

**Embodiment and the senses in travelogue filmmaking**

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# **Embodiment and The Senses in Travelogue Filmmaking**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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### *9 Meditations*

Format: DVD, Video, PAL, Colour, Dolby Sound

Running time: 53 min.

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## ABSTRACT

This practice-based research presents an analysis of the representation of embodied experience in the travelogue film genre. It reflects upon the embodied and synaesthetic nature of the cinematic experience by tracing a shift in travelogue filmmaking from the ocular realism characteristic of early travelogue films to the emergence and proliferation of subjective approaches. Moreover, it analyses experimental travelogue films and the capacity of non-linear and non-narrative structures to express sensuous, embodied perception.

*9 Meditations* is the practice component of this thesis. It is an experimental travelogue film. Through its production this research explores the translation of embodied experience as a multi-sensory process into filmmaking practice.

In the field of film studies, the travelogue has not been widely discussed outside historical approaches, and it has certainly never been discussed in relation to phenomenology and embodied sensation. This research articulates a new conceptual framework for both the production and theorisation of the travelogue film, as a form that is intrinsically related to performance, subjectivity and embodied perception. Moreover, this research concerns both the production process in filmmaking practice and the cinematic experience as grounded in synaesthetic, embodied perception. This approach brings to the forefront the capacity of audiovisual practice to both encode and produce sensuous knowledge.

## INTRODUCTION

This practice-based research explores the translation of embodied experience into filmmaking practice in the context of travelogue films. The practice component of this thesis is *9 Meditations* (2010), an experimental travelogue film. A main aspect in the production of *9 Meditations* was experimenting with cinematic techniques that could express the complexities of embodied experience as a multi-sensory process. The translation of embodied and sensuous experience into film practice explores the potential of cinema to map internalized spaces, ultimately questioning the extent to which spectators are able to sensorially inhabit audiovisual spaces through a technological medium such as film.

A key idea in this thesis is the conceptualisation of the cinematic experience as one that transcends its audiovisual register and is experienced synaesthetically, through and across all the senses. The travelogue film genre predominantly uses stylistic conventions derived from the travelogue genre in literature, such as episodic narrative, chronological continuity and textual formulation of plot-based structures. From early cinema, the representational styles used in travelogue films were based on a discourse that conceives travel as a primordially visual activity. These styles of representation are primordially realistic and mimetic. They entail an ocular mode of vision that occludes the synaesthetic experience of the travelling body. The ocular realism entailed in these styles of representation is associated to a mimesis of human perception. This was evident in the travelogues of early cinema, which incorporated extra-cinematic technologies that seemed to imitate embodied perception by mechanically reproducing sensorial stimuli. This can also be seen in contemporary travelogue films such as the IMAX 3D, 4D and 5D cinema theatres. Moreover, during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, travelogue films shifted towards the enunciation of subjective experience in the form of film essays and video-diaries with first person narration. These subjective approaches did not entirely depart from a mimetic style of representation. This can be seen in the use of subjective camera viewpoints and camera movements that imitate human bodily gestures.

On the other hand, experimental travelogue films with non-linear and non-narrative

structures have used alternative strategies to express the travel experience. The altering of temporal continuity and the use of de-centralised perspectives seem to radically resemble memory processes and embodied forms of vision. Experimental travelogue films entail a form of spectatorship in which the non-audiovisual senses are evoked through haptic images. Through the production of *9 Meditations*, the practice component of this thesis, these subjective and experimental approaches in filmmaking were critically tested.

The film, titled *9 Meditations* (format: DVD, Video, PAL, Colour, Dolby Sound, Running time: 53 min) is an exploration about sensuous embodiment and its translation to film practice. *9 Meditations* evokes the sensorial engagement of the travelling body by gathering footage from walking journeys in Switzerland, France, Italy, Mexico, England, Wales and Spain from 2007 to 2010. This thesis is the result of a mutual process of interaction and construction between the written component and the practice. Through the production of *9 Meditations* emerged critical questions about the embodied nature of film and its capacity to reflect upon the sensuous experience of travelling. These questions both challenged the theoretical findings and modified its results. In that sense, the research was not merely epistemological in the sense of producing knowledge that could exclusively subscribe to textual analysis but it was also an ontological process in which ideas and concepts had to be fabricated and modelled around the practice. The operational criteria had to be formulated according to the specific needs of each stage in the production.

The main questions of this research are:

- How can sensuous embodiment be translated into film practice?
- How is embodied experience represented in travelogue films?
- To what extent does the enunciation of subjective experience open the possibility of translating embodied sensation? Can subjective approaches in travel filmmaking challenge the ocular realism characteristic of the travelogue film genre? Does self-representation in first person films permeate the sensorial link between the body and our experience of it? Can the narration of the self,

understood as a performative act, allow the translation of affective sensation but also of haptic and tactile ways of sensing through film? What is the relation between subjectivity and embodiment in the first person travelogue film?

- How does experimental travelogue films negotiate the representation of embodied sensation?
- How does haptic modes of vision and non-linear structures affect our experience of film?

Through the production of *9 Meditations*, this research explores different strategies in filmmaking practice that address the representation of embodied experience as a multi-sensory process. However, this research was also nurtured by the analysis of travelogue films as well as film theories on the embodied nature of the cinematic experience and literary accounts on travel writing. It involved a critical review of the history of the travelogue film from early cinema and its transformation throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This analysis included documentaries, film essays and video-diaries with a travelogue structure as well as fiction travelogues, although the fiction form was not included in the final version of this thesis. A reason for this was that the category of the non-fiction has been key to the travelogue genre in film but also in literature and the arts. The travelogue has an intrinsic relation to reality and to the lived experience of travelling, this can be seen in the categorization of most travelogue films as documentary films about travelling. However, there are also fiction films about travel journeys, which often use travel as means to present a variety of locations and backgrounds for the main story. In other words, in fiction films travel often becomes secondary to the narrative. On the other hand, non-fiction travelogues maintain a higher degree of verisimilitude to the actual experience of travelling, and arguably, may more aptly express the embodied experience of travel simply because they represent travel as a lived event. This close link between non-fiction and travelogue films renders fiction travelogues beyond the scope of this research. However, the debate concerning realism as an aesthetic style and its disassociation from factual 'reality' or 'truth' is further discussed in Chapter 3, in relation to IMAX travelogues and tri-dimensionality.

The theoretical framework of this research draws from a variety of fields, such as

phenomenology applied to film studies, film theory on the nature of embodiment and the cinematic experience, phenomenological geography, history of the travelogue genre, travel writing and travel literature, critiques of the hegemony of vision in French literature, psycho-geography, documentary theory and body criticism amongst others. Throughout this thesis I present a historical analysis of the travelogue genre while engaging in a discussion of the modes of vision entailed in its styles of representation.

I argue that the travelogue film genre has been primordially constructed as an ocular and spectacular form closely related to the practice of tourism. I refer to the travelogue's aesthetic style as 'ocular realism', identifying a form of mimesis that recreates the ocular experience of travel on film.

In the first chapter, I review the contextual framework for the analysis of embodied experience in film. I discuss the phenomenological approach to film studies, the concept of the film experience as multi-sensory as well as notions of haptic images, intersubjectivity, mimesis and embodiment. In the second chapter I discuss the history of the travelogue genre, its emergence during the colonial era and its dissemination through tourism. I also discuss the subjective voice as a consistent trait in the travelogue genre. In chapter three I question the extent to which the travelogue's mimetic and ocular styles of representation reflect upon a Bazanian teleology of cinematic realism. This concerns the use of extra-cinematic technologies in travelogue films, which attempt to bring the spectator's body closer into an immersion into filmic space by simulating the physical and sensorial experience of travelling. Such technologies can be described as tridimensional, surrounding, immersive, kinaesthetic and non-audiovisual. Moreover, I discuss the extent to which such technologies can be considered haptic, ocular or embodied, while referring to Laura U. Marks notions of haptic visuality and haptic images. Then I demonstrate how the travelogue's representational styles tend to fall within an ocular rhetoric, articulating the experience of travelling as ocular and spectacular through the use of devices that are hyper-realistic and mimetic. I argue that such representational styles have failed to address the affective and embodied dimension of travelling. In the fourth chapter I discuss a shift in documentary filmmaking towards self-reflexive forms such as the film essay and the video-diary. Through the analysis of films as case studies, I problematise



consistent traits found in the first person travelogue film, such as voice over narration and subjective camera viewpoints. In the fifth chapter of this thesis I discuss experimental strategies in the travelogue film and the ways in which non-linear and non-narrative structures seem to express embodied experience as perceptual and affective by resembling memory processes. In chapter six I write a retrospective on the production of *9 Meditations* and the ways in which the filmmaking process reflect upon embodied perception and engage in synaesthetic forms of vision.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Contextual Review

### Introduction

The travelogue film genre has brought to generations of spectators images of places and cultures from around the world offering the experience of travel through the cinema screen. The travelogue film is discursively related to the practice of tourism, in the sense that both are grounded on a logic that conceives the act of '*seeing*' as a way of '*knowing*' a place (Urry, 2002). The production of travel images and its visual representation of travel have been intrinsically linked to the practice of tourism, through the ocularisation of travelling as a practice constituted by the same production and consumption of images. The discursive relationship between tourism and the production of travel images effaces the multi-sensory, synaesthetic dimension of the travel experience, as an embodied one. The activity of travel conceived as the human action of movement across physical and geographical space implies the re-working and internalization of lived space through the senses. When we travel, we not only 'see' other places, but feel, sense, smell, touch, taste and move through them. Through our body we are able to anchor our perceptual and sensorial existence to a changing surrounding as we engage sensorially in space. As Amir Soltani writes, 'body and mind work together to decipher the sensory affects, and mental maps from environment to give us a sense of place' (2008:19). This perceptual process also occurs during the cinematic experience. Giuliana Bruno describes the cinema spectator as a voyageur, 'a passenger that transverses haptic and emotive terrain' (2002:16). Similarly for Amir Soltani, the visual space in film acts as 'a sort of transport for the viewer to travel through space' (2008:8).

In film studies, recent theories on the embodied nature of the cinema suggest that the spectator's experience of film is not reduced to audiovisual perception but is extended across her sensing body, in a dynamic way between and across all the senses (Sobchack, 1992; Buck-Morss, 1994; Marks, 2000; Bruno, 2002; Massumi, 2002).

Through film, and especially through the travelogue film, we inhabit and experience other places. In the context of the travelogue film, embodied experience is inscribed in both its production and its mode of spectatorship. On one hand, travelogue filmmaking is based on the practice of travelling as the physical performance of movement by the body across geographical space. On the other, perceptual and sensuous experience are the means of transport for the cinema spectator to engage with film. Early travelogue films attempted to represent the sensorial experience of travelling through a mechanisation of sensorial stimuli enabled by extra-cinematic technologies. This is the case of the travel ride films, in which images of travel along with moving seats and aromas dispersed in the theatre complemented the spectator's sensuous engagement with the film. This mimetic impulse to recreate embodied sensation is also evident in 19<sup>th</sup> century stereoscopic travel imagery, which attempted to imitate spatial perception through tri-dimensional images.

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, travelogue films shifted towards subjective and personal approaches in the form of video-diaries and essay films. The proliferation of first person voices in film and media production was reflected by an increasing concern in the visual arts and academic research about the validation and expression of personal experience. Since the 1980s, the increasing academic interest in the body as the site from which meaning is both articulated and produced, have provided a theoretical framework to explore notions of performance, embodiment and the senses in audiovisual forms of spectatorship. This can be seen as part of a larger trend in the Humanities characterised by a return to the body as the site from where processes of identification and signification are both articulated and experienced 'in the flesh'. This field of studies is referred to as 'body criticism' (Wegenstein, 2006).<sup>1</sup> As Jonathan Auerbach suggests, new theory on the embodied nature of the cinematic experience offers a corrective measure to earlier apparatus and psychoanalytic theories which conceived the spectator as a passive subject caught in a process of identification between the self and the images of bodies on-screen (Auerbach, 2007). Moreover, theories of the gaze in film studies have worked through a logic that favours optical

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<sup>1</sup> Bernadette Wegenstein maps the emergence and development of what she terms 'body criticism', its epistemological basis and its current 'embodiments'. She links the development of body criticism to the emergence of a new historicism, based on human experience. She traces an epistemological shift resulting from the emergence of psychoanalysis, phenomenology and cognitive science. She argues that 'body criticism is not only felt in these three fields but extended across the Humanities to performance arts, media theory, architecture and gender studies [2006].

perspective and geometry, effacing a primordial aspect of the film experience, that of 'inhabiting and transversing space' (Bruno, 2002:15). From this climate of bodily concerns emerges the question of how we experience film at the basis of our body and how is embodied experience encoded through audiovisual media, such as film and video. This points at a paradigm at the core of the cinematic experience: film is experienced throughout our senses and across our body, although embodied experience as a whole, multi-sensuous process cannot be in turn directly encoded into audiovisual media. However, the conceptualisation of multi-sensory and embodied modes of spectatorship in the work of Vivian Sobchack and Laura Marks have contributed to a new understanding of cinema that incorporates synaesthetic experience and explores the ways in which the non-audiovisual senses are evoked through film (Sobchack, 1992; Marks, 2000). These approaches have brought the conceptualisation of haptic and embodied modes of vision, emphasizing the importance of sensuous memory in the spectator's experience of film. In this Review, I map existing research in film theory, specifically in relation to film spectatorship, embodiment, phenomenology, haptic images and bodily criticism.

### **The Phenomenological Approach to Film Studies**

Phenomenology is a philosophical movement founded during the 1920s. Its enduring legacy is associated to a protective attitude towards a subjective view of experience, conceived as a fundamental one in any full understanding of the nature of knowledge (Moran, 2000:21). Early phenomenological approaches to the analysis of film can be traced back to the writings of Andre Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer, which were concerned about the phenomenal and perceptual aspects of the film experience. Bazanian phenomenology of film faced severe criticism after 1968, at a time when the dissemination of the structuralist project influenced a large body of work in film criticism. Phenomenological approaches to film analysis were largely criticised from the 1960s onwards, for carrying the burden of liberal humanism with its essentialist and idealist approaches that failed to situate its analysis into historical and social contexts. As a response to the political upheavals of the time, structuralist approaches were more interested in analysing the social aspects of film rather than its aesthetics.

The phenomenological assumption of reality as something perceived through direct experience was especially problematic for the structuralist approach. It appeared suspicious, as phenomenology was associated to the essentialist conception of reality as something to be found through perception, as something already given and readily accessible. In Sobchack words:

[Phenomenology] 'was also seen as extremely naïve, making claims about "direct" experience precisely at a moment when contemporary theory was emphasizing the inaccessibility of direct experience and focused on the constitutive processes and mediating structures of language" (Sobchack, 1992:xiv).

For Sobchack, the very concept of experience is seen as a 'soft, mushy term' grounded in subjective existence and hard to pin down in academic research (Sobchack, 2004:XIV). Its subjective aspects seem to resist the structures of sociology, behaviourism and psychology. Moreover, the concept of experience seems to refer to a pre-conceptual, pre-language, pre-knowledge moment of contact between a situated and embodied subject and the world. According to the phenomenological geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, the concept of experience has:

'A connotation of passivity; the word suggests what a person has undergone or suffered...Experience thus implies the ability to learn from what one has undergone. To experience is to learn; it means acting on the given and creating out of the given. The given cannot be known in itself. What can be known is a reality that is a construct of experience, a creation of feeling and thought' (Tuan, 1977: 9).

The notion of experience seems to challenge external analysis because it entails a subjective, internal world that cannot be known directly from outside the perceptual field of subject. However, the retake on phenomenology in film theory is concerned with the embodied nature of cinema spectatorship and the ways in which the film is able to encode and produce sensuous knowledge as culturally conditioned perception. This recent move towards the aesthetics of embodiment in cinema has witnessed the re-integration of phenomenological concepts into the analysis of film theory (Rutherford, 1998). By theorizing the body as site of both perception and signification, these approaches translate into a re-articulation of the filmmaking process in as much as they re-constitute the cinematic experience as an embodied one. On one hand, this

brings to the forefront the experiential dimension of the spectator and the inter-subjective relation to film in terms of sensuous, embodied perception. On the other, these approaches provide an increased awareness of the filmmaking process as a way to express sensuous experience. For instance, by evoking culturally specific sensuous geographies or by evoking the non-audiovisual senses through haptic modes of vision. Moreover, the re-emergence of phenomenology in film theory seems to react against traditional analyses of film based on structuralism and psychoanalysis, as in the work of Christian Metz or Jean Louis Baudry (Sobchack, 1992). It attempts to analyse signification in the cinema as a lived-phenomena, embodied in a subject of vision anchored in the world (Sobchack, 1992). Traditional analyses of film, such as the structuralist and the psychoanalytical approach tend to describe the film experience as 'monologic', often treating the spectator as a material receptacle (Sobchack, 1992:271). On the other hand, the phenomenological approach on the cinematic experience involves the conception of a dynamic form of spectatorship. It conceives the cinema spectator not as a passive recipient of images, but as a sensing being dynamically engaged with the experience of film.

### **Towards A Phenomenology Of Film**

The application of phenomenology to film theory has involved the appropriation of phenomenological concepts proposed in the work of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Husserl is known as the originator of the phenomenological method, one of the main achievements of Husserl's work was the development of the concept known as intentionality (Sobchack, 1992).<sup>2</sup> The concept of intentionality refers to the nature of consciousness as a correlational structure (Husserl, 1973 [1913]; Sartre, 1943; Heidegger, 1927, Sobchack, 1992). In his exploration about the nature of consciousness, Husserl distinguished between *noema* and *noesis*, the first referring to an intentional object of consciousness and the second referring to the intentional acts of consciousness (Sobchack, 1992). By separating the acts from the objects of consciousness, Husserl developed a model for the analysis of

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<sup>2</sup> Although the notion of intentionality has its origins in scholastic philosophy during the Middle Ages, and was brought back by Franz Brentano<sup>2</sup> in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was through the work of Husserl that the concept of intentionality became a key idea in phenomenology.

perceptual processes. This method involved the bracketing (also known as phenomenological reduction) of presuppositions and natural attitudes towards an object in order to reveal its 'essence' (Husserl, 1960: 12-13).<sup>3</sup> Husserl's phenomenology located consciousness in a transcendental ego. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty located the processes of consciousness in a lived, situated, embodied subject (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Sobchack, 1992:39). A key idea in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is the attempt to move beyond subject-object binaries to focus on the embodied experience of consciousness as a situated and symbolic practice in itself. For Merleau-Ponty, the correlational structure of perception is not a static process between *noesis* and *noema*, but a dynamic structure meaningful to embodied subjects (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). He conceived human movement as one of the most basic forms of intentionality, because it involves the active engagement of the body, as it inhabits space (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:117). He argues that consciousness means being through a mediating body that directionally extends its attention towards an object. This idea can be seen in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, which largely focuses on the performative dimension of the body through perceptual processes.

A basic epistemological problem with the application of phenomenological concepts into film analysis is the equation of a conceptual framework based on human perception with a phenomenology of film. This can be seen in the work of Vivian Sobchack in her book *The Address of the Eye* (1992), which focuses on the embodied nature of perception in the cinema. Sobchack writes:

'The attitude of our consciousness towards the cinematic object simultaneously positions us as existential subjects in relation to the screen and posits the existential status of what we see there in relation to what we have experienced and know of the life-world we inhabit' (Sobchack, 1999: 243)

Sobchack develops Merleau-Ponty's ideas into a phenomenology of the film experience. She conceptualises cinema spectatorship as a dynamic, dialogical and intersubjective

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<sup>3</sup> Husserl's reduction involves three phases: the first is the phenomenological *epoche*, which refers to a process of critically distancing oneself from judgements, beliefs and presuppositions about the object. The second phase is the eidetic reduction, which involves the investigator to focus in the abstract and general properties of the object, while remaining distant from the particularities of personal experience and remaining open to the possibilities of experience in relation to the object. This phase is where 'those essential or invariant features of the phenomena "left" to consciousness are intuited, made explicit and thematized' (Sobchack, 1992:37). The third and last phase of the phenomenological reduction is the total bracketing, in which the lived-world (*lebenswelt*) is isolated and the only thing that remains is consciousness itself.

process performed between situated and embodied subjects: the spectator and the film (Sobchack, 1992). For Sobchack, the film is not only an object to be perceived but also a subject that perceives (1992:167). She compares the spectator's body as the 'instrumental subject of intentional consciousness' to the film's body, as a 'technologically mediated consciousness of experience' (1992:168). Sobchack's conception of the film's body as a sensing organ of perception in itself is developed in Daniel Frampton's conception of film as a thinking being. Both Sobchack and Frampton's work are haunted by similar philosophical underpinnings as they deal with the confrontation of two modes of perception, namely human and filmic. The conception of film as an *entity*, a sensing or thinking being in itself, turns film into a sort of technological consciousness that sees the characters and settings within the film. In that sense, the film's body is able to see and to be seen, it is a "viewing-view/viewed view" (Sobchack, 1992:167). For Sobchack, the film's body is also an instrument that mediates between the filmmaker's and the spectator's communication and perception (1992:168). This conceptualization of film-as-being implies the insertion of *intentionality* into the film's body. This intentionality may, for theorists like Frampton, appear to be completely independent from the authorial voice of the film. In other words, what we see and hear in a film is not necessarily attributed to the intentionality of a filmmaker, a narrator, or any authorial voice inside or outside the film. By conceptually attributing film with intentionality, the frame becomes an opening to the window of perception of a technological being. Conceptually, it becomes detached from its author and acquires a life of its own. In Frampton words:

'Film seems to be a double phenomenology, a double intention: our perception of the film, and the film's perception of its world' (2006:15).

The attribution of an intentional consciousness to film has to do with the resemblance between human perception and film perception. In '*Filmosophy*' (2006), Frampton talks about the resemblance between film and mind and the ways in which film can work as a metaphor for human consciousness. Frampton argues that film also works as a different form of trans-subjectivity that cannot be limited to our understanding of perception and consciousness as human (2006:46). According to Frampton, film has a unique capacity to recreate mental states, not only by juxtaposing images of objects that come to signify a resemblance of mental states by association, but by holding the



potential to present the formation of images, as perceived by human consciousness, and the cutting of these images through time, resembling memory processes (2006:19).

### **The Film Experience As Multi-Sensory**

Although cinema is composed of images and sound, the cinematic experience cannot be described as merely audiovisual. Film theorists interested in sense perception and embodiment regard the experience of watching a film as multi-sensory (Sobchack, 1992; Marks, 2000; Massumi, 2002; Barker, 2009). The multi-sensory qualities of the cinematic experience are not due to the extra-cinematic stimuli we get from the cinema theatre nor from the space of the film projection but from the fact that our senses work 'in concert' (Marks, 2000:212). According to Jennifer Barker the senses are interconnected, constantly communicating with each other and feeding through and across the other senses (2008:2). These inter-sensory dynamics are referred to as *synaesthesia*, a phenomenon in which the stimulation of one sense modality raises a perceptual response in another sense modality, such as the perceiving colours when listening to sounds or 'tasting' visual shapes (van Campen, 1999:9; Marks, 2000:213).<sup>4</sup> Synaesthetic experience involves the mutual engagement between the senses, that is, their inter-connectedness. Greta Berman writes that synaesthesia 'has been identified by psychologists as a specific condition that occurs when an individual who receives a stimulus in one sense modality simultaneously experiences a sensation in another' (1999:15). Although clinically diagnosed synesthetes are extremely rare, synaesthetic experience is not. Gail Martino and Lawrence E. Marks suggest that strong types of synaesthesia are characterized by a systematic and vivid perception in one sense modality as a response to stimuli in another sense modality (2001:62). On the other hand, weaker forms of synaesthesia include cross-sensory correspondences that might be expressed through language or through the recognition of similarity between different sense perceptions (Martino and Marks, 2001:63). Although most people do not experience strong forms of synaesthesia, the perception of analogous, cross-modal associations between senses is very common. Martino and Marks suggest that most people do experience weaker forms of synaesthesia (2001:64). For instance, through

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<sup>4</sup> Synesthesia, from the greek *syn* (together) and *aisthesis* (perceive). See Van Campen, 1999.

cross-modal metaphors that express sensuous associations in language such as *warm* colours or *sweet* smells (Martino and Marks, 2001:63). However, cross-modal associations between senses are not metaphorical but intuitive, which means they are not dependent on mere language associations but rather on palpable, sensuous experience (Mandelbrojt, 1999: 2).

A point of debate in relation to synaesthetic experience has to do with the unity of the senses as a whole, and conversely, on the conception of the senses as separate entities. According to Crétien van Campen, in neuropsychological debate there are two main strands of theory that explain the phenomenon of synaesthesia (1999:9). The oldest and most widely accepted is known as the modularity thesis, which conceives each sense perception as individual and separate from the others (van Campen, 1999).<sup>5</sup> The other thesis, known as the unitary thesis conceives sense perception as one single integrated sensory organ with five sub-organs (van Campen, 1999:9).<sup>6</sup> The modularity thesis consider synaesthesia as 'the product of a neural miss-wiring between, for instance, auditory and visual areas' located in the brain while the unitary thesis consider it to be a 'natural emotional process of integral sense perception, and locate the phenomenon in the limbic system, coined the "emotional brain"' (van Campen, 1999:13). The debate on synaesthesia has been carried mainly in the fields of neuropsychology, with a pronounced concern about the organic localization of sense perception; as well as in the arts, with a concern about the translation of one sense experience into another, such as music into visual media (van Campen, 1999:9). In film studies the notion of synaesthesia is linked to Merleau-Ponty's writings on '*The Phenomenology of Perception*', in which he suggests that the notion of the senses as separate entities is commonly used in the analysis of sense experience rather than in its actual praxis (1945:266). Merleau-Ponty suggests that through the act of intellectually reflecting about sense experience, we conceive the senses as separated from each other, although in direct experience our sense perception works inter-

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<sup>5</sup> The modularity thesis claims that synesthetic perception is the product of mental associations between sense perceptions. See Van Campen, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> The unitary thesis was developed in the 1920s by Gestalt-oriented researchers Erich von Hornbostel and Heinz Werner. Hornbostel and Werner believed that the sensations of brightness, warmth and roughness originated in more than one sense modality. Werner experiments on synaesthesia were based on the assumption that although adults differentiate between each sense experience, babies perceive their environment undifferentiated. See Van Campen, 1999.

sensorially [Merleau-Ponty, 1945:266; Barker, 2009:88]. Jennifer Barker argues that the senses never fully work on a one-to-one basis but rather form quite specific and complex relations between them. She writes:

‘Senses are permeable envelopes, folding onto one and into one another and marking the negligible space between the inside and outside of bodies and objects’  
[Barker, 2008:238].

This fluid interaction between sense modalities is also applied to the experience of watching a film. It can be argued that the cinematic experience is based on a two-sense modality, that of sound and sight. However, precisely because our senses work across and between one another, our experience of film is never fully contained by the sensuous stimuli of the filmic audiovisual register. Even if cinema is composed by image and sound, our visual and aural senses are constantly informed and given meaning by our other sensory modes, our capacity to feel, touch, taste, smell but also by our proprioceptive and kinesthetic senses, that is our capacity to feel the dimensions and weight of our own body and its movement in space (Sobchack, 2004: 60). Cinema spectatorship is always an embodied act because cinema engages all of our senses, olfactory, tactile, visual and aural but also our kinaesthetic and proprioceptive, which are in turn constantly informed by our memory processes.<sup>7</sup> For Marks, it is not only our senses which inform the way we experience film but also the memory of our senses which give meaning to the cinematic experience (2000:222-223). As we watch a film, our memory is constantly bringing back to our conscious attention the memories of other sensuous experience we associate with the images on screen and the sounds we hear. Therefore, film necessarily involves embodied forms of spectatorship because images and sounds appeal to sensuous memories, whether olfactory, tactile, gustatory or kinaesthetic. Moreover, spectatorship is synaesthetic and multi-sensory because cinema evokes smell, taste, texture as well as bodily movement.

Even if cinema spectatorship is always an embodied act, the translation of embodied experience onto the medium of film is not a direct process of inscription, to say the least. An underlying problem is that of the un-representability of sensation as it is fully experienced on the flesh. Obvious as it may seem, sensuous experience can not be

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<sup>7</sup> The proprioceptive senses detect pain, the movement of internal organs, the sensations derived from bodily movement and the orientation between different parts of the body in relation to each other.

made available to the cinema spectator in the same way it is experienced by the body, simply because it cannot be directly encoded into film. The translation of sensuous experience into film presupposes the intention to record sensation by using a mechanical device (the camera) that operates from the outside of the site from which sensation is being experienced (the body). As I have suggested, it is quite impossible to literally reproduce human sensation through film because the camera cannot be positioned from within ourselves and can only record the exterior traces of sensuous activity. Laura Marks writes:

‘How can the audiovisual medium of film and video represent non-audiovisual experience? There are no technologies that reproduce the experiences of touch, smell, taste and movement. There are technologies that attempt to simulate the effects of these experiences, such as virtual reality’s audiovisual synthesis of movement or IMAX movies, whose disorienting audiovisual cues induce vertigo in viewers. But there is no way to mechanically *reproduce* the smell of a peach, the texture of concrete, or the feeling of falling off a cliff’ (Marks, 2000:211).

Images and sounds suggest, evoke, provoke and inspire sensations that are intended to be communicated through the film production, but can never be fully anticipated. In other words, the expression of sensuous experience through film is never fully in control of the filmmaker because ‘sometimes the disjunction between the visible and the verbal may point to meanings that lie between them’ and sometimes, embodied sensation escapes the audiovisual register altogether (Marks, 2000:129). However, sensuous experience as an individual and embodied process can be signalled more evidently through certain techniques in filmmaking practice. Throughout this thesis, I discuss the ways in which subjective and self-reflexive approaches facilitate the representation of sensuous experience because they signal the individual experience of an embodied subject. However, self enunciation in first person narration doesn’t automatically grant the viewer an access into the character’s ways of sensing, neither it fully translates the complexities of sensuous experience as it is lived in the flesh, but it can signal the presence of human subjectivity and provoke a form of bodily identification between the viewer and the film. On the other hand, haptic images in the cinema entail a mode of vision that engages the non-audiovisual senses.

## The Haptic Senses In Film Theory

Haptic perception is defined in psychology as the combination of tactile, kinesthetic and proprioceptive senses (Marks, 2000:162). The notion of the haptic in film theory emerges from Gilles Deleuze's theories on the cinema. Deleuze's notion of haptic space 'implies a type of seeing different from the optical, a close-up viewing in which the sense of sight behaves just like the sense of touch (Dudrah, 2010: 4). In *The Logic of Sense* (1969 [1990]), Deleuze proposes a 'dynamic genesis' of representation, which begins in the materiality of objects and extends into an immaterial, transcendental field' (Hughes, 2008:19). This material field has a corporeal depth, in which 'everything is body and corporeal' (Deleuze, 1990:87). Deleuze suggests that only bodies exist in the present, he writes: 'cosmic present embraces the entire universe: only bodies exist in space and only the present exists in time (1990:4). From this corporeal, material field emerges the body without organs. The body without organs:

'...encapsulates an attempt to go beyond seeing the body as a molar entity or organism (made up of blood, organs, limbs, hormones, etc.) and rather to see the body as always extending beyond itself conjoined with or articulated by practices, technologies, institutions, objects and so on' (Blackman, 2008:110).

The concept of the body without organs emphasizes the body through its political transformations, changes and 'becomings' as socially and discursively constructed (Blackman, 2008). Moreover, the Deleuzian notion of the image-affect refers to the 'retention and the reproduction of 'external movements', or the movement-images of the plane of immanence' (Hughes, 2008:24). The action image entails a crisis, a failure in the synthesis of its action in which 'the sensor-motor link between perception and affection fails' (Hughes, 2008:24). In Deleuze's work, the term 'affection' does not refer to personal feeling but rather to a capacity to affect and to be affected. Brian Massumi, in his translation of *A Thousand Plateaus* defines affect as 'a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:xvii). Moreover, affection is 'a motor tendency on a sensitive nerve' (Deleuze, 2001:87). The affection image is associated to an expressive quality of feeling as potential of intensity. Deleuze's analysis is anchored in Henri Bergson's theories on the embodied nature of memory. This can be seen in Deleuze's theories about the time-

image and the movement-image in the cinema. The movement-image refers to the potential of movement inscribed in the duration of a film shot (Deleuze, 1983; Kowsar, 1987). In other words, the movement-image refers to 'images that express duration' (Kowsar, 1987:399). The time-image, on the other hand, expresses Bergson's conception of time as simultaneous, lived, flowing, enduring, not as a continuum but as the existential merging of past and future through memory and desire. Deleuze writes:

'The past does not follow the present that is no longer, it coexists with the present it was. The present is the actual image, and its contemporaneous past is the virtual image, the image in a mirror. Every moment of our life presents the two aspects, it is actual and virtual, perception on one side and recollection on the other' (Deleuze, 1989:79).

Deleuze's notions of actual image and virtual image reflect on the prevalence of memory during the present as it is lived and expresses both temporal moments into the same present of the image. For Marks, it refers to the two aspects of time as it splits, the actual image corresponding to the present that passes, the virtual images to the past that is preserved' (Marks, 2000:40). Laura Marks borrows Deleuze's theory of time-image cinema in order to discuss the multi-sensory qualities of film. This can be seen in Mark's conceptualisation of haptic visuality in which 'memory is encoded in objects through contact' (Marks, 2000:129). A key idea in Marks conceptualisation of haptic visuality and haptic modes of vision is proximity. For Marks, haptic visuality distinguishes from optical visuality in that the first requires proximity to sense (2000:162). Optical visuality is entailed in a mode of vision that requires enough distance to appreciate the object seen. On the other hand, haptic vision entails the discerning of textures and surfaces. Marks writes:

'While optical perception privilege the representational power of the image, haptic perception privilege the material presence of the image (Marks, 2000:163).

Marks conceptualisation of haptic images echoes Deleuze and Guattari's description of the aesthetics of nomad art as one that uses a 'close range' of vision, referring to visual proximity as opposed to a long distance vision, and haptic perception as opposed to optical perception (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:543). Moreover, Deleuze's analysis of cinema can be associated to phenomenological methods although he emphasizes the temporal qualities of the cinematic image as opposed to its spatial embodiment. This is

something that Vivian Sobchack argues in *'The Address of the Eye'* (1992). For Joe Hughes, Deleuze's analysis of cinema is primordially a study about subjectivity, and it is based on the explorations of a transcendental unconscious (1008:26). On the other hand, Sobchack's analysis of the cinematic experience insists on a situated, en-worlded subject of vision as an embodied one (Sobchack, 1992:31). Unlike Sobchack, Marks emphasizes the act of sensuous contact between the film and the spectator, not only through sight but also through a haptic form of vision (2000). For Marks, spectatorship is 'an act of sensory translation of cultural knowledge' (2000:153). Haptic images in the cinema entail a degree of indeterminacy in their symbolic order, and provoke a mode of vision in which the spectator has to complete the meaning of the film through her own (culturally coded) sensuous memories (Marks, 2000). Marks conceptualisation of haptic visuality involves a dialogical mode of vision that entails an emphatic perception of film. This mode of vision grasps film as a sensuous subject and is diametrically opposed to objective modes of vision in which film is perceived as a visible object.

### **Intersubjectivity**

The concept of intersubjectivity in phenomenology refers to an empathic relationship between the self and others, in which others are perceived as subjects instead of as visible objects. Gary Brent Madison writes:

'I do not perceive the other as I perceive things in the world; his body does not exist for me as a simple physical reality. Behind the body that I perceive I divine the presence of another psychical life, or, rather, I do perceive this life, but in a mediate fashion' (Madison, 1981:38).

The perception of the other as both a visible body and as a seeing subject reflects the intersubjective relation at work between embodied subjects (Sobchack, 1992:23). This empathic relationship encompasses the sharing of emotions, actions and sensations between self and others (Gallese, 2003:171). For Sobchack, the relationship between the spectator and film in the cinematic experience cannot be considered monological in the sense that a viewing subject perceives a viewed, passive object (1992:23). Instead, Sobchack argues for an intersubjective and dialogical relationship between film and

spectator, in which both are able to perceive and to be perceived (1992:23). That is, the spectator is capable of seeing the film, while the film is able to see the world it represents. The notion that film can see the world does not refer to a reciprocal view in the sense of film looking back at the spectator but rather to film's capacity to perceive the world it represents. Sobchack describes a double embodiment and a double act of vision in which both film and spectator are capable of seeing and to be seen (1992:23). For Sobchack, both film and spectator share their status as embodied and en-worlded beings that share 'a similar manner and manner of existence' between them (1992:23). This approach conceptualises cinema spectatorship as a dynamic and embodied performance in which the spectator is not simply looking at film but rather, is performing an intersubjective, dynamic act of perception.

## Embodiment

A main concept in phenomenology is the notion of embodiment, developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). The notion of embodiment refers to the body as the basis for subjective experience, the primordial ground for perceptual processes and the centre of consciousness. The body Merleau-Ponty refers to is not perceived as objective or as a physiological entity. Instead, he calls it the *phenomenal* body, a body grounded in subjective experience. The phenomenal body is the body I experience as *mine*. Therefore, it is experienced as performance and as potential to perform. Merleau-Ponty writes: 'It is never our objective body that we move, but our phenomenal body' (1962 [1945]: 121). For we cannot be conscious of a body that is not ours, and therefore all bodies apart from ours appear in consciousness as objective bodies. Our own body is always a *sensing body*; it is the physical extension of our conscious self. It can be seen how the concept of embodiment is an exploration of the phenomenal body from an experiential basis. The application of the notion of embodiment into the film experience not only allows us to reconsider spectatorship as a multi-sensory process but also entails the need to articulate new ways of understanding how sensuous knowledge is evoked through film.



## Mimesis

In this thesis the concept of mimesis is used to describe mimetic representation as the imitation of perceptual experience into film practice. In other words the faculty to recreate and evoke perceptual references through film. In that sense, mimesis refers to the recreation of sensuous experience through audiovisual techniques. On the other hand, the concept of mimesis as proposed by Laura Marks refers to the material contact between film and light, to the indexical qualities of film and the digital capturing of light in video making. For Marks, the indexical qualities of film allow sensuous knowledge to be physically and directly encoded onto the surface of the film (Marks, 2000). Through a mimetic, sensuous contact, haptic objects are fossilized and encoded into film (Marks, 2000:84). In that sense, mimesis is indexical rather than iconic (Marks, 2000:138). Michael Taussig writes about the double nature of the concept of mimesis:

‘Here is what is crucial in the resurgence of the mimetic faculty, namely the two-layered notion of mimesis that is involved – a copying or imitation, and a palpable, sensuous, connection between the very body of the perceiver and the perceived’ (Taussig, 1993:21).

Taussig suggests that mimesis as *contact* and mimesis as *imitation* are two different moments of the same process: that of sensing (1993). For Taussig, sensing involves being in contact with the object of perception. Moreover, the debate around the indexical qualities of film (and photography) has to do with their capacity to record physical reality. Film and photography as analogue technologies involve the physical imprint of light as it is reflected from the objects into the film. That is, light is reflected on ‘real’ objects and inscribed upon the surface of the film. For Marks, this physical property is associated with a kind of mimetic drive in the technology of cinema (2000). The notion of mimesis in Marks’ sense refers to the specific characteristic of film to ‘fossilize’ objects through light. Marks conceive fossils as ‘the indexical trace of an object that once existed’ (2000:84). For Marks, the fossil-like qualities of film give it representational power (2000). In other words, it is its relation to the real –the fossil as trace of reality- that lends film its facticity. Marks writes: ‘mimesis presumes a continuum between the actuality of the world and the production of signs about that world’ (2000:138). In that sense, the notion of mimesis is used to describe the qualities of the haptic image in the cinema, as images that entail direct physical contact and

demand an intimate relation from its viewer. However, this thesis uses the concept of mimesis to describe representational aspects in travelogue filmmaking. Specifically to discuss anthropomorphic styles of representing the experience of travelling on film, in which technology seems to mimic embodied experience.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Travelogue Genre

#### The Concept of Travel in The Humanities

Since the 1980s, the concept of travel has been increasingly used across the Humanities to describe the growing cultural mobility in current global phenomena (Urry and Rojek, 1997; Clifford, 1997). The intensification of global exchanges in cultural goods, the increasing interconnectivity between nations across the globe and the massive migration of people across borders are characteristic of our contemporary global era. Globalization reflects an unprecedented mobility in terms of technology, culture and economics, but also in terms of conceptual transformations. This conceptual 'mobilisation' involves the creation of spaces for the negotiation of concepts such as identity, belonging and cultural difference in a transnational platform. From this context, it is not unusual to find metaphors of travel in the fields of cultural studies (more prominently in postcolonial criticism and gender studies), sociology, tourism and anthropology but also in the visual arts.<sup>8</sup> The broad scope of the concept of travel has allowed theorists to relate it to cultural displacement, migration, exile and Diasporas as well as nomadic and tourist practices. According to Janet Wolff, metaphors of travel in cultural criticism are intrinsically gendered in the same sense in which travel has been historically constructed as a masculine activity. Wolff states that the use of travel vocabularies in nomadic criticism and travel theory, do not depart theoretically from the notion of travel as a male gendered practice (2002:85). She notices three main theoretical areas in which metaphors of travel have been used: postcolonial criticism, postmodernism and post-structuralism (Wolff, 1993). Another theorist who supports this claim is Giuliana Bruno, who writes:

'Despite the use of travel metaphors in theoretical discourse and a growing interest in travel culture and theory, an effacement of difference (gender as well as ethnic) still appears to be taking place' (Bruno, 2002:85).

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<sup>8</sup> See *On the Road Again, Metaphors of Travel in Cultural Criticism* by Janet Wolff, in *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 7 No. 2 May 1993, page 224-39.

It can be seen how the notion of travel has been a focal point of debate across the Humanities. The conception of travelling as a creative and expressive performance turns it into a fertile and productive ground for the negotiation of cultural, racial and sexual issues in which the performance of the travelling body is paramount to its discursive construction. Travel is always performed across the grids of political, racial, sexual and cultural configuration of identities. This turns travel into a meaningful metaphor in cultural criticism, although the positioning of travel metaphors within racial and cultural debates risks the perpetuation of oppositional binaries. In that sense, the notion of travel is always already captured between the discursive limits of transformative oppositions, namely racial, sexual and cultural. Teshome H. Gabriel expresses the need to break from oppositional paradigms, he writes:

‘Theorists of otherness fail to take into account that otherness speaks the same language of oppositional cinema. To succumb to the notion of otherness is to be part of the same, to be trapped within the confined and prescribed boundaries that limit it’ (Gabriel, 1990: 404).

Gabriel describes nomadic aesthetics as the expression of a boundless, free lifestyle that rejects the nation state’s frontiers and territory while expresses its significance through artistic practices in which performance, spirituality, music and symbolism prevail (1990). For Gabriel, this approach is ubiquitous to black, third world or post-colonial artistic practices. Moreover, the relevance of travel metaphors in cultural criticism has to do with its practice as one that reflects issues about current affairs in cultural mobility.

### **The Origins Of The Travelogue Genre**

The origins of the travelogue can be found in travel literature. According to Hulme and Young the traveller’s tale is as old as fiction itself (2002). One of the earliest records of a travel story is found in Egypt, written a thousand years before Homer’s *Odyssey*.<sup>9</sup> Most academic research concerning the origins of the travelogue uses the notion of *travel literature* and *travel writing* as interchangeable concepts. The term travel writing refers to non-fictional journals in which an actual journey is documented. On the other hand,

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<sup>9</sup> *The Odyssey* is dated around mid to late 8<sup>th</sup> century BC.

travel literature is considered a more broad term that includes fictional travel stories. Two remarkable examples of travel literature are Marco Polo's *Le Livre des Merveilles* from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and John Mandeville's *Travels*, published between 1357 and 1371. Although due to the questionable veracity of both writings, we often find the journals of Columbus discovering the Americas in 1492 as considered to be the first example in the history of travel writing. Other early examples are Vasco da Gama's trips to Africa and India in 1497 and John Cabot voyage to North America in 1497 (Hulme & Youngs, 2002).

The travelogue genre produced a vast amount of literature in the journals of explorers, missionaries, conquistadores, traders and scientists throughout the colonial period. Colonial travel writing brought to Europe the records of newfound species, the mapping of unexplored territories and the description of cultures unknown to the European public.<sup>10</sup> This body of work is conceived as a record of the European voyages of discovery, which gave the travelogue genre a reputation amongst contemporary cultural theorists as a vehicle of empire (Kaur and Hutnyk, 1999; Pratt, 1992). Throughout the colonial era, the European public imagined the world through the writings and illustrations of colonial travellers. The journals of Humboldt and Darwin travelling in South America were the means by which European scientific communities became acquainted with native species of flora and fauna, as well as with indigenous cultures. Colonial travel writing was enabled by the systematic description of cultural others and was replete with narrations about their physical appearance, behaviour, bodily practices, descriptions of gesticulations, indigenous dances and rituals. Through these writings, the non-western body was pervasively imagined as primitive, exotic and un-civilized (Farnell, 1999:349). The European curiosity over the body of the other was fuelled by a contrast between European and non-European cultural practices. It traced a discursive line between the western travelling body and the indigenous one as radically different in their clothing, hairstyle, eating habits, sexual behaviour and social manners (Farnell, 1999:349). It can be seen how the narratives of colonial travel writing delineated and fashioned the European body as much as they traced the contours of the colonised. It is not surprising that in contemporary cultural theory, European travel

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<sup>10</sup> In the last two decades there has been an increase in the amount of research dedicated to the study of travel writing. One of the most recent compilations is the *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, (edited by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs) which maps the history of the travelogue genre in literature and explores the relationship between travel writing, ethnography, gender and theory (2006).

writing is still associated to the perpetuation of colonial ideologies, and to Europe's appropriation and measuring of the world (Clark, 1999; Kaur and Hutnyk, 1999; Pratt, 1992; Root, 1996). The practice and dissemination of colonial travel writing set the grounds for the travelogue as a genre in literature and later on, in the travel lectures of the Victorian era. The ways in which colonial travellers described their journeys created a narrative style that would define the travelogue far after the colonial era.

Moreover, travel imagery also contributed to the construction of national identities and the production of space and territory in the European imagination. The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed an extensive production of travel imagery in the form of travel lectures and postcards (Gunning, 2006). This was related to the development of new technologies for transport as well as to the growth of commercial routes across the European colonies. Jeffrey Ruoff writes:

'Industrialized forms of representation (photography, the illustrated daily newspaper, movies) arose together with industrialized modes of transportation (the steamship, the train, the automobile) and these diverse components of our modern world intersect precisely in travel, tourism and colonialism; in the vortex of these forces lies the travelogue' (Ruoff, 2006:2).

Armchair-travellers of the Victorian era were able to see images from around the world through both the magic lantern slides and the stereoscope. The stereoscope, as well as the tintype and the *carte de visite* (photographic visiting card), were mediums that actively contributed to the construction of Victorian identities and the dissemination of Victorian values through the depiction of places and geographical subjects (Hoelscher, 1998). It can be seen how the dissemination of travel images during the 19<sup>th</sup> century changed the ways places and national identities were imagined and produced. The emergence of the concept of national territory during this era also changed the ways in which societies thought about the landscape. Ann Gallagher writes:

'As the structures of the tourism and heritage industries began to develop and the picture postcard emerged as the souvenir landscape, land has at times been represented as a packaged, marketable commodity' (Gallagher, 2000:5).

Travel imagery and especially stereoscopic images were an important factor in the construction of tourist space in America during Victorian times (Hoelscher, 1998). They also contributed to the negotiation of public and private space, as different travel

images were accessible in different social settings. For instance, the stereoscope (first used in the 1840s) offered a three-dimensional view of an image by putting together two photographs of the same object, usually a place, from a slightly different angle (Gunning, 2006). It was often found at home as a piece of furniture or as a portable piece of equipment, but could only be used by one single person at a time. Compared to the lanternslide shows, the stereoscope offered a far more private experience. On the other hand, travel lectures and lanternslide shows involved a social gathering in which audiences sat in front of a presenter, turning travel images into a form of visual spectacle. The Victorian travel lecturer guided the audience through a visual journey of illustrations and hand coloured slides while narrated his adventures abroad.

Since the 1830s in America, the Chautauqua<sup>11</sup> and Lyceum<sup>12</sup> circuits allowed the public to see the performances of travel lecturers and by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, most lecturers were illustrating their shows with lanternslides. Some examples of recognised lecturers at the time are Edward L. Wilson, John L. Stoddard and Burton Holmes (Altman, 2006). Burton Holmes was originally from Chicago, where he met John L. Stoddard, who introduced him to the world of the travel lecture. Holmes became a recognized lecturer and travelled across America showing his lanternslides. Some of the regular stops in Holmes's road show included Carnegie Hall in New York, Symphony Hall in Boston, and Orchestra Hall in Chicago. Altman writes:

'Like all other late-nineteenth-century travel lectures, Holmes practiced the art of what is rightly called the 'illustrated lecture'. At the heart lies the noun- the lecture itself, the verbal discourse simultaneously assuring temporal and geographical continuity, accompanied by continued communication with the audience' (2006:63).

Holmes' travelogues during the period from 1892 to 1897 were mainly based around hand coloured slides. It was not until 1898 that he introduced 60 mm. short interludes of moving images (Ruoff, 2006). But the transition from lanternslides to moving images in Holmes travelogues did not produce any major changes in his lectures. Holmes

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<sup>11</sup> Chautauqua is an adult education movement in the United States, popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Chautauqua circuit were a touring program presented in tents, in which the presenter would offer lectures to the public.

<sup>12</sup> The Lyceum movement emerged in America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Lyceum circuit involved the presentation of lecturers, entertainers and readers who would travel from town to town to entertain, speak, or debate in a variety of locations.

slowly incorporated moving images, at first only as supplements shown at the end of the lecture. It was not until 1899 that he began to integrate the films into the lectures themselves (Musser, 1994).

During the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, travel lecturers continued to fill their shows with moving images. According to Altman, 'by 1910 virtually every corner of the globe had been included in travel films' (2006:70-71). It was during this period that some travel lecturers became interested in producing nature films to accompany their shows. One of them was Richard E. Follet, the director of the Detroit Zoological Society at the time. Follet announced his lecture on a brochure as:

'An Enchanting Panorama of American Forest, Field and Water Life' followed by the text: 'the animals and birds of the forests and fish of the streams are so realistically depicted that the spectator is transported to the scenes presented'.<sup>13</sup>

It can be seen how the realism ascribed to travel imagery was seen as a commodity in itself. Another filmmaker of the Chautauqua Circuit was Raymond L. Ditmars, curator of mammals and reptiles at the New York Zoological Gardens and author of *The Book of Nature* (1914). Ditmars lectures were mainly on animal traits and the life of the wild, some of his films are *The Polar Bear* (1919), *The Smaller Monkeys* (1917), *The Animals of Australia* (1917), *The Larger Birds* (1917) and *American Deer* (1917)<sup>14</sup>. Amongst other filmmakers that toured with the Chautauqua circuit there is Howard Cleaves, a photo-naturalist, a lecturer and a writer; John P. Gilbert and Lee Keedick who were all producing nature films during the same period (Altman, 2006).

Travelogue films continued to incorporate new audiovisual technologies. The naturalist Arthur C. Pillsbury was the first lecturer that included x-ray pictures in his films. Pillsbury invented the microscopic motion picture camera, the X-Ray Motion picture camera and the underwater motion picture camera around 1920s (Altman, 2006). In 1926, the cinematographer Claude Friese-Greene embarked on a journey around Britain, recording 26 episodes for a series called *The Open Road* (1925) to be shown weekly at the cinema. Friese-Greene developed a new colour technology that used a

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<sup>13</sup> The brochure was published in 1913 and can be found at the University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Department, *Travelling Culture, Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century*. Digital Collection: *Redpath Chautauqua Collection*

<sup>14</sup> This brochure is also found in the *Redpath Chautauqua Collection*. The exact date of its publication is unknown.



two-colour successive frame process with alternative frames tinted in red and cyan. This succession gave the effect of natural colour, but due to its excessive flicker it was not further developed.

The growth of the cinema industry in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century transformed the way travel films were made. Travel lecturers went from producing their films on their own to collaborating with film production companies, which gave the travel film a more recognized status by itself. By 1912, the travel lecturer F. Tennyson Neely was booking his films with the option of choosing to see the film with or without the lecture. This separation between the physical presence and performance of the lecturer and the film was an important change in the history of documentary and travel filmmaking. For the first time, films were perceived as commodities in themselves. As Altman writes, 'these films were able to enter into a new type of commercial configuration, where the films would do the travelling, without the need for a lecturer to accompany them' (2006:76).

Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, the travelogue film engendered a series of ethnographic expeditions around the world, with a strong emphasis on non-western cultures (Benelli, 2006). By 1930s, the development of sound technologies enhanced the travelogue genre, making it especially popular with American audiences. According to Benelli, the emergence of sound in cinema created:

'A dynamic textual enrichment in newer travelogues relative to the films of the silent era, which had been hindered by the necessity of alternating written intertitles with passages of recorded images; the intertitles interrupted the visual flow of the film and needed to be kept brief lest they slow the pace of the film as well' (2006:181).

According to Benelli, the popularity of the travelogue genre in the early 1930s was due to three main reasons. First, the enrichment that sound technology brought to the medium. Second, the low cost of production, as travelogues didn't need stars to work in them, and they usually shared the costs with the researchers or the scientific institutions interested in carrying out the expeditions. And third, they offered to show a piece of 'reality', which was considered a commodity in itself at that time (Benelli, 2006). Benelli considers the main attraction of the travelogue during the 1930s to be a mixture of fascination with non-western cultures and places and a curious eye for what

was at the time, censored subjects in other kinds of film apart from the travelogue. Especially in the case of ethnographic expedition documentary, which depicted female nudity and genuine violence in the form of hunting scenes and animal fights (Benelli, 2006:182). An example of this is Lewis Cotlow's *Jungle Headhunters* (1951), which portrays the cultural practices of the Jivaro tribe, highlighting the craft of shrunken human heads; the film also displays the nudity of native women, a controversial theme at the time. Other examples are William Campbell's *Ingagi* (1930), James Leo Meehan's *Hunting Tigers in India* (1929) and *Across the World with Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson* (1930). Other ethnographic films include *White Shadows of the South Seas* (1928) and *Nanook of the North* (1922) by Robert Flaherty (Benelli, 2006).

From the 1930s onwards, the travelogue increasingly subscribed to new cinematic technologies but the travel lecture in its original form wouldn't disappear completely. According to Ruoff, in 1998 there were 284 features in circulation in the United States, most of them shot in Europe (39%), America (26%), Asia (15%), Central and South America (9%), Australasia (5%) and Africa (4%) (2006:227). Surprisingly, most of the travel lectures circulating in America during 1998 do not deal with the exoticism of non-western cultures that was associated to ethnographic films of the 1930s (Ruoff, 2006). Contemporary travel lecturers use different approaches, such as comedy, wildlife, history or tourism. Current travelogue producers are independent entrepreneurs, usually male Americans or Europeans, who 'produce, shoot, record sound, edit, distribute, exhibit and narrate 16 mm. movies' (Ruoff, 2006:223). However, although the travel lecture is still present and active in contemporary times, it has been largely invisible in the field of film studies. Ruoff writes:

'The historical invisibility of the travel lecture film is most evident in its total exclusion from film history books' (Ruoff, 2006: 218).

Perhaps one of the reasons why the travel lecture has received little attention in academic research is due to its performative nature, which leaves little trace apart from the actual film. According to Ruoff, there are very few archives of travel lecture films. From the late 1930 to the 1970s, travel lectures used 16 mm. cameras and Kodachrome positive film, which meant the films cannot be adequately replicated which caused most of these films to disappear (Ruoff, 2006).

The travelogue genre continued its presence in television. Through the early 1950s, television became commercially available for the public, and with it, the dissemination of the travelogue genre in the form of television shows. One of the main reasons why the travelogue continued to be an appealing format was its potential to encompass multiple stories on a seemingly unconnected variety of themes. Television travel shows gathered unrelated stories by organising them around a journey, a feature that appeals to broader audiences as opposed to more specialized themes in television shows. The variety of themes went from marathon-like journeys around the globe as in Michael Palin's *Around the World in 80 Days* (1989), or Ewan McGregor *Long Way Round* and *Long Way Down* (2005); to religion, as in Peter Owen Jones' *Around the World in 80 Faiths* (2009); natural sciences, as in The Discovery Channel multiple travelogues; or cultural history, as in National Geographic TV shows.<sup>15</sup> Another common subject is the recreation of historical journeys, as in the case of Brian Sewell's *The Naked Pilgrim* (2004) and *The Grand Tour* (2006).

From this variety of documentary travelogues we find consistent stylistic conventions and similar narrative techniques (Altman, 1999). One of the most often used is the episodic narrative, which organises events in apparent chronological order, displaying the travel journey from the point of view of the presenter, while giving information about historical and cultural aspects of the places visited along with interviews with local people and other travellers. This style would continue to evolve throughout the emergence of audiovisual technologies during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, generating a wide range of material, from amateur and home movies to travel documentary, travel TV shows, promotional tourist videos and 3D IMAX travelogue films. In the case of the IMAX, the travelogue would be primordial to the development of its style and narrative techniques and would adopt the travelogue as its 'key structuring principle' (Griffiths, 2006:239). From early cinema to the development of IMAX pictures, the travelogue would continue to use an episodic narrative. The presence of the traveller as a presenter and protagonist of the genre would persist. It was not until the development of the documentary genre, and the dissemination of Grierson's style of filmmaking that the travelogue genre would move from the autobiographical character (found in travel

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<sup>15</sup> I am citing here the name of the television presenter and not the name of the director or producer, see full cites in the Filmography.

lectures and early travelogues) to more impersonal approaches, such as the voice over narration and fly-on-the-wall viewpoint. Although during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the shift from observational methods to self-reflective approaches in documentary filmmaking generated a new range of first person travelogues, in the form of video diaries and essay films.

### **Subjectivity In The Travelogue Genre**

The use of autobiographical, first person narration has defined the travelogue genre throughout its history. Since its emergence as a literary form, the narrative of the travelogue was characterised by being personal, episodic, diaristic and independent from a plot or a narrative progression (Ruoff, 2006:11). The first person narration continued in the travel lectures of the Victorian era, which were narrated by the lecturer himself. Up until 1910, a decade after Burton Holmes incorporated moving images into his travel lectures; travelogue films began to separate from the live performance of the lecturer by incorporating inter-titles in the films (Altman, 2009:76). The narration was separated from the live speech of the lecturer and incorporated into the diegesis of the film in the form of inter-titles and later on with the coming of sound, in the form of voice over. For the first time in the history of the travelogue, the films were able to travel around themselves without the need for the presence of the lecturer in front of the audience (Altman, 2009:76). However, the first person narration remained consistent in the inter-titles of silent films, as in Claude Friese-Greene's *The Open Road* (1925).<sup>16</sup> It was not until the dissemination of John Grierson's style of filmmaking that the travelogue moved away from its autobiographical character to more impersonal approaches, such as the voice over narration and fly-on-the-wall viewpoint. This style of documentary seemed to portray reality from an impartial viewpoint, and was perceived as truthful and objective. However, its authority to represent reality was challenged during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which witnessed a shift from observational methods to self-reflective approaches in documentary filmmaking.

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<sup>16</sup> *The Open Road, A Cinematic Postcard of Britain in the 1920s* (1925) by Claude Friese-Greene [64 min.] is a collection of silent films taken on a journey around Britain that uses inter-titles in first person, in the same fashion as Victorian travel lectures.

During the 1970s, the weakening of the grand narratives brought by the deconstructivist agenda of the structuralist movement bred a sceptical distrust for any universal perspectives that constructed an objective and unchanging vision of the world. This involved the critical re-positioning of socio-cultural formations as well as the epistemological organization between the symbolic and the 'real'. Any fixed notion of reality became problematic which resulted in the questioning of the documentary as a carrier of truth, veracity and objectivity (Rascaroli, 2009:3). If the classical documentary was once associated to truthful and objective claims about the world, its authority to produce such discourses were to be broken down and exposed as rhetorical forms (Rascaroli, 2009:5). Second, documentary filmmakers adopted a different set of strategies that made explicit the subjective act of communication. This meant the filmmaker's acceptance to his or her own partiality by speaking from a subjective position (Rascaroli, 2009). According to Rascaroli, the emergence of subjective forms of filmmaking is symptomatic of a crisis in the post-modern subject (2009:10). Rascaroli adds that the increasing fragmentation of human experience and identity in a post-modern, globalized world is responsible for the emergence of a widespread tendency in film but also other forms of media to articulate subjective positions as means of coping and representing such fragmentation (2009:4-5). The fragmentation of the subject in post-modernity is symptomatic of a time in which reality has been displaced by its mimesis, a hyper-reality enabled by mass media and digital technologies (Kao, 1997). According to Karl S. Y. Kao, this has brought a crisis in representation because the referents are dissolved into its simulacrum (1997). For Kao, the emergence of self-reflexivity has to do with this crisis in Western epistemology and its realist tradition, which is founded on the mimesis of an external or internal world. Kao writes:

'Self-reflexivity itself is a deeply ingrained quality in the Western literary tradition. It is now simply being brought to a head by the hyper meta-sensibility of postmodernism in the wake of the demise of nineteenth-century high realism. The self-conscious, meta-theoretical tendency of poststructuralist criticism evidently plays a role in foregrounding this quality' (Kao, 1997:59).

This hyperrealism, as symptomatic of globalised societies express a ubiquitous drive to bridge the gap between reality and its representation. The mimetic impulse behind the realist tradition is based on the reproduction of similarities between a 'real' world and

the object of art. This is also a characteristic of self-reflexive texts, which seemingly connect verbal expression and the referent (Kao, 1997). A source of anxiety in the process of self-representation, both in literature and in filmmaking, is this relationship between fiction and reality (Kao, 1997).

On the other hand, the extensive use of first person voices in filmmaking practice embrace personal contingency and subjective experience through self-reflexive texts, allowing the filmmaker to make claims about her own existence and her own experience of the world. Subjective and self-reflexive approaches in non-fiction filmmaking allowed the documentary to re-gain a form of credibility, this time not through universal claims, but through personal and subjective experience. This shift was evident in travelogue films such as film-essays and video-diaries. Although the travelogue returned to its initial form of narration in first person, the new travelogues increasingly used self-reflexive narration. Examples of this are Chris Marker's *Lettre de Sibérie* (Letter from Siberia, 1957), *Sans Soleil* (1983) and Agnès Varda's *Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse* (The Gleaners and I, 2000). According to Carl Plantinga, these films 'are fundamentally "about" the documentary and "about" representation itself' (1997:179). For Plantinga, it is such reflexivity that creates a close relation between the essay-film (or what he calls the 'metadocumentary') and the cinéma vérité tradition (1997:179). Unlike Plantinga I argue that there is a radical difference between the self-reflective and self-reflexive aspects of the film-essay and the cinema vérité. While the films of cinema vérité reflected upon their own making through a pronounced acknowledgement of the presence of the camera in the act of filming, the self-reflexivity of the film-essay revolts around its narrative construction. Cinema vérité attempted to approach truth and reality from a perspective devoid from any personal viewpoint (Bruzzi, 2000:73). That is, it was self-reflexive and not self-reflective. Through an observational method, cinema vérité drew what seemed to be documentary's last attempt on objectivity by using a set of techniques that favoured spontaneity into an apparently aleatory ordering structure. Paradoxically, the films of cinema vérité tradition remained mindful of staged technical aspects such as lighting (Plantinga, 1997:180). It can be seen how both the film-essay and the cinema vérité attempted to deconstruct the objectivity and authority of the classical documentary tradition, but the

first one does so by questioning its own act of enunciation while the second exposes the process of collecting and recording of the images (Plantinga, 1997:180).

Subjective, first person travelogues that use similar techniques to cinéma vérité are television series such as *Around the World in 80 Days* (1989) and *Full Circle* (1997) presented by Michael Palin, BBC's *A Picture of Britain* (1996) presented by David Bimbleby, *Long Way Round* (2004) presented by Ewan McGregor (2004), *The Naked Pilgrim* presented by Brian Sewell (2004). These television series attempt to represent the reality of the traveller as well as the act of recording it as a spontaneous process, constructed as a seemingly un-staged and un-scripted journey affected by the casualties of 'real' travel journeys. On the other hand, films such as *Lettre de Sibérie* (1957), *Sans Soleil* (1983) and *Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse* (2000) depart from the documentary tradition's insistence to represent an objective reality. Instead, they use the medium of film and video to articulate self-reflective critiques that question its own representational power. Moreover, some essay films radically depart from realist representation. This is the case of Werner Herzog's *Fata Morgana* (1971), which mixes science fiction narration with documentary footage to portray a poetic journey across the Sahara desert.

At the intersection between documentary practice and travelogue filmmaking there are other categories such as the ethnographic documentary and the experimental ethnographic film, which also make use of subjective approaches. Strictly speaking, these films are not considered travelogues because they don't focus on the travel journey itself. Rather, ethnographic films are concerned with issues about cultural and racial 'otherness' in post-colonial subjects, often positioning the filmmaker as a tourist, ethnographer, exile or immigrant while merging self-representation with cultural critique (Russell, 1999:279). Self-enunciation in ethnographic film is seen as a rhetorical strategy that empowered post-colonial subjects to make claims about her own existence and her own experience of the world. This was epitomised by Jean Rouch's films such as *Moi, a Noir* (1958) and *Chronique d'un été* (Chronicle of a Summer, 1960). There are also ethnographic films that merge experimental techniques with cultural critique such as Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Reassemblage* (1982) and Dennis O'Rourke's *Cannibal Tours* (1989). While presenting some elements of the

experimental, these films are primordially performed as anthropological and ethnographic practice rather than being aesthetic explorations of the medium. However, these films use an experimental style to position film and video as a tool for the dissemination of cultural critique. At the same time, they merge elements of the ethnographic, the experimental and the surreal with the travelogue structure. It is evident that ethnographic films inherently present elements of the travelogue because they involve travelling as method of operation although the focus of ethnographic films is not the travel journey itself. Ethnographic films are based on the politicization of the subject and the self-representation of cultural others as a means to re-negotiate identities in cultural discourse, namely ethnic, national, sexual and racial (Russell, 1999:276). This brings the ethnographic film closer to the traditional travelogue because it largely relies on subjective approaches articulated in first person. Self-representation in both ethnographic video and first person travelogues are about the representation of the self as both performance and as a 'staging of subjectivity' (Russell, 1999:276). Examples of this approach in video diaries and first person travel films are Tony Downmunt's *A Whited Sepulchre* (2008) and Jennifer Fox's *Flying, Confessions of a Free Woman* (2006).<sup>17</sup> In which the performance of the traveller as filmmaker is crucial to the development of the story. These video diaries are more concerned with the narration of the self and the transformative aspects of the journey rather than directly challenging cultural representations of 'otherness'.

### **The Context Of Experimental Travelogue Film And Video**

The experimental travelogue stands as an aesthetic and ontological exploration concerned with issues about the nature of film and video, the frame, the temporal relations between the recording or pro-filmic event and the projection event as well as notions of perception, the senses and the physical experience of travelling. A key idea in the theorisation of experimental film has to do with its resemblance with the human mind (Choi, 2006: 165). This relation is based on the mutual concern in philosophy as

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<sup>17</sup> *A Whited Sepulchre* (2008) and *Flying, Confessions of a Free Woman*<sup>17</sup> (2006) each negotiate racial and sexual identities through the self-representation of white western subjects. Both trace journeys into postcolonial spaces and question the underlying power relations that affect their performance and its relation to others. Although both films are very different from each other in their subject and approach, both can be identified as video diaries with a travelogue structure.



well as in experimental and avant-garde film to explore notions of perception, reality, illusion, motion and temporality. One of the theoretical potentials of experimental film is that in its quest to subvert established norms in filmmaking practice, tends to radically test traditional theories on the analysis of film (Choi, 2006:166). Moreover, experimental films exemplify many of the concerns shared in phenomenological approaches to film theory and its conception of film spectatorship as embodied, perceptual experience. I explore the notions of non-linearity and non-narrative in the experimental film, through the writings of Malcolm Le Grice's *'Experimental Cinema in The Digital Age'* (2001) and *'Film Art Phenomena'* by Nicky Hamlyn (2003). I discuss films such as Lisl Ponger's *'Passagen'* (1996), *'Gone Troppo'* (1984) by Nicholas Nedekopoulos, Joram Ten Brink's *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales* (1997), *'Motel to Motel'* by Ryan Stec and Véronique Couillard, *400 Series* by Leslie Peters, Fern Silva's travel films such as *Sahara Mosaic* (2009) and *In The Absence of Light, Darkness Prevails*.

The context of the experimental travelogue film is caught somewhere between the film essay, the video-diary, the documentary, the amateur holiday video and the city-films of the avant-garde tradition. It encompasses multiple approaches that can go from subjective and diaristic structures to abstract and conceptual representations of travel. The origins of the experimental film can be traced back to the European avant-garde movement of the 1920s (Krakauer, 1960:175). Avant-garde film was set against the grain of commercial cinema and was defined by its rebellion against storytelling in narrative film. During the 1960s it advocated the politics of experience, positioning the filmmaker as an author and enunciator of her films, bringing to the forefront the director's personal experience (Rascaroli, 2009:107). It was a moment in which the video-diary was becoming a widespread method for exploring the occurrences of daily life, especially for women's filmmakers such as Chantal Akerman, Sue Friedrich, Marjorie Keller and Yvonne Rainer. The personal cinema of the avant-garde, such as Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage and Andy Warhol's films, often overlaps with the home movie and the autobiographical documentary (Rascaroli, 2009:107). The video-diary became a trademark for the avant-garde film through the work of Stan Brakhage and Jonas Mekas, and specifically the travelogue has been present in several video-diaries associated to the avant-garde such as Jonas Mekas *Reminiscences of a Voyage to*

*Lithuania* (1972), Wim Wender's *Tokyo-Ga* (1985) and *Lighting Over Water* (1980); Aleksandr Sokurov's *Elegiya dorogi* (Elegy of a Voyage, 2002) and *Spiritual Voices* (1995); Vincent Dieutre's *Leçons de Ténèbres* (2000) which presents a queer confessional journey through Utrecht, Naples and Rome; John Smith's *Hotel Diaries*, a series of films including *Frozen War* (2001, Ireland), *Museum Piece* (2004, Germany), *Throwing Stones* (2004, Switzerland), *BandB* (2005, England), *Pyramids/Skunk* (2006-7, Netherlands) and *Dirty Pictures* (2007, Palestine).

The close connection between the avant-garde film and artistic practice has located its exhibition context within specialised sites such as gallery spaces and art house screening rooms. However, the emergence of internet broadcasting has facilitated the sharing and distribution of experimental videos. Its audience has gone from the reduced circles of distribution in academia and galleries in metropolitan centres towards its global online access (Birchall, 2009). While avant-garde films and video art are showcased in Internet archives, experimental videos by amateur and independent artists are exhibited through personal broadcasting technologies such as You Tube and Vimeo. Moreover, the affordability of video and the appearance of networking technologies have allowed independent filmmakers to record, edit and broadcast their films inexpensively. Consequently, the production of experimental travel films and videos has been further enabled by portable technologies, mass transportation, globalisation in tourist economies as well as a rise in cultural mobility through network communications.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Ocular Realism and Embodied Experience

#### In The Travelogue Genre

In this chapter I argue that the travelogue film genre has been primordially constructed as an ocular and spectacular form closely related to the practice of tourism. I trace a relationship between tourism and the travelogue in the sense that both are delineated by an optical form of vision, through a discourse that equates the act of seeing with the act of experiencing place. I refer to the travelogue's most dominant aesthetic style as 'ocular realism', identifying a form of mimesis that recreates the ocular experience of travel on film. Throughout this chapter, I will question the extent to which the travelogue's mimetic and ocular styles of representation reflect upon a Bazanian teleology of cinematic realism. This concerns two main forms of representation in the travelogue film genre: the first and most dominant is associated with the showing and exhibition of places as images, conceived as objective, realistic, spectacular and primordially ocular. The second refers to a form of representation that attempts to bring the spectator's body closer into the filmic space by simulating the physical and hyper-sensorial experience of travelling, as in the case of travel-ride films and 3D IMAX travelogues. Both forms of representation articulate the experience of travel as ocular and spectacular through the use of representational devices that are primordially realistic and mimetic.

I argue that such representational styles have failed to address the affective and embodied dimension of travelling, as experienced by the phenomenal body.<sup>18</sup> I discuss how mimetic representations of travel have incorporated extra-cinematic technologies in the travelogue genre. Such technologies can be described as tridimensional, surrounding, immersive, kinaesthetic and non-audiovisual. Throughout this chapter, I

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<sup>18</sup> The body Merleau-Ponty refers to, is neither objective nor a physiological entity. Instead, he calls it the phenomenal body, a body grounded in subjective experience. The phenomenal body is the body I experience as mine. Therefore, it is experienced as performance, as potential to perform. Merleau-Ponty writes: 'It is never our objective body that we move, but our phenomenal body' (1962 [1945]: 121). For we cannot be conscious of a body that is not ours, and therefore all bodies apart from ours appear in consciousness as objective bodies. Our own body is always a sensing body; it is the physical extension of our conscious self. It can be seen how the concept of embodiment is an exploration of the phenomenal body from an experiential basis.

discuss the extent to which such technologies can be considered as haptic, ocular or embodied, while referring to Laura U. Marks notions of haptic visuality and tactile images. Then I demonstrate how the travelogue's representational strategies, although often grounded on extra-cinematic and multi-sensorial devices, tend to fall within an ocular rhetoric and occlude the spectator's engagement with the process of meaning construction.

### **Travel Images and the Specularity of the Modern Era**

The travelogue came into being during the modern era, at a time in which societies were increasingly oriented towards an economy of visual display (Debord, 1967). This was signalled by the development of visual technologies, widespread scientific research on optical perception and the massive production of images as commodities. The modern era was characterised by a pronounced economy of visuality that was manifested in science as well as in the arts and popular culture (Crary, 1988). It was a time that delivered a cornucopia of experiments on optical perception and gave birth to a wide range of optical devices such as the thaumatrope, the phenakistiscope, the stroboscope, the zootrope, but also the diorama, the kaleidoscope and the stereoscope (Crary, 1988).<sup>19</sup> Moreover, through the massive production of travel images, visual technologies were actively contributing to the construction of the modern worldview. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, travel images in the form of natural wonders, famous cities and landmarks were the most common subject in the dioramas and panoramas (Gunning, 2006). It can be seen how the travelogue film genre emerged from a context of 'feverish production of views of the world, an obsessive labour to process the world as a series of images and to make those views available as never before' (Gunning, 2006:32). This has to do with the introduction of massive means of transportation such as the railway and the steamship, which favoured the consequent industrialization of tourism (Ruoff, 2006).

As travel became increasingly available to the public in terms of transportation and tourism infrastructure, images of travel turned paramount to the industry of tourism.

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<sup>19</sup> Although these devices were originally meant to explore the nature of visuality in human perception, they quickly became forms of popular entertainment. See Crary, 1988.

According to Tom Gunning, during the modern era the concept of travel became increasingly linked to the production of images, he writes:

'The image becomes our way of structuring a journey and even provides a substitute for it. Travel becomes a means of appropriating the world through images' (Gunning, 2006:27).

The postcard, the stereoscope and the travel lecture not only disseminated images of foreign lands to those that were unable to travel but also became a fundamental part of the practice of travelling and tourism. The introduction of portable cameras allowed any traveller to become a travel photographer and eventually the celluloid slides turned family holidays into travel lectures (Gunning, 2006:29). The production and consumption of travel images became essential components of the travel industry as well as the experience of travelling. The postcard was not only a souvenir of the journey but its very purpose and goal and a proof that one has visited the sites (Gunning, 2006:28). Through photography, the postcard, the lanternslide and the stereoscope, the images of foreign lands became increasingly accessible to the public, which rendered visual technologies as a way of reaching and knowing the world.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the emergence of the modern subject as a *viewing* subject provided the conditions for the development of multiple technologies, media and forms of art that were based primordially in the act of *viewing* (Crary, 1990; Crawshaw and Urry, 1997). Moreover, the emergence of cinema did not only signal the culmination of a long standing project in the arts – that of realist representation through time and movement – but also in science, as a technological development that allowed to capture for the first time, the movement of images as they appear in 'natural' visual perception. Travel images made the world accessible to the public, a worldview that was primordially constituted by optical perception. The travelogues of early cinema promoted the novelty of consuming places through sight, employing a language of visual representation that brought to the spectator the visual experience of culture, people and places. It can be seen how the travelogue film constructed the experience of travelling as an ocular and spectacular one, delineated by its 'aesthetics of astonishment and stimulation' (Gunning, [1986] 2000: 232). This was based on a discourse that conceived the experience of travelling as a fundamentally visual one

(Urry, 1990). This is evident in the vocabulary of travel and tourism, which is grounded on the visual aspects of the travel experience. As John Urry and Carol Crawshaw notice, everyday language is permeated with an underlying visual logic that conceives travelling through the act of viewing while favouring optical perception over the other senses (1997). Phrases such as 'seeing the sights', 'capturing the view' or 'eye-catching scenery' as well as terms such as sightseeing, panorama or vista all refer to the same discourse of experiencing travel through 'sight' (Crawshaw and Urry, 1997:178). The practice of travel and the production of travel images became mutually intertwined. Mazierka and Walton write:

'Cinematography – as enthusiasts called their new hobby – was part of the new technological apparatus that, together with trains and later cruise ships, motor cars and aeroplanes, became associated with 20th-century holidays, in a way that gave agency to the user in terms of what to record, how to represent it and how to edit it' (Mazierka and Walton, 2006:7).

The 'vistas' projected on the travelogue film resembled the tourist sightseeing, the passing of sights along the tour-bus window or the railway car while showing famous landmarks and tourist sites. The similarity between tourism and the experience of cinema going also derived from their 'escapist character' (Mazierka and Walton, 2006:5). This speaks of a realistic drive in the travelogue film, which involves the visual display of places as attractions to be seen, but also its potential to show images of travel, as one would experience them in 'real' life perception.

### **Ocular Realism As An Aesthetic Style In The Travelogue Film Genre**

The association between travelogue films and realism is one embedded in the early days of filmmaking. In fact, the travelogue is considered the first chapter in the history of documentary (Ruoff, 2006). John Grierson wrote that when the term 'documentary' was first used in France, it was only meant to refer to travelogues (Fowles, 2002; [Grierson, 1932]). This close connection between realism and travel filmmaking associates the perceptual activity of 'seeing' to the activity of 'being' in place. This idea is reinforced by the film's ability to record real-life events. In that sense, the travelogue's connection to 'reality' has to do with both its aesthetic style as well as to

its status as a record of reality. The non-fictional character of the travelogue added to the indexical qualities of photography and film as mechanical reproducers of 'reality' provided the early travel films a status of veracity and facticity. The capacity of film to record movement through time was followed by the assumption that reality was knowable, objective and representable, all of which lend documentary travelogues a status of authority in the representation of the 'real' world.

The question of whether or not audiovisual technologies are able to represent reality as it is experienced in human perception is one that has been debated since the emergence of film studies. In the writings of André Bazin we can see a concern to relate the emergence of visual technologies to real life perception. Bazin saw the emergence of cinema as the culmination of a long-standing project in the visual arts that aimed at the complete mimesis of reality as it was experienced in human perception (Bazin, 1960). Cinema achieved what no other medium did before: the photographic recording of movement through time by mechanically re-constructing spatial and temporal relations as they are experienced by the human eye (Shaviro, 1993). John Crary notices that pre-cinematic optical devices from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the thaumatrope, phenakistiscope, stroboscope, zootrope, as well as the diorama, the kaleidoscope and the stereoscope are frequently discussed in film studies in terms of their progressive development towards a more perfect form of representation that culminates with the emergence of the cinema (1990). Crary argues that such approaches tend to conceal the specific characteristics of each of these optical devices (1990:110). Although there is a consistent relation between the emergence of optical and cinematic technologies and a progressive development towards increasingly realistic representations, each optical device or technology presents a different way of perceiving and a different relation to 'reality'. For Tom Gunning, the audiences of the 'cinema of attractions' looked at the images on screen as a way of 'seeming to be somewhere else by being absorbed in a "view"' (Gunning, 2008:27). Gunning writes:

'The phrase used by a number of film companies as their motto, "the whole world within reach" exemplifies this thinking: the world brought close as a picture and appropriated by the viewer' (2008:33).

Similar to other forms of realist representation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the travelogue provided the sensation of physically being in another place. For instance, the panorama

displayed views of landscapes that extended horizontally, covering as much visual space as the naked eye would cover.<sup>20</sup> Either in the form of a flat depiction of a landscape or rolled inside a building that located the spectator at its centre (as in the Panorama Rotunda<sup>21</sup>), the panorama allowed the viewer to feel immersed within the represented space. The spectator's eyes could linger through the extensive view in a similar fashion that one would do while looking around in an open space. Wolfgang Schivelbusch writes that these forms of photographic media, such as the panoramic and dioramic shows, were designed to substitute the still expensive train travel journey (1977).<sup>22</sup> But unlike the panorama and the diorama, the travelogue film relied in its intrinsic relation to the moving image to convey a feeling of lived space. The travelogue's mimetic drive attempted to recreate the perceptual experience of travel through cinematic representation.

I refer to this aesthetic style as 'ocular realism'. This mimetic relationship between travelling and its cinematic representation happens in two main aspects: the first derives from the reconstruction of the travel experience as it is *lived*, that is, as a *mimesis* of the *bodily sensation of movement* through space while the second has to do with the *indexical* qualities of the medium as a direct recorder of light. The second aspect has lent the travelogue its reputation as a factual genre. On one hand, the travelogue genre has extensively relied on the re-construction of the perceptual experience of travel as it is experienced in 'real life'. On the other hand, the genre has gained its representational power through the ocularisation of such. Although the facticity of the documentary film has been challenged in film studies and filmmaking practice, ocular realism as a style of representation has continued to be part of the traditional travelogue film.

From its beginning, travel lectures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were mimetically reproducing the itineraries of travel through linear structures based on episodic narratives that worked as an audiovisual re-enactment of the travel journey. The travel lecture's episodic narrative -usually arranged in chronological order- provided a linearity to the otherwise unrelated images that resembled the trajectory and itinerary of the traveller. This

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<sup>20</sup> See Figure 1 in the Appendix.

<sup>21</sup> See Figure 2.

<sup>22</sup> See Figure 3.



continuity has remained consistent throughout the history of the travelogue. In fact, it would become primordial in the construction of narrative cinema. The continuity that renders the otherwise unrelated images of travel into a coherent journey-like structure is organized around a 'logic of the visible', which creates a unity in the causality of events projected on screen (Auerbach, 2007). Its 'diegetic unity', as Jonathan Auerbach suggests, creates an illusion of consistency between separate spatiotemporal moments which form- by virtue of suturing different shots- an imagined continuum distant from the event as it was filmed (Auerbach, 2007:85). The articulation of spatiotemporal events into a continuum allowed the spectator to feel immersed within the filmic stream and perceptually re-enact the travel journey.

The introduction of moving images into early travel lectures opened the possibility of representing a crucial element of its subject matter: the movement across physical space.<sup>23</sup> The magic lanternslide allowed the travel lecture to represent the visual field of the traveller as a moving gaze and provided the audience with a new kind of perceptual illusion. Initially, the transition from lanternslides to moving images in Burton Holmes' travelogues did not produce any major changes in his shows, as they were shown only as supplements at the end of the lectures. In 1899 Holmes began to integrate the films into the lectures themselves (Musser, 1994). It was a source of wonder and excitement to the audiences of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to witness the changing of sights from country to country in the course of one single show (Clarke and Doel, 2005). The films became part of the continuum of the narrative, visually re-constructing the journey. As new technologies of transport developed, this visual reconstruction would increasingly depart from the situated lived space of the traveller's body and move into the passing views as seen from moving vehicles.

Schivelbusch writes that the insertion of the railway during the 19<sup>th</sup> century meant a radical change in the perception of space. The continuous stream of the passing landscape as perceived by the train traveller, meant the body's detachment from the visual space of the land (1977). Schivelbusch notices that railway travel caused a 'loss of the landscape', in the sense that all that could be perceived by the train traveller was a 'mere clothing' of the landscape, a geometrisation of its geology and a mechanized

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<sup>23</sup> In 1898 Burton Holmes introduced 60 mm. short interludes of moving images to his travel lectures (Ruoff, 2006).

experience of its space (1977:55). Railway travel favoured the distance senses such as sight and sound rather than the more intimate senses of smell and touch. It is not surprising, as Schivelbusch notices, that 19<sup>th</sup> century literary descriptions of travel went from the description of more palpable feelings of spatial surroundings to the description of the novelty of perceptual impressions that railway travel brought, such as the rapid changes in panoramic perspective (1977). For Schivelbusch, the train rider's perception of the landscape is detached from the body, in the sense that the irregularity and roughness of the terrain as felt in previous forms of transport was replaced by the smooth and continuous displacement over the train tracks, and that such smoothness gave the train-traveller a feeling of being disconnected from the landscape (Schivelbusch, 1979; Musser, 1991). The movement and speed of the landscape as seen from the train window was directly connected to the idea of modernity (Acland, 1998). Buck-Morss writes:

'Railroads were the referent, and progress the sign, as spatial movement became so wedded to the concept of historical movement that these could no longer be distinguished. But speed was not the only metaphor that took on a mythic identity with progress. Under conditions of competitive capitalism, pure numbers, abundance, excess, monumental size, and expansion entered into this semantic constellation, and became 'progress' very effective advertisement' (1989: 91).

Early travelogues were keen on portraying the 'modern' experience of travel as the visual reflection of industrial progress. This was evident in the *train-travel film*, one of the subgenres of the travelogue genre (Musser, 1991). Examples of this are films such as *Elevated Railway, 23rd Street, New York* (1896) *104th Street Curve, New York, Elevated Railway* (1899) by Thomas A. Edison. Edison train-travel films focus on the spectacle of the moving landscape as seen from the train, a perceptual novelty at the time. The railway offered not only faster transportation but also a completely new way of 'seeing' the places that it passed by, faster than previous transport but also with a moving panoramic perspective (Acland, 1998; Schivelbusch, 1979).

Railway travel was a central element of early cinema's chase films such as *'The Great Train Robbery'* (1903) by Edwin Porter and *Romance of the Rail* (1903) by Thomas A. Edison. The central attraction of films like *Elevated Railway* was the changes of perspective in ocular perception: the roofs seen from the top and the smooth

displacement of the views passing by. The urban setting became a spectacle for the moving gaze of the camera. The camera was usually attached to the end of a train, which re-enacted the sensorial delirium of the train-traveller for the cinema spectator. An example of this is *Panorama Exterior Westinghouse Works* (1904). The film shows views of the city as seen from the railway but unlike the *Elevated Railway* films, it not only shows the front of the train but the view from the sides. In *Panorama Exterior Westinghouse Works* the regular speed of the train's movement produces a visual rhythm in which electricity posts, buildings, roads, rocks and landscape features are experienced as a continuum. Schivelbusch suggests that the rapid and constant changing of scenery did not give the train traveller enough time to grasp the space as a whole, which meant the landscape could only be seen as fragments (1979). Visual experience from the train was fragmented also in the sense that the train traveller was continuously divided between the visual stream of passing views and the situated-ness of the body as anchored in the interior space of the train carriage, a split that resembles the experience of film itself.

In Edwin S. Porter's *'What Happened in the Tunnel'* (1903), the train window becomes the background of the story, as a window placed behind the characters that situates the scene into a constant flux of views. Although it is not strictly a travelogue film, the train window shows the same divide in visual perception. The film *New York Subway* also known as *Interior N.Y. subway, 14th St. to 42nd St.* (1905) shows a long shot of the interior of the tunnel from the front of the train. The recording of the constant unfolding of views allowed the cinema spectator to experience the sensation of movement by taking the position of a moving gaze. The camera transversing space gave the spectator the sensation of moving along with the camera eye. It offered the visual apprehension of spatial references through a similitude to real life perception. Jennifer Barker suggests that the pleasure found by the spectator in the 'cinema of attractions' was derived from its kinetic properties. In other words, it derived from the impression of movement itself and not from the narrative. She writes:

'Spectators took pleasure in the thrill of merely seeing the body in motion on screen and had no need for a narrative to make sense of the images; the films "made sense" sensually, as pure stimulation' (Barker, 2009:133).

One example is the famous and somewhat dubious case of Lumiere's *Arrival of a Train* (1896), in which the terrified audience reacted to the image of the arriving train as if it was a real object moving towards them (Gunning, 1989). Gunning writes: 'According to a variety of historians, spectators reared back in the seats or screamed or got up and ran from the auditorium (or all three in succession' (1989:114). Gunning notices how this event has been used by contemporary theorists to assert the representational power of film as the culmination of realist representation. He writes:

'Restored to its proper historical context, the projection of the first moving images stands at the climax of a period of intense development in visual entertainments, a tradition in which realism was valued largely for its uncanny effects' (Gunning, 1989:80).

According to Gunning, the visual power of such forms of entertainment was a matter of a *trompe l'oeil* play between *knowing* it is an illusion yet *feeling* its uncanny resemblance to real life (1989:80).<sup>24</sup> The audience of the 'cinema of attractions' performed an embodied response to the representational power of the image (Marks, 2007:7). These immediate bodily response were not confined to audiovisual perception but were felt through and across all the senses. Cinema spectatorship entails embodied, synaesthetic perception in the same way in which space and place are experienced kinaesthetically as well as visually, aurally and through tactile references (Merleau-Ponty, 1962 [1945]: 121). Embodied sensation entails a dynamic process of perception in which the senses work together, feeding each other. The separation between the senses is usually an approach used in its analysis but it does not occur pragmatically. Moreover, cinema is not only experienced audiovisually but also viscerally, affectively as well as synaesthetically (Sobchack, 1992; Massumi, 2002; Marks, 2000; Barker, 2009). The travelogues of the cinema of attractions were not merely optical illusions but provoked kinaesthetic sensations. The prominence of its embodied response was later reinforced in the travel ride film, which emphasized the novelty of sensorial experience as a spectacle in which the body took central stage (Rabinovitz, 2006:45).

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<sup>24</sup> *Trompe l'oeil* refers to a genre of hyper-realistic illusion in the arts. From French 'trick the eye'.

## Mimetic Re-Enactment of Sensorial Experience: The Travel Ride Films

The travel ride film incorporated a new set of hyper-realistic strategies to mimetically represent travel. Its hyperrealism involved the reconstruction of the travel journey not only as it appears to our eyes, but also as it 'feels' to our senses. From the travel-ride films of early cinema such as the Hale's tours, the Cinéorama, the Maréorama, the Odorama, and the Phantom Rides to the appearance of the Disney Star Tours and 3D IMAX pictures, representations of embodied experience were driven by the use of hyper-realistic and extra-cinematic technologies that attempted to bring spectators closer into a sensorial immersion in cinematic space.<sup>25</sup> The cinematic properties of the travel ride and its portrayal of space through time granted the viewer a realistic experience by providing the visual illusion of travelling while picturing the constant flow of the landscape as objects moving towards the spectator (Rabinovitz, 2006). Lauren Rabinovitz points out that certain elements in the landscape heighten the rhythm of such flow (2006). For instance, it was common for the cameras in the front of the train to be tilted towards the train tracks, which formed a strong indicator of visual perspective and distance. Elements in the landscape such as telephone poles, buildings, bridges and tunnels act as visual markers that change the rhythm of the trajectory, adding points of rest or breaks between light and darkness by creating rhythm through repetition.

Barker associates the emergence of the moving image with other attractions such as the rollercoaster, which 'offered a similar kinetic thrill' (2009:132). If the 'cinema of attractions' was closer to the rollercoaster than to other forms of cinema, the travel ride was the closest form to its kinetic re-enactment. In the Hale's Tours, the use of extra-cinematic technologies such as hydraulic seats that move according to the movement of a train and the design of theatres resembling the interior of a train or a boat, were grounded on mimetic realism as a representational style. The travel ride films represented kinaesthetic experience as felt by the movement of trains or boats. Raymond Fielding traces back the origins of the travel ride to 1895, when H.G. Wells and Robert Paul patented a form of travel-ride film that simulated travel through time and space (1970). Fielding writes:

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<sup>25</sup> See Fielding, 1970, page 37.

The members of the audience were to be seated on platforms which rocked to and fro, and which moved toward and away from a screen onto which still and motion picture scenes were to be projected' (1970:34).

The *Hale's Tours and Scenes of the World* was designed as an artificial railway, in which a short film of approximately ten to fifteen minutes was projected (Fielding, 1970).<sup>26</sup> The film usually showed the point of view from a moving train and it was projected in the front window of the train car which enhanced the sensation of travel while other machines made the illusion more convincing: the train car would tilt and shake and there were be sounds of steam whistles and wheels (Rabinovitz, 2006). It was a set of hyper-realistic technologies combining auditory, tactile and visual sensations (Fielding, 1970). Rabinovitz writes:

'Across the century, travel ride films articulate a seemingly contradictory process for the spectator: they attempt to dematerialize the subject's body through its visual extension into the cinematic field while they emphasize the spectator's body itself as the centre of an environment of action and excitement. They have to sensationalize and smooth over the gaps between the in-the-body experience (affect) and the out-of-the-body sense of panoptic projection' (Rabinovitz , 2006: 45).

I argue that the spectator's body was not necessarily split between vision and sensation, but rather the viewing of the film and the extra-cinematic stimuli complemented each other. The spectator's senses not only re-created the embodied experience of travel as presented by the film but also created its own. The travel ride's cinematic re-construction was based on an input/output logic of sensation that translated sensuous experience into a mechanized copy of embodied sensation. However, affective sensation was not anticipated, as it cannot be controlled by external stimuli only. In the travel ride film, the gap between affect and ocular perception was not bridged, as Rabinovitz points out. Instead, it was embodied experience that was sensationalized as physical, predicable in its organization and mechanized, while affective experience remained dismissed. A representation of affective, or 'in-the-body' experience of travel, as Rabinovitz puts it, would necessarily deal with the internalized connections between memory and sensuous experience. The travel ride film only incorporated different aspects of the sensorial experience of travel in a mimetic re-

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<sup>26</sup> Built in 1904 by engineer George C. Hale. See Figure 4 in the Appendix.

enactment already divided into a set of fragmented stimuli. This mechanized approach to sensation in the travel ride film contrasts with the emergence of subjective viscosity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. John Crary writes that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a shift in the conception of vision and perception as grounded in the materiality of the body and not only dependant on external stimuli (1994). The emergence of subjective modes of vision meant perception was not as much about external stimuli but about the make-up of our sensorial experience as it is internalized. This shift marked an epistemological crisis in which perception could no longer be conceived as objective nor as the foundation of human knowledge of the world (Crary, 1994). Paradoxically, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in philosophy as well as in the emerging field of scientific psychology, perception was made embodied, but also quantifiable, measurable and abstract. Crary writes:

This disintegration of an indisputable distinction between interior and exterior became a condition for the emergence of spectacular modernizing culture' (1994:22).

Such epistemological crisis challenged the status of the perceiving subject. Reality was no longer conceived as something attained directly through perception; instead, perception began to be conceived as an internal process somewhat independent from an objective and material reality. It can be seen how the travel ride film came into being from the intellectual climate of an epoch that conceived sensation as torn between input (stimuli) and output (embodied experience). This discourse ultimately conceives sensuous stimuli as reproducible, abstract and mechanic. The premise was that although the subject experiences perception as an internal process, the stimuli that causes perceptual experience could still be manipulated, measured and controlled. The travel ride film, in its attempt to recreate the *sensation of movement*, failed to recognize the variable changes intrinsic to the subjective, affective experience of sensing. The travel ride film simply took the fragmented components of a post-rationalized embodiment of the travel experience and turned it into segmented stimuli. Massumi writes about the relationship between movement and sensation:

'Feelings have a way of folding into each other, resonating together, interfering with each other, mutually intensifying, all in unquantifiable ways apt to unfold again in action, often unpredictably' (Massumi, 2002:1).

For Massumi, the relationship between sensation and movement is unpredictable change. He suggests that previous conceptions of movement as literal, predictable and mechanic have already fallen into forms of 'naïve realism' (Massumi, 2002:1). In that sense, the technologies involved in the travel ride conceived the sensation of travel as homogenous throughout the audience and as Massumi asserts, it naively imagined sensation as reproducible. However, the re-enactment of bodily sensation in travel ride films is not entirely consistent in its continuity. Clarke and Doel suggest that although the hyperrealism of travel ride films was in fact derived from the technologies used, the content of the films was often not explicitly realistic. In the sense that some travel ride films included incongruous elements that threatened the continuity of the illusion, such as tracking shots followed by still shots or static viewpoints of landmarks (2005). Arguably, the weight of 'truth' that the travelogues of early cinema carried was to be displaced by a realism derived from pure 'sensation'. While the travel ride films of early cinema focused on travel and tourist experiences, contemporary travel rides increasingly depict fantasy themes, science fiction characters and trips to outer space or ancient civilizations (Rabinovitz, 2006). It can be seen how its mimetic representation of sensorial experience articulate a hyper-reality that is more about realism as aesthetic style rather than realism as connected to 'truth' or 'veracity'. Moreover, in contemporary travel rides it does not matter whether or not what the spectator sees actually exists outside the cinema as much as it matters that the sensorial stimuli of the cinema is credible to the spectator's senses, that is 'realistic' as opposed to 'real'. However, it is a contentious assumption to reduce the use of these technologies in cinema to a Bazanian teleology of film representation. Although in the travelogue genre, technological developments have gone hand in hand with a simulation of travelling as it is experienced in real life perception. This is also evident in the use of IMAX 3D and more recently, 4D film theatres.

### **The Travelogue And The IMAX Screen**

Travelling is intrinsic to IMAX forms of representation and it is also inscribed in its promotion and exhibition contexts (Griffiths, 2006). Alison Griffiths notices that the travelogue constitutes the structural principle of IMAX films (2006:239). This is evident



in IMAX's visual surveillance of space, characterised by a heavy use of aerial photography and phantom rides in which long tracking shots seemingly cut across vast spaces (Acland, 1998; Griffiths, 2006).<sup>27</sup> The camera penetrates into corners of the landscape unfolding spectacular views into camera movements that are otherwise unattainable for human visual perception. In fact, a dominant discourse in the promotion and exhibition of IMAX documentaries is the presentation of IMAX films as cinematic journeys, and the appeal of watching films so realistic that provide the sensation of actual travelling. This is due to the kinesthetic sensation provoked by cameras moving rapidly across heights (Acland, 1998). Sweeping camera movements added to the gigantic proportions of the IMAX screen provoke in the spectator a sensation of being 'inside' the film, providing a panoramic mode of vision that causes the spectator's immersion into filmic space (Acland, 1998; Recuber, 2007).

The sensorial shock involved in IMAX panoramic vision is related to the changes in perspective experienced by train-travellers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Acland, 1998). Acland suggests that the spectatorial mode of perception enacted by the IMAX viewer, instead of being detached from the visual field, as in railway travel, is immersed within the panoptic field of the giant screen. This is what Acland calls *panoramic realism*, in which 'the stunning films of IMAX and the special viewing situation reignite the early experience of filmic realism – the shock of movement and the sensation of 'being there' (1998:430). On one hand, the huge dimensions of the IMAX screen and the sensorial immersion it provokes are modes of vision closely connected to the buildings of Panorama Rotundas. On the other hand, these modes of vision are also connected to the extended representations of space present in the panoramic paintings of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The immersive larger-than-life space of the IMAX theatre causes human sight to be merged into filmic and architectural space (Acland, 1998:430). Tim Recuber suggests that these technological and architectural devices facilitate a more intense and 'absorbing' sensory experience for the spectator (2007:316). For Acland, the theatre merges with the audience senses. Recuber takes this idea forward conceiving the spectator's experience of the IMAX as a form of immersion, in which the spectator is 'plugged' into filmic space (2007). For Recuber, the IMAX spectator

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<sup>27</sup> The phantom ride is a camera movement made famous by travel ride films in which the camera is positioned at the front of a train or moving vehicle.

becomes a cyborg, physically, materially and sensorially engaged with the film (Recuber, 2007).

In Recuber's approach, extra-cinematic technologies such as 3-D IMAX<sup>28</sup> headsets and 'GSS Sensory Seats'<sup>29</sup> dissolve the distinction between human and machine, transforming the spectator's experience in one that is 'plugged' into filmic space, experiencing film physically and viscerally as much as visually (Recuber, 2007). Moreover, the IMAX gigantic proportions and camera styles surpass all possibilities of sightseeing, giving the spectator a sense of totality, of constructing a 'full view' of the world (Acland, 1998). Such totality inscribes a visual geography of the world that ocularizes the experience of travelling and of 'being-in-place', in as much as it discursively constructs the travel experience as attainable through technology. The IMAX entails an objective mode of vision modelled around an economy that favours high definition imagery, over-sized dimensions, overextended image data, hyper-realistic graphics and an over-stimulation of our audio visual fields. Its overtly stimulating properties provide a sensory experience of film based on visceral response, vertiginous spatial references as well as visually immersive surroundings.

This combination of sensuously exhilarating stimuli in the cinema echoes the AromaRama, the Smell-O-Vision as well as the shaking seats of the travel ride film, in their attempt to stimulate the senses through technology. More recently, the incorporation of extra-cinematic technologies in film have upgraded what seems to be a mimesis of real life sensory perception. It seems as if cinematic technologies such as IMAX were increasingly realising the Bazanian teleology of cinematic realism (Acland, 1998). Acland writes:

'Its goal is one of simulation, of hyper-realism, of producing images so real that they offer an illusion of material presence, and of creating the sensation of movement for its spectators' (Acland, 1998:430).

These hyper-realistic and immersive technologies in the cinema have been further developed in what is branded as 4D and 5D Cinema Theatres. The 4D films encompass tri-dimensional vision with interactive technologies such as D-BOX seats, which are

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<sup>28</sup> See Figure 5 in the Appendix.

<sup>29</sup> The GSS sensory seats is a system that interprets low frequencies from a film's soundtrack into vibrations produced by devices implanted in seat backs (Recuber, 2007).

integrated systems that incorporate motion effects specifically programmed for each scene of the film.<sup>30</sup> In 5D cinema, sensorial immersion is further provoked by additional atmospheric effects such as wind, fog, mist, rain, snow, bubbles and light effects inside the theatre. This is combined with seat effects that poke the spectator's back or neck, spray water over and tickle the legs. While seating on a DBOX, the spectator moves in synchronic motion with the film, shaking with rumbling explosions and moving along car chases. This is enabled by a platform or seat that uses different movements and vibrations to simulate the action on the film. DBOX technologies are branded as a 'multi-sensorial revolution'.<sup>31</sup> It can be seen how new technologies are increasingly aiming to incorporate aspects of embodied sensation in the cinematic experience. However, these technologies are concerned with the non-audiovisual senses only as complementary stimuli to the cinematic experience. Moreover, they have largely missed the affective dimension of embodied and synaesthetic modes of spectatorship and have focused on the mechanisation of sensorial stimuli through physical sensation. This is not exclusive of recent developments in cinema technology but has rather been consistent with the emergence and development of visual devices throughout the history of film.

### **Tri-Dimensionality And Tactility: The Stereoscope And The IMAX 3D**

Stereoscopic vision and tri-dimensional cinema are closely connected to the sense of touch (Clarke and Doel, 2005:53-54). These technologies present a visual volume that challenge optical perception by reproducing the visual changes of perspective that are perceived when looking at an object. Their attempt to mimic human perception brings the spectator into a closer relationship to the visual space of the image. For David B. Clarke and Marcus A. Doel, the capacity of the stereoscope to visually bring forward the volume of an object gave it a tactile quality by fusing the optical with the 'real' (2005). They write:

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<sup>30</sup> DBOX is a brand that manufactures and designs motion systems for the cinema industry.

<sup>31</sup> The slogan 'multi-sensorial revolution' can be found in their website: DBOX website: <http://www.d-box.com/en/the-mfx-technology>

'Where the panorama, diorama, magic lantern, Praxinoscope and Cinématographe would continue to fail, the stereoscope would succeed. For the *absolute* novelty of the stereoscope lay in its ability to render an impression of solidity. In so doing, it made vision tactile' (Clarke and Doel, 2005:53-54).

The tactility ascribed to tri-dimensional images is associated with an illusion of volume and perspective. This is emphasized in IMAX 3D films, in which high-resolution images offer enough visual details that make the image appear palpable and tactile. However, the tactility of the IMAX and the stereoscope offer an optical tactility instead of a haptic one. They entail a mode of vision that does not rely on closeness or proximity, qualities intrinsic to the sense of touch. Instead, optical tactility is implicated in the visual display of texture and a precise detail of visual volume. In other words, it privileges the representational power of the image instead of its material presence, as in haptic vision (Marks, 2000:162). Tri-dimensional visual technologies offer a hyper-realistic representation of volume and perspective, often dismissing the sensations ascribed to its material presence. This has to do with the different degrees of proximity and distance involved in haptic and visual experience. Merleau-Ponty writes:

'In visual experience, which pushes objectification further than does tactile experience, we can, at least at first sight, flatter ourselves that we constitute the world, because it presents us with a spectacle spread out before us at a distance, and gives us the illusion of being immediately present everywhere and being situated nowhere. Tactile experience, on the other hand, adheres to the surface of our body, we cannot unfold it before us, and it never quite becomes an object' (1962 [1945]: 369).

The visual apprehension of texture remains distant from the surface of the object it apprehends. On the other hand, haptic visibility brings the spectator closer, to a point where texture and surface become form, and sensation of form (Marks, 2000:162). Like the IMAX 3D, the stereoscope relies on a demarcated sense of distance to convey its optical illusion. Its realistic illusion depends on the distance between the image and the viewer, and more specifically on a relational distance between each eye of the viewer and the image.<sup>32</sup> In that sense, the stereoscope creates an effect of emulating physical

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<sup>32</sup> The stereoscope brought forward for the first time, the question of the binocularity of vision or binocular disparity. That is, the fact that we perceive slightly different images with each of our eyes, yet we experience vision as single or unitary. However, the degree of binocular disparity as experienced by a viewer has to do with the degree of closeness between the object and the viewer. That is, binocular disparity becomes evident when we look at objects from a very close distance. For instance, by touching the tip of our nose with one finger, we become much more aware of the two images as perceived by each of our eyes. Physical proximity makes evident that what we experience as a single vision or

proximity, thus 'the desired effect of the stereoscope was not simply likeness, but immediate, apparent tangility' (Crary, 1992:122-124).

Stereoscopic images rely on clear symbolic representation. The delineated figures serve as a direct reference of its meaning, as one that can be immediately accessed through vision. In other words, although stereoscopic vision subscribes to an apparent tactility, it entails an ocular mode of vision in which objective, distant apprehension is necessary. In optical vision, meaning is already ascribed, available and defined in its visual content. In that sense, the meaning of stereoscopic images is already constructed through visual references. The mimesis of tactile perception through stereoscopic and tri-dimensional images effaces tactile engagement as a haptic, multi-sensory process. Optical forms of vision pervade sensuously dynamic forms of meaning construction in cinema spectatorship because they entail the deliverance of a predetermined symbolic order within the film's text. Moreover, haptic viscosity comprehends the tactility of an image as a quality that lacks a literal meaning, refuses to be described by narration and compels the spectator to resource to her own experience in order to make sense of it. It escapes the immediacy of visual referents by being fundamentally vague, that is, undefined, blurred, grained and even absent. Compared to the tactility ascribed to haptic images, stereoscopic vision evokes sensuous engagement through optical tactility. On the other hand, haptic images require the viewer's construction of meaning through sensuous contact and can serve as visual reference of internal processes for the spectator. The indeterminacy of haptic images compel to the imagination of the viewer, activating inter-sensuous dynamics in the body that require the spectator to complete the image with her own memories (Marks, 2000).

It can be seen how the travelogue film has been primordially constructed as an ocular and spectacular form. The ocular realism involved in the travelogue styles of representation relies on an objective mode of vision that aims to realistically recreate perceptual references. This is evident in the travelogue's use of extra-cinematic technologies, which attempt to translate embodied experience through the

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unified vision is in fact the reconciliation of two different angles or points of view: that of our eyes. Crary argues that the 'realism' of the stereoscope is based on the apprehension of such different viewpoints (1992). See Figure 6 in the Appendix.

incorporation of sensorially stimulating devices. This simulation of sensorial experience renders sensation as self-contained, controllable, mechanic and reproducible, often surpassing the subtle, dynamic changes involved in embodied forms of spectatorship.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Subjectivity And Embodiment In First Person Travelogue Films

In this chapter I discuss first person travelogue films in the forms of film-essays and video-diaries such as Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1983), Aleksandr Sokurov's *Elegiya dorogi* (Elegy of a Voyage, 2002), Johan van der Keuken's *Amsterdam Global Village* (1996), Patrick Keiller's *London* (1994) and *Robinson in Space* (1997), amongst others. Through the analysis of these films, I discuss the translation of embodied and sensuous experience into film. I argue that if the traditional travelogue genre ocularized the embodied experience of travel through a mechanized mimesis of bodily sensation, subjective and self-reflective approaches in the travelogue film engage in a different kind of mimesis. That is, the mimesis of the human subject through cinematic language, in the form of self-reflective first person narration and subjective cameras. Through these techniques, these films signal a subjectivity that is embodied by the film, in some cases engaging in a mimetic re-enactment of bodily gestures and behaviour through cinematic language. Some of them do this kinaesthetically by enacting the actual movements of the body with the camera, while others do this through more sensuous approaches, as engaging in tactile ways of seeing, presenting haptic images that work as an extension of the tactile senses through sight.

#### The Self As Narrative: Subjectivity And Self-Reflexivity In The Travelogue Film

The use of autobiographical, first person narration is an inherent characteristic of the travelogue genre. Since its emergence as a literary form, the narrative of the travelogue was characterised by being personal, episodic, diaristic and independent from a plot or a narrative progression (Ruoff, 2006:11). As I mention in the Literature Review, the shift in documentary filmmaking from objective approaches towards the use of subjective voices changed the subjective voice of the travelogue from the 1950s onwards. The use of first person voices became increasingly self-reflexive and self-reflective. These travelogues engaged in the narration of personal experience, at the

same time they reflected about the representational power of the medium through the process of filmmaking. The use of the voice over in the travelogue moved from descriptive accounts towards reflective narratives about the very act of enunciation. In narration, self-reflexivity involves the self-representation of the subject through language, bridging the gap between enunciation and the embodied subject. On one hand, self-reflective films involve the act of introspection through narration. On the other hand, the notion of self-reflexivity refers to films that are reflexive about their own making, conscious about their construction and mindful of their own fictional status.

Self-reflexivity is a characteristic of the essay film, a hybrid form that expresses a personal investigation, encompassing fiction and non-fiction elements. It is dialogical in its structure, constantly posing questions, provoking an intellectual engagement with the text. Instead of following a formal composition, the essay film tends towards fragmentation, repetition and dispersion [Rascaroli, 2009:22]. Self-reflexive films attempt to bridge the gap between verbal expression and the referent, pointing at a gap between fiction and reality. For Kao, this form of self-representation reflects a mimetic drive based on the reproduction of similarities between a 'real' world and the object represented [S.Y. Kao, 1997]. The essay-film is inherently subjective and tends towards the autobiographical, often flirting with diaristic styles. Essays films with a travelogue structure are Chris Marker's *Letter from Siberia* (1957), *Sans Soleil* (1983) and Agnès Varda's *The Gleaners and I* (2000). These essay-films directly deal with questions about representation in documentary practice. Their use of voice over questions the objectivity of their own narration, addressing the spectator directly and engaging her in the process of meaning construction. *Letter from Siberia* depicts Marker's journey across Irkutsk, Lake Baikal, Siberia and Yakutsk in Russia. It uses self-reflective and self-reflexive narration as a means to engage in a critique of the authority and objectivity of classical documentaries. Although *Letter From Siberia* portrays different cultural practices, the subjective tone of the narration refuses to engage in an objective description of cultural others. Another self-reflective essay-film with a travelogue structure that strategically questions the representational power of documentary narration is Trinh Min-ha's *Reassemblage, From the Firelight to the Screen* (1983), an ethnographic film about identity and cultural politics, in which the self-reflective tone of



the voice over questions its own ways of describing and speaking about the locals. It can be seen how the use of self-reflective narration reinforces the subjective character of the narrator's voice and makes evident the process of meaning construction in documentary representation. In other words, it makes evident that the filmmaker (and narrator) is aware of her own representational power, inscribed in the act of recording the film and speaking about 'otherness'. On one hand, the articulation of subjectivity through self-representation emphasises the film's authorial voice and makes evident the filmmaker's subjective perception. On the other, the self-reflective voice expresses a form of subjectivity that is embodied by the film itself. The location of the voice over outside the diegesis of the film foregrounds the film's unity and promotes the illusion of heterogeneous space (Doane, 1980:38). In other words, it contributes to the construction of the film's body as a single, perceiving subject.<sup>33</sup> Although the film essay and the video diary are forms related to each other in the sense that they both articulate subjective approaches, the essay film focuses on a variety of themes outside the narration of personal history.

The video diary or diary-film often takes the form of a memoir, presenting a subjective narration structured as an interior monologue. The diary-film is explicit about the performance of the self as narrator and its authorial inscription into the text. Rascaroli argues that the problem of defining one's identity is a challenge for the literary autobiography because the self is neither transparent nor always readily available for literal and grammatical description (2009:8). The 'I' tends to become a character for both the writer and the filmmaker, who, no matter how honest and sincere her intentions may be, will always produce a slippage in the process of self-description. The self-referential and verbal description of the subject produces an inevitable slippage between the praxis of the body and its description (S.Y. Kao, 1997). Such slippage is problematic because it arranges the subject's identity into a linear narrative that occludes the transformative and performative aspects of its formation and fixes memory and personal history into a one-directional stream. This is more evident in literature than in film because the language of film relies on images, which are not as readily located within a fixed grid of referents and meanings. In film, the meaning of the image remains relative and dependant on its relations to other images and other texts.

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<sup>33</sup> For a discussion on the notion of the film's body, see Chapter 1 page 13.

On the other hand, in literature the self-referential description of experience achieves a more concrete sense of the subject, in which words can literally describe the facts, actions and passages from the writer's life. The narration of the video diary often splits the enunciating subject in two because the diarist is constantly constructing a double identity as both the writer and the subject of his writing (Rascaroli, 2009:117). This double-consciousness gives a sense of otherness to the diarist whom, in the process of creating continuity for her self as a character, experiences a dislocation and a displacement between her embodied self and her written, constructed self (Rascaroli, 2009:117).

The diary-film constructs the identity of the enunciating subject through the expression of personal stories and memories. This is the case of Wim Wenders' *Tokyo-Ga* (1985), which narrates Wenders' journey to Japan, inspired by the films of Yasujiro Ozu. The journey reflects Wender's search to find the living traces of Ozu's films but the Japan he encounters belongs to a different time. As he struggles to connect his present with Ozu's films he makes explicit his search for pure cinematic images. Another example of a diaristic travelogue film is Carlos Boledo's *Bajo California* (1998), a personal story of migration, exile and landscape art that explores the political and cultural conflict lived by Mexican migrants in the USA. *Bajo California* explores issues on cultural translation and memory through Boledo's family history across the US/Mexican border. While sometimes adopting an almost confessional mode, the diary film dwells in the intimacy of personal perspective, inviting the spectator to become a confidant of the narrator's stories. This is also the case of Agnès Varda's *Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse* (The Gleaners and I, 2000) which depicts Varda's personal investigation on the act of gleaning as she travels around France. *The Gleaners and I* is constructed as a diaristic, video essay. Varda gathers interviews and documentary footage of rural gleaners in agricultural fields, urban collectors and recyclers of objects as well as of her own encounter with Jean François Millet's painting *Les Glaneuses* (1857). She creates a metaphor for her own filmmaking practice, in which she positions herself as a gleaner of cinematic images. Varda's voice guides the course of the film, as she reflects about her own memories and her own experience as a filmmaker. Another diaristic travelogue is Tony Dowmunt's *A Whited Sepulchre* (2008), which explores Dowmunt's own family history in Sierra Leone and his own struggle to reconcile colonial and racial

history with the diaries of his grandfather. Downmunt's narration speaks to the camera in a confessional style, revealing a high degree of intimacy and closeness. It can be seen how the diarist filmmaker often presents a profound awareness of their role in the filmmaking process and the representational authority inscribed in its practice. An example of this is *Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman* by Jennifer Fox (2007). *Flying* explores and problematizes gender roles in contemporary societies around different countries. Fox performs as the protagonist of the film at the same time she reveals a certain anxiety to enable more democratic processes of representation in her own filmmaking practice. Instead of recording her subjects, she uses a technique she terms as 'passing the camera', a dynamic in which the characters share the recording of the film. This approach allows the active participation of the film's subjects in the act of representation. It can be seen how subjective, first person voices in the travelogue film allow the inscription of the subject through film. It's crafting negotiates the filmmaker's performance as both traveller and storyteller, through the articulation of personal experience and its translation into film practice. This translation has to do with ways of signalling the filmmaker as a subject embodied by the film.

### **The Subjective Camera in the First Person Travelogue Film**

In autobiographic and first person films, the subjective camera or point-of-view shot is used as a way of signalling the narrator's consciousness. The screen represents the narrator's visual field, hence the widespread equation between the 'I' of the narration with the 'eye' of the camera (Rascaroli, 2009:8). The subjective viewpoint creates a particular set of conditions that favours the spectator's identification with the narrator's character as it is particularly suited to the expression of the narrator's perception and 'her psychological and emotional perspectives and responses' (Rascaroli, 2009:13). By seeing what the narrator sees, the spectator finds herself immersed within the perceptual field of the character. However, the presence of a protagonist or narrator on screen breaks with this logic of identification because as long as the spectator is engaging with the parody of a subject embodied through the film, then she is symbolically sharing that character's perceptual field. The moment the character's body becomes fully visible, the phenomenal illusion of identification is interrupted

because it signals we are no longer looking through the character's eyes. Although the spectator always occupies her own body in space, subjective camera viewpoints enable a process of identification that can provoke a sympathetic response to the character's subjective perception and an engagement with the character's bodily position (Sobchack, 1992:234). The combination of subjective cameras with first person narration seems to equate 'the film's disguised embodiment, and therefore its "human subjectivity" with the spectator's experience of introceptive perception' (Sobchack, 1992:232).

Although through perception, the spectator might emphatically engage with the fiction of the film as an embodied subject, bodily identification doesn't depend on the film's subjective character. In other words, it doesn't depend on a first person narration neither on subjective camera viewpoints. Rather, bodily identification with film seems to derive from the similar relations between the character's human body and the spectator's body (Barker, 2009:75). A primordial identification emerges from the film's body, its gestures and camera movements that seem to replicate a human's way of moving and ways of engaging with the world (Barker, 2009:75). A subjective camera paired with first person narration transforms film into an anthropomorphic body expressing and behaving through similar movements and gestures than a human body. Barker points out that the identification or 'empathy' between the film and the spectator is not simply a matter of the spectator sharing the narrator's location by means of a viewpoint or by first-person narration (2009:75). For Barker, it is a matter of empathy between the film's body and the spectator's body that also happens in non-narrative films (2009:75). Barker writes:

'Our bodies orient and dispose themselves toward the body of the film itself, because we and the film make sense of space by moving through it muscularly in similar ways and with similar attitudes' (Barker, 2009:75).

Although we do not experience and perform bodily movement in the same way that a film would do, simply because our bodies are built differently than a film, we are able to experience a sort of 'muscular empathy' with the film (Barker, 2009:77). While our bodies move by means of arms, legs, hands, feet, muscles, bones and tendons, the film moves through camera tracks, zooms, lenses and montage. As cinema spectators, we

are able to sense velocity and changes in perspective that are experienced across our whole bodies and not only through vision. We also respond with our bodies to the film's movements, gestures and attitudes towards the world. Barker writes about the movements of the camera:

'Swaggering, skulking, cowering, reaching, flinching, swaying, swerving, leaning, or simply standing upright, for example, all send messages about our place in and attitude toward the world and toward one another' (Barker, 2009:77).

In the travelogue film genre, this 'muscular empathy' entails a form of kinesthetic identification that allows the spectator to perceptually perform cinematic travel through her senses. Although this sensuous identification occurs in all forms of cinema spectatorship, this is more evidently seen in the use of subjective viewpoints when combined to anthropomorphic camera movements, because they seem to visually and kinaesthetically mimic humanly embodied experience. This is the case of Aleksandr Sokurov's *Elegy of a Voyage*.

### **Aleksandr Sokurov's *Elegy of a Voyage***

*Elegy of a Voyage* (*Elegiya dorogi*, 2001) traces Sokurov's travel journey from Siberia into the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam.<sup>34</sup> The film is structured as a diary narrated by Sokurov. There are two techniques in *Elegy of a Voyage* that make consistent references to the embodied experience of Sokurov as he travels through Siberia and into the galleries of the museum: the first person narration and the subjective camera viewpoint. These two elements mimetically represent Sokurov's human subjectivity through cinematic language, the first imitating Sokurov's thinking process and the second imitating Sokurov's bodily movement and changes in his visual field.

Vivian Sobchack writes that every 'film's body' presents a unique organization of meaning and a unique sensuous geography (Sobchack, 1992:133).<sup>35</sup> In a similar vein,

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<sup>34</sup> *Elegiya dorogi* (*Elegy of a Voyage*, 2001) is a film commissioned as part of the exhibition 'Unpacking Europe' (2001) at the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam.

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion on Vivian Sobchack's notion of the film's body, see page 13.

Jennifer Barker notices that every film presents its own 'body language', that is, its own way of expressing and communicating its perceptions and attitudes towards the world (2009:79). The 'body language' of *Elegy of a Voyage* poignantly imitates the Sokurov's bodily gestures. First, the narration of personal experience in the voice over added to its whispering tone, signals a form of subjectivity embodied by the film. Second, the subjective camera viewpoint presents the film's world as perceived by a Sokurov's character. This implies a narrative identification in which Sokurov's visual field is shared with the spectators. The camera movements as well as the tone of the narration heighten the representation of Sokurov's perceptual space as private. Both of which are not only subjective but also mimetic of the comportment of a humanly embodied subject. This turns *Elegy of a Voyage* into an anthropomorphic film, defined by humanly gestures and engaged in humanly ways of sensing. The subjective camera positions the spectator within the phenomenal field of the narrator, provoking not only identification with the character, by feeling involved in his or her actions, but also identification with the camera, by sensorially moving with it. This form of identification with the camera is both affective and kinaesthetic. As the camera transverses space (and time) the spectator's perceptual field moves along with it. Malcolm Le Grice notices, the subjective camera viewpoint is 'dialectically related to the way we experience visual continuity in our daily engagement with reality' (2001:136). It tricks the eye into believing that what one is seeing follows a similar temporal continuity to the one we experience in 'reality'. The similarity between human perception and filmic perception lies in their perceived temporal continuum. Therefore, the subjective camera is particularly suited to represent the personal experience of time by creating a shared temporal relationship between the phenomenal field of the spectator and the narrator's. However, the illusion of shared visual fields between spectator and protagonist is easily disrupted. As long as we don't see the narrator's body on screen, the illusion of sharing perceptual fields can be sustained. The presence of the narrator's body on screen disrupts this continuity because it signals to the spectator that she is no longer inside the narrator's consciousness but outside of it. The presence and absence of the enunciating subject's body on screen creates a problem for this illusion.

In *Elegy of a Voyage* Sokurov's voice narrating over the image of his body causes a slippage in the continuity between the time of the shooting and the voice over. The presence of Sokurov's body positions the spectator not within the private field of the narrator's consciousness (as in other more consistent subjective camera viewpoints) neither within the private sphere of the narrator's confession (as in other video-diaries) but as a third person. We look at Sokurov on screen, yet we hear his 'thoughts' on the voice over. This makes *Elegy of a Voyage* resemble a first person fiction film, because the narrator appears as a character and speaks to us as if the events happened before the narration. Moreover, the presence of Sokurov's body on screen problematizes the subjective and authorial character associated to the video-diary because it signals it wasn't himself working behind the camera, positioning the film as a fictional construction and challenging its 'authenticity', a quality often ascribed to the non-fiction video diary. Unlike other video diaries, *Elegy of a Voyage* makes evident that the scenes are staged and planned according to a script. Yet it cannot be considered a fiction film, because it uses non-fictional footage recorded in a real museum with a real person performing himself. It does suggest that the production and style of *Elegy of a Voyage* presents a constructed subjectivity resembling the private experience of a fictional character, as opposed to other nonfictional film diaries. Rascaroli notices the discrepancy involved in the voice over narration of a diary film and the presence of the protagonist on screen; on one hand weakening the authorial voice and on the other, strengthening the character's position as protagonist (2009:133).

### **Temporality And The Construction Of The Subject**

Film and video diaries often take travelling as a crucial element of the story because they tend to portray not only geographical journeys across space, but also internal, psychological journeys through time. The crafting of a video diary always involve the integration of different temporal moments and the articulation of a connective link between the places of the journey (Rascaroli, 2009:116). Rascaroli writes:

'The filmic diary is twice in the present: it offers the 'now' of the recorded images (because images are always in the present tense), and the 'now' of the reflection and commentary on them' (2009:129).

Through the editing, the diary-filmmaker both remembers and re-constructs her past, while re-living the events that unfold on screen. Its making requires not only the construction of the film but also the self-construction of the filmmaker's identity, who is constantly in a process of identifying her own attitudes and responses towards the images and the process of expressing them through the narration. This is particularly evident in *Elegy of a Voyage*, because Sokurov's character continuously questions his own position within the images of the film. For instance, the first scenes in *Elegy of a Voyage* establish that we have embarked on a journey. This is conveyed through images of a river (T.C. 00:01:41), birds flying over water (T.C. 00:01:22) and roads and landscapes seen from a moving vehicle (T.C. 0:02:03).<sup>36</sup> These initial images set a kinaesthetic foundation for the film and readily establish that we are set on a journey, although neither the images nor the narration specify the locations or itinerary. Sokurov character seems to be constantly lost in different places while the narration remains vague about the events he describes. In one scene, Sokurov doesn't remember how he ended up walking next to a monk towards a church in which a baptism is taking place (T.C. 0:04:45). He asks: 'What am I doing here? Who sent me?' (T.C. 0:08:26) and a moment after he asks: 'Where am I?' (T.C. 0:09:10). Later on we see him on a moving boat leaving a city shore at night but he doesn't specify where he is heading to and only notices that he is alone (T.C. 00:12:28). This poetic form of narration is more expressive of the psychological dimension of Sokurov's character rather than of the geographical journey he is performing. The constant reiteration of his thoughts about solitude, melancholy and spiritual search constitute the emotional landscape of the film, while geographical references remain irrelevant.

### **The Presence Of The Body In *Elegy Of A Voyage***

The presence of Sokurov's body on *Elegy of a Voyage* serves as a visual reference of his embodied relation to the spaces he travels through. It appears as either a silhouette framed from the back, something that Silke Panse relates to the romantic *Rückenfigur* ('back-view figure') or in close-up images showing details of his body (Panse, 2006:10). On one hand, Sokurov's embodied experience is suggested through subjective camera

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<sup>36</sup> See Figure 7 in the Appendix.



viewpoints. On the other, it is visually represented through the framing of his body on screen. The camera shifts between Sokurov's internal perception and its bodily presence, which de-stabilizes the illusion of perceptually sharing his visual field. For instance, in one scene Sokurov's back figure slowly walks towards an open door<sup>37</sup> (T.C. 0:27:18). We are aware that the silhouette on screen belongs to the voice we hear because the narration explicitly describes Sokurov's act of going through the door, yet we are no longer looking at the world through his eyes. In a sense, the connective tissue of the film is not enabled by identification with the camera but rather by the constant reiteration between the image and the voice over. Mary Ann Doane suggests that the voice-off always submits to the body on screen because 'it belongs to a character who is confined to the space of the diegesis, if not to the visible space of the screen' (1980: 41). In that sense, the body of Sokurov on screen acts as a support for the film's narrative. In *Elegy of a Voyage*, the voice over narration explicitly emphasizes the different temporal locations of the non-diegetic voice and the image. The voice seems to recognize the images and remember the events as they are shown, constantly questioning itself: '*Who has brought me here?*' (T.C. 0:29:31), '*Why is that frame empty?*' (T.C. 0:27:48), '*Is it an island?*' (T.C. 0:25:58). By questioning the content of the image and the location of the protagonist, the voice over both weakens the authority of the narration and reinforces its subjective tone. It says:

*'I was still alone but someone guided me, it was neither night nor dawn. Then there was a blossoming tree in my path, as if this were Japan?'* (T.C. 0:26:07)<sup>38</sup>

The coupling of the images and narration help sustain a clear narrative continuity. However, it is not through identification with the camera viewpoint that we, spectators are able to follow the flow of the film. Le Grice writes about the spectator's identification with the camera, which, he makes clear, is not the same as an identification through the camera or of the camera. The identification *with* the camera is most frequently approached 'via the personification of the camera in the character point-of-view shot, or its extreme extension as the point of view of the first-person filmmaker' (Le Grice, 2001:180). In both cases, he argues, the identification is lost by the identification with a character, and is relocated now as an identification through the

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<sup>37</sup> See Figure 8.

<sup>38</sup> See Figure 9 in the Appendix.

camera and with the character. Although *Elegy of a Voyage* is an example of what Le Grice considers an extreme identification with the camera, identification is not enabled by subjective viewpoints but by the narrative continuity in the voice over which sutures the shifts between different perspectives.

### The Mimesis of Sokurov's Body

The overall framing and photographic style of *Elegy of a Voyage* suggests an attempt to provoke not only an identification with the character through the subjective viewpoint of the camera but with the character's own ways of sensing. Throughout the film there are multiple references to Sokurov's sensations and the physical experience of Sokurov's body moving. For instance, Sokurov's hands are shown touching over the surface of the gallery walls, almost caressing the paintings (T.C. 00:31:52).<sup>39</sup> The narration also verbalizes Sokurov's physical sensations. In a scene, Sokurov finds a snowed cherry tree (T.C. 0:26:23); the subjective camera frames Sokurov's hand through a close up of his hand touching the tree branches. The voice over says:

*'The branches are cold, my hands are freezing' (T.C 0:26:38)*<sup>40</sup>

In a scene previous to his entrance to the museum, we see an image of Sokurov's legs, his body leaning downward, touching the stone floor with his hand. The voice over says:

*'Then I felt a live warmth from the stones. I found myself in a completely different place' (T.C. 0:25:35)*

After he enters the museum, we see a close up of Sokurov's hands moving through the surface of the walls, caressing them (T.C. 0:33:22). The camera was positioned in a way it resembled Sokurov's perspective while the voice over says:

*'The walls are cold, I want to go faster but something retains me' (T.C. 0:31:59)*

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<sup>39</sup> See Figure 10 in the Appendix.

<sup>40</sup> See Figure 11.

The narration's self reflective tone describes Sokurov's psychological condition as well as literally verbalizing the physical sensations he experiences. A nostalgic tone colours the entire film, the images show a blur effect that softens the edges of the objects on screen and make the film resembles a dream. The expression of embodied sensation through the cinematic language is related to the illusion of a sustained proximity evoked through its framing styles. On a visual level, there are multiple close-ups of Sokurov's body and hands touching the objects he encounters. On an aural level, the whispering voice of Sokurov takes us into his own private sphere, as if one had to be physically close to him in order to hear what he is speaking. On one hand, the framing of Sokurov's body from his own perspective anthropomorphically transforms the film into a perceptual body. The film's gestures and body language becomes a mimesis of Sokurov's performance, re-enacted by the film's movements and gestures.

However, the mimesis of Sokurov's body by the film is not entirely consistent. The camera's movement is mechanically regulated by tracking shots. It moves swiftly and softly through space unlike the movement of a human body. After Sokurov has entered the museum, the camera pans softly and slowly into the first room (T.C. 00:27:34). It continues to move upstairs, as if it was floating.<sup>41</sup> The movement of the camera doesn't correspond to the movement of Sokurov's body, yet we know it represents Sokurov's visual field. Although the tracking shots betray a realistic sense of bodily movement, it shows us relatively similar changes in visual perspective as the ones Sokurov would experience. Through this kinaesthetic mimesis, the film's body engages with the world through Sokurov's character. However, it is the film's own body language, its way of moving over the objects Sokurov touches that 'moves' us. By watching the camera panning softly, and whether or not I [as spectator] agree with the fiction of the camera gaze as Sokurov's eyes, I can however, feel the space inside the gallery as I emphatically imagine it being similar to the movement of my own body across the same represented space. The subjective camera creates a form of empathy that allows me, as spectator, to experience the space of that film haptically, kinaesthetically and affectively. As I perceptually *move* inside the spaces represented on the film, I am

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<sup>41</sup> In 'The Russian Ark' Year, Country, Sokurov makes a consistent use of a subjective camera viewpoint that represents the visual field of a ghost also rambling through a museum. Similarly, the visual field of the ghost moves by means of tracking shots.

kinaesthetically affected by their spatial components, by the distribution and layout of the objects I see and the objects Sokurov is touching. The spaces, seen through Sokurov's eyes affect me differently and provoke different reactions on me than if I was watching a film made entirely of still images.<sup>42</sup> The style of framing Sokurov's own body from his own perspective attentively mimics the way in which his own hands would appear to himself. This turns *Elegy of a Voyage* in an anthropomorphic film because by means of representing the bodily of experience of Sokurov, the film had to *become* human in the sense of adopting human gestures and bodily attitudes. However, the film necessarily departs from the actual sensations it evokes, because sensuous experience represented on film always produces a slippage between actual sensation and cinematic representation.

The sensuous imprint of *Elegy of a Voyage* is independent from Sokurov's actual experience, and anthropomorphic as it may be, it is still constituted by the film's own ways of sensing, that is, its expressive behaviour, its gestures, body language and attitudes towards the world (Barker, 2009). Moreover, each film presents a sensing body of its own, proper to itself, which produces meaning independently from its authorial voice. Each 'film's body' presents a unique organization of meaning and a unique sensuous geography (Sobchack, 1992:133). The body of the film speaks of itself and on its own, without its meaning being dependant on an authorial voice. *Elegy of a Voyage* makes sense *on* its own because it constructs meanings that escape Sokurov's intentions. The use of a first person voice and the subjective camera viewpoint facilitate the representation of sensuous experience because these techniques signal the individual experience of an embodied subject and presuppose an extension of that subject's perceptual field into the cinema screen. Although the enunciation of the self through the use of first person narration doesn't automatically grant the spectator an access into the character's ways of sensing, neither can it fully translate the complexities of sensuous experience as it was lived in-the-flesh, it can however signal the presence of human subjectivity and provoke a form of bodily identification between the viewer and the film.

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<sup>42</sup> See the discussion on Patrick Keiller's *London* and *Robinson in Space* in page 75.

## The Merging Of Represented Space With Lived Space

In the last scenes of *Elegy of a Voyage*, Sokurov walks around the gallery looking at the paintings on the walls. The narration suggests he is symbolically entering each of the paintings he sees. The voice over describes the characters and the scenes Sokurov sees in the same way it would describe real, non-represented space. In other words, the narration refers to elements inside the paintings as if they were situated in Sokurov's own reality. This aspect of *Elegy of a Voyage* exemplifies the travelogue film motto: to experience (and perceptually inhabit) other places through film. The activity of travel already involves the internalization of lived space through the senses, not only seeing places but feeling, sensing, smelling, touching and moving through them. In *Elegy of a Voyage*, Sokurov suggests this as a double metaphor. Sokurov looks at the painting *St. Mary's Square and St. Mary's Church at Utrecht* (1662) by Pieter Saenredam, he stares at the people in the painting and says: '*the people used to come here for a walk*' (T.C. 00:41:52). He looks at Pieter the Elder Brueghel's *The Little Tower of Babel* (c.1563) and wonders who the builders are (T.C. 0:37:45) and how convenient it was to put ships along the shore (T.C. 00:37:10).<sup>43</sup> This happens throughout his visit to the gallery. Near the end of the film, Sokurov looks at a painted sky and says:

*'I remember well this sky. I remember it well because I waited a long time for the cloud to move away from me, so I could see its reverse side and read what was written on it: If there is faith, the sky is alive. Is all death below?'* (T.C. 00:40:29)<sup>44</sup>

The poetics in *Elegy of a Voyage* blur the line between represented space and lived space. Sokurov's character seems to dwell between these interstices, seeing the world as dream. This exemplifies the emotional imprint of the film and works as a metaphor of the vividness of mental images, memories and emotions as ones that intersect with the situated-ness of our bodies. *Elegy of a Voyage* portrays the inner world of Sokurov drawn as the materialization of memory into the images of the paintings, symbolically transcending the realm of the mind. It produces a double metaphor for the film spectator, and a double phenomenology: Sokurov enters the paintings as we enter the

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<sup>43</sup> See Figure 12 in the Appendix.

<sup>44</sup> See Figure 13.

film. He travels to represented space in the same way we, spectators, travel to the spaces inside the film.

### Patrick Keiller's *London* and *Robinson in Space*

*London* (1994) is a non-fiction film by Patrick Keiller structured as a journey around the English capital and narrated in first person. *London* recounts the ramblings of Robinson and his male lover as they visit the city and its suburbs through the work and life of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century poets such as Arthur Rimbaud, Guillaume Apollinaire, Charles Baudelaire, Horace Walpole and Laurence Sterne. *London* shows monuments and historical landmarks while the narrator discusses the public spaces of the city and its economical and social problems. In 1997 Patrick Keiller released the sequel *Robinson in Space*, a travelogue around England. This time, Robinson and the Narrator are set on a quest to discover 'the problem of England' (T.C. 0:04:39). *Robinson in Space* follows the footsteps of Daniel Defoe's *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-26) and travels from Reading along the Thames while formulating different critiques on English economic and social situation at the time. At first glance both *London* and *Robinson in Space* seem like traditional documentaries with a classic aesthetic and a male, English speaking voice over. Both films present similar approaches to filmmaking and are made almost entirely of internal forms of montage.<sup>45</sup> The coupling of first person narration and internal montage largely conforms the cinematic style of Keiller's travelogues. This style presents the voice of the invisible narrator as phantasmagorical and devoid of any bodily relation to the spaces and places represented. It portrays Robinson as a character present in the narration but not physically located in the places represented on the film. The places shown on both films are shot from a distance, often through long shots (*Robinson in Space*, T.C. 00:23:49, 00:19:07).<sup>46</sup> This style of framing reflects an objective mode of vision in which places are apprehended as optical objects, devoid from a sense of proximity (*London*, T.C. 00:03:54, 00:17:43).<sup>47</sup> In this sense, *London* and *Robinson in Space* lack haptic

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<sup>45</sup> An internal montage uses static cameras, with events unfolding inside the frame.

<sup>46</sup> See Figures 14 and 15 in the Appendix.

<sup>47</sup> See Figures 16 and 17.

expression. Instead, they convey a sense of mobility through its narrative, which moves swiftly through space –geographically, and through time –historically (Mazierka and Rascaroli, 2006). The static style of framing used in *Robinson in Space* and *London* speak of a particular phenomenal relation between the film and the spectator. Mazierka and Rascaroli write:

‘Robinson’s and the Narrator’s aloofness from the places they visit is also rendered visually and aurally. There is often a significant distance between the camera (identified as the place occupied by the travellers) and the object to which the Narrator refers in his monologue’ (2006: 69).

The aloofness of Robinson’s and the Narrator is related to the fact that they don’t appear to be physically located in any place (*Robinson in Space*, T.C. 00:03:27).<sup>48</sup> Their bodies are unseen, therefore ‘we do not experience the consequences of their actions. They remain hidden both from people in the crowd and are ineffective, like spies or even ghosts’ (Mazierka and Rascaroli, 2006:69). Both Robinson and the Narrator are only present as disembodied subjectivities. Although there are no references to bodily movement or to the presence of an embodied subject we are aware that what we see on screen represents the visual field of the narrator. The absence of the narrator’s body coupled with first person voice over would, in theory, give us a sustained illusion of a shared visual field with the narrator, yet the lack of expressivity in camera movements renders this identification un-effective. In *Robinson in Space* and *London*, the relationship between the spectator and the film is primordially conditioned by the overarching weight of the narrator’s voice. We see the images of towns, buildings and monuments but the sounds of the location are rather dim. Instead, the sound of the narrator’s voice takes over the audiovisual presence of the film. In fact, the true suturing force of *Robinson in Space* and *London* is not the internal montage but the narrator’s voice, which incessantly guides the journey, tying together seeming unrelated images. Both films seem to provoke a divided attention between intellectual reflection on the content of the narration and a distanced and optical appropriation of the neatly framed landscapes (*Robinson in Space*, T.C. 00:38:38, 00:59:42).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> See Figures 18 in the Appendix.

<sup>49</sup> See Figures 19 and 20

There are however, few instances in which *London* directly appeal to a tactile mode of vision, as opposed to an optical one. Throughout the film, we see images of water surfaces taken from different points of the river Thames and its canals. For instance, the waters of the Brent River (T.C. 1:02:35)<sup>50</sup>, waters under the bridges of London (T.C. 0:18:01) and other unspecified water surfaces of a dirty canal (T.C. 0:16:10), spiralling waves (T.C. 0:19:15), muddy waters (T.C. 0:48:36) and raindrops falling on a canal (T.C. 0:29:55). On one hand, these images serve as *leitmotif* for the film. They signal the passing of time and a change of location for Robinson and the Narrator. Each image of water surfaces present different movements, wind direction and light, as if they represented the particular conditions of each place. The intersection of quasi-abstract images of water reveals a particular mode of vision that contrasts the overall style of *London* and *Robinson in Space*. The focus on the wavering surface of the water appeals to the tactile senses in that it reveals only light and texture, and departs from the objective style of representation used everywhere else on both films. These images of light on moving waters are coupled with dim sounds and soft melancholic music, intermittently giving *London* a poetic, melancholic tone.

It can be seen how the sound, the style of framing as well as the camera movements can either engage our tactile and embodied modes of vision or suggest a more distanced, optical and objective approach to the experience of viewing a film. Although spectatorship is always an embodied act, the way in which the images are produced directly affect our engagement with them. *Robinson in Space* and *London* don't depart stylistically from the travelogue tradition. Rather, their significance stems from the content of their narrative, which plays with the historical construction of the city and the social aspects of urban development. Moreover, in terms of representing embodied sensation, both films are pronouncedly mute. This analysis of *Robinson in Space* and *London* demonstrate how first person narration doesn't necessarily involve the translation of embodied sensation into film.

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<sup>50</sup> See Figures 21 and 22.



## Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil*

The work of Chris Marker is considered representative of the *cinéma vérité*. Marker is part of what was called The Left Bank Group, which shared 'a desire to keep their work in touch with contemporary social and political realities,' (Lupton, 2005:42).<sup>51</sup> The post war period witnessed the end of the French colonial rule, the Algerian war of independence, the Vietnam War, the Cuban crisis and the Korea War.<sup>52</sup> These events were profoundly reflected in Marker's work, as it can be seen in Marker's film-essay *A Grin Without a Cat* (*Le fond de l'air Est Rouge*, 1977), which explores the worldwide political wars of the 60's and 70's.<sup>53</sup> Some film movements that are related to Marker's work are the influence of Italian neorealism in French cinema.<sup>54</sup> About the same time as the Nouvelle Vague, the *cinéma vérité* developed in France, mainly through the work of Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin. *Cinéma vérité* was aiming to make the spectator have the illusion of genuine reality. We can see a reflection of these movements in Marker's method, which is the film essay through the aesthetics of poetic realism. Marker's films express tensions between fiction and realism, this is evident in his interest in the exotic, far-away lands and the exploration of nostalgia and marginality (Dudley, 1995) From this context in film production, Marker consolidated as a travelling filmmaker, producing films such as *Dimanche à Pékin* (Sunday in Peking, 1956), *Letter from Siberia* (1957), *Description d'un Combat* (Description of a Struggle, 1960), *Cuba Si!* (1961) and *Sans Soleil* (1983). These films derived from Marker's travels to China, Siberia, Israel, Cuba, Japan and the United States.

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<sup>51</sup> In contrast to the Right Bank Group which was formed by the film critics from *Cahiers du Cinema* who turned into filmmakers: Godard, François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol and Jacques Rivette. The Left Bank emerged during the 1950s, at the growth of french documentaries, and was formed by Agnès Varda, Alain Resnais and Marker himself. The Left bank shared a common background and interest in the bohemian artistic movements of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Paris. See Lupton, 2005.

<sup>52</sup> We are looking at a specific socio-political context after World War II, at a time in which an economically drained France was breeding a kind of cinema that tended to go back to popular traditions, as straight narrative in classical French films. The French Nouvelle Vague emerged as a reaction, aesthetically and economically against another type of cinema, as an attempt to break against the big American filmmakers of the time (Narboni, 2001). The French New Wave was rejecting classic cinematic forms, engaging with the social and political struggles of that period, breaking with conservative methods and experimenting with new ways of conceiving visual styles, narratives and editing techniques. This can be seen in the Nouvelle Vague critical self-reflexivity, in which the camera turns to the filmmaking process itself, making it the cinema of the cinema. This characteristic of the Nouvelle Vague is found in Marker's films.

<sup>53</sup> *A Grin Without a Cat* articulates a summary of 10 years of the history of the left. This film clearly shows one of the central characteristics of Marker's work, a subjective approach on history, creating a mixture between political film and documentary, filtered through the subjective view of the author.

<sup>54</sup> Filmmakers such as Rossellini, de Sica and Antonioni were exploring reality as seen by the artist. The complete erasure of the author in Italian neorealism was aimed to express a reality that expressed the difficult economical and moral conditions of post-war Italy.

*Sans Soleil* exemplifies Marker's reflective style. It traces a journey around France, Japan, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Iceland and the US, gathering a collection of images that explore the tensions between cultural history, identity and memory processes. The film is structured as a film essay and is narrated by a woman reading the letters of Sandor Krasna, a fictional cameraman. Both Sandor Krasna and the narrator are fictional characters and pseudonyms that conceal Marker's authorship. However, although it uses fictional characters, *Sans Soleil* combines personal narration with non-fictional footage. In the opening scene we see the image of three girls (T.C. 00:00:12), which the narrator calls 'the image of happiness', lasting about two seconds before cutting to a black screen.<sup>55</sup> The narrator says:

*'One day I'll have to put it all alone at the beginning of a film, with a long spread of black.. if they can't see the happiness in the picture at least they'll see the black' (T.C. 0:00:22).*

The black screen locates the 'now' of the film in the post-production, in the supposed reviewing of the images as seen by the narrator. At the same time, this layering between different temporalities makes evident the moment of the projection event. These cross-references between different temporal moments within the same cinematic image are the very fabric of the film, the pairing of the filmmaking process and the reviewing of the images mixed with the actuality of the narrator's voice. The voice over situates us into the narrator's perceptual sphere, already located in the moment in which she views the footage. In other words, we are not symbolically seeing the images at the supposed moment in which the events were recorded (as in fiction films) but rather, we are viewers of the narrator's act of seeing. The frame represents the narrator's visual field but it is not a traditional subjective viewpoint. Although we are seeing through the narrator's eyes, the sharing of perceptual space only occurs during her act of watching the footage. In that sense, we are not symbolically embodying the narrator's consciousness through a classic subjective camera although we are supposedly seeing what she sees. It is, as if the inter-subjective relationship between film and spectator was further complicated by the narrator's act of viewing the footage. For Sobchack, the activity of seeing is experienced firstly in consciousness as it is directed towards a visible world (1992:97). That is, vision is directed toward the object of

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<sup>55</sup> See Figure 23 in Appendix.

vision. However, in the same way in which I, as a 'body-subject' am aware of myself as an embodied and perceptual being, I can reflectively turn the act of seeing on itself by directing my attention towards my own perceptual vision (Sobchack, 1992:97). In this way, vision becomes reflective, aware of its own act of seeing as it discovers the origins of perception in its own, subjective body. This dynamic in the act of seeing allows us to discover the world as visible in as much as it allows us to discover oneself as a seeing subject. In a similar vein, we are able to discover the other through vision, and to be aware of that other as an embodied subject who is also capable of seeing us. This dynamic process of vision as mutual and inter-subjective is made evident in *Sans Soleil's* voice over narration. The narrator sees the images on the film as we see through her own act of seeing, at the same time, her act of seeing becomes *visible*, because the voice over locates the frame into her perceptual field.

In *Sans Soleil* the narrator's character is unseen, yet it is her vision that symbolically allows us to see through her eyes. As I argued earlier in this chapter, the subjective camera involves the sharing of the character's visual field. However, in *Sans Soleil* vision becomes multi-layered, transposed, displaced from one subject to the other. The inter-subjective character of the film is further enriched by the narrator's voice. Mary Ann Doane writes:

'As soon as the sound is detached from its source, no longer anchored by a represented body, its potential work as a signifier is revealed. There is something always uncanny about a voice which emanates from a source outside the frame' (Doane, 1980: 40).

For Doane, the voice in film articulates both the film's body and its spatial setting (1998). The voice serves as a support for the spectator's bodily identification with film, as such it is always anchored in a given body, sometimes an invisible one. At the same time, that body is always already anchored in a given space (Doane, 1998: 36). The voice in the film implicates the spectator inter-subjective relationship to the film because it constructs the limits of its diegesis and presupposes a location or source from where the voice emanates, in a sense. The invisible narrator in *Sans Soleil* is not located within the diegetic space of the film. However, her voice accounts for a space in the film that the camera does not register. For Doane, 'it is its radical otherness with respect to the diegesis which endows this voice with a certain authority' (1998:42). The narrator's

invisibility is only signalled through her disembodied voice, making her subjective act of seeing visible through the film. The inter-subjective vision involved in *Sans Soleil* provokes a form of identification between the film and spectator because by making evident the subjective act of vision, it invites the sharing of the narrator's visual field.

However, the use of haptic images in *Sans Soleil* promotes a bodily form of identification that activates haptic vision in the spectator. The treatment of the images in the postproduction, the electronic distortions made with a synthesizer, the movement and composition of images recorded from television, the close-ups, portraits, and landscape shots reveal a haptic visuality at work. The instances of *Sans Soleil* in which texture is revealed as form or electronic distortions shown as surface speak of a form of vision that provokes an engagement with the image through the body. In relation to the other case studies discussed in this chapter, my experience of watching *Sans Soleil* is not one that simply derives bodily identification from the camera, as in Sokurov's *Elegy of a Voyage*. The camera is not there to resemble human subjectivity; it is not, anthropomorphic in a sense. However, it engages my own embodied subjectivity through an inter-subjective act of vision, at the same time it appeals to my haptic senses because it presents images that transcend optical vision.

### **Johan van der Keuken's *Amsterdam Global Village***

*Amsterdam Global Village* (1996) is a four-hour travelogue that follows the journey of Khalid, a Moroccan-Dutch courier driving his moped across Amsterdam. Although the film is based on the city of Amsterdam, it takes us to Bolivia, Chechnya, Sarajevo and Thailand. Throughout the film, van der Keuken present multiple stories around the notions of belonging and exile exploring the intricate mix of cultures, ethnicities and nationalities that create the social fabric of the city. Moreover, *Amsterdam* maps cultural geographies that challenge the distinction between centre and periphery, between north and south, and render these categories as paradoxes inherent in global forms of citizenship. Such geographies are traced along sensuous experience, through and across the borders of the city but also across the frontiers of the racial and the cultural. *Amsterdam* not only portrays the global aspects of the city but also of other

ways of sensing, both cross-culturally and cinematically. It presents characters that have experienced a form of cultural displacement such as Roberto, a Bolivian guy living in Amsterdam; Khalid, a Moroccan-Dutch courier; Borz-Ali, a Chechen exile and a group of Chinese children learning the alphabet in school. Through their stories, van der Keuken traces an embodied geography of the city, threading the very fabric of its subcultures. Van der Keuken's camera follows these characters as they move around the city. The wandering gaze of the camera traces the film along the circular structures of Amsterdam's canals. Through these journeys, van der Keuken cinematically builds a city of moving people, giving the film a deeply kinaesthetic imprint based on bodily movement.

### **Perception And Tactility In Van Der Keuken's Films**

The films of van der Keuken show a concern about the portrayal of the body, not as a visual object but rather as the embodiment of political autonomy, of asymmetrical sense perception, of difference and marginalization in its most physical dimension. Thomas Elsaesser refers to van der Keuken's films as 'a body of perceptual surfaces', a body expressed in v.d. Keuken's particular ways of seeing, an almost 'clinical, unflinching gaze' reflected on the bodily images of his films (Elsaesser, 2005:202). Keuken's camera approaches its subjects from various and simultaneous viewpoints, often composing the image in relation to different vantage points, using intricate points of view that move away from the formality of central perspective (Elsaesser, 2005:203). His way of seeing afford his films a strong authorial imprint, although the camera is not explicitly subjective in the sense of portraying his own position as the viewer and recorder of the events. Instead, v.d. Keuken's camera lingers closely around his subjects, allowing the images to describe close encounters that neither deny his presence nor highlight it.

Van der Keuken's filmmaking style can be considered as particularly synaesthetic, because his treatment of the images often revolves around haptic modes of vision. This is evident in *Amsterdam, Global Village* (1996), which features various scenes that focus solely on the way light reveals texture. This style of filmmaking turns images into tactile

surfaces. In order to accomplish this tactile transformation of the visual, van der Keuken waits for slow events to unravel in front of the lens. In *Amsterdam*, the long tracking shots of the canals create slower rhythms within the film (T.C. 2:07:35). Light becomes prominent as it is reflected on the surface of the water showing the variations of colour in every ripple and wave (T.C. 3:31:17).<sup>56</sup> The changes of tempo and rhythm in these scenes reveal v. d. Keuken's capacity to portray sensuous experience through the observation of light. For instance, swirling lights reflected on the water of the canals (T.C. 3:32:00), chiaroscuro portraits of the characters (T.C. 00:29:33, 00:58:34), lens flares and rain drops through glass window (T.C. 0:04:46), close-up image of the texture of a lobster (T.C. 1:22:47), all these scenes show an emphasis on surfaces and textures triggered by light changes.<sup>57</sup> This characteristic of van der Keuken's style is also present in *The Eye Above the Well* (1988). For instance, in the opening scene we can see the sunlight passing through tree branches (T.C. 0:00:03), light passing through smoke (T.C. 0:01:55), the shade of palm trees reflected on water (T.C. 00:03:13). This emphasis on surfaces and light is also evident in the way van der Keuken approaches his subjects. The bodies that appear in *The Eye Above the Well* are framed from a close distance, often revealing their nudity unabashedly (T.C. 0:05:07). V.d. Keuken's gaze is neither objectifying nor distant but rather intimate, recording his subjects from a close, embodied proximity. By choosing to move closer towards the subjects of his films, van der Keuken shows a radically human way of portraying cultural difference, based not solely on the materiality of the body but rather on its performance as a peer. In Elsaesser words, Keuken's films replace 'hierarchy with contiguity and coexistence, making us aware also what is at stake politically in the new proximity and ethically at what risk' (2005:209). In *The Eye Above the Well*, this pronounced proximity is evident in the way v.d. Keuken frames the performing bodies of dancers, martial artists and religious people. His camera is never afar but rather moves along with them, touches them, frames them intimately and allows the spectator to emphatically engage with them.

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<sup>56</sup> See Figure 24 in Appendix.

<sup>57</sup> See Figure 25, 26 and 27.

## Corporeal Images And The Handheld Camera

V. d. Keuken's camera movements in *Amsterdam Global Village* (1996) flow with the music of the film, especially in scenes in which the music is part of the diegetic sound. Keuken daringly changes positions, moving the camera swiftly along the rhythm of the music. This style of shooting allows a high degree of spontaneity and improvisation to come through the filmmaking, and reveals v.d. Keuken's style as intuitive and connected to the movement of his own body. The movement of his hand holding the camera is brought to the forefront as an integral element of the film. The framing allows one to sense v.d. Keuken's pulse moving and at times even correcting the viewfinder's position. For instance, almost at the end of *Amsterdam*, we can see a scene of an orchestra (T.C. 00:03:35:46). The first minutes of the scene show a medium shot of the orchestra director at work, swinging the baton in the air. As the seconds pass, his gestures reveal a particular minutia, each one pregnant with meaning as it becomes evident that each movement of the baton anticipates a change in the score. We don't see the musicians as the camera is focused on the figure of the director. At the climax of the song, the camera starts to move swiftly across the room without focusing on anyone in particular but rather following the rhythm of the music. It is, as if the baton was transformed into v.d. Keuken's camera, who decidedly imprinted the movement of his hand into the movement of the film. It is what David MacDougall would call a 'corporeal image' which are 'not just the images of other bodies; they are also images of the body behind the camera and its relations with the world' (2006:3). v.d. Keuken's camera, moves with the music as one would move our heads or feet to its rhythm. It becomes apparent that unlike the director of the orchestra, v.d. Keuken could not anticipate the changes in the score and there is one last movement of the camera that follows a preceding rhythm without matching it. It lasts barely a few seconds but it speaks about a certain relationship between the act of recording - through a mechanic device - and the body behind the process, the body of the filmmaker. This is also evident in another scene (T.C. 1:22:59), which shows Khalid listening to electronic music in his flat while the camera moves from object to object and from wall to wall while following the rhythm of the music. A particular relationship between body and technology is evident here in the way v.d. Keuken's handheld camera follows the music, this time not the flowing music of an orchestra but the electronic

beats of a synthesizer. The handheld camera attempts to follow the rhythm but the movement pulsates with the shakes of a human hand and doesn't quite mimic the precision of electronic beats. In a playful re-enactment of the music as it is felt through his body, Keuken gives expression not only to the way things look, to his own gaze or way of seeing but rather to his own embodied expression of sound. This is perhaps one of the most faithful types of translation of embodied experience into cinematic language, from the kinesthetic movement of a hand to the shaky frames of the film. In a sense, although this example doesn't consist of a formal representation of embodied sensation, the image is a direct by-product of lived translation from auditory stimuli into bodily movement.

The films of van der Keuken make evident that subjectivity can be implied in film practice without necessarily representing a particular subject. In *Amsterdam Global Village* and *The Eye Above the Well* it is van der Keuken's who records and edits the films, yet he is not present as a character in the narrative neither his presence is something obvious or evident during the films. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, the use of a subjective voice or the presence of a first person narration can in fact verbalize the embodied sensations the protagonist experiences, as in the case of Sokurov's *Elegy of a Voyage* or Marker's *Sans Soleil*, but there are other forms of expressing embodied experience without necessarily representing a particular subject. While the enunciation of subjective experience can open the possibility of translating embodied sensation, the expression of embodied sensation also occurs through the ways in which the images are framed, the aesthetic style and even the way the production process is approached by the filmmaker. If subjective approaches in travel filmmaking have indeed challenged the ocular realism characteristic of the travelogue film, it hasn't always been through the use of a subjective voice. On one hand, self-representation allows film to acquire an authorial voice and grants it with a particular set of perceptions associated to a particular subjectivity, that of the filmmaker or protagonist. However, the expression of embodied experience can also be signalled through the visual representation of the sensing body, the use of haptic images or through the evocation of haptic modes of vision.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Experimental Travelogue

In this chapter I discuss non-linear and non-narrative structures in the experimental travelogue film and their potential to express the embodied experience of travelling. I also analyse how these structures affect our experience of space and place through film. I relate the notion of haptic images and haptic modes of vision to the translation of embodied sensation. These notions are discussed through the analysis of films such as Lisl Ponger's *'Passagen'* (1996), *'Gone Troppo'* (1984) by Nicholas Nedekopoulos, Joram Ten Brink's *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales* (1997), *'Motel to Motel'* by Ryan Stec and Véronique Couillard, *400 Series* by Leslie Peters, Fern Silva's travel films such as *Sahara Mosaic* (2009) and *In The Absence of Light, Darkness Prevails*.

#### The Non-Linear Structure: Dislocating Travel Itineraries

The non-linearity of the experimental film subscribes to a critique of authoritarian symbolic regimes in which causal representations conform the rule. The dominant structure in narrative cinema arranges scenes into a linear sequence of causal events. That is, images are arranged through a logic that illustrates an order based on cause and effect. Moreover, the dominant narrative structure in the travelogue film uses the linear continuity of the travel journey as cinematic structure. This is mostly evident in the way travelogues often begin and end with scenes of departure and arrival. This causal ordering of the travel journey represents human actions as a linear course or continuum. This is based on a discourse that conceives travel as a progressive movement from point A to B and is consistent throughout the history of the travelogue. Moreover this structure is also present in holiday amateur films and videos (Nicholson, 2009:95). According to Le Grice, this linearity is dialectically related to the ways in which we experience and perceive reality (Le Grice, 2001:136). He writes:

'In a sense, all our perceptions and consciousness take place in a 'timeline' but it is evident that from these discrete temporal elements –our perceptions- we are able to construct concepts which are not themselves fundamentally temporal. For example, from our temporal perceptions we can model spatial relationships, or link temporal events to construct a hierarchy, which is not itself linearly causal – as in the psychological associations of memory' (Le Grice, 2001:292).

Although we perceive reality as a continuous stream through time, the processes of memory allow us to change our attention towards other spatio-temporal moments. This idea is evident in Deleuze's theory of the time-image, in which he distinguishes between actual and virtual images (Deleuze, 1989:79).<sup>58</sup> In a similar way, non-linear structures in experimental film and video seem to resemble this simultaneous merging of memory and actuality into a temporal continuum. As Le Grice asserts, film is unavoidably a time-based medium and as such it subscribes to a temporal continuum (2001:298). The problem is not however, the implicit temporal ordering of images through the duration of a film but rather, its causal arrangement into a hierarchical symbolic order. Causality dictates a relationship of cause and effect that determines the meaning between one image and another. It implicates a determined relationship between the meaning of the images and pre-establishes the symbolic order of its reading. The linearity that prevails in dominant narrative cinema represses the viewer's own construction of meaning (Le Grice, 2001:292). On the other hand, non-linear structures allow new links and cross-referential relations to emerge, creating new connective hierarchies (Le Grice, 2001:296). Moreover, non-linearity entails the indeterminacy of the film's symbolic order, which allows the spectator's sensuous memory to contribute in the formation of the meaning of the image. Non-linearity turns the image into affective sensation because it allows the spectator's own sensuous construction through the film experience.

Moreover, the experimental film tradition has proposed different alternatives to the linearity of sequential narrative. Techniques that create different temporalities within a film, such as the a-temporal montage, the use of different scenes into simultaneous continuum and the alteration of the consequential succeeding of events by means of repetition. When these techniques are applied to the experimental travelogue film, they

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<sup>58</sup> For a discussion of Deleuze's theory of actual and virtual images, see Chapter 1, pages 18-19.

create a rupture in the representation of places as connective points in the journey. They also discursively depart from the travelogue's association to the practice of tourism. The traditional travelogue is based on the narration of the journey and the sequential description of places. On the other hand, the experimental travelogue film tends to conceive the notion of place as an abstraction of spatial references, instead of tracing specific itineraries across geographical points. Structuring the travel journey as non-linear causes the sequential dis-ordering of locations and their disassociation from the itinerary as a chronological and geographical register. In this way, the notion of place is abstracted from specific locations at the same time in which the ordering of the scenes becomes unrelated to the itinerary of the journey. This is the case of non-linear films such as Fern Silva's *Sahara's Mosaic* and *In the Absence of Light, Darkness Prevails*, Nicholas Nedekopoulos's *Gone Troppo* (1984), *Motel to Motel* (2006) by Ryan Stec and Veronique Couillard and Joram Ten Brink's *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales* (1996). All of which gather footage of travel journeys without directly referencing exact locations. In some cases there are implicit references of place, as in *Motel to Motel*'s exterior light boxes displaying hotel names or *Sahara's Mosaic*'s street signs which indicate the film was shot in an Arab speaking country. However, locations are mostly irrelevant to these films' structures. In *Motel to Motel* the body of the filmmakers takes central stage, radically departing from the traditional travelogue's common themes such as cultural difference and landscape. *Motel to Motel* expresses the physical, perceptual and sexual side of motel dwelling, altogether dismissing geographical references. In experimental travel films, when information about locality is not readily available through the film narrative, the notions of space and place are explored from a liminal context of perceptual and bodily references. In films such as *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales*, the narration mentions some of the location. However, its non-linear style suggests there isn't a direct relation between the narration and the images. The randomized ordering of the images alter its meaning through repetition, dislocating the travel itinerary. This form of cinematic composition dislocates the notion of travel as the sequential visiting of geographical references and relocates its experience back into sensuous perception.

Non-linearity has the potential to portray travel through the expression of internal processes such as memory, affect and sensation. Non-linear films have the structural

quality to drift, swirl and curl back upon themselves through repetition or through the distortion of temporal references. These a-temporal qualities seem to resemble memory processes, making it a potential tool for the expression of embodied sensation. On one hand, memory is not experienced as a direct stream of chronologically arranged perceptions towards the present. This aspect of the experience of travelling as sensorially embodied, turns non-linear structures into a tool to disengage the spectator from the sequential ordering of the journey. It also turns the cinematic representation of travel into a sensuously productive space for the spectator to perform her own sensuous journey. Non-linear travelogue films enable the spectator to allocate the film image within her own affective and sensorial narratives rather than being stitched to the causality of pre-determined plot.

Non-linear films activate a process of meaning production in which new relations between the images are created. An example of this is *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales* by Joram Ten Brink, which gathers images from China, India, San Francisco, Antarctica, Italy, Holland and France. It creates a complex mix of urban scenes, landscapes, images of rural workers, roads and other sites of passage combined with electronic sounds, music and voice over narration. The narration is sparingly positioned in a few scenes, telling stories about infidelity, travel, emotion and what seems to be an interview with a man who can't dream, cry, fantasize or talk about his feelings (hence the film's title). Some parts of the narration are repeated, each time combined with different images. This allows different associations of meaning to emerge every time the narration appears. Instead of dictating how the story is to be read in a unidirectional flow, the film allows enough room for detours and digressions. This capacity of the experimental travelogue stands parallel to the perception of memory in human experience, in which memories are re-played over and over again in different spatio-temporal moments, re-visiting our stream of consciousness and acquiring new meanings and associations each time they are recalled. The graininess, dust and scratches of *The Man Who Couldn't Feel* give relevance to the film's surface as a primordial interface in the spectator's experience. The haptic quality of its texture blurs the immediacy of image content and invites the spectator to productively engage with the film through her tactile senses. In other words, the indeterminacy of the image acts as a pivotal mechanism that triggers a haptic mode of vision in the spectator.

According to Le Grice, non-linearity is concerned with two aspects in film: abstraction and a break with narrative form (2001:289-290). Although haptic images are not necessarily abstract, they however involve a degree of indeterminacy as a primordial quality. It can be seen how haptic images in cinema are related to non-linear structures in the sense that both qualities entail the disruption of a linear relation between the symbolic order of narrative content and the process of meaning production during the cinematic experience. In that sense, *The Man Who Couldn't Feel* challenge the relation between the symbolic content of the image and the profilmic event on one hand, and of the image and the narration/sound on the other. This is also the case of Nedekopoulos's *Gone Troppo* and Silva's *In the Absence of Light, Darkness Prevails* in which a non-linear structure allow the spectator to explore other aspects of the travel experience that are not brought to the forefront in linear and narrative film.

Another first person travelogue with a non-linear structure is *Gallivant* (1996), a film by British filmmaker Andrew Köttling. In *Gallivant*, the filmmaker sets on a journey around the coasts of Britain along with his mother Gladys and his daughter Eden, who suffers from Joubert's syndrome, a medical condition that affects coordination and communication. *Gallivant* combines the travelogue structure with experimental techniques into a diary-like film. The narrative combines conversations between Gladys, Andrew and Eden with voice over narration along with conversations that depict the travel journey through their encounters with local people. The editing shows a past paced rhythm, in which the constant acceleration of images is contrasted to the tranquil sceneries of small coastal towns. At the same time, the audio combines out of synch conversations with the sounds of locations, which creates a mixture of different temporalities. Only Gladys' voice seems to take us back into the present of the story. Mary Ann Doane suggests that experiments with asynchronous sound in the cinema displace the unity of the film from the body of the character to the film itself (1980). In other words, it makes evident the totality ascribed to film through the unity of its sound and image. In *Gallivant*, the juxtaposition of different temporal moments between the diegetic space of the film and the voice over emphasizes the 'fantasmatic body' of the film (Doane, 1980:34). Its unity and sensuous coherence become adhered to its audiovisual presence.

The shifting from fast to slow tempos creates moments of rest inside the film, breaking the continuous flow of the narrative. The contradiction between states of rest and movement within the film seem to express Kötting's nostalgia over the irrevocable passing of time. The emotional landscape of the film is expressed through the family relationship between the characters in which daughter, father and grandmother record their journey together, as a means of preserving the moment, fighting against the imminent separation that succeeds the end of the trip. In *Gallivant*, family drama is not as much literal as it is subjacent, colouring the entire film with emotions about loss, grief and a celebration of the present.

### **The Non-Narrative: Story-Sensing And Other Ruptures**

A key question in the discussion of experimental, non-narrative travelogue films has to do with issues about the performance of subjectivity and its inscription into the structure of the film. The traditional travelogue uses the narration of the traveller as a way of structuring the journey into an episodic narrative, organizing the events into scenes within an apparent chronological order. This is also the case of video-diaries and narrative essay-films with a travelogue structure, in which the use of first person narration contributes to the construction of the travelling subject. The narrative enunciation of the self as performer of the travel journey provides traditional travelogue films with a stable sense of selfhood and place. Conversely, the subjective character of experimental travelogue films is often only signalled through its authorship rather than explicitly positioning the filmmaker as narrator. In that sense, although they express the filmmaker's vision, they are not necessarily autobiographic. The role of the narration and the use of voice over in the experimental travel film tends to break with the singularity of the first person voice, as it does not rely on a single, unified subject. In some cases, the identity of the narrator is not specified, as in Joram Ten Brink's *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales* (1996), in other films it uses multiple voices to construct the narration, as in the case of *Passagen* (1996) by Lisl Ponger. Other experimental travelogue films use a voice over only to introduce or end the film, as in the case of *In the Absence of Light, Darkness Prevails* by Fern Silva (2010).

Experimental travel films challenge the notion of the traveller as a stable, unified subject through the use of multiple layers in the narration and through the use of multiple points of vision. In *Passagen* (1996) the narration uses the voices of different travellers arriving and leaving Vienna, telling stories about forced emigration as they escape from the Nazis. The juxtaposition of different voices enriches the film's narrative and creates a mixture of personal accounts. The voice over is combined with found footage that was originally intended for private use, in other words amateur film material taken during holidays and personal travels. The relationship between image and audio is not direct, as images don't illustrate the narration we hear on the voice over. Contrary to the traditional travelogue in which a traveling subject is both performer and storyteller, *Passagen* offers multiple vantage points of vision as well as multiple voices. Its relationship to a subjective view seems ambiguous; the first person voice over makes the camera appear as a subjective view although we are actually seeing archival holiday footage. This juxtaposition of voices and perceptual vantage points breaks against the unity of the film as unified body. Classical mise-en-scène perpetuates the unity of the film's body and prevents its fragmentation, rendering the film's body as heterogeneous (Doane, 1980: 47). This unity is explicit in classical documentary's voice-over. In *Passagen*, the division of that unity through the multiplication of voices radically changes the relation between the sound and the image. It produces a disjunction between meaning and sound and a fragmentation in the imaginary cohesion of the film (Doane, 1980:48).

In the case of *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales* (1996), the narration radically departs from classical narrative. The voice over tells different stories, some of which seem to be related to the travel journey and some without a direct relation to the images. The repetition of the narration replayed over different scenes provoke an expansion in the symbolic space as it is constructed and imagined by the spectator, each time with different associations (Le Grice, 2001:298). This strategy allows the spectator to explore alternative ways of thinking about the relationship between the images and the text. It also traces multiple journeys within the same film. Although a certain relation between the images and the narration can always be interpreted, the connections seem to be intuitive rather than symbolic. Le Grice writes that filmic construction seems to match meaning along the lines of narrative action (2001:203). In

that sense, cinema spectators always find ways to interpret and produce meaning in order to follow the development of the course of action in film (Le Grice, 2001:203). This is particularly relevant to non-narrative and experimental film because it articulates an underlying drive to find logic into seemingly unconnected images and to match our experience of film with those impressions.

This dynamic occurs independently of whether the camera signifies a central, subjective view or not. Experimental travelogues tend to work against the techniques that construct a central viewpoint. Perspective is decentralized from perceptual references into multiple fields of vision, dismantling any sustained identification with the camera as subjective view. Le Grice writes:

‘The primary illusion of cinema is neither the photographic illusion of a space which is not present, nor the photocinematic illusion of a time which is also not present, but the illusion that we are implicated, through presence, in the actions of another time and place’ (Le Grice, 2001:202).

For Le Grice, identification in film has to do with the representation of human actions, most commonly present in narrative film but also present in abstract films (2001:200). Narrative requires causality, as it involves the representation of human (or anthropomorphised) actions through temporal continuity and the spectator’s identification with these actions in the film (Le Grice, 2001:200). Jennifer Barker notices that bodily identification with film stems from the similar relations between the character’s human body and the spectator’s body (Barker, 2009:75). For Barker, film’s gestures and camera movements seem to mimic human’s ways of engaging with the world (Barker, 2009:75). Barker terms this form of identification as ‘muscular empathy’ (2009:77). This form of identification between the spectator’s body and the film also happens in non-narrative films and it is based on the sensuous apprehension of similarities between bodily gestures (2009:75). For Barker, film’s movements such as camera tracks, zooms, lenses and montage are sensorially interpreted as bodily movements by the spectator, who is able to sense the film’s changes in perspective and speed, but also its gestures and attitudes towards the world. Barker’s approach is useful in the analysis of experimental films because it entails an uncertainty about the symbolic systems in which such films produce their meaning. The experimental film is primordially set against the constraints of classical narrative, making the production of



meaning through an unstable state of flux (Le Grice, 2001). It entails a mode of spectatorship in which the viewer is able to perceive the meaning of the images through indexical and iconic references in the audiovisual material. However, the experimental style makes such referentiality difficult, often becoming the focal point (Plantinga, 1995). Walter Moore suggests that the analysis and criticism of experimental film is difficult to put into words because it escapes the literal meaning associated to classical film narrative. He writes:

‘For with its shocking and disorienting imagery, the underground film often hits the viewer at a visceral level of awareness. The visual experience escapes the net of words and verbal judgement’ (Moore, 1980:81-82).

Abstraction in cinema demands ‘a priority for physical experience over interpretation, creating an extreme point of reference both for dominant and experimental cinema’ (Le Grice, 2001:293). As Moore suggests, the production of meaning in experimental films derives from the perceptual and sensuous contact between film and spectator. This mode of spectatorship is based on abstraction and indeterminacy as fundamental qualities for its meaning production. The indeterminacy of experimental films involve a haptic mode of vision in which the spectator resources to her own memory and sensuous knowledge in order to produce meaning.

### **Sensuous Knowledge And The Experimental Travel Film**

The experimental travelogue film is especially apt to code and express the sensuous aspects of travelling. Instead of using narrative as a causal chain of events to convey the experience of travel, it expresses mental and emotional states through non-narrative and non-linear structures. This is the case of films such as *Motel to Motel*, which directly negotiate perceptual references into filmmaking practice. The special effects in the post-production of *Motel to Motel*, visually represent the perceptual changes during sexual practices in drug-induced hallucinatory states. Even when the subject matter of the experimental travel film is not perception or physical sensation, non-linear and non-narrative structures act as a catalyst that disrupts the symbolic order of the image and forces the spectator to produce new sensuous knowledge. For

instance, Fern Silva's travel films entail a haptic mode of vision that invites the spectator to sense through the surface of the screen. This is not only conveyed through the use of close-up images but through the framing style, which emphasises the graininess and textural surface of the film, the movement of the handheld camera and the juxtaposition of multiple and seemingly unrelated visual perspectives. By prioritizing aesthetic function over narrative content, these techniques have the potential to provoke affective and synaesthetic responses in the spectator, stimulating haptic forms of vision, kinaesthetic sensation and visceral reactions. As Moore writes:

'Many of the most provocative experimental films of the past two decades are visual explorations of the very structure of film at both a perceptual and technological level. Filmmakers are attempting to visualize the phenomenological aspects of the cinematic experience' (Moore, 1980:5).

These phenomenological aspects involve the expression of perception and sensation through technology. The ways the camera frames its subjects; the speed of camera movements, the montage as well as visual composition and colour correction are all forms to express specific mind-frames and bodily sensations. The experimental approach to travel filmmaking creates new sensuous geographies that allow spectators to formulate new associations in the process of meaning production. For instance, in Silva's *In the Absence of Light, Darkness Prevails*, there are black and white images of baby turtles moving on the beach and into the water (T.C. 00:02:10).<sup>59</sup> The image has an inverted black and white filter. This distortion reveals the texture on the water surface and the sand in an altered, unfamiliar form. It brings to the forefront a form of haptic viscosity, which requires a mode of vision in which the eyes almost move over the surface of the screen, rather than apprehending the referent from a distance. In a different scene, we see an image of a man fumigating a field, coupled with eerie, low-tone sounds (T.C. 00:04:21).<sup>60</sup> The scene is distorted with colour effects and intercut with images of what seems to be a lunar landscape. These effects change the tone of the scene from quotidian into surreal. The sound effects and the non-linear ordering of the film transform the meaning of the image, alienating its context. Replacing the sound recorded at location not only erases referential points but also adds a new layer

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<sup>59</sup> See Figure 28 in the Appendix.

<sup>60</sup> See Figure 29.

of meaning along with a different set of sensations. The actual event of a man fumigating a field is disassociated from its factual referent through the editing.

### **Haptic Images: Sensuous Travel Through Film**

A primordial aspect of the film experience is that of 'inhabiting and transversing space' (Bruno, 2002:15). In other words, feeling immersed within filmic space is an inherent part of the experience of watching a film. For Giuliana Bruno, the film spectator is a traveller that journeys across emotive and haptic spaces (2002:16). Bruno writes:

'Touch is a sense actively involved with the locomotive capacity of the body and with its kinaesthetic perception. Because the haptic realm is not simply inclusive but "comprehensive" of this motile touch and its kinesthetics, the haptic, in a way, becomes an actual geographic sense' (Bruno, 2002:254).

She is suggesting that we make sense of space through our kinesthetic and tactile senses. In fact, through film and most prominently through the travelogue film, we inhabit and experience other places. Cinema is not merely experienced through our audiovisual senses but also viscerally, affectively and synaesthetically (Sobchack, 1992; Massumi, 2002; Marks, 2000; Barker, 2009). Barker notices that during the experience of watching a film, our bodies anchor us to the present, both in terms of spatial and temporal relations (Barker, 2009:161). We become perceptually immersed within the space and time of the film. She writes:

'Rather than being "stitch into place", we are neither "here" not "there", we are caught up in a constant oscillation, drawn like a thread back and forth, through the fabric of the film experience' (Barker, 2009:161).

For Barker, film does not only moves us against its surface in a haptic way, but invites us to inhabit its space, getting caught between the 'here' of our own physical and embodied space and the 'there' of the film's space (Barker, 2009:161). She adds that even though we never completely leave our physical space in the theatre, the physical spatial surrounding is not enough to keep us anchored in it (Barker, 2009:84). Our perceptual bodies travel with our attention, entering the filmic space and moving along with it. Similarly to the effects of non-linear structures in the cinema, haptic images in

film are a mechanism that allows the viewer to perform her own process of meaning production. Laura Marks writes that haptic images discourage the viewer from distinguishing objects, through graininess, blur, changes in focus or under and over exposure (2000:172). An example of haptic images in experimental travel film is Bill Viola's *Chott el-Djerid* (A Portrait in Light and Heat, 1979), which uses footage recorded in the Tunisian Sahara desert. In the first eight minutes of the film most of the images are overexposed, showing an almost entirely white screen with few shades that indicate the traces of the recorded object. Images of a house, light poles and the horizon as well as an extreme long shot of a walking man are barely delineated on the screen (T.C. 00:01:23), while we listen to the noisy sound of the wind as it shakes the camera microphone (T.C. 0:04:29).<sup>61</sup> In a different scene, we see still images of the Sahara desert, quasi-identical between one another and arranged in a slow time-lapse (T.C. 00:08:18). Their juxtaposition makes evident the regularity of the landscape and the subtle changes in texture of the terrain. The heat of the sand creates alterations in the landscape, making the horizon appear as a fluctuating, blurred mirage (T.C. 0:11:28).<sup>62</sup> The only scene that uses human action is a man throwing a stone into a pond (T.C. 0:09:43). The indeterminacy of the content of the images triggers a haptic mode of vision that forces the viewer to sense her way through the film in order to 'make sense' of it. This mode of vision escapes the linearity and literality of narrative allowing other sensuous aspects to emerge. In experimental video, haptic vision is enabled by means of digital distortion, pixilation and special effects. Marks writes:

'The tactile quality of the video image is most apparent in the work of video makers who experiment with the disappearance and transformation of the image due to analog synthesis and digital effects. Electronic effects such as pixellation can render the object indistinct while drawing attention to the act of perception of textures' (Marks, 2002:10).

Another characteristic of haptic images is that they convey a sense of tactility through closeness. In the same way we lose focus of an image when it gets closer to our eyes or nose, the haptic image in cinema is often performed through extreme close-ups, allowing textures to surface by moving the camera closer towards the subject, also allowing the viewer to become closer and intimate with the image. For instance, the

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<sup>61</sup> See Figure 30 in the Appendix.

<sup>62</sup> See Figure 31.

work of Leslie Peters '400 Series' (1997-2000) exemplifies this idea. It was shot as a series of videos recorded on the highways of Ontario. While looking at the first video of '400 Series' called *401:01*, one realizes that what is presented on screen is a close up of the surface of a road as seen from a moving vehicle (T.C. 00:12:60).<sup>63</sup> At moments, the image becomes so abstract that all we see are lines of colour moving across the screen. Peters records surfaces of abstract, blurred, moving close-ups. Le Grice writes:

'Like abstract art in general, abstract film involved the 'analytic' abstraction of visual qualities from their representational function and their 'synthesis' in a new language often described as visual or chromatic music' (2001:317).

The language ascribed to abstract art and cinema lies primordially on the basis of perception, as pre-conceptual and pre-symbolic. However, levels of abstraction also entail levels of referentiality. In '400 Series', one is aware of the referent, as in the case of the images of moving roads, because they are recognizable in a visual and aural sense. However, its apprehension is not objective. My experience of watching them immediately brought to my conscious attention my own memories of travelling in the backseat of a car, especially as a child. It can be seen how the indeterminacy of abstraction contributes to the symbolic formation of the image engaging the spectator in a haptic mode of vision. This mode of film and video spectatorship focuses on the perceptual surface of the medium rather than its content. Moreover, it can be seen how the experimental film has created multiple cinematic spaces that dismantle the objective, ocular, hyper-realistic style of the traditional travelogue film.

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<sup>63</sup> See Figure 32.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Notes On The Production Of *9 Meditations*

The film *9 Meditations* (2010) is the practice component of this thesis. It is an experimental travelogue film that explores the translation of sensuous and embodied experience into filmmaking practice. A key aspect in the production of *9 Meditations* was the critical testing of different cinematic techniques that could express embodied experience as a multi-sensory process. The translation of embodied and sensuous experience into film practice explores the capacity of film to map our perceptual engagement with the space around us and questions the extent to which spectators can sensorially inhabit audiovisual spaces through technological media such as film and video. This research conceptualises both travelling and cinema as perceptual transversions of emotive terrain through the senses (Bruno, 2002:16). Cinema spectators are conceived as passengers that perceptually travel through film space (Soltani, 2008:8). Moreover, this approach conceives cinema spectatorship as an embodied and multi-sensory process that cannot be reduced to audiovisual perception but rather extends between and across all the senses (Sobchack, 1992; Buck-Morss, 1994; Marks, 2000; Bruno, 2002; Massumi, 2002). In other words, the cinematic experience transcends the audiovisual register of film and video, synaesthetically. This points to a paradigm at the core of the cinematic experience: film is experienced throughout our senses although embodied experience as a whole, multi-sensory process cannot be in turn directly encoded into film. Albeit both our experience of cinema and travel are always embodied, filmmaking practice invariantly displaces the physical actuality of sensuous experience into evocative reconstruction.

The conceptualization of *9 Meditations* involved the historical analysis of the travelogue film as a tradition that has consistently used linear, episodic narratives as its basic structure. As I discuss in Chapter Three, the travelogue film has effaced the embodied aspects of the travel experience in favour of ocular and hyper-realistic styles of representation, which seem to engage in a mimesis of sensorial stimuli. On the other hand, experimental films evoke sensuous perception in radically different ways. The

experimental film, perhaps more prominently than any other film form, seems to resemble the human mind (Choi, 2006:165). Its resistance to the linearity of classical narrative has led its techniques towards expressive structures that seem to portray emotional and mental states. In that sense, experimental film is able to express the experience of vision, imagination, memory and dream (Frampton, 2006:17). The experimental travelogue is a form related to the film-essay, the video-diary, the documentary as well as the amateur holiday video and the city-films of the avant-garde. Moreover, experimental travelogue films are aesthetic and ontological explorations concerned with issues about the nature of the medium, perception, the senses, reality, temporality, movement and the exploration of space through film. These aspects were critically explored through the production of *9 Meditations*.

### **About *9 Meditations***

A main focus in the production of *9 Meditations* was the search for expressive techniques in filmmaking practice that evoked the embodied experience of travelling. As I mention in the analysis of the traditional travelogue<sup>64</sup>, there is a connection between objective and distant modes of vision and ocular and hyper-realistic styles of representation. In *9 Meditations*, the translation of embodied experience was linked to the expression of haptic modes of vision through the evocation of the proximal senses. The production involved generating video footage recorded during the physical performance of long distance walks. Some of the locations are pilgrimage routes, as in the case of Wiricuta in Real de Catorce, Mexico and the Camino de Santiago across the north of Spain. Others were hiking sites such as the Tour de Mont Blanc across Switzerland, France and Italy, the National Park of Brecon Beacons in Wales, hiking routes in Kent, England, walking and cycling paths along the coasts of Sardegna in Italy and rural areas in the state of Tamaulipas in Mexico.<sup>65</sup> Approximately, the production of *9 Meditations* involved walking 370 km. (230 miles) from 2007 to 2010. The main reason for using walking as a theme in *9 Meditations* was that its practice enables the body to connect with the environment in a physical way. The activity of walking directly involves

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<sup>64</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>65</sup> See a detailed list of locations in page 115, under *9 Meditations: Technical Information and Credits*.

the senses as mediators of spatial reality, as opposed to other forms of travelling. Sarah Pink writes:

'Paths and routes are not simply functional routes that connect one place to another, but are meaningful sensory and imaginative places in their own right that interact with and are contextualised by the sensescapes of which they form a part' (Pink 2007:246).

Moreover, the activity of walking in natural environments highlights the sensorial experience of the lived-body and is separated from the urban flâneur, the tourist and the machine-propelled traveller. Walking, as one of the most basic forms of human movement<sup>66</sup> 'allows us to be in our bodies and in the world without being busy by them, generating a rhythm in thinking that reflects the environment it transverses (Solnit, 2001:5). During long distance walks the body seems to become acquainted with its own senses, both in external and internal perception. The walking body creates its own relation to night and daylight, developing its own rhythms in terms of rest, recovery, physical exertion, hunger and sleep. At the same time, the walking body develops a highly physical relationship to the terrain because every inclination, slope or hill involve specific changes in the movement of the muscles and entail specific degrees of effort, balance and skill. Moreover, the walking body is able to read the surface of the terrain, internalising space through its own movement. In that sense, the experience of long distance walks was crucial to the production of *9 Meditations* because it served as a way of testing and challenging the potential of film to explore the internal mapping of space as sensuous, embodied perception.

Tim Ingold describes the relationship between embodied experience and walking in the natural environment (1993). He writes about the ways in which the Scottish natural landscape can be conceived as a composition of hills and valleys. For Ingold, the divisions between the different elements of the landscape are less a matter of arbitrary spatial and altitudinal measurement and more about its embodied, kinaesthetic experience (Ingold, 1993:203). The activity of climbing up hills and descending into valleys or walking across rivers delineates the contours of the territory as it is felt

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<sup>66</sup> For Rebecca Solnit, the history of walking is 'everyone's history', as it goes back to the history of the human species and its evolution. The study of walking crosses through multiple fields, from anatomy, anthropology, architecture, gardening, geography, politics, culture, religion and sexuality (Solnit, 2001:4).



through the muscles. In that sense, the landscape is 'directly incorporated into our bodily experience (Ingold, 1993:203). Walking is a way of making sense of places as it enables us to connect with the environment in a physical way (Pink, 2007). Sarah Pink writes:

'First, the experiencing body is central to the production of place as it determines place through its movement in and physical multisensorial engagement with the environment: in modern western terms, seeing, smelling, touching, hearing and simultaneously creating the texture of the environment, through footprints, breathing air out into it, producing sound' (Pink: 2007:245).

As Pink notices, the performance of the walking body involves the continuous negotiation of spatial surroundings through our senses. However, the video recording of the experience of walking always effaces the complexity of its lived performance as synaesthetic embodiment. While the praxis of walking involves sensuous, bodily experience, the recording of walking is always already 'blind' to non-audiovisual stimuli because its encryption into video or film is constituted only by an audiovisual trace. However, the recording of the performance of walking constitutes the formation of another sensuous interface, that of the film itself. In that sense, neither the film nor the video camera can archive the physical and embodied experience better than the body of the walker. The walking body archives kinesthetic sensation as sensuous knowledge. It does not only remember motility but is also transformed by it, as physical activity changes the physical structure of the muscles through microscopic tears that later generate muscle growth and further physical strength and endurance. The impossibility of recording these aspects with the camera made me conceptualise film and video as media that evoke embodied sensation rather than directly encoding it. This also applies to the experience of film's spectatorship. Albeit the body of the spectator can be perceptually immersed in the spaces of the film during the experience of watching a film, the medium is far from being interactive or responsive to the specifically situated bodies in the theatre or to their individual engagement with the medium.

The recording of *9 Meditations* brought to my attention that the audiovisual trace of my experience of walking constituted in the video footage was always already disembodied. Although the video frame had a physical connection to the movement of my own

walking body (because it was constantly moved by my hand holding the camera), the image doesn't reflect my visual field. As Nicky Hamlyn writes:

'Films that deal with the representation of space also tend to question and reconfigure the relationship between the camera and its subject. Any critical cinema is bound to do this in order to explore how the film apparatus -finite, two-dimensional, enclosing, transient – confronts space – infinite, three dimensional, continuous, enduring' (Hamlyn, 2003:121).

In *9 Meditations*, the translation of spatial experience as sensuously embodied, involved conceptualising the camera as a prosthetic, perceptual device. In that sense, the video recording extended my own sensuous engagement but in a radically different way than my own, as humanly embodied perception. My own shifts in visual attention, as well as thoughts, impressions, feelings and memories during the act of recording were lost. However, the trace imprinted in the footage allowed for its reconstruction through the video editing. This process transformed *9 Meditations* into a different journey than the one performed by my body. Although *9 Meditations* was enriched by the memories of actual walking it always surpassed its input, turning embodied sensation into an audiovisual allegory.

### **The Video Recording**

During the first walking journeys, I was constantly looking at ways to imprint the sensuous and bodily aspects of the journey into the video. While walking, I purposely focused on non-audiovisual parameters that could be signalled and coded into the filmmaking practice. This resulted in the testing of different techniques to record the walks, which led me to think differently about the conceptualisation of embodied experience and its relation to film as an audiovisual medium. At first, I enthusiastically assumed that there were ways in which sensuous embodiment could be signalled, if not directly recorded, but later concluded that embodied sensation was something that could only be evoked through cinematic language. Physical sensations such as muscular and joint pain, exhaustion as well as the recognition of strength and the improvement of endurance levels through walking were notions that at first seemed difficult to reconcile with the film practice. It seemed that film was more apt to express

mental and emotional states rather than physical ones. This has to do with the temporality ascribed to its duration, which parallels conscious perception in the sense that they both entail a temporal continuum.<sup>67</sup> In other words, sensuous perception could more easily be signalled through a mimesis of conscious perception expressed through the video's continuum of time. As Lucy Fischer notices, editing seems to 'mimic the workings of the human mind' (1999:65). On the other hand, the proprioceptive senses (which signal the internal perception of movement in our body parts) were more difficult to express through film. Generally speaking, the experience of the non-audiovisual senses seemed to be more provocatively evoked through haptic images. Haptic images create an indeterminate relation between the content of the images and its symbolic order. The use of blurred, grainy and abstract images trigger a mode of vision that engages the spectator through haptic visuality, forcing her to produce the meaning of the image in relation to her own experience and memories. The editing and post-production increasingly divorced *9 Meditations* from the audiovisual register of the recorded journeys and made it closer towards an evocation of internal processes, such as memory and sensation.

Another technique that was primordial for the filmmaking process of *9 Meditations* was the use of extreme close-ups. Close-ups create a proximal distance between the images on screen and the spectator. They rely on a tactile mode of vision in the same way in which the sense of touch relies on proximal, physical contact. Proximity defines non-audiovisual senses such as taste, touch and smell. This notion helped me develop an aesthetics that expressed the proximity ascribed to embodied sensation as anchored in my own body. This is evident in the use of close-ups (T.C. 00:00:02, 00:00:12), whispering voices (T.C. 00:03:20), breathing sounds, heart bits and well as in the visual blurring and distortion of the images (00:42:05). The extreme close-up relates to haptic modes of vision because they are both delineated by an active proximity, by the act of getting close to the object of vision as opposed to appreciating it from a distance. This style of framing entails a subjective and embodied visuality that breaks from the optical and hyper-realistic styles of representation dominant in travelogue films. In the same way in which our tactile senses are stimulated by direct contact, haptic vision is triggered by the proximity through the act of seeing. This can be seen in the use of

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<sup>67</sup> See Chapter 5 for a discussion on the relationship between non-linear structures and human perception.

close-up images of rocks (T.C. 00:04:44)<sup>68</sup>, leaves, fruits (T.C. 00:19:42) but also in images of hands, feet, skin, hair, eyes. Some scenes in *9 Meditations* purposely portray tactile sensation, such as the feeling of walking barefoot on the beach (00:32:20).<sup>69</sup> Less obvious evocations of tactile sensation include abstract images of candlelight (T.C. 00:42:05)<sup>70</sup> and distortions in the colour of the landscape (T.C. 00:42:00)<sup>71</sup>.

Most close-ups in *9 Meditations* were shot with a photographic camera and later on arranged as time-lapses in the video editing process. This technique allowed me to obtain a larger resolution rate in the images and a broader range of visual material to work with. During the post-production, I arranged the photographs into sequences and decided which parts of the image were relevant to each scene, constructing a series of cinematic 'meditations' about sensuous embodiment. The photographic camera also allowed me to record objects from a closer position than the video camera without compromising its focus. This contributed to obtaining extremely close perspectives that showed the tactile surfaces of objects. According to Marks, close-up images encode haptic, sensuous memory and bridge the gap between audiovisual representation and embodied sensation (Marks, 2006:164). Instead of inviting the spectator to visually apprehend the image, the close-up encourages a proximal, embodied mode of vision and a dynamic subjectivity between the viewer and the film (Marks, 2006:164).

Another important framing technique in *9 Meditations* was the handheld camera, which I used constantly during the walks. In a few scenes, I held a short tripod in order to record myself as I walked. The handheld camera made the frame shaky as I moved. This was important because it allowed the movement of my own body to be imprinted on the video and made evident the connection between the frame and my own bodily movement. Although this technique is associated to documentary filmmaking, in this case it was not so much about representing reality as it was about describing a connective relationship between the camera and my body responding to the irregularities of the terrain. The camera records the movement of my arm as I walked amongst rocks, water or fallen trees. As Hamlyn writes about holding the camera: 'The

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<sup>68</sup> See Figures 33 and 32 in the Appendix.

<sup>69</sup> See Figure 35 in the Appendix.

<sup>70</sup> See Figure 36.

<sup>71</sup> See Figure 37.

question of how the camera is held relates to different modes of vision, it refer us back to the operator's vision, a constitutive part of the meaning of the image (Hamlyn, 2003:89). The hand held camera not only simulates eye and head movement but as in the case of *9 Meditations*, it integrates the bodily and kinaesthetic aspects of walking with the video frame.

### **The Editing**

The process of postproduction in *9 Meditations* involved the viewing and re-viewing of the footage in order to create different relations in which to organize the scenes. The first step in the editing process was writing a log of the scenes recorded. This occurred after every travel journey and it involved creating a numbering system to organize the videotapes. Each tape was then reviewed while listing the images it contained. The reviewing of the footage in the editing suite was a way to both remember and re-construct the journey. My own memories were constantly transformed through the editing as new memories of its cinematic arrangement were produced. In that sense, the editing process displaced the actuality of the experience of being 'there' in location into the digital processing of its record or trace, captured on video. Deleuze's notions of virtual and actual images explore the merging of different temporalities in the film image. For Deleuze, the virtual image is the past preserved as memory, while the actual image is the image that unfolds on the screen (Deleuze, 1989:79). The virtual image points at the sensual re-collection of memory and its interjection in the present, as the actual image passes through time. Marks develops the notion of the virtual image through the example of home videos recorded in family gatherings. She notices that while the emotional, psychic, affective and otherwise physical experience of being there at the moment of recording is lost in the video, the actual image on screen becomes an 'institutionalized representation of the moment' (Marks, 2000: 40). For Marks, the virtual image of a family gathering overpowers the memory of the gathering and often replaces it. The memory of the event becomes embodied in the memory of the video, effacing the first.

This re-writing of memory was a key element at work during the editing of *9 Meditations*. Although the images on the editing suite were a record of my own experience, the act of viewing displaced their actuality of perception as lived in the profilmic event. The act of witnessing its digital trace simultaneously produced and encoded new sensuous knowledge and memories about the journey as well as produced new interpellations with the images on screen. The re-viewing of footage involved, at first glance, the apprehension of new sensuous memory as it unfolded on the screen. The viewing of the footage virtually dismantled my own presence inside the film and positioned me as an outside observer of my own recorded past. The screen became a metaphorical barrier between two worlds: the filmic realm and the physical experience of my body outside of it. The past that is preserved in the video image is not only the digital image on screen, but also the sensual re-collection of lived memory as well as the memory of the video image passing through time. The memory of the recorded event is re-constituted, re-created and re-formulated through the editing process. Laura Rascaroli writes:

'Post-production adds a new layer of temporality to the film diary: the review of the traces of the past and the commentary imposed on them reveal the present situation of the autobiographer and, while adding explanations and clarifying the present perception of the past, also 'register the unbridgeable gap between then and now' ([David E. James, 164] in Rascaroli, 2009: 129).

Memory as a distinct meta-sense transport, bridges and crosses all the other senses, it is the horizon in which different sensory experience converge. In that sense, the production process of *9 Meditations* involved the storing and re-storing of experiences 'from one sensory dimension into another' as well as their dispersion through the finding of sensory records outside the body (Seremetakis, 1994:9). The act of remembering mirrors the atemporal continuum of non-linear structures in filmmaking. Massumi writes:

'In synaesthesia, remembering is a perceptual event. It is a reactivation of a biogram for purposes of reaccess. If an event-perception is faced, then when a biogram is reaccessed isn't the synesthete facing a previous facing? Hasn't experience doubled back on itself like a Möbius strip?' (Massumi, 2002:193).

This synaesthetic re-construction of perception was primordial to the editing process of *9 Meditations*, in which I virtually re-visited, allocated and constructed a perceptual

horizon of sensory correspondences into the unified perceptual space of the film. The final version of *9 Meditations* conjures all these different temporalities into its own unified, filmic body. The non-linear structure of *9 Meditations* expresses this re-visiting of different temporal locations, and the re-accession of simultaneous moments through its construction.

### **The Non-Linear Structure of *9 Meditations***

In the first stages of the editing process I cut pieces of the footage that seemed relevant to my investigation of embodied sensation. This involved cutting long strips of video into shorter sequences. At first, I experimented with different structures that distributed the scenes into a crescendo, cut with *intermezzos* that broke the linear flow of the film. I also decided to intercalate images from different journeys to create an irregular structure that could express simultaneous temporal relations between the scenes. I grouped scenes together often intuitively, composing a visual narrative that reflected my own sensations during the walking. The editing process also involved the reading of my journals, in which I wrote constantly during the travel journeys. The writing of travel journals during the recording helped me keep a record of the issues that played an agency in the production. The main questions were about the limits of the frame, its resemblance to windows and to the human visual field, other issues that were crucial during the recording were distance, closeness, speed and stillness as well as the difference between physical space and filmic space. While my journals kept a chronological record of each travel journey, I purposely wanted to move away from the linearity of traditional travelogues by experimenting with techniques that could reflect the simultaneity of memory processes. In *9 Meditations*, the repetition of images (T.C. 00:00:49, 00:13:05), and specially of landscapes remind us that these are not places we've left behind, but are re-visited throughout the film. This creates a sense of re-mapping a space, as opposed to cutting through it (Hamlyn, 2003:121). The re-visiting, as well as the shifts between stasis and motion (T.C. 00:01:31, 00:05:48, 00:08:08, 00:13:00)<sup>72</sup>, gives spatiality an ambiguous form. Travel in *9 Meditations* becomes a matter not of moving from one point in the itinerary to another, but a reflection on

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<sup>72</sup> See Figures 38, 39, 40 and 41.

memory and perceptual association. *9 Meditations* moves away from the linearity of a traced itinerary and virtually subverts the regulating forces involved in travelling, both in a physical and a political sense, such as roads, maps, routes, inspection points, security checks, etc. The use of close-ups images that interrupt the visual apprehension of landscapes and open spaces also contributes to the disruption of the film's linear continuum (T.C. 0:18:40, 00:18:55, 00:18:32). In these scenes, close up images of tree bark, stones, moss, pine needles and moving water bring filmic perception back into its proximal senses. These images cut through the continuum of landscape scenes, reflecting upon spatial perception as one anchored in the tactile senses of the body. For instance, a scene that shows the peaks of Mont Blanc is followed by an image of my hand holding a stone and a close-up image of my eyes looking up the peak (T.C. 0:19:54). These small sequences inside the film create visual narratives that contribute to the overall structure of *9 Meditations* without necessarily subscribing to a linear narrative. In that sense, the different parts of the film can be viewed at different moments and in different order. Rather than organising the film's scenes into one single narrative that described the travel itinerary, the structure of *9 Meditations* plays with different temporalities. On one hand, it uses the repetition of scenes and locations as a means to cycle back into its own structure, regressing into previous scenes and disrupting the chronological order ascribed to traditional travelogues. On the other, it uses changes from stasis to motion, between still photography and moving image (T.C. 00:05:45). The cutting between subjective viewpoints, extreme close ups and landscapes ruptures the flow of natural perception. The temporal continuum is disrupted by the freezing of the image and departs from realistic representations of time.



## CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed the ways in which sensuous and embodied experience are represented in the travelogue film. I have also explored the translation of embodied experience into filmmaking practice through the production of *9 Meditations* (2010) an experimental travelogue film. A main aspect in the production of *9 Meditations* was experimenting with cinematic techniques that expressed the complexities of embodied experience as a multi-sensory process. The traditional travelogue film was constructed as a hyper-realistic, optical and spectacular form that attempted to translate bodily experience through a mimesis of embodied sensation, interpreted as mechanic and predictable stimuli.<sup>73</sup> This research conceives the cinematic experience as multi-sensory and synesthetic rather than audiovisual.<sup>74</sup> This notion is based on the premise that the cinematic experience is informed by both our senses and our sensuous memory, which contribute to the process of meaning construction during the experience of watching a film (Marks, 2000:222-223). As we watch a film, our memory is constantly bringing back to our conscious attention the memories of other sensuous experiences we associate with the images and sounds on film. Therefore, film necessarily involves embodied forms of spectatorship because images and sounds appeal to sensuous memories, whether olfactory, tactile, gustatory or kinaesthetic. Moreover, spectatorship is synesthetic and multi-sensory because cinema evokes smell, taste, texture as well as bodily movement. However, even if cinema spectatorship is always an embodied act, the translation of embodied experience onto the medium of film does not occur through a direct process of inscription. An underlying problem is that of the un-representability of sensation. Sensuous experience cannot be directly encoded into film in the same way it is experienced by the body therefore cannot be made readily available to the spectator's senses through film. Rather, sensuous experience can be represented, evoked, suggested or expressed through certain cinematic techniques, such as subjective camera viewpoints, non-linear and non-narrative structures or through the use of haptic images. A key issue here is about the conceptualisation of the cinematic

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<sup>73</sup> See Chapter Three for a detailed discussion on the ocularisation of the travelogue genre.

<sup>74</sup> See Chapter One for a discussion of the cinematic experience as multisensory.

experience as one that transcends the audiovisual senses. This is based on a premise that conceives the body as the basis from which the cinematic experience is produced and positions sensuous memory as the living archive of sensuous knowledge.

Since its emergence, the travelogue genre has been characterised by the use of autobiographical and first person voices, self-reflective and self-reflexive narration, an episodic narrative and a diaristic tone (Ruoff, 2006:11). The traveller's act of self-representation through language bridges the gap between enunciation and the embodied subject. Moreover, the travelogue's narration is often self-reflective because it involves the act of introspection. It can also be self-reflexive because it often makes evident its own process of construction. For instance, a self-reflexive travelogue film might reveal its own filmmaking process, or might question its own framing or narrative style.<sup>75</sup> First person travelogue films highlight the traveller's perception as subjective. This is further emphasized by the use of voice-over, which provides a sense of unity and totality to the space of the film. In this sense, the voice-over expresses a form of subjectivity that is embodied by the film itself and contributes to the construction of the film's body as a single, perceiving subject.<sup>76</sup> This is more evident in autobiographic and first person films, in which the subjective camera or point-of-view shot is used as a way of signalling the narrator's consciousness. There are travelogue films in which the point-of-view shot seems to imitate human visual perception through camera movements. In these cases, film mimetically reconstructs the perceptual activity of travelling and becomes an anthropomorphic film-body expressing and behaving through similar movements and gestures than a human body. This form of anthropomorphic realism reflects a mimetic urge to bridge the gap between the fictional, representational status of film and a physically embodied reality.

Apart from the subjective, first person approaches to travelogue filmmaking and the more extreme cases of anthropomorphic realism, travelogues are also present as experimental films and videos. The experimental travelogue departs from the perceptual and ocular realism of the traditional travelogue film through the use of non-linear and non-narrative structures that seem to resemble both the internal process of memory and the sensuous, embodied experience of the travelling filmmaker.

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<sup>75</sup> See Chapter Four

<sup>76</sup> For a discussion on the notion of the film's body, see Chapter One page 13.

Non-linear and non-narrative structures in experimental film break with the discourse of travelling as a visually itinerant activity. Instead of tracing a chronological order in the travel journey, experimental travelogues use a variety of temporal compositions, often using repetition as means of dismantling the causality of linear structures. The sequential dis-ordering of locations and their disassociation from a geographical itinerary turns the notion of place into an abstract concept. In this sense, non-linearity frees the travelogue film from its traditional geographical references. Moreover, through the use of non-linear structures, experimental travelogue films constitute a body of work that express travelling as an embodied and multi-sensory experience by evoking tactile and haptic modes of vision, actively engaging the spectator into the process of meaning production. Non-linear travelogue films break from the ocular representations that characterised the early days of the travelogue genre. They re-articulate subjective approaches in filmmaking practice, not only through the use of first person voices but also by resembling the simultaneous merging of memory and actuality into a temporal continuum. As Le Grice asserts, the medium of film cannot escape its own temporal continuum because it is a time-based medium and therefore exists as a definite duration (2001:298). As I mention in Chapter Five, the problem is not about the implicit temporal arrangement of cinematic images through the duration of a film but rather, its arrangement into a hierarchical symbolic order of cause and effect. Experimental travelogues use non-linearity as means to explore the indeterminacy of its own symbolic order, which allows the spectator's sensuous memory to contribute to the formation of meaning of the image. Non-linearity is translated into affective sensation because it compels the spectator's own sensuous construction of film.

Traditional representational strategies in the travelogue genre are often grounded on extra-cinematic and multi-sensorial devices and tend to fall within an ocular rhetoric that occlude the spectator's engagement with the process of meaning construction. On the other hand, experimental travelogue films tend to activate a haptic mode of vision in the spectator. The indeterminacy of haptic images, whether it may be in the form of graininess, blurred, pixelated or even absent images compel the viewer to complete the meaning of film with her own memories and experiences. As I mention in Chapter Three, in the traditional travelogue film there is a link between objective and distant modes of vision and ocular and hyper-realistic styles of representation. Traditionally,

the depiction of places in the travelogue genre has been about the visual display of panoramas and landmarks, which entail the distant apprehension of places as a main element in the travelling experience. In *9 Meditations*, the translation of embodied experience was linked to the expression of haptic modes of vision through the evocation of the proximal senses. That is, to the emphasis of more intimate, closer ways of experiencing the travel journey. This was achieved by recording from extremely close perspectives that showed the tactile surfaces of objects. The use of close-up images translates haptic, sensuous memory by bridging the gap between audiovisual representation and embodied sensation (Marks, 2006:164). In this way, the close-up image provokes a proximal, embodied mode of vision rather than a distant, objective one. In *9 Meditations*, this can be seen in the cutting between subjective viewpoints, extreme close ups and landscapes which aim to rupture the flow of natural perception, departing from realistic representations of time and place. Moreover, *9 Meditations* present an alternative form of travelogue filmmaking, which aims to dismantle the objective, ocular, hyper-realistic style of the traditional travelogue genre.

The experimental travelogue film is especially apt to express the sensuous and embodied experience of travelling, although we cannot dismiss the potential of subjective and diaristic approaches in documentary travelogues to evoke and express the experience of the travelling body. However, first person travelogues tend to convey embodied experience as visually apprehensible. On the other hand, experimental travelogue films express more internal and mental aspects of embodied, sensuous experience. By activating haptic modes of vision in the spectator, experimental travelogue films present more subtle ways of evoking affective sensation. Through the analysis of the history and development of the travelogue film genre, it becomes evident that there has been a consistent attempt to represent embodied, sensuous experience through cinematic and extra-cinematic technologies. Although it may be tempting to associate technological innovation in cinema to a Bazanian teleology of cinematic realism it is best to consider the specific qualities of each technology rather than blurring them into a single cause or purpose.<sup>77</sup> Developments in cinematic technologies do present increasingly realistic images, higher definition, more pixel data, better

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<sup>77</sup> Bazin saw cinema as the culmination of a enduring project in the visual arts that aimed to reproduce reality as it was experienced in human perception (Bazin, 1960). See Chapter Three for a detailed discussion.

sound fidelity and even more immersive technologies such as 3D and 4D. Each technology, however, presents a different relation to reality, emphasizing specific aspects while occluding others.<sup>78</sup> Although recent developments in moving image technologies may provide a more realistic experience, they do not necessarily evoke embodied sensation in more compelling ways than previous cinematic technologies. In other words, the answer to the problem of representing embodied sensation is not to be found in a fully immersive sensory-cinematic environment. Rather, it is a matter of considering that perhaps the potential of film to suggest synesthetic and embodied experience lies at the frontiers of its narrative, at the breakage of its own symbolic order. This is the case of experimental travelogue films, in which the travelogue ceases to be about storytelling and becomes a matter of productive sensuous engagements with the experience of travelling. Perhaps the travelogue genre had to depart from the hierarchies of linear itineraries, chronological ordering and geographical referencing in order to produce more embodied, sensuous forms. Although the filmmaking process inevitably displaces the actuality of embodied sensation into an audiovisual allegory, film can express the non-audiovisual aspects of the filmmaker's perception, producing new sensuous configurations that are embodied by the film itself. Moreover, the conceptual move from the notion of cinema as audiovisual to cinema as embodied allows sensuously productive journeys to emerge, and allows different forms of meaning construction in the cinematic experience.

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<sup>78</sup> See Chapter Three.

## **9 MEDITATIONS: TECHNICAL INFORMATION AND CREDITS**

**Title:** 9 Meditations

**Format:** DVD, Video, PAL, Colour, Dolby Sound

**Running time:** 53 min.

### **Credits:**

Perla Carrillo Quiroga (Director, Main Camera, Photography and Post-production)

Carmen Quiroga (Camera assistant)

Andrew Stafford (Camera assistant)

### **Soundtrack:**

BASTa! by Joris Vanvinckenroye (Belgium), Andrew Stafford (UK), Yuri Kono and Paul Love (Japan/UK), Triciclo by Armando Carrillo del Peral, Gustavo Hernandez y Hugo Cedillo (Mexico), Shem Booth (UK), Lado UB by Beto Filizola (Mexico) and Michael Appleaby (UK).

### **Walkers:**

Andrew Stafford, Marc Carey, Janet Alvis, Peter Alvis, Nicky Boyle, Elizabeth Bird, Mary Cockcroft, Amra Dzeko, Paul Gofton, Oliver Keene, Patricia Fairland, Deb Shanders, Philip Sharp, Rosina Ritter, Olivia Carrillo, Layal Ftouni, Carmen Quiroga and Gustavo Morales.

### **Locations:**

- *Mexico:* Real de Catorce and Cerro del Quemado, Sierra Madre Oriental, Jaumave, Miquihuana and El Tigre and Pico de Orizaba.
- *United Kingdom:* London, Canterbury, Dover, Brighton, The Lake District and Epping Forest in England. Brecon Beacons National Park, Talgarth, Llangorse Lake and Grwyne Fawr Reservoir in Wales.
- *Republic of Ireland:* Dublin.
- *Italy:* Alghero, Fertilia, Cappelletta and La Speranza in Sardegna, Courmayeur and Mont de la Saxe.

- *Spain*: Bilbao, Vizcaya, Burgos, Leon, Fromista, Carrion de los Condes, Sahagún, El Burgo Ranero, Mansilla de las Mulas, Orbigo, Astorga, Rabanal del Camino, Ponferrada and Villafranca del Bierzo in Castilla y León. Sarria and Santiago de Compostela in Galicia.
- *Switzerland*: Geneva and Trient Valley.
- *France*: Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, Col de Montets, La Flegere, Brevent, Lac Blanc, Annecy Lake, Les Houches, Les Contamines and Col de Voza in the Haute-Savoie region.

**Software used:**

Final Cut Pro, Adobe After Effects, Adobe Photoshop, Soundforge

**Production Equipment:**

- Sony DCR-HC38/E Mini DV Handycam Camcorder
- Sony DSR 45 DVCam/MiniDV player/Recorder
- Canon PowerShot SD 1300 IS
- Sony DCR-TRV460 Batteries
- MacBook Pro

## APPENDIX

### Chapter Three.



Figure 1. Panorama



Figure 2. Panorama Rotunda



Figure 3. Dioramic show





Figure 4. Hale's Tours



Figure 5. IMAX 3D



Figure 6. Stereoscopic Image

## Chapter Four



Figure 7. *Elegy of a Voyage*  
T.C. 00:01:22

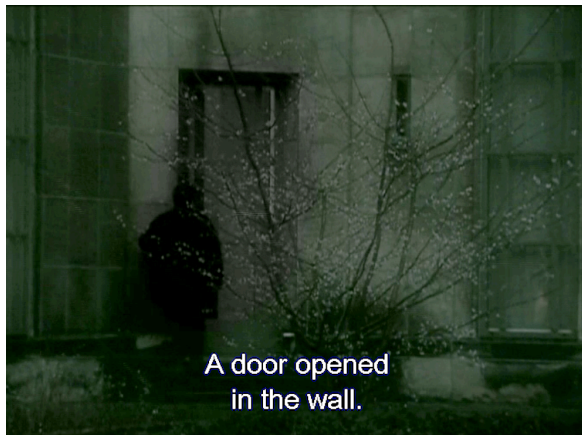


Figure 8. *Elegy of a Voyage*  
T.C. 00:27:18



Figure 9. *Elegy of a Voyage*  
T.C. 00:26:07

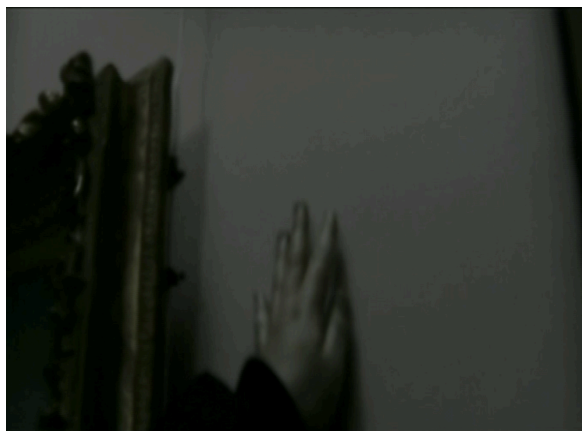


Figure 10. *Elegy of a Voyage*  
T.C. 00:31:52



Figure 11. *Elegy of a Voyage*

T.C. 00:26:38



Figure 12. *Elegy of a Voyage*

T.C. 00:37:45



Figure 13. *Elegy of a Voyage*

T.C. 00:40:29



Figure 14. *Robinson in Space*

T.C. 00:23:49





Figure 15. *Robinson in Space*  
T.C. 00:19:07

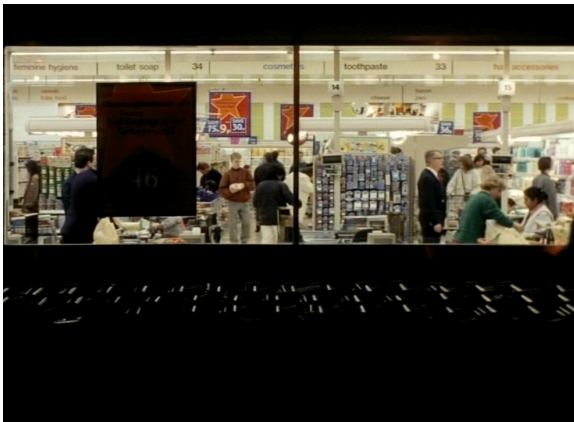


Figure 16. *London*  
T.C. 00:03:54



Figure 17. *London*  
T.C. 00:17:43



Figure 18. *Robinson in Space*  
T.C. 00:03:27



Figure 19. *Robinson in Space*  
T.C. 00:38:38



Figure 20. *Robinson in Space*  
T.C. 00:59:42



Figure 21. *London*  
T.C. 01:07:35



Figure 22. *London*  
T.C. 00:18:01



Figure 23. *Sans Soleil*

T.C. 00:00:12



Figure 24. *Amsterdam Global Village*

T.C. 02:07:35



Figure 25. *Amsterdam Global Village*

T.C. 00:27:45



Figure 26. *Amsterdam Global Village*

T.C. 00:04:46



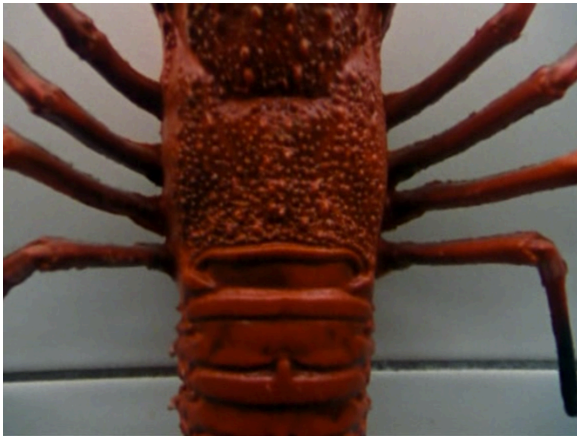


Figure 27. *Amsterdam Global Village*

T.C. 01:22:47

## Chapter Five

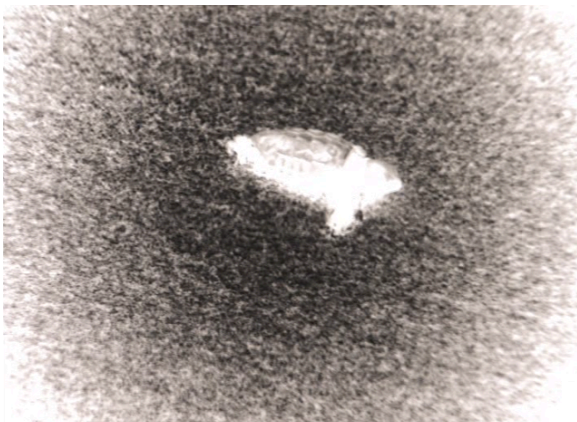


Figure 28. *In The Absence of Light, Darkness Prevails*

T.C. 00:02:10



Figure 29. *In The Absence of Light, Darkness Prevails*

T.C. 00:04:25



Figure 30. *Chott el-Djerid*

T.C. 00:01:23



Figure 31. *Chott el-Djerid*

T.C. 00:11:28

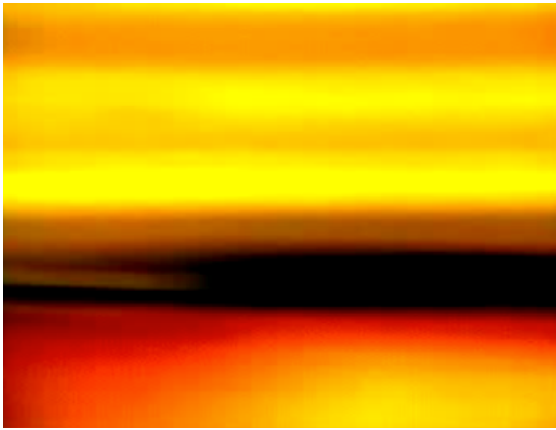


Figure 32. *400 Series, 401:01*

T.C. 00:12:60

## Chapter Six



Figure 33. *9 Meditations*

T.C. 00:04:44



Figure 34. *9 Meditations*

T.C. 00:19:42





Figure 35. *9 Meditations*

T.C. 00:32:20

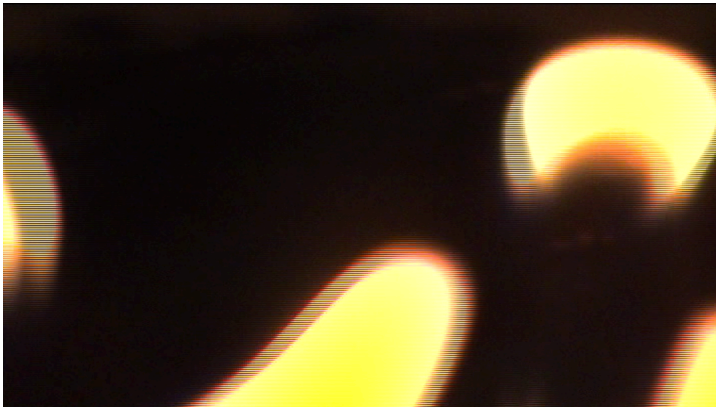


Figure 36. *9 Meditations*

T.C. 00:42:05

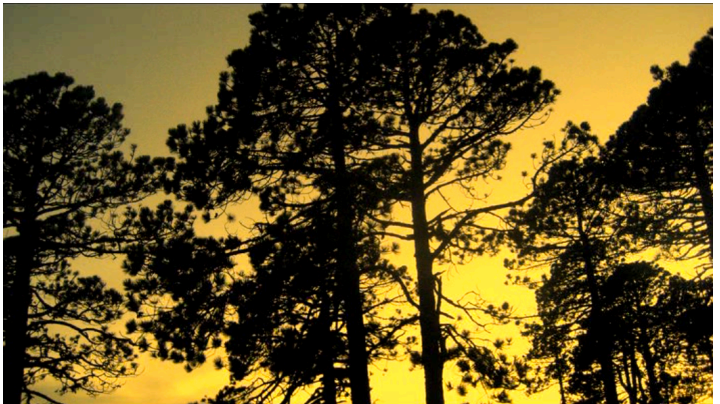


Figure 37. *9 Meditations*

T.C. 00:42:00



Figure 38. *9 Meditations*

T.C. 00:01:31



Figure 39. *9 Meditations*

T.C. 00:05:48



Figure 40. *9 Meditations*

T.C. 00:08:08



Figure 41. *9 Meditations*

T.C. 00:13:00

## FILMOGRAPHY

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