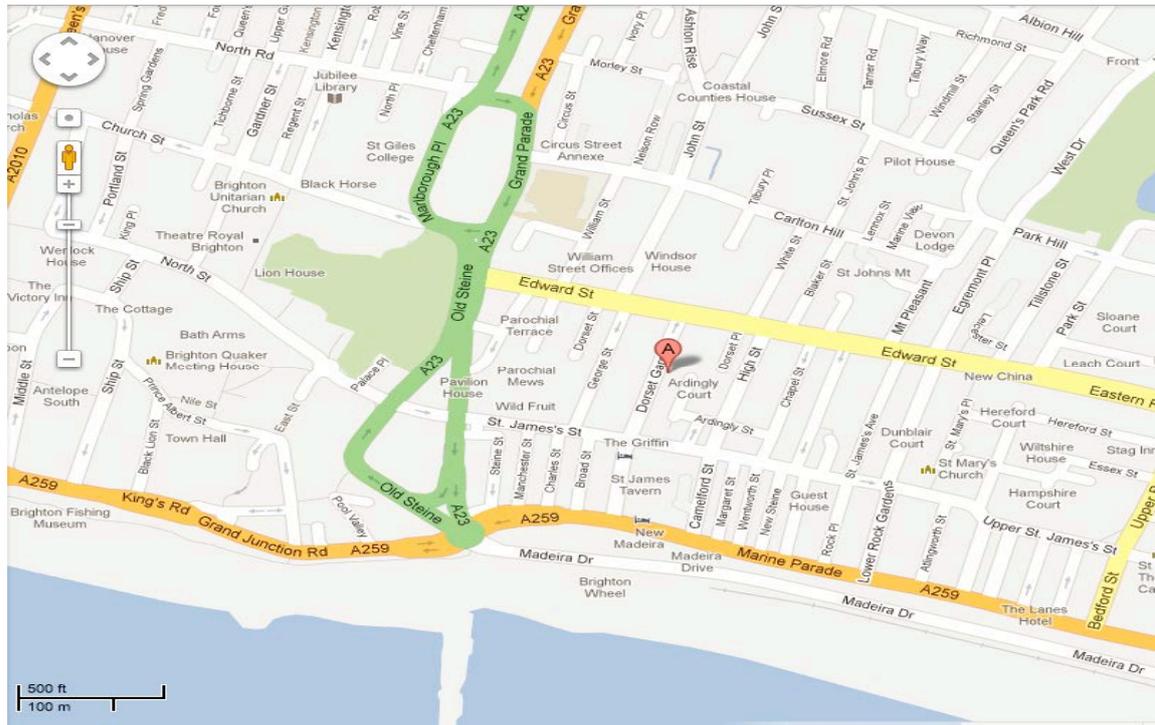
In thinking forward to a further study based on this location, a second analysis of the Underground was conducted by returning to the original analysis, with idea of incorporating a perspective of looking back in time to the summer of 2005, and of trying to make a connection to the mood of the time, and how this mood became a day-to-day lived experience. This was in relation to an assertion about rhythms, which Lefebvre also makes, which is that rhythms in all their diversity also entail history, or else, we would all be living in a succession of instantaneous moments.[170] In this respect, this last study attempted to incorporate the rhythms of the conflicting moods of the

time, from carrying on as usual to a more individually felt anxiety, through the creation and application of conflicting tones and rhythms in music, in relation to the images.

A conclusion which was arrived at through the practice of the second Underground study, was that since music has the spatial potential as Chion asserts, to: "...[communicate] with all times and all spaces of a film even as it leaves them to their separate and distinct existences,"[171] it is also possible that music can potentially operate in a reverse way, by masking or obscuring the other spaces of a film (or video) or the other rhythms, such as those generated from the ambient sounds of the natural environment. In doing so, a defamiliarizing and reflexive effect would possibly result, causing the viewer to question the reason for the over emphasis of the music track, rather than consider how the music relates to the presentation of the images and sounds. This paradox was in fact confirmed in one screening of the musical version of Underground. For example, the reception of the film at the London International Documentary Festival in 2011 included viewers who related to the musical elements of the film as conveying the conflicting mood of the time, while others felt that the musical elements were overstated and therefore a caricature of the musical scores of Hollywood films. Because of the polarity of the viewer's experiences, the element of music as documentary technique definitely requires further study, in order to address the question of how this element might be applied for incorporating the rhythms of history into the rhythmanalytical and documentary study of urban space.

# Documentation

Brighton, Kemptown, UK



(Google Maps, Kemptown, Brighton, 2013)

Kemptown Locations Diagram



Edward Street

Rainbow Park

Location 2

Back Gardens

Amex

Edwardian Terraces

Parking garage

Dorset Gardens

Location 1

Tower block

Ardingly Court

St. James Street

**N** ↑

(Seaside) ↓

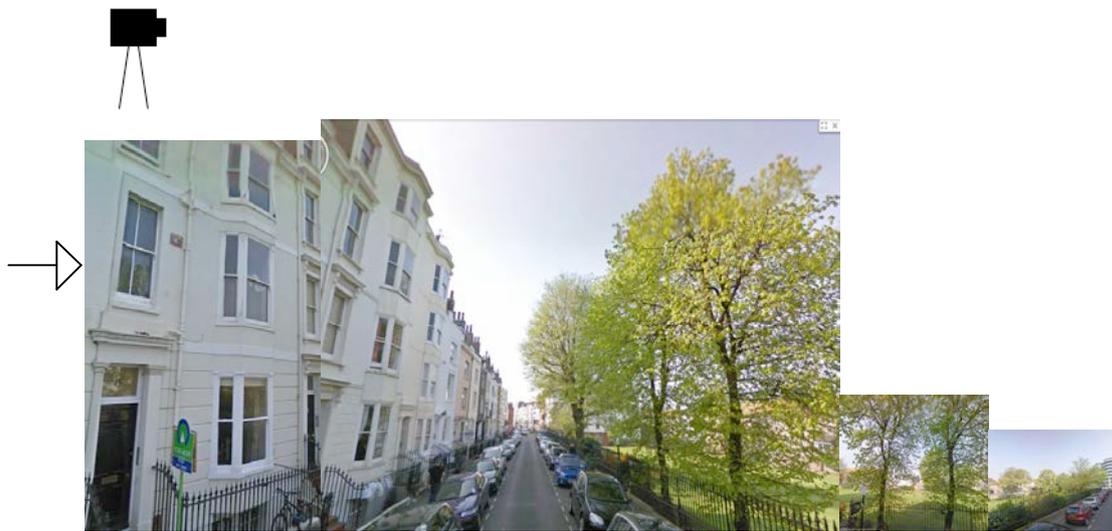Location 1 – Exterior View of Camera Position



(Google Maps, Ardingly Court, 2011)

Location 1 – Interior View of Camera Position



10 Dorset Gardens, Sandra Lim  (2006)

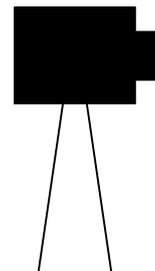Location 2 – Exterior View of Camera Position



(Google Maps, Dorset Gardens, 2009)

Location 2 – Interior View of Camera Position



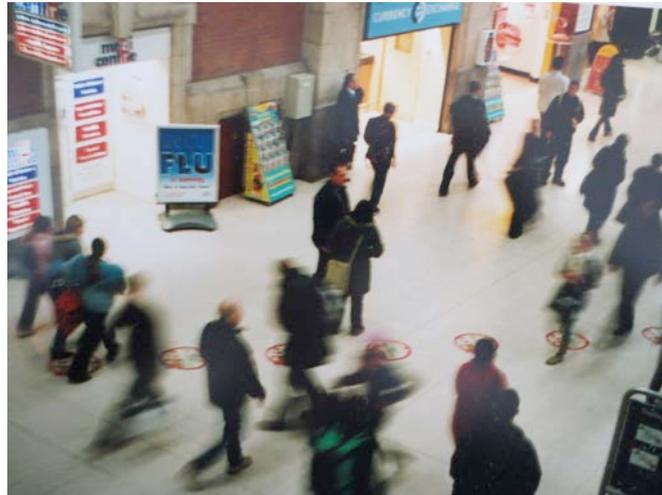10 Dorset Gardens, Sandra Lim (2008)

Location 3a – London Underground, Victoria Station



Overview, Sandra Lim (2005)

Location 3a – London Underground, Victoria Station continued



Sandra Lim (2005)



Walkthrough: Following the Red Dots, Sandra Lim (2005)

Location 3b – London Underground Jubilee Station



Sandra Lim (2005)



Sandra Lim (2005)



Walkthrough: Blue Wall, Sandra Lim (2005)

Location 3 – Westminster Station Escalators



Sandra Lim (2005)

Location 3 – Westminster Station Escalators continued



Sandra Lim (2005)

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**Chapter Notes**

[1] Dziga Vertov, "Kinoks: A Revolution," in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984). 17.

[2] ———, "The Birth of Kino-Eye," in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).  41.

[3] This conference seemed to mark the first of it's kind in the UK more recently, to interrogate the intersections of art and documentary, featuring for example, work by British contemporary artists Jane and Louise Wilson who are known for their expanded film and video installation projections which feature derelict urban environments.  See: Gail Pearce and Cahal McLaughlin, *Truth or Dare: Art and Documentary* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007).

[4] Lucas Hilderbrand and Lynn Sachs, "Experimental Documentary Questionnaire," *Millennium Film Journal*  (Spring 2009).

[5] For example, The International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam is one of the more notable documentary festivals to feature a program of documentary films and videos made by artists.  See: *Paradocs*, 25th International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, http://www.idfa.nl/industry/Festival/program/non-competitive-programs/paradocs.aspx 2010.  The London International Documentary Festival is also another example.  See: Patrick Hazard, "London International Documentary Festival," London Review of Books, http://www.lidf.co.uk/event/artexperimental-shorts/.

[6] The term "British Artists' Film and Video" seems to have been put into common usage by Curtis who also characterizes the institutional base of such work in a variety of ways including: work which moves fluidly between film co-op, gallery and academic institutions/art schools in the UK such as British avant-garde film traditions like Structural/Materialist film, or films and videos made by contemporary artists of the Young British Artist (YBA) generation who include Gillian Wearing or Jeremy Deller.  Curtis also includes the eminent British documentarians John Grierson and Lindsey Anderson within

this definition.  The common thread amongst these different strands of Artists'
film and video seems to be that many of these filmmakers were educated in
art schools and bring this background into their film and video work and
therefore the descriptor of "artists'" film conveys the idea of film and video
work that is made by artists.  See: David Curtis, *A History of Artist Film and
Video in Britain* (London: The British Film Institute, 2007).

[7]According to Peter Gidal, a pioneer of the British Structural/Materialist
film, the formative period of British Structural/Materialist film covered a period
of roughly ten years from 1966-76, "emanating from the London Film-makers
Co-operative, " and distinguished by the pursuit of  "the empirical 'real,'" the
focus of which was upon non-representational and materialist film practices,
which foregrounded the procedures and processes of making a film; thereby
involving the spectator's subjectivity, as subject to the conditions of viewing a
film.  Writing in 1981, Gidal seemed to see this time period as a privileged
moment in the British avant-garde film, as something very different to the
North American avant-garde, with it's focus upon irony and also at the same
time in danger of disappearing into a form of hybridization in the films that
were currently being made in the timeframe just after this.  See:  Peter Gidal,
"The Current British Avant-Garde Film: Some Problems in Context [1981]," in
*The Undercut Reader:  Critical Writings on Artists' Film and Video*, ed. Nina
Danino and Michael Mazière (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2003).
229.

[8] As Nichols has pointed out, an inaugural editorial written in 1969 by
the editors, established a new film criticism agenda for the journal, shaped by
a political and cultural climate of dissent in France, which mixed Marxism,
structural linguistics and psychoanalysis in order to create a model of film
critique which focused upon film form in it's cultural historical and industrial
context.  Although the French film Structuralists and the British
Structural/Materialist filmmakers each had a similar bone of contention with
dominance of commercial and narrative cinema, the British
Structural/Materialist filmmaker Malcolm Le Grice has emphasized that the
"Structural" in Structural and/or Materialist film bore no relation to

Structuralism.  See: Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism [1969]," in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology, Volume 1*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). 22. See also: Malcolm Le Grice, "Stan Brakhage and Malcolm Le Grice Debate [1978]," in *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, ed. Malcolm Le Grice (London: British Film Institute, 2001).  87.

[9] For theorists such as French Structural film theorist Jean-Louis Baudry, the system of filming and projecting film was regarded as having a homogenizing effect in at least three ways.  First: a series of still and discrete images present a seamless continuity through the effects of montage and the persistence of vision, which displace and homogenize the differences at the core of the original images taken from reality.  Second, Baudry theorized that the dark theatre setting limits the viewer's mobility and therefore freedom, while simultaneously creating an illusion of mobility through the projected scenography, which the viewer is led to believe that he/she has mastery over through a western system of classical perspectival depth.  Baudry also theorized that the physical environment of the cinema promoted a state of regression, as the viewer looses himself/herself within the dramas of idealized characters and events on the screen.  All of these effects of the cinematographic apparatus were deemed by Baudry to be a powerful form of subliminal control over a passive viewer, which ultimately supported film as a commodity.  See for example: Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus [1968]," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Phillip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).  286-298. Also, a criticism of apparatus theory which later emerged in Post-Structuralist film theory in the 70's, was the assumption of a passive and uniform viewer (subject) and the lack of account given to the viewer's own sense of his/her own sense of social subjectivity and the ability of the viewer as unable to recognize "himself/herself as a subject in the viewing process."  This argument can be equally brought to bare on the polemics of Structural and/Materialist film, which argues that the viewer of narrative films is also a passive viewer.  See: Phillip Rosen, "Introduction: Text and Subject," in

*Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Phillip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).  155-159.

[10] For example Malcolm Le Grice, a pioneer of the early British Structural/Materialist film speculated at the time upon some of the reasons why 'underground' film had a limited audience.  In part he believed this was due to an inherent weakness in the practices of mainstream distribution and even the fact that underground filmmakers were not as savvy at promoting their own work. See: Malcolm Le Grice, "Thoughts on Recent 'Underground' Film [1972]," in *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, ed. Malcolm Le Grice (London: The British Film Institute, 2001).  22-23.

[11] British filmmaker and avant-garde film historian David Curtis gives a detailed first person account of the rise of British Co-op filmmaking and his role in its development.  See: Curtis, *A History of Artist Film and Video in Britain*.  21-33.

[12] Both Malcolm Le Grice and Peter Gidal identify the viewer as a passive spectator in relation to the illusionism of dominant cinema, as something to be countered in the development of Structural/Materialist films. See: Peter Gidal, "Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film," in *Structural Film Anthology*, ed. Peter Gidal (London: British Film Institute, 1976).  3.  See also: Malcolm Le Grice, "Towards Temporal Economy [1980]," in *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, ed. Malcolm Le Grice (London: British Film Institute, 2001).   184-186.

[13] Gidal, "Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film."  8-9.

[14] Four of the common approaches to editing film, as pointed out by film scholar Susan Hayward include: "continuity," "cross-cut," "deep focus," and "soviet montage editing."  According to Hayward, continuity editing is the most common style or approach, attributable to Hollywood cinema, which strives to preserve the story time in a rationalized and coherent order.  Deep focus editing is the style promoted in the writings and film aesthetics of French film theorist André Bazin. This style of editing is attributed to the Italian Neo Realist filmmakers such as Roberto Rossellini, and is ideologically positioned as a counter to continuity editing, whereby the belief is, that when a shot is

framed in deep focus, the viewer is provided with a fuller perspective in which events occur and play out naturally or more realistically.  In this case, there is less cutting and joining of shots required, and therefore, the viewer is not lead to conclusions.  In this system therefore, the benefit is the viewer can exercise the freedom to choose and make meaning through editing the elements within the frame or the mise-en scène.  However as Hayward aptly points out, none of these systems are superior.  Each has it's own benefits and some filmmakers mix approaches.  See:  Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, Key Guides (New York, NY: Routledge; reprint, 2005).  94-97.  It is interesting to make note of how Bazin's theory of film editing corresponds to the emphasis upon duration in Peter Gidal's theory of Structural Film.

[15] Gidal, "Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film." 1-11.

[16] Le Grice, "Thoughts on Recent 'Underground' Film [1972]." 15-16.

[17] ———, "Towards Temporal Economy [1980]." 193.

[18]See: Malcolm Le Grice, "Thoughts on Recent Underground Film [1972]," in *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, ed. Malcolm Le Grice (London British Film Institute, 2001). 17-18.  The idea of dominant cinema as a system of pre-constituted codes is a direct or indirect reference to the semiotic film theory out of France circulating during this period.  In France, film theorist/semiotician Christian Metz theorized narrative film to be a language with it's own signs and processes of signification or codes which he proposed could be broken down into syntagmas, segments and shots, which amounted to a typology of classical narrative cinema.  For example, Metz theorized several types of autonomous shots, such as a non-chronological subjective insert, capable of conveying a moment of memory, fear, dream, or premonition, and theoretically, this type of insert could be found from one film to the next in the classical narrative system.  The logic of the anti-illusionist polemic underpinning Structural/Materialist film therefore seems to be that if narrative cinema is pre-constituted in codes such as these, then it does the thinking for the viewer and creates passive viewing. For a breakdown of Metz's *Grand Syntagmatique de la band-images* See: Christian Metz, "Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film [1966-67]," in *Narrative,*

*Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Phillip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). 45-46.  Along with the ideological effects of the cinematographic apparatus, narrative cinema was therefore a form of ideology to be reckoned with in the British avant-garde film of the sixties and seventies, however as Hayward has importantly pointed out – the single theory behind works such as Metz's *Grand Syntagmatique*, was not complex enough to embrace many of the discourses which surround and are embedded within a film text, which are always fluid, rather than static, and include: a variety of subject positions, historical factors and technological shifts in production.  See: Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. 362.

[19] Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Cinema at a Distance (Interview with Peter Gidal)," Chicago Reader, http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.com/?p=25072.

[20] Wheeler Winston Dixon, "Peter Gidal," British Film Institute, http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/472632/.

[21] Curtis, *A History of Artist Film and Video in Britain*.  27.

[22] Choi points out a number of positions on the notion of documentary, the more ubiquitous definition being that documentary implies a truthful record of reality.  See: Jinhee Choi, "Documentary," in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology*, ed. Noël Carroll and Jinhee Choi (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).  137-139.  Nichol's has also famously coined the phrase "discourse of sobriety" in referring to a more traditional idea of documentary film, which is reliant upon evidence, facts and rhetorical arguments with little embellishment.  See:  Bill Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).  47.

[23] In this article Wollen contrasted the practices of Co-op film exemplified for example by British Structural/Materialist film, as following in the tradition of the first avant-garde film movements and filmmakers such as Cubist abstract films of Fernand Legér or Hans Richter of the 1920's and 30's, with an emphasis upon extending "the scope of painting into film."  Wollen subsequently traced the idea of a second avant-garde film movement with beginnings in Russian avant-garde film of the 1920's and filmmakers such as Sergei Eisenstein, and following through to the French filmmaker Jean Luc

Godard in the 1960's and 70's, as concerned with expanding narrative codes beyond commercial narrative cinema. For Wollen, each strain of practice had its drawbacks. The first Avant-garde according to Wollen was primarily a silent film tradition, which did not exploit enough of the possibilities of the film medium by extending itself into other codes of practice. Filmmakers such as Godard, who belonged to the European and narrative avant-garde film movement Wollen observed, did expand the idea of narrative code. Godard did this in his early films, by creating disjunctions between the signifier and signified. However, Wollen observes that Goddard abandoned this project opting instead to leave shots out of a film, to be filled in by others. Overall, Wollen viewed the split as an uneven development in the history of film and posited at the end of this article the possibility of a commixing of these two strands to further enrich avant-garde film as a whole. See: Peter Wollen, "The Two Avant-Gardes," in *The British Avant-Garde Film, 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings*, ed. Michael O'Pray (Indiana University Press, 1996). 136.

[24] The concept of performance in documentary may defined in a number of ways. More recently, the British film scholar Stella Bruzzi has defined performance in documentary in relation to the theories of the linguistic philosopher J.L. Austin. In this respect Bruzzi defines performance as the inherent elements of the genre, which have manifested in more recent documentary film and videos, which serve to enact or set into motion in the viewer, the notion that "a documentary only comes into being as it is performed." According to Bruzzi, "performative documentaries are "as much concerned with representing reality as their predecessors, but more aware of the inevitable falsification or subjectification such representations entails." As a result, the performative elements of a documentary such as: the self-conscious performances of the subjects of a film promote a reflexive action in the viewer, which signals the "impossibilities of authentic documentary representation." As Bruzzi states "documentary like fiction is authored" and therefore, the point of foregrounding the act of performing in documentary is to make the viewer aware of this. See: Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary*, 2nd ed.

(New York: Routledge, 2006).  186-197.  Bruzzi's notion of performance in documentary is in direct contrast to the American documentary film scholar Bill Nichol's longstanding conception of a category of performative documentary practice.  While Bruzzi's conception points to the ways in which performative acts in a documentary serve to alienate the viewer in relation to the idea of truth and authenticity through documentary representation, Nichols' conception, highlights the ways in which non representational and non linguistic elements such as sound, music and voice or motion effects, serve to forge experiential, existential and intersubjective connections between viewer and the maker's experiences of the world.  As Nichols offers, the performative documentary "attempts to reorient us – affectively, subjectively – towards the historical, poetic world it brings into being."  See: Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries*.  99-101.  The definition of performative documentary I refer to in this case is Nichols conception rather than Bruzzi's.  Bruzzi's conception will also be important to keep in mind moving forward.

[25] These are some of the characteristics, which Rees points out in the early British Structural/Materialist films.  See: A.L.Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video:  From the Canonical Avant-Garde to Contemporary British Practice* (London: British Film Institute, 1999).  77-82.

[26] Gidal, "Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film."  2.

[27] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "'Association' and the 'Projection of Memories'," in *Phenomenology of Perception* (London; New York: Routledge, 1962; reprint, 2003).  25.

[28] Henri Lefebvre, "Social Space," in *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).  87.

[29] ———, "Spatial Architectonics," in *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).  182-184.

[30] ———, "Seen from the Window," in *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (London: Continuum, 2004).  27.

[31] ———, "Spatial Architectonics," 206.

[32] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).  68-81.

[33] Peter Gidal, "The Current British Avant-Garde Film: Some Problems in Context [1981]," in *The Undercut Reader:  Critical Writings on Artists' Film and Video*, ed. Nina Danino and Michael Mazière (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2003).  229.

[34] Malcolm Le Grice, "Thoughts on Recent 'Underground' Film [1972]," in *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, ed. Malcolm Le Grice (London: The British Film Institute, 2001).  14-16.

[35] Peter Wollen, "The Two Avant-Gardes," in *The British Avant-Garde Film, 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings*, ed. Michael O'Pray (Indiana University Press, 1996).  136.

[36] Pam Cook, "Teaching Avant-Garde Film: Notes Towards Practice," in *The Screen Education Reader:  Cinema, Television, Culture*, ed. Manuel Alvarado, Edward Buscombe, and Richard Collins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979/80).  63-64.

[37] Laura Marks, *The Skin of Film*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000.  p. 162-179.

[38] Peter Gidal, "Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film," in *Structural Film Anthology*, ed. Peter Gidal (London: British Film Institute, 1976).  4.

[39] Malcolm Le Grice, "Towards Temporal Economy [1980]," in *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, ed. Malcolm Le Grice (London: British Film Institute, 2001).  193.

[40] A.L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video:  From the Canonical Avant-Garde to Contemporary British Practice* (London: British Film Institute, 1999).  116-118.

[41] John Sundholm, "I Am a Rhinoceros: Memory and the Ethics and Aesthetics of Materiality in Film," *Studies in European Cinema*  (2005).  60.

[42] Noam M. Elcott, "Darkened Rooms:  A Genealogy of Avant-Garde Filmstrips from Man Ray to the London Film-Makers' Co-Op and Back Again " *Grey Room, Inc. and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology*  (2008).  11.

[43] Marc Webber, "Shoot Shoot Shoot: British Avant-Garde Film of the 1960's and 1970's," (London: A LUX Project in Collaboration with RE:VOIR, 2006). 13.

[44] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "'Association' and the 'Projection of Memories'," in *Phenomenology of Perception* (London; New York: Routledge, 1962; reprint, 2003). 25.

[45] Nicky Hamlyn, *Film Art Phenomena* (London: British Film Institute, 2003). 131.

[46] Martin Heidegger, "Being-in-as-Such: Fear as a Mode of State-of-Mind," in *Being in Time* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1962). 173.

[47] ———, "Being-in-as Such: Being There as State-of-Mind " in *Being in Time* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1962). 178.

[48] Malcolm Le Grice, "On Léger, Vertov and the Flicker Film [1977]," in *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, ed. Malcolm Le Grice (London: The British Film Institute, 2001). 44-50.

[49] Dziga Vertov, "Kinoglaz [1924]," in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984). 39.

[50] ———, "Artistic Drama and Kino-Eye [1924]," in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984). 47.

[51] ———, "Kino-Eye [1926]," in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984). 69.

[52] Michael Renov, "Away from the Art of Copying: The Art of Documentary Practice," in *Truth or Dare: Art and Documentary*, ed. Gail Pearce and Cahal McLaughlin (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007). 15.

[53] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics*, ed. John McCumber and David Michael Levin (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964). 162.

[54] Gidal, "Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film." 1.

[55] Malcolm Le Grice, *Abstract Film and Beyond* (London: Studio Vista, 1977).  118.

[56] Sundholm, "I Am a Rhinoceros: Memory and the Ethics and Aesthetics of Materiality in Film."  59.

[57] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences [1947]," in *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics*, ed. John Mc Cumber and David Michael Levin (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964).  22.

[58] Merleau-Ponty, "'Association' and the 'Projection of Memories'."  28.

[59] David Curtis, *A History of Artist Film and Video in Britain* (London: The British Film Institute, 2007).  27-32.

[60] Andy Warhol and Pat Hacket, *Popism: The Warhol Sixties* (Orlando, Austin, New York, San Diego, Toronto, London: A Harvest Book: Harcourt, Inc., 1980).  164.

[61] Peter Gidal, *Andy Warhol: Blow Job*, ed. Mark Lewis, One Work (London: Afterall Books, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, 2008).  3-5.

[62] P.A. Sitney, "Structural Film," in *Visionary Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).   372-373.

[63] The late Callie Angell was the foremost curator of the Andy Warhol Film Project for the Whitney Museum of American Art. I had the opportunity to hear her introduce Warhol's *Screen Test* films and *Blow Job*, and see the films at the British Film Institute on the occasion of the publication of her Art Catalogue of Warhol films and the Warhol season of films, which played at the British Film Institute in August 2007.  See: Callie Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests:  The Films of Andy Warhol: Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: H.N. Abrams: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2006).  14-15.

[64] Peter Gidal, *Andy Warhol Films and Paintings: The Factory Years* (New York, New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1971).  101.

[65] Anna Jerslev, *Performative Realism: Interdisciplinary Studies in Art and Media* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2005).  103-111.

[66] Gidal, *Andy Warhol Films and Paintings: The Factory Years*.  80

[67] Ibid.  90

[68] ———, "Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film." 8-9.

[69] Ibid.  9.

[70] ———, *Andy Warhol: Blow Job*. 12

[71] Ibid.  26.

[72] Ibid. 16-19.

[73] Ibid. 26.

[74] Deke Dusinberre, "The Ascetic Task: Peter Gidal's Room Film 1973," in *Structural Film Anthology* (London: British Film Institute, 1976).  113.

[75] Martin Heidegger, "Care as the Being of Dasein: The Basic State-of-Mind of Anxiety as a Distinctive Way in Which Dasein Is Disclosed," in *Being in Time* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1962).  232.

[76] Ibid.  235.

[77] Laura Marks, *The Skin of Film*.  175-176.

[78] This conference seemed to mark the first of it's kind in the UK more recently, to interrogate the intersections of art and documentary.  See: Gail Pearce and Cahal McLaughlin, *Truth or Dare: Art and Documentary* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007).

[79] Lucas Hilderbrand and Lynn Sachs, "Experimental Documentary Questionnaire," *Millennium Film Journal*  (Spring 2009).

[80] For example, The International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam (IDFA), is one of the more notable documentary festivals to feature a program of documentary films and videos made by artists.  See: *Paradocs*, 25th International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, http://www.idfa.nl/industry/Festival/program/non-competitive-programs/paradocs.aspx 2010.  The London International Documentary Festival (LIDF) is also another documentary film festival, which programs a range of types of documentary practice. See: Patrick Hazard, "London

International Documentary Festival," London Review of Books, http://www.lidf.co.uk/event/artexperimental-shorts/.

[81] The term "British Artists' Film and Video" seems to have been coined by Curtis who characterizes the institutional base of such work in a variety of ways including: work which moves fluidly between film cooperative, gallery and academic institutions/art schools in the UK such as British avant-garde film traditions like Structural/Materialist film, or films and videos made by contemporary artists of the Young British Artist (YBA) generation who include Gillian Wearing or Jeremy Deller. Curtis also includes in this category, the eminent British documentarians John Grierson and Lindsey Anderson. The common thread seeming to be that many of these filmmakers were educated in art schools and bring this background into their film and video work. See: David Curtis, *A History of Artist Film and Video in Britain* (London: The British Film Institute, 2007).

[82] American film philosopher and cognitive film theorist Noël Carroll considers the external factors such as cataloging in databases, programming and public assertions that a film is a documentary through exhibition and labeling, as playing an important role in the way a film is received and accorded documentary status within the public realm. Carroll goes so far as to conclude that, these forms of public acknowledgement of a work as documentary, is enough of an assertion for a work to gain documentary status. In many ways this attests to the fluidity of what constitutes documentary practice. See: Noël Carroll, "Fiction, Non-Fiction, and the Film of Presumptive Assertion: A Conceptual Analysis," in *Film Theory and Philosophy*, ed. Richard Allen and Murray Smith (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2003).

[83] The Jarman award is one of the more prestigious awards in British Cinema, which is named in honor of British filmmaker Derek Jarman (1942-1994), for risk taking filmmaking. See: FLAMIN, "The Jarman Award 2012," Film London Artists' Moving Image Network, http://flamin.filmlondon.org.uk/projects/projectscurrent/jarman_award.

[84] *IDFA Paradoc Talks: The Making Of*, 25th International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, http://mirza-butler.net/index.php?/1/news/ 2009.

[85] Jane L. Chapman, *Issues in Contemporary Documentary* (Cambridge: Polity Press, UK, 2009).  132.

[86] Fredric Jameson, "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," in *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).  1-12.

[87] ———, "Surrealism without the Unconscious," in *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991). 71.

[88] I'm basing the initial part of this statement on Creswell's definition of a postmodernist perspective, and the beliefs, which underpin this perspective for qualitative researchers.  See: John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2007).  79-80.

[89] See: Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (New York: Women Make Movies, 1989), VHS Tape.

[90] Cate Elwes, "John Smith Talking Film with Cate Elwes," in *John Smith: Film and Video Works 1972-2002*, ed. Mark Cosgrove and Josephine Lanyon (Bristol: Picture This Moving Image and Watershed Media Centre, 2002).  64.

[91] For example, Pam Cook offers a first hand account of how this theoretical shift influenced her teaching of avant-garde films at the British Film Institute. See: Pam Cook, "Teaching Avant-Garde Film: Notes Towards Practice," in *The Screen Education Reader:  Cinema, Television, Culture*, ed. Manuel Alvarado, Edward Buscombe, and Richard Collins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979/80). 61-80.

[92] See: Malcolm Le Grice, "Stan Brakhage and Malcolm Le Grice Debate [1978]," in *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, ed. Malcolm Le Grice (London: British Film Institute, 2001).  86-88.

[93] Gidal, "Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film."  5.

[94] John Smith, *The Girl Chewing Gum [1976]* (London: LUX, 2011), Film on DVD.

[95] Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema," in *Narrative Apparatus Ideology*, ed. Phillip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). 332-334.

[96] Currie devises a useful approach to understanding story and narrative, in observing "the duality of story told and the mode of telling."  In this way Currie comes to the conclusion that irony is not simply a matter of "saying one thing and meaning the opposite" which he points out is the more common way of defining irony. For example, an "ironic point of view" or the "ironist's pretence" as Currie theorizes can function to draw attention to a target, which in the case of *Girl Chewing Gum* can be said to be the implied authority of the filmmaker/director which corresponds with Smith's intention with the film to deconstruct authority.  See: G. Currie, "Irony: A Pretended Point of View," in *Narratives and Narrators: A Philosophy of Stories* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2010).  150-158.  See also: Gregory Currie, "Preface," in *Narratives and Narrators: A Philosophy of Stories* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2010).

[97] Elwes, "John Smith Talking Film with Cate Elwes."  68.

[98] A.L. Rees, "Associations: John Smith and the Artists' Film in the Uk," in *John Smith: Film and Video Works 1972-2002*, ed. Mark Cosgrove and Josephine Lanyon (Bristol: Picture This Moving Image and Watershed Media Centre, 2002).  18.

[99] There seem to be a couple of versions of this film on DVD.  The one that I am referring to is the most recent 2003 version, published by LUX as part of a compilation of John Smith's Films.  See: John Smith, *Worst Case Scenario [2003]* (London: LUX, 2011), Film on DVD.

[100] Michel Chion, "The Real and the Rendered," in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). 109.

[101] No.w.here, "Texts: Images I Wish I Had Filmed but Couldn't: General Public Berlin: Wednesday February 10, 2010," No.w.here.,

http://www.mirza-butler.net/index.php?/project/images-i-wish-i-had-filmed-but-couldnt/.

[102] In this article, Mirza and Butler discuss their intentions behind the founding of the No.w.here film co-op in London, and their role in keeping film as an artist's medium vital, in the context of a changing media landscape.  In the founding of No.w.here, they acquired much of the original film equipment including the Co-op's optical printer, when it merged with the London Video Arts to become the LUX in 1999.  No.w.here provides practical workshops that teach the original avant-garde film techniques characteristic of the early co-op and Structural/Materialist films in London.  They also provide a screening and discussion platform of key filmmakers works in this tradition, including their own work, which they also program and curate along side of this.  See: Karen Mirza and Brad Butler, "Mutation on a Form," in *Experimental Film and Video*, ed. Jackie Hatfield (London: John Libbey Publishing, 2006).  171-179.

[103] Brad Butler and Karen Mirza, *The Exception and the Rule* (London: Filmarmalade, 2009), Film on DVD.

[104] Artangel, " Projects: Karen Mirza and Brad Butler: The Museum of Non Participation," http://www.artangel.org.uk/projects/2008/the_museum_of_non_participation/about_the_project/about_the_project.

[105] Brad Butler, "How Can Structural Film Expand the Language of Experimental Ethnography?" (Practice based PhD, University of the Arts London, 2009).

[106] Catalogue LUX, "The Exception and the Rule - Collection - LUX," LUX, http://lux.org.uk/collection/works/exception-and-rule.

[107] Brad Butler and Karen Mirza, *Non Places (1999)* (London: Filmarmalade, 2011), Film on DVD.

[108] Robert Stam, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature:  From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Goddard,* 2nd ed. (New York, Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press New York, 1992).  214-215.

[109] Gemma Sharpe, "Artists at Work: Karen Mirza and Brad Butler: June 7 2010," Afterall Online, http://www.afterall.org/online/artists-at-work-karen-mirza-and-brad-butler.

[110] William Raban, *Theframe - William Raban* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), Interview on DVD.

[111] BFI, "William Raban (1948-)," BFI, http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/586498/index.html.

[112] See: Catalogue LUX, "William Raban - Collection - LUX," LUX, http://lux.org.uk/collection/artists/william-raban. See Also: A.L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video: From the Canonical Avant-Garde to Contemporary British Practice* (London: British Film Institute, 1999). 117.

[113] This one-minute film by Raban is easy to miss on this DVD, as it is tucked into the interview section. William Raban, *Sundial (1992)* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), Film on DVD.

[114] ———, *A13 (1994)* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), Film on DVD.

[115] ———, *Island Race* (London: LUX Collection, 1996), Film.

[116] ———, *MM (2002)* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), Film on DVD.

[117] Sergei Eisenstein, "Methods of Montage," in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. Jay Leda (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Inc., 1977). 82.

[118] ———, "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. Jay Leda (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Inc., 1977; reprint, 10th). 29-30.

[119] Raban actually refers to the new architecture going up in East London as "monstrous." See: Raban, *Theframe - William Raban*.

[120] Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand, *Manhatta (1921)* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 2005), Film on DVD.

[121] See: Jan-Christopher Horak, "Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler's Manhatta," in *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde 1919-*

*1945*, ed. Jan-Christopher Horak (Madison Wisconsin, London England: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995). 267-268.

[122] See Chapter 2 and pages 25-29 of this dissertation, in which I've already accounted for the aesthetics of Warhol's apperceptive Structural Films.

[123] In his own description of *Island Race*, Raban tells of how he took his daughter along on shoots trying to film from her perspective. This is a likely explanation for the 'hidden' camera framing which is also apparent in *A13* as well. See: William Raban, *Island Race (1996)*, Booklet accompanying BFI Video DVD Release William Raban (London: British Film Institute 2004). 14.

[124] Le Grice, "Stan Brakhage and Malcolm Le Grice Debate [1978]." 87.

[125] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences [1947]," in *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics*, ed. John Mc Cumber and David Michael Levin (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964). 25.

[126] Henri Lefebvre, "Social Space," in *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX: Blackwell Publishing, 1991). 94

[127] ———, "Forward to the Second Edition: Some Overviews on the 'Modern World'," in *The Critique of Everyday Life Vol. 1* (London: Verso, 2008). 57.

[128] Ibid. 97.

[129] ———, "Plan of the Present Work," in *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX: Blackwell Publishing, 1991). 16-21.

[130] Lefebvre, "Social Space." 89.

[131] Ibid. 94.

[132] Ibid. 87.

[133] Ibid. 101.

[134] Ibid. 101.

[135] Ibid. 116.

[136] ———, "Plan of the Present Work." 36-39.

[137] Christian Schmid, "Henri Lefebvre's of the Production of Space: Towards a Three-Dimensional Dialectic," in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, ed. Kanishka Goonewardena (New York: Routledge, 2008).  29.

[138] Ibid.  39-40.

[139] Lefebvre, "Plan of the Present Work."  40.

[140] Henri Lefebvre, "Spatial Architectonics," in *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).  170.

[141]  Lefebvre, "Social Space." 87.

[142]  Ibid. 101.

[143] ———, "Plan of the Present Work."  52.

[144] ———, "Spatial Architectonics."  200.

[145] Henri Lefebvre, "Contradictory Space," in *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).  318.

[146] Ibid.  318.

[147] Ibid.  319.

[148] ———, "Contradictions of Space to Differential Space," in *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).  365.

[149] Lefebvre, "Spatial Architectonics."  182.

[150] Ibid.  183-184.

[151] Ibid.  205.

[152] Ibid.  205.

[153] Ibid.  206.

[154] Ibid.  206.

[155] Ibid.  206.

[156] ———, "Contradictory Space."  304.

[157] Henri Lefebvre, "The Rhythmanalyst: A Provisionary Portrait," in *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (London: Continuum, 2004).  21.

[158] ———, "Seen from the Window," in *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (London: Continuum, 2004).  27.

[159] Michel Chion, "The Audiovisual Contract: The Audiovisual Scene," in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).  68

[160] Ibid.  70.

[161] Ibid.  71-78.

[162] Ibid.  81.

[163] Lefebvre, "Seen from the Window."  31.
[164] Google Maps, "10 Dorset Gardens," (2013).
[165] Google Maps, "Ardingly Court," (2011).
[166] Lefebvre, "Seen from the Window."  28.
[167] Google Maps, "Dorset Gardens,"  (2009)
[168] Lefebvre, "Seen from the Window."  36.
[169] David Harvey, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (London: Verso, 2010). 12.
[170] Lefebvre, "Seen from the Window."  36.
[171] Chion, "The Audiovisual Contract: The Audiovisual Scene."  81.