

NEW VERNACULARS AND FEMININE *ÉCRITURE*; TWENTY-
FIRST CENTURY AVANT-GARDE FILM

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Abstract

New Vernaculars and Feminine *Écriture*; Twenty First Century Avant-Garde

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This practice-based research project explores the parameters of – and aims to construct – a new film language for a feminine *écriture* within a twenty first century avant-garde practice. My two films, *Radio* and *The New World*, together with my contextualising thesis, ask how new vernaculars might construct subjectivity in the contemporary moment. Both films draw on classical and independent cinema to revisit the remix in a feminist context. Using appropriated and live-action footage the five short films that comprise *Radio* are collaged and subjective, representing an imagined world of short, chaptered ‘songs’ inside a radio set. *The New World* also uses both live-action and found footage to inscribe a feminist transnational world, in which the narrative is continuous and its trajectory bridges, rather than juxtaposes, the stories it tells.

Both the films and the contextualising written text flag the possibility of new approaches at the intersections between cinema, poetry, feminism and critical theory. Drawing on the work of a number of filmmakers, feminists, writers and poets - including Abigail Child, Scott MacDonald, Betzy Bromberg, Christopher MacLaine, Chris Kraus, Eileen Myles and others - I describe the possibilities of cross-pollination of media and approaches. Through interrogating the methodologies of feminist, independent, mainstream & experimental films, their use of protagonists, montage,

mise en scene and soundtrack, I argue that my two films have developed new vernaculars, which offer the potential to constitute a new feminine *écriture* through a knowing revival of cinema as a form of exploratory language. In addition to the constituting force of the films themselves, questions of identity and the current and potential future of film are interrogated via the writings of such cultural theorists, philosophers and artists such as Svetlana Boym, Lauren Berlant, and Christian Marclay.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
On Writing Oneself	8
Overview of Chapters.....	12
Chapter 1. Agents, Protagonists and Ecriture Feminine	17
Becoming and Agency; the Protagonist Revised.....	19
Notions of <i>Noir</i>	23
Waves	25
Narrative Voices; Linking and Repurposing.....	30
Towards A Revised Feminist Avant-Garde	35
Chapter 2 <i>Mise en Scène</i> : Space, Time and New Worlds.....	37
Chapter 3. Montage: Cutting up the Fabric	59
Chapter 4. Identity: Juggling Ghosts and Paradox, Ambivalent Anxieties	81
Chapter 5. The Sonic Dimension: Performance, Music, Voice	104
Conclusion	127
Bibliography	132
Filmography.....	162
Exhibitions & Performances	171

Accompanying Materials

The New World, dir. Ruth Novaczek (2011)

Radio, dir. Ruth Novaczek (2013)

Introduction

Experiments don't have goals. They have outcomes and surprises.
—— Shelley Silver¹

Both the text and the films in this project use a discursive style to explore a range of themes, motifs and references, which contextualise my practice. I link ideas in a discourse that pursues a rhizomatic journey through the problematics of experimental film practice in relation to feminine *écriture*.² This project asks: how can I draw on an avant-garde and found-footage practice to build complex subjectivity, and how do new vernaculars³ arise from this collision of enquiries. I understand new vernaculars as a means to use some of the tools and motifs of the experimental avant-garde cinemas in order to revision filmic language with a broadly feminist perspective.

My film practice began at St. Martin's School of Art in London in the 1980s, which at the time had strong links with the London Filmmaker's Co-op, and both emphasised a

¹ Laura V. (2014) "It's not polite to stare: interview with Shelley Silver," *Holbrook's trunk: Georgia museum of art blog*, January 6th, 2014. Available at: <http://gmoa.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/its-not-polite-to-stare-interview-with.html> (Accessed: 9 March 2014).

² First coined by Helene Cixous in 1975 (in *The laugh of the medusa*) *écriture féminine* refers to female difference in relation to language. Cixous, Luce Irigaray and others called for women to write themselves, based on their experience. I have anglicised the 'feminine' but the 'écriture' remains in French. Cixous, H. (1975) 'The laugh of the medusa', in Marks, E., and Courtivron, I. (eds.) (1980) *New French Feminisms*. Brighton: Harvester, pp. 245-64. All further references are to this edition.

³ *Vernacular* refers to a kind of argot. For example, the African-American vernacular is transnational and transmedial. While vernacular can be used to describe an architectural style that is domestic or functional, it also has linguistic implications, an idiom or dialect that is casual, local, or a mother tongue not learned, but transmitted. The sense of the word in this context is fundamental to my practice. See for example Miriam Bratu Hansen 'I take the study of modernist aesthetics to encompass cultural practices that both articulated and mediated the experience of modernity, such as the mass-produced and mass-consumed phenomena of fashion, design, advertising, architecture and urban environment, of photography, radio, and cinema. I am referring to this kind of modernism as "vernacular" (and avoiding the ideologically over-determined term "popular") because the term vernacular combines the dimension of the quotidian, of everyday usage, with connotations of discourse, idiom, and dialect, with circulation, promiscuity, and translatability.' Hansen, M. B. (1999) 'The mass production of the senses: classical cinema as vernacular modernism' *Modernism/modernity* 6 (2), pp.59-77. Available at: <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/modernism-modernity/toc/mod6.2.html> (Accessed: 2 May 2014), p.59. See also: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/vernacular>. (Accessed 2 May 2014)

structural approach to filmmaking.⁴ But Super 8 was becoming popular, and Derek Jarman, Isaac Julien, and others broke away from structural film to make work which documented and dramatised queer and black experience. My own Super 8 films at the time, sought a lyrical rather than formal engagement with the process of making, and a method rooted in film as artistic process towards an evolving feminist-inflected cinematic language. This process seeks to reveal new vernaculars, idioms and grammars that refer across literature, cinema and art. Having broken with the formalism of structural film I began to include meaningful content, and a core of subjective enquiry that sought to reveal new approaches to personal narrative in the 1990s, working in both film and video.

While my films adhere to a degree to the context of experimental film, many understand them as art per se, specifically the US writer Chris Kraus, who works primarily in the gallery setting.⁵ My practice developed contextually during periods spent in New York where I showed my films and installations between 1994 and 2000 in art galleries, and this was foundational for my current research. There was a fluidity of film culture that emerged from art schools on both the East and West coasts that drew on cinema, art, feminism, poetry, music, and theory, which introduced a broader hybridity to my practice. Through dialogues in the US, I encountered Abigail Child's *noir* found-footage films, and Chris Kraus and her radical genre-busting text *I Love Dick*. In New York I encountered a feminist, culturally aware, vernacular art world on the margins of academia. Art, cinema, gender, subjectivity, poetry and everything else comprised a new *carte-blanche* for filmic experiments. Lauren

⁴ Sitney, P. A. (2002) *Visionary film: the American avant-garde, 1943-2000*. New York: OUP, p.348. According to Sitney structural film insists on its form and its content is minimal, however the lyrical film allows us to 'see what the camera sees'.

⁵ See Kraus, C., *The White Review*, p.12.

Rabinovitz notes that Maya Deren advocated a cinema that would stylistically explore and expand a specifically cinematic language.⁶ The quest for formal innovation beyond Maya Deren's legacy as 'the mother of the avant-garde'⁷ has produced a cluster of different approaches to language in the underground, arthouse, experimental, structural, countercultural and avant-garde fields.⁸ This PhD project, comprising the following chapters and my films *Radio* (2011) and *The New World* (2013), explores the paradoxes of feminist filmmaking within the avant-garde. These two films investigate how new vernaculars can be formed by shifting and migrating formal concerns in new contexts.

Because contemporary experimental film is in a state of flux and lacks a rigorous and substantial (feminist) canonical map, the history of the moving image is relatively unknown to new art audiences in formal terms. There have been some movements that chart a rough canon: the New York underground, the California experimental scene, the British Co-op movement and various black, queer and feminist offshoots which took aspects of their formal grammars from these roots. In 1975 Peter Wollen noted that the 'two avant-gardes' developed unevenly, 'in Europe today there are two distinct avant-gardes. The first can be identified loosely with the Co-op movement. The second would include film-makers such as Godard, Straub and Huillet'⁹, yet Wollen notes that Jackie Raynal's *Deux Fois* (1968) fits neither model. Wollen also mentions the nature of film itself as 'a form of art employing more than one channel,

⁶ Lauren R. (2003) *Points of resistance: women, power and politics in the New York avant-garde cinema, 1943-71*. 2nd edn. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, p.49.

⁷ Starr, C. (1976) 'Maya: the mother of the avant-garde film', *New York Times* 02 May 1976, p.13.

⁸ These terms are to all intents and purposes interchangeable, in referring to non-mainstream commercial filmmaking. They do however imply different foundational values and were coined in different contexts at different times.

⁹ Wollen, P. (1975) 'The two avant-gardes' in Simpson, P. Utterson, A. and Shepherdson, K.J. (eds.) (2004) *Film theory: critical concepts in media and cultural studies, vol. 4*. New York: Routledge.

more than one sensory medium, and uses a multiplicity of different types of code.’ And he thus advocates a view of the avant-garde that doesn’t simply reduce things to political or apolitical but instead concludes with the hope that cinema could ‘elaborate the semiotic shifts that marked the origins of the avant-garde in a uniquely complex way, a dialectical montage within and between a complex of codes.’¹⁰

Agnès Varda’s notion of *cinécriture* echoes the demand for women to be embedded in the text and the world¹¹, and the combination of subjectivity and historiography in the present, are the motors for my own enquiry into new forms of filmic experimentation. As early as 1926, in her essay ‘The Cinema,’ Virginia Woolf writes, ‘We should be able to see thought in its wildness, in its beauty, in its oddity.’¹² Avant-garde cinema is often characterised by the desire to represent the process of thought and psyche. Yet the filmic avant-garde and the experiment in general have ossified into a set of tropes epitomised in structural materialism¹³, and a formalism that continues to invoke a set canon as key to avant-garde practice. What is currently understood as the filmic experimental and avant-garde is in fact a canonical set of films that flag a certain tendency in America, Japan and Europe since the 1920s. I argue that experiment is process-driven and constantly changing; there is no preconceived outcome.

¹⁰ Wollen, P. (1975) ‘The two avant gardes’. *MediaArtNet*. Available at: <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/mediaartnet/>. (Accessed: 13 November 2014).

¹¹ Smith, A.(1998) *Agnes Varda*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. ‘She constructs a film she says, as a writer constructs a text’ then she cites Varda ‘Au cinema, le style c’est le cinécriture’ p.14.

¹² Woolf, V. (1926) ‘The cinema’, in McNeillie, A. (ed.) *The essays of Virginia Woolf: 1925-1928, Vol. 4*. New York: Mariner, p. 348.

¹³ P. Adams Sitney had coined the term ‘structural film’ to describe a process-driven formal practice epitomized by Hollis Frampton, Peter Kubelka and Michael Snow, among others, who broke away from the complex and condensed practice of Stan Brakhage for example. In Britain in the 1960s, Peter Gidal had proposed a non-objectification of women in avant-garde film by returning to the material itself and an abstract structural formalism. Sitney (2002), p.348.

The development of avant-garde film has involved a number of debates around what constitutes a vanguard in cinematic terms, and this has been apparent in a range of movements in the late twentieth century which challenged their predecessors. Fred Camper's 1987 article in *Millennium Film Journal* rued the demise of the 'giants' of the old avant-garde at the dawn of a new era.¹⁴ The 1989 Toronto Experimental Film Congress had invited many of the older generation (Stan Brakhage *et al.*) to attend, which led younger American filmmakers to write an open letter stating that the 'time is long overdue to unwrite the Institutional Canon of Masterworks of the Avant-Garde.'¹⁵ The old avant-garde had minimized linguistic, cultural and sexual differences, and the signatories noted that revolutionary film can only survive where it can shift and migrate according to changing historical conditions. In 1990, Paul Arthur, Tom Gunning and Manohla Dargis all published essays on this new generation in *A Passage Illuminated: The American Avant-Garde 1980-1990*, with a focus on the overlooked and radical changes that had taken place as a result of feminist and cultural shifts away from an unspoken patriarchal normativity in experimental film.¹⁶

The films and texts I cite are a methodological key to my filmmaking practice, drawing on a range of sources: from cinema, gallery installation, writing, poetry and the filmic avant-garde. The films of Liz Rhodes and Annabel Nicolson have served as important examples of the British feminist avant-garde¹⁷, and while I appreciate their

¹⁴ Camper, F. (1986-87) 'The end of avant-garde film', *Millennium Film Journal*, 16/17/18 (Fall-Winter), pp.65-94.

¹⁵ Quoted by Wees, W.C. (1993) *Recycled images: the art and politics of found footage*. New York: Anthology Film Archives, p.24. The signatories included Abigail Child, Su Friedrich, Steve Fagin, and Peggy Ahwesh.

¹⁶ Arthur, P. (1991) 'Lost and found: American avant-garde film in the eighties', pp.15-29; Gunning, T.(1991) 'New horizons: journeys, documents, myths and counter myths', pp. 35-49; Dargis, M. 'Beyond Brakhage: avant-garde film and feminism', in Arthur, P. and Voorhuies, N. (eds.) (1991) *A passage illuminated: the American avant-garde 1980-1990*. Amsterdam: Mecano.

¹⁷ See for example Curtis, D. (2006) *A history of artists film and video in Britain 1897-2004*. London: BFI, p.37 and Rees, A. L. (1999) *A history of experimental film and video*. London: BFI. Both Curtis

formal and textual concerns, their intentionality and subjectivity is cooler than my own tendency toward expressionism. I situate myself as a diasporist and cosmopolitan, and work outside the predominantly formalist concerns of UK experimental film culture, turning instead towards Chantal Akerman and other francophone filmmakers, and the US underground. Since the 1990s I have been based in Tel Aviv, New York, and London, where conversations, collaborations and exchanges drew on several registers of identity and sources, which are outlined in the following chapters. Both *Radio* and *The New World*, explore cinema, history, narrative, thought and feminism from a subjective position that moves beyond identity per se towards a cultural flexibility that is at home in a broader world; transversal and transnational.

Reflecting on second and third wave feminism¹⁸ I return to H  l  ne Cixous's search for feminine inscription, which in 1975 she called a 'vain scouting mission'.¹⁹ The problem of marginalisation in my own work has defined a complex route, which is abstractly, and subjectively feminist in character. In this regard, Judith Halberstam writes that 'even popular films and media' can be used to produce incisive critiques of mass culture to de-privilege conformity and reinscribe marginalization as powerful.²⁰ Laura Mulvey's countercultural cinema and Claire Johnston's 'countercinema' had contributed to a broad rethinking of how women might engage with cinematic

and Less more or less proscribed an historical canon that tends to include Nicolson, Rhodes and others as primary examples of British feminist filmmaking.

¹⁸ Blaetz, R.(2007) *Women's experimental cinema: critical frameworks*. Durham NC: Duke University Press; Juhasz, A. (2001) *Women of vision: histories in feminist film and video*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁹ See Cixous (1980) pp.245-64.

²⁰ See Halberstam, J. (2005) *The queer art of failure*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

practice with more cultural and political self-reflexivity.²¹ According to Lauren Berlant, ‘much radical culture-building used Brechtian avant-garde tactics – to make strange and change the *forms* that desire was thought to take.’²² Berlant elucidates: ‘Theory, as Gayatri Spivak writes, is at best provisional generalization: I am tracking patterns... I am interested in lines of continuity and in the ellipsis, with its double meaning of what goes without saying.’²³ It is not a question of collecting new theory to find a way to language, but to map the fractured, elliptical and unspoken in the quest. Jean-Luc Godard notes in *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1998) that there is simply too much film in existence for a student to watch all the important works in real time; there are too many new genres of cinema springing up in the wake of global DVD distribution and ubiquitous phone cameras to follow a course through twenty first-century moving-image work. The implication is that the West is no longer creating canonical trajectories: experiments and innovations are occurring within global-national cinemas, the internet, and new documentary forms, along with the anti-linear and spiral filmic strategies advocated by some feminists. Visual anthropology, the essay film, and auto-ethnography are ‘genres’ arising from the evolution of identity politics in the 1980s and 1990s, rethinking Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin’s collaborative project *Chronique d’un Été* (1960), which opened avenues for western self-reflexivity.²⁴

²¹ See Johnston, C. (2006) ‘Women’s cinema’; Ettinger, B.(2006) *The matrixial borderspace*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; hooks, b.(1996) ‘The oppositional gaze: black female spectators’ in hooks, b. (ed.) *Reel to real: race, sex and class at the movies*. London: Routledge, pp. 197-213.

²² Berlant, L. (2012) *Desire/Love*. Brooklyn: Punctum Books, p. 46.

²³ Berlant (2012) p.3.

²⁴ *Chronique d’un été* was a philosophical/anthropological/documentary collaboration. Morin had written on cinema, while Rouch was a well-known anthropologist.

I interrogate what Catherine Russell calls ‘the deep ironies’ which ‘derive from the overlapping and coextensive aesthetics of realism, modernism and postmodern simulation’²⁵ as well as the contradictions and paradoxes of ‘the work of film in the age of video.’²⁶ Rooted in an unmapped cartography of what constitutes both feminism and experiment in film, this thesis sketches a map. In *The New World* these overlaps and paradoxes are strategic in forming a language that both references and challenges existing films and videos and their generic norms, mixing original footage, cinematic quotes, and literary and musical referents.

On Writing Oneself

Since diary-writing is a subjective practice, it’s more fragile, looser, messier. As a transcription of live thought, diary-writing’s destined for confusion because the mind doesn’t stay still for very long. As an art making practice it’s incoherent and therefore essentially flawed.

—— Chris Kraus²⁷

The syntactic experiments of avant-garde film are mirror and reaction to the ‘noise’ of the world, a social critique and sensuous rhythmic involvement, a critical and physical (material) attempt to disrupt, devolve, revolve, and evolve, to create social messy irritating botched beautiful brilliant argumentative intimate shocked hysterical and wry standoffs.

—— Abigail Child²⁸

For decades, artists like [Ana] Mendieta, [Hannah] Wilke, Valie Export, Eleanor Antin existed only within the ‘feminism’ constellation. Though they were no less intentional or consistently productive than the men, there were no meta-narratives told about their lives and work. And so they had no value.

—— Chris Kraus²⁹

²⁵ Russell, C. (1999) *Experimental ethnography: The work of film in the age of video*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, p.240.

²⁶ See Russell (1999) title page.

²⁷ Kraus, C. (2004) *Video green: Los Angeles Art and the triumph of nothingness*. New York: Semiotext(e)/Smartart, p.139.

²⁸ Child, A. (2005) *This is called moving: a critical poetics of film*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, p.131.

²⁹ Kraus (2004) p.74.

The failure of meta-narrative to inscribe questions of identity is an ongoing feminist issue.³⁰ For instance, Mary Anne Doane cites Luce Irigaray as ‘perhaps the most persistent spokeswoman for the necessity of delineating a female specificity’.³¹ Abigail Child translates Mulvey’s essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ as: ‘women portrayed as passive, possessed objects,’ and suggests ‘alternative readings from the margins.’³² Child identifies the crucial question as: ‘Is it because women have been more identified with the site of our writing rather than distanced by a metalanguage... that we have been less inclined to theorize?’³³ and states clearly that this is not ‘a static essentialism’ but a question of the ‘validity and authority of experience.’³⁴

Intuitive filmmaking and its process valorises experience; filming, collecting, cutting and arranging, is more mysterious than materialist, and the diary as a viable form that fuses art and life, has characterised much avant-garde film for decades.³⁵ Yet the inscription of women’s experience is full of variation and contradiction, often political and related to class and other inequalities. Lauren Berlant describes an unstable desiring subject, where ““identity”” itself, whether sexual or gendered, is therefore an always failed project... in that it is always determined by multiple, diverse and divergent aims.’³⁶ Since Deren, successive waves of feminist artists and writers have sought a language for their subjectivity, informed by the social position

³⁰ Jacqueline Rose has problematized the concept of subjectivity by defining it as ‘the constant failure of identity.’ Rose, J. (1988) *Sexuality in the field of vision*. London: Verso, p.90.

³¹ Doane, M. (1987) *The desire to desire*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p.82.

³² Child (2005) p.66.

³³ Child (2005) p.66.

³⁴ Child (2005) p.66.

³⁵ Particularly in the films of Stan Brakhage and Marie Menken in the mid to late twentieth century.

³⁶ Berlant (2012) p.51.

of women in what filmmaker Nelly Kaplan described as 40,000 years of patriarchal oppression.³⁷

The films I have submitted for this project, *Radio* (2011) and *The New World* (2013) function as research outcomes as well as avant-garde films in their own right. My methodology embraces an eclectic reading, watching and thinking in terms of theory that can be applied to my practice, which draws on a broad spectrum of art writing, subjective literature and an engagement with contemporary film culture that reconsiders *écriture* and gender afresh. Vivian Gornick writes of how she had ‘to find the right tone of voice; the one I habitually lived in wouldn’t do at all: it whined, it grated, it accused’³⁸ This finding the right tone in my own video diaries and citations was the motor behind the making of both *Radio* and *The New World* where a persona emerges that, as Gornick notes in her own writing, ‘acts as a reliable narrator one trusts to follow on a journey that brings us out to a place where things seem larger, to make large sense of things in the moment.’³⁹ I concur with Gornick’s notion of a self-investigation that engages with the world, from which a larger sense of a story can emerge.⁴⁰

Radio investigates how the short film compresses time, and the research elements contained within the five-part narrative are drawn from the model of the 1970s

³⁷ Kaplan, N. quoted in Johnston (2006) p.9.

³⁸ Gornick, V. (2002) *The situation and the story; the art of personal narrative*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, p.21.

³⁹ Gornick (2002) p.24.

⁴⁰ Gornick (2002) p.35.

concept album.⁴¹ Using appropriated footage and re-filmed extracts from Hollywood, French New Wave, experimental, and ‘world cinema’⁴², the *Radio* DVD remixes my own existing work in several formats⁴³ to build new films via a process of revision. In mixing my own diary footage and video documentation with cinema clips across a broad range of genres, the making of these films forced a conversation with these elements both practically and theoretically. *Radio* is a collection of short videos, and where structuralism has been concerned with the textural qualities of celluloid, these videos explore the graininess and contrast of refilmed cinema, cameraphones, and video footage edited in Apple’s simple i-Movie editing software⁴⁴ and in *The New World*, finished on Final Cut Pro.

The New World is a long short film. It attempts an expansion of the vernaculars and *écriture* in *Radio*, and is its sequel. Where *Radio* employed a language akin to the film trailer, highlighting and intensifying narrative, *The New World* is a compressed feature film, and its sequence unfolds across several complex and intensely worked vignettes. Where *Radio* makes no attempt at narrative closure, *The New World* has a continuity of themes and motifs that resolve, despite the film’s open ended conclusion; it employs long fades to black and an emotionally resonant score to work as a standalone film because its scope aims at the epic. Working with editor Lucy Harris from my own rough edit, we collaborated on the temporal organisation of the film, finding ways to bridge sections, and re-recorded some of the sound for greater clarity. Work on *The New World* at the editing stage incorporated digitised Super 8

⁴¹ Particularly singer-songwriter albums such as Joni Mitchell’s *Blue* (1971), Carole King’s *Tapestry* (1971), and Bob Dylan’s *Blood on the Tracks* (1975).

⁴² A common term to describe a range of films that are not English-language films and infer an arthouse rather than commercial cinema tradition.

⁴³ DV video, cameraphone, Super 8, and DVD.

⁴⁴ I use the version from 2001 which has a simple, filmic structure like early Adobe Premiere or Final Cut Express.

film, and tonally altered various video materials towards a unified whole. With regard to copyright law, these works comply with the notion of fair use⁴⁵, which permits the right to quote copyrighted material for scholarly or artistic purposes. Poet Kenneth Goldsmith considers twenty-first century media an ‘available resource’, and writing about Christian Marclay’s *The Clock*, he notes that it is ‘a massively popular work constructed in the style of broad-based web trends’. Marclay makes his position clear; "Technically it's illegal, but most would consider it fair use."⁴⁶ The cross-pollination offered by appropriation and the transforming of context it exploits is at the core of my practice; it documents a conversation, and weaves the research into the narrative structure. Each of the following chapters negotiates an element of the film making process: narrative and protagonist, *mise en scene*, montage, identity, and the soundtrack, to unpack the research behind the films.

Overview of Chapters

⁴⁵ Works cited that are not in the public domain may comply with the notion of ‘fair use’, or the right to quote. All works cited in the films have been mentioned and therefore acknowledged. However the Disney corporation do not make works available for citation, and many artists use copyrighted work as quotation which often comes under the protection of ‘fair use’. On Christian Marclay’s epic appropriation piece Richard B. Woodward writes; "The Clock" is both a triumph of digital editing and of "fair use" copyright law. It cost Mr. Marclay two years and a crippling injury to his mouse-clicking hands to assemble these clips. But at least he did not have to pay for them. Only the art world could reward this kind of obsession.' Woodward, R. 'Twenty-four hour view cycle, *Wall Street Journal*, 28 September 2011. Available at: <http://online.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111903791504576587093709382946> (Accessed 31/10/2014)

⁴⁶ Goldsmith, K. (2014) 'Copyright is over – if you want it', *Billboardbiz*, 15 July 2014 Available at: <http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/legal-and-management/6157548/copyright-is-over-if-you-want-it-guest-post> (Accessed 4/11/2014) . The ‘elephant in the room is copyright: few have mentioned that Marclay hasn't cleared any permissions with Hollywood for his work’. While both my films play freely with the concept of fair use in the internet age, the two long pieces of music that open and close *The New World* serve as more than citation, and for this reason I’ve acquired the music rights for limited use.

The **first chapter** argues for an eclectic practice that seeks the agency and subjectivity of its women protagonists. Feminist theorists and critics have tended to focus on representation and a justified demand for the criteria of the Bechdel test in narrative film.⁴⁷ ‘The women’s experimental films frequently revise the very paradigms within which this cinema has traditionally been considered,’ wrote Jean Petrolle and Virginia Wright Wexman, referring to ‘authorial agency by a historically marginalised group.’⁴⁸ While Mulvey had noted that experimental filmmaking by women might discover ‘formerly unknown principles at work in the lives and psyches of women,’ Petrolle and Wexman argue that this can be summed up as cultural agency in re-presenting subjectivity along broader lines.⁴⁹

I cite Helene Cixous and Viviane Forrester’s calls for written and observed subjective, feminist expression.⁵⁰ I look to Abigail Child who, like Deren, has written much about the experimental film and its poetics.⁵¹ The chapter negotiates the ‘dynamic ontology of becoming’ in experimental film, and its relevance to the protagonist.⁵² I argue that a film practice that favours a Cixousian *écriture féminine*, exposes the largely uncharted field of women’s visual experience, thought and perception.

⁴⁷ In Bechdel’s 1985 comic strip “The Rule,” part of her long-running serial *Dykes to Watch Out For*, the character Mo insists that, for films to be feminist-friendly, they must feature the presence of at least two female characters with names, who talk about subjects other than men, criteria that have been adopted in popular feminist culture as ‘the Bechdel test’. See Bechdel, (2005) ‘The Rule’, *DTWOF: the blog*, August 16, 2005. Available at: <http://alisonbechdel.blogspot.co.uk/2005/08/rule.html> (Accessed: 27 July 2010).

⁴⁸ Petrolle, J. and Wexman, V.W. (2005) ‘Introduction: Experimental Filmmaking and Women’s Subjectivity’, *Women and experimental filmmaking*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pp.3-5.

⁴⁹ Mulvey (1999) p.70.

⁵⁰ See Cixous, “Laugh,” and Forrester, “Le Regard des Femmes,” in *New French feminisms*, pp. 181-82.

⁵¹ Child (2005).

⁵² Grosz, E. (2005) ‘Bergson, Deleuze and the becoming of unbecoming’, *Parallax* 11(2) pp. 4-13.

Compressed time and questions of narrative structure are key in my practice; they are ‘attempts to encapsulate the whole world’ in a ‘dinky form.’⁵³ In the **second chapter**, *mise en scène* and its psychogeographical implications are considered in relation to the writings of Luce Irigaray, Gaston Bachelard, Guy Debord and others.⁵⁴ Questions of poetic space and dislocation are discussed in relation to my work, where a phenomenological interiority of tone and mood, is parsed via jump-cut bricolage. *Mise en scène* and montage have similar functions in film, but the former is concerned with location and consequently dislocation, as well as atmosphere, décor and style. I interrogate how this works in my film practice and that of others, looking at both interior and exterior spaces, the domestic and the road movie. I demonstrate how *Radio* and *The New World*, use *mise en scène* and *mise en abyme* to fuse space, protagonist, place and memory in an intricately-woven narrative that is both intensely interior, and also epic in scope.

In representing narrative time and space, the cut creates meaning through the assembly of material; it cuts the cloth to the measure of the piece and is fundamentally about looking and linking. In the **third chapter** this vital intervention is discussed and interrogated in both theory and practice, reflecting on the long take and on rapid cuts with examples from the critical writing of Abigail Child, Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein, Trinh T. Minh-Ha, and others.⁵⁵ The writing illustrates how editing works as both punctuation and tone. Abigail Child, seeking a radical experimental

⁵³ Kraus, C (2011) ‘Films: program notes’, Brooklyn NY: Real Fine Arts.

⁵⁴ Irigaray, L. (1977) *This sex which is not one*. Translated by Carolyn Burke. Reprint. New York: Cornell University Press, 1985; Bachelard, G. (1958) *The poetics of space*. Translated by Marie Jolas. Reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1994; Debord, G. (1955) *Introduction to a critique of urban geography*, Les Lèvres Nues 6. Translated by Ken Knabb, *Situationist international online*. Available at: <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/geography.html>. (Accessed 25 February 2014).

⁵⁵ Child, (2005); Kuleshov, L. ‘The Principles of Montage’ in Levaco, R. (ed.) (1974) *Kuleshov on film*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.191-95; Taylor, R.(2009) *The Eisenstein reader*, translated by Richard Taylor, R. and Powell, W. Hampshire UK: Palgrave Macmillan; Trinh, M.H. (1991) *When the moon waxes red*. New York: Routledge.

film practice, advocates fitting things together that don't go.⁵⁶ Her series *Is This What You Were Born For?* begun in 1977, opted for a montage-centred, process-oriented approach to making. *Mayhem* (1987) is part of this series, and fuses B-movie outtakes with 16mm footage shot in New York City. Following Deren, Stan Brakhage and Hollis Frampton, Child breaks rules and plays with language. Collage is 'about inserting one language into another,' says Kraus, Child's intensely bricolaged films demonstrate this.⁵⁷ In her book *This is Called Moving* she investigates process and contexts as a feminist and as a film maker, in dialogue with the montage theory of Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov in dialogue with a range of avant-garde ideas.⁵⁸ Collage forms a core in my own work, and I discuss montage strategies in *Radio* and *The New World*.

Chapter four confronts the ambivalent anxieties of identity in my work and that of others. The focus in this chapter is on Jewish identity and its relation to other debates, citing Daniel Boyarin's assertion that 'Jewishness disrupts the very category of identity because it's not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these in dialogical tension with one another.'⁵⁹ I unpack salient issues in the work of Chantal Akerman and others in relation to my own Jewishly-resonant films, which embed complex identity questions within transnational narratives. *The New World*, using found footage, original material and feminism, examines identity in the twenty first century. Questions of intertextuality and remixing, interrogate cultural identity and

⁵⁶ Child (2005) p.64.

⁵⁷ See Gellman, P. (2011) *Where art belongs*. Cambridge MA: Semiotext(e), p.36.

⁵⁸ See Nichols, B. (2001) *Maya Deren and the American avant garde*. Berkeley: University of California Press, a collection of essays, some of which seriously interrogate the emergence of mid-twentieth century avant-garde film.

⁵⁹ Boyarin, D. (1997) *A radical Jew, Paul and the politics of identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.244.

transnational positions to ask questions about the legibility of the Jew and problems in relation to Zionism from a diasporic perspective.

The fifth chapter is concerned with sound, and different musical and sonic genres in the construction of a film soundtrack. With reference to the theories of John Cage, David Toop, Trinh T. Minha and Michel Chion, I draw on the work of Lewis Klahr, Christian Marclay and others to survey a range of experimental filmic sound.⁶⁰ I discuss how I developed the soundtrack in *Radio* and *The New World*, and how I explored the mixing of genre and tone to enhance and amplify the image. I describe how a conversation between the sonic and the visual is explored via a process where a dense layering of diegetic and ambient sounds build a soundscape held together by a narrative voice.

⁶⁰ See for example: Trinh, M.H. (1991) p.56; Camper, F. (2002) 'American Movies', *The Chicago Reader*, April 18th, 2002. Available at: <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/american-movies/Content?oid=908308>. (Accessed February 25th, 2014).; Toop, D. (2012) 'Why Do We Have To Be Quiet Tonight?: Christian Marclay's *Everyday*', *David Toop's Blog*, October 15th, 2012. Available at: <http://davidtoopblog.com/2012/10/15/why-do-we-have-to-be-quiet-tonight-christian-marclays-everyday/>. (Accessed: 25 March 2013).

Chapter 1. Agents, Protagonists and *Écriture Feminine*

In this chapter I argue that a revived avant-garde film practice requires cross-pollination, dialogue, and generic crossovers to revitalise avant-garde and feminist film. I demonstrate how my films *Radio* and *The New World* inscribe feminine *écriture* and demonstrate complex subjectivity to produce new vernacular forms through the process of building narrative trajectory. I argue that a self-reflexive approach to filmmaking can define a new kind of narrative which addresses notions of agency and subjectivity. Citing Jean-Luc Godard, Craig Baldwin and other avant-garde cinephiles, I advocate the mining of existing cinema and a range of media sources. I demonstrate how elements of film noir can be used to express this through both the protagonist and her narrative trajectory. Film *noirs* and repurposed femmes fatales form the basis of an argument for recycling the sexist stereotypes of the twentieth century in twenty-first century filmic remixes. I draw on examples of twenty-first century women's feature films to revisit genres such as the road movie in a feminist context, and to explore possible protagonists that are autonomous, vulnerable, flawed, and engaged with their own self-determination. Returning to Helene Cixous' call to 'write oneself' and notions of subjectivity discussed by Judith Butler and others, I argue for agency and experience as motors for the protagonist. By referencing both independent cinema and avant-garde films, I revisit narrative form via empowered genderqueer protagonists who become the subjective voice of my work.¹

¹ Cixous, H. (1975) *The laugh of the medusa*. Translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen in Marks, E. and de Courtrivon, I. (eds.) (1980) *New French feminisms*. Brighton: Harvester Press, p.246.

Subjectivity, says Judith Butler, is the lived and imaginary experience of the subject, the protagonist in my films is thus not so much an actor who advocates for a cause, but is an agent in the quest for an identity that is constantly ‘becoming’². Carrie Noland writes that in order to develop a theory of agency that places movement centre stage, is to know that humans are embodied within and impress themselves on their worlds³. I use agency as an authorial intervention that creates a momentum with which to translate feminine *écriture* into cinematic form. *Radio* and *The New World* both borrow from a spectrum of cinematic protagonists who are repurposed alongside the non-actors I cast in the films. *The New World* parses both mainstream and avant-garde cinemas to propose an epic avant-garde narrative cinema that has much in common with Christopher MacLaine’s *The End* (1953) and Betzy Bromberg’s *Soothing The Bruise* (1990), which both share a quality of narrative coherence and humour, uncommon in much avant-garde film. In my own work, and particularly in *The New World*, the interplay of trajectory and agent builds an assemblage of voice, texture and fabula⁴ that produces a meandering narrative capable of layered meanings, which draws on MacLaine and Bromberg’s epic scope. Chris Kraus outlines the motives behind this model of filmmaking in the era of digital technology:

Films that can be described as experimental, DIY, personal, poetic, abject. The technology’s changed but the impulse to create this kind of order – delirious, dreamy, romantic, paradoxical, fraught – is still compelling. A terrible megalomania, an insistence on being present – even when one has no personal presence – through one’s double, the film.... Much as I loathe the idea of a feminine *écriture*, I have to

² Butler, J. (1990) *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. Reprint. New York: Routledge, 2006, p.122.

³ Carrie, N. (2009) *Agency and embodiment: performing gestures/producing cultures*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, p.2.

⁴ A term used by Russian Formalists to describe the chronological arrangement of narrative, and *syuzhet* is the way in which the story is told.

admit that the impulse to do this seems very female. Barbara Rubin a patron saint of this kind of film... 15-year-old girl given a Bolex transforms her isolate misery into Christmas on Earth.⁵

Both *Radio* and *The New World* emerged from hours spent watching, reading and thinking across cinema, literature and art to find compelling and idiosyncratic protagonists and narratives that evoke the delirious, dreamy and paradoxical impulses Kraus mentions. The repurposed protagonists in my work construct a lyrical, fraught feminist world that echoes the oneiricism of Maya Deren's *At Land* (1943) and Andre Breton's advocacy of surrealist juxtaposition to portray a destabilised reality.⁶ Both films employ a *noir*-inflected suspense. Bilge Ebiri, writing about David Lynch's *Mulholland Dr.* (2001) notes that 'mystery often empowers its protagonist; more often than not, they become active in uncovering the truth behind what's happened.' There is something of the detective in the central characters and the voiceovers in both *Radio* and *The New World*. They are women who confront patriarchy and are wounded in the process.

Becoming and Agency; the Protagonist Revisited

The writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari introduce another dimension to narrative critique; that of 'becoming'⁷, and consequently the role of the subject or agent, released from the suffocating fixity of her place in a storyline, to become instead an agent of her own motives. Elizabeth Grosz has argued that Deleuze (and

⁵ Kraus, C. (2011) *Films: program notes*. Brooklyn NY: Real Fine Arts.

⁶ Breton, A. (1969) *Manifestos of surrealism*. Translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, p. 14. 'I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality, if one may so speak.'

⁷ Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (2004) *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. London: Continuum, 2004, p.321. The authors refer to the 'minoritarian' position which demands 'becoming' as a perpetual dynamic towards a withdrawal from the majority, and an agency that rises up from the minority. (Here they apply this movement in terms of the becoming woman, or the becoming Jew).

Guattari's) anti-Cartesianism in *Anti-Oedipus* created a 'dynamic ontology of becoming' which might serve the aims of feminism, but the avant-garde she contends, is male, self-conscious and Cartesian.⁸ She writes of the basic uncertainty of Descartes cogito ('I think therefore I am') as destabilised by its implicit mind-body split. She explores the role of embodiment via Deleuze's reading of Descartes⁹, asserting that the feminist project is limited if 'all transgression is... familial in origin and projective in operation', and proposes a departure from a political agenda towards questions of agency and identity 'through the notion of an agent or a subject who performs an act which produces a certain kind of identity.'¹⁰ In my own films the protagonist's embodiment builds a 'perpetual inventory'¹¹ that motivates a 'dynamic ontology of becoming', by thinking and linking ideas and motifs. In *The New World* the central character is constantly reinvented through overdubbing, and in cutting from one protagonist to another emphasises the fluidity of her identity and position.

In 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"' Laura Mulvey wrote that she understood that her critique of, and focus on, the male third person 'closed off avenues of inquiry that should be followed up,' and acknowledged the 'freedom of action and control... that identification with a hero provides.'¹² She refers to Jennifer Jones' character in King Vidor's *Duel In the Sun* (1946) as enjoying 'tomboy pleasures'¹³ and of women's identification in Hollywood dramatic narratives as

⁸ Deleuze and Guattari (1983) See: Grosz, 'Interview with Elizabeth Grosz' as cited above.

⁹ Williams, J. (2005) 'Cogito' in Parr, A. (ed.) *The Deleuze dictionary*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.48-50. Grosz, E. (1994) *Volatile bodies: towards a corporeal feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p.

¹⁰ See: Grosz, 'Interview with Elizabeth Grosz', as cited above.

¹¹ Krauss, R. E. (2010) *Perpetual inventory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

¹² Mulvey, L. (1981) 'Afterthoughts on 'visual pleasure and narrative cinema'', inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun*'. In *Feminism and film theory* edited by Sue Thornham, pp.69-79. Reprint. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

¹³ Mulvey (1999) p.12.

'restless in their transvestite clothes.'¹⁴ While Mulvey's reconsideration of spectatorship in cinema has coined the notion of the male gaze, she seems to overlook the female gaze, despite the Joan Crawfords and Bette Davises of classical Hollywood who demonstrate its power so strongly. Mulvey's study chooses masochistic scenarios, yet her Freudian readings fail to imagine the possibility of the fluidity of desire or female empowerment.

Somewhat paradoxically, Mulvey cites Germaine Dulac and Maya Deren as 'mingling cinematic movement and interior consciousness' in their films.¹⁵ The mingling of narrative movement and interiority informs my own film-making and undertakes the challenge of realigning questions of the gaze, both in the film itself, and in terms of spectatorship. Lauren Berlant understands that gender is potentially transformative and gendered identity is a fetish, a monumental substitute that seeks to repress anxiety about loss, vulnerability and failure.¹⁶ According to Carrie Noland, in order to move towards Butler's ideas of subjectivity, 'the body has to be theorised from the start as a gendered body'.¹⁷ That is, gender positions can be expanded and mediated via a critique of the conventions of normativity, of patriarchy and of the gaze from the margins. In *The New World*, Jones' Pearl, Crawford's Vienna and other Hollywood stars are recast as agents of their own thoughts and desires, and as facets of my own subjectivity and they enact what Butler and Berlant advocate, by making gender a specific point of view from both sides of the camera.

Maureen Turim asks 'what happens to the notion of the personal cinema when the person behind the camera is a woman... what happens to the representation of the other (and by extension, the world) within that which is offered as the personal vision

¹⁴ Mulvey (1999) p.13.

¹⁵ Mulvey, L. (1989) 'Film, feminism and the avant-garde' in *Visual and other pleasures*. London: Macmillan, p.114.

¹⁶ Berlant, L. (2012) *Desire/love*. London: Punctum Books, p. 62.

¹⁷ Noland (2009) p.171.

of the self.¹⁸ In *Radio* and *The New World*, the desiring subject is behind the camera and the protagonist is both the eye and the subject, which resonates with Viviane Forrester's question 'what do women's eyes see'.¹⁹ As Hélène Cixous demanded that we write ourselves, in these collaged films the protagonists are the authors of their own consciousness. For instance as Naomi Gilbert wrote, we must 'become our own muses' if we are to interrogate a feminist subjectivity'.²⁰ Marguerite Duras has blamed theory for the slow advance in subjective writing, which 'ought to be crushed by now, it should lose itself in a reawakening of the senses.'²¹ Attributing theory to a 'male lack of intelligence', the aim of women, she says, is to quell the theoretical voice. This is a demand for theory to give way to experience, and the intelligence Duras critiques here is one that cuts the mind from the body and blocks the intuitive process. The emotionally intelligent protagonists and their experience are the foundation of the films. Informed by Avital Ronnell who notes the tendency among theorists 'to forget or repress poetry'²², I argue that the poetic and lyrical is crucial to the inscription of psyche and thought in the reassignment of the gaze as both thinking and desiring in my films.

Critical appropriation, self-reflexivity, and humour offer the tools to attempt a vernacular development in my films that draws on psychological thrillers, private eyes, fleeing brides, *femmes fatales*, and the troubled narrators and mavericks of cinema. Lauren Berlant notes that 'acting and interpretation enable the desiring subject to reinhabit her own plot from a *number* of imaginary vantage points

¹⁸ Turim, M. (1982) 'Reminiscences, Subjectivities and Truths' in James, D. E. (ed.) *To free the cinema: Jonas Mekas and the New York underground*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p.201.

¹⁹ Forrester, V. 'What women's eyes see' in Marks and de Courtrivron (1980) p. 262.

²⁰ Cixous in Marks and de Courtrivron (1980) pp.245-62; Gilbert, N. (1972) 'To be our own muse: dialectics of a culture heroine', *Women and Film*, 2, p.2.

²¹ Duras, M. 'Smothered creativity' in Marks and de Courtrivron (1980) p.111.

²² Avital, R. (2005) 'On the misery of theory without poetry: Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin's "Andenken"' *PMLA*, 120(1) (January) pp.16-32, p.17. [Online]. Available at:

simultaneously' and I demonstrate this through the spectrum of protagonists I arrange in the casts of *Radio* and *The New World*.²³ From repurposed Hollywood actors to my own cast of non-actor friends, these protagonists ventriloquise a fragmented landscape of womens' personae where a bricolaged assemblage of cuts revisits the gaze, *noir*, and desire between the authorial position behind the camera and the reframing of the women as agents of the narrative trajectory.

Notions of *Noir*

In his study of film *noir*, James Naremore notes that 'the essence of *noirness* lies in a feeling of discontinuity, an intermingling of social realism and oneiricism.'²⁴ My films employ the resonant tonality of *noir* to trace memory via a broken, transient interior psychic order, which creates a spiral trajectory. This kind of prismatic subjectivity inscribes a vernacular that plays freely with subjective interiority, and expresses the process of thought and association.

Radio and *The New World* are indebted to *noir*, and to the hard-boiled male characters in 1940s Hollywood films and in 1960s French cinema and explore the potential for a revision of the women of *noir*. In my own work the protagonist is reinscribed as both the source of desire and as its object; the wisecracking agent, or the wounded heart of her own trajectory. Her complexity depends on escaping passivity. She is, as D. Diane Davis would have it, breaking up.²⁵ The novels of Raymond Chandler and James M. Cain imagined women freed from domestic roles and with complex personalities and

²³ Berlant (2012) p. 74.

²⁴ Naremore, J. (2008) *More than night: film noir in its contexts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.22.

²⁵ Davis, D. D. (2000) *Breaking up (at) totality: a rhetoric of laughter*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, p.140.

psychic ambiguities, which I take further in my own work, revising the *femme fatale* which was simply a cipher for male desire into a main protagonist who is neither fatal nor a cipher. Sheila McLaughlin reworked *noir* in *She Must Be Seeing Things* (1987)²⁶, using innovative characterisation, poetic framing and compelling narrative psychology to place two women in the same frame, as jealous lovers. The themes of conflict between women, paranoia and questions of power are examined with an ironic *noirish* tone that employs ‘detectives’ in trenchcoats, intercultural lesbian relationships, and a shadowy *mise en scène*. These characterisations resonate with Diane Davis invocation of post-feminism as a means towards ‘an/other feminism’, or a ‘postfeminist feminism’, where she proposes a third way beyond binary thinking that is founded on a ‘radical *re-visioning*’.²⁷ McLaughlin had applied Godard’s notion that ‘all you need for a movie is a gun and a girl’ in her feminist *noirs*, and the woman and the gun in the same frame is as psychologically resonant as any hard-boiled Bogart, while raising questions about the role of the gun in cinema as the ultimate male accessory.²⁸ Notably, Godard did this in *Made in U.S.A.* (1966), casting Anna Karina as the ‘detective’ Nelson, based on a David Goodis pulp *noir*.²⁹ Anna Karina is not much of a *noirish* heroine re-visited as her character is neither dangerous nor *fatale*, but lost. While Quentin Tarantino’s *Jackie Brown* (1997)³⁰ reclaims the

²⁶ Maslin, J. (1988) ‘She must be seeing things: sexual stereotypes and role-playing’, *New York Times*, 13 April 1988. [Online] Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=940DEFD61039F930A25757C0A96E948260>. (Accessed 5 March 2014). The film received a scathing review from Janet Maslin in the *New York Times* after a screening at Film Forum. Maslin harshly critiques McLaughlin’s technical skills, noting a lack of dramatic tension, and directorial incompetence.

²⁷ Davis (2000) p.161.

²⁸ François-Lack, R. ‘All you need is...a girl and a gun’. *The Cine Tourist Blog*. Available at: <http://www.thecinestourist.net/a-girl-and-a-gun.html>. (Accessed: 20 July 2014). Roland François-Lack demonstrates that Godard attributed this argument to D.W. Griffiths in 1964.

²⁹ *Made in the U. S.A.* (1966) directed by Jean-Luc Godard. The film features a character named after American pulp *noir* author David Goodis. In the film, Goodis the character is an author writing a biography of French writer Louis Aragon, and a novel that will appropriate Nelson’s story; to prevent this appropriation, she murders him.

³⁰ Based on Elmore Leonard’s novel. Leonard, E. (1992) *Rum Punch*. New York: Delacorte Press.

Blaxploitation performer Pam Grier,³¹ as a middle-aged air steward who bucks the system, outsmarts the police and the gun-runner drug-dealer Ordell (Samuel L. Jackson) to drive off into the sunset, the hero of her own life. In *The New World*, I quote Grier's character thinking and smoking in slow-motion, her setting a New York cafeteria, where a voiceover describes her as 'always waiting, always late'. The characters I've repurposed demonstrate a fragility that anticipates D. Diane Davis' 'post-feminist feminism' that is 'breaking-up', or breaking down the dimensions of their roles. 'The "I" and the "you" are never given, never stable, "we" are breaking up' writes Davis³². My interventions, in voiceover and cutting, pull these protagonists from the twentieth century into the twenty first to change their context, repositioning them in a broken new world where they are repaired by the narrative as the thinkers and philosophers of their own ontology.

Waves

Third-wave feminism³³ introduced an expansion of feminist focus to the broader concerns of age, race and class. In the 1990s slackerish³⁴ TV series *My So-Called*

³¹ Grier was the star of the 1970s movies *Foxy Brown* (1974) directed by Jack Hill and *Coffy* (1973) directed by Jack Hill.

³² Davis (2000) p. 3.

³³ Coined by Rebecca Walker. Walker, R. (1992) 'Becoming the Third Wave', *Ms.* January 1992. New York.

³⁴ Following the 1991 release of Richard Linklater's film *Slacker* the term in the 1990s refers to apathetic youth who were cynical and uninterested in political or social causes. I use the term [as?] quasi-feminist because Danes' character is not so much a conscious feminist but more an agent of her own self-determination.

*Life*³⁵ Claire Danes plays Angela Chase, a thoughtful protagonist with a sharp sense of irony, whose stream-of-consciousness voiceover is the central conceit. Angela's interiority is the voice of the series, her complex subjectivity is smart and observational, alienated from the normative conformity of high school culture. Glenn Eichler and Susie Lewis' teen animation *Daria* (1997-2001) had an acerbic, wry misanthrope as its eponymous heroine who, like Angela, is smart, bookish and alienated from the normative conformity of high school.³⁶ Lena Dunham's *Girls* TV series (2012-), and her feature film *Tiny Furniture* (2010) pick up where Richard Linklater's generic slackers³⁷ and *Daria*'s misanthropy and Angela's subjectivity left off, giving voice to a new generation of young urban white Jewish women. Dunham picks up themes from Mary McCarthy's *The Group* (1963), which describes a group of Vassar College writing graduates who are disillusioned and struggling with their sexual, economic and intellectual identity. What Dunham has achieved especially in her own character Hannah in *Girls*, is to present frank and often deeply flawed portrayals of young women negotiating the twenty-first century.

My work is not concerned with re-visioning as the re-presentation of consistently strong or positive role models. There is an abstraction in the reworking of my protagonists; they dodge single-issue identity politics in favour of more nuanced and complex renditions of female personae. They have to solve different problems where they inhabit a new world, new technologies and new political situations. Alisa Lebow has described the characters in my 1994 film *Cheap Philosophy*³⁸ as fusing

³⁵ Winnie Holzman, the series creator, *My So-Called Life* ran on ABC from 1994-1995

³⁶ *Daria* was a spin-off character, having served as the foil in Mike Judge's TV animation *Beavis and Butt-head* (1993-). She merited a series of her own in a clever progression from slacker boys to smart as hell girls.

³⁷ *Slacker* (1991) directed by Richard Linklater (1991). Set in Austin Texas, Linklater's film depicts young marginalized characters in a rambling unstructured narrative that is low-key and observational. Slacker generally refers to Americans, often graduates, who can find neither a job nor a social role; Lena Dunham's *Girls* are generally considered twenty-first century slackers.

³⁸ A post-Holocaust 'musical' made with Arts Council of England funding.

‘well-worn feminine romanticism... with an uncomfortable and unwelcome violence that lurks just under the surface.’³⁹ There is certainly an emotionality in my films, and the violence Lebow notes is its shadow, because I map my own struggles via the protagonists. I have often cast biracial actors, particularly Francesca Souza, to flag cultural ambiguity in representation. Like Cindy Sherman in her *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-1980), I play with filmic stereotype in my work. If there are violent undertones and ambiguous motives among my own protagonists, they reflect on Melanie Klein’s notion of ‘the early interplay between love and hate, and the vicious circle of aggression, anxieties and feelings of guilt’ which Klein observed in analysing children’s games, where she noted the interconnection of positive and negative transference in children.⁴⁰ I transpose some of Klein’s ideas in my work with an element of aggression that is acted out or symbolised by guns or shadows that conceal a rage that is ‘the loss of rage itself’, as Claire Kahane would have it, but for Klein rage has no gender.⁴¹ In my films the protagonists enact a self-reflexivity, often speaking to camera, which emerges from the intuitive arrangement of passages, of sounds and of stories. Luce Irigaray’s notion of mimesis as a strategic essentialism is applied in my films with a knowing play with stereotype to challenge oppressive formulations of sexual difference.⁴² In my early performances – *The Cabinet of Doctor Kahn* (1993), *Let Them Eat Soup* (1994), *Esther Kahn, Portrait of a Lady* (1993), and *Excuse Me I’m a Human Being: A Karaoke for Ghosts* (1994) – I represented myself as psychopathic, pathological and fragmented, flagging ‘woman’

³⁹ Lebow, A. (2008) *First person Jewish*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.121.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, J. (ed.) (1986) *The selected Melanie Klein*. London: Penguin, p. 210.

⁴¹ Kahane, C. ‘The woman with a knife and the chicken without a head: fantasms of rage and emptiness’ in Rudnytsky, P. L. and Gordon, A. M. (ed.) (2000) *Psychoanalyses/feminisms*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, p.179.

⁴² Irigaray, L. (1977) *This sex which is not one*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Reprint. New York: Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 76.

and ‘Jew’ in an overt play on stereotype.⁴³ Acting out a mimetic assassination of myself to refute simplistic notions of queer identity and representational reclaiming, by demonstrating the internalisation of Judeophobia, homophobia and sexism. This was reiterated in my film *Cheap Philosophy* (1994) where wigs and other props signify the ‘princess’, the ‘jewish doctor’, the ‘psychotherapist’ and the ‘alcoholic jilted lover’. In recent work I reference Luce Irigaray for what Raneeta Chatterjee describes as ‘her deliberate presentation of herself as feminine according to patriarchal norms as a necessary prelude to deconstructing their pretensions to universality’.⁴⁴ Catherine Russell also notes that: ‘It is not enough to substitute lesbian content or images into structures of seeing and desire borrowed from the mainstream,’ but I would argue that in fact this interplay is impossible to avoid.⁴⁵ In my own films the casting of women protagonists and the absence of male actors implies an incidental feminist stance where representation is not overt but implicit. The actors in my films often fetishise cinematic glamour. Joan Rivière in *Womanliness as Masquerade* (1929) understands masquerade as a device for avoiding anxiety, a mask to hide traces of perceived ‘masculinity’ and to avert possible reprisals.⁴⁶ The use of masquerade in the work of Abigail Child, Sheila McLaughlin and Nikki S. Lee for example, plays with glamour and the performance of ironic femaleness and queer desire. These are ready-made devices whereby the protagonists are able to reframe and reclaim gendered stereotypes. In *Mayhem* (1987) Abigail Child ‘integrates the

⁴³ Performed at Jackson’s Lane Theatre, London, London Filmmakers Co-op, Blacks Club, London, Koln Feminale, and the Mizrahi Synagogue, Krakow, Poland, 1993-1994.

⁴⁴ Chatterjee, R. ‘Of footnotes and fathers: reading Irigaray with Kofman’ in Rudnytsky and Gordon (2000) p. 57.

⁴⁵ Russell, C. (1999) *Experimental ethnography: the work of film in the age of video*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, p.154.

⁴⁶ Russell, C. (1999) *Experimental ethnography: the work of film in the age of video*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, p.154.

conventions of film noir, with vignettes of goings-on in the East Village.⁴⁷ Child's films often satirise *noirish* sensibility, suggesting that, when the genre is engaged knowingly and out of context, there can be a transformation of the *femme fatale* from victim to agent of her desire. This transformation marks the protagonist in *The New World*, and the combination of autobiography and *noir* tonality in the film bring the protagonists into a frame which revises desire.

As a protagonist-author, I channel and enact subjectivity in my films in parallel with an intuitive arrangement and cutting of the material. The characters work in dialogue where they collide and clash with each other to evoke a multi-faceted feminine *écriture* that reiterates Cixous' call to blow up the language of patriarchy by subverting its conceits. The films question the post-structural avant-garde and engages critically with its language. According to Rosalind Krauss the structural avant-garde prefers repression to exposition, and in not achieving resolution it goes 'underground'.⁴⁸ In *The New World* I propose lostness as the condition of post-feminism migrating en route to a new wave. But it is partially underground, partially submerged, and the unconscious work of process is to make the stories emerge. The disillusion of the main protagonist (Francesca Souza) in a car, shot on Super 8 in the 1980s, overdubbed with Rita Hayworth's voice in *Gilda*, employs sarcastic biting quips cut together to describe a catalogue of sexual betrayal. She does not repress vulnerability and failure but transforms it by giving it a fragmented voice. In a dreamy and anomalous bridge from the claustrophobic car interior, a shot of the sky and a plane imagines a freedom and lightness that escapes to a moment of hope. This small section of the film leaves the tense world of *noir* yet fails to find anything more than

⁴⁷ Wees, W. C. (2005) 'No more giants' in Patrolle, J. and Wright, V. (eds.) *Women and Experimental Filmmaking*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, p. 21.

⁴⁸ Krauss, R. (1986) *The originality of the avant-garde and other modernist myths*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, p.13.

reiterated loss, a nostalgic melody in thin air. Yet in *Radio, noir* sets the tone throughout, emphasising the claustrophobia and despair of the characters as frustrated women in a patriarchal world. In *The New World* Souza ventriloquises others, and the lone women in the frame are attached by visual and sonic bridges that connect them to hope, to loss and to an effort to negotiate the world. They are framed as *femmes fatales* but it's only a frame-up; what they voice is a halting audacity, the language of patriarchy has been blown up, and the pieces are glued together again in the new order of the cut-up.

Narrative Voices; Linking and Repurposing

The narrative trajectory in *The New World* turns the linking and thinking into a collision of gazes, by juxtaposing the protagonists across time and place.

The story is revealed in this improvisational process, and the displaced self acts as a prism for discoveries. As Chantal Akerman has noted, if you seek too hard, you find nothing but your own preconceptions, it's better that this happens indirectly, looking 'off axis' reveals a less over-determined story.⁴⁹ Narrative emerges from the material and has the freedom to operate like a dream. Advocating for the power of the dream and the free play of thought at work in Surrealism, André Breton writes that 'Our brains are dulled by this incurable mania for reducing the unknown to the known, to the classifiable'.⁵⁰ Similar to the potential found in the space of dreams among Surrealists, for Abstract Expressionist painters the role of process in the

⁴⁹ Akerman, C. 'On D'Est' in Kalbreich, K. and Jenkins, B. (eds.) (1995) *Bordering fiction: Chantal Akerman's "d'est"*. Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, p. 20, cited in Lebow (2008) p.34.

⁵⁰ Breton, A (1924) 'First manifesto of Surrealism'. Translated by A. S. Kline. *Poetry in Translation*, 2010. Available at: <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/French/Manifesto.htm>. (Accessed: 2 December 2014).

improvisational nature of art-making invents the gestures themselves. For the New York painter Amy Sillman, for instance, ‘AbEx was something grand lying around the dollar bin at the secondhand-book store, something to be looked at, cut up, and used as material, like punk music or underground movies ... made by a lineage of do-it-yourselfers and refuseniks’. But in reclaiming some of the enthusiasm and freedom of this kind of art-making, Sillman repurposes the formal aspects of AbEx, appropriating the practice to ‘twist it into the form I wanted it to assume’.⁵¹ In my own process this appropriation towards transformation uses a range of raw material; I reference and borrow from cinema, use video-diaries and staged enactments to document daily life through the former and more abstract ideas via the latter.

A tendency in the US west coast experimental film scene from Joseph Cornell to Craig Baldwin, has parsed Hollywood narratives in new ways, using found footage and radical disjuncture to reinvent narrative and reframe actors in new contexts.

Joseph Cornell’s *Rose Hobart* (1936), Christopher MacLaine’s *The End* (1953), Betzy Bromberg’s *Soothing the Bruise* (1980) and Bruce Conner’s *A Movie* (1958) map a tendency to borrow and cite, which continues in the work of Craig Baldwin and others.⁵² David E. James notes a spectrum of cinemas in and around Los Angeles, where cross-pollination circulates reciprocally throughout the field of film.⁵³ Scott MacDonald writes of a critical cinema that can be mimetic, autobiographical or theoretical, represented by George Kuchar, Carolee Schneeman and Hollis Frampton

⁵¹ Sillman, A. (2011) ‘AbEx and disco balls: in defense of Abstract Expressionism II.’ *Artforum* (Summer 2011). Available at: <http://artforum.com/inprint/issue=201106&id=28354>. (Accessed February 6th, 2014).

⁵² Baldwin says ‘The language of history, the mediated version is internalized’ his film *Sonic Outlaws* (1995) is ‘a personal expression of a culturally saturated individual...talking back’. Craig Baldwin, ‘Interview’ in MacDonald, S. (2006) *A Critical Cinema 5: Interviews with independent filmmakers*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.177.

⁵³ James, D. E. (2005) *The most typical avant-garde*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.14.

respectively. The mimetic film imitates popular narrative cinema rather than working with what McDonald terms ‘anti-narrative’, offering the potential for what Laura Mulvey envisaged in the 1970s: a political and aesthetic avant-garde that critiques the film industry by recycling formal languages.⁵⁴ This tendency is, according to James, influenced by Soviet montage, Surrealism and European experiments in the 1920s, the New York underground and Godard’s critical narratives, as well as Hollywood and its out-takes.⁵⁵ My work is in conversation with the varied approaches to language in the field of underground, avant-garde, visionary and experimental film. As Paul Arthur has noted: ‘behind the visionary vernacular lurked a cluster of ideas about film just surfacing in academic discourse.’⁵⁶ Arthur is referring to P. Adams Sitney’s *Visionary Film*⁵⁷ and the 1970s American avant-garde discourse that exposed ‘a tangle of crisscrossing circuits that galvanize’ across ‘diverse formal vocabularies’.⁵⁸

In 1984, Teresa de Lauretis wrote: ‘The most exciting work in cinema and in feminism today is not anti-narrative... it seeks to stress the duplicity of that scenario and the specific contradiction of the female subject in it.’⁵⁹ She argues for ‘a new language of desire’ expressed through Kaja Silverman’s suggestion that ‘an extreme immersion’ in discourse might offer the female subject a way to work with and against narrative in order to represent the agency of ambivalence in cinema.⁶⁰ Nelly Kaplan does this in *La Fiancée du Pirate* (1969) by working to deconstruct signifier, narrative and protagonist by reworking the old story of the witch in the woods. In an

⁵⁴ MacDonald (2008) p.124.

⁵⁵ James (2005) p.12.

⁵⁶ Arthur, P. (1982) ‘Routines of Emancipation: Alternative Cinema in the Ideology and Politics of the Sixties’ in James, D. E. (1982) p.18.

⁵⁷ First published in 1974 and subtitled *The American avant-garde: 1943-2000* in the 2002 edition.

⁵⁸ Arthur, ‘Routines of Emancipation’ in James (1982) pp.xii-xiii.

⁵⁹ de Lauretis, T. (1984) *Alice doesn't: feminism, semiotics, cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p.157.

⁶⁰ de Lauretis (1984) pp.155-56.

interview with Jonas Mekas, who persisted in asking questions about gender in her films, Kaplan refuted the idea that films can be ‘male or female’. Mekas assumes form and content are contiguous, and Kaplan responds with the rebuttal that ‘all creation is androgynous.’⁶¹ In my films voices are reassigned, overlaid, and asynchronous, as they map a complex set of motifs. This resonates with what Vera Dika identified as a struggle with the voice in the films of Yvonne Rainer and Chantal Akerman, which, she claims, are subdued and strangled, because they attempt to voice ‘the unutterable’.⁶² Dika argues in favour of Vivienne Dick’s ‘aggressive screech’ in *Guerillere Talks* (1978), which she says recalls and undermines Andy Warhol’s emotionally restrained sensibility.⁶³ Yet Dick’s performed filmic punk does little to address the importance and complexity of these ‘strangled’ voices and her posing characters say little, loudly, where Rainer and Akerman get closer to radical narrative via the fragile agency of their protagonists.

In my own films the characters are vulnerable and therefore wrestle with an implicit but invisible patriarchy; they are not valourised or heroic, but struggling. In *The New World* Ardant’s frantic character debates with Mary McCarthy’s text on the nature of revolution and what it might look like⁶⁴ former Blaxploitation star Pam Grier is intercut with a wide shot of Katz’s Deli, New York, and her exhalation of smoke in slow-motion suggests thought and anticipation. A sequence from *Jellyfish* (2007)⁶⁵ follows Batya (Sarah Adler), working as a waitress in a tacky wedding hall, overlaid

⁶¹ ‘Nelly Kaplan: An Introduction’ [interview with Barbara Halpern Martineau] quoted in Johnston, C. ‘Women’s cinema as counter-cinema’ in Thornham, S. (ed.) (1999) *Feminist film theory: a reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, pp.22-23.

⁶² Dika, V. (2012) *The moving pictures generation: the cinematic impulse in downtown New York art and film*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p.58.

⁶³ Dika (2012) p.58.

⁶⁴ McCarthy, M. (1992) *Birds of America*. New York: Mariner Books, p.244.

⁶⁵ *Jellyfish* (2007) directed by Etgar Keret and Shira Geffen.

with a voiceover that charts her ‘depressing daily life’, then cuts to the suicidal Adele (Vanessa Paradis in *The Girl on the Bridge*) who becomes the target in a knife-throwing act.⁶⁶ The agency these characters have in the film is that of consciousness, however distressed or confused they may seem. They inhabit themselves on the shaky ground that frames them. In *Radio*, and *The New World* the films’ message is indirect, a palimpsest of fragments, gesture and speech that leaves the context open. Because these narratives are neither didactic nor conclusive, Eileen Myles has remarked on the ‘slippery history, a world that changes shape and deepens’ in my films.⁶⁷ While there are oblique and hidden ideas in the films, the use of a cinematic vernacular makes them easier to read. For an example of how obliqueness can work with the vernacular, the artist Julia Dogra-Brazell’s eerie, haunting and psychologically resonant films paint an *unheimlich*⁶⁸ sense of absence. There is a parallel with my own work and Dogra-Brazell’s detailed montage, elliptical plotlines, and quasi-reliable narrator/protagonists. However, the emptiness in my own work is not an absence of the embodied, but the failure of embodiment to make a certain kind of sense. The detours and tangents within the narrative trajectory embed the protagonist in the deep space of the film... In many ways *Radio* and *The New World* are constructed like cinema trailers for feature films. Trailers employ a shorthand that condenses the story in an intriguing way, and the *noir* tonality and emotional resonance in my films work well with this model, highlighting key motifs in a suspenseful and inconclusive way. But these films are not trailers, they are films in their own right that use a well-known form to tell their story.

⁶⁶ *The Girl on the Bridge* (1999) directed by Patrice Leconte.

⁶⁷ Eileen Myles, notes on the DVD [on DVD] *The New World* (2014) directed by Ruth Novaczek.

⁶⁸ See for example Sigmund Freud *Das Unheimliche* (1919) which translates as the uncanny, and is understood to mean something that is unsettling yet familiar. Freud, S. ‘The Uncanny’ (1919) in Dickson, A. (ed.) (1990) *The Penguin Freud library: volume 14, art and literature* ed. by Albert Dickson. London: Penguin, pp. 335-376.

Towards A Revisioned Feminist Avant-Garde

The poetic lyricism in the films of Wong Kar-Wai, or the radical disjuncture of MacLaine's *The End* (1953) provide models for a possible revision of feminist avant-garde narrative cinema. The intuitive construction of these films, with their tangential, meandering structures, suggest the thinking and linking I evoke in my own practice. Fragmentation, as discussed by feminist writers such as Elizabeth Grosz, Donna Haraway and others⁶⁹, describes the formal condition of women in a postmodern setting. This condition requires a radical fluidity in relation to language and ontology, which could build a feminist lexicon for new narrative forms that explore how stories are told.⁷⁰ Playing with time and form opens up a means to reinscribe the gendered position intellectually within the current globalised climate of financial and martial recklessness which privileges the commercial and, by extension, the patriarchal. Experimental feminist film faces a backlash where retrogressive and gendered positions have become the norm, yet women as protagonists, narrators, and commentators in a globalised consumer culture may yield models for a revitalised feminine *écriture*.

Arthouse film makers like Hana and Samira Makhmalbaf, Elia Suleiman, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Claire Denis, Catherine Breillat, Wong Kar-Wai, Apichatpong

⁶⁹ See for example Layton, L. 'Discourses of Fragmentation', in Gordon and Rudnytsky (2000) p.223. Discussing Teresa Ebert's notion of ludic feminism where fragmentation is an aspect of diversity to be celebrated as represented by Donna Haraway, contrasted with Ellen Friedman's thoughts on fragmentation as necessary for women writers to avoid being constituted (as whole or coherent) by patriarchy, which Layton claims is not ludic.

⁷⁰ See Harris, A. N. (2007) 'Partial Visions of Patriarchy and Fragmented Subjectivity: Chicana Feminism Amidst Anti-Hegemonic Discourse', *Rhizomes* 14 (Summer 2007). Available at: <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue14/harris.html>. (Accessed: 6 February 2014).

Weeresethakul, Anurag Kashyap and others, have assimilated the aesthetic, contextual and formal devices that experimental filmmakers explored in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s within new global, transnational contexts. They reflect the changes in production, distribution and genre that the globalised world has forced, by taking advantage of the freer applications of cinematic language across cultures, amplifying the global rather than the globalised. With temporally-relaxed narrative strategies and non-conformist and often eccentric protagonists these filmmakers have assimilated many New Wave and underground tropes. They have done so in a dialogue within mainstream, experimental and arthouse cinemas where cross-pollination continues to function as a means to refresh avant-garde practice by extending its intertextual references. By embracing this cross-fertilisation and borrowing and quoting an eclectic range of sources, my films strive to reconsider feminine *écriture* in the twenty first century, using the technological advances on offer for collecting materials, and assembling and distributing films that return to the visionary ideals of the twentieth century avant-garde to express the concerns of the current era. In reconsidering and repurposing the protagonists in my films in a surrealist, or oneiric narrative structure I repair the broken women of the twentieth century, reassembling them in the twenty first century as archive, and through reappropriations and reconstructions of performance, channelled through my own authorial subjectivity.

Chapter 2 *Mise en Scène*: Space, Time and New Worlds

Cinema was once imagined as an emblem, a harbinger, and a social vehicle of the transfiguration of time; a phenomenology of an eternal present made image.

—— Paul Arthur¹

In this chapter I will be looking at how *mise en scene* works to create a phenomenological² setting for new vernaculars. Feminine *écriture* is explored through its application to location, and temporal and narrative space in *Radio* and *The New World*. I will demonstrate how *mise en scene* works to unify mood and setting to create a sense of things in time and space that emphasizes filmic poetry.

The complexity and immensity of the cosmos as perceived in the twentieth century through relativity and quantum theory, revealed the potential of many possible worlds, and poetic film was well-suited to their representation. In the 1960s Jonas Mekas saw poetic, personal cinema as a means to continue and renew the ideas inherent in the earlier filmic avant-garde, represented by filmmakers such as Maya Deren.³ Writing of formal approaches to the fluid nature of the moving image, James Naremore notes that: ‘The Surrealists were “dreaming” cathected details from the cinematic *mise-en-scene*, but not just any detail caught their eye... Among their particular favourites were movies about gangsterism and murder’ that bestowed ‘an

¹ Arthur, P. (1992) ‘Routines of emancipation: alternative cinema in the ideology and politics of the Sixties’ in James, D.E. (1992) (ed.) *To free the cinema: Jonas Mekas and the New York underground*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp.17-38, p.17.

² Chamarette, J. (2012) *Phenomenology and the future of film: rethinking subjectivity beyond French cinema*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Chamarette describes a ‘plastic, textual, political, material, aesthetic, relational and embodied moment of the filmic encounter’ ‘a multiple and heterodox approach’ towards ‘a film phenomenology’ p.2. She draws on Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty to discuss the intertwining of subject and object positions, p.54. Phenomenological *mise en scene*, she writes, describes ‘the presence of things’ a consciousness of objects and experience, p.251.

³ Turim, M. (1992) ‘Reminiscences, Subjectivities, Truths’ in James (1992) p.197.

aura of the marvellous upon urban décor.’⁴ He writes of early American films that spoke of ‘daily life... and raise[d] to a dramatic level a banknote... a bottle... a handkerchief.’⁵ The setting of a film creates tone, mood and location; it can infuse the entire film or be disrupted through cutting. Space, scale and time are emphasised in film; Amos Vogel, founder of Cinema 16, notes that: ‘Time and space are telescoped or destroyed: memory, reality and illusion are fused.’⁶ For Vogel and others in the 1960s, cinema represented an extra dimension of time and movement; citing Albert Einstein’s spacetime physics, Vogel emphasised that: ‘Space is thus simply a possible series of material objects, and time a possible order of real events.’⁷

Mise en scène could be collapsed into two modes: the domestic and interior, and the road or the streets. One explores interiority, domesticity or isolation, the other, flânerie and the open road: the world. In *The Poetics of Space*, French philosopher Gaston Bachelard writes: ‘In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what space is for.’⁸ The house, Bachelard claims is the phenomenological receptacle of daydreams, of past, present and future, which he calls the ‘ultimate poetic depth of the space of the house.’⁹ He is speaking of the interplay between memory and abstract time, of the localising of intimate spaces; this is *mise en scène*. Bachelard emphasises the poetics of space itself, and of the daydream in life. ‘The great function of poetry,’ he says, is to ‘give us back the situations of our dreams.’¹⁰

⁴ Naremore, J. (2008) *More than night: film noir in its contexts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.18.

⁵ Naremore (2008) p.19.

⁶ Vogel, A. (1974) *Film as Subversive Art*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, p.20.

⁷ Vogel (1974) p.14.

⁸ Bachelard, G. (1994) *The poetics of space*. Translated by Marie Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, p.8.

⁹ Bachelard (1994) p.6.

¹⁰ Bachelard (1994) p.15.

This fluidity of scale and the oneiric was envisaged before the advent of cinema; Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* was published in 1865 and gained popularity towards the end of the century, when film was in its infancy. The first film adaptation was Cecil Hepworth's *Alice In Wonderland* (1903) followed by Edwin S. Porter's *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* (1910), and there have been at least ten film versions since. The bizarre journey that Alice takes into a parallel universe makes filmic sense in moving, or cutting between worlds; her descent into a rabbit hole of multiple dimensions is echoed in Maya Deren's *At Land* (1944), where each cut reveals another psychic level.¹¹ A cliff-face ascent leads directly to a dining table where the somnambulistic protagonist, played by Deren herself, belly-crawls along the length of the table, unnoticed by the chattering diners. The *mise en scène* builds a surreal world where the spectator is engaged in the dream; as Jean Cocteau noted, film is both a fountain of thought and a collective dreaming.¹² The poetics of *mise en scène* create otherworldly spaces in time. In Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1942), stair, knife, curtain, window and key, are imbued with an uncanny presence, and the domestic *mise en scène* infused with an uncertain cinematic continuity which links the pieces of an oneiric logic that illustrates thought and idea.

In *Fruit of Paradise* (1970), Vera Chytilová adapts *Alice in Wonderland* and the biblical story of Genesis. Eve/Eva leaves and re-enters Eden – the primal (*mise en*)scene – pursued by the devil, and pursuing the flirtatious Adam/Josef.¹³ Her films *Daisies* (1966) and *Fruit of Paradise* were both shown at LACMA, Los Angeles, as part of a series entitled *Adventures in Wonderland: Alice and other Lost Girls in*

¹¹ *At Land* (1944) Directed by Maya Deren.

¹² Bernard A. and Gauteur, C. (eds.) (1994) *The art of cinema*. Translated by Robin Buss. London: Marion Boyars, p.49.

¹³ Verrone, W. (2011) *Adaptation and the avant-garde: alternative perspectives on adaptation theory and practice*. London: Continuum, p.123.

Fantastic Worlds.¹⁴ *Fruit of Paradise* is fantastical, visually rich and associative; Eva reclaims Eden as hers, moving through several registers of surreal space and time. Eve/Eva leads Josef/Adam through forests and grasslands, beaches and bedrooms in a journey towards knowledge, as the devil/Robert pursues them like a lurking, salacious gigolo. Eva makes the world on her own anarchic terms; Chytilová and designer Esther Krombochova create a defiant and absurd radicalism. In *Daisies*, Eden is carved out of communist-era Czechoslovakia, as the protagonists eat, drink, and play in the lakes, restaurants and ballrooms of stuffy Czech party officialdom; they party with the Communist Party, wrecking its order. In *Fruit of Paradise* Chytilová builds a new world from Eva's playful, pleasure-seeking and complex desires; her Eden is breathtakingly beautiful, and full of satire and humour, there is no expulsion, simply the quest for knowledge and life.

Describing cinematic poetry in the short film, Deren spoke of a 'vertical investigation of a situation that probes the ramifications of the moment.'¹⁵ Bachelard observes that the poetic space of the house is thought of in vertical terms, and, in *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (Sophie Fiennes, 2006), Slavoj Žižek claims that Alfred Hitchcock's houses, in *Psycho* (1960) and *The Birds* (1960), emphasise a Freudian distinction between the ground floor of ego, the attic of super-ego and the cellar of the id¹⁶. Bachelard speaks of 'topoanalysis', a Jungian rather than Freudian reading, where the very structure of the space is invested with phenomenological values, by which I mean imbued with the process of experience. In daydreaming in space, filmic and poetic narrative is free to wander, from niche to attic to cellar.

¹⁴ *Daisies* (1966) and *Fruits of Paradise* (1970) directed by Vera Chytilová.

¹⁵ Deren, M. (1971) 'Poetry and the film: a symposium [with Maya Deren, Arthur Miller, Dylan Thomas, Parker Tyler. Chairman, Willard Maas. Organized by Amos Vogel]' in Sitney, P. A. (1971) (ed.) *Film culture: an anthology*. London: Secker & Warburg, p.174.

¹⁶ *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (2006) directed by Sophie Fiennes.

In my own films, the world is collapsed into a continuous *mise en scène*, regardless of location. Thus Paris, New York and the Negev can be intercut in *The New World*, so that the *mise en scène* itself is rendered transnational, fusing interior with exterior by jump cutting. The setting is both elsewhere and new, dislocated and fused by the anomalous *mise en scène*. Setting and narrative, protagonist and milieu are more or less inseparable; one echoes and reflects the other, and in the feminist context the patriarchal world enmeshes protagonist and setting further, and they become inextricably linked. Thus *mise en scene* is not simply décor or setting, but reflects lived experience.

This entanglement flags the psychological nature of setting and tone in cinema. In my film *The New World* it is not a revised or ideal setting that frames the protagonist, but a mash-up, psychogeographically and phenomenologically lucid, yet devoid of redemption; its finale asks for ‘a new password,’ a point of entry to a possible new world. The final song in the film, Dory Previn’s ‘Going Home,’ suggests a return to Hestia’s sacred domestic realm, a crossing of thresholds and dimensions.

Marguerite Duras sense of ‘elsewhere’ and disjuncture in the filmic interiors in *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta Desert* (1976) demonstrates the unifying function of setting.¹⁷ Set in the Paris mansion from which the Rothschilds had fled under the Nazi occupation, the location resonates with disembodied voices and offscreen dramas. Duras’ text describes the ruins of colonialism, building a critique across cultural, historical and formal lines to conjoin the colonial and genocidal. The house is multiply marginalised, as a site of an actual flight from violence, as a symbol of a

¹⁷ *Son Nom de Venise dans Calcutta Desert* (1976) directed by Marguerite Duras.

complex history, and as a post-colonial critique. This kind of ruined and abandoned interior as metaphor recurs in the film installations of Jane and Louise Wilson and Zarina Bhimji, where architecture stands in for an absent protagonist, and the text, for the *dramatis personae*.

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail Bakhtin notes that the chronotope¹⁸ describes the interconnectedness of the temporal and spatial.¹⁹ This collapse of borders describes how *mise en scène* functions in film. Textual explorations of memory conjure the cinematic in literature and vice-versa; Marcel Proust's detailed recollections echo the beginnings of cinematic consciousness, and much *fin de siècle* writing reflects the dawn of cinema and its explorations of time and space, by reflecting on memory and jumping back and forth in time. Jeanette Winterson's 2012 memoir revisits modernist notions of the temporal and spatial in writing: 'It is probably why I write as I do – collecting the scraps, uncertain of continuous narrative. What does Eliot say? *These fragments have I shored against my ruin...*'²⁰ *Mise en scène* is conceptual; its role is to create meaning, to locate the spectator and action in time and space. On another level it sets the emotional tone of location, of objects and décor. It is both the stage and the frame. Filmmaker Alia Syed describes *mise en scène* as 'metaphorical in the first instance, it is what is brought in from outside – past and present simultaneously.'²¹ If the frame defines what is outside, whatever is within the frame is a world: a construction of mental images; figures of thought. This

¹⁸ Literally and etymologically- time-space, meaning the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships in narrative. For Bakhtin, this was applied to literature and form (1937-1938) (see following footnote). Here I am applying the principle to the function of *mise en scene* in film.

¹⁹ Bakhtin, M.(1981) 'Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel' in *The dialogic imagination: four essays*. Translated by M. Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, pp.184-258. See also Cathy Greenhalgh, C. 'Malleable perception and cinematographic chronotopes in new documentary forms', *Documentary Now*, London, 19 June 2013.

²⁰ Winterson, J. (2012) *Why be happy when you could be normal*. London: Vintage, p.41.

²¹ Conversation between Alia Syed and Ruth Novaczek, July 5th, 2012.

metaphorical dimension connotes the *unheimlich*; the domesticity of *Meshes* is not homely, but otherworldly and uncanny.

The domestic space is commonplace in avant-garde films; the ‘home movie’, the *heimlich*²², the interior plays a role in underground film because it is a place of intimacy, and of the symbolic order: a Bachelardian poetic space, the ‘here and now’ of modernism. But for women filmmakers the domestic has had mundane meanings, trivialised to imply the ‘homespun’ and that which is private and personal outside the frame of the symbolic order: an abject space²³. Yet Bachelard anticipates *écriture féminine* in his examination of the poetic spaces of intimacy and their inner immensity.²⁴ To paraphrase Luce Irigaray: by remaining in a fixed place of gender, in the domestic realm, women become *lack*, excluded and negated from the patriarchal linguistic order.²⁵

Hestia, the feminine divinity who guards the domestic realm via a flame passed from mother to daughter, represents a purity that Irigaray explains as neither defensive, nor prudish, nor an allegiance to a patriarchal culture that evaluates virginity as an exchange between men.²⁶ This divinity, according to Irigaray is a fidelity to the identity and genealogy of woman, and to the sacred character of the domestic. Hestia, she explains, is usurped by extraterrestrial gods who rupture this feminine genealogy,

²² While in German *unheimlich* connotes eerie or scary, and *heim* can mean home (although *heimat* is more common for homeland) *heimlich* means hidden or secret.

²³ Drawing on Kristeva’s notion of the abject being that which is rejected by the social order, and also symbolic of the rejected maternal in the formation of identity, I site the domestic as symbolic of the maternal and of home as uncanny. See for example Kristeva, J. (1982) *Powers of horror: an essay on abjection* translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, p.65.

²⁴ Bachelard advocates the lived experience of architecture, the poetic dimensions of domestic spaces, and the daydreams spaces might encourage. Bachelard (1994) p.8.

²⁵ Irigaray, L. (1993) *Je, Tu, Nous*. Paris: Editions Grasset et Fasquelle. Amazon Kindle. Location 210.

²⁶ Irigaray (1993) Kindle Location 210. ‘Cette purété ne signifie pas une virginité défensive ni pudibonde... non plus une allégeance à la culture patriarcale et sa définition de la virginité comme valeur d’échange entre hommes’ (my translation).

forcing women and the domestic into exile. Similarly the female aspect of the divine in Judaism is the Shekhinah, which represents immanence and is both earthbound and exiled; and her immanence is contained in her yearning for connection. Feminist rabbi Sheila Shulman described her as ‘a bird on a wire.’²⁷ In a sense, the radical alienation of the women protagonists in my own films represents this terrestrial exile, the Shekhinah, both immanent and unbelonging, a subjective outsider. This is reflected in the radical disjuncture of the *mise en scène*.

The *unheimlich* world of Deren’s *Meshes*, the displaced woman in *At Land*, and an *Alice* at large in the world, and baffled by her changing scale, all suggest a feminist *mise en scène* that is fluid and transcendent. In *I Love Dick*, Kraus busts open notions of the private and domestic, or, as per the blurb for the novel, creates ‘a new kind of feminist who isn’t afraid to burn through her own narcissism in order to assume responsibility for herself and for all the injustice in world.’²⁸ Kraus disputes the subterfuge that has marked so much relegation of women to private spaces at their own expense; her road movie confessional refuses the boundaries imposed by Dick, her phallic-eponymous ‘hero’ and takes back the wider world subjectively; the road, the motel, thought, letters, and domestic interiors build a vast, rhizomatic *mise en scène*²⁹.

In the work of Deren, Abigail Child, Bette Gordon, Lynne Ramsay and others, setting presents a psychic organisation of material that suggests a language particular to

²⁷ In a tutorial at Leo Baeck College, London, October 1998.

²⁸ See ‘*I Love Dick*’. MIT Press. Available at: <http://mitpress.mit.edu/books/i-love-dick>. Accessed March 25th, 2014.

²⁹ In Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1988) *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia* translated by Brian Massumi. Reprint. London: Continuum, 2004. Deleuze and Guattari suggest the rhizome is ‘composed not of units but dimensions’ and the lines that link these dimensions are ‘segmentary’ and therefore intersectional, p.23.

women, not as a specifically gendered reading, but of an innovative formal intervention in a common poetics. Yet equally viable in this linguistic *genre* are Jem Cohen's poetic, evocative New York cityscapes, Stan Brakhage's domestic interiors, Jack Smith's quirky choreographies and Alfred Leslie's precise repetitions and framing. These examples flag the idea that innovative strategies within *mise en scène* are and have been passed across margins and cultures like any other cross-pollination. As Nelly Kaplan remarked, creation is androgynous, and setting is a metaphor, a world on its own terms.³⁰ For feminine *écriture* to work cinematically, the setting must reflect a world inscribed by women's experience within it.

Naomi Zucker's video installations made between 2001 and 2005, *Run, Corridor, Good Morning* and *Sleep* explore the Jerusalem apartment of her recently deceased mother; the sense of absence, of memory stripped of any literal referents, a *mise en scène* that employs colour, texture, and emptiness, suggests a life once lived within the apartment walls.³¹ Zucker's camera uses rotating, tracking and slowly zooming shots to capture the memory and life of her mother. There is a pervasive but unsentimental sadness, a Durasian abandonment in the *mise en scène* that conjures a history that brought her from Berlin to Jerusalem. The identity of the artist is embedded in the gaze, which suggests an unmediated subjectivity with a deeper layer of history and memory within the textures of camera and decor.

³⁰ Mekas, J. (1999) 'Interview with Nelly Kaplan' cited in Johnston, N. 'Women's cinema as counter-cinema' in Thornham, S. (ed.) *Feminist film theory: a reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p.23.

³¹ *Corridor* (2002), *Good Morning* (2002), *Run* (2003-04) and *Sleep* (2003-04) directed by Naomi Zucker.

Hélène Cixous argues that by virtue of subjectivity, *écriture féminine* ‘cannot fail to be more than subversive.’³² Yet this centrality of subjectivity has often produced social realism rather than radical poetics, diffusing linguistic innovations in a politically ghettoised authorial position. Barbara Rubin Suleiman critiques feminist realism thus: ‘although we have learned to think of them as *conventions*... the conventions of realist fiction correspond to what most of us think of, in our less theoretical moments, as “the natural order of the world.”’³³ Realism is not natural, art must intervene; women, notes Suleiman, are the ‘usurpers and subverters of a certain kind of “male” language,’ and she calls for ‘the inventing of new structures, new words, a new syntax that will shake up and transform... old ways of seeing.’³⁴ Suleiman is writing in 1990; revising the calls for an *écriture féminine* she demands an expansion of the feminist avant-garde beyond a radical response to a male world.

In the 2007 film *Buddha Collapsed out of Shame*, Hana Makhmalbaf sets her child protagonist in the Afghan desert after the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas.³⁵ There is a sense of total devastation in the landscape; rocks, caves and abandoned shacks form the setting, as a young girl walks to a village to exchange eggs for a pen and paper in order to attend school. She is ambushed by a group of young boys who attempt to cover her head with a sack, bury her, and stone her. This gruesome child’s game in the desert with the girl victims echoing the real-life experiences of their mothers in a Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. In this atmosphere of absolute patriarchy the girl’s quest for literacy is reflected in the destroyed statuary and endless desert, and I

³² Cixous, H. (1975) ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’ quoted in de Lauretis, T. (1984) *Alice doesn’t, feminism, semiotics, cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p.135.

³³ Suleiman, B. (1990) *Subversive intent: gender, politics and the avant-garde*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, p.35.

³⁴ Suleiman (1990) pp.122-23.

³⁵ *Buddha Collapsed Out of Shame* (2007) directed by Hana Makhmalbaf.

have used some of these scenes in *Radio*, in order to reinscribe the ‘biblical’ landscape in the wanderings of a young girl seeking to write herself. Samira Makhmalbaf also explores these desolate landscapes in *At Five in the Afternoon* (2003) and *Blackboards* (2000), where education and desert form the thematic *mise en scène* of the films.³⁶ They deal with a present tense outside western modernist concepts of progress; there is no Internet, only blackboards, and people, chalk and rock. The Makhmalbaf sisters’ films exist outside the urban or the domestic *mise en scène* of western cinema as we know it, they are about education, landscape and young women struggling to obtain knowledge and a voice.³⁷ The epic figurations of both sisters’ films pose women against symbolic backdrops, as if to frame them anew and recontextualise their meaning. For this reason I draw on them in *Radio* for images of feminine *écriture* in an intersectional context.

Abigail Child contends that experimental filmmaking is a means to examine why one is on this planet with a critical commitment to the contemporary world, and that the avant-garde is, in itself, an agent of change.³⁸ In *L’Homme à la Valise* (1983) and *J’ai Faim j’ai Froid* (1984), Chantal Akerman interrogates personal and domestic space anew via comedy and claustrophobia, while in *Sans Toit ni Loi* (1985) (*Vagabond* is its English title), Agnes Varda pulls off a melancholic road movie where the protagonist attempts to inscribe herself in an often alienating landscape.³⁹ It questions an outsider’s personal space in the world that Sandy Flitterman Lewis calls an

³⁶ *At Five in the Afternoon* and *Blackboards* (2000) directed by Samira Makmalbaf.

³⁷ Although Samira Makhmalbaf’s first film *The Apple* (1998) is based on the virtual imprisonment of two girls in a domestic environment, again the emphasis is on their lack of education, and their eventual freedom is on the streets of Tehran.

³⁸ Child, A. (2011) [interview with François Bovier and Ricardo da Silva], ‘Conversation avec une cinéaste ‘maximaliste’’ in Bovier, F. (ed.) *Is this what you were born for?: strategies d’appropriation et collage audio-visuel*. Geneva: MetisPresses, pp.117-40.

³⁹ *L’Homme à la Valise* (1983) and *J’ai Faim, J’ai Froid* (1984) directed by Chantal Akerman. *Sans Toit Ni Loi* (1985) directed by Agnes Varda.

‘impossible portrait’ of femininity, in which Varda ‘reverses’ Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane* (1941).⁴⁰ Mona’s (Sandrine Bonnaire) encounters and milieux are a reversal of Wonderland; her search for freedom is the impossibility Flitterman Lewis claims, for her world impoverishes her by exclusion. Mona is heroic, and in her wanderings around the south of France she encounters a range of philosophies none of which she can truly accept, with the exception of Assoun (Yahyaoui Assouna), a Moroccan vine cutter and her final friend/lover, before she’s pelted with wine dregs in a small village, and dies, frozen, in a ditch. Through her *mise en scene* Varda develops a strong sense of margins, of feminine abjection and exile. This maverick sensibility of setting and character demonstrates how *mise en scene* includes each element in the frame and in the collages in both *Radio* and *The New World*, setting functions as a broken landscape in which the actors must search for meaning, and it is their presence that unifies the locations they move through.

In Kaplan’s *La Fiancée du Pirate* (1969), Marie (Bernadette Lafont), a modern-day witch, exacts revenge on the avarice and hypocrisy of a village population, after her mother is crushed to death by a reckless driver.⁴¹ She transforms their miserable cabin into a marvellous shack in the woods, blackmailing her tormentors and selling her body to live as an artist on her own terms. As Kaplan has remarked, it’s a story of a woman who doesn’t get burned as a witch but instead burns her persecutors.⁴² Both Mona and Marie live in a liminal French country setting, where the *mise en scène* is overtly the frame for their lives; Mona claims the land as a drifter, whereas Marie constructs her world. Both films have a tonally surreal quality, and reformulate both

⁴⁰ Lewis, F. (1990) *To desire differently: feminism and the French cinema*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, p.285.

⁴¹ *La Fiancée du Pirate* (1969) directed by Nelly Kaplan.

⁴² ‘*La Fiancée du Pirate*’, *Wikipedia*. Available at: http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Fiancée_du_pirate. (Accessed 10 March 2014).

the gaze and its object, radically questioning relations of desire by reframing the dynamics of power.⁴³

Founded by the Situationist Guy Debord in 1955, the psychogeography movement describes a radical nostalgia where the uncertain, restless wanderings of psyche and self; the abstract, urban *dérive* provides a means for interior and exterior to merge. An urban subjectivity, a sense of place that has liminal borders, where a contemporary Alice might walk through the mirror on her own terms. Debord wrote:

‘Psychogeography could set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.... The sudden change of ambiance in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres;... the appealing or repelling character of certain places... gives rise to feelings as differentiated and complex as any other form of spectacle can evoke.’⁴⁴

Psychogeography evokes an exemplary *mise en scène*: located, moody and saturated in abstract ambiance. While the *dérive* usually claims the city streets, the road movie embraces the wider world; the road is not of the margins, but reflects a sense of the moving thought that film conjures. Stan Brakhage’s notion of ‘moving visual thinking’ can be applied to the *dérive*.⁴⁵ Chris Petit describes how, when he acquired a car, the boring landscape of England was suddenly enlivened; motion, a windscreen and a soundtrack created instant cinema. *Radio On* (1979) is a road movie – a British road movie is a rare thing – and as Petit notes, the cinematic American road connotes

⁴³ Lewis (1990) p.287.

⁴⁴ Debord, G. (1955) ‘Introduction to a critique of urban geography’. *Les Lèvres Nues* 6 (September 1955). Translated by Ken Knabb. Available at: <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/geography.html> *Situationist International Online*. (Accessed 25 February 2014).

⁴⁵ Sitney, P. A. (2008) *Eyes upside down: visionary filmmakers and the heritage of Emerson*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.79.

an exciting uncertain future, a *dérive* of the open road, and an open narrative.⁴⁶ A stylish retro car, contemporary music tracks and cinematic cliché; Petit's movie mixes *noirish* plot, absent characters, trains, boats and planes, in this overlooked avant-garde feature. 'O, mes chemins et leur cadence,'⁴⁷ my roads and their rhythm, as Bachelard has written.

Thom Anderson evokes the city as protagonist in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003), revisiting Hollywood's mythical *mise en scène*.⁴⁸ The psychogeography of L.A. is revealed as an iconic and multifaceted site, layered like a palimpsest with reinterpretations of place and space in cinema. Manohla Dargis reconsiders this tonally complex L.A. in her discussion of Curtis Hanson's *L.A. Confidential* (1997), citing the director who tells her he wanted 'to be true to the period but also feel contemporary,' not as a neo *noir*, but to animate the sense of 'manufactured illusion' and a dark melancholy that Dargis parallels with Robert Frank's photo-book *The Americans*.⁴⁹ She writes that Hanson translates from James Ellroy's novel the contradictions of L.A.'s iconography: 'a glamorous Hurrell fantasy and a Weegee crime scene,' a city of shadows and beauty, and of history reframed.⁵⁰

Some independent directors base their work specifically within the *mise en scène*.

Wes Anderson's films build entire alternative worlds, a fantastical and timeless parallel universe. In *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001), a palette of pinks and reds flag

⁴⁶ *Radio On* (1979) directed by Chris Petit.

⁴⁷ quoting Jean Caubère, Bachelard (1994) p.11.

⁴⁸ *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003) directed by Thom Anderson.

⁴⁹ Dargis, M (2003) *L.A. confidential*. London: BFI Publishing, pp.47-8; Frank, R. (1959) *The Americans*. New York: Grove Press.

⁵⁰ Dargis (2003) pp. 48-9; Ellroy, J. (1990) *L.A. confidential*. London: Mysterious Press.

the Tenenbaum house⁵¹. Anderson creates a collaged Gotham of retro tone and ironic nostalgia, fusing the 1950s, the 1970s and the future in parallel time. A quasi-New York of Gypsy Cabs and Green Line buses, depressed siblings, cowboy academics, flashbacks and bric-à-brac. The frame overrides deep space in the highly constructed tableaux and the camera is more or less static. These settings connote a lucid, nostalgic and surreal sense of time and place. Anderson's subsequent film *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004), riffing on Jacques Cousteau's television series *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau* (1966-76), evokes a world of strange creatures and non-sequiturs, a live-action comic book world of dysfunctional relationships, weird adventures and strange juxtapositions.⁵² In *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012), scout paraphernalia and a fictional island, reminiscent of Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons*, set the scene for a love story that celebrates youthful innocence against adult disillusion.⁵³

The spatial strategies in David Lynch's films build a tonality of metaphor into the settings, and a mood that is oddly timeless carries through the films' narrative incongruities. *Blue Velvet* (1986), *Lost Highway* (1997) and *Mulholland Dr.* (2001) are set in 'strange worlds' in which narratives criss-cross and wander off at tangents; subterranean and sublime, their tone is dark and menacing.⁵⁴ Both Anderson and Lynch have understood the metonymic associations of objects and era in the filmic frame, and play with nostalgia, innocence, irony, and cynicism; modernism in conversation with the postmodern.

⁵¹ *The Royal Tenebaums* (2001) directed by Wes Anderson.

⁵² *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004) directed by Wes Anderson. *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau* (1966-76) directed by Jacques Cousteau.

⁵³ *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012) directed by Wes Anderson. Ransome, A. (1930) *Swallows and amazons*. London: Jonathan Cape.

⁵⁴ *Blue Velvet* (1986), *Lost Highway* (1997) and *Mulholland Dr.* (2001) directed by David Lynch.

The New Wave(s) replaced the *cinéma de papa*⁵⁵ with a rebellious hopefulness reflected in the décor, the music and the clothes of a new era. A tendency in some twenty first century US independent films draws on a nostalgic *mise en scene*, recycling twentieth century tropes for ironic ends, exemplified by the love of analogue, vinyl and retro in American hipster culture.⁵⁶ Where consumerism has branded meaning and association, there are no longer ‘simple’ coffee cups or cigarettes in the current lexicon of cinema; objects have become metonymic in their setting. The poetic interiority of modernist-era *mise en scène* has been compromised; the coffee pot in Vittorio de Sica’s *Umberto D.* (1952), the coffee cup of reflection in Godard’s films, the way cigarette smoke often demonstrates thought, a trenchcoat or a train invested with the cliché of their nostalgic association; branding has transformed the tonal meaning of filmic objects⁵⁷. In my own work I use cliché to emphasise the relation of experience via spaces, objects and *mise en scene*. In this way I frame subjectivity by association, linking object and subject, which I demonstrate in both *Radio* and *The New World*, where in the former, fast-cuts blur the borders of location and time, and in the latter, depict them as bridges, through fades to black.

New screen technologies, from computer windows to phone interfaces, emphasise the *mise en abyme*. In heraldry this describes the inset motifs within the shield, and Susan Hayward likens its expression in film to the Russian doll, or Chinese box.⁵⁸ *Mise en abyme* can describe the self-reflexive embedding of motifs, or more simply, intertextuality. This extra dimension of setting creates a new fluidity of interior and

⁵⁵ Coined by Francois Truffaut in his 1954 essay "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" in *Cahiers du Cinema* January 1954 and which refers to the kind of clichéd cinema the New Wave wanted to supersede.

⁵⁶ Particularly in the films of Wes Anderson like *The Royal Tenenbaums* and Wong Kar Wai’s *In The Mood for Love* (2000).

⁵⁷ *Umberto D.* (1952) directed by Vittorio de Sica.

⁵⁸ Hayward, S. (1996) *Key concepts in cinema studies*. London: Routledge, pp.219-20.

exterior. In *The Virtual Window*, Anne Friedberg asserts that temporal *flânerie* – flashbacks, ellipses, and the achronologous – are part of cinema’s fluid temporality.⁵⁹ She notes that new technologies raise questions about the framing of the visual field and its limits. The frame is, for Friedberg, the decisive structure; it is not a metaphor, but an embodied, phenomenological and literal field; in Vivian Sobchack’s words, ‘a metaphor for intersubjective mediation.’⁶⁰ To illustrate *mise en abyme* she evokes the screens within screens of computers as a Derridean *parergon*, ‘a nested *mise en abyme*... and a new logic of viscosity.’⁶¹ She further explores this territory of portal and frame, citing the ‘[d]oors, windows, box office windows, skylights, car windows, mirrors’ that frame, reflect and occlude our vision.⁶² ‘The frame of the (computer) screen is a closed system, a primary container for inset secondary and tertiary frames that may recede in *mise en abyme*, but also converge to reunite within a grander but still bounded frame.’⁶³

The rupture of linear time has underscored much experimental cinema. In avant-garde film the return to dropped themes, the spiral layerings of a palimpsest, and idiosyncratic juxtaposition suggest the depth and tangential meandering of the written text. Jeanette Winterson’s memoir speaks of a subjective protagonist, in an achronologous and fragmentary world. She conjures a complex self-discovery that connects the pieces of a puzzle over the course of a multi-layered narrative frame. In an investigation of both time and language, she writes that, ‘[Sigmund] Freud, one of

⁵⁹Friedberg, A. (2009) *The virtual window: from Alberti to Microsoft*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

⁶⁰ Friedberg (2009) pp.10-12; p.17.

⁶¹ Friedberg (2009) p.10.

⁶² Deleuze, G (1983) *Cinema 1: L’image-mouvement*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, p.26, cited in Friedberg (2009) p.200.

⁶³ Friedberg (2009) p. 241.

the grand masters of narrative, knew that the past is not fixed in the way that linear time suggests. We can return, we can pick up what we dropped.’⁶⁴

Deren had noted the parallel emergence of avant-garde film and relativity, ascribing them an equivalence in an idiom of evolving temporal and spatial grammars.⁶⁵ Henri Bergson described cinema in terms of quantum time and the fleeting image, he explains, ‘we take snapshots as it were of our passing reality.’⁶⁶ Film has embraced a slippage in the industrial-era mechanical clock; sprocket holes and frames per second denote a certain temporal entrapment. In the mechanised world time is ‘locked,’ as Winterson and others have observed. Gilles Deleuze’s notion of the Time-Image zig-zags through theory and lyrical discourse⁶⁷; the cinema he writes, comprises a number of ‘images embodied within each other’⁶⁸. Film utilises the ease and fluidity of the moving image to ransack, rupture and disrupt the locked mechanics of the clock, Deleuze describes the elements of a film as ‘sheets’ that must intersect to find meaning, and thought the continuity that unrolls around and behind the image.⁶⁹ In this way a fluidity is evoked via the *mise en scène* itself, place and space are transgressed and usurped by intuitive filmic process, which is demonstrated in *The New World* through anomalous locations cut together and juxtaposed while retaining a narrative thread in the text. Discussing Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985), David Rodowick writes, ‘this is not an image that “shows”, equating visibility with

⁶⁴ Winterson (2012) p.58.

⁶⁵ Sitney (2008) p.40.

⁶⁶ Bergson, H. (1907) *Creative Evolution*. Translated by Arthur Mitchell. Reprint, New York: Henry Holt, 1911, p.332.

⁶⁷ Deleuze, G. (1985) *Cinema 2: The Time Image*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. Reprint. New York: Athlone Press, 1989, p.110. ‘The work of art crosses coexistent ages’ writes Deleuze (in the English translation) in the original French the way Deleuze uses language reminds me of a zigzag pattern, weaving in and out of ideas.

⁶⁸ Deleuze (1989) p.120.

⁶⁹ Deleuze (1989) pp.119-121.

knowledge... it is an image that must be *read*.⁷⁰ He implies that *mise en scène* flags a reading, not of visible evidence, but of a tone that evokes the meaning of the landscape. According to Rodowick, Deleuze's movement-image is the floating image which circulates in the external world, but also penetrates us to constitute our internal world.⁷¹ The filmic world, or interiority, is experienced by the viewer as an intersubjective dynamic of tone and feeling. As Laura U. Marks would have it, there is a haptic element to perception triggered by our recognition of a phenomenological element within the *mise en scène* itself.⁷²

'La porte me flaire, elle hesite' (the door scents me, it hesitates): Bachelard's formulation echoes the phenomenological ambiance of doors in film, from Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un Poète* (1932) to Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945). He continues, 'why not sense that, incarnated in the door, there is a little threshold god?'⁷³ These thresholds, which Irigaray has discussed in relation to the domestic and to Hestia as keeper of the hearth, are explored in a series of films I made between 2003 and 2011: *Episode* (2003), *Sense* (2004), and *Phoneo* (2008), which are remixed in *Radio*⁷⁴. The films are comprised of Super 8, video travelogues, diaries and out-takes. *Radio* opens with a woman describing her childhood desire to enter the world of the family radio set, where everyone seemed to be 'having such fun.' Her wish to join them is then illustrated by a montage of image fragments that describe a cut-up world of found footage, glimpsed moments, objects and gestures. This wonderland inside the radio

⁷⁰ Rodowick, D. (1997) *Gilles Deleuze's time machine*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, p.148.

⁷¹ Rodowick (1997) pp.76-7.

⁷² Marks, L. (2000) *The skin of the film: intercultural cinema, embodiment, and the senses*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, p.171.

⁷³ Bachelard (1994) p.223.

⁷⁴ Wikipedia describes the principle thus: 'A **remix** is a song that has been edited or completely recreated to sound different from the original version'. The remix originated in 1960s and 1970s Jamaican dance hall music, where bands created versions of well-known tunes. In my own work this is a collage technique that reuses either edited or unedited materials for new renditions. Available at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remix>. (Accessed: 14 October 2014).

ends with a credit sequence and we emerge from something like a Joseph Cornell box⁷⁵, into a fictive ‘real world’. The *mise en scène* is ‘the whole world’, the *mise en abyme* is inside, the symbolic inset, the world within a world. The *mise en scène* is tonal, emotional, eclectic and hybrid, and mostly remixes earlier footage I collected in New York, Europe and the Middle East over two decades, plus new material. The remixing of old and new materials works as a strategy to process documentation and diary footage in order to recontextualise them. *Radio* was conceived as a remix album from the start, with a definite musical reference: the 1970s singer/songwriter album, which transforms what might have been a diary into a composition with separate ‘tracks’. The addition of new footage intervenes to change the meaning of the old, it engages in a discourse with the passages and themes taken from earlier work. Their reconfiguration alters the tone and the rhythm of each film, and the remixed films riff on the ones made entirely of new and found material, which are constructed to fit the ‘album’ format, each are around five minutes in length.

My film *Cactus Babylon* (1997) explored notions of home via interviews with friends in the streets bars and coffee shops of New York. Characters told their stories on First Avenue and in Katz’s Deli; Italian-American artist, Linda Salerno, talked of the constant ambivalence of home in Yonah Shimmel’s coffee shop on Houston Street, while another friend talks about opera while walking through the East Village. Jumping between seascapes, interiors, bars and streets, the *mise en scène* of *Cactus Babylon* suggests a perpetual diaspora, a globalised yearning, and the juncture of oral history, urban décor, and restless ambivalence. Bar and café interiors recur in my

⁷⁵ Joseph Cornell (1903-1972) was a New York artist who made collage films and boxes ‘Cornell used the found materials that inhabit his boxes—paper birds, clay pipes, clock springs, balls, and rings—to hint at abstract ideas. A metal spring from a discarded wind-up clock may evoke the passage of time; a ball might represent a planet or the luck associated with playing a game.’ See: Joan Summers and Ascha Drake. <http://www.josephcornellbox.com/boxes.htm> (Accessed 7 October 2014).

work, acting as a reclaiming of public spaces as sites of reflection and intimacy and usurping the entrapment of the domestic space. On the other hand they evoke a claustrophobia; the films render the material into a highly subjective shorthand, so that the *mise en scène* is a palette of tone and memory, texture and space.

Paul Arthur describes Child, Leslie Thornton and Su Friedrich as filmmakers who all, ‘enmesh the prerogatives of personal life experience – memory, autobiography, direct observation of everyday life -with the constraints of a socially shared past, recasting radical subjectivity as the interpenetration of public and private spaces.’⁷⁶ In *The New World* these elements combine to construct a *mise en scène* of recycled images and personal motifs embedded in an episodic longer film, which quotes, paraphrases and surfs across time, place and memory. It is a bricolage of radical disjuncture but the tonality is integrated in a narrative momentum that I believe sustains its interrogation of poetics and politics, protagonist and space. Three locations form the main structure: a car interior, and two different restaurants. The era and locations are ambiguous, and intercut with voice, text, sound and often anomalous images. A range of appropriated cinema clips rupture the narrative to emphasise the cinephilic tone and the ironic nostalgia that permeates the film. My most ‘recycled’ film to date, it has opened up the radical possibilities of appropriation in my work as a means to critique and comment on the twenty-first century from a twentieth century vantage-point; because I remember television in the 1960s, and as Child has noted, we are television kids, or as Godard observed, the children of Marx and Coca-Cola.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Paul Arthur quoted in Wees, W. (2005) ‘No More Giants’ in Petrolle, J. and Wexman, V.W. (eds.) *Women and experimental filmmaking*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press pp.22-44, p.25.

⁷⁷ Child quoted in Wees, W. (1993) *Recycled images: the art and politics of found footage*. New York: Anthology Film Archives, p.71; *Masculin/Feminin* (1966) directed by Jean-Luc Godard.

In *The New World* the *mise en scène* fuses time and space, protagonist, place and memory in an intricately woven narrative that is both intensely interior, and also epic in its scope. Initially edited in i-Movie and overlaid with basic video effects, the textures, colours and monochromes of varying contrasts integrate the whole. These fragments of setting and location, text and citation cohere on their own terms, crossing from *mise en scène* to *mise en abyme*, by flagging the complex map of thought and its tangents.

Mise en scène is an authorial sign, and a tool that places the filmmaker in a specific time scale. In Hollywood it is understood as style, and this is equally true in the avant-garde film, which manifests its integrity in the textures, motifs, and locations of its materials; image, music and text. The recycled or appropriated image plays with temporal location, citing and situating several registers within an integrity of filmic space and time. Godard writes that:

it is not in terms of liberty and destiny that cinematic *mise en scène* is measured, but in the ability of genius to batten on objects with constant invention... Look at these stretches of heath, these neglected homes, or the somber poetry of modern cities... invention holds sway only over language, and *mise en scène* forces us to imagine an object in its signification.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Narboni, J. L. (1986) (ed.) *Godard on Godard*. Translated by Tom Milne. Cambridge MA: Da Capo Press, p.24.

Chapter 3. Montage: Cutting up the Fabric

It may be, therefore, that it will be for the montage rather than the *mise en scène* to express both exactly and clearly the life of an idea.

—— Jean-Luc Godard¹

Montage has been theorised more than any other aspect of filmmaking and is often reduced to questions of the long take versus the short cut. This chapter will investigate the ways in which editing creates meaning. I will discuss how the form and duration of the film determines how images are combined. Cutting *Radio* I used i-Movie to build a dense, compressed set of films, in *The New World*, I worked with an editor, to expand this density and to negotiate editorial decisions. For artist-filmmakers the cut represents an engagement with both process and material. In my own work montage represents an intervention; of thought process and filmic process, cutting image and sound in layers, some staccato, some lyrical. The challenge in moving from dense short films to longer work is to slow the pace, to work in a new time frame. This kind of expanded narrative is exemplified in MacLaine's *The End* (1953), which cuts passages into chaptered sections, some *tableaux vivants*, others fast cut, to portray six characters in a narrative flow at odds with his use of radical disjuncture.² *The New World* is a montaged road movie, where Freudian condensation³ arises from the cut, and releases new rhythms, drifting into different registers and associations. This process has created a syntax for the fragmentary, unifying the rhythms and tones, which, like free jazz, transcends the individual note and creates a harmony from

¹ Godard, J.L. (1986) *Godard on Godard*. Translated by Tom Milne. Cambridge, MA: De Capo Press, p.39.

² *The End* (1953) directed by Christopher MacLaine.

³ Erwin, E. (ed.) (2002) *The Freud encyclopedia: theory, therapy and culture*. New York: Routledge. 'Dream imagery is a composite of superimposed representations of past and present experiences' Erwin writes, leading him to conclude that condensation is a basic 'mechanism of dreaming' and while displacement censors dreams, condensation adapts them via superimposition, p.159.

apparent dissonance, riffing on improvisation. My aim was to orchestrate a range of textures, to match and juxtapose diverse materials with a lo-fi approach to texture and source. I worked with an eclectic assortment of films on DVD, texts and sounds; quoting and remixing my own footage with appropriated material. It is chaptered, cut to different rhythms, forming an expanded bricolage, and my collaboration with editor Lucy Harris was a negotiation of the rhythm and space of the montage. The result is a formally coherent narrative, composing elements that are ‘out of step’ that ‘create a time corner, a bending instead of adjacency.’⁴

In representing narrative time and space, the montage in my films incorporates my own subjective gaze, and the relation of narrator, object and subject, are rendered through the assembly of material; it cuts the cloth to the measure of the piece and is fundamentally about looking and linking. Lev Kuleshov demonstrated the power of associative cutting in his famous experiment with the actor Ivan Mosjoukine, shots of whose face are intercut with a girl in coffin, a bowl of soup and a woman on a couch⁵. While the actor maintains the same expression, audiences linked the subsequent clip to an emotional resonance through association. In America, D.W. Griffith’s experiments with continuity editing, introduced narrative fluency, and a more subtle manipulation of audience emotions by assembling scenarios cut with inter-titles, in what has become the standard narrative structure in western cinema: a spatial and temporal continuity that dissects theatrical space, which became *de rigueur* in

⁴ Child, A. (2005) *This is called moving: a critical poetics of film*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, p.176.

⁵ Kuleshov taught at the newly founded Moscow Film School and the film demonstration of montage theory with the matinee idol Mosjoukine was probably made in 1919-1920. See for example Gillespie, D. C. (2000) *Early Soviet cinema: innovation, ideology and propaganda*. London: Wallflower Press, pp. 23-26.

classical Hollywood.⁶ Generally filmic emotions are evoked via Kuleshovian strategy, and by extension, montage illustrates the gaze.

Questions of cutting experimental or underground film refute the either/or of Soviet montage versus American continuity. The Odessa steps sequence in *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) is typically cited to exemplify the former and Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) the latter. Esther Shub, who worked with Eisenstein, was probably the first editor to mix archival material with live action in the 1920s.⁷ The Dadaist cut-up techniques of Tristan Tzara⁸ and the collage strategies of Andre Breton's Surrealism⁹ brought jarring juxtapositions with Freudian implications to montage, which influenced several schools of underground moving-image practice internationally. The Soviets— Eisenstein, Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Dziga Vertov – pioneered the theorising of montage, breaking it into emotional, intellectual and political registers. Later, the New York underground adopted disrupted continuity, appropriating Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel's absurd disjunctures¹⁰ or Jean-Luc Godard's jump-cuts in *Breathless* (1960) and revised the Dadaist and Surrealist cut-up or collage.¹¹ Decades of cross-fertilisation produced a

⁶ The release of Griffith's films *Birth of a Nation* (1915) *Intolerance* (1916) *Broken Blossoms* (1919) coincided with the emerging Soviet montage theory and Kuleshov was an admirer of Griffith's techniques. It should be noted that Griffith's films are objectionably racist. Concurrently to Griffith, African-American filmmaker Oscar Micheaux was working with narrative in film, setting up a studio in a racially-divided America. Micheaux's films are far more subtle and interesting than Griffith's, particularly his second feature *Within Our Gates* (1920).

⁷ *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927) is her best-known film as director.

⁸ Tristan T. (1920) 'Dada Manifesto on Feeble Love and Bitter Love', *391 Magazine*. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.391.org/manifestos/1920-dada-manifesto-feeble-love-bitter-love-tristan-tzara.html#.VDQW0kvyBg0> (Accessed 7/10/2014).

⁹ Breton's Surrealist manifestos sought anomalous juxtaposition as a strategy to reanimate the power of objects. Christian Keathley notes that this serves as a 'radical *reframing*... Thus Andre Breton's maxim appropriated from Lautreamont, "Beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table" – expresses the belief that placing objects out of context reinvigorates' perception and experience. Keathley, C. (2005) *Cinophilia and history, or the wind in the trees* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, pp. 68-69.

¹⁰ In *Un Chien Andalou* 1929 and *L'Age D'Or* 1929.

¹¹ Brion Gysin introduced William Burroughs to cut-up techniques in film and writing in Paris in the 1960s, see for example Knickerbocker, Conrad, Burroughs, W. S. (1982) 'The Paris Review Interview with William S. Burroughs' in Calder, J. (ed.) *A Williams Burroughs reader*. London: Picador, p. 263.

constantly evolving theory of the cut, and montage is a much-theorised area, which in my own films works as an intuitive process. While departing from Husserl's notion of intuition in phenomenology, Emmanuel Levinas sees the intuitive life as a key to the origin of being, and critiques Husserl's intuition as theoretical and unbound to experience.¹² The filmmaker Sally Potter taught editing classes at St. Martins School of Art in 1985 which I attended; she stressed the importance of an intuitive approach to cutting that depends more on rhythm and tone than theoretical concerns. The embodied experience of engaging with the material while cutting, without dwelling on assemblage, but on rhythm and tone, works to create unexpected outcomes. However Marguerite Duras insisted in 1975 that 'theory ought to be crushed by now,' while Hélène Cixous argued in the same era that a feminine practice can never be theorized because theory is grounded in a phallogocentric discourse, one can never theorise, enclose or code this practice.¹³ Cixous writes of 'the domain of women' which she says cannot be theorized but should be played with or sung.¹⁴

Questions of montage versus continuity, or the long-take over the short cut, are founded in André Bazin's argument that the long take and deep focus, stand for true cinematic realism.¹⁵ Countering the master narratives of western thinking, Trinh T. Minh-Ha writes that: 'Jump cuts... sentences on sentences, looped phrases, snatches of conversations, cuts, broken lines,' are truer to thought process, and that to value the long take as an attempt to eliminate distortion is to say that life is a continuous

¹² Levinas, E. (1973) *The theory of intuition in Husserl's phenomenology*. Translated by André Orianne. Reprint. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1995, pp.93-94.

¹³ Husserl-Kapit, 'Interview with Marguerite Duras' and Cixous, H. 'The Laugh of the Medusa' in Marks, E. and de Courtivron, I. (eds.) (1980) *New French feminisms*. Brighton: Harvester. p.111; p.253.

¹⁴ Cixous, H. 'La scène de L'inconscient, la scène de L'histoire' in Van Rossum-Guyon, F. and Díaz-Diocaretz, M. (eds.) (1990) *Hélène Cixous, chemins d'une écriture*. Vincennes: PUV Rodopi, p.27.

¹⁵ Bazin, A. (1967) 'The evolution of the language of cinema' in Gray, H. (ed.) *What is cinema? vol. 1*. Translated by Hugh Gray. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.37.

process with no ruptures, no blanks, no blackouts.¹⁶ The longer, the truer, she writes, and in Hollywood, montage aims at the building up of ‘the illusion of continuity and immortality.’¹⁷ Trinh traces Eisensteinian montage to the poetic principle of the haiku.¹⁸ Where Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov graphically matched visual-linguistic puns in *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), Kuleshov theorises A+B=C, or shot, reverse shot. Mark Rappaport contends that Kuleshov created an experiment which set the parameters for action and reaction, shot reverse shot, which hasn’t really changed since 1918.¹⁹ Michelangelo Antonioni’s long takes in *L’Avventura* (1960) create a distanced emotionality which reduces the excesses of melodrama to simple glances or gestures without neo-realist emotive tonality. The slow-paced realism of Robert Bresson or Nuri Bilge Ceylan eschews Hitchcock’s showy use of montage or Godard’s often violent interventions of cut or text, in favour of a more conservative and disciplined use of the cut as subtle punctuation. Montage is the signature tone of a film maker, and also a narrative tool. Eisenstein’s five montages – metric, rhythmic, tonal, intellectual, and overtone/associational – have been the founding theories of the intervention of the cut.²⁰

Yet dreams are primal montages and precede theorisation; Jean Cocteau noted that the art of the film maker engages the audience in a collective dream with enough skill not to break the measured magic of the dreamer’s logic. He writes of the necessity of a kind of mechanics in the process:

¹⁶ Minh-Ha, T. T. (1991) *When the moon waxes red*. New York: Routledge, p.7.

¹⁷ Trinh (1991) p.57.

¹⁸ Trinh (1991) p.112.

¹⁹ Rosenbaum, J. (1996) ‘The Seberg We Missed: Interview with Mark Rappaport’. *Cineaste*, Winter 1996 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.net/1996/01/the-seberg-we-missed-interview-with-mark-rappaport/>. (Accessed 8 March 2014).

²⁰ Eisenstein, S. (1949) ‘The filmic fourth dimension’ in Leyda, J. (ed.) *Film form: essays in film theory*. Translated by Jay Leyda. Reprint. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977, pp. 64-71.

A film is not the telling of a dream, but a dream in which we all participate together through a kind of hypnosis, and the slightest breakdown in the mechanics of the dream weakens the dreamer, who loses interest in a sleep that is no longer his own.... By dream I mean the magnificent absurdity of dreams, since the spectators would not have linked them together in the same way.²¹

Editing is simply a tool for linking one thing to another, but montage makes sense of materials within the conceptual time-frame of the whole. In Michael Mazière's *Actor* (2010), scenes from Alain Delon's entire oeuvre are cut together in chronological order; the cuts mark the intersections: a door opening or closing, a reflection in a mirror, a look or a glance, a corner turned.²² Montage is choreography in time.

Jean-Luc Godard contends that montage trumps *mise en scène*, and that the two are inextricably intertwined. 'Montage is above all an integral part of *mise en scène*. Only at peril can one be separated from the other... If direction is a look, montage is a heart-beat.'²³ Abigail Child expands on the nature of montage as the organizational rhythmic core of film. She writes of a poem by Eisenstein: 'The use of nouns, the repetition, the use of new lines, the unexpected abutments... are succinct analogies to film montage.'²⁴ Child proposes Vertov's triumph of consciousness over political coercion as a strategy to 'fight the sway of magic' to 'provide a unique combination

²¹ Cocteau J. (1994) *The art of cinema*. Translated by Robin Buss. London: Marion Boyars, p. 49.

²² *Actor* (2010) directed by Michael Mazière.

²³ Godard (1986) p.39.

²⁴ Child (2005) pp.168-69, quoting Eisenstein, S. (1983) *Immoral memories: an autobiography*. Translated by Herbert Marshall. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p.53.

Watches. Watches. Watches

Pocket watches with chains.

With pendants.

With seals.

Cigar cases. Cigar cases.

...

And sticks. Sticks. Sticks.

Straw hats.

of the cells of the cinematic body, a way of grouping them that will resurrect the lifeless shots.²⁵

For Bazin, it is 'montage, that abstract creator of meaning, which preserves the state of unreality demanded by the spectacle.'²⁶ He argues that, as cinema evolves, audiences can distinguish between 'real scenes' and montages. He looks to Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock and Jean Renoir in his quest for realism. A champion of deep focus and the long shot, and writing of the relation of 'man to things and to the surrounding world,' he notes that in Welles' films, concrete duration may conflict with the abstract time of montage.²⁷ It is this abstraction that enables both Godard and Child to observe that it is montage itself that encapsulates the mnemonic, subjective and bizarre juxtapositions of cinema, which blur at the boundaries of *mise en scène*.

Bazin's dedication to realism must be understood as particular to his time; he states simply that montage creates a meaning derived exclusively from juxtaposition rather than from within the images themselves, and thus is an artifice that detracts from the gravitas of realism.²⁸ According to Adam Kossoff, Pier Paolo Pasolini attacked Andy Warhol's *Sleep* (1963) as 'insane naturalism.'²⁹ Kossoff argues that the intervention of montage makes meaning apparent, illustrating this with a clip from Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985), where his unwavering camera fixes its subject even in extreme emotional duress with a long take. Abraham Bomba, a barber in Israel, is

²⁵ Child (2005) pp.170-71, quoting Vertov, Michelson, A. (ed.) (1984) *Kino Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*. Translated by Kevin O' Brien. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.269.

²⁶ Bazin (1967) p.37.

²⁷ Bazin (1967) p. 45.

²⁸ Bazin (1967) p. 25.

²⁹ Kossoff, A. (2013) 'The longevity of the long take and the documentary real'. *Documentary Now*, London, 19-20 June 2013. Available at: <https://documentarynow.wordpress.com/programme-2013/>. (Accessed: 10 November 2014).

forced to recount how he cut Holocaust victims' hair before they were gassed. This kind of relentless duration, Kossoff contends, has, in the digital age become a collective tool for documentation, embedded in the event, with an emotional power devoid of cynical manipulation.³⁰

Nuri Bilge Ceylan, like Bresson, uses long takes to render his profoundly emotional yet distanced, stories in film. The opening sequence in *Three Monkeys* (2009) echoes Bresson's *Mouchette* (1967), where a long take and sinuous camera movement leads the spectator into rich and darkly atmospheric action; in the former, an accident on a country road, in the latter, a gamekeeper watching a poacher setting traps in the woods. In both films parallel editing, which by Eisenstein's definition is intellectual montage, connects the two narrative threads, linking the protagonists and the traps in which they are about to be caught.³¹

Hitchcock's montage, by contrast, pulls the spectator into an emotional and psychological frame. The establishing shot in *Psycho* (1960) uses a slow zoom from cityscape to hotel room, where the victim Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) is introduced.³² The montage builds from the first zoom in, to her panicked and conflicted thoughts on her journey to the motel where she's murdered. Her guilt and ambivalence are voiced and emphasised by the montage, which is echoed at the end of the film when Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins) is psychologically exposed. Raymond Durgnat wrote that 'montage for Eisenstein, as for [Alain] Resnais, consists in rediscovering unity from a

³⁰ Kossoff (2013).

³¹ *Three Monkeys* (2009) directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan and *Mouchette* (1967) directed by Robert Bresson.

³² *Psycho* (1960) directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

basis of fragmentation, but without concealing the fragmentation in doing so.³³ Hitchcock, particularly in *Psycho*, cuts fragments together to create a psychological picture of character that is closer to Eisenstein than to Griffiths, using associative cutting to suggest the psychology of the protagonist, rather than an assembly of continuous action. Surveying montage theory, David Bordwell notes that a fluid, variable editing style had entered cinema via television in the late 1950s and 1960s. He claims this echoes Eisenstein's intellectual montage and usurps the dominant conventions of seamless continuity. He also notes that the discursive qualities of the novel begin to be felt in new ways of cutting, citing Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier, who describes *écriture* in cinema offering a disjunctive montage that generates a dynamic play of meanings. He further notes the influence on montage strategies of musical forms, particularly those of Pierre Boulez, who pronounced that each work must necessarily find its own form.³⁴

Many U.S. independent films by women in the twenty first century have returned to a Hawksian style of cutting, with dialogue setting the pace, following a televisual model of continuity editing; in these films material and context are revised, incorporating decelerated daily life, women's subjectivity, ironic intertextual observations and edgy humour. The following examples demonstrate this kind of editing strategy in independent films. Nicole Holofcener interrogates relationships via subtle cutting, dissecting the gaze in terms of relational attachment. In *Friends with Money* (2006) the lives of the characters are intercut in episodic tableaux.³⁵ Olivia (Jennifer Aniston) cleans houses; her friends are all married and rich, and her own life is constantly juxtaposed with the tics and neuroses of the group, who are all stratified,

³³ quoted in Bordwell, D. (1997) *On the history of film style*. Cambridge MA: Harvard, p.88.

³⁴ Bordwell (1997) p.89.

³⁵ *Friends with Money* (2006) directed by Nicole Holofcener.

guilty, and dissatisfied on some level. Holofcener unfolds her stories in cross-cutting, ventriloquizing her social observation in slow-paced intellectual montage. These kinds of films reflect a new ironic knowingness among women feature directors in the US; Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* (2006), Lisa Cholodenko's *Laurel Canyon* (2002) and Holofcener's oeuvre share a keen social eye, cutting continuity with unexpected close-ups, and redefining the gaze through hybrid cutting strategies.

Lena Dunham follows the quirky characterisation in Miranda July's first feature *Me and You and Everyone We Know* (2005) with her film *Tiny Furniture*. She voices a twenty first century urban middle-class angst, and her slackerish, mumblecore approach appropriates new tropes in late twentieth century independent films.³⁶ Her parents, artists Laurie Simmons and Carroll Dunham, are cast as fictional characters, while Dunham plays the main protagonist Aura. The poster for the film has Dunham lying on the floor with miniature tables and chairs in the foreground, and the text reads 'Aura Would Like You To Know That She's Having A Very Hard Time' in bold upper-case. Since Kevin Smith's *Clerks* (1994), this kind of cinema has taken on the smart ennui of a generation in flux, 'traumatic-realist' rather than cinephilic.³⁷ In Smith's *Chasing Amy* (1997), intercut monochrome fragments of close-up, abstracted sex-scenes, reflect on male erotic angst. These films transgress through twists of context. Whereas Howard Hawks cut fast to the dialogue, as in *His Girl Friday*

³⁶*Tiny Furniture* (2010) directed by Lena Dunham. Hoberman writes: 'It's Mumblecore' and continues 'Thriving on the modest truth of clumsy mishaps and incoherent riffs, fueled by a combination of narcissism and diffidence, Mumblecore reflects sensibilities formed by *The Real World* (our life is a movie) and *Seinfeld* (constant discourse), as well as *The Blair Witch Project* (DIY plus Internet).' These films are usually low-budget and focus on twenty-to-thirtysomethings and are descended from Richard Linklater's 1991 film *Slacker* which coined the term. Hoberman, J. (2000) 'The Vulgar Classes', *The Village Voice*. 16 May 2000. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.villagevoice.com/2007-08-14/film/it-s-mumblecore/> (Accessed: 11 March 2014).

³⁷ Foster, H. (1996) 'Death In America', *October* 75 (Winter 1996), pp.36-39. Here Foster notes a genealogy of traumatic realism rooted in the denial of death, dating back to Warhol and pop culture, that is resurfacing towards the end of the twentieth century.

(1940), the slacker generation linger on apathetic exchanges. The Coen brothers similarly offer slow-paced, character-focused continuity, marking a change of pace that counters the accelerated, overwhelmed twenty first century.

Like mathematics and music, montage serves as the stave or diagram on which a narrative is carried, punctuated and counterpointed: mapping thought, and engaging the viewer dynamically. The camera is merely a presence, the film is tailored by the cut, punctuated with transitions that link ideas to one another. French critic and filmmaker Luc Moullet notes that Godard accentuates disjuncture by syncopating and chopping up the material, which he calls ‘a frenzied poem,’ made of unconnected interludes which form a relationship with each other; ‘separate circles which by the end of the sequence or sonnet, turn out to be linked.’³⁸ This kind of logic works in my own films, where motifs diverge and reprise, articulating a dense dialogue with, and emerging from, the material itself. Things turn out to be linked, drawing on connections between text, sounds and images. In *Radio* these motifs diverge and reprise, from *Episode*, where mountain and lake vistas and New York Cityscapes intercut with the protagonist/narrator, to *Sense* which returns to the city and then to the eerie roads of upstate New York, onto *Phoneo* made entirely from cameraphone footage, which is a love story. These remixes suddenly segue to the found-footage mash-up in *Alibi* which is distinctly *noir*-ish to *Radio*’s thematic finale, where each of these miniature worlds, or narratives conclude. While each of the five films can be read separately, they also overlap and interlink via their themes and motifs.

³⁸ Moullet, L. (1992) ‘Jean-Luc Godard’ in Hillier, J. (ed.) *Cahiers du cinéma, 1960-1968: New Wave, new cinema, reevaluating Hollywood*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, p.39. Moullet was a prolific but overlooked New Wave filmmaker, as discussed by Sally Shafto, ‘Luc Moullet’. *Senses of Cinema*. Available at: <http://sensesofcinema.com/2009/feature-articles/luc-moullet-pompidou/>. (Accessed 8 March 2014).

The short film works with a different logic, a different scale and a different measure. Godard however is disparaging of the short film; in 'Take Your Own Tours,' he argues that the Cahiers du Cinema group³⁹ 'don't believe in short films' because of their limits and because they are by nature, anti-cinema. The short, he claims, simply is not long enough to explore character in depth, or to develop a narrative. 'To take this to its conclusion: a short film does not have time to think.'⁴⁰ But French auteur cinema tended to work with the ninety minute feature length at this time, and many short films compress and play with time, and with montage strategies that allow stories to be told within a shorter duration. This kind of montage is demonstrated in Christopher MacLaine's *The End* (1953) and Betzy Bromberg's *Soothing the Bruise* (1980) which both stretch and compress narrative time in a broad epic sweep. Sadie Benning's short pixelvision⁴¹ films made as a teenager in her bedroom are cut to emphasise the abstract time frame of these personal diary films made in her bedroom and neighbourhood, *If Every Girl Had a Diary* (1990) crams a lot of detail into its eight minute running time, and *A Place Called Lovely* (1991) at thirteen minutes, tells a complex story, again enacted in her bedroom, of child abductions, US politics, and the terror of growing up. Cinema 16's *American Short Films* DVD released in 2006 includes works by Andy Warhol, Maya Deren and others, and illustrates two approaches to duration; the intervention of the cut, and no cuts at all, as in Warhol's *Screen Tests* (1964-1966). Many of the films are truncated storylines, where others emphasise a radical approach to their time frame. Standish Lawder's *Necrology: Roll Call of the Dead* (1969-70), *Warhol's Screen Test: Helmut*

³⁹ A French film magazine founded by Andre Bazin in 1951 whose contributors included Godard, Eric Rohmer, Francois Truffaut, Claude Chabrol and Jacques Rivette. Many of the writers for the magazine were filmmakers and were advocates of auteur cinema which formed the basis of the French New Wave.

⁴⁰ Godard (1986) pp.107-16.

⁴¹ A 'toy' video camera manufactured from 1987 by Fisher-Price, which Benning used in her films from 1989-1992.

(1966), and Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) stand out because they challenge the formulaic nature of much short film making. In Lawder's film the cuts are barely visible and create a surreal disjuncture, while Warhol's film typically eschews the cut, and in Deren's the cuts work vertically to carve out a poetic space in the narrative.⁴²

Marie Menken's *Notebook* (1962) which is edited in camera, influenced Stan Brakhage, Kenneth Anger and others in mining the everyday for images and acknowledging the role of process. P. Adams Sitney writes of her 'immanent and imposed rhythm' and notes the subtle wit that imbues her lyrical films.⁴³ Brakhage called her 'the rarest of filmic diamond-cutters,' noting her '24 gems per second' compression of image and time.⁴⁴ Jonas Mekas praises her lyricism, tracing film poetry from a general 'French-avant-garde', to Cocteau, and the American experiments of the 1940s, including Deren, Anger, and Willard Maas as the second wave, and Menken and Brakhage as a third period, 'where filmic syntax achieves a spontaneous fluidity and where the images are truly like words that appear and disappear and repeat themselves as they create clusters and blotches of visual meanings.'⁴⁵

'New cinema'⁴⁶ says Mekas, crosses space, time and memory, and is a bridge-building that unifies fragments into an integrated whole. In the 1960s he speaks of being shattered by the events of recent history, broken into 'a thousand painful

⁴² *Cinema 16: American Short Films* (2006). Momac Films Ltd.

⁴³ Sitney, A. P. (2002) 'The Lyrical Film' in *Visionary film, the American avant-garde, 1943-2000*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.160.

⁴⁴ Brakhage, S. (2002) *Film at wit's end: eight avant-garde filmmakers*. New York: McPherson & Co., pp.47-48. Programme notes for screening of Menken's films at the Charles Theatre, New York, December 1960.

⁴⁵ Mekas, J. (1962) 'Movie Journal', *Village Voice*, 4 January 1962, pp. 46-47.

⁴⁶ Mekas founded the New American Cinema group in 1959 which was committed to an eclectic avant-garde. He's speaking in the 1960s about the qualities of the emerging avant-garde he championed at Anthology Film Archives.

pieces.’ ‘Let’s clean out everything,’ he says, ‘the whole bag of horrors and lies and egos.’ His generation, he says, are marked by travels from West to East, in India and Mexico, via psychedelics, yoga systems, and macrobiotics.⁴⁷ No-wave’s filmic punk emerged after the Beats, after Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie’s *Pull My Daisy* (1959), after John Cassavetes’ *Shadows* (1959) and Scorsese’s *Mean Streets*, and after Mekas’ call for a new cinema, and was committed to reprising rebellious underground and punk energies in new ways, exemplified by bands like *Sonic Youth* and performers like Lydia Lunch⁴⁸. Jim Jarmusch’s *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984) marked an emerging underground/arthouse feature-length hybrid film making. Jacques Rancière writes of the encounter of incompatible elements, or dialectical montage, as ‘the absolute reality of desires and dreams’ revealing ‘one world behind another.’⁴⁹ In symbolic montage, Rancière contends, unrelated elements may establish an analogy, the ‘coupling power of the uncoupled,’ the intermingling of logics which he finds in Godard’s ‘mystery.’⁵⁰

Child’s *Mayhem* boldly fuses no-wave energy with Vertovian strategy. Mixing live-action with found footage, she embeds intentionality⁵¹ within the appropriated footage which she cuts tightly with her cast of actors who mimic the cinematic tropes of her B-movie out-takes. With an equally mashed-up⁵² soundtrack by Christian Marclay,

⁴⁷ Mekas, J. (1966) ‘Commencement Address: Philadelphia College of Art’, *Internet Archive*, 11 June 11th, 1966. [Online] Available at: <https://archive.org/details/commencementaddr00meka>. (Accessed 25 March 2014).

⁴⁸ No wave emerged in New York in the late 1970s as a response to established musical new wave bands such as Talking Heads. As a movement it cut across art, video, film and music and aimed for a more raw version of post-punk.

⁴⁹ Rancière, J. (2007) *The future of the image*. Translated by Gregory Elliott. London: Verso, p.56.

⁵⁰ Rancière (2007) p.57; p.60.

⁵¹ Eliot Deutsch notes ‘An intentionality is thus an immanent objective of being in process’ he writes that artworks have a life of their own, related to Husserl’s phenomenological intentionality of consciousness, flagging ‘an intrinsic meaningfulness’. Deutsch, E.(1996) *Essays on the nature of art* Albany: SUNY, p.76.

⁵² The ‘mash-up’ is another term for the remix, and the cut-up (as coined by William S. Burroughs).

Child assembles a commentary on cinema and a comic take on sexuality and urban life. The cuts define both pace and tone, and their precision and timing illustrate the close relation between *mise en scène* and montage. In *Soothing the Bruise*, Bromberg mixes a range of appropriated and live-action footage to create a dense and fascinating web of stories in the abstract. Her collaged essay film about sex, politics and America is scintillatingly beautiful, then suddenly, starkly devoid of aesthetic concerns: a woman runs in the dark illuminated by headlights, a tap, a basin, graffiti in a washroom, a missile and a flag, an ink stain on blue jeans peeled back to reveal the imprint of a 'bruise', a mountain panorama, a mall.⁵³ In Bromberg's film we sense a complex critique of Americana; men eating in a diner, strip malls, women in washrooms, women in the dark – *noir*-ish, fleeting figures, and brash colourful townscapes. The soundtrack is equally collaged, fragments of sound underpin the image: texts, conversation, music and ambient noise collude in a visionary evocation of the magnitude of her themes, intertwined like micro-movements in a piece of music. Bromberg's montage is collage but lacks the overtly cartoonish humour and political satire of Child, Henry Hills or Bruce Conner, nor is there an overt agenda underlying her dense collation of image and sound in oddly confluent juxtaposition. Her intervention is woven into the fabric of the narrative in the genius of the cuts, what Child advocates as fitting things together that don't go.⁵⁴ The result is a lyrical and critical integrity, wherein the montage suggests profound thematic links and registers. Bromberg's film echoes much of the logic of *Radio* and *The New World*, by mixing appropriated and live-action footage and grading it texturally and tonally to blend into a subjective narrative. I have drawn on this technique in *The New World* in

⁵³ *Soothing the Bruise* (1980) directed by Betzy Bromberg. Bromberg in the LUX distribution notes says it's about 'Sex roles, consumption and destruction in America'. Available at: <http://lux.org.uk/collection/works/soothing-bruise> (Accessed 9 October 2014).

⁵⁴ Child, e-mail to author, 13 February 2013.

an attempt to create a narrative consistency despite the uneven quality of the source materials.

Breaking down the picture plane to reduce representational continuity, echoes a deliberate application of cut and repetition as a twentieth century artistic revolt against a western art tradition that presents (biblical) narrative in deep space⁵⁵. The temporal continuity of a Christian timeframe, juxtaposed with an intangible Judaic and Muslim spatial notion of the invisible, sublime divine, implies different narrative approaches, and different renditions of space and time.⁵⁶ In Islam and Judaism, time and its image are fluid, in direct relation to the representation of the human form and the taboo of the second commandment; the 'idolatrous' image fixes the viewer (in a narrative) and anomalously fixes the sublime. Mystics in the ninth century Middle East – for example, Sa'adia Gaon and the Qalaam debates – discussed time and representation; past, present and future existed in a single time frame.⁵⁷ Quoting Walter Benjamin, Laura U. Marks notes that the lack of the cut leaves us with the 'durée from which death has been eliminated... the miserable endlessness of a scroll.'⁵⁸ She argues that the experience of the passage of time is not merely durational, but opens a relationship to the future as well as the past. Henri Bergson's notion of cinema, she concludes, evokes a duration devoid of personal intervention; solitary and, thus,

⁵⁵ Christopher Tyler and Amy Ione note that: 'in the twentieth century, we find that new scientific discoveries concerning the physical structure of space and space-time set the stage for a renewed investigation of space in art.' Frank Stella and others, they claim attempt to 'break the deadlock of the pictorial surface' hence the breaking down of the picture plane as defined by Renaissance artists and their rendering of perspective. Tyler, C.W. and Ioane, A. 'The Concept of Space in Twentieth Century Art' [Online]. Available at: http://www.ski.org/CWTyler_lab/CWTyler/Art%20Investigations/C20th_Space/C20thSpace.html (Accessed 9/10/2014).

⁵⁶ Christian temporality is divided by the birth of Jesus into A.D. and B.C., referred to by modern Jews as B.C.E. (before the common era) and C.E. (common era). For Judaic perceptions of time, defined in relation to immanence, see Heschel, A. J. (1951) *The Sabbath*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

⁵⁷ See Ormsby, E. (2007) 'From Arabic to Hebrew', *New York Times*, 6 May 2007. [Online]. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/06/books/review/Ormsby.t.html?_r=0. (Accessed: 8 March 2014).

⁵⁸ Marks, L. U. (2000) *The skin of the film: intercultural cinema, embodiment, and the senses*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, p.63.

deathless, because it avoids the notion of memory residing in the interstitial space of the cut.⁵⁹

As Emmanuel Levinas has emphasised, there can be no ontological discourse in the absence of the Other; a durational space without personal intervention is perhaps ‘inhuman’ or dead.⁶⁰ As Marks would have it: ‘What is there to see in the image?’, suggesting that duration must contain meaning.⁶¹ The question ‘What are we going to see in the next image?’ produces a miserable and endless time, there is no past or present, only the next frame.⁶² She expands this notion of the optical image in relation to memory: ‘Memory is more like a minefield (or a bed of fossils) than like the limpid reflecting pool that Bergson describes.’⁶³ In Marks’ view this constitutes a ‘forking model of time, of present-that-passes and of past-preserved, there can be no objective record of the past.’⁶⁴

The cut is agency, and it is fragmentary, like experience; dense cutting implies a complex subjectivity within an enduring but ever-changing patriarchal post-colonialism because it suggests an authorial intervention. Josef Stalin’s hatred of montage as a decadent formalism opposed to Socialist Realism demonstrates how fascism despises complexity and duality, subjectivity and intellectual intervention. On the other hand, the cellphone camera offers unparalleled opportunities for the intervention of the witness in the long take, which in turn counters surveillance in a climate of social unrest and technical coercion.

⁵⁹ Marks (2000) p.63.

⁶⁰ See for example Levinas, E. (1985) *Ethics and infinity: conversations with Phillippe Nemo*. Translated by Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, pp.86-95.

⁶¹ Marks, (2000) p.63.

⁶² Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p.272, quoted in Marks (2000) p.63.

⁶³ Marks (2000) p.63.

⁶⁴ Marks (2000) p.65.

US artist Jenny Holzer works primarily with text, her electronic display works made in the 1980s, composed as the series *Truisms* between 1977 and 1979, function as moving image, they are a textual montage, a flow of aphoristic truisms that follow a continuous narrative; these ‘text films’ move in an ordered continuum and tell a story as a billboard or tickertape does, like a scroll. Holzer tells stories in the language of the tabloids in the visual sense, but her context skews the meaning; indeed, she makes meaning of cut-together truisms, blatantly stating concepts in juxtaposition, such as ‘If you behaved nicely, the communists wouldn’t exist’ and ‘Protect me from what I want,’ she creates a meta-narrative of the phrase and the font. Montage works as the semiotic implication of one cut juxtaposed with another. Holzer has made the inter-title the central protagonist of her moving image works, and like Godard who intercuts text in many of his films, *Weekend* (1967) being one of the earliest examples, confronts the dominance of text in the world and its hegemonic application in the media.

The YouTube clip, where random fragments of whole films are seen out of context or in sections, or cameraphones which record moments from life, are a kind of montage emerging from technology. Abigail Child argues that the trivial media slogans, advertising jingles, and soaps of the technological twenty-first century need ‘the human in the picture’, consciousness she contends is the only antidote to what Dziga Vertov calls the technological nonconscious.⁶⁵ André Breton and the Paris Surrealists would deliberately dip into cinemas and watch films in fragments, used lived experience to cut film into a surrealist temporal adjacency, an anti-narrative strategy as performed remix. In the overwhelmed culturally saturated twenty-first

⁶⁵ Child (2005) p.170.

century, recycled footage montages are an inevitable critical intervention. Craig Baldwin describes how making *Sonic Outlaws* (1995) he was ‘a culturally saturated individual talking back’ describing ‘the materials cluttering up our brains: *The Flintstones* tune; the Shell sign; “snap, crackle, pop” and needing an outlet in film. Christian Marclay’s remixes on themes of time or telephones or musical moments from the collective commons of film history, utilise the cut to reconfigure meaning in new contexts. *The Clock* cuts a 24 hour clock from appropriated footage, with visual and verbal cues providing an accurate timepiece in film form. Marclay is a collagist, his film works are both archive and montage. Like *The Clock*, *Crossfire* (2007), *Telephones* (1995), *Replay* (2007) and *Video Quartet* (2002) all employ existing footage to assemble thematic pieces that critically investigate Hollywood, cutting and assemblage. One of the first wave of artists to use musical montage and scratch edits in performance, Marclay has developed the genre into critical video collage that carries Guy Debord’s idea of détournements and Scott MacDonald’s ‘critical cinema’ into an art made from cinema that is out of context which works through montage and rhythm to subvert the original.⁶⁶ What Rosalind Krauss calls the ‘post-medium condition’ emphasises the rapid shifts of significance in evolving new media, which signals an end to formal coherence and the ‘master narrative.’; Marclay is among her examples of artists who are reinventing media in a post-medium age.⁶⁷

Julia Dogra-Brazell cuts flashes of gesture into long takes of black, layered with multiple, subtle sounds that evoke memory and thought, in a palimpsest of degraded, jittery fragments, manipulated, that is, cut, to a dreamlike meandering. In *Before I Left* (2011), she intercuts a swan’s beak, a hand on a chain on a playground swing, the

⁶⁶ Marclay was a frequent collaborator on the soundtracks of Child’s films.

⁶⁷ Krauss, R. (2013) *Perpetual inventory*. Boston: MIT, p.xiii; p.37.

sound of a rowboat, dripping water, a hum, evoking the sense of something on screen that is not actually there, like peripheral vision, through the long cuts to black a drama is hidden or submerged.⁶⁸ In Asian cinema, Apichatpong Weeresethakul's meditative, slow-paced *Syndromes and a Century* (2006) and Tsai Ming-Liang's languid, thoughtful feature *What Time is it There* (2001), have introduced a Buddhist inflection of time and space to both cutting and narrative; simply put, in Buddhism there is no beginning or end time, all is a continuum, death and life are one. In the latter film, scenes from François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959) play on the TV screen in a darkened Taiwanese apartment.⁶⁹ Hsiao Kang (Kang-shen Lee) is a watch seller, mourning the death of his father, while his mother believes he will be reincarnated. He sells a watch to a woman en route to Paris, and obsessively immerses himself in changing the clocks to French time and watching Truffaut's film. The woman Shyang-chi (Shyang-chi Chen) wanders listlessly around an alienating Paris, where she has sex with a woman she meets in a café.⁷⁰ Later she unwittingly meets (the middle-aged) Jean-Pierre Léaud (the star of Truffaut's 1959 film) on a bench, and Hsiao's father is reincarnated in the same park. The French New Wave is quoted in new contexts and links two characters across space and time.⁷¹ In Weeresethakul's *Syndromes and a Century* (2006) there is a lot of waiting, a lot of nothing happening, and then moments of humour punctuate the lyrical slowness of a story of two doctors, first in rural Thailand, and then forty years on, in a Bangkok hospital.⁷² As in Wong Kar Wai's epic romances, *Chungking Express* (1994) and *In The Mood For Love*

⁶⁸ *Before I Left* (2011) directed by Julia Dogra-Bazell.

⁶⁹ *What Time is it There* (2001) directed by Tsai Ming Liang.

⁷⁰ Perhaps a reference to Chantal Akerman's *Je, Tu, Il, Elle* (1976).

⁷¹ Ming Liang, T. 'An interview with Tsai Ming Liang'. Interviewed by Samantha Culp and Tyler Coburn. Translated by Ken Chen, Bingyi Huang, James Tweedle and Susan Yu. Available at: <http://www.yale.edu/wake/fall03/tsai.html>. (Accessed 8 March 2014).

⁷² *Syndromes and a Century* (2006) directed by Apichatpong Weeresethakul. See Thunskä Parisittivorakul, T. 'A Conversation with Apichatpong Weeresethakul' *Criticine*. Available at: http://www.criticine.com/interview_article.php?id=24. (Accessed 8 March 2014).

(2000), there is a sensibility that is serious, meandering and lyrical, and at the same time punctuated with humour. There is a dialogue with American and European cinema but there is a heightened sense of time in the narrative structure, expressed most clearly in Wong's *2046* (2004), Weeresethakul's *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010), and Tsai's *What Time is it There*, which express a blurring of past present and future, and of the mechanical or linear notion of the temporal⁷³ which Stephen Teo has identified as a 'Space Time Tango' able to jump back and forth.⁷⁴

Child writes about needing to see the cut rather than hiding it in so-called seamlessness, and notes that, 'for Joyce, Stein, Proust, film cuts must have been very exciting concretizations of the movements of thought.'⁷⁵ This kind of assemblage reinforces the idea of process; as Child and others have noted, the decisions made in putting a film together are not evident at the beginning; the film emerges from the cuts. Jumpy continuity that refutes seamlessness is the motor of my films. *Radio* and *The New World* are complex bricolages; the former compresses time, the latter decelerates and speeds up, it plays around with time and narrative, it steals and borrows from film, music and literature, embedding motifs in a finely-meshed trajectory. It is the montage that articulates and orchestrates the film, it stretches and compresses the raw material; montage is a compositional process. A bricolage of voices (Pam Grier, Rita Hayworth, Bette Davis, Jean Seberg and others) dub the main protagonist and creates a ventriloquized persona who eventually breaks down, and

⁷³ Christianity is exemplary in terms of its linear time, beginning with Jesus as its year zero and its Gregorian solar calendar with fixed dates. Jewish time begins with 'the creation' 5775 years ago and the calendar is lunar and thus flexible. Buddhists work with a lunisolar calendar and their year zero coincides with the physical passing of the Buddha.

⁷⁴ Teo, S. (2005) 'Space Time Tango' in *Wong Kar Wai: Auteur of Time*. London: BFI Publishing, p.47.

⁷⁵ Child (2005) p.186.

through to herself. The interplay of elements crash edits sounds and textures into a bizarre, dislocated *mise en scène*, and these clashing adjacencies are integrated by the narrative voiceover and transitions between chapters. Appropriating and reconfiguring narrative, *The New World* addresses agency within the cut, playing with both cinematic cliché and found footage, showing how montage is an intervention in rhythm, meaning, time and narrative that in my work is the foundation of the process of composition.

Chapter 4. Identity: Juggling Ghosts and Paradox, Ambivalent Anxieties

Jewishness disrupts the very category of identity because it's not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these in dialogical tension with one another.

—— Daniel Boyarin¹

Could there be a thought of difference that did not return to the thought of identity?

—— Judith Butler²

In this chapter I will argue that identity, particularly Jewish identity, is full of ambivalent anxiety founded in second generation post-Shoah trauma, and the political issues springing from the Israeli Palestinian conflict. I will show how my own work and that of others negotiates Jewish and non-heterosexual gender positions to express a cultural practice fraught with ambivalence and anxiety.

Identity debates have been the motor for much cultural rethinking since the emergence of globalism. Amelia Jones notes that Euro-American culture has developed a pseudo 'post-identity' that plays down the complexity of difference against oppositional models.³ Citing Rosi Braidotti, Jones debates notions of inter-relationality, which are enabled by global technological developments as a 'radical relationality.'⁴ Gender plays a major role in these evolving questions; as Judith Butler contends, 'a radical rethinking of the ontological constructions of identity' is necessary if feminism is to be revised and revived, freed from normative and

¹ Boyarin, D. (1997) *A radical jew: Paul and the politics of identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.244.

² Butler, J. (2003) 'Reflections on Germany' in Boyarin, D., Itkovitz, D. and Pellegrini, A. (eds.) *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.395.

³ Jones, A. (2012) *Seeing differently: a history and theory of identification in the visual arts*. New York: Routledge. Amazon Kindle Location 612.

⁴ Jones (2012) Amazon Kindle Location 795.

gendered clichés.⁵ In my own work sexuality/gender and Jewishness inflect broader cultural debates. Subjectivity is, after all, the manifestation of identity. Marjorie Garber describes this interplay as intersectional: ‘the vexed crossings of Woman and Jew.’⁶

Daniel Boyarin’s definition of what Jewishness *isn’t* provides a contemporary context that will be explored further in this chapter. While there is a glut of writing and debate on both the Holocaust and Israel, postwar Jewish identity is complex, ambivalent and problematic. As Albert Memmi has noted, Kafka never once wrote the word ‘Jewish’, yet, he argues, he was ‘literally haunted by his Jewishness.’⁷ Moreover, Memmi writes, this ‘vague spiritual malaise’ flags a perverted relation to time and history, due to the punctuations of disaster and catastrophe for which the State of Israel was ostensibly a remedy.⁸ Now, inextricably linked to Israel, these debates around identity are shifting constantly, framing the issues in increasingly unstable and oblique narratives. As one Israeli friend said, ‘we’re all Holocaust survivors now.’ This chapter aims to unpack some of these positions and readings in relation to my own work.

Diaspora culture is eclectic, unstable and variable, and increasingly so in the twenty first century. The Jewish diaspora in particular has a broad range of geographic and

⁵ Butler, J. (2006) *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. London: Routledge, 2006, p.7.

⁶ Garber, M. (2003) ‘Category crises: the way of the cross and the Jewish star’ in Boyarin *et.al.* (2003) p.19.

⁷ Memmi, A.(1968)*Dominated Man*. Boston: Beacon Press. , p.93.

⁸ Memmi, A.(1963) *Portrait of a Jew*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode. pp.15-17; p.204.

cultural variation that is in constant flux. The contemporary rhizomatic⁹ map of Jewish identities differs considerably from that of the twentieth century. The state of Israel has a broad demographic and includes Arab, Indian and African Jews, a large Francophone community of Maghrebi origin, Palestinian Arab Israelis, African refugees, and Thai workers, form a complex cultural picture. As Memmi, a Tunisian Jew, would have it, his ambiguous relation to identity emerges from the sense that he was ‘a sort of half-breed of colonization,’ understanding everyone because he belonged completely to no one.¹⁰ David Perlov, in *Diary* (1973-82), describes a sense of being at home everywhere and nowhere.

Reminiscent of Walter Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project* (1982)¹¹ which assembled citations to chart a poetic history where multiple fields converge in the text, Fania Oz-Salzberger writes that intertextuality is key to understanding Jewishness as transmitted through text rather than religious culture.¹² Amos Oz sees ancient Israel as a fully developed literate, political and legal civilization for whom a shared religion was a single element, not a key. To shift questions of identity from religious affiliation to textual inheritance makes sense in the unpacking of this dense and complex history and reveals some crucial elements in the formation of cultural identifiers, and subsequent notions of alterity. Emmanuel Levinas understood that alterity, the Other, discourse and dialogue, mark the distinction between individualism

⁹ In biology the rhizome is a network of underground stems of plants, different from the arborescent model which has roots and a crown. Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* describe the rhizome as having many routes of connection and offers a multiplicity of links. For Deleuze and Guattari the rhizome offers a system of knowledge capable of outlining a broad map of connections between things. Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1988) *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Reprint. London: Continuum, 2004. p.22.

¹⁰ Memmi (1968) p. 49.

¹¹ Benjamin, W. (1982) *Das passagen-werk*. Suhrkamp Verlag. Benjamin, W. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland, Kevin McLaughlin. Reprint. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press Cambridge, 2002.

¹² Oz, A. and Oz-Salzberger, F. (2012) *Jews and words*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, pp.1-2.

and relational ethics.¹³ The point in the twentieth century where Martin Heidegger and others flirted with fascism, was the moment when Jewish philosophers began to think about alterity and relationship. Levinas' essays on Martin Buber, author of the seminal *I and Thou*, demand that we face the other, and philosophically embrace alterity, flagging the relational as the foundation of ethics.¹⁴

The 2013 show *Vot Ken You Mach* at the Dresden Kunsthaus purports to 'grasp individual decisions on cultural identity beyond religion and nation' and presents contemporary art, 'films, cartoons and concerts' around Jewish identity in the twenty-first century.¹⁵ A new generation of Israeli-German artists are represented, with comics and cartoons shaped by 'Jewish exile culture' from the US, and collaborative, semi-conceptual Balkan-inflected music from Europe and the Middle East. Radical in breaking the habit of showing Jewish-themed work in Jewish museums, *Vot Ken You Mach* treats Jewish alterity as specific in a contemporary context and interrogates the flux and variations in the post-Shoah world. Many Israeli artists now live and work in Berlin, creating new post-Shoah debates; Yael Bartana's ironic kibbutz projects in Poland,¹⁶ and Oz Almog's radical research and collaborations, as well as my own work *Radio* are included in the show.¹⁷ The curator, Christiane Mennicke Schwartz

¹³ See for example Levinas, E. (1985) *Ethics and infinity: conversations with Phillippe Nemo*. Translated by Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

¹⁴ Buber, M. (1923) *I and thou*. Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith. Reprint. London: Continuum, 2004. For Levinas' readings of Buber, see *Le Temps et l'autre*, (1948) Reprint. Paris: Fata Morgana, 1979) and (1995) *Altérité et transcendance*. Reprint. Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2006. And *Ethics and Infinity*.

¹⁵ *Vot ken you mach*, curated by Christiane Mennicke-Schwarz. Dresden Kunsthaus, December 2013.

¹⁶ Yael Bartana, *And Europe Will Be Stunned* (2007-2011), a trilogy of films based on the non-Jewish, Polish 'Jewish Renaissance Movement' which proposes that Israeli Jews return to Poland.

¹⁷ 'An Israeli artist and activist based in Vienna who has staged shows which 'shocked', for example *Him Too? A Chronicle of a Cultural Obsession*, Oz Almog confronts visitors with the question as to what Anne Frank and Jesus, Bob Dylan and Fred Astaire, Mr. Spock and Albert Einstein, Frida Kahlo

has emphasised the transnational and intertextual context of the works, and post-Zionist and post-Jewish positions which interrogate complex relations between the West and Israel, Jews and culture.

Irit Rogoff describes culture as a relationship rather than a thing. An Ashkenazi Israeli, Rogoff writes about the nature of the Israeli Jewish ‘tragedy’. A friend of hers contends that she had spent most of her life immersed in a European culture that oppressed her, yet, she remarks, ‘we believe we are the real Europeans, that those people out there in France, Germany, Spain are simply fraudulent parvenus who have usurped our rightful cultural place.’¹⁸ Rogoff speculates on diaspora as not only the dispersal of Jews exiled from Israel in the first century, but also claims that 1948 was a reversal, a double whammy she calls ‘the diaspora’s diaspora.’¹⁹

In my own work, identity is represented by an appropriation of eclectic cultural artefacts, in the bricolaged feminist adventure films *Radio* and *The New World* that grapple with identity-related subtexts. The Holocaust and Israeli politics have been inextricably embedded in the minds of my generation; the result, in my films, is a hybridity, a quirky historiography, and overt and covert tropes that flag specifically

and Madeleine Albright could possibly have in common. Oz Almog features flamboyant heroes and anti-heroes whose only common denomination is their Jewish origin: names like Baruch Spinoza, Jack Ruby, Bob Dylan and Rosa Luxemburg. Showing the opposite to the racist anthropologist’s image of the Jewish Face and underlining the diversity, Almog selected the personalities portrayed from the Bible, Myth and heroic tales, Nobel laureates, politicians and soldiers, humanists, Hollywood celebrities, saints, freaks, gangsters and murderers – people who made history. Albert Einstein rubs shoulders with fashion designer Ralph Lauren, sex symbol Hedy Lamarr with the writer Franz Kafka, actress Winona Ryder with Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, film director Stanley Kubrick with gangster Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel, Meyer Lansky with rock musicians Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley and Lenny Kravitz.’ ‘Oz Almog’, *Wikipedia*. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oz_Almog. (Accessed: 3 June 2013).

¹⁸ Rogoff, I. (2000) ‘Daughters of Sunshine’ in Mirzoeff, N. (ed.) *Diaspora and visual culture: representing Africans and Jews*. New York: Routledge, p.168.

¹⁹ Rogoff (2000) p.170.

gendered and Jewish motifs. Where queer commentary²⁰ has raised questions about subjectivity and authenticity, queer experience is ideally suited to experiment, it is an identity in the making.²¹ Self-representation is no longer simply a matter of speaking up. Who are we speaking to, and what do we represent in an age of flux? Identity has become complex and intersectional in the twenty-first century; the original call to write oneself still holds for me as a practitioner in order to narrativise complex identity in new filmic forms.²²

Film is concerned with the image: ‘Jews have a big problem with the image... images are linked to idolatry,’ Chantal Akerman says to Jean-Luc Godard in an interview in 1980. Referring to the biblical second commandment prohibition on the making of graven images, she raises questions about the practice and the making of the non-idolatrous image. Akerman’s films imply the oral tradition, the telling of stories that avoid idolatry in a culture that is already idolatrous, worshipping golden calves, money; the worship of things. For Akerman the films contain another face looking to camera, and imply a relational position where face to face with another, there is a

²⁰ The term queer theory was coined by Teresa de Lauretis in 1990 to denote an intersectional relationship between feminism(s) and questions of sexuality, gender and identity. My own research has been influenced by Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *The Epistemology of the Closet*, and more specifically Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner in *What does queer theory teach us about X ?* where they claim they have ‘been invited to pin the queer tail on the donkey.’ But, they argue, queer commentary might be a more useful term to describe the links in the rubric, belonging to a discourse world that only partly exists. *Queer* has no stable referent point they argue, and commentary would serve as a challenge to the invisible normativity of heterosexual culture. To sum up, they write that many issues of queerness have opened the field to more general issues, queer commentary has introduced: vernacular idioms, the acknowledged and the disavowed, jokes, and experiments in critical voice. See: Butler (2006); Sedgwick, E. (1990) *The epistemology of the closet*. Reprint. London: Penguin, 1994; Warner, M. and Berlant, L. (1995) ‘What does queer theory teach us about X? *PMLA* 110. [Online] Available at: http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/BerlantWarner_WhatDoesQueerTheory.pdf (Accessed: 11 October 2014).

²¹ As Sarah Schulman, one of the founders of the queer experimental film festival in New York, MIX has remarked in an interview. Conrad, R. (2013) ‘The defiant prose of Sarah Schulman’, *e-flux*. Available at: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-defiant-prose-of-sarah-schulman/> (Accessed 24 March 2013).

²² Cixous, H. (1975) ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’ in Marks, E. and de Courtivron, I. (eds.) (1980) *New French feminisms*. Brighton: Harvester, p.249.

dialogue.²³ In her interview with Godard, avoiding questions about the image, Akerman talks instead about wanting to make a film about diaspora, and her research on I.B Singer in New York, which became *Histoires d’Amerique* (1989)²⁴. Speaking of Jewish elements in her thought, she says, ‘I lost them without having lost them completely. A lot still remains – in ordinary things, in everyday life, in love.’²⁵ And speaking of origins and belonging she remarks, ‘As far as I’m concerned I don’t have a relationship with any place... if I have to feel I’m from somewhere, it would undoubtedly be New York more than anywhere else.’²⁶ These stories are embedded in the everyday, Jewishness is in life and in love, and in New York, but no single or particular place. In my own work an interplay of cities and sentiment is expressed through the erasure of borders; in *The New World* and *Radio* locations simply segue from one to the other. Everyday life and love retrace questions of connection in my films, and in Akerman’s, through an avoidance of an idolatrous or monolithic stance, a preference for nuance and complexity. In *The New World* I quote moments in hotels in *Les Rendez-Vous D’Anna* to express this nomadic dislocation, and Anna’s constant travelling and the absence of domestic spaces.

In Akerman’s Israeli documentary essay *La-Bas* (2006) the unseen subject is Akerman herself. In this oblique self-portrait she is conflicted, reclusive, and ambivalent; an exile in a ‘promised land’ she is unable to inhabit. Akerman reiterates again and again, on the phone or in monologue, ‘it’s complicated.’ *La-Bas* is the ‘over

²³ Novaczek, R. (2014) Interview with Chantal Akerman, 12 October 2014.

²⁴ Godard cited in Bergstrom, J. (1999) ‘Chantal Akerman: splitting’ in Bergstrom, J. (ed.) *Endless night: cinema and psychoanalysis, parallel histories*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.273.

²⁵ Bergstrom (1999) p. 273.

²⁶ Bergstrom (1999) p.277.

there', an elsewhere, and a bond to the post-trauma of the final solution. Migrations and cross-fertilisations mark an unbelonging echoed saliently in Akerman's film.

In 1992 Jacques Derrida began to talk about his Jewish identity; *Circonfession* struggles with his Jewish-Algerian origins, his French mother-tongue, his secularism, and his relation to colonialism, he describes himself as 'the last of the Jews'.²⁷ In 2001 H el ene Cixous published *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en Jeune Saint Juif*; in her opening note she remarks 'What does "Jew" mean? Who can say "I am Jewish" without a shudder of the tongue and mind?'²⁸ This shudder of the tongue and mind sketches the ambivalence, the political problematics that arise in attempting to think about a Jewish avant-garde practice within current debates. Cixous reflects on Derrida's identity:

I can only portray him as Jew in French, in all the French sleights of word, in this tongue which he says is his sole language and that he does not possess, I mean does not have: on the one hand he can't bear the sight of it... on the other hand he adores her, his whole life he has dreamed of having her, his Beauty.²⁹

She continues 'had I not from the age of three, in the throes of a world war, when I first began to trace the letters of the alphabet, unthinkingly signed a pact with the letter J among all the letters of the French language?'³⁰

²⁷ Derrida, J. (1993) 'Circumfession' in Bennington, G. (ed.) *Jacques Derrida*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.190.

²⁸ Cixous, H. (2005) *Portrait of Jacques Derrida as a young Jewish saint*. Translated by Beverley Bie Brahic. New York: Columbia University Press, p.vii.

²⁹ Cixous (2005) p.2.

³⁰ Cixous (2005) p.3.

Akerman's oblique, restless Francophone flânerie traverses the 'passovers, transfers, expulsions... exinclusions, blacklistings, doors slammed in your face' that Cixous writes of, a history that is also culture, rendered indirectly, obliquely, at a once-remove.³¹ In *The Imaginary Jew*, French writer Alain Finkielkraut remarks, 'How many identities we assumed, one after the other! Colonized natives with Frantz Fanon, American blacks with Malcolm X and LeRoi Jones, guerillas with Che... this rapid series of armchair journeys shaped our coming of age.'³² Civil rights, diasporic identities and Jewish self-determination in Israel splintered and fragmented a postwar Jewish homogeneity where the trauma of the Shoah may have created some sense of cohesion. 'Face-to-face with nothing,' as Hannah Arendt would have it, questions arise as to what Jewishness might 'be' or become with a legacy of shame and guilt based on Holocaust and contemporary Israel.³³ Arendt emphasised that the 'Jewish principle of multiplicity, the principle of both/and, as opposed to the Western principle of either/or' brings a sense of lucid observation to her philosophy that cannot be reduced to 'theory' or 'doctrine.'³⁴ In this way her non-theory impacts much work that adopts this position, as outsider, as observer; both/and. Arendt's model seems to resist idolatry, to resist either/or, to emphasise nuance and multiple readings.

Alain Finkielkraut asserts that what we call postmodernity is in fact the post-Holocaust era. Finkielkraut, like Walter Benjamin, connects Jewish culture with

³¹ Cixous (2005) p.5.

³² Finkielkraut, A. (1980) *The Imaginary Jew*. Translated by Kevin O' Neill and David Suchoff. Reprint. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994, p.19.

³³ Arendt, H. (1932) 'The Enlightenment and the Jewish question' 1932, in Kohn, J and Ron H. Feldman, R.H. (eds.) *The Jewish writings*. Reprint. New York: Schocken, 2007, p.16.

³⁴ Edna Brocke, "Afterword: 'Big Hannah' – My Aunt", in Kohn and Feldman (2007) p.520.

contemporary political questions, and in doing so stumbles upon deeper questions of identity that have complex ramifications. *The Imaginary Jew* opens with a quote from Isaac Babel: ‘If I were to write my autobiography, I would call it “The Story of an Adjective”.’³⁵ He then introduces his protagonist, a boy in a school playground who has his first encounter with this adjective ‘Jew’: ‘he will have an uneasy feeling that a new expulsion is at hand... later perhaps he will choose to “pass” and invest all the skill at his disposal in blatantly dissimulating his identity to flee the Semitic malaise.’³⁶ Finkielkraut’s ‘imaginary Jews’ are those who ‘live in borrowed identities’; they ‘have taken up residence in fiction,’ and so their authenticity must be authenticated.³⁷ For Finkielkraut the post-war generation, paralysed by the Holocaust, start afresh in Zionism, yet carry two kinds of shame.³⁸ In “Circumfession” Derrida writes that, ‘my presence then finally becomes the absence it always was.’³⁹ He confesses to his ‘nostalgeria’, and cites two propositions; firstly, that ‘we only ever speak one language,’ and a second that refutes it: ‘we never speak only one language.’ What then he writes ‘are the chances of the readability of such a discourse against its unreadability?’⁴⁰ These tensions inflect my film work, the juggling of embedded identities, Jewish and queer, that engage with the host culture, yet nevertheless struggle with registers of assimilation. This is reflected in the fractured monologues in *The New World*, in the protagonist’s confinement in a car, with backgrounded Jewish figures and a fractured voiceover, a dubbed persona.

³⁵ Finkielkraut (1980) p.3.

³⁶ Finkielkraut (1980) p. 5.

³⁷ Finkielkraut (1980) p.35

³⁸ Finkielkraut (1980) p.128

³⁹ Derrida (1993) p.182.

⁴⁰ Derrida, J. (1998) *The monolingualism of the Other, or, the prosthesis of origin*. Translated by Patrick Mensah. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, p.52; p.57; p.72.

The New York show, *Too Jewish*, addressed identity head-on in 1995.⁴¹ Subtitled *Challenging Traditional Identities*, it cited Jean-Paul Gaultier's 'Hassidic' fashion collection of 1993 and Rhonda Liebermann's 'Jewish Barbie' column in *Artforum* in the 1990s, bringing an urban and ironic angle to what had hitherto been more or less sacrosanct and traditional. The show reinterpreted notions of American-Jewish identity at a time when the first Intifada and changing attitudes towards Israel had created ambivalence and angst around questions of Jewishness. Much of my own New York work, made between 1994 and 2003, investigates urban, non-traditional identity questions, and includes conversations and interviews with Abigail Child, Sarah Schulman, Linda Salerno and other artists around questions of alterity. During periods spent living and working in both Israel and New York, I developed a sense of identity embedded within an abstract, even metonymic, Judaism; Katz's deli in New York for example, stands in for myself and my Jewishness. This approach attempts a mosaic or cosmopolitan identity, breaking away from an insular or parochial position in the free flow of ideas and locations. Akerman's *Portrait d'une Jeune Fille de la fin des Années 60 à Bruxelles* (1994) almost exactly mirrors my growing up in London: middle-class, closeted, ambivalently Jewish.⁴² In *The New World* Super 8 footage my father shot at the restaurant my parents owned in the 1960s relates a quasi-fictional account of assimilated diaspora life in London; a French-themed café run by my Jewish family, my Hungarian grandmother, Sephardic mother, Viennese father, and French-Moroccan uncle provides a bridge in the film between Fanny Ardant's

⁴¹ Curated by Norman Kleeblatt, Jewish Museum, New York. Followed by the catalogue publication: Kleeblatt, N. (1996) *Too Jewish? challenging traditional identities*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press.

⁴² Episode of the French TV series, *Tous les garçons et les filles de leur âge* (1993-94).

question as to whether a film is a love story or a war film, and the point in the film where Rita Hayworth voices Francesca Souza's linguistic breakdown. Ruptured by war my family history intervenes in the narrative as a location of displacement.

In 1972 Akerman relocated to New York, where she was based until 1976. In this period she made *La Chambre* (1972), and *Hotel Monterey* (1972): cluttered rooms, a hotel lobby, corridors in a run-down hotel. These films are moving away from the identity positions of her European films of that era. In New York, she watched the city as a francophone outsider. Extracts from *News From Home* (1977) appear as citations in my 2010 collage film *Alibi*, which is a study of dislocation.⁴³ Akerman's film plays with several registers; home, exile, diaspora, and her relationship with her mother, from whom the letters are received, and whom the text addresses. New York City in French conveys a sense of desolate beauty and urban isolation, and the irony of the film's title asks whether it is her home, or is her mother tongue her real home? This quest for a mother tongue, through the voice and its addressee, is echoed in my films *Cactus Babylon*, *Easy Listening*, and more specifically in *The New World* where the protagonist is constantly looking for a place to call home, but failing. While for Akerman, the mother is her anchor, her identity, my own work negotiates the foreign city as familiar, my character is a rootless cosmopolitan adrift in a borderless world.

Akerman revisits America in 1989 with *Histoires d'Amerique*, comprising a string of Jewish-American jokes. In the 1990s she returns to Europe and the Shoah (and her mother) in *D'Est* (1993) her work has a Jewish agenda at its heart, sometimes more overt than others. In "Chantal Akerman: The Integrity of Exile and The Everyday,"

⁴³ *Alibi* is one of the five films on the *Radio* DVD.

Jonathan Rosenbaum describes Akerman as ‘an outsider in an international context.’⁴⁴ He contends that she must be read as Belgian and Jewish, despite spending periods of time in France and the US, because she isn’t really part of French cinema. He notes that Babette Mangolte, who shot *News From Home* and many other Akerman films, introduced Akerman to the North American avant-garde, which was to have a profound influence on her subsequent work. The language of Francophone cinema and US counterculture both configure a European take on diaspora; Akerman, like many contemporary artists, crosses the Atlantic constantly.

Her films have several registers of ‘Jewishness’; Anna in *Les Rendez-vous d’Anna* (1978), is Belgian-Jewish, as is the erotically-obsessed protagonist in *Nuit et Jour* (1991) who juggles two lovers, and is inexhaustible and insatiable. *Portrait d’une Jeune Fille de la Fin des Années 60 à Bruxelles* charts a young Jewish-Belgian girl’s daily life as she skips school to have sex. All Akerman’s films are politico-sexual in this respect; it is through sexuality that her characters find themselves, and discover the world. In *Tomorrow We Move* (2004), the daughter is a (queer) writer of erotic fiction and her mother, a pianist. Rosenbaum ascribes an exilic mood in Akerman to ‘the discomfort of bodies in rooms,’ emphasized in *Les Rendez-Vous D’Anna*, an exilic mood that carries into the shot itself.⁴⁵

Writing of *D’Est*, Alisa Lebow assigns a parallel to the ‘indirect memory’ of Jewishness that Finkielkraut describes in *The Imaginary Jew*.⁴⁶ She reads this through Benjamin’s many ‘spaces, moments, and discontinuities,’ which are echoed in what

⁴⁴ Rosenbaum, J. (2011) ‘Chantal Akerman: The Integrity of Exile and the Everyday’, *Lola 2* (2011). Available at: http://www.lolajournal.com/2/integrity_exile.html. (Accessed: 10 March 2014).

⁴⁵ Rosenbaum, 2011.

⁴⁶ Lebow, A. (2008) *First person Jewish*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.1-2.

she views as a shared ‘methodology of acute indirectness that astounds in its ability to communicate more nuanced and suggestive resonances between history and the present than could any forthright approach towards the subject.’⁴⁷ Less is more, the unsaid resonates, as do spaces in music, and like film, music moves in time. This kind of tension makes Akerman’s films resonate with perplexed detours and unexplained neuroses. In *La-Bas*, the setting is abstract, a Tel Aviv apartment. ‘La-bas’ (over there) is unspecific for a reason; it suggests the ambivalence of European Jewish presence in an Israel that is menacing, suggesting the impossibility of a neutral position in relation to the Jewish state. Yet much of Akerman’s oeuvre is tragi-comic: *L’Homme à la Valise*, *J’ai Faim, j’ai Froid, Toute une Nuit* (1982), and *Saute ma Ville* (1968), are, like ‘Une jeune fille’ concerned with the agoraphobic/domestic and the erotic/neurotic. What Lebow describes as a ‘vague but ubiquitous sense of Jewishness’ is expressed in oblique humour, understated desires, and ambiguous presence.⁴⁸ Akerman has been a compass for my search for an approach to Jewish and queer identity, because she embraces intense ambiguity and palpable angst in *La-Bas* in relation to Israel, the absurd humour in *J’ai Faim J’ai Froid*, the encounters and repetition in *Les Rendezvous D’Anna*, flag an emotional yet distanced relation to place and space.

When reading Akerman obliquely in this way, negotiating the unsayable and the stumbling search for definition, a new kind of grammar emerges that is sure of its radical poetry. In the 1980s a tutor at St. Martin’s suggested that I should use Jewish symbols that were overt and recognisable. Until this moment, I’d been using faces,

⁴⁷ Lebow (2008) p.3.

⁴⁸ Lebow (2008) p.133.

music or locations as a stand in for a more overt or specific Jewishness, an encrypted identity. She had suggested that I use ‘Anne Frank or a synagogue,’ and this began a long reflection on what kind of symbols might allow my work to be read as Jewishly inflected, without resorting to such simplistic models. In *First Person Jewish*, Lebow notes that in my films *Rootless Cosmopolitans* (1990) and *Cheap Philosophy*:

This Jewish mosaic wants nothing more than to bring all of the broken, disenfranchised alienated people back in frame... Breaking the unspoken pact of silence among British Jews, Novaczek in effect wants to proclaim and reclaim Jewish alterity.⁴⁹

While Lebow has problems with the way I throw ‘race’ into question by casting non-white Jews as protagonists, thereby blurring boundaries, she notes that performing a range of stereotypes in my work conveys a visibility lacking in the reading of the ‘Jew’ within the British cultural spectrum, throwing the ‘taxonomic project of race into question.’⁵⁰ Yet this was (and still is) my response to a tutor expecting Anne Frank, to play with stereotype overtly. Lebow, a native New Yorker, contends that I ‘blatantly disregard... the unwritten code of Jewish assimilation,’ and that there is ‘an ardent commitment’ in my work, to Jewish visibility.⁵¹ This is demonstrated in my film *Cheap Philosophy* (1992), in which I use wigs and costumes to signify Jewish characters in monologues to camera as my alter-ego, Esther Kahn, I portray; a feminist revolutionary in a beret, a chain-smoking opera singer, a yeshiva student, an assimilated lesbian, a drunk cabaret artiste, a psychoanalyst and her analysand.

⁴⁹ Lebow (2008) p.135.

⁵⁰ Lebow (2008) p.136.

⁵¹ Lebow (2008) p.137.

Judith Butler, recalling a talk she gave in Germany where she was assumed to be Italian, notes that ‘a conjured Italian origin attests to the “illegibility” of the Jew.’⁵² While legibility is the key to being fully read, I am less concerned with lesbian visibility in my own work, I tend toward an incidental and understated sexuality that allows for a broader reading on a philosophical level; I want my films to be read outside margins. If there is a sexual or gendered position in my work it has more to do with Berlant’s *queer commentary* that takes place with regard to the gaze of the protagonist and spectator, concerned with love, desire, failure and politics. In *Sense and Episode on the Radio* compilation, Manhattan provided a *mise en scène* that could explore a metonymic paradigm for ‘Jewish’ in New York. In Tel Aviv I could take this further, with the added weight of an ambivalent and conflicted political milieu that forms the basis of both my Israeli films, *Talk Israel* (1994) and *Nowhere Having Found Its Way* (2008), which are documentaries. Ultimately the context of dislocation and fluid borders is at the heart of my films.

Roberta Mock notes the emergence of a specifically Jewish humour in the early twentieth century, ‘at this point that we begin to recognize a theory of “Jewish humor”—one that counterbalances external adversity’ and a Freudian ‘internal masochism—that sits within and also exemplifies wider, “universal,” theories of comedy. Certainly, by the mid-twentieth century in America, Jewishness and comedy were inextricably linked’.⁵³ Comediennes Sandra Bernhard and Sarah Silverman render their Jewish identity into a dark, absurd, postmodern Jewish humour. Bernhard’s stories of life as a ‘valley girl’ and fantasies of growing up gentile, Silverman with anecdotes studded with references to sexual practice, politics, drugs

⁵² Butler, J. ‘Reflections on Germany’, in Boyarin *et.al.* (2003) p. 402.

⁵³ Mock, R. (2007) *Jewish women on stage, film and television*. Palgrave MacMillan, p.2.

and race. In segregation-era America⁵⁴, the Catskills' Jewish hotels hosted comics like Lenny Bruce, and Woody Allen⁵⁵; this satirical standup reflexivity easily found its way into cinema. In the East and West coast underground film cultures, radical humour, satire and irony feature in much Jewish work: the Kuchars, Child, Henry Hills and others play with an irreverent and comic interpretation of the avant-garde. The Jewish humour of which Sigmund Freud writes, full of unconscious and taboo satire, is present in much Jewish work that is otherwise serious, and in my own comedies.⁵⁶ *Radio* has several wry jokes at its dark heart, and *The New World* is a comedy in this vein, Eileen Myles writes 'Her work is always dour and comic, a kind of diasporic standup that gets ventriloquized through bridges and animals and cigarettes and women's faces and out the window of moving cars.'⁵⁷ In *The New World* image and text voice an alienated identity founded on mournful humour; the waitress, for example, whose 'mouselike exterior hides a mouselike interior', the waiting, smoking women, the absurd, jarring cuts. Mock describes the roots of Jewish women's performance, that, 'through self-construction, they blurred the lines between person and persona, authenticity and mystery', and this comes close to summing up how the satire in *The New World* works. Mock writes 'the construction of Western Jewish female identity is the tension between insider and outsider status, hybridity and liminality'. In reading my films Jewishly this tension which Myles describes as

⁵⁴ My mother recounts how when she lived in New York she was shocked that there were hotels and clubs in upstate New York that admitted neither Jews nor people of colour.

⁵⁵ Sarna, J.D. (2004) *American Judaism: a history*. Yale University Press, pp.219-221. In 'An Anxious Subculture', Sarna catalogues the many resorts closed to Jews and African-Americans who then opened their own hotels. The Catskills' hotels are well-known for hosting Jewish comedians.

⁵⁶ Freud, S. (1905) *The joke and its relation to the unconscious*. Translated by Joyce Crick. Reprint. London: Penguin, 2002.

⁵⁷ Eileen Myles, sleeve notes for *The New World* DVD December 2013.

ventriloquized, is in fact performed obliquely as ambivalence, via the characters and their fractured commentary, or in the landscape which seems always elsewhere.⁵⁸

Child calls her recent trilogy a ‘prismatic look at being Jewish in America’. When I asked what she thought might be considered Jewish in her work, she answered, ‘well, maybe the idea of “ideas” – is that Jewish?’⁵⁹ Child’s films play with ideas with what Tom Gunning calls an affirmation of the affinity between radical form and radical content.⁶⁰ In *The Suburban Trilogy* (2011) she investigates suburbia through split-screen collages, and fast-cut montages of postwar America; baton-twirlers smile eerily, the soundtrack comes from horror films and TV laugh-tracks, and products are listed in rolling credits, ‘celery sticks, deodorant’. Child’s Jewishness is appraised via her images of New Jersey, the endless repetition and jump cuts, 1950s advertising, guns, asynchronous chapters, she is a choreographer of the cut. Child links and maps ideas; *The Future is Behind You* (2004-5), the first film in the trilogy, cuts to monochrome family footage titled ‘Bavaria 1932’. Yiddish music, soundbites, a conversion, ‘we never thought of ourselves as Jewish,’ a family cavorting in the mountains, in a garden, kisses, more soundbites: ‘bolshevism is the greater evil,’ ‘we simply said nothing.’ While her seven part series *Is this What you Were Born For* (1981-1989) explored cinema, New York City, B-movies, and melodrama, *The Suburban Trilogy* is the first of her works to explore Jewishness directly.⁶¹ There is a menacing foreboding in the films that link European lives on film, to jaded suburban America. In *Surf and Turf* (2008-11) she shifts to bright colour, the twenty first

⁵⁸ Myles (2013) as above; Mock (2007) p.11.

⁵⁹ Child, A. (2012) Email to Ruth Novaczek, 1 September.

⁶⁰ Gunning, T. (2005) ‘Poetry in Motion’ in Child, A. *This is called moving: A critical poetics of film*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, p.xii,

⁶¹ *The Suburban Trilogy* (2011) directed by Abigail Child.

century, the Jersey shore, fast-cut collage, big suburban houses, kids playing by a pool. One child says, ‘my great grandma was in the Holocaust,’ as if it were a theatre show. We see the beaches are wired off, guards at the gates; one woman says she feels ‘fenced in’ by these security measures that purportedly keep the community safe from attacks. Child has assembled a compelling narrative that jumps from 1932 via the televisual culture of postwar suburbs, to the twenty first century Syrian Jewish refugees in a gated resort. Like Akerman she juggles personal Jewish history and poses new conditions and questions, jumping from Europe to New York in conversation. My film *The New World* echoes this transatlantic conversation around Jewishness, and *Radio* riffs on Child’s televisual Americana in *Mercy*, (1989) *Mayhem* (1987) and Akerman’s *News From Home* (1977). New York School poets like Alice Notley, Barbara Guest and Eileen Myles performed identity as the ‘quotidian and, and the “deep gossip” with which they formed a new vernacular of the city.’⁶² The first wave of the New York School in the 1950s and 1960s had a core of openly gay men as its primary practitioners⁶³; Myles’ carries that further, putting lesbian content into the vernacular poetry that celebrates the city, a ‘female conversation’ that is identity performed as personal; rock ‘n’ roll in the sense that it flaunts its raw, sexual, rhythmic vibrancy.

New York, throughout the twentieth century nurtured new vernaculars in music, writing and art. Out of this sprang queer, Jewish, Black and women’s voices that intertwined recollection and politics, where identities assimilate the raw materials of new music and art to produce forms that can bust out of marginal positions.

⁶² Nelson, M. (2007) *Women, the New York School and other true abstractions*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, pp.xx.

⁶³ Frank O’Hara, Allan Ginsberg, Joe Brainard and many others.

Akerman, Child and Myles' New York isn't literal, it is an imagined place of possible and multiple identities, and like Joe Brainard's classic poem *I Remember* (1970), it fuses memory, desire and identity into a bricolage of life and experience.⁶⁴ In my films *Cactus Babylon* (1997), *Easy Listening*, *Sense*, *Radio* and *The New World*, New York has provided an urban location that aesthetically and energetically hosts the registers of identity I play with and reconstruct. In my practice and imagination it represents past, present and future, and assumes a mythical quality that assimilates the ghosts, paradoxes and anxieties of alienated alterity.

Svetlana Boym's 'off-modern' and Matthew Buckingham's 'future-anterior' both consider how we might approach the future when we haven't done with the past.⁶⁵ History inflects what might be, and what agency might come into play to build some structure around 'what-if'. Boym's Off-modern manifesto heralds the off-kilter, off-Broadway and off-centre to reconsider the broken technologies and lost artefacts of the twentieth century in the twenty first as a way of working through history and memory and their wounds, traumas and vulnerabilities. Applying Boym's manifesto to an experimental avant-garde practice and questions of identity embraces the discarded that prevailed at the end of the twentieth century, to encounter new locations and dislocations which characterise the debates of the twenty first century. Boym writes 'The off-modern acknowledges the syncopes and the off-beat movements of history that were written out from its dominant versions, edited by the

⁶⁴ Brainard, J. (1970) *I remember*. New York: Angel Hair.

⁶⁵ Boym, S. 'Nostalgic technology: notes for an off-modern manifesto'. Available at: <http://www.svetlanaboym.com/manifesto.htm> . (Accessed 10 March 2014); Matthew Buckingham and Svetlana Boym (2010). Interview with *Future Anterior*. 22 May 2010. [Online]. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/22091983>. (Accessed 10 March 2014).

victors, who cared little about the dignity of the defeated'⁶⁶. Ellen Gallagher, Adrian Piper and other African-American artists have been asking these kinds of questions for some time, finding subtle ways to convey the complexity of political positions within the cultural frame of the dominant paradigm. In my own work I claim a Jewish cultural identity that is layered and complex, and a reflection around themes and allusions that converse between multiple sites and narratives in order to negotiate what assimilation, in the poetic sense of the word, might produce. I mean in assimilating Jewishness and queerness into the wider world on one hand, and assimilating cultural artefacts into bricolage on the other.

The New World transposes hegemonic language and re-inscribes the 'rootless cosmopolitan' as a fully integrated global character, who 'fail[s] better,' as Samuel Beckett would have it, in the dialogue between East and West.⁶⁷ The film channels a Godardian multiplicity of image and montage, citation and bricolage, while the multiple 'personae' represent a single subject, 'she', in a twenty-first century identity crisis. Boym's off-modern is echoed in a multi-layered narrative that is inconclusive; playing with masquerade and enacting an unresolved and ongoing abstract, rhizomatic alterity.

The Jew in this case is a xenolith, yet part of the geology of the region.⁶⁸ In some ways this exilic sensibility is no different to notions of the artist as outsider or

⁶⁶ Boym, S. (2011) 'Off-modern'. Available at: <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/o/off-modern/off-modern-svetlana-boym.html> (Accessed: 13 October 2014).

⁶⁷ Beckett, S. (1986) 'Worstward Ho', in (2009) *Company, Ill Seen Ill Said, Worstward Ho, Stirrings Still* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009).

⁶⁸ Xenolith is a geological term describing a seam of rock in a larger geology that differs from the 'host' rock. See 'Xenolith', *Imperial College Rock Library*. Available at: <https://www2.imperial.ac.uk/earthscienceandengineering/rocklibrary/viewglossrecord.php?gID=0000000366>. (Accessed: 10 March 2014).

commentator. The construction, linguistically and filmically, recalls *midrash*, and plays with text, image and narrative in circular ways, juxtaposing contradictory elements and bridging them sonically, or with long fades to black.⁶⁹ It is endless; it is a serial, and in a sense the questions of Jewish alterity and flux are embodied in the notion of the form following the function. Like a *genizah* it is a collection of documents and histories that coexist in a single channel film.⁷⁰ It speaks of desire and impossibility, a xenolithic take on thorny questions of identity and alterity. As Godard quotes André Bazin in *Histoire(s)*, ‘cinema substitutes for our gaze a world corresponding to our desires.’⁷¹

But the problematics remain: the desire to throw off the trauma of the twentieth century, and the critical anger many Jews feel towards the Israeli political situation, has created an ambivalent and often oblique idea of Jewish identity in film. While so many Hollywood films have a bar mitzvah or a Jewish wedding to flag American-Jewish identity, the tensions and silences in Akerman’s work point to a deeper register of contemporary debates which are increasingly Israel-related. These questions resonate in my work; as it was for Arendt, my Jewishness is a given, rather than a position. Like Akerman, I am drawn to reflect on the horror of history and its

⁶⁹ ‘The term “midrash” designates an exegesis which, going more deeply than the mere literal sense, attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures, to examine the text from all sides, and thereby to derive interpretations which are not immediately obvious.’ See ‘Midrash’, *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, 1906. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10805-midrash>. (Accessed: 10 March 2014).

⁷⁰ A *genizah* is ‘is a storage area in a Jewish synagogue or cemetery designated for the temporary storage of worn-out Hebrew-language books and papers on religious topics prior to proper cemetery burial... The word *genizah* come from the Hebrew root *g-n-z*, which means *hiding*, and originally meant “to hide” or “to put away”. Later, it became a noun for a place where one put things, and is perhaps best translated as “archive” or “repository.”’ See ‘Genizah’, *Wikipedia*. Available at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genizah>. (Accessed March 10th, 2014).

⁷¹ See Rosenbaum, J. (2003) ‘Godard’s myth of total cinema: *histoire(s) du cinéma*. 9 November 2003. <http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.net/2003/11/godards-myth-of-total-cinema-histoires-du-cinema-tk/>. (Accessed: 10 March 2014).

relation to the ambivalence around Israel, which is unavoidable unless one literally casts off one's Jewish identity *tout court*, and finds ways to assimilate multiple identities in a constantly changing world. Cinema itself is full of material that has yet to be reworked and transformed through the prism of different subjectivities.

Questions of identity are being reworked via the revision and recycling of existing texts to make new historiographies which embrace ambivalence as a given, and that identity, far from fixing the subject, can be fluid and a process of becoming. In this way the either/or of binary positions could, like the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, find a resolution in allowing multiple narratives to coexist, a gaze that corresponds to complex desires, from which a more globally-inflected vernacular might spring up. This would reflect multiple locations, narratives and voices, visualizing a transnational *mise en scene* that challenges parochial or national positions, and links a range of women's voices. A feminine *écriture* that addresses cultural production in the twenty-first century and the technologies and motifs it might embrace.

The conundrum of this conundrum is that there are still areas that are unspeakable, or like the anti-racist and feminist debates, forced to go over old ground again and again. As Julia Kristeva has noted, to be a 'foreigner' can be a question of sexuality, of gender, of culture or any other exilic role.⁷² This repetition disables an expanded project of speaking across a range of alterities in new ways. Identity, so often rooted in oppression is fraught with ghosts and paradoxes, which can provide an interesting set of tensions that must necessarily use experiments in vernacular and content to speak of its perpetual change.

⁷² Kristeva, J. (2013) 'On Julia Kristeva's Couch', Chicago Humanities Festival, 19 October 2013. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-AzikJn_uc. (Accessed: 10 March 2014).

Chapter 5. The Sonic Dimension: Performance, Music, Voice

Frank Sinatra's two numbers about broken affairs in [Lewis Klahr's] *A Failed Cardigan Maneuver* are matched by fragmented images – a lone cocktail shaker, an inventory of magazine pictures of women – that separate characters from one another and from objects, and the many figures in *Govinda* (1999) seem automatons slowed by the droning sound of the opening song.

— Fred Camper¹

While my films are primarily moving image works, their soundscape is enmeshed in rhythm, music and voice. The sound is cut up and fragmented, threading through the fabric of the structure, punctuating and amplifying the formal integrity of the whole. This chapter aims to contextualise the narrativising of subjectivity in the sonic element of my work, and the role of sound in my films in relation to feminine *écriture* and the sonic vernaculars this produces. Embracing punk, riot grrrl film scores, rock and roll and classical music, I advocate an eclectic soundscape that mirrors feminine *écriture* by speaking and thinking a sound and music that challenges what Kathleen Hanna in the riot grrrl manifesto calls assimilating to 'someone else's (boy) standards of what is or isn't'.²

Having come to film via music, more specifically through being in bands in the 1980s and experimenting with songwriting, film works as a vehicle for expanding and exploring elements of my own sound composition. In my films, musical phrases and

¹ Camper, F. (2002) 'American movies'. *The Chicago Reader*. 18 April 2002. Available at: <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/american-movies/Content?oid=908308>. (Accessed: 25 February 2014).

² Emerging from the punk scene in the 1990s, the riot grrrl movement and bands like Bikini Kill, and later Le Tigre (founded by Kathleen Hanna and including film maker Sadie Benning, were into D.I.Y women's music production and the expression of third-wave feminist themes; activism, contradiction and empowerment through musical performance. The riot grrrl manifesto was published in the fanzine *Bikini Kill 2* in 1991 and its first line goes; 'BECAUSE us girls crave records, and books and fanzines that speak to US'. Available at: http://onewarart.org/riot_grrrl_manifesto.htm (Accessed 14 October 2014).

motifs are cut together and overlaid with sound effects and dialogue, quotations, voiceover and poetry. Impressed in the 1980s by music videos and advertising, I developed the desire to overlay images with music and sound from watching avant-garde and structural materialist films³, where sound was either lacking or clichéd; where breathing, heartbeats, discordant noises, or distorted offscreen voices dominated avant-garde soundtracks. Music, especially popular music, was mostly taboo in experimental films until the 1980s and 1990s, especially in the UK, where a certain formalist purity valorised silence or certain kinds of noise.

Punk and consequently rock n'roll appeared in some new-wave experimental films in the 1980s, matching the crash edits and fast cuts that had cross-pollinated from MTV. Kenneth Anger used rock n'roll as the soundtrack to *Scorpio Rising* in 1963, featuring Ricky Nelson, Presley, The Surfari's, The Shangri-Las and other 1950s and 1960s pop tunes; in 1965, *Kustom Kar Kommandos* is overlaid with Sandra Dee and Bobby Darin's 'Dream Lover' in its entirety. Bruce Baillie's *All My Life* (1966) is cut to Ella Fitzgerald's song of the same title.⁴ Elizabeth Price notes the role of pop music in her video installations:

I use pop music – with its cathartic, libidinal pleasures – to draw on my formative experiences as a shy teenager growing up in Luton, listening to post-punk on the radio. Its alienated fury and arch, satiric wit offered me an ambivalent optimism.⁵

³ See Peter Gidal's 1976 essay on structural/materialist film at *Luxonline*, which opens thus; 'Structural/ Materialist film attempts to be non-illusionist. The process of the film's making deals with devices that result in demystification or attempted demystification of the film process. But by 'deals with' I do not mean 'represents'. In other words, such films do not document various film procedures, which would place them in the same category as films which transparently document a narrative, a set of actions, etc.' Gidal, P. (1976) *Luxonline* (2005). Available at: [http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/theory_and_definition\(1\).html](http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/theory_and_definition(1).html) (Accessed 14 October 2014).

⁴ Corey Creekmur, Facebook discussion with the author, November 26th, 2013.

⁵ Price, E. (2013) "Art should be a way to understand our time – and influence it." *The Guardian*, 20 November 20, 2013. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/nov/20/elizabeth-price-art-understand-time-annual-award>. (Accessed: 11 March 2014).

In the US avant-garde, music, televisual and cinematic sounds were often used ironically. Abigail Child uses cartoon noises, and fragments of found sound, while the brothers George and Mike Kuchar employ zany sounds to build a weird and uncanny ambiance, in for example George Kuchar's *Wild Night in El Reno* (1977), and Mike Kuchar's *Purgatory Junction* (1997) which draw on a melodramatic B-movie sonic styles. Gunvor Nelson's *My Name is Oona* (1966) uses repetition and voice loops to emphasise psychological effect, while Christopher MacLaine's *The End* (1953) exploits voiceover to unify and drive the narrative, over a mix of asynchronous sound. In this way the general tendency of auditory information to be perceived in layers can be integrated into the fabric of sound and image.

Referring to Joseph Anderson's "Sound and Image Together," Claudia Gorbman notes that, 'Experiments on perception and attention in infants indicate that "the processing rule" may be this: if auditory and visual events occur at the same time, the sound and image are perceived as one event.'⁶ Gorbman further asserts that, 'The moment we recognize to what degree film music shapes our perception of a narrative, it is no longer incidental or innocent.'⁷ Chris Petit's *Radio On* (1979) is perhaps the first British road movie. Combining screen and sound, motion and music, it illustrates the most basic of scores: a car windscreen overlaid with rock 'n' roll. The 1980s was the era of the Walkman, where subjective experience of the world in motion was accompanied by a tune; sound in motion is at the root of many film scores, and emphasizes the interiority of the sonic experience.

⁶ Anderson, J. (1993) 'Sound and image together: cross-modal confirmation', *Wide Angle* 15.1 (January 1993), p.35, quoted in Gorbman, C. 'Chion is a poet in theoretician's clothing'. *FilmSound.Org*. Available at: <http://filmsound.org/chion/claudia.htm>. (Accessed: 11 March 2014).

⁷ Gorbman, C. (1987) *Unheard melodies: narrative film music*. London: BFI Publishing, p.11.

These multi-layered yet integrated approaches to sound drive my own films where the score is woven through the progression of images, remixing Igor Stravinsky and Bob Dylan together in a phrase, overlaying rock 'n' roll guitar with diegetic sound and voiceover narrative. The remixes are lo-tech, mish-mashed and fragmentary, homogenised by voiceover. A sonic *détournement* of found sounds that mix and remix, my film *The New World* expands and articulates the sonic mash-up. Unable to find meaningful women's monologues in classical Hollywood films, or at least very little that could stand alone or work in a remixed dialogue, I worked with the quality of the voice itself. Pam Grier, excerpted from Quentin Tarantino's *Jackie Brown* (1997) and Rita Hayworth from King Vidor's *Gilda* (1946) ventriloquise my original silent Super-8 footage of a woman in a car talking to camera. Sonic bridges link these sequences, with densely mixed sound effects, aphorisms, song fragments and literary quotes which come from my own notebooks, or highlighted phrases in books I read and music I encounter, that link in to the narrative of the film. In addition, both *Radio* and *The New World*, (as in all my films since 1994), employ a voiceover with New York-inflected accent. It is a 'Jewish' voice and a lost voice, with a nod to rock n'roll, it sounds somewhat like Lauren Bacall's drawl in *The Big Sleep* (1946) and a little like Patti Smith's voice on her album *Horses* (1975). It is a drawl full of ennui, careworn and melancholic, often deadpan.

On Radiohead's album *OK Computer* (1997), a dialogue between techno and analogue, ballad and beat, sound and harmony, noise and tune, evokes a cinematic aural landscape that is melancholic and oneiric. This kind of dense mixing of sonic dimensions has been part of my process since the late 1980s; improvised,

performative⁸ and emotionally resonant, mixing surf music and classical, noise and conversation, voiceover and song to weave dense, hybrid scores. Jean-Luc Godard has cut and remixed various musical genres in his films; where melodies might eclipse underlying horror, they are cut up: Antonio Vivaldi's music starts, stops, starts again in *Pierrot le Fou* (1965). Godard plays with musical genres to make this kind of sonic deconstruction clear, mixing Beethoven with rock 'n'roll, with musical phrases moving in and out of the score.

Just as poetry compresses, embeds and transposes ideas in several registers, the sound in my films acts as a palimpsest, layering meaning. The beat and tone of language is rhythmic, the rhythm of the image is musical, and sound works as music. Jessica Lauren's 2000 album *Film* uses helicopters, traffic, whistles and other urban noise in her rhythmic jazz compositions, and in my films sounds are used to represent the absent, submerged voice, where the viewer/listener is the link between dimensions of diegetic and rhythmic registers, filling in gaps. The misheard and barely registered form an impressionistic scumble⁹ as the foundation of the film. This impressionistic sound echoes Trinh T. Minha's dialogue with tones that revolve and question their foundations.

What self-expression? I mis-express myself more than it mis-expresses me...
Penetrates. Ensnares. Now I see and hear myself decensoring.
—— Trinh T. Minh-Ha¹⁰

⁸ 'Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they...purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.' Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. Reprint. London: Routledge, 2006. p.185.

⁹ An underlay or ground which serves as the tonal, textural foundation in painting or drawing.

¹⁰ Minh-Ha, T. T. (1991) *When the moon waxes red*. New York: Routledge, p.56.

My characters mime the words of others, or are dubbed and overdubbed, with my own voice or that of others. Why? Because the sonic dimension is separable and wild¹¹, it can ground or subvert the stability of the image. What Michel Chion calls the acousmatic, where the source of sound is not visible, like backgrounded radio or telephone, or *acousmetre*, where the voiceover's source is never visible, force these layers to clash and dance in my scores.¹² The moving image in my films is a collage and the soundtrack echoes this via remixing and overlaying. The Beatles' song 'You Can't Do That' was covered by Harry Nilsson in 1967, where he rearranged the song, embedding references to some twenty other Beatles' tunes, mixing and quoting in a layer of backing vocals, anticipating the remix. My own bricolages of sound, riff over and within the foundational diegetic track that moves in and out of focus. A rock 'n' roll element in my work, starting with songwriting and performance was emphasised and developed in the US in the 1990s, where I encountered Americana and rock 'n' roll poetry that seemed *noirish* and apocalyptic. A dystopian tone shapes the soundscapes of a series of dark narrative films made in America and remixed in *Radio*. Surf, country, rock 'n' roll, soul, Balkan, Klezmer, and incidental musics are linked with voiceover in a dense collage. These films embed complex and intricate non-sequiturs, nesting in a remixed mish-mash of sound.

The musician Keiji Haino works by bringing together eclectic sources to build compositions, transposing and reinterpreting songs and standards, claiming he had an epiphany on hearing The Doors in the 1960s. Haino went on to play several genres of

¹¹ Wild sound or a wild track is 'an audio track intended to be synchronized with film or video but recorded separately. Generally, the term "wild track" refers to sound recorded on location, such as sound effects gathered when the cameras were not rolling or extra takes of lines performed for audio only.' See 'Wild Track'. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wild_track. (Accessed: 14 October 2014).

¹² Chion, M. (1990) *Audio-vision: sound on screen*. Translated and edited by Claudia Gorbman. Reprint. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

music – psychedelic, jazz, pop, rock ‘n’ roll – on his own terms, as well as DJing across an eclectic range of music. The cross-fertilisation that characterises innovative sonic approaches is echoed in Japanese film. In his autobiography, Akira Kurosawa says that working with composer Fumio Hayasaka changed his views on how film music should be used; from then on, he viewed music as ‘counterpoint’ to the image and not just an ‘accompaniment.’¹³

Film sound theorist Kathryn Kalinak maps the transition from original soundtracks to compilation scores that cull music from different sources.¹⁴ These contrapuntal and collated music tracks illustrate the ways in which the soundtrack is layered and composed to form an element that dissolves into the image rather than standing apart. Artist Rie Nakajima works with sound and performance. Using battery-powered devices, she animates ordinary objects like plastic bags, whistles and tins. Her performances emphasise subtle sounds and incorporate environmental noise. Her overtone soundscapes build layers of occasional harmonies and rhythms that merge and diverge in time and space.¹⁵ Like Andrei Tarkovsky’s notion of sculpting in time¹⁶ Nakajima sculpts sound in space.

David Toop describes Christian Marclay’s composition *Everyday*, performed at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in 2012, as:

¹³ Kurosawa, A. (1982) *Something like an autobiography*. Translated by Audie E. Bock. New York: Vintage, pp.191-98.

¹⁴ Kalinak, K. (2010) *Film music: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵ Nakajima, R. ‘How About Both’, *Things he would like*, blank, Turin. April 18th 2013. Available at: <http://vimeo.com/64716898>. (Accessed: 11 March 2014).

¹⁶ See Tarkovsky, A. (1989) *Sculpting in time: reflections on the cinema*. Austin: University of Texas. Tarkovsky asserts that cinema records time in visible signs and is therefore the foundation of cinema. p.119.

a provocation of moving images and sound, so whether you see the concert or hear it is impossible to parse, but it also bounces around in a cloudy zone between registers, history, document, myth, the real and the hyperreal. Cinema is the score but of course more than that. Drawing from the archive of cinema, what it presents via a screen to the audience and musicians... is a series of everyday gestures whose sounding is central to their impact as image and narrative... Jacques Tati was the master of this... [As Michel Chion describes it:] 'CLANG goes the now famous swinging door in *Les Vacances [de M. Hulot]* (Jacques Tati, 1953)'... The founding myth of contemporary art, Duchamp's readymade, is caught up in this everyday. A door swing, CLANG, nothing. But Tati makes it swing again, then again, then again.¹⁷

Chion's account of Tati exemplifies the elevation of the sonic dimension in cinema via spaces, silences and everyday noise. In mainstream cinema, Nicholas Hazanavicius' *The Artist* (2011) has revisited the role of sound in the transition from silent cinema to the talkie, by cutting anomalous synch sounds into a scene mid-way through the mostly silent film. *The Artist* plays with the way we take synch sound for granted, and it plays with silence in the age of the talkie. In *Le Quattro Volte* (2010), Michelangelo Frammartino eschews dialogue completely; the soundtrack is composed of goat bells, animal noises, wind and footsteps, doors opening and closing and other 'everyday' sounds.¹⁸ Frammartino plays against dialogue, drawing our attention to quotidian noise. While this attention to daily sound and experiments with silence is nothing new, the endless possibilities of reconfiguring the sonic are. Composition is just that: it scores the visible in film, emphasizes or flags tone and mood. In Godard's *Prenom Carmen* (1983), songs by Tom Waits are mixed with sampled Beethoven, and a temporal disconnect is flagged by these anomalous interventions. Sounds are

¹⁷ Toop, D. (2012) 'Why do we have to be quiet tonight?: Christian Marclay's *Everyday*. *David Toop's Blog*. October 15, 2012. Available at: <http://davidtoopblog.com/2012/10/15/why-do-we-have-to-be-quiet-tonight-christian-marclays-everyday/>. (Accessed: 15 October 2012).

¹⁸ *Le Quattro Volte* (2010) directed by Michelangelo Frammartino.

specific to the age, to technology, and in the urban environment new sonic lexicons are formed from these elements.

Marclay, by cutting cinematic images on the basis of their soundtracks, has emphasized the way sound and cinema are entwined. Child, who has frequently worked with Marclay incorporates fragments of B-movie soundtrack with televisual sound, to highlight both genres, particularly the comic effects of the latter, and the melodrama of the former. Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia* (1999) is described by Matthew Sewell as: 'Stocked with high-strung, spiraling-out-of-control characters who inhabit a narrative design that willfully verges on incoherence;' Sewell further quotes Mark Olsen's description for *Sight & Sound*: 'a magnificent train wreck of a movie, an intimate epic of full-throttle emotions that threatens to go off the rails at any moment.'¹⁹ In fact its narrative design is further complicated by the soundscape, with crossfades that extend for minutes into subsequent scenes, sonically implicating and linking characters in a melodramatic web. Sewell compares this emotional intensity to Pedro Almodóvar, but Almodóvar is not as radically experimental sonically: he amplifies drama through well-placed songs, or moments of intense dialogue. In *Climates* (2006) Nuri Bilge Ceylan plays with crisp diegetic sounds that seem to come from off-screen, acousmatic commentaries from the wings; the clatter of drawers, grinding of teeth, breathing, footsteps, amplified and dislocated, emphasizing gesture without resort to dialogue, which is sparse in all his films.²⁰

David Lynch borrows from Hitchcock's use of Franz Waxman and Bernard Herrmann and their epic approaches to the score; Angelo Badalamenti's compositions for the TV

¹⁹ Sewell, M. (2011) "'But it did happen: Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia*", *Bright Lights Film Journal* 73 (August 2011). [Online]. Available at: http://brightlightsfilm.com/73/73magnolia_sewell.php#Ud_-4zl8vww. (Accessed: 11 March 2014).

²⁰ *Climates* (2006) directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan.

series *Twin Peaks* (1990-91) and the film *Mulholland Drive* (2001). Since Alfred Hitchcock's work with Herrmann, film scores have become increasingly 'signature', producing film-specific composers such as Hayasaki, Henry Mancini, Nino Rota, Ennio Morricone, John Barry, Teiji Ito and others. *Radio* and *The New World* compose an emotive sonic tonality by using popular music, film soundtracks, diegetic and acousmatic sounds mixed in a layered palimpsest that corresponds to the image yet stands alone as a sonic composition.

Nicola Phillips describes how sound and image transform one another in the audience's perception, 'According to Chion,' she writes, 'this transformation occurs not because of any "natural harmony" between image and sound, but owing to the "audio-visual contract", wherein, "the two perceptions mutually influence each other."' ²¹ Chion's notion is that sound, for example, music, 'adds value' to the image. The nature of synchronous sound causes the filmgoer to construe the image differently, and hence the relationship of sound and image in film should not be described simply as 'associationist', but as 'synergetic'; they enter into a 'contract' in the filmgoer's perception. ²² Exploring the role of sound in film *noir*, Eloise Ross remarks that '[Douglas] Kahn writes of sound as a terrestrial product –as something of the land, of and belonging to space, and produced by people in the world. He writes, "sound is not only experienced as occurring *in between* but as surrounding the listener, and the source of the sound is itself surrounded by its own sound."' ²³ Film

²¹ Phillips, N. 'Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*', *FilmSound.Org*. Available at: <http://www.filmsound.org/philips.htm>, quoting Chion, *Audio-Vision*, p.9. (Accessed: 11 March 2014).

²² Phillips 'Michel Chion'.

²³ Ross, E. 'Sounds from the city in film *noir*', *Senses of Cinema*, 62 (April 2012). Available at: <http://sensesofcinema.com/2012/feature-articles/sounds-from-the-city-in-film-noir/#2>. (Accessed: 11 March 2014). Quoting Kahn, D. (1999) *Noise, water, meat: a history of sound in the arts* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, p.27).

sound, she says, is constructed as a singular, stable track to operate as a vector that holds the spectator within the film when the images are constantly changing and cutting. Ross further cites Mary Ann Doane's quotation of Pascal Bonitzer's term 'voice-off', as something uncanny in a voice that emanates from a source outside the frame.²⁴

Lewis Klahr seamlessly incorporates popular and classical music in his films, without the arch irony of many US experimenters:

Occasionally, his sound tracks suggest an aural dimension, evoking proximity or distance, but he prefers to keep sounds lo-fi to match the flatness of the visuals. Even popular songs played in their entirety... or Alban Berg are often treated this way without diminishing their importance to a film's meaning or mood.²⁵

For Klahr there's a sense of taking an energy from music and transforming it: 'the danger and exhilaration of New York City, and my desire to emulate and translate into my films the passion and speed of the punk and new-wave music I was listening to. As I developed as a filmmaker, I was consciously working through other filmmakers' styles, creating my own version of their films. I wasn't a very good mimic, so I always got it wrong and, in so doing, broke new ground.'²⁶ At the same time Klahr will use entire songs without compromising the visual ambiance. Writing about Klahr's *Engram Sepals (Melodramas)* (1994-2000), Camper notes that:

²⁴ Ross (2012) quoting Doane, M.A. (1980) 'The voice in cinema: the articulation of body and space', *Yale French Studies* 60, pp.40-41.

²⁵ Pipolo, T. (2013) 'The Illustrated Man', *Artforum* (March 2013). Available at: <http://artforum.com/inprint/id=39403>. (Accessed: 11 March 2014).

²⁶ Pipolo (2013).

One aspect of melodrama that Klahr takes even further than [Vincente] Minnelli or [Douglas] Sirk is the way characters' fates seem determined by the sound track. This is not at all akin to a music video, which subordinates the images to the music; Klahr's characters seem to have some will, but their potential for self-determination is undermined by the way they seem forced to act out the songs.²⁷

In my own films the sonic strategies emerge from a wholesale appropriation of songs and tunes that are used to emphasise character, with a reference to music video, which subverts the genre, particularly in *Radio*. In *The New World* I borrow the overlay of Stravinsky's 'Berceuse,' part of the *Firebird Suite* (1945), from Klahr's film *Altair* (1994) to ground the film in its melancholic, dreamy tonality. The soundscape in the film moves between foreground and background, Eileen Myles describes the sonic dimension in *The New World* as:

Music is pulsing along in a way you often don't notice so that as a conversation goes on in a car there's a percussion that rather than being so very present just kind of makes the world feel actual so that the sonic component of her piece suddenly feels like the front of the work and the visuals are working behind.²⁸

My soundtracks are constructed in similar ways to Klahr's multilayering, from diaristic moments re-recorded to change or flatten the tone, borrowing and remixing in order to break new sonic ground, recycling and repurposing music, noise and voice to enmesh them in the overall composition.

Klahr says of *The Pettifogger* (2011):

²⁷ Camper (2002).

²⁸ Eileen Myles, text sleeve notes for *The New World* (2014) directed by Ruth Novaczek.

I recorded parts of the soundscape without going directly from machine to machine. For example... I took a tape recording of a storm I had made in the 1980s, played it on the stereo in my dining room, and recorded it again so that it absorbed the ambience and noise of that room, adding a subtle secondary level to the original – a bit of 2011 added to the mid-1980s.²⁹

The soundtrack, Klahr says, ‘is meant to suggest a realistic world at odds with the artifice... I create a fictional universe while simultaneously puncturing, deflating, or destroying it. The sound does and doesn’t attach to the images; it syncs up, then drifts away.’³⁰

This approach resonates in my own work, where I record sounds from projected films in my living room, or music from passing cars, the sound of trees waving or a knife being sharpened, and then mix them underneath the music or voiceover, creating a palimpsest, and altering the registers of implication and meaning.

Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori Alexandrov published a manifesto on sound in 1928.³¹ As Jamie Sexton notes:

For these writers, a contrapuntal application of sound was necessary if the cinema was going to advance further as an art. Thus, sound and image should be combined in asynchronous ways, so that new meanings could be generated out of the clash of aural and visual units.³²

²⁹ Pipolo (2013).

³⁰ Pipolo (2013).

³¹ Eisenstein, S., Pudovkin, V. and Alexandrov, G. (1928) ‘A statement’. Translated by Jay Leyda in Weis, E. and Belton, J. (eds.) (1985) *Film sound: theory and practice*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.83-5.

³² Sexton, J. ‘Avant-garde film: sound, music and avant-garde film culture before 1939’, in Harper, G. et. al. (eds.) (2009) *Sound and music in film and visual media: a critical overview*. London: Continuum, p.578.

This kind of theorizing makes sense, stacking the contemporary soundscape, especially in cities where new technologies provide new noises; the powering on of computers, mobile ringtones, email alerts and reversing cars cut into the nostalgic aura of tunes and riffs, of which jazz musicians have been aware for decades. There is no silence, as John Cage has demonstrated.³³ Music historians describe Beethoven's sources as birdsong and folk tunes³⁴; to harness the sonic layers of contemporary life is to note the clash of birdcalls and building work, police sirens and telephones, passing car radios and rattling cutlery. *Radio* revels in the stacked soundscapes which background the voiceover. The challenge in a sonically-overwhelmed world is to amplify the inaudible and lower the volume on the screaming dimension of dominant noise, and in *The New World*, texts, aphorisms, musical fragments, voiceover and diegetic sound are mixed to form a coherent score that contributes to the narrative flow of the images. In *Radio* sound effects and offscreen voices are layered to build an eerie and *noirish* tonal register that scores *Alibi* and *Phoneo*, while *Episode* and *Sense* play with pop music, radio noise and voiceover, intertwined to rhythmically punctuate the cuts.

The mismatching of image to soundtrack has created juxtapositions that flag how sound and image work; Marclay's *Up and Out* (1988), commissioned by Artangel, marries Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966) on screen to Brian de Palma's *Blow Out* (1981) soundtrack. Louise Lawler's *A Movie Will Be Shown Without The Picture* (1979) played the soundtrack of John Huston's *The Misfits* (1961) over a dark screen. The cult synchro-project *Dark Side of the Rainbow*, sees fans link the Pink

³³ Cage, J. (1994) *Silence: lectures and writings*. London: Marion Boyars.

³⁴ See for example Swafford, J. (2014) *Beethoven: anguish and triumph*. New York: Harcourt, 2014. Swafford suggests musicians of the period accumulated pastoral gestures such as bagpipe drones, folk tunes, bird song and country dances, that found their way into the symphonies of the period, p.506.

Floyd album *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973) to *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), synching the start of the album to the MGM lion's third roar. Rumours that the band encoded a secret message in the coincidental alignments, which Pink Floyd members deny, first surfaced on the Usenet discussion group alt.music.pink-floyd in 1995.³⁵ A website dedicated to this proposal alleges the album also synchs with Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).³⁶ The practice of synching mismatched sound to visuals was popular among 1970s stoners³⁷, who turned down the volume on TV and played albums over the top, emphasizing the fluidity of meanings arising when different sounds overlay the image. In a sense, this is the essence of cinematic scoring, and absurdity or emotionality can be cranked up through sonic montage, which has been developing since the Panoram Soundie in the 1960s, music video in the 1980s, and other image/music overlays that depart from the traditional regimes of cinematic scoring in the studio feature.

If eclectic hybridity is to be expressed sonically, this kind of layering, appropriation, and radical mixing flags a trend towards a generic scrambling that fuses many sources and types of sounds into a compositional integrity. The soundtrack, while enmeshed in the fabric of the film, is like the image, separable. Derek Jarman's *Blue* (1993) emphasized the value of the soundtrack in creating visual imagination, and in my own compilation *Radio*, I attempt to draw equal attention to the score, and to some extent

³⁵ 'DarksSide of the rainbow', *Wikipedia*. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark_Side_of_the_Rainbow. (Accessed: 11 March 2014).

³⁶ See 'Wizard of Oz + Dark Side of the Moon = DSotR.' *Dark Side of the Rainbow*. Available at: <http://dark-side-of-the-rainbow.com/twoo-dsotm-dsotr.html>. (Accessed: 11 March 2014).

³⁷ Habitual marijuana smokers or potheads, people who 'get stoned' on cannabis. For twenty first century applications see for example Anthony Bourdain and other New York chefs on pot-smoking and food: Severson, K. (2010) 'Marijuana fuels a new kitchen culture', *New York Times*, 18 May 2010. [Online]. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/19/dining/19pot.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (Accessed: 14 October 2014).

reverse the importance of sound over image by a dense and inextricable linking of the two. This process is aleatory and echoes Cage's random compositions and perception of sound as an agent; as he wrote, 'when I hear traffic, the sound of traffic I have the feeling that sound is acting. And I love the activity of sound.'³⁸ Cage is referring to the relational implications of music, claiming it resembles conversation, and imparts an overly literal aspect to natural sounds. He seeks a Zen Buddhist or Indian musical foundational theory, to intercept the world through the *action* of sound. The agency of sound to describe the world can be emphasized through an intuitive moulding of soundscape as a facet of a broader perception.

The soundscape of Cage's lifetime was mechanical and analogue. He flagged the role of silence in 1952 with his 'silent' piece '4'33,'" but in today's concert halls the indelible background sound chirps differently, with the digital layer of tones and notes that permeates the 21st century. While it is legend that classical composers rendered birdsong into music, birds themselves are mimics, and the American gull and the Moroccan gull have a different call. The Maghrebi cockerel mimics the muezzin, its tonality distinctly Islamic; a French pigeon has a slightly different accent to a British one. In my own work, global collected sounds create a diasporic score, mixing east and west and disregarding generic homogeneity, its juxtapositions anomalous and mismatched via montage, which is sonically both composition and production at once.

Music in my work is fragmented and the sounds cut through the sentiment of the occasional harmonies: a knife is sharpened while an empty elevator descends; a Herrmann score runs under traffic noise; TV laughter is dubbed over a passage from

³⁸ Cage, J. (1991) interview in *Listen* (2003) directed by Miroslav Sebestik.

Stravinsky; taxi radios cut into folk songs. Art-school rock band and DJ culture, film scores and world music, diegetic sound and voiceover collaborate in my work to build a soundscape of collision. It represents both cultural clashes and global harmonies, it conspires— that is, breathes together – with subject and object, sight and sound.³⁹

While remixing and archival montage have been used by many artists in recent decades, (as I note in previous chapters) a more intuitive channeling informs my work, as it embeds several layers within its audible narrative trajectory. While Phil Spector’s wall of sound⁴⁰ was heavily dependent on several instruments playing the same tune to add weight to the tone, my own layering uses difference as its resonant body.

As Cage remarked in a lecture in 1968:

After I had been studying with him for two years, [Arnold] Schoenberg said, “In order to write music, you must have a feeling for harmony.” I explained to him that I had no feeling for harmony. He then said that I would always encounter an obstacle, that it would be as though I came to a wall through which I could not pass. I said, “In that case I will devote my life to beating my head against that wall.”⁴¹

In my own process this question of eschewing harmony, or a feeling for harmony in favour of a repeated confrontation with a wall describes how in weaving layers that eventually fuse to form a coherent soundscape, it is the arrangement and composition that cut through density to clarity. As the film nears completion, it is as if the layers snap into place and fit to the images rhythmically to make narrative sense of the whole. This kind of sonic collage requires musical production; it has to mix things to

³⁹ Andy Warhol, “Conspiracy Means to Breathe Together,” screenprint, 1969.

⁴⁰ Virginia Moorefield defines Wall of Sound as massed instrumental and vocal forces, plus an augmented R&B rhythm section, and the liberal use of echo chamber effects. Exemplified by Spector’s 1963 production of the Ronettes *Be My Baby*. 11-12. Moorefield, V. (2005) *The producer as composer: shaping the sounds of popular music*.

⁴¹ Cage (1994) p.260.

levels that allow a fusion to happen by moving volume and tonalities around. While this mix appears to be lo-tech, its method is complex and dense. Julia Dogra-Brazell uses a similar technique of layering in several of her films, including *Plot* (2006) and *The Garden* (2007), and particularly in *Before I Left* (2010), where the highly nuanced minutiae of sound effects and other noises builds a mesh of densely produced scoring.

In my film *Sense* (2005), density is built through cross-fading disparate musical elements, as tonal punctuation. In *Episode* (2006), the soundscape is built from home made sound and rhythm more akin to rap. In *5050* (1995), I remixed Thelonius Monk tracks with a voiceover narrative. Subsequently I've overlaid layers of sounds and music to create a mesh of background for voice, layers of sounds form a vehicle for the narrative voiceover, emphasising the rupture between the sounds. This process of embedding, enmeshing and punctuating sound builds a sonic vernacular of contemporary noise, on ground that is both traditional – that is, revisioning eclectic music theories – and intuitive, channeling textual vocalisation. The work of sound in my work animates the narrative and conceals the auditory equivalent of flash frames in the text.⁴² A flash frame works on an unconscious level as it's not strictly visible. In terms of sound these are barely heard sounds that lurk in the background in *Alibi*, *Radio* and to some extent in most of my film work, such as a knife being sharpened, hard-to-hear voices, and other barely audible backgrounded sounds. The sonic in my work cross-talks and cuts over genres, mixing tinny soundtrack to orchestral grandeur, and then cutting back with a single voice, a badly-sung song, or a fragment of a tune, particularly evident in all the films on the *Radio* DVD.

⁴² 'In video or film editing, a flash frame is a very short shot (usually one frame, but occasionally several) that appears in a sequence of images. Flash Frames are usually inadvertent and result from either an editing mistake or an equipment problem. From time to time, however, they are inserted intentionally for creative reasons.' See 'FlashFrame', *Wiktionary*. Available at: http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/flash_frame (Accessed: 14 October 2014).

Sonic *détournements* are inevitable in the digital age with its ubiquitous ringtones and stacked noises. As the track to a film, composition performs the task of weaving, to keep the narrative motif on the rails. As Ross notes, ‘Sound is a pervasive and encompassing sensorial aspect of film; sound can be heard from all around us, not just where our vision is directed... Although sound is not more important than image, the reverse does not hold true either.’ She writes of sound forming an ‘affective cinematic world... Even if only chimerical.’⁴³ When I worked in the Rio cinema I used to listen to the film soundtracks from the lobby in order to learn to hear blindfold. There is a chimerical and affective resonance in the mixing and layering of soundtrack when it is not pristine and Dolby-ed, but heard at a once-remove, uncanny and strange. This is how a soundtrack can work to enrich and deepen narrative affinities, scoring and underscoring themes and motifs. The once-remove of overlaid sounds which mix with the diegetic creates a palimpsest of resonance, where the sonic dimension is never an afterthought but inextricably linked to the image. This sonic layering works in *Radio* to produce an immersive landscape that, like poetry, produces new meaning by juxtaposition and contrast. In *The New World* these layers of sounds merge and then diverge, creating a rhythmic dynamic infused with both narrative energy and tonal noise. In remixing the soundtrack so densely, the sound is reconfigured as a new sonic dimension that emphasises and deepens the score and its narrative.

⁴³ Ross (2012).

Conclusion

This thesis reimagines a revitalised avant-garde that embraces feminine *écriture* anew, to construct new vernaculars from analogue and digital materials. My research has moved my practice towards more expansive, elegant and epic forms that transcend the punk-inflected, extreme tonality of my earlier works. The process of reading, watching and working with the materials for this project produced many questions about formal language and its role in narrative formation. Process allows tangential detours which reveal unconscious and intuitive motifs. As Rebecca Solnit writes ‘Certainly for artists of all stripes, the unknown, the idea or the form or the tale that has not yet arrived, is what must be found.’¹ Citing Thoreau², Solnit contends that unless we are lost we cannot find ourselves and realise the infinite extent of the relational³.

Radio and *The New World* appropriate, interrogate and narrativise the nostalgic⁴, the fragmentary and the radical. I make subtle, nuanced claims in these works, and argue that art is primarily a conversation that leads to new knowledge that can be shared. I argue for a revitalised avant-garde practice that moves beyond formalism to ongoing, transformative narrative trajectories that embrace feminine *écriture*. While I acknowledge the complexity of new technology and its impact on lens-based media, I

¹ Solnit, R. (2006) *A field guide to getting lost*. Edinburgh: Canongate, p.5.

² Thoreau, H. D. (1882) *Walden*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company.

³ Solnit (2006) p.15.

⁴ I refer here to Svetlana Boym’s ideas in *The future of nostalgia*, where she proposes nostalgia as part of the process of reclaiming the lost artefacts, the fragmented and broken technologies she advocates in her proposal for the *Off-modern* which she coined. See for example Boym, S. (2001) *The future of nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books and ‘Nostalgia’, *Atlas of transformation*. Available at: <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/n/nostalgia/nostalgia-svetlana-boym.html> (Accessed: 19 November 2014).

contend that while avant-garde film has been usurped by migrations to the gallery and feature-length cinema, returning to simple hand-held devices to document daily life can offer a way to revive experimental subjectivity. I therefore propose a radical practice with the materials at hand, be it DVD ripping, cameraphone filming, or spontaneous guerrilla actions. According to Catherine Russell, found footage, collage, montage or archive materials constitute ‘an aesthetic of ruins,’ techniques, she argues, that produce, “‘the ethnographic’ as a discourse of representation.’ ‘Its intertextuality’, she claims, ‘engages with the past through recall, retrieval and recycling’ and opens up a new means of ‘representing culture’.⁵ Looking at films by Bruce Conner and Leslie Thornton among others, she contends that the historical avant-garde is in fact, over. She differentiates between modernist avant-garde realism, and the postmodern archival simulacrum. Feminism and recycling are key here: ‘if a new sensually aware, cinematically refined feminism was the most discussed ideological trend of the 80s, recycled found footage is the most visible formal tendency of the decade,’ (the 1990s) writes William Wees⁶. In my own work these elements are invoked as a method to produce new vernaculars by revisiting the kind of cinematic feminism Wees cites, with the mnemonic tendencies that recycling produces.

I ask how avant-garde practice and discourses can create new questions that remain open, changing form through process and self-reflexivity. In bringing together this hybrid research I write of the kind of cinema I want to see and imagine, which is reflected in the films I make. Creating a model for autonomous agency and auteurist

⁵ Russell, C. (2009) *Experimental ethnography, the work of film in the age of video*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, p.238.

⁶ Wees, W. C. (1993) *Recycled images: the art and politics of found footage*. New York: Anthology Film Archives, p.34, quoted in Russell (2009) p.239.

vision, this practice revisits Maya Deren and others who developed avant-garde film as a genre, and takes it into the twenty-first century with its many new materials; cameras and lenses, editing platforms, cross-pollination and video quotation, for example, which expand and revive a practice founded on twentieth century technologies.

Engaged in process and language, the films voice and unearth lost artefacts which produce new icons and confluences, and the protagonists, borrowed or performed afresh, offer an image of restless figures who ventriloquise many voices and registers. A rootless cosmopolitan, 'she' negotiates a new world order, yet speaks of the memories, myths and dramas of the old world in the context of the new. Rosi Braidotti's 'cultural mutations... "the cultural cartography"...happening to bodies, identities, belongings, in a world that is technologically mediated, ethnically mixed and changing very fast in all sort of ways' describe the way my work maps ongoing change.⁷ My film work is about post-national uncertainty; unsure of the future, of the past, of home, and of the world, yet on the threshold of something that can move beyond identity to something that has an elective affinity to change. What Braidotti describes as 'a process of abandoning identity and entering in the construction of subjectivity, subjectivity being per definition transversal, collective.'⁸ *Radio and The New World* take a space in the field of British experimental film to explore a larger alterity and affinity through intervention and process. My process is the writing of life

⁷ Braidotti, Rosi (2012) 'On Nomadism: Interview with Rosi Braidotti', interviewed by European Alternatives, *Kurdish Feminist Tribune*. [Online]. Available at: <http://kurdishfeminists.com/kurdi/niviskar.php?id=592> .Accessed 19 November 2014. (When I found this on the net a year ago this interview was on several websites, the above is one of two remaining in an internet search, the other is an article entitled 'On Nomadism: An interview with Rosi Braidotti on George Macunias' website which is identical to the above. See: <http://georgemacunas.com/exhibitions/fluxhousefluxcity-prefabricatedmodular-building-system/fluxhouse-fluxcities/essays-2/european-alternatives-on-nomadism-interview-with-rosi-braidotti/>).

⁸ Braidotti (2012).

with ellipsis, where the out-take, and ‘junk’ collide with what Deren describes as a vertical space⁹ on a tangential narrative trajectory, while the horizontal links events, the vertical Deren implies, illuminates meaning. It is through the problems of weaving identity – sexual, gendered, cultural and historical – into my work, into the documenting and assembly, into the process, that the story, if there is one, emerges. This is the vernacular, the song of oneself.

Eileen Myles writes, ‘poetry most of all is a mastery of places, not the world but the weather of the states that form in your life and what you read.’¹⁰ The revision of formal language and grammar in *The New World* creates a space for narrative work in a similar vein to emerge, to revive the avant-garde with a critical relation to the dominant paradigm. In my own film work, meaningfulness, rather than aesthetics *per se*, is the criterion for making choices with an engagement with the material that produces self-reflexivity. In this way the subjective merges with the aesthetic to produce moving-image work which revitalises process-driven avant-garde film. Content, form and context meet in narratives that that spring from unknown outcomes and methods, where stories emerge from the material, and from the quotidian as well as the unconscious.

In an era of ubiquitous video documentation, film is no longer a medium as such, but a discourse that is open and in constant flux. Celluloid and video can and do overlap. They contribute to new knowledge by reinvoking ideas and methods left behind in the twentieth century, to reframe their relevance in the twenty-first century and to create a

⁹ ‘the poetic construct arises from the fact, if you will, that it is a "vertical" investigation of a situation’. Deren, M. (1953) ‘Poetry and Film: A Symposium’. *Virtual Circuit*. Available at: http://www.virtual-circuit.org/word/pages/Poetry/Symposium_Poetry.html. (Accessed: 24 November 2014).

¹⁰ Myles, E. (2010) *Inferno: a poet's novel*. New York: OR Books, p.261.

space for new and radical narrative film practices that explore serendipitous, audacious approaches to cinematic language and genre. In the text, the eclectic nature of the research and its links to francophone cinema and the US underground provide a foundational methodological alternative to the British avant garde and open up a space for feminist interventions in the mapping of avant-garde film. Based on the methods and rationale of my practice, these chapters serve to research how hybrid experimental filmmaking works and can flag a way towards new, global or transnational vernaculars.

In *Shadowtime*, Charles Bernstein ventriloquises the voice of the ‘Young Walter Benjamin’; our task, he says, ‘is to liberate the future from its deformed existence.’¹¹ The avant-garde must therefore wrestle the future from the hands of those who deform it by the repetition of actions that no longer illuminate meaning, to form new conversations, regardless of the medium, to renew debate at the level of language.

¹¹ Bernstein, C. (2005) *Shadowtime*. Los Angeles: Green Integer Press, p.43.

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Filmography

The 11 O'Clock Show, produced by Rob Moore and Dominic English (1998-2000) [TV]

77 Sunset Strip, created by Roy Huggins (1958-64) [TV]

The 400 Blows, dir. François Truffaut (1959)

2001: A Space Odyssey, dir. Stanley Kubrick (1968)

5050, dir. Ruth Novaczek (1995)

À bout de souffle [*Breathless*], dir. Jean-Luc Godard (1960)

À propos de Nice, dir. Jean Vigo (1930)

Actor, dir. Michael Mazière (2010)

The Alcohol Years, dir. Carol Morley (2000)

Ali G in da USAiii, dir. James Bobin (2003-04)

Ali G Indahouse, dir. Mark Mylod (2002)

Da Ali G Show, dir. James Bobin and Steve Smith (2000)

Alibi, dir. Ruth Novaczek (2010)

Alice In Wonderland, dir. Cecil Hepworth (1903)

Alice's Adventures In Wonderland, dir. Edwin S. Porter (1910)

All About Eve, dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz (1950)

All My Life, dir. Bruce Baillie (1966)

All That Heaven Allows, dir. Douglas Sirk (1955)

Altair, dir. Lewis Klahr (1994)

American Beauty, dir. Sam Mendes (1990)

Anatomy of Hell, dir. Catherine Breillat (2004)

The Apple, dir. Samira Makhmalbaf (1998)

The Artist, dir. Nicholas Hazanavicius (2011)

At Five in the Afternoon, dir. Samira Makhmalbaf (2003)

At Land, dir. Maya Deren (1944)

Battleship Potemkin, dir. Sergei Eisenstein (1925)

Beavis and Butt-head, created by Mike Judge (1993-) [TV]

Before I Left, dir. Julia Dogra-Brazell (2010)

The Birds, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1960),

Birth of a Nation, dir. D.W. Griffith (1915)

Blackboards, dir. Samira Makhmalbaf (2000)

Blow Out, dir. Brian de Palma (1981)

Blow-Up, dir. Michelangelo Antonioni (1966)

Blue, dir. Derek Jarman (1993)

Blue Velvet, dir. David Lynch (1986)

Buddha Collapsed out of Shame, dir. Hana Makhmalbaf (2007)

Bullets for Breakfast, Holly Fisher (1991)

Cactus Babylon, dir. Ruth Novaczek (1997)

La Chambre, dir. Chantal Akerman (1972)

Chasing Amy, Kevin Smith (1997)

Cheap Philosophy, dir. Ruth Novaczek (1994)

Chez Paulette, dir. Anya Lewin (2013)

Christmas on Earth, dir. Barbara Rubin (1963)

Chronique d'un été, dirs. Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin (1960)

Chungking Express, dir. Wong Kar Wai (1994)

Citizen Kane, dir. Orson Welles (1941)

Clerks, dir. Kevin Smith (1994)

Climates, dir. Nuri Bilge Ceylan (2006)

Coffy, dir. Jack Hill (1973)

Committed, dirs. Sheila McLaughlin and Lynne Tillman (1984)

Deux Fois, dir. Jackie Raynall (1968)

Einleitung Zu Arnold Schoenbergs Begleitmusik Zu Einer Lichtspielszene, dirs. Jean Marie
Straub and Danièle Huillet (1973).

Daisies, dir. Vera Chytilová (1966)

Daria, created by Glenn Eichler and Susie Lewis (1997-2001) [TV]

David Holzman's Diary, dir. Jim McBride (1967)

The Deadman, dir. Peggy Ahwesh (1987)

Diary, dir. David Perlov (1973-82)f

The Dictator, dir. Larry Charles (2012)

Duel in the Sun, dir. King Vidor (1946)

East of Borneo, dir. George Melford (1931)

Eloge de l'amour, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (2001)

The End, dir. Christopher MacLaine (1953)

Engram Sepals (Melodramas), dir. Lewis Klahr (1994-2000)

Episode, dir. Ruth Novaczek (2003)

D'Est, dir. Chantal Akerman (1993).

A Failed Cardigan Maneuver, dir. Lewis Klahr (1999)

Fake Fruit Factory, dir. Chick Strand (1986)

The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty, dir. Esther Shub (1927)

Far from Heaven, dir. Todd Haynes (2002)

La Fiancée du pirate, dir. Nelly Kaplan (1969)

Film socialisme, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (2010)

Foxy Brown, dir. Jack Hill (1974)

Frances, dir. Graeme Clifford (1982)

Fruit of Paradise, dir. Vera Chytilová (1970)

The Future is Behind You, dir. Abigail Child (2004-5)

The Garden, dir. Julia Dogra-Brazell (2007)

Gilda, dir. King Vidor (1946)

Girls, created by Lena Dunham (2012-) [TV]

Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse, dir. Agnès Varda (2000)

Govinda, dir. Lewis Klahr (1999)

Guerillere Talks, dir. Vivienne Dick (1978)

Handsome Harry, dir. Bette Gordon (2006)

Handsworth Songs, dir. Black Audio Collective (1987)

His Girl Friday, dir. Howard Hawks (1940),

Histoire(s) du cinema, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (1998)

Histoires d’Amerique, dir. Chantal Akerman (1989)

L’Homme à la valise, dir. Chantal Akerman (1983)

Hotel Monterey, dir. Chantal Akerman (1972)

Imitation of Life, dir. Douglas Sirk (1959)

In the Mood for Love, dir. Wong Kar Wai (2000)

Is This What You Were Born For?, dir. Abigail Child (1977-)

Jackie Brown, dir. Quentin Tarantino (1997)

J’ai faim j’ai froid, dir. Chantal Akerman (1984)

Je, Tu, Il, Elle, dir. Chantal Akerman (1976)

Johnny Guitar, dir. Nicholas Ray (1954)

Kustom Kar Kommandos, dir. Kenneth Anger (1965)

L.A. Confidential, dir. Curtis Hanson (1997)

La-bas, dir. Chantal Akerman (2006)

Laura, dir. Otto Preminger (1944)

Laurel Canyon, dir. Lisa Cholodenko (2002)

The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou, dir. Wes Anderson (2004)

Listen, dir. Miroslav Sebestik (2003)

Los Angeles Plays Itself, dir. Thom Anderson (2003)

Lost Book Found, dir. Jem Cohen (1996)

Lost Highway, dir. David Lynch (1997)

Luminous Motion, dir. Bette Gordon (1998)

Lust for Life, dir. Cordelia Swann (1983)

Lust in the Dust, dir. Paul Bartel (1985).

Made in U.S.A., dir. Jean-Luc Godard (1966)

Magnolia, dir. Paul Thomas Anderson (1999)

Marnie, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1964)

The Man Who Envied Women, dir. Yvonne Rainer (1985)

Man with a Movie Camera, dir. Dziga Vertov (1929)

Marie Antoinette, dir. Sofia Coppola (2006)

Martina's Playhouse, dir. Peggy Ahwesh (1986)

Masculin/Feminin, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (1966)

Mayhem, dir. Abigail Child (1987)

Me and You and Everyone We Know, dir. Miranda July (2005)

Mean Streets, dir. Martin Scorsese (1973)

Meshes of the Afternoon, dir. Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid (1942)

Mildred Pierce, dir. Michael Curtiz (1945)

Mildred Pierce, dir. Todd Haynes (2011) [TV]

Moi, un noir, dir. Jean Rouch (1959)

Moonrise Kingdom, dir. Wes Anderson (2012)

Monodramas, dir. Stan Douglas (1991) [TV]

Morvern Callar, dir. Lynne Ramsay (2004)

Mouchette, dir. Robert Bresson (1967)

A Movie, dir. Bruce Conner (1958)

Mulholland Dr., dir. David Lynch (2001)

My Name is Oona, dir. Gunvor Nelson (1966)

My So-Called Life, created by Winnie Holzman (1994) [TV]

Necrology (Roll Call of the Dead), dir. Standish Lawder (1969-70)

The New World, dir. Ruth Novaczek (2013)

News From Home, dir. Chantal Akerman (1977)

Nocturne, dir. Peggy Ahwesh (1998)

Notebook, dir. Marie Menken (1962)

Notes on Utopia, dir. Jonas Mekas (2003)

Notre musique, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (2004)

Nowhere Having Found Its Way, dir. Ruth Novaczek (2008)

Nuit et jour, dir. Chantal Akerman (1991)

Oh My Darling Clementine, John Ford (1946)

Otolith III, dir. Otolith Project (2009)

Outtakes From the Life of a Happy Man, dir. Jonas Mekas (2012),

The Owl's Legacy, dir. Chris Marker (1989 [TV])

Paris, Texas, dir. Wim Wenders (1984)

Passion Triptych, dir. Cordelia Swann (1983)

Peggy and Fred in Hell, dir. Leslie Thornton (1985-)

Friends with Money, dir. Nicole Holofcener (2006)

Perestroika, dir. Sarah Turner's (2009/2013)

The Pettifogger, dir. Lewis Klahr (2011)

The Pervert's Guide to Cinema, dir. Sophie Fiennes (2006)

Phoneo, dir. Ruth Novaczek (2008)

Pierrot le fou, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (1965)

Plot, dir. Julia Dogra-Brazell (2001-06)

'Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles,' dir. Chantal Akerman (1994).

Episode of *Tous les garçons et les filles de leur âge* (1993-94). [TV]

Portrait of a Drinker [aka *Ticket of No Return*], dir. Ulrike Ottinger (1979)

Prenom Carmen, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (1983)

Psycho, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1960)

Pull My Daisy, dir. Alfred Leslie (1959)

Pulp Fiction, dir. Quentin Tarantino (1994)

Le quattro volte, dir. Michelangelo Frammartino (2010)

Radio, dir. Ruth Novaczek (2011)

Radio On, dir. Chris Petit (1979)

Rage, dir. Sally Potter (2009)

Rashômon, dir. Akira Kurosawa (1950)

Reckless Eyeballing, dir. Christopher Harris (2004)

Remembrance, dir. Jerry Tartaglia (1990),

Les Rendez-vous d'Anna, dir. Chantal Akerman (1978)

Rootless Cosmopolitans, dir. Ruth Novaczek (1990)

Rose Hobart, dir. Joseph Cornell (1936),

The Royal Tenenbaums, dir. Wes Anderson (2001)

Le Sang d'un poète, dir. Jean Cocteau (1932)

Saute ma ville, dir. Chantal Akerman (1968),

Sans toit ni loi [Vagabond], dir. Agnès Varda (1985)

Scorpio Rising, dir. Kenneth Ander (1963)

Screen Test: Helmut, dir. Andy Warhol (1966)

The Seashell and the Clergyman, dir. Germaine Dulac (1927)

Sense, dir. Ruth Novaczek (2004)

Separation, dirs. Jane Arden and Jack Bond (1968)

Sex and the City, created by Darren Star (1998-2004) [TV]

Shadows, dir. John Cassavetes (1959)

She Don't Fade, dir. Cheryl Dunye (1991)

She Must Be Seeing Things, dir. Sheila McLaughlin (1987)

Shoah, dir. Claude Lanzmann (1985)

Slacker, dir. Richard Linklater (1991)

Sleep, dir. Andy Warhol (1963)

La société du spectacle, dir. Guy Debord (1973)

Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta Desert, dir. Marguerite Duras (1976).

Soothing the Bruise, dir. Betzy Bromberg (1980)

Spellbound, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1945).

Stranger Than Paradise, dir. Jim Jarmusch (1984)

The Suburban Trilogy, dir. Abigail Child (2011)

Surf and Turf, dir. Abigail Child (2008-11)

Syndromes and a Century, dir. Apichatpong Weeresethakul (2006)

Talk Israel, dir. Ruth Novaczek (1994)

The Tango Lesson, dir. Sally Potter (1997),

Television Spots, dir. Stan Douglas (1987-88) [TV]

Three Monkeys, dir. Nuri Bilge Ceylan (2009)

Tiny Furniture, dir. Lena Dunham (2010)

Tomorrow We Move, dir. Chantal Akerman (2004)

Tous les garçons s'appellent Patrick, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (1957)

Toute une nuit, dir. Chantal Akerman (1982)

Twin Peaks, created by Mark Frost and David Lynch (1990-91) [TV]

Umberto D., dir. Vittorio de Sica (1952)

The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau, created by Jacques Cousteau (1966-76) [TV]

Les Vacances de M. Hulot, dir. Jacques Tati (1953)

Variety, dir. Bette Gordon (1984)

The Watermelon Woman, dir. Cheryl Dunye (1996),

We Need To Talk About Kevin, dir. Lynne Ramsay (2011)

What Time is it There, dir. Tsai Ming-Liang (2001)

Within Our Gates, dir. Oscar Micheaux (1920).

The Wizard of Oz, dir. Victor Fleming (1939)

Die Worte Des Vorsitzenden, dir. Harun Farocki (1967)

WTC Haikus, dir. Jonas Mekas (2011)

Exhibitions & Performances

Aviv, Naomi and Noam Segal, curators. *Neo-Barbarism*. Tel Aviv: Rothschild 12, 2010.

Yael Bartana, *And Europe Will Be Stunned* (2007-2011) [video installation]

Calle, Sophie. Retrospective. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2009. Including the installations
Address Book (1983) and *Take Care of Yourself* (2007).

Dogra-Brazell, Julia. *The Impossibility of Storytelling* (1999) [iris prints]

Gordon, Douglas. *24 Hour Psycho* (1993) [video installation]

Kleeblatt, Norman, curator. *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities*. New York:
Jewish Museum, 1995.

Lawler, Louise. *A Movie Will Be Shown Without The Picture* (1979) [film installation]

Lorca di Corcia, Philip. *Polaroids*. London: Spruth Magers, June 2011.

Marclay, Christian. *The Clock* (2010) [video installation]

———, *Crossfire* (2007) [video installation]

———, *Everyday*. London: Queen Elizabeth Hall, 2012.

———, *Replay* (2007) [video installation]

———, *Telephones* (1995) [video installation]

———, *Up and Out* (1988) [video installation]

———, *Video Quartet* (2002) [video installation]

Mekas, Jonas. *Retrospective*. London: Serpentine Gallery, 2012.

Mennicke-Schwarz, Christiane, curator. *Vot ken you mach*. Dresden: Kunsthaus, December 2013.

Nakajima, Rie. "How About Both." In *Things He Would Like*. Turin: blank, April 18th, 2013.
Accessed March 11th, 2014. <http://vimeo.com/64716898>.

Novaczek, Ruth. *The Cabinet of Doctor Kahn*. London: Jackson's Lane Theatre, 1993.

———, *Esther Kahn, Portrait of a Lady*. London: London Filmmakers Co-op, 1993.

———, *Excuse Me I'm a Human Being: A Karaoke for Ghosts*. London: Blacks Club, 1994

———, *Let Them Eat Soup*. Koln: Feminale; Krakow: Mizrahi Synagogue, 1994.

Otolith Group. *The Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Collective 1982-1988*.
Liverpool, FACT, 2007.

———, and Chris Marker. *The Inner Time of Television* (2010) [video installation]

Price, Elizabeth. *The Woolworths Choir of 1979* (2012) [video installation]

Tcherkassky, Peter, curator. *Found Footage: Filme aus gefundenem Material*. Vienna, 1991.

Zucker, Naomi. *Corridor* (2002) [video installation]

———, *Good Morning* (2002) [video installation]

———, *Run* (2003-04) [video installation]

———, *Sleep* (2003-04) [video installation]

