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Politicizing a film practice

Anderson, Gary

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University of Plymouth

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Politicizing a Film Practice

by

Gary Anderson

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Media and Photography
Faculty of Arts

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Gary Anderson

Abstract: Politicizing a Film Practice.

This is a practice-based Ph.D. in filmmaking and concerns the generation of a radical film practice. It is situated in the field of no-budget experimental film and video making and deploys a combination of deconstruction and critical perspectives of cultural production in the construction of its *modus operandi*.

The contribution to knowledge is in two parts. First the bringing together in a film practice established and various knowledges from other areas; contemporary and historical experimental film and video, observational documentary and amateur film practices, specifically Home Movies, in connection to established but various extant modes of reading that material. The second part of the contribution to knowledge relates to the methodology underpinning this amalgamation of knowledges. This is enacted through the tri-partite positioning of the researcher as ‘researcher’, ‘family-maker’ and ‘filmmaker’. From within those positional framings the submission has sought to utilize a politicization of contextualisation. The second part of the submission’s contribution to knowledge can then be formulated as the advocacy of a committed contextualisation that treats the investigator’s position as valid and crucial material for interrogation.

The outcome is a film practice that does not rely on sporadic funding and vacillating public recognition but rather an ongoing, organic and sustainable film practice that arises from and is nourished by the contexts it seeks to critically engage in.

This translates formally into two DVDs and 39,153 words. There are four chapters or ‘Screenings’ which are self-reflexive and imaginative interrogations of DVD 1 *Home Movies Summer 2005* (13 mins) which take the form of fictionalised conversations. Screening 1, a conversation between the researcher and a senior academician interrogates the film practice in the context of academic, practice based research and outlines the relationship between the artefact and the written text as related objects of thinking. Screening 2, a conversation between the researcher and members of his family, investigates notions of the familial drawing on some feminist perspectives that query notions of representation. Screening 3, a conversation between the researcher and Media and Cultural Studies staff at the researcher’s home institution, cross-examines the film practice in relation to a theoretical formulation of political resistance. Screening 4, a conversation between the researcher and other filmmaker colleagues, scrutinises formulations from historical and contemporary film practices and charts filmic influences upon the filmmaking itself.

DVD 2 (28 mins) contains five experimental Home Movies that work to illustrate the filmmaking evolution towards the principal Home Movie on DVD 1.

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Steph, Sue, Bri, Maybelle, Jimbo, Little Steph and Little Bri.

For Lena, Neal, Gabriel and Sid.

Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

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Relevant seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was often presented; external institutions were visited for consultation purposes and papers and films were presented.

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Papers and Conferences (in chronological order)

Visible Evidence XI, 16-19 December 2003, Watershed Bristol, University of Bristol and University of the West of England.

Avant-Garde Cinema: An International Conference, 24-26 September, 2004, University of Edinburgh.

Building Bridges: The Cinema of Jean Rouch, 5-14 October, 2004, French Institute, London, CREAM (Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media), University of Westminster.

Cinema and Technology, 6-9 April, 2005, Institute for Cultural Research, University of Lancaster.

(Inter-)facing: Theory and Practice, 21-22 April 2005, University of Exeter (**Film/Paper delivered**).

Re-Mapping Deleuze, 17 September 2005, Cornerhouse, Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University and Staffordshire University.

Research Spaces: Materialization of Practice in Art & Architecture, 14-20 November 2005, Slade School of Fine Art and the Bartlett School of Architecture (**Film/Paper delivered**).

Research Symposium: The Documentation of Fine Art Processes and Practices, 2 December 2005, The Lancaster Institute For The Contemporary Arts, Lancaster University.

The Assessment and Examination of AVPhDs, 27-28 January 2006, Birkbeck College.

Interval (2), 17 March 2006, Slade School of Fine Art.

Research Into Practice, 7-8 July 2006, University of Hertfordshire.

AVPhD 3, 27-28 October 2006, Birkbeck University of London (**Film/Paper delivered**).

Cultural Studies Now International Conference, 19-22 July 2007, University of East London (**Film/Paper delivered**).

The Deleuzian Event, 27-28 September 2007, Manchester Metropolitan University (**Film/Paper delivered**).

Papers and Research Events at the University of Plymouth

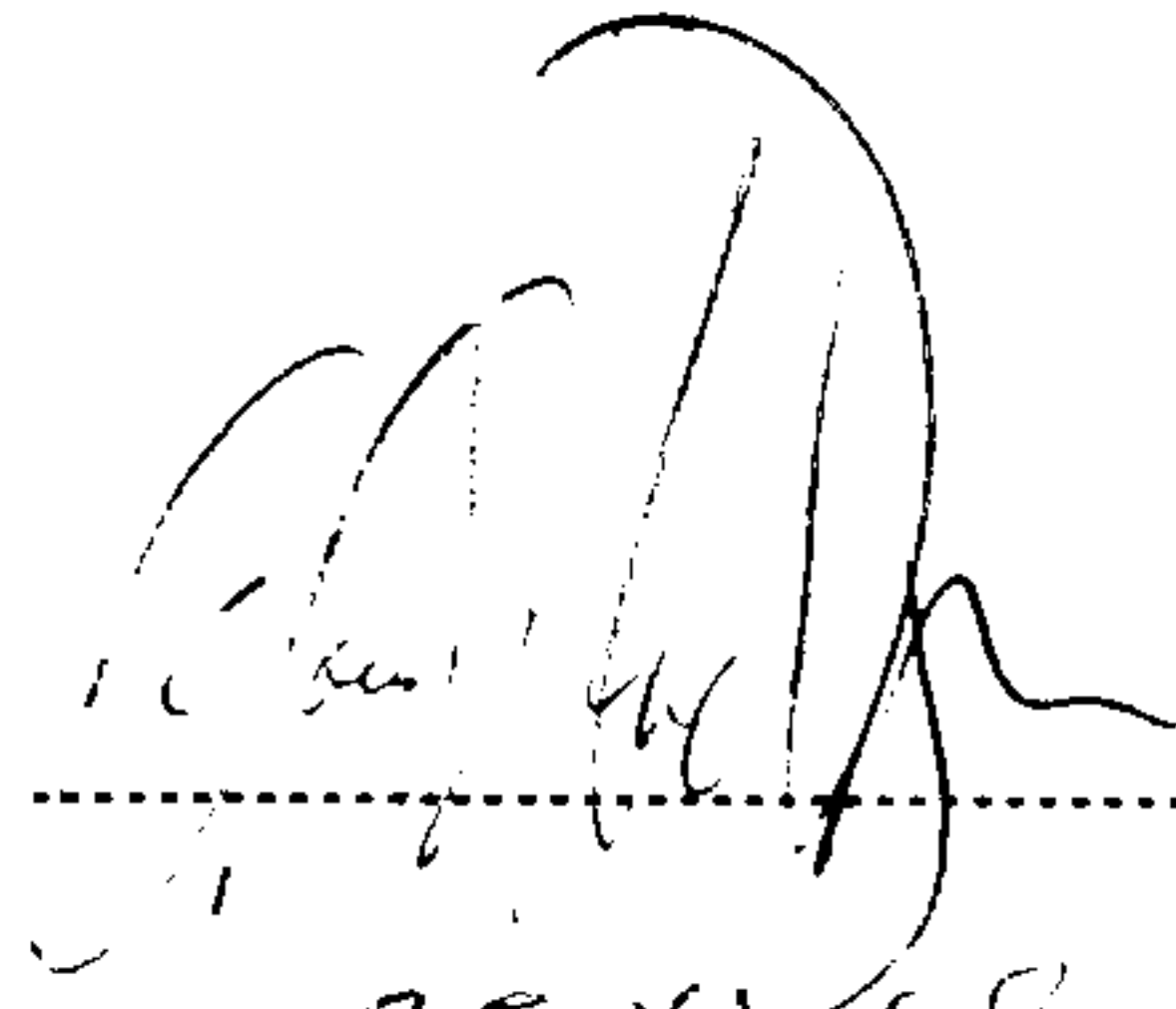
Research Training Workshops, Sept 2003 – May 2006, Faculty of Arts.

Critical Spaces, Sept 2003 – April 2006, School of Architecture and Design.

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Signed  _____
Date 25.XI.08 _____

Director of Studies: Chris Rodrigues
Second Supervisor: Liz Wells

External Examiner: Prof. Jon Dovey
Internal Examiner: Dr. Geoff Cox

Introduction

Structure of the Introduction

This introduction is in three parts: Introduction to the Submission, Introduction to the Written Text and Introduction to the Four Screenings. Each of these sets out to establish the rationale of each section of the submission. I start from the outer most point: positioning the submission, in which field and according to which methodological tools. I then move in closer to introduce the written text, its four chapters, its key terms and its key characteristics. This will include the referencing superstructure that has been deployed throughout the Four Screenings as ‘Conversations’ and ‘Footnotes’ and will closely define some of the terms used throughout this submission. The submission then moves on to the Four Screenings. For reading convenience I have placed the introductory comments on the pages immediately preceding the chapter they introduce.

Introduction to Submission

My aim here is to explain how this submission works. I will start by stating where I think the submission is to be positioned, in what field and according to which theoretical tools. Then I will define the core idea behind the structure of the submission, moving on to say what I think the thesis is and how it is to be understood.

First of all there are two parts to this submission. There is a written part that contains an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion and there is an audio-visual part that contains a series of video films. This can be found on the two DVDs that accompany this submission. DVD 1 contains the film that is central to this written text as it provides the basis for the discussions in the following four chapters. This is called *Home Movies: Summer 2005*. DVD 2 contains a number of other Home Movies from my film practice that have been selected to indicate the development towards *Home Movies: Summer 2005*. I leave the question of what to do first, read the written text or watch the films, up to the personal preference of the examiner/reader. In terms of this submission they are both equally important and inter-related and will only make doctoral sense when taken together.

Positioning the Submission

The submission belongs broadly to the field of experimental film practices, more specifically to no-budget, amateur video practice in the form of Home Movies. This research capitalizes the first letters of 'Home' and 'Movie' in order to emphasise this particular field of amateur film and video practice and defines 'Home Movies', after Patricia Zimmermann (1995), as that produced entirely by the nuclear family in question, in this instance, a husband-wife and their two young children. It draws from a number of theoretical toolboxes namely deconstruction and critical theories of cultural production and feminism. My research has in part sought to define a position for the film practice in asking a simple question: to whom is the filmmaking relevant? Deconstruction has been useful in looking critically at the immediate contexts in which my film practice operates. This includes the context of this submission. Following on from that I feel it appropriate to position this submission not only in the field of no-budget, experimental film and video practice but also as a contribution to the field of practice-led doctoral study in audio-visual research.

Rationale for Submission

The rationale behind the structuring of this submission is both to make my research findings accessible and present those research findings in an appropriate form. In order to do this I had to answer some important questions. For example: How much should I let the words take charge of the articulation of the findings? How much should be left to the films? How far can I go in marrying the ‘making-available-of-research-findings’ to the rationale of how I found out what I found out? How close can the thesis be to its articulation? Could it be the same thing?

Asking myself these questions has fulfilled a significant methodological function in the making of this submission. Iain Biggs, an artist academic looking at some questions surrounding practice-led doctoral research, claims that ‘Any informed approach [...] will recognize that artist/academics’ primary task is to find appropriate forms that accurately reflect imaginative research processes and outcomes, while also seeking to mediate these appropriately to a wider research community that, in turn, has an obligation to respect difference.’¹ The idea here is that a balance is struck between an ‘as-accurate-as-possible’ depiction of

¹ Biggs (2004) <<http://www.amd.uwe.ac.uk/index.asp?pageid=771>> accessed 16th March 2006.

research claims and methods and the obligation to mediate that depiction in the interests of accessibility. Katy Macleod, a researcher concerned with practice-led doctoral study, claims that the job of the ‘artist-scholar’ in disseminating research claims might be ‘to trace as close as they dare to *the thing itself*.’² The thing itself, according to Macleod, is *thought* and thought may be reflected in the artefact or written document or even be shown to emerge between them.³

The problem both Biggs and Macleod are concerned with is accuracy. How can the research findings be accurately put forward in a submission? The answer for me is in the two words Biggs uses to qualify his recommendations to the AHRC in the above quoted paper: ‘reflect’ and ‘mediate’. He claims that the submission should ‘accurately *reflect*’ research findings whilst at the same time those findings should be ‘*mediated*’ in order for them to be understood and accessed by the wider research community. In putting together this submission I have kept those two words in mind. Whilst I understand that a fully accurate write up of my research aims, claims and methods might be impossible, I do intend to trace as close as I dare to *the thing itself*. Only in my case I wish to propose that the thing itself is the thesis, the propositional thought put forward for testing.

² Katy Macleod has published extensively on the topic of Doctoral Research in Fine Art. See Macleod & Holdridge (2006).

³ Macleod (2003) ‘What is Writing?’, (delivered at Research Training Session, October 2003, University of Plymouth). Many of the ideas contained therein found their way into her co-edited book. See Macleod & Holdridge (2006).

Definitions of Terms

In order to develop this idea it will be necessary to define a certain number of terms I have used throughout this submission. I will begin with what I mean by the term ‘thesis’ and where it is to be found in this submission and go on to define key terms such as ‘self-politicization’ and most importantly ‘reflexivity’ and ‘the politicization of contextualisation’ – which is a crucial finding of the research. It is necessary to give these terms clear meanings at the outset of this submission so as to equip the reader with the necessary tools for understanding what this submission seeks to achieve and through which terminology it seeks to achieve it.

What is a Thesis?

I would like to challenge an assumption put forward in guide books for doctoral students such as Philips and Pugh’s *How To Get A Ph.D.* (2000), Dunleavy’s *Authoring a PhD Thesis: How to Plan, Draft, Write and Finish a Doctoral Dissertation* (2002), or Rowena Murray’s *How To Write A Thesis* (2003). These are three widely disseminated examples where the ‘thesis’ is a synonym for the submitted bound copy. Dunleavy writes ‘A Thesis, or a long dissertation (I use the words interchangeably from now on) forms a critical element in all main

models of Ph.D. education' (Dunleavy 2003: 1), or Murray maintains 'The material covered in this book has evolved over fifteen years of thesis writing and research supervision courses' (Murray 2002: 5), or Philips and Pugh's 'By the time that they [doctoral candidates] enter the final stages of the thesis-writing for the degree they are determined "to get it and forget it!"' (Philips and Pugh 2000: 4). In these examples the thesis is synonymous with the written text. I want to make it clear that in this submission the thesis is *not* the written text.

The Penguin English Dictionary offers two definitions of 'thesis'. A thesis is 'an essay or treatise, written by a candidate for university degree embodying results of research [secondly] a proposition [or] theory put forward for discussion or proof' (Garmonsway 1979: 872). I have found these definitions more useful. I find the word 'embodying' useful and could reformulate the definition to suit my own purposes as follows: 'a thesis is the proposition embodied in communicable form and put forward for discussion or testing.' That kind of thesis is available in this submission.

Where is my Thesis?

I am reluctant to claim the thesis is the same as the writing not because I am afraid to put it in words but because my research concerns a film practice which may include the written, but does not, in the end, wholly rely on the written for

the generation of research claims and methods. It is also the case that one of my research claims is that the propositional idea, or the thesis, gets tested every time I put it forward. In this sense I think of my thesis as something that happens in action, in each new here and now, in each new context. The thesis cannot work unless it takes the specifics of the context of its testing into consideration. The submission is another film screening opportunity and along with the discussion that the viva hosts, a place where the thesis can be put forward and tested. I mention the particularities of the submission because I would like to stress that I am not contributing to knowledge, a generic outcome for a doctoral study, by offering a proposition that is ‘true’ regardless of the context in which it is put forward. I have discovered through my research that work has to be done to have the thesis emerge for testing in each new context. The work I have done for this submission is only to make the thesis work in *this particular* context.

Between, Because of, And

I have constructed the submission in order that the thesis emerges both *between* and *because of* the written *and* audio-visual elements. I say *between* because I want to make it clear that the written text is not just the theory part of the research and the audio-visual element is not just the practice part. What is interesting about my research happens between them. I say *because of* to emphasise the way the thesis is presented in this particular instance is specific to

its context. That means I have invented a way of presenting the thesis in order to make it a relevant Ph.D. submission, in relation to the growing field of practice-led doctoral studies in audio-visual research. I say *and* because it is an extremely useful word in de-authorising the false binary of the ‘written’ (often understood to be the ‘thesis’) and the ‘made’ (or artefact). This submission provides a place for the thesis to emerge with the cooperation of the written and the made. It is not a choice between the written OR the made, but an acceptance of the usefulness of the written AND the made, together.

What is *my* Thesis?

My thesis statement is:

Self-politicization happens through the politicizing of my film practice.

That is the central propositional thought put into words. However it is only half complete. It requires activating and in order for it to be activated it requires a specific context. This submission offers such a context and thereby a way of activating the thesis and putting it forward for testing. My hope is that this offers the examiner and reader a firm foothold in the reading of this submission. Also that it provides a mutually beneficial departure point for both myself and examiner in an examination context.

What is meant by ‘self-politicization’?

Self-politicization has a specific meaning in this research project. It was formulated as a way of trying to include my own positionality within the investigation into the generation of a politicized film practice. It became clear early on in the research that if the generation of a film practice were to be politicized it would do well to think through, with criticality, some of the political connotations of its immediate contexts. For example Screenings 1 and 3 contain investigations into educational contexts whilst Screenings 2 and 4 deal with home and family and filmmaker training contexts. There are a number of historical and contemporary film practices that operate reflexively (see Screening 4), but it was felt that something more was needed for this research project. It became clear that a formulation of a methodology that would apply to my very own ‘here and now’ as the key figure or author of a film practice would assist in the generation of a particular kind of politicized film practice. This led me to engage in critical reflexivity not just from the point of view of my immediate political environment but also my role as author of the film practice within specific contexts. It became clear that the relationship between a politicized film practice and the role of the author of that film practice was one fraught with difficulties and complications. One need only mention Dziga Vertov or Jean-Luc Godard (see Screening 4) to suggest that politicized film practices are often born

out of very complex intersections between a film's text and its author's political views. But one thing that became clear was that politicized film practices are more often than not generated by filmmakers who have explicit political views both on their own film practices and on contemporary political environments. In this sense the question for this researcher was to try to think through, in practice, a way of generating a politicized film practice that not only included the filmmaker's immediate contexts and his position within them, but also drew upon that as the subject of the film practice itself.

This complex process of negotiation between a text and its author and the socio-political relations that surround and inform this relationship was, for intellectual convenience, formulated as the notion of 'self-politicization'. The thesis statement is formulated to suggest that the carrying out of an engagement in critical self-reflexivity will assure the success of the research project. In other words the generation of a politicized film practice will, in this case, rely upon the politicization of the multiple positions of the author in relation to the film practice.

What is meant by 'critical reflexivity'?

Engaging in critical reflexivity is a crucial component in the methodological approach to this research project. It may be necessary to distinguish between critical reflexivity and critical reflection. Critical reflexivity would be the exercising of a certain critical awareness of one's own position in the processes of production, in my case the processes of the generation of a politicized film practice. Vitrally, this would include a recognition of the contingency of the views and opinions that this position generates. What is crucially important here is the pro-active acknowledgment of the researcher within the scope of their own research. This is discussed through this submission in the form of interrogations on the positionality of myself, the author of the film practice, in various contexts. There is a very deliberate ploy NOT to divorce my positionality as researcher (or father/husband, filmmaker or doctoral student) from the findings of the research itself. This research is much more interested in highlighting a dependency between the research findings and the research methodologies. In other words there is a crucially important relationship between 'what' is said and 'how' it is said. In this sense the researcher's engagement in critical reflexivity as a methodology has proved very useful.

This research used Walter Benjamin, in particular his 1934 text 'The Author as Producer' as a basis for some of these insights. Here Benjamin explicitly asks that those who engage in cultural production – although he uses a newspaper and its readers as his example – should 'reflect upon their position in the processes of

production’ (Benjamin 1977 [1934]: 90). This research holds that Benjamin’s text, seen in this way, constitutes an invitation to engage in critical self-reflexivity and is founded upon Benjamin’s demand for reflection on positionality. See Screening 3 for more on this in relation to Benjamin.

In current research parlance ‘critical reflection’ is somewhat different. It might best be described as the process of ‘looking again’ at what has been produced and thinking of ways to widen the appeal, strengthen the qualities or otherwise better the artefact in question. This approach plays a part in this submission but it is not necessarily its priority.⁴

What is meant by ‘the politicization of contextualisation’?

This research starts with the assumption that every article of cultural production exists in and is produced by historically specific contexts. The cultural artefact, in my case this submission, and its meanings are culturally specific and therefore contingent upon the conditions of the contexts they operate within. This Materialist line of thinking, later developed by Jacques Derrida in deconstruction, is deployed in this submission. I used it to take the notion of

⁴ This is an expansion of the answer I gave to the question asked by one of the delegates at *AVPhD3*, a conference for doctoral students and supervisors, hosted by Birkbeck, University of London, 27-28 Oct, 2005: ‘What is the difference between reflexivity and reflection in your work?’ This was after the presentation of the video on DVD1, *Home Movies: Summer 2005*.

contextualising one's work, arguably a necessity for doctoral studies, one step further. The generic notion of contextualising one's doctoral practice is found in numerous contexts: Philips and Pugh's seminal study of doctoral research, *How To Get A Ph.D.* (2000), AHRC's recent *Guidelines for Doctoral Students and Supervisors* (2006), Macleod & Holdridge (2007) as well as the University of Plymouth's own post-graduate students' logbook (2006). The notion running through all these examples is that contextualising one's work involves two crucial stages. Firstly to position one's research in a particular branch of a particular field, in my case, within amateur video-making practices as a branch of film practices. Secondly to validate a claim to new knowledge a doctoral student must state to whom the new knowledge is relevant and why.

However, given that all cultural production is, in Derridean terminology 'always-already' culturally and socio-politically situated (explicitly or implicitly), I was interested in critically exploring the contexts that produce the new knowledge *as well as* the compulsory situating of that new knowledge within the wider contexts of film practices. This became part of the methodology of this research project and part of its contribution to knowledge.

As a researcher I felt it was in the interests and spirit of the research project not only to situate my work within a particular context but also to problematize the notion of contextualisation for doctoral work. I developed the idea that

contextualisation not only could, but properly *should* include reference to the contexts from which the work is produced. This would help shed more light on the research findings. A significant part of the research findings would be a close scrutiny of the methodologies that produced them. In other words, engaging in critical reflexivity is part and parcel of a solidly constructed notion of contextualisation. I found this was especially useful in a practice-based context as it provided a convenient opportunity to divulge critical thinking regarding the making of the Home Movies, their subsequent screenings and the contexts they operate within. But I would argue that this kind of contextualisation is just as useful for other kinds of research and is not exclusive to ‘practice-based’ – a problematic term in itself.⁵

It became crucial to find a way to deal with the notion of contextualisation and what that actually meant for me as a researcher. In order to understand the notion of contextualisation I attempted to understand the contexts that my work already existed within *politically*. That is, to try to understand the connections between the radical film practice I was trying to generate and the ‘bigger picture’, for example understanding my research along narratives of race, and gender. It was crucial for me to make sure that the connections made between myself as researcher and my research contexts were put up for critical interrogation. In this

⁵ See Screening 1 for a full discussion of the problematic notion of ‘practice-based’ as a term for doctoral study.

sense part of the work of the research project is to realise a politicization of the practice of contextualisation.

The notion of the politicization of contextualisation was also born out of frustration with colleagues' understanding of the term contextualisation in their own doctoral studies. I presented a paper for the AVPhD international group of doctoral students, supervisors and practitioners in audio visual arts entitled '*The Politics of Contextualisation*'. This paper outlined and critiqued a notion of contextualisation as a form of 'copying'. My argument was that deploying a shallow notion of contextualisation - that merely involved divulging who one's influences have been in film history - was little more than saying from whom one has copied. My intention was to invest the notion of contextualisation with political overtones. I argued that this was in the interests of a fuller, more critically and socially engaged practice of contextualisation rather than relying on the merely descriptive that listed groups of other artists who happened to have similar working practices.

The politicization of contextualisation runs throughout the main chapters in the form of Screenings – which are interrogatory conversations *with* and *within* the contexts that the film practice was produced. The Conclusion will outline some of the insights gleaned from deploying this approach to the notion of

contextualisation and will seek to tie it into the notion of self-politicization and critical reflexivity.

Introduction to the Written Text

I have two aims in this introduction. I want to present a case for why I have written the chapters the way I have and then I want to introduce each chapter fixing the appropriate contextual and theoretical frames for their reading.

First of all it is important to say what this written text is not. It is not the ‘thesis’. It is not something that *only* seeks to frame the ‘practice’, nor is it a text that is subordinate to or dominant over the ‘practice’. It is not the ‘theory’ part of the submission, nor the part that stands alone for examination. Moreover it is not conventional academic writing. Each chapter is not an article for publication, nor could any of them be given as papers at conferences, at least not as they presently stand.⁶ This written text is rather the most suitable mechanism to facilitate an appropriate identification, interrogation and defence of the thesis statement.

⁶ However I have presented at a number of conferences material that has been developed through this doctoral research. See p. 6-7 for a list of the national and international conferences and exhibitions where I have disseminated research material and published findings.

In inventing this written text I have sought to reflect one of the core elements of activity in my research. My research is chiefly concerned with making films, screening them and discussing them with the viewers. I have therefore constructed the chapters as a set of conversations between the viewers and myself.

Now I want to make a case for why I have done this. I wanted to find a writing form that could hold an appropriate theorisation and contextualisation of research findings and methods whilst *at the same time* demonstrate a central feature of how my research has been conducted and findings secured. In other words I wanted to reflect as accurately as possible the complex, multi layered, imaginative research processes whilst fulfilling the criteria relevant to the context, i.e. doctoral requirements. I would suggest that these are not mutually exclusive. Institutional requirements and integrity to research findings and methods can co-exist and hopefully do in this submission.

The Conversations and the Footnotes

One important technicality of this approach to writing up research findings is the deployment of a referencing superstructure throughout the chapters. I have sought to write in two voices in the chapters: the conversational and the academic. The main body of text is the conversation. Here I sought to reflect and

reflect upon actual conversations had about the film practice. These conversations were often varied and contained disparate references and sources. One of the functions of the footnotes is to reference those disparate sources and to provide a theoretical contextualisation. This grew into what I have called the more ‘academic’ voice. There is no intention of suggesting a false binary here in terms of ‘the conversational’ *versus* ‘the academic’. Both voices, as will be seen, contain elements of each other. It is only for the purpose of intellectual convenience that I have sought to name the two voices in this way. Structuring the main chapters also provided an opportunity to reflect the processes I had gone through in disseminating the work in different contexts. Each of the contexts calls for a different register whether at home or at work or with filmmaker colleagues. The footnotes are in an academic register throughout. In assembling this writing structure I found it useful to think of this approach as ‘two sides of the same coin’ in that each side appears independent but only together do they make up the complete artefact. I ask the reader to spend equally appropriate amounts of energy on the footnotes as on the conversations. In brief, my point is that these two voices *together* best serve to create a workable reflection of the research’s aims, claims and methods.

Conversations have proved a productive form for me to write in. In making a case for conversations I would like to account for a number of things. First what the relationship is between the conversations I had with viewers at screening events

and the written conversations that make up the four chapters. This will involve to what extent and why the conversations have been radically altered to suit the requirements of the doctoral submission. It will also involve thinking around the impossibility of an authentic transcription of a conversation as evidence of research findings and will furthermore bring in ideas about a speculative documentation that takes account of different contexts.

I began with the question: What would happen if I accurately transcribed all the conversations I had during the screening sessions and put them forward in the submission as research findings? First of all there would be too many words. I had about a large number of screening sessions, and they still continue. Each screening session lasted for approximately an hour, sometimes significantly longer, and often included conversations that went on with other people well after the screening session was over. But even if the submission procedures allowed an unlimited number of words, transcriptions would still not be appropriate. The main reason is because the two contexts, the conversations as they took place and the conversations in this submission, are very different. A transcription of a conversation would not really make sense in the context of a doctoral submission, subject as it is to very different sets of rules and conditions. But because it was at the conversations that a crucial part of my research had taken place, namely reflecting on the films with other people, I felt its inclusion would foreground the most crucial elements of my research practice. This, along

with very detailed footnotes bringing in theoretical reference material, provided an excellent opportunity to deliver an appropriate form of writing for this particular doctoral submission.

Documenting the Conversations

Documenting something, in my case these particular conversations with viewers, turned out to be a very complex problem with a very simple solution. Conventionally documentation is an accurate depiction in the document – the transcribed conversation for example – of what actually happened. My first task then was to record, with pen and paper and sometimes a camera, the conversations that took place after the screening event. But very early on I realised that moving across media, from spoken to written or video, not to mention across time, place and the other specifics of the context in which the conversations took place, proved the literal transcription of a conversation to be a non-starter. This was because I was not changing the content of what was documented according to the new contexts in which it was supposed to make sense. I realised that videoing a conversation brought in a whole new set of problems.⁷ I went on not to document any of the conversations except by writing down some notes for future reference after the screening events had finished.

⁷ I was lucky enough to have a few people accept being filmed while we sat and talked. I said I would only use it to transcribe conversations. Apart from the obvious issues of the interlocutors being self-conscious both about what they looked and sounded like, whether they felt themselves to be articulate enough

During these experiments in documentation I was continually put in mind of how any documentation is probably always contingent on the technologies and circumstances of its documentation. The more the documentation reflects this contingency the more interestingly it documents.⁸

etc, I found that the conversations did not flow very easily and often ended up sounding like dry, lifeless interviews with audience members. Their words seemed guarded and their opinions were continuously qualified. When I decided not to document the conversations using any technology other than my own memory, I found people were much more generous with their opinions and the flow of the conversations much more conducive to further thought. I had another screening with the people who had earlier agreed to be filmed. I showed them another film and we talked about it over a bottle of wine. It proved to be an immensely rewarding experience for me. I made notes afterwards and put some of the ideas in the written version of Screening 3.

⁸ Lancaster University hosted a conference *Documenting Practice*, Dec 2005, which a group attending Katy Macleod's Arts Practice research cluster at The University of Plymouth's Faculty of Arts attended. In response to the conference Katy Macleod hosted a feedback session. The feedback session was a place to reflect on the idea of documentation and to what extent documentation practices change that which is documented. This was a crucial session for me in forming my thoughts on documentation and this is what I wrote to the research cluster after the feedback session. I include it here as it makes clear that a full, literal, verbatim documentation is not preferable to an imaginative, possibly creative documentation:

Dear all, just before I arrived at our feedback session (07/12/05) I set myself a little task! I thought it might have been fun to try to fill up one side of A4 with interesting sentences that might come out during the session. A little documentation just for me – I thought. The original idea was that I write down some useful things people say for my own benefit. But when I got home I had a look at what I'd written and was chuffed to find it really engrossing. [...] During our feedback session I sat there thinking about my 'writing-down-of-some-notes' as a kind of recording. The recording technology was my pen and paper but maybe more importantly the way I was feeling during the session. This made some ideas and sentences more 'recordable' than others. A different mood would have produced a different set of sentences. I was continually put in mind of how any documentation is probably always contingent on the technologies and circumstances of its documentation. And that the more a documentation reflects this contingency

In this sense I have developed a form of documentation that seeks to respond to its own contingencies and limitations. My ambition here was to have the documentation refer to its own processes.⁹ This was one of the ways I sought to address the immediate context in which my film practice operates.

Therefore, to outline my relatively simple solution to this complex problem, I made the conversations almost entirely fictional in content and littered them with reflexive comments on the contexts in which they are situated. The conversations did take place at the time and location I indicate, but they have been radically

the more interestingly it documents. Here are the sentences. I just wanted to let them out again so that those who were not there might be able to get a whiff of what it was like to have been there (at least for me...). 1. 'Would have been really exciting if it had a quizzical equivalence' 2. 'Matrix of different perspectives coming together' 3. 'Seeing documentation as a deploying of accounting' 4. 'Subjective but accounting for conditionality' 5. 'Accounting that recognizes its grouping' 6. 'An account is an account of accounting' 7. 'Know thy grouping!' 8. 'Documentation is a series of choices.' From email to Research Cluster, chaired by Katy Macleod, Faculty of Arts, University of Plymouth, dated Mon 12th December 2005.

⁹ I feel this is an important point for the practice-led research culture. I want to quote a colleague from the Faculty of Arts, University of Plymouth who said rather cryptically, during a screening of one of my Home Movies, 'It seems to be terribly important for you to say something whilst trying to make me see that what you said was said precisely because you wanted me to see that you knew that the way you said it was terribly, terribly important.' In other words the making of any artefact, film, painting, dance, music in a doctoral context always (perhaps annoyingly!) includes reference to its own making. Furthermore I would argue that that is precisely what is required in a practice-led research culture interested in reflexive artwork. It seems to me that the Ph.D. is awarded, at least partially, on to what extent a doctoral submission has made this clear. I don't find it annoying, I have found it a useful platform from which to develop my thesis.

altered. It is important to stress that all of the words in the conversations are my own and that the ideas inside the conversations are fictionalised reconstructions that may or may not bear a resemblance to the actual conversations that took place. In other words the conversations in the submission are not the same as the conversations that took place before the submission. I was interested in finding a practical solution to the idea that any documentation of research would do well to reflect the extent to which it has had to mediate its claims and findings. This is in order to best reflect those findings in a new context. The new context is the doctoral submission.¹⁰ In other words, a non-mediated documentation, a documentation that ignored the input of the documentor, although it may look like the real thing, would be a limited way of relaying information from one context to another. In my case from the research itself to its examination.

I looked for a form that would both accurately reflect my own interpretation of the conversations and, at the same time, remain appropriate to this submission. In this vein I kept what I considered to be the matrix of thought within the actual conversation and subsequently built around it with what I thought most appropriate for this submission.

¹⁰ Included in this is the idea of the personal persuasion of the one who documents. The documentor is implicit in that which is documented as the documentor is active in making choices concerning what and how something is documented. This links directly with the discussion of direct cinema and its practices in Screening 4.

This includes a considerable text of footnotes. In relation to the conversations I was interested in making sure the footnotes provide an appropriate and accurate intellectual context for the conversations. It has also been a necessary supplement to the conversations and provides a referencing structure appropriate to this research project. This is borne out in some of the collections of references in the footnotes that belong to various fields of discourse and might otherwise not be seen side by side in a doctoral study. It was my intention, in the interests of reflecting my own research methodologies, to make sure that the logic of the conversations was reflected in the footnoting and referencing. This means that the relationship between the conversations and footnotes is one of mutual support and justification. So, not only do the footnotes provide an appropriate framing reference for the ideas and issues dealt with in the conversations, but also the conversations provide a discursive framework for the material of the footnotes. The intention is that through the different voices deployed in the written text the reader is provided access to one of the key methodological tactics of the research. This is to carefully de-authorise the boundaries contained within binaries such as 'the academic' and 'the conversational' or 'the theoretical' and 'the practical', 'the thinking' and 'the action'. This has been done in order to provide a working example of how it might be possible to 'carry out' and 'report on' doctoral research imaginatively and creatively. The structural composition of the written text as conversation and footnotes is one of the key clues to the possible application of the research findings; that is, what might be relevant to

the field of doctoral research in arts, as well as to experimental film practices is that *what one says* and *how one says it* are integrally related. The suggestion here is that integrity to research findings necessarily involves critical thinking around how those research findings are delivered and disseminated. That has been a crucial concern for this submission and is reflected in the choice to have the conversations and the footnotes serve their distinctive, yet deeply related, purposes.

Introduction to the Four Screenings

Before I introduce the conversations separately and identify some of their singularities I would like to make a number of general connections between them. These will be thematic connections drawing broadly on why I have found the technology of the conversation useful and specifically which elements of a conversation I have exploited to get my thesis across.

First of all I should make it clear that all the conversations took place after the screening of a particular film available on DVD 1. I chose *Home Movies: Summer 2005* as a benchmark as it most readily spoke about my research claims and methods. I use the same film for the basis of the four different conversations in the desire to stress how different contexts produce different readings and how the film practice, which is not just filmmaking but also film screening and subsequent conversations, adapts to those different contexts.

Conversations are useful in constructing a position from which I can speak about my research. I want to touch on how my experience of these conversations and their subsequent ‘writing-up’ has been a form of imaginative interrogation on my own part in relation to my research methods and findings. I will draw attention to the ways in which I am able to frame the researcher, myself, *within* the frames of my own research. This has been a crucial ploy in my research methodologies and

relates back to my choice of conversation as a means of reflecting upon my film practice. Finally I will talk about who I have the conversations with and why. They all belong, albeit in different ways, to the contexts and establishments that I already belong to, from university faculties through family members to filmmaker friends and colleagues.

Within the Frames of my Research

A crucial element of my research methodology has been to place a version of myself within the frames of my own research and ask questions about my status as researcher, filmmaker and family maker. It has been invaluable to look critically at my own positions. What results is a series of investigations into my own research contexts as well as family and filmmaker contexts.

Again the issue of finding an appropriate form for the dissemination of my research methodology and its findings has been a key concern here. I have been interested in both an internal and external contextualisation. I do not wish to suggest that these are mutually exclusive and I do not wish to support a false binary, but for intellectual convenience, and to emphasise a key aspect of my research methodologies, I chose to distinguish between an internal and external contextualisation. Internal contextualisation means that I have been concerned with interrogating my position in the interests of politicizing my own film

practice. This means that I have looked critically at my own position as a white, male, husband and father of two, filmmaker doing a practice-led Ph.D. in audio visual research. The external contextualisation relates to the position of my film practice in relation to the broader contexts of politicized filmmaking, experimental film and video in the UK and cultural activism through an arts practice. Conversations with people from those contexts, a Senior Researcher (Screening 1), my own family (Screening 2), Lecturers in Media and Culture (Screening 3) and filmmaker colleagues (Screening 4) provide an opportunity to explore those different contexts critically and interrogatively.

Positions in Conversations

I want to re-emphasise the differentiation between the actual conversations that took place and the conversations that I have rewritten and adjusted for the submission. The kinds of positions operating in each case are significantly different. In the actual conversations that took place after the screenings I am positioned first and foremost as a filmmaker who having shown a film wishes to enter into a discussion about it.

In those conversations, which have been rewritten, there is another kind of position. That position is first and foremost a Ph.D. doctoral candidate determined to adequately present their research claims and methods to examiners

in the context of submission. But within the rewritten conversations themselves other positions are staked out. In order to bring this point home I have presented the research through four very different conversations. In each re-written conversation the position of the interlocutors are carefully constructed to accurately reflect my interpretation of the original conversation's context. My aim is to imaginatively interrogate the different matrices of thought at work in my film practice according to each of the specific contexts in which the film practices seek to operate.

Imaginatively Interrogative

The conversations in this written text are imaginative in that they build on what a conversation was, my impressions of it and some of the areas of thought it developed. But crucially imaginative because it invents ways in which those particular thoughts might be made relevant to the new context of this submission. The conversations that I have 'written-up' as though they happened are the ones where I imagined a tough set of questions to answer and that this answering would help illuminate areas of my research for the examiner/reader. My aim was to place my work in an atmosphere of interrogation, and to see if the research could be defended.

It is important to stress that ‘Gary’, a character in the four conversations, based on myself, is an authorial construction and in each conversation different. In constructing my submission in this way I was faced with an awkward dramaturgical problem. I needed to make the conversations convincing while at the same time make sure Gary did not get all the best lines, nor know all the answers to the questions posed by the other characters. In resolving this issue I have Gary a little naïve, under-confident or nervous at times. This also means that the author’s views, my own, do not necessarily correspond with Gary’s. I rather constructed the conversations in such a way as to allow a winning argument to emerge. The source of the winning argument is often not found in Gary. However I want to make it clear that those points that are designed to win the argument represent the views of the author.¹¹

There is a particular kind of limitation in having myself as the author of all the characters, myself as interrogator and interrogated; it might seem that I am asking myself questions I can provide easy, ready-made answers to. This is not the case with my submission. I see myself as interrogator and interrogated as

¹¹ For example in the first two conversations, Screening 1 and 2 Gary is clearly not the one who is ‘winning the argument’. So very specifically in Screening 1 when Gary asks about Peter Gidal, it is to allow myself as author an opportunity to offer my own reading of Gidal’s work through the senior researcher. The same with Seka in Screening 2 when she identifies a problem with the film practice and demands equal authorial status with the author of the Home Movies in the future in order to avoid certain theoretical difficulties. Those winning arguments represent my own views.

providing two important opportunities. Firstly imaginative interrogation provides a platform where the researcher, myself, can ask what they know to be the most difficult questions of all. I would claim that the researcher's privileged access to the processes of their own imaginative research processes facilitates an especially rigorous kind of interrogation. In other words I have made sure that the most difficult questions regarding the film practice are present in the conversations that follow here. Secondly trying to think in someone else's shoes has been an extremely surprising and useful exercise. I found that I was able to ask questions, in another voice, that I would be unable to ask of myself otherwise. This, although imaginative with limited accuracy, has provided opportunities for me to try to understand different disciplines within different fields. Intensive research was necessary for me to be able to ask questions in the voice of those with whom I share a context: a Senior Researcher in Fine Art (Screening 1), or a feminist art-activist¹² (Screening 2), or a group of media and

¹² I came across 'art-activist' as a term through The Live Art Development Agency based in London run by Lois Keidan et al. John Jordan, formerly of the artist group PLATFORM (co-directors: Jane Trowell, James Marriot and Dan Gretton), 'a collective committed to social and ecological justice through the transformative power of art', see <<http://www.platformlondon.org>> last accessed 16th March 2006. Jordan has written very eloquently on the formulation of art-activism and its current practices. This is a very readable piece available to download for free on: <http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/Study_Room/guides/John_Jordan_SR_G.html> last accessed 16th March 2006. This formulation of art-activist is in direct contradistinction to some other, perhaps less well thought through formulations. See for example the Chicago art entrepreneur Paul Klein's ideas on art activism. He was recently voted Chicago Society of Artists' Man of the Year (2006) after taking over a 2.5 million square foot expansion of McCormick

cultural studies lecturers (Screening 3) or film makers from another country (Screening 4).

Who are the conversations with and why?

All the conversations take place with friends, colleagues or family. Part of the rationale of the film practice is to explore my immediate contexts and to bring out in conversation what I think it is that makes those contexts tick. Politicization in this sense is largely dependent upon understanding the immediate contexts in which my film practice operates. To provide the examiner/reader with an opportunity to see this in action I selected, out of the many contexts I conducted conversations in, four to develop further. These conversations evolved into the rewritten conversations for this submission. The original conversations were with a senior lecturer who is a researcher in the field of practice-led doctoral study. The second was with my wife who is a practicing artist and scholar, also engaged in a practice-led Ph.D of her own. The third was with members of the teaching and research staff at the school of Media and Photography, University

Place, Chicago for which he has been appointed 'Art Curator'. He also describes himself as an 'art activist' which is evidence of the slippery-ness of the term. See <<http://www.kleinart.com>> last accessed 16th March 2006. Grant Kester and Nina Felshin provide transatlantic views much in the vein of Jordan's where art is given the task of joining in the struggle for social and ecological justice, see Kester (1998) and Felshin (1995).

of Plymouth. The fourth was with a number of filmmaker and artist colleagues from my studies in Eastern Europe.

The first and third are in academic contexts, Screenings 1 and 3, the second is from a familial context, Screening 2, and finally the fourth is in an international context with filmmaker/artist colleagues and friends with whom I studied and collaborated in Slovakia during my studies there, Screening 4. Each of the screenings have their particular function but together they make up a collection of different ways of thinking appropriate to those different contexts and highlight how my film practice makes a point of adapting to the diverse demands of each of those contexts. On top of this the conversations provide a solid platform from which to locate an appropriate contextualisation for my film practice.

Accounting for Myself

Being made to answer for my film practice through conversations which have interrogative aspects, has been a way of trying to account for myself and my film practice to the wider research community, and crucially to account for my film practice to myself. I feel that my responsibility lies in presenting an ‘as accurate as possible’ reflection of my research aims, claims and methods through an imaginative self interrogation. This is reflected not only in my research aim to interrogate my own *position* through a film practice as researcher, family maker

and filmmaker, but also to interrogate that *film practice* through imaginative conversations.

Screening 1

Introduction

This particular conversation focuses on the context of the practice-led Ph.D. in arts. It is chapter one for two reasons. Firstly because it goes into detail about many of the points raised in the Introduction to this Submission and therefore follows on nicely from it. Secondly, this conversation is, of all the chapters, the most immediately relevant to the context in which it is situated. Since this is a practice-led Ph.D. submission it is important in my research to try to understand what the prevailing ideas are in this field and how they might relate to the delivery of my research findings.

This imaginative conversation provides an opportunity for me to contextualise my film practice in relation to the field of practice-led doctoral research, whilst at the same time providing a space in which some research claims can be subject to interrogation.

Screening 1 is very loosely based on a conversation that took place at the Faculty of Arts, Plymouth on the 16th of February 2006 between 2:30pm and 5:10pm. I have made the characters in this conversation very simple and two dimensional in order not to get unnecessarily bogged down in the complexities of generating

two robustly three dimensional individuals. To this end I have deployed instantly recognisable character tropes. Hence the Senior Researcher, (a further fictionalisation because there is no such post at the Faculty of Arts, University of Plymouth), is a stereotypical academic. Old, grey haired, slightly quaint, but impatient and sometimes rude. There is no resemblance whatsoever between this fictional character and the one with whom I had a screening conversation in February. ‘Gary’, the research candidate’s naivety is exaggerated in order to allow the author, myself, the opportunity for the Senior Researcher to map out the field of practice-led research especially in relation to audio-visual research. I should also mention that I have chosen to have my research colleague remain anonymous as I did not want it to seem as though I were putting words into their mouth or publishing their views. The thoughts contained within this conversation are all my own thoughts as are all the words. Where appropriate I have referenced the work that informs my own thoughts in the footnotes.

I have also emphasised the fictionality of this scene by adding a few sentences that describe the set. In addition I punctuate the conversation with action or directions. I deploy this fictional scene setting in order to ensure the conversation can be read as imaginative.

The conversation is further designed to do two more things. Firstly to introduce the key elements of my film practice, namely the tripartite positioning of myself

as family-maker, filmmaker and researcher. Secondly to interrogate those claims set out in the Introduction to the Submission in more detail by bringing in contemporary debates surrounding practice-led doctoral study in arts. This is with a particular focus on the relationship between ‘making’ and ‘writing’.

This conversation opens on my thoughts on the work of Gayatri Spivak, a post-colonial thinker who describes herself as a deconstructionist-feminist-marxist. In a conversation with Ellen Rooney in the opening chapter of *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (Spivak, 1993) she talks of how a ‘context’ is synonymous with a ‘reading’. I found this particularly useful for the opening chapter of this submission as it articulates my concern with the different contexts in which the film practice operates. I put all the Spivak references into the mouth of the Senior Researcher on purpose and made it look like a particular passion of his. However, I want to distance myself from the practice of applying theory to an arts practice, as the Senior Researcher says, ‘as though it were a technology.’ On the other hand I do think Spivak’s work, concerned as it is with positionality and educational institutions alongside ideas of political agency, forms a relevant theoretical backdrop to this conversation and my film practice more generally.

There are footnotes which act as a referencing mechanism for sources that if put inside the main body of text would disrupt its flow. I have left the referencing mainly outside the main body of text in order to allow the central ideas of the

conversation to emerge more vividly and to imitate the way a conversation would not normally include complex cross-referencing. Also, in the footnotes, I am not ‘in character’, as the naïve ‘Gary’ of the conversation. The footnotes offer the examiner/reader the chance to take me at my word.

Characters:

SR: Senior Researcher, very Oxbridge, 78 years old, worked at this department for 22 years, can be patronising to students and junior research staff.

GARY: Gary Anderson, doctoral candidate, 34 years old, about to write up research findings, a little in awe of the Senior Researcher and a little hesitant when getting points across.

It is late afternoon in mid February. The Senior Researcher, an elderly male academic with white hair and broad shoulders, sits next to Gary, a doctoral candidate, with a slight build who every now and again, turns to biting his nails. The Senior Researcher watches something on the television, mildly amused as Gary, a little tense, waits for the film to end and the conversation to begin. They sit in a cramped office. It is a mild, but pleasant day, the window is slightly ajar and the vertical blinds shiver every now and again from the breeze. On the side of the television set, in fading yellow marker are the words, ‘Property of the Art School, Exeter’. The film finally comes to a close. There is an awkward silence.

SR: Quite, quite, well. Shall I eject this? (*Hands the DVD to Gary*) Thank you. Is this how your practice works, we watch the film together and then have a conversation?

GARY: Yes. That's how it works. It's very simple. Erm...Last week I emailed you to ask if we could do this...

SR: Yes, yes, yes. Last week I got an email asking for this meeting. You said you wanted to converse on the topic of your position as a Ph.D. student doing practice-based research. You were keen to stress the idea of 'political agency' being exercised within the educational institution, through your film practice, as I remember.

GARY: Yes. What did you think of the film?

SR: Well, I don't really know. I think it is interesting that you are looking at the contexts in which your films are produced and screened. The academic, research culture is one of the contexts you produce work in. I was thinking about the conversation we might have and I remembered Spivak's *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. This was first published in 1993, by Routledge, I think, that same year I was asked to sit on the editorial board of the international journal Higher

Education Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.¹³ I refused the post but did contribute a number of articles, one of which was on Spivak's *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. The first chapter - 'In a Word: Interview', Ellen Rooney is talking to Gayatri Spivak about exercising political agency in an institutional context, amongst other things. I think some of the things that come out of that conversation might be relevant to you and your film practice.

GARY: Excellent. What does political agency mean here?

SR: Well, Spivak, as a post-colonial thinker is interested in political agency and how that might be achieved for the marginalised – or in her words 'the subaltern'. Agency in this sense involves a person of the margins, for example, a woman, a black, the working class, intervening in the particular state of affairs which oppresses them. In other words having agency in this sense is about being active politically. Being politically active, in other words, if you are a woman might be to demand equal pay rights with men at the institution you work for. That would serve as an example of being politically active or having political agency.¹⁴

¹³ This is a fictional journal.

¹⁴ At The Cultural Theory Institute, Manchester University, on the 16th February 2005, Gayatri Spivak gave a paper entitled 'Learning to Learn'. In it she outlined her most recent thoughts on political agency and who had access to it: 'Agency presumes collectivity and those receiving an education in Humanities are provided 'permission to have agency' [...] the idea is not teacher training but

GARY scribbles down some notes as the SENIOR RESEARCHER looks on. He strokes his chin thoughtfully and continues.

SR: 'In A Word: Interview' is, in part, about the idea that there might be a way, a magical way, to say something 'in a word'?¹⁵ The implication here is that to summarise a matter 'in a word' is not possible, or even desirable.¹⁶ The conversation between Rooney and Spivak makes explicit how 'readings' through specific contexts challenge the idea of an 'essential' meaning that can travel across contexts and remain the same. In other words, the meanings are modified through and by the contexts in which they are situated. I believe the same happens with your efforts in *Home Movies: Summer 2005*. Could this be the case? Different meanings are produced in different contexts. The film practice

teaching and rearranging desires.' This has been a particularly useful formulation for me as a researcher because it encourages a positionalist perspective. This means it is important for me to engage critically in the contexts I carry out research in. Spivak problematises a notion of agency in 'Can The Subaltern Speak?' (Nelson & Grossberg 1988: 283ff).

¹⁵ Ellen Rooney writes:

As an idiom, 'in a word' signals a moment of compressed and magically adequate expression. To summarize a matter 'in a word' is to locate or hit upon its proper form, to capture its essential quality, and thus to say all that has been said. (Spivak 1993: 1)

¹⁶ Derrida's roundtable discussion *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* (Caputo 1996) posits a similar, if somewhat more playful assertion, that things can't be reduced to a few simple phrases. This is taken from the roundtable discussion with Derrida held at Villanova University in 1994.

seems to want to take note of this by having conversations after screenings where different readings of the film emerge.

GARY: That's right.

SR: So let me give you my reading of this film. I work in the same institution as you, and have access to our Ph.D. research culture, so I know that your research question centres on issues of whether a white, male, like yourself, is able to produce a radical film practice. Now, usually, it would be quite enough if you proceeded to appropriately identify the 'white male', according to which social, political, linguistic codes he is to be identified and so on. Along with this, if you appropriately identified the radical film practices you are drawing on and presented them along with an appropriate theorisation, then, conventionally that would be enough for a Ph.D. But here I can see something else at work. If you as a filmmaker are seeking to identify yourself **WITHIN** the film practice, meaning **WITHIN** the screening contexts where you sit and discuss with the viewers what you have shown them, then we have something altogether more difficult to pin down. As I see it, your research findings are primarily visual, and the appropriate contextualisation of your research findings will be difficult to present. How are you going to do it? How can you write up the live mediation of the categories you are exploring in your film practice? What you seem to be interested in hits against the normative practices of academic research culture. Not to mention the

subject or leitmotif of your Home Movies is your own family, of which you are, again, WITHIN. So my reading begs a question: given that your research findings are primarily visual or audio-visual how will the research findings translate from the visual to the written?

GARY: (*hesitant, nervous*) Through the spoken. I have screened the film 30 times or more. After each screening we have a conversation. Sometimes the conversation is stimulating, sometimes not. The conversations reference different parts of my film practice; for example with you I can talk about making artwork in a Ph.D./institutional context...

SR: Quite, quite.

GARY: Then with my family I can bring in appropriate theorisations of the familial; with senior lecturers in Media and Culture I can bring in appropriate theorisations of political resistance/cultural activism; with other filmmakers I can reference the appropriate film practices that inform my own.¹⁷

SR: In other words you can get in all the appropriate contextualisation and theorisation framed within the relevant intellectual fields. Each chapter being a conversation after a screening. The advantage of that is that you get to fulfil the

¹⁷ These are respectively the four chapters that make up this written text.

research protocols of positioning research claims appropriately, but crucially you get to place yourself WITHIN the making of those claims. Reasonably interesting!

GARY: I think that this forces the thesis – the thing being put forward – out of ‘the written’ and back towards ‘the made’ – where it began – to end up somewhere between the two. The mechanics of the relationship between the written - the four screenings - and the made - the Home Movies - becomes a crucial element of the thesis itself.

SR: Oh. I see. *(he strokes his chin thoughtfully)* The written is not then the explication of the made. It is not as though you have made something, a Home Movie in your case, and now the written will jolly well come along and explain it all to us?

GARY: No. They are different ways of thinking about the thesis.

SR: Well, I think I can see what you’re driving at. And of course, having conversations about the films is an obvious way of anchoring the film practice on the films themselves and what happens when they are shown, rather than on retrospective theorising. Don’t forget that! *(The Senior Researcher fixes his chair, clears his throat and looks determined to move on to deeper things)* OK.

Let's move in closer to the context in which we are speaking. If we foreground the film we have just seen. *Home Movies: Summer 2005* you might be able to say, with Ellen Rooney, that context emerges as a synonym for reading. Which is to say that there is a different reading available in each different context. In this particular context, sitting in my office at the place we are both employed, albeit me at a senior level, and you at a junior, student level, a certain reading of the film emerges.

GARY: That's true. I think if you had come to my home and sat with my wife and kids and watched the film there, I imagine the reading would be very different.

SR: Perish the thought! Well, this might go some of the way to explaining an important element of the film practice, namely that it does all it can to be cognizant of the implications of the context in which it is situated. But what about the question of political agency you referred to in your email?

GARY: (*starts to say something but is interrupted*) I wanted to...

SR: Well, first off I would say that to contextualise in the first place is anti-essentialist – in contextualising your own context as it were, you are granting yourself an opportunity of looking critically at the context in which you are

situated. You might also get a chance to look critically at what you bring to that context. Put simply, deploying a criticality of one's own position where that includes, in this conversation, being cognizant of the 'practice-based' doctoral studies context, might be a first step to exercising political agency. A sort of preparatory ground, if you will.

GARY: I wonder if that might be possible through thinking about my history.

SR: What do you mean?

GARY: Well, by looking at what I might bring to a context.

SR: Do you mean to say that in practical terms you look critically at what seems natural, or essentialist in a specific context? Maybe that comes through the training you have received as a filmmaker. In this vein the films concentrate on two different but related 'essentialisms' namely yourself as a 'filmmaker', and as 'family maker'.

GARY: I've been a filmmaker for about ten years now. It is very easy to forget to think critically about that position. I started directing films at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, Bratislava, Slovakia in 1995. After directing films on Super VHS and Betacam, then 'graduating' – that's what they used to call it - to

16mm and super16mm I became very interested in perfecting my skills as a filmmaker. I had no idea about what position I was supposed to be speaking from or indeed to whom I was speaking. I just made films. At least that's what I thought I was doing.

SR: Now of course you realise there is no such thing.

GARY: The 'teaching machine' in Slovakia was geared in such a way, in my experience, that asking questions concerned with positionality was seen as a distraction. The business of the film school was to teach you the trade of the filmmaker, the necessary skills and to facilitate the gaining of relevant experience in order to be employed professionally...¹⁸

SR: But, it can be very difficult to see the position one is in. Sometimes it's so obvious it becomes invisible. Spivak talks about this in other contexts. 'No one can quite articulate the space she herself inhabits. My attempt has been to describe this relatively ungraspable space in terms of what might be its history.'¹⁹ The same critical processes might be deployed when thinking about your position in your 'family'.

¹⁸ See Screening 4 for a full discussion of this topic.

¹⁹ Spivak (1990: 68).

GARY: I was watching a re-run of Paul Watson's *The Family*²⁰ one night on BBC4. Watching it I started thinking about how I was a father in a 'perfect', nuclear family unit. I decided to investigate this situation through a film practice. Now, here I am talking to you. In this case I am not only a family man and a filmmaker, I am also a researcher.

SR: Well, here you are, after all, screening a film in my office. I wanted to return to the way you might be using your agency in an institutional context. It appears to me that if you produce a 'live mediation' of the categories of the white, male, family man, filmmaker, then the spectator has to try to work out what those categories are and how they can be applied. There are two crucial elements there. Live mediation and institutional context.

²⁰ *The Family*, Paul Watson (1974). Richard Leacock (see Screening 4 for discussion of influence of Leacock's work on my own) told me in a personal conversation during his visit to the University of Plymouth in November 2003 at Dartington Hall, UK, that it was 'reality TV' that most haunted him when thinking about his legacy in television and cinema. He mentioned Paul Watson's ground breaking reality TV series *The Family*, and added that together with Watson and Nick Broomfield they had 'spawned a monster'. The conversation continued to look at some of the ways in which reality TV shows can often ignore issues of representation and the positions of the filmmakers in relation to their subjects. Jon Dovey's monograph *Freakshow* (2000) is an excellent resource for critical discussion of reality TV and its cultural implications. Essentialisms abound in Watson's portrayal of 'family' in the mid 1970's. See Screening 2 for more discussion on the construct of the family and representation and its relation to my film practice.

GARY: Yes, I've been working hard to try to find a way in which the films I make might be relevant to the contexts in which they are screened.²¹

SR: Quite, quite. The practice-based doctoral research in arts is one of those contexts. Katy Macleod, a colleague of mine, just down the corridor by the way, with a slightly smaller office, has done lots of work on the relations between writing and making in the context of doctoral study in Fine Art. Her recent book *Thinking Through Art* edited together with Lyn Holdridge, a research assistant here with us, is the culmination of a decade of research into so called 'practice-based' doctoral study.²² As I understand it, within this culture, by virtue of the fact that you are a registered and fully funded practice-based Ph.D. candidate, you could potentially be exercising a kind of agency, in the narrow sense that you contribute to that field.²³ I'm not at all sure about the word political here, but you might be able to argue that any kind of agency is political. Personally I

²¹ Films I made at Film School in Slovakia won screenings along more industrial models including Slovak National Television and various Film Festivals around Europe. I often felt that there was nothing specifically relevant about the films to the contexts in which they were screened. This turned out to be a key motivating factor in my deciding to work towards a Ph.D. in filmmaking as it might provide an opportunity for me to get to grips with the question of the relationship of the production of the film with its reception. Eventually I came to see the production and reception of the film as mutable categories (see Screening 3).

²² Macleod & Holdridge (2006).

²³ My doctorate studies are fully funded by the University Of Plymouth's Student Scholarship (USS). Fees are covered and a maintenance grant, in line with AHRC rates, is provided (currently £12,000 per annum). The scholarship ran from October 2003 to the final payment in July 2006 to cover a full three year period.

wouldn't. I might be able to see eye to eye with you there if you argued that that was just one of the ways in which you were seeking a political agency, specific to the research context.

GARY: I was thinking that a political agency is partly defined by the context in which it operates. For example there is no use my trying to politicize ideas about how I live with my family, wife and two kids, in any other context except the one where it is relevant. I get the feeling all agency is like that. Like meanings, it can't cross contexts very easily.

SR: Just to re-iterate something we touched on earlier, Spivak often, if not always, rewrites her interviews and there's a very good reason for that. What was spoken was spoken in a particular context with a particular interlocutor. When that gets translated to the written the context changes, and so do, by implication, the meanings that were understood at the time of speech. Spivak, as I understand it, rewrites her interviews to compensate for that change in how her words are disseminated. And of course because when one writes one has more time to think things through.

GARY: That's relevant to my research.

SR: Of course one wouldn't want to apply Spivak as though she were a technology, now would one?²⁴

GARY: No.

SR: But, if memory serves, Peter Gidal's film practice might well share a thing or two with yours. Both of your work seems inflected with the same intention to compensate for, or at least reference, the context in which the situations depicted in the films will be screened and read. Gidal is something of an extremist in this respect.

GARY: Is my work like Gidal's?

SR: Not really, but you share a concern. Gidal was treasurer the London Film Makers Co-operative from 1969 to 1978.²⁵ I think the questions Gidal raises are still important today.

GARY: Is he still making films?

²⁴ Although I've heard this notion criticised a number of times at conferences and research seminars, I found a formulation of it in Judith Butler's *Precarious Life*, (2004: 128ff). See Screening 2 for how Butler's thinking on gender and representation became a useful reference point in querying notions of the family.

²⁵ Gidal (1999: 16-20).

SR: Not that I know of.²⁶ But go to the Central St Martin's archive and have a look.²⁷ I remember being extremely impressed with the staunchly ethical approach his films take to the medium of filmmaking. We won't go into detail about that here, suffice to say that the impossibility of representation plays a significant role in his filmmaking. The tension between wanting to represent, being seduced by the image that represents and knowing that representation is problematic, underlies everything I have seen of his. I am thinking particularly of *Room Film 1973* (1973). I probably shouldn't go into this with a junior researcher, but I was at a conference once where somebody actually got up from the floor and yelled 'Well why the hell does he make films at all if he doesn't want to represent?' Of course the delegates were stunned. They thought it was a tiresome and petulant question but on reflection I came to understand it as an excellent question.²⁸ By making films he gets the chance to raise critical issues and questions about film, in public with other people.²⁹ I should note that Gidal,

²⁶ Gidal is still active. He made *Volcano* in 2003.

²⁷ I saw a selection of Peter Gidal films housed at the Central St Martin's archive. The British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection is a research project led by Senior Research Fellow David Curtis concentrating on the history of artists' film and video in Britain and is housed at Central St Martin's College of Art and Design. For more information <<http://www.studycollection.co.uk>> last accessed 16th March 2006.

²⁸ I heard a delegate member of the audience ask this question at a conference Avant-Garde Cinema. An International Conference at the University of Edinburgh 24th- 26th September 2004, coordinated by Alexander Graf.

²⁹ Gidal claims:

The politics of my film practice on a more specific filmic level was as to the questionability of representation pure and simple, an anti-narrative polemic, and practice, against identification: you not being [you], it not being

at least in my mind, is always WITHIN, his film practice, or at least he, the filmmaker, is always implicated in his film practice. The ethical quandaries surrounding representation are intended to reveal something about the production of the film – which necessarily includes the filmmaker.³⁰ So in this sense his films were both necessary, in that he felt it crucial, from a political point of view, to ask the questions of representation in filmmaking, and impossible in that nothing, in a sense, is represented in his films. The camera is constantly at work zooming in and out, going in and out of focus. As soon as something begins to be recognisable, the camera moves away, as though unable to cope with the ethical quandary of representation. Here, I am thinking of *Condition of Illusion* (1975). With Spivak there is a similar line of thought, she says: ‘The greatest gift of deconstruction: to question the authority of the investigating subject without paralysing him, persistently transforming conditions of impossibility into possibility.’³¹ I don’t want to oversimplify this but for Gidal the question is of ‘representation’: your project, a little less ambitious than Gidal’s, seeks to ask questions in different contexts about the investigating subject. The investigating

it...That – in relation to overt political theories and positions – was a strong motive force for thought and for new work. (Gidal 1999: 18)

For Gidal it is the polemical that challenges ‘that setting up of images and meanings and characterisations as truths, as natural, as real’ (Gidal 1999: 19).

³⁰ There are many reference sources for this. Although I don’t share Reekie’s hatred of S/M I particularly enjoyed his polemical writing on Gidal. See Duncan Reekie’s Ph.D. *Not Art: An Action History of the British Underground*, University of Plymouth (2003: 238-45). Reekie at one point refers to Gidal’s films as ‘pointless and tedious’.

³¹ Spivak (1987: 201).

subject is not paralysed but questioned. This questioning happens in the live mediation of the categories of family maker and filmmaker. In this sense 'One is left with the useful, yet semi-mournful position of the unavoidable usefulness of something that is dangerous.'³² In your case this seems to be both the filmmaking and the family making.

GARY: Yes. OK, that's right. Now, we talked a little about my being a filmmaker and less so about a family maker...

SR: I think you suggested a researcher too? Is that the triangulation you are looking for in this conversation?

GARY: Those three points are for me the most relevant elements of my 'so-called' practice-led PhD. Especially here with you, in your office. It seems the most relevant of those is the so-called practice based researcher.

SR: Why do you say 'so-called' practice based? Are you suggesting a rejection of the 'practice' and 'theory' binary?

GARY: Yes.

³² Spivak (1993: 5).

SR: Might you then go along with Katy Macleod's formulation of making and writing as 'related objects of thinking.'³³

GARY: That is relevant to the film practice.

SR: It means that the different elements of the research are 'related' to each other. They are both, the writing and the making, ways by which certain thoughts, or ways of thinking, are made explicit. Yet those modes of making explicit relate to one another, and collaborate to make the project's aims, claims and methods as explicit as possible. Making things explicit is an institutional requirement.

GARY: Yes.

SR: Sharing the weight of making thought explicit between the writing and the making can be a productive process. It refuses writing as the 'master-discourse' and foregrounds the artefact as something that can articulate a proposition to some extent. Making the thesis explicit is a good thing in an academic context. A

³³ Macleod writes:

The works are critical or philosophical gestures of thought. In the making and writing, what transpires is simply *related objects of thinking*. Whether one mode is more or less important is subject to the quality of thought [contained therein].' Macleod (currently unpublished), see 'Related Objects of Thought: art and thought, theory and practice.' (Miles 2005: 143-54)

copy of the submission goes to the British Library, one to the host library, and the idea is that, through this archiving mechanism, in the interests of future readers, the thoughts - contained therein - are made clear. I would not insist that the artefact cannot contain elements of ambiguity. For example, a thesis proposition that ran 'one's films are necessarily ambiguous' would be a reasonable claim to make provided it were clearly made. Together, as related objects of thinking, they might provide a more engaged version of the multilayered research one has undertaken. So 'practice' is not just making the film, and 'theory' is not just writing about it; they are related objects of thinking.

GARY: So is the term 'practice based' useful, at all?

SR: (*becomes quite animated*) 'Practice-based' or 'practice-led' is a term now used at many university faculties. Robin Nelson,³⁴ a professor of theatre arts at Manchester Metropolitan University outlines some of the differences between practice-based, practice-led, practice-in, practice-as and collaborates with PaRiP at the University of Bristol.³⁵ At the Research Review Practice Led Research in

³⁴ See <<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/palatine/dev-awards/par-report.htm>> last accessed 16th March 2006, for full report of his distinctions and see <<http://www.avphd.gold.ac.uk/janprog.php>> last accessed 16th March 2006, for downloadable version.

³⁵ PARIP describes itself as:

a five-year project directed by Professor Baz Kershaw and the Department of Drama: Theatre, Film, Television at the University of Bristol. It is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board. Dr Angela Piccini and Dr

Art, Design and Architecture AHRC definition of Research refers to the AHRC Research Funding Guide 2005 as the site that introduced ‘practice-led’ as the preferred term.³⁶ There is also a new AHRC research project led by Chris Rust in Sheffield.³⁷ Broadly speaking Katy Macleod looks at the burgeoning practice-based research culture from the bottom up – that is from the students perspective, those who are actually engaged in coming to terms with some of the central issues and problems of practice based research as students under pressure from its rules and regulations. In her recent book *Thinking Through Art* she profiles some examples of doctoral studies that came to terms with the relations between making and writing. Katy Macleod’s recent work is careful to avoid ‘practice-

Caroline Rye are the project's post-doctoral research associates and are responsible for the day-to-day running of the project. PARIP's objectives are to investigate creative-academic issues raised by practice as research, where performance is defined, in keeping with AHRB [AHRC] and RAE documentation, as performance media: theatre, dance, film, video and television. As a result of PARIP's investigations and in collaboration with colleagues, educational institutions and professional bodies throughout the UK and Europe PARIP aims to develop national frameworks for the encouragement of the highest standards in representing practical-creative research within academic contexts.

<<http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip/index.htm>> last accessed 16th March 2006.

³⁶ This project runs from November 2005 to September 2006 and is coordinated by Professor Chris Rust at Sheffield Hallam University. <<http://aces.shu.ac.uk/ahrc/ahrcreview/resources/ahrcdefinition.php>> last accessed 16th March 2006.

³⁷ Based at Sheffield Hallam University. I am impressed by this project being so keenly aware of the need for examples in practice-led research. My own ‘practice-led’ research is featured on their ‘Case Studies’ web pages. See <http://aces.shu.ac.uk/ahrc/ahrcreview/download_casestudy.php> last accessed 16th March 2006.

based' as a term as it often proves misleading.³⁸ I am told that in Research training workshops³⁹ there have been lively discussions about what 'practice' might mean and some discussions in a very lively Research Cluster for Ph.D. students who make artefacts as part of their research.⁴⁰ No doubt your supervisor will think that is something you should attend. The term practice-based is misleading. First of all it presupposes a necessary conflict with theory. Saying practice-based is tantamount to saying 'not theory based'. Of course the terminology is part of the problem. The idea that an artwork be sufficiently theorised in order for it qualify for the award of Doctor of Philosophy is not in contention here, of course the artefact has to be appropriately theorised. I am told Katy Macleod is often forced to remind participants of her workshops that her point was never to defend artwork that wasn't appropriately theorised, but rather

³⁸ I agree with Professor Sir Christopher Frayling in his Foreword where he states:

The current phrase of choice to describe this idea is practice-based research, a phrase I dislike because it simply restates the old theory/practice dichotomy in a new guise whilst seeming to say more. (Macleod 2006: xiii)

³⁹ Katy Macleod and Malcolm Miles ran research training workshops at the University of Plymouth:

This is a two-year programme of termly research workshops for current research students, supervisors, and research assistants in the Faculty of Arts. This workshop is also suitable for staff or graduates interested in beginning a research degree but who have not yet registered. The workshop will be interactive, will draw on the research topics of those present, and include guided discussion and guest speakers. (From class handout Macleod & Miles 2003)

⁴⁰ This is another research cluster that first met Autumn 2005. Our attendance at conferences 'Research Symposium: The Documentation of Fine Art Processes and Practices' 2nd December 2005 at Lancaster University and 'Research into Practice' 7-8th July at Herts University and feedback sessions have been a crucial element of the cluster's activity thus far. This is run by Katy Macleod.

argue that some artwork that was being examined, and criticised in view of its apparent lack of theorisation, was in fact appropriately, even rigorously, theorised.

GARY: I attended those sessions.

SR: I attended a two-day event at Birkbeck last month and was very encouraged by the culture's determination to deal with some of the issues raised in a 'practice-based' Ph.D. in AV - meaning audio-visual.⁴¹ This particular event focused on examination procedures and began with Robin Nelson who delivered a paper focusing on ideas about a fair set of rules and regulations. Although I enjoyed his paper enormously and found it very informative I must admit I did start to worry about the implications of a top down 'rules and regulations' led research culture. There were examples of Ph.D.s in progress which were very useful, but the emphasis was on the rules and regulations for the first day. The day ended with the recommendations that the Doctorate might best be split into two, one to cater for the more academic, i.e. theory based doctorate and one to cater for the more professional i.e. practice-based doctorate. With the emphasis remaining on the examination of the Ph.D. Victor Burgin's paper entitled 'Assessing the Relationship between Studio and Theory Criteria in Moving

⁴¹ I attended 'The Assessment and Examination of AVPhDs' 27-28 January Birkbeck College. <<http://www.avphd.gold.ac.uk>> last accessed 16th March 2006. I gave a paper at AVPhD 3 (see p. 7 of this submission).

Image Research' outlined the various Ph.D. qualifications that might be introduced as a way of best meeting the requirements laid down by university regulations. Burgin was clear that there were two possible ways to go in the practice-based culture given the regulations set forth in funding bodies like the AHRC and the universities themselves: the first choice was revolt – or say that 'words' are an unnecessary appendage to the moving image research; the second option was to try to find suitable solutions to cater for the different types of Ph.D. research skills that students bring with them to university. To this end he re-iterated the idea of a professional Ph.D. and an academic Ph.D. The awardee of the professional Ph.D. might find work teaching on visual courses whilst the awardee of the academic Ph.D. might publish and lecture.

GARY: I don't like the sound of that. But do you think there is a possibility of an adequately theorised artefact that can be submitted and subsequently defended in the viva voce without a written text?

SR: No. But it is interesting to speculate. If I pit Macleod against Burgin I might be able to make clear what appeals to me in Macleod's work. Burgin is insistent that the 'argument' carries the thesis in a practice-based Ph.D. Burgin references Derrida's experience with students in California who instead of handing in a written essay, handed in a videocassette upon which they had fashioned an audio-visual response to Derrida's question. In the end Derrida had to refuse the

videocassette along the lines that it didn't adequately replace the written text. Burgin warned, in Derrida's words 'there has got to be as much demonstrative, theoretical power, etc., in your videocassette as there would be in a good paper. Once you have done this, we can talk about it.'⁴² Burgin went on to claim that there does not, as yet, exist a stable support for a debate in the image, that although the supports of knowledge are always shifting, they have not, as yet, shifted far enough for the image to be in a position to defend itself. Burgin further added that the artefact or image is 'able to reference a debate but that is surely not the same as having the debate'.⁴³ In other words the Ph.D. contains a proposition that is to be elucidated by the written element.

GARY: Do you agree with Burgin on that?

SR: I am inclined to agree with Burgin on many things. I just wonder about the position from which he speaks, a position of examiner that seeks to find a pathway through the rules and regulations. It starts and ends with the requirement that all Ph.D.s must be accompanied by a written element that adequately positions and appropriately frames the artefact within an appropriate intellectual field. Katy Macleod's approach has been cognizant of student

⁴² Derrida & Steigler (2002: 143).

⁴³ Burgin was particularly eloquent when refusing what he referred to as the 'frustrating practices' of some researchers in visual arts who refuse to position and contextualise their work in terms of which debates they are engaging in, with words.

exemplars and looks at how those particular examples have adequately negotiated the rules and regulations. Much of the work that Katy Macleod presents are excellent examples of how a particular combination of artefact, written document and spoken word can deal with what look like limitations in the rules and regulations. For example Elizabeth Price's Ph.D. 'sidekick' is an excellent example of a theorised artefact that uses interesting writing methodologies in order to achieve its aims. Katy Macleod talks about this as "a stunning example that genuinely carries through its research propositions."⁴⁴ Elizabeth Price's written document was a performative piece of circular writing that ostensibly refused any reductionist reading of the artefact.⁴⁵ The submission was without an abstract and without chapters. So there is an excellent example from the other end of the telescope.

GARY: That's something I've always suspected.

SR: The point I'm trying to make is that concentrating on rules and regulations to the detriment of thinking about how Ph.D. research students themselves are tackling the problems, and coming up with fascinating, creative and challenging solutions, might not be in the culture's best interests. If I can just summarize that opposition I set up for the sake of argument between Macleod and Burgin by

⁴⁴ Macleod & Holdridge (2007).

⁴⁵ See Elizabeth Price's Ph.D. submission entitled '*sidekick*' completed at the University of Leeds (2000) and Macleod & Holdridge (2006: 122-32).

saying that it might be the difference between a grass-roots, bottom-up in Macleod's case and a managerial, top-down in Burgin's. So, to answer your question, I feel it might be very difficult to pull off a Ph.D. submission that didn't contextualise itself in words. I would be surprised if either Burgin or Macleod thought it possible. Their intellectual positions are quite close in the end, but their positions in relation to where they gather their evidence is different. Note that Burgin cites Derrida, *as an examiner*, unable to examine his students' work, whilst Macleod foregrounds positive examples of successful, theoretically positioned exemplars of 'practice-based' Ph.D.s.⁴⁶

GARY: Personally I feel the written word has an enormous part to play in my submission. I find the relations between the making and the writing too productive to let go of.

SR: Quite. Well, you may like to consider your research as something that suggests a methodological equivalence between the related objects of thinking: the written and the made. If you write this conversation up, changing it to suit the context in which it is intended, meaning your submission, and highlight that alteration, you might be doing something that you have been doing all along in

⁴⁶ Macleod & Holdridge (2007). Contained are eight examples of practice-based doctoral research in Fine Art. It includes the candidates Abstract, Chapter Sequencing, and some representative quotes from the written texts. See also Macleod & Holdridge (2006).

your film practice. Namely, you have been taking bits out of your everyday life and mediating them in order that they be understood in the context in which they are read. This runs through both elucidations of thinking, the writing and the film making. In the end they probably shed light on each other.

GARY: Thank you.

SR: Maybe this takes us back to the beginning of our conversation where we talked a little about Spivak and her ideas of contextualisation as a way out of presenting things as natural, as though they always happen like that. Naturalising institutional frameworks, for example doing a practice-based Ph.D. without getting into what that context demands from the researcher, making it sound natural, is a dangerous game to play. I think it might be the case that by tackling some of the issues current in the practice-based research culture might be a way of denaturalising that context. Denaturalising through contextualisation is exercising political agency of sorts. Maybe the word is politicization. But you must be careful here not to give the impression that the politicization is of the context, it is only ever the politicization of your own work within that context. In your case the practice-based doctorate in arts. But you have not now politicized that culture. That would be impossible with a single contribution. You might have gone some of the way to politicizing your own contribution to that culture.

GARY: Does that mean that my contribution acts in that culture? That it has agency?

SR: The word 'act' or 'agency' is very slippery here. To get to grips with the slippery-ness of these terms it is useful to invoke Spivak. In an interview with *Radical Philosophy* when asked about what 'deconstruction' might mean she answered 'It is really the name of a way of doing these two things.' Spivak meant Marxism and Feminism. '[O]r any kind of thing. It is much less substantive than these two projects. It is more a way of looking at the way we do things so that this way of looking becomes its doing.'⁴⁷ The looking becomes its doing. So that 'act' becomes a way of looking. If one may exercise political agency, here, in this particular context, it might be by looking at the context in which one is situated, where the work is situated.

GARY: And this is why you thought Gidal was relevant as well as Macleod. And it is the talking with you, a Senior Researcher, published widely on education, specialising in the doctorate in Fine Art where these things can come to the fore.

⁴⁷ Spivak (1990: 133).

SR: The reason it comes to the fore is because it is relevant. So is it right that a reading emerges as a synonym for context. In a word, it does so because the reading is relevant to that context. It always is!

There is an awkward silence

SR: Well, let's leave it there for now. It's just gone ten past five and I've a few papers to catch up on.

GARY: Thank you very much.

GARY packs his things together rather hurriedly. He picks up his coat, puts it on, walks towards the door, but something occurs to him. He turns back to the Senior Researcher who has already started going over some of his notes.

GARY: Do you always leave the window open?

SR: Mmm? Well, it won't close, the bloody thing's broken. I can't close it.

GARY: Let me have a go.

GARY goes over to the window, struggles with it a little, then bangs it closed.

SR: (*Mutters under his breath*) Well, you're good for something then.

GARY *did not hear. He leaves the room and closes the door gently behind him.*

Screening 2

Introduction

This particular conversation focuses on notions of the familial through the lived experience of a family engaged in an arts practice. It queries notions of representation and asks questions about the nature of a collaborative arts practice in relation to a single authored arts practice. It suggests other forms of collaboration and a possible way forward in democratising the film making by including the members of the family within the decision making processes rather than just as participants in the profilmic events. It also looks to identify the researcher within the frames of their own research by placing the figure of the filmmaker 'father' under interrogation and proceeds to ask to what extent he is, himself, complicit in the reproduction of repressive ideologies. These questions are asked from a feminist perspective and appropriate referencing is provided in the footnotes.

This conversation took place on the 3rd April 2005. The actual people involved have been renamed in order to emphasise a level of fictionality within the conversation. Scene setters and directions have also been included to the same effect. SEKA (31), MARO (5) and LEE (3) are loosely based on my partner Lena and our two children Neal and Gabriel. SEKA is from the fictional land of UR, which stands for the invented nation of the United Republic, which in my

imagination most closely resembles former Yugoslavia where Lena is originally from. Together we all watch a version of the film *Home Movies: Summer 2005*.

On another level the conversation seeks to reference the extent to which the collaborators' contributions have been understood in different ways by the collaborators themselves. I have made Lee's speech difficult to understand in an attempt to emphasise this point. His pictorial contribution to the ballot paper – part of the profilmic event of painting on the postal voting paper – is designed to help foreground the possible different readings of the contributions the different members of the family provide in the Home Movie. For example the children do not know that they are spoiling a ballot paper or that this could be read as a form of political protest. It is from this base that the conversation moves on to query the notion of a single author practice and admits that a collectivist practice might be a more democratic way forward in the future for this film practice. The writing does a similar job to the film making here in that it seeks to problematise an unthinking representation of the familial from a single point of view: the father-husband's. To this end I have been careful to draw out the possible disagreements, especially between SEKA and GARY, of what ideological function the Home Movies serve. SEKA, whose name derives from 'sisterhood', is a feminist art activist. She provides the necessary critique of the film practice, but sees hope in a reconstituted practice of shared authorship between the authors AND subjects of the Home Movies. As a character she is a way in which

I can bring in some of the relevant feminist thinking on family and Home Movie making. In the end I give SEKA the last word as her views most closely correspond to my own.

Characters:

MARO, A five year old boy, dark hair, precocious and a little spoilt, son of Seka and Gary and older brother of Lee.

LEE, A three year old boy, fair hair, enthusiastic and sociable, but also a little spoilt.

SEKA, A thirty one year old, fair hair, feminist art activist, mother of Maro and Lee and wife of GARY.

GARY, A thirty four year old, dark hair, filmmaker, father of Maro and Lee and husband of SEKA.

The action takes place at the family home on the council estate, ground floor flat in Liverpool 17. The sun is already down. The children are playing in their pyjamas with a toy train set as SEKA watches the film on the 36" television screen. She clearly isn't enjoying it. Gary is trying to get the children to watch the film but neither are particularly interested having seen it many times before. As the closing credits roll SEKA returns from the kitchen with a refilled glass and a litre bottle of Radnicko Pivo, 'the worker's beer'. She offers Gary a refill. She pours the rest of the bottle into his glass.

GARY: So, kids, did you like that film?

MARO: Dad, did I make that film? Dad, did I make that one as well?

GARY: Yes, you helped me make it, didn't you?

MARO: Did I? What did I do? Did I do the picture and the sound?

GARY: No, you were in it though, like acting and playing with Lee. And you were playing in it too wasn't you Lee-Lee?

LEE: Yeah! I was in it too. Maro was in it too. Mama was in it too. I madd a pog.

SEKA: What did you say Lee? You made a what?

LEE: I madd a pog.

GARY: A what?

MARO: He said he made a dog!

GARY: Where did you make a dog, Lee-Lee?

LEE: On da pikor.

SEKA: What picture, Lee? Did you make a dog on the picture?

LEE: Yes, I madd a pog, Woof, woof!

SEKA: Oh, he means on the ballot paper. Gary, rewind the film, let's ask him if he painted a dog on the ballot paper.

GARY: OK! (*rewinds the film*) Lee, is that your picture?

LEE: Yeah. That my pog. I madd a pog. Woof, woof!

GARY: Clever boy, Lee! Look Maro, Lee made a dog.

MARO: Oh, well done Lee-Lee. You made a Dog. Didn't you Lee! I didn't paint a dog. I just made lots of scribbles and lines with the paint-brush.

SEKA: Did you Maro? Why did you make lots of scribbles and lines?

MARO: 'Coz you and Dad said I had to paint over the paper. So, I just painted on it like in pre-school. And then I had to wash my hands 'coz they was full of dirty paint, wasn't they Dad?

GARY: Yes. See that, though. I had no idea Lee-Lee painted a dog on the ballot paper. Seka, what about you? What did you think of the film? Do you like my Home Movies?

MARO: What is a Home Movie daddy?

GARY: Well, the Home Movies I make are all the same in that they have Daddy behind the camera, Mummy in front of the camera made to do something and the children in front of the camera made to do something *for* the camera.

SEKA: That's been your working definition?

GARY: Yes, I formulated it from Patricia Zimmermann's work and her seminal book *Reel Families, A Social History of Amateur Film*.⁴⁸ In that book she talks about amateur filmmaking being caught between reactionary and radical

⁴⁸ See Zimmermann (1995) for a very influential study for my research of the potentially radical practice of Home Movie making.

practices. Reactionary in that Home Movie making tends to be made through phallogentric, consumerist sets of practices whilst on the other hand if we think about 'getting our hands on the means of production' then, potentially at least, Home Movie making and amateur film practices are deeply radical. For the simple fact that, a few special effects aside, we can make and say whatever we want with them.⁴⁹

SEKA: So which side of the divide are you on?

GARY: (*nervously*) Well, I think we need to be active in exposing our condition as a phallogentric, consumerist family. At least that's my position. I try to fight from within.

SEKA: Speak for yourself! Zimmermann says that to study amateur film and in your case to make amateur film means detouring from the analysis of textuality into the power relations of discursive contexts, a much less-finite pursuit. Her book is designed to invite readers, as your practice is for spectators, to relocate to

⁴⁹ In *Reel Families* Zimmermann is concerned that the potentially radical in amateur film practices has been misrepresented and/or overlooked and therefore made safe:

Analyzing how social, economic, aesthetic, and political discourses have historically defined amateur film can chart how dominant media formations marginalised and stabilized the potential, but latent, political disruptions of amateur film. (1995: ix-x)

a different, more private terrain of cultural production.⁵⁰ My question to you then is why. Why relocate to the private?

GARY: Because that's where I live, spend most of my time AND that's where I believe real change can happen. From that position. Bottom up not top down! From the everyday, not from the occasional or the special. That's why the aesthetics of amateur film and video practice suit my requirements – not the high quality, high production aesthetics I learnt at film school.⁵¹ Remember we were talking last night about multi-generational intact families and how my family on paper might fit into that, but in practice, it's nothing of the kind.

SEKA: Don't try and change the subject with me!

GARY: We'll talk about politicized arts practice later.⁵² I want to start to think critically about families, starting with my own.

SEKA: Yes, I remember, but even *we* got married for the papers darling!⁵³ How's that for your precious multi-generational intact families? I bet your family

⁵⁰ Seka is paraphrasing one of the key formulations of Zimmerman's thinking (Zimmerman, 1995: x).

⁵¹ See Screening 4 for a discussion of amateur and professionalized film practices and their repercussions on this project and its video practice.

⁵² See Screening 3 for a full discussion of theoretical formulation of the arts practice with reference to critical theory.

weren't expecting that! (*SEKA continues with gusto and irony, clearly irritated by the film*). We couldn't live in this wonderful country and be part of your enormous multi-generational intact family if I didn't get my papers, now would we? You'll be tracing your family tree next!⁵⁴

⁵³ Gary Anderson and Lena Simic were married in Bratislava, Slovakia on the 18th December 1999. This was expressly to enable Lena Simic to obtain the proper documentation in order for her to come and live in the United Kingdom of Great Britain with Gary Anderson.

⁵⁴ My own paternal family tree was traced to discover the (paternal) family name of 'Sweeney' originated in Ireland and travelled to Liverpool in 1846 – the time of the potato famine and the UK Prime Minister Peel's repealing of the Corn Laws. The paternal family records are very scant with large gaps casting doubt over family continuity. However, the overriding impression that the family investigator, my paternal Uncle, came back with was how 'we', as a family, had changed from a large extended, intact family with a rich history to isolated 'nuclear' family units. (From personal conversation with my paternal Uncle, 1990). To the best of my knowledge my maternal family tree has not been traced. I have no plans to do so. My own personal view is that tracing family trees is not an ideologically-free activity. Rather that family trees are often complicit in legitimising repressive structures by simplifying complex individual relationships to the simplified family relations of Father-Son, Mother-Daughter, Grandmother-Granddaughter and so on. There might be a case however for tracing my own female genealogy. I've been given the idea by Maarit Makela, a research fellow at the University of Art and Design, Helsinki. For her intriguing work on tracing her own female genealogy through an arts practice see 'Constructing Female Genealogy: Autobiographical Female Representations as Means for Identity Work' (Makela 2003). She draws on Irigaray's thought, specifically the possibility of a lost female genealogy:

Each of us has a female family tree: we have a mother, a maternal grandmother and great-grandmothers, we have daughters. Because we have been exiled into the house of our husbands, it is easy to forget the special quality of the female genealogy; we might even come to deny it. (Irigaray, 1993: 19, cited in Makela 2003: 540)

My own thoughts are that although clearly critical of a phallogentric family tree the activity would still be complicit in over-simplifying unique and complex individual relations to stock familial ones. I have, however, been known for the past six years as Gary Anderson, which is my maternal family name, rather than

GARY: How?

SEKA: You idealise your own family as some sacred form against which all other families are to be measured. In UR, during Socialism, new housing estates were built for small nuclear family units. The Grandparents were left out. Here, in your family, the multi-generational intact family is a myth! You talk about it as a self-perpetuating system – where all the parts fit together to form a developing unit.⁵⁵ When actually you hardly ever see anyone from your family: I met your grandfather once, I think, even though he lives just 3 miles away. You see your mother when she comes down for a visit from Scotland with all of your brother's kids, which is three times a year – or we go up there. You see your father at Christmas and Easter and the kids' birthdays. I've never met your uncle

Gary Sweeney, the name I had from birth. I haven't really found the right space to explore this in my film practice, but plan to in the future.

⁵⁵ This is broadly known as Family Systems Theory which posits the family, usually an extended family, as something that can

occupy various positions which are in a state of interdependence, that is, a change of behaviour of one member leads to a change in the behaviour of other members. (Hill 1971: 12 cited in Cheal 1991: 65)

Cheal claims: 'System theorizing, then, is a way of reconceptualizing individual problems within a model of relationship dynamics' (Cheal 1991: 67). Cheal notes that the broad appeal of the family systems theory is partly due to the scope of its concepts. Its generality enables a wide range of specialists to share a common language, and it therefore facilitates communication among them (Cheal 1991: 66). My own view is that the overriding problem however with Family Systems Theory is precisely its generality, it cannot hope to acknowledge the particularities of individual families and their members who have unique (and possibly resistant to therapy) problems or issues.

Peter, or your Auntie Pat or your Uncle Dave and I think the last time you saw them was when you were 12 years old one Christmas. All of these statistics you've been reading about the family are JUST statistics. And stop saying 'multigenerational'. It's annoying.⁵⁶ The family! The bogeymen in parliament love to bring it up. It was the same with the socialists in UR. Family is ideological fodder for hegemonic institutions to perpetuate themselves. They differentiate themselves politically; left, right, centre, socialist, fascist, Labour, Tory, Lib Dems, whatever - they all deploy the idea of family as the stabilising principle of society.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Koller states a preference for the term 'multigenerations' over 'families' (Koller 1974: 5-7).

⁵⁷ Standard Sociological Theory, originally developed by Talcott Parsons and William J. Goode has been hugely influential in England as well as the US and Canada (Cheal 1991). The idea SEKA is expressing is that Standard Sociological Theory (or Structural Functionalism to give it its other proper name) has been the bedrock of government policies on family regardless of their political persuasion. In other words the family unit, in particular the nuclear, bourgeois configuration, is seen as 'natural' and therefore immutable. From a feminist perspective in particular, this is a problematic assumption. There are innumerable references for this. I particularly enjoyed Hartmann's refiguring of the family away from a site of unified, mutual interest to a 'location' where redistribution of resources takes place, often unfairly. Hartmann (1981) has been influential in this field. Incidentally this is where Hartmann, using a family metaphor, memorably states:

The marriage of Marxism and feminism has been like the marriage of husband and wife depicted in English common law: Marxism and feminism are one, and that one is Marxism. Recent attempts to integrate Marxism and feminism are unsatisfactory to us feminists because they subsume the feminist struggle into the 'larger' struggle against capital. To continue the simile further, either we need a healthier marriage or we need a divorce. (Sargent 1981: 2)

GARY: No, but the socialist ideal of domesticity is the sharing of duties and resources, not between isolated, anti-social family members but between many people.⁵⁸

SEKA: Oh, wake up! I'm not talking about little socialist style Utopias on the fringes of small towns. I'm talking about centralised, multinational socialism, like in UR. Our party secretary Nepostojnov, although he couldn't keep it in his trousers, was always thought of as a family man. Every little girl's grandfather! I waited for him in Nikdje when he visited.⁵⁹ I presented him with a red carnation. He picked me up and kissed me. It was in all the papers – the headline ran *Drug*

⁵⁸ See Somerville's succinct and revealing summary of the central idea in Barrett and McIntosh's *The Anti-Social Family* (1982):

The social forms which the family denies and deprives are the socialist ideals of collective forms of domestic activity and provision – communal dining halls, laundries, nurseries – and the communal forms of social intercourse – social centres, the 'revitalisation of public life', collective households. The privatised family is identified with individualism as an ethic, with a selfish concern for one's own, and with a rabid consumerism which oils the wheels of capitalist production. It is clearly the enemy of socialist collectivist ideals and forms of social organisation. It is also the enemy of feminism because it inscribes the gender relations of dominance and subordination. (Somerville 2000: 190)

⁵⁹ Nepostojnov is the fictional head of state of the UR. His name roughly translates as 'non-existent'. Nikdje roughly translates as 'nowhere', the original meaning of the term Utopia. See Miles for an informative history of literary utopias, which, as Miles points out 'allows a distinct, imaginative realm to emerge in which to construct a counter-image of the writer's own society' (Miles 2008: 7).

*Nepostojnov, Chika Nepostojnov! - Comrade Nepostojnov, Uncle Nepostojnov.*⁶⁰

It's patriarchal bullshit!

GARY: But we are a family of sorts aren't we? Even if the political parties use the idea of family instrumentally, we are still a family. Aren't we? Is the family a good thing or a bad thing?⁶¹

SEKA: Well it depends on what ideas you want to propagate. If you use the term family at all, you're already in murky waters. A family, if it is anything, must be composed of different people. Then to reduce those different people to a whole, a name, such as 'family' is a dangerous business because you always run the risk of ignoring other important qualities. Family, by definition, is a unit. That's how the terminology works. So, for example, something that is easy to ignore if you're interested in 'family' is the position of women in the family. Women run

⁶⁰ This is based on an actual event that Lena Simic relates in one of her live art performances entitled *Joan Trial*, where she, as a young girl in the mid 70's was selected by the local council in Dubrovnik, Croatia to hold the second T of the name 'TITO' for the president to see as he walked past. See <<http://www.joantrial.org>> last accessed 16th March 2006, for more information on this performance.

⁶¹ Mark Poster's remarks in his 1978 Preface have not lost their relevance:

Today the family is being attacked and defended with equal vehemence. It is blamed for oppressing women, abusing children, spreading neurosis and preventing community. It is praised for upholding morality, preventing crime, maintaining order and perpetuating civilisation [...] The family is the place from which one desperately seeks to escape and the place to which one longingly seeks refuge. To some the family is boring, stifling and intrusive; to others it is loving, compassionate and intimate. And so it goes with the family, back and forth with no sign of agreement on the horizon. (Poster 1978: i)

the risk of being read and represented in the roles of mother, wife and daughter and so on. This is especially true in a Home Movie context where the familial roles are central to the proper functioning of the genre. In other words a Home Movie requires that the participants be family members or friends of the family or have some other pertinent connection to the familial. These roles, notice, are often in relation to a man at the centre. So for example I am the wife of somebody, the daughter of somebody, the mother of somebody. I don't get to be the centre – the husband or the father or the son does! Women get trapped by 'the family' like this. They get marginalised by the structure that places the dominant male centrally. And of course this leads squarely on to, in the case of a Home Movie practice, the problem of representation of women in the family. I am being represented or 'spoken for' in a system I don't agree with.

GARY: I remember hearing that a lot at school. 'Spoken for'. Some of the girls in my class at school would say to me, 'No, you can't ask her out, she's already spoken for', meaning she already has a boyfriend.

SEKA: Well exactly. 'Spoken for' in this sense means she is represented by another. And who is the other who represents her or speaks for her? The boyfriend. And of course the other girls are complicit in this, they normalise it, make it sound natural. Were the boys ever 'spoken for' by the girls?

GARY: No, we used to say they were ‘tied down’.

SEKA: Well, what a surprise! Here, I am in this Home Movie ‘spoken for’ or represented as a Mother, a Wife (*with scornful irony*) and poor you ‘tied down’ as a Father and Husband! It’s terribly unfair!

GARY: But how is that a problem with representation?

SEKA: It depends on what your intentions are in the film practice. A possible reading, and I know Zuzana, my old friend from UR who visited us a few weeks ago, read your film this way at your home screening. She said I, as a woman, am not in control of my own image, at least in this instance of Home Movie making. She said she could understand that if you were to critique representation by claiming an essentialist difference between the sexes. In other words, for your critique to function I would have to be gendered according to sexual difference. For some feminists this is clearly unacceptable.

GARY: This formulation, or this line of attack ran through lots of feminist work in the 60’s ad 70’s.⁶²

⁶² Valerie Solanas’ SCUM Manifesto’s memorable polemic opens with: Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the

SEKA: Zuzana was clearly thinking of that time. But, it might not be the most pertinent issue these days.⁶³ A more interesting formulation of the critique of representation might be along the lines of gender being culturally constructed.⁶⁴ This would be my own reading. Now it may well be that Home Movies have this built into them and it might be your job, because you engage in Home Movies to critique that. I don't mean to suggest you are perpetrating gender constructions on purpose. Maybe they seem natural to you and you further normalise them in your film practice. Despite the fact that you have, on a number of occasions, professed yourself to be a feminist.

money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex.
(Solanis 1967, cited in Reckitt & Phelan 2003: 194)

Jill Johnstone later became prominent in the Women's Liberation Movement but was initially engaged in the art scene she documented as a flamboyant provocateur (Reckitt & Phelan 2003: 193-221).

⁶³ de Lauretis writes:

In the feminist writings and cultural practices of the 1960's and 1970's, the notion of gender as sexual difference was central to the critique of representation [...] now [it] has become a limitation, something of a liability to feminist thought. (1987: 2)

⁶⁴ Butler has written persuasively on this topic:

Although the unproblematic unity of 'women' is often invoked to construct a solidarity of identity, a split is introduced in the feminist subject by the distinction between sex and gender. Originally intended to dispute the biology is destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed [...] [T]aken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders [...] [W]hen the constructed status of gender is theorised as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one. (Butler 1990: 9-10)

GARY: Well, I only ever meant to suggest that I was gender-aware.

SEKA: Don't make me laugh! What happens in the Home Movie is that I always end up being the wife or mother and that happens because the Home Movie needs me to be the woman in the family.

GARY: But I end up being the father. I'm not complaining.

SEKA: You don't have to complain, you are already in control. The political project of feminism has always had that in mind. It always said it knew why men were rarely fighting in the feminist corner, it said it was because the construction of gender suited men, it kept them in place and power. That is why it goes on, even though theoretically, we know that gender is culturally constructed. It goes on everywhere!⁶⁵

⁶⁵ de Lauretis laments:

the construction of gender still goes on a busily today as it did in earlier times, say the Victorian era. And it goes on not only where one might expect it to – in the media, the private and public schools, the courts, the family, nuclear or extended or single-parented [...] the construction of gender also goes on, although less obviously, in the academy, in the intellectual community, in avant-garde practices and radical theories, even, and indeed especially, in feminism. (de Lauretis 1987: 3)

GARY: This is why essentialisms about the family are dangerous. This is why I wanted to challenge that notion of the familial being natural or normal in the Home Movie. My brief to myself was always to be anti-essentialist.⁶⁶

SEKA: (*Laughing*) Is that what you mean when you say you are gender-aware? Who has hold of the means of production in the Home Movies, especially in relation to representation, essentialist or anti-essentialist? Who? Me? The kids?

GARY: Me!

SEKA: With your hands on the means of production, and representation being one of those means, you have to take the problems of representation seriously, especially within a Home Movie making practice where the woman is most at risk.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ See Screening 1 for how important anti-essentialism has been in my film practice especially in an academic context.

⁶⁷ The most useful reference for my film practice comes from a section of Lena's own Ph.D. which combines the insights of two important feminist thinkers:

However, I am not proposing that women, 'conscious female subjects of feminism', have somehow escaped the socio-cultural production of themselves as subjects. Judith Butler warns us that 'Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of 'women', the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought' (Butler 1998: 275). Feminism and its subjects, women, are products of the socio-cultural system we live in; they are not outside it. Even if our understanding of gender is that it is produced and constructed, 'women' still remain a group whose identity is 'always up for grabs' (Spivak 1996: 21) and therefore 'we, women' need to take our

GARY: I see, but the idea is that I intervene in the reproduction of familial ideologies which tend to have Women at its centre theoretically, but on its margins in terms of the power relations that exist in family structures.

SEKA: Power relations? Look, how does this work? Gary has his camera, his wife and his kids and what does he do? Film, film, film all day long! And what's he filming? His family!⁶⁸ When you take it to university and show people, it's unquestionably YOUR family you are parading around. Do you see what I'm saying? The familial roles are being constructed again and again every time you play the film.

GARY: That depends on who is watching, surely!

SEKA: I'm trying to make it clear that you are perpetuating that idea of family in your Home Movies and it is especially irksome to a feminist like me!

representation seriously, even when aware that that representation is not outside the socio-cultural system that produced it. (Simic Anderson 2006: 38, *unpublished*)

⁶⁸ Just for the record I film the Lena, Neal and Gabriel very sparingly. For the present film under discussion they were in front of the lens at a ratio of about 5 to 1. In other words for every minute of *Home Movies: Summer 2005* in the final edit I filmed for five minutes. As my film practice has developed the ratio has decreased.

GARY: OK, kids d'you want to play in the hall? There's a train set there, too.
Do you want to make the train set Lee-Lee?

LEE: No. I wan do wigwaw.

SEKA: Which one Lee-Lee?

LEE: Wigwaw.

GARY: What did you say Lee?

MARO: He said the jigsaw!

GARY: Oh the jigsaw.

MARO: Which one Lee, the turtle one?

LEE: No, dat one!

MARO: Oh, Lee, Lee, let's do the farm animals one. Come on Lee! Help me fit them all together.

LEE: O day den.

SEKA: (*ironic*) There's a little family who live on the farm isn't there Gary? A little happy family. Maybe they could make some Home Movies about their pigs and cows and sheep? And how their little children feed them? What an idyllic picture! Wouldn't that make a lovely film!

GARY: No, but this is why I think Home Movies are so interesting. I want to get close to that idea of representing a family, a nuclear, traditional, bourgeois family of husband, wife, two kids and then make things happen that disrupt or intervene in that. Maybe refigure it. This is why your performances in the films are so crucial. It's been really interesting to fuse your performance skills with my filmmaking.⁶⁹ Remember the one where you, supposedly drunk, were trying to make the Christmas Dinner and the chicken kept falling on the floor as you carved it? Or the complaining at being filmed all the time in Norway? These are the moments when a straightforward representation becomes problematic. That's one of the key ideas in my research: to intervene in the production of categories

⁶⁹ Lena Simic is a performance artist, trained in theatre directing/acting at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, Bratislava and London Academy of Performing Arts. Lena is currently undertaking an AHRC funded practice-based PhD at Lancaster University. Her recent art projects include a series of interventions into female archetypes through the local and her lived experience. <<http://www.joantrial.org>>, <<http://www.medeamotherclothes.org>> and <<http://www.magdalenamakeup.org>> last accessed 16th March 2006.

that usually go unnoticed, like ‘family’. I use family in order to be able to ask questions about it.

SEKA: So in a sense you feel you are giving me a creative space where I, as a performer, can intervene into the situation being filmed.⁷⁰

GARY: Yes, but performing gets me out of that trap of representation, doesn’t it?

SEKA: Well, although deploying the performative seems like a useful strategy in circumventing notions of the familial as natural and normal I still think there is a problem. You can’t just by-pass it by saying ‘everything is pretend’!

GARY: What?

⁷⁰ Feminist theatre theorist Elaine Aston writes:

The female performer as potential creator of an ‘alternative’ text to the male authored stage [screen] picture in which she is ‘framed’, is [...] made available for consideration. (Aston 1995: 32-4)

The idea Seka is interested in here is the possible subversion of the male frame by an independent frame set up [in my case by Lena through her own performances in the Home Movie] within the profilmic event itself. The alternative reading being made available might be more than just a question of different readings of the film. It might be a question of what the different contributors contribute to the film practice in their own inimitable way – something I am eager to point out in this conversation as it leads me into the idea of a possible collectivist practice where all the contributions are under the banner of shared-authorship. This is opposed to the problematic of a single authored approach to Home Movie making where the subject of investigation is specifically the construction of the family and the familial.

SEKA: Even if you want to ask questions about the familial you are still using representation to do it. It reminds me of Audrey Lorde's 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house, they may allow you to temporarily beat him at his own game, but...' ⁷¹ In your case this would apply if the master's tool were 'representation' per se. Lorde is, of course, talking in a different context, a black, lesbian, feminist context. But I feel her idea is applicable to you and your practice. You want to ask questions about representation, specifically about reproducing familial ideologies through a film practice, specifically a Home Movie practice. But the basic ingredient in your practice is representing your wife and kids AS your wife and kids.

GARY: My idea is to make work whilst being cognizant of my own position. My own position can be seen as a position of power. I am a white male. I belong, at least in terms of gender and race, to the most politically and economically powerful group in the world. In a sense it follows that the master's tools are at my disposal. I'm a father in a nuclear, bourgeois family unit. I'm educated. Also I was trained as a Film Director. But, and this is where I feel I depart from the

⁷¹ Lorde writes:

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support.

<<http://lists.econ.utah.edu/pipermail/margins-to-centre/2006-March/000794.html>> last accessed 16 March 2006.

standard white male, I want to use these tools in combination with my everyday lived experience in order to come up with a filmmaking that has criticality and self-reflexivity embedded within it. I think one of the ways of putting criticality inside the film practice is by making sure the position from which you make your films is foregrounded. In other words including one's positionality in what one says. In this sense I'm inside the master's house waving frantically at the window trying to get the attention of the passers-by.

SEKA: But here you need to be very careful. It might not be enough to just reference your own position. Remember that quote from Trinh Min-ha you kept barking at me when you started your Ph.D.?

GARY: From that *Third Cinema* conference?⁷²

⁷² Trinh Minh-Ha writes:

Many who agree to the necessity of self reflectivity and reflexivity in filmmaking think that it suffices to show oneself at work on the screen, or to point to one's role once in a while in the film, and to suggest some future improvement in order to convince the audience of one's 'honesty' and pay one's due to liberal thinking. Thus, there is now a growing body of films in which the spectators see the narrator narrating, the filmmaker filming or directing, and quite expectably, the natives – to whom a little camera (usually a super-8) or tape-recorder is temporarily handed out – supposedly contributing to the production process. What is put forth as self-reflexivity here is no more than a small faction – the most conveniently visible one – of the many possibilities of uncovering the work of ideology that this 'science of the subject' can open unto. In short, what is at stake is a practice of subjectivity that is still unaware of its own constituted nature (hence the difficulty to exceed that simplistic pair, subjectivity and objectivity); unaware of its continuous role in the production of meaning (as if things can 'make sense' by themselves, so that the interpreters function consists only of *choosing* among the many existing readings); unaware of representation

SEKA: Yes.

GARY: My point is to engage in self-reflexivity in more ways than simply putting myself in front of the camera as the filmmaker and say to the spectator “Aren’t I clever, look at me making the film you are watching.” Trinh Minh-ha is very eloquent on that point. In order for me to ‘uncover the ideologies at work’ as she puts it, I look to many things, one of them is my own positionality through a feminist lens. Feminism helps me to make sure I don’t overlook my position as the father-patriarch filmmaker in the film practice. In fact I’d go further and claim that I invoke certain strands of feminism in order to make sure that I answer the most difficult questions!

SEKA: So your position is about taking up a position – a critical one – on your position – as father-filmmaker?

GARY: Yes, that’s partly it!

as representation (the cultural, sexual, political inter-realities involved in the making: that of the filmmaker as subject; that of the subject filmed; that of the cinematic apparatus); and, finally, unaware of the Inappropriate Other within every ‘I’. (Trinh T. Minh-Ha, 1991: 77)

Also delivered as a paper ‘Outside In, Inside Out’ at *Third Cinema Theories and Practices*, Edinburgh International Film Festival, August 1986.

SEKA: But listen to yourself. It sounds a bit much! A position within a position upon a position and whatever else.

GARY: I can't help the fact that it sounds a bit much. It is actually very straightforward. I could put it another way and say - I've taken critical self-reflexivity seriously. That's all it means.

SEKA: OK. This is your form of critique. You are inside the practice, that's how you feel most able to criticize, first by drawing attention to your own position then speaking from it, so that what is said can be read in relation to where it is said from.

GARY: I'm only saying I want to ask questions through a Home Movie film practice.

SEKA: But the family is not the same as the Home Movie.

GARY: No, I know, but I'm just saying that neither one is natural. Families are no more natural than Home Movies. When we make a film there's all sorts of manipulation going on, from setting up shots and situations to you performing to the camera. We are collaborating in a denaturalising of our familial roles and positions. Remember when we soaked Lee with the spray from the sea and

filmed him crying? Remember when we pretended Lee was lost so Maro had to go and look for him around Che Guevara's train car museum?⁷³ Filming these things gives me a chance to ask questions about the family. For me the question of family in the Home Movie is related to the question of representation, where representation is the undemocratic 'speaking for' another through the audio-visual technologies of representation. I unquestionably 'speak for' you when I have you in the films under my authorship.

SEKA: You're right but if the collaboration were total, which it is not, then representation, in your sense, might not be an issue between us, the family and you the filmmaker. But collaboration is not total, so in the end you are inevitably empowering yourself by undemocratically speaking for us to others. And what about the kids? How are you getting the kids to a level of informed consent. Mind you, kids are constantly being used in a variety of ways anyway, so what harm will a bit of Home Movie-ing do them? Commercials on TV are incredibly aggressive, even at school they get to win McDonald's tokens if they are good in class! Well I suppose you will pay for it later when they grow up to be teenagers and find out what you made them do at the demonstrations.

⁷³ All of the films mentioned here are on the DVDs that accompany this written text.

GARY: Hopefully they will have less illusions about how filmmaking works! It's an education in a way. At least that's what I think.

SEKA: You do in the end agree with what I'm saying, though don't you? A family is not natural, but a politically constructed device that, with the advent of consumer capitalism, oils the wheels of the capitalist machinery.

GARY: Yes! For me the film practice includes a methodology of using something in order to question it.

SEKA: There's a critique of Home Movies available inside your films. Not really a critique of family per se, but of Home Movies. Of course the two are connected. Su Friedrich, Merilee Bennett and Annette Kuhn all make clear connections between patriarchal structures, familial structures and Home Movie making in their own film and writing practices.⁷⁴ A feminist perspective on Home Movie making seems almost bound to be a critical one.

⁷⁴ Merilee Bennett, *A Song of Air*, 1987 is critical of established Home Movie practices. This particular film 're-makes' her father's (Arnold Bennett) Home Movies as intervention into her father's authorial, narrative practice (Danks 1997) <<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/02/23/haunted.html#b12>> last accessed 16th March 2006. Also Annette Kuhn's fascinating positional play with her father's 'erased' presence in their family documents. Kuhn, whilst intervening in her father's authorial, patriarchal status posits that: 'In all these struggles, my project was to make myself into my father's daughter' (Kuhn 1995: 18). Su Friedrich's *The Ties That Bind*, 1984, serves as an example of an intervention into patriarchal ideologies active in the Home Movie, however her

GARY: I know, it's a dangerous game this Home Movie making isn't it really?

SEKA: (*suddenly outraged*) Who for and in what circumstances?

GARY: (*Taken aback*) What!? Erm...

SEKA: Come on!

GARY: Erm...I don't know.

SEKA: For me! Me, as a woman. I am actually most at risk here. And of course being a woman is not all I am. Categorising me as woman is problematic and this is exactly what the Home Movie does.⁷⁵ Others might just read it as 'natural' that

films have a distinctive therapeutic or cathartic drive, especially *Sink or Swim*, 1990, of which Friedrich claims:

But the longer I worked on it, the less I wanted to punish him [father], and the more I felt I was not doing it so that he would finally acknowledge my experience, but so that I could acknowledge my experience. (MacDonald 1992: 313)

⁷⁵ Denise Riley writes:

To put it schematically: 'women' is historically, discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change; 'women' is a violate collectivity in which female persons can be differently positioned, so that the apparent continuity of the subject of 'women' isn't to be relied on; 'women' is both synchronically and diachronically erratic as a collectivity, while for the individual, 'being a woman' is also inconsistent, and can't provide an ontological foundation. Yet it must be emphasized that these instabilities of the category are the sine qua non of feminism, which would otherwise be lost for an object, despoiled of a fight, and in short,

you, the Father of the family, are filming me and the kids. Any (*with irony*) ORTHODOX family has its woman and more and more orthodox families are making Home Movies, more often than not with the father with his hands on the camera. As I've told you a million times already uncritical Home Movies perpetuate patriarchal ideologies.

GARY: (*stuck for words*) I – I – I erm...

SEKA: (*interrupts*) Look! Maybe the question is how much collaboration you invite and receive from me and Lee and Maro. Otherwise known as YOUR family. Because I see a paradox at the heart of this project that I don't think you can get out of. I think placing a version of yourself WITHIN the research, laying your cards on the table as the site through which hegemonic practices are enacted

without much life. (Riley 1988: 1-2)

Interestingly, Riley goes on to say:

To be or not to be, 'a woman'; to write or not 'as a woman'; to espouse an egalitarianism which sees sexed manifestations as blocks on the road to full democracy; to love theories of difference which don't anticipate their own dissolution: these uncertainties are rehearsed endlessly in the history of feminism, and fought through within feminist-influenced politics. That 'women' is indeterminate and impossible is no cause for lament. It is what makes feminism: which has hardly been an indiscriminate embrace anyway of the fragilities and peculiarities of the category. What these do demand is a willingness, at times, to shred this 'women' to bits – to develop a speed, foxiness, versatility. The temporalities of 'women' are like the missing middle term of Aristotelian logic; while it's impossible to thoroughly be a woman, it's also impossible never to be one. On such shifting sands feminism must stand and sway. (Riley 1988: 113-4)

The two extracts together suggest the high level of complexity involved in dealing with the categorisation of 'women' and that, in the case of my own film practice, it is important to be informed about the potential pitfalls of the categorisation of 'women'.

and reproduced is ok, but not enough! You will always be caught in the trap of representing the other. To which, and this is my own opinion, you actually have no right! You can get release forms and get me to sign stuff and all the rest of it as collaborator, but until we have equal authorial status over the work the problem will never go away. Of course it is too late now. The films have already been made. I am thinking of the future. And I don't mean authorial in the way we might all stick our names down or sign on the dotted line and share in the film's profits.

GARY: Of which they are none!

SEKA: Of which there certainly are none! Equal authorial status that means a tolerance of the diversity of attitudes about the film practice, what it means, whom it represents, who is it for and why. We, me, Maro and Lee-Lee, need to join in the screenings, the discussions. You need to hand over the means of the production of 'the family' in the Home Movies to me and the others who are in it.⁷⁶ As long as you are doing a Ph.D. according to institutional guidelines, that is 'a single authored' work, you will always be in the trap of showing me to others

⁷⁶ In *The Policing of Families: Welfare versus the State*, Donzelot insists on the terminological difference between 'families'- meaning many individual cases - and 'the family' as a recognisable institution. When there is a clearly defined institution the work of critic becomes easier because the target of criticism is clearly defined (Donzelot 1980: ix). I use 'the family' here deliberately as an identifiable target.

as ‘a woman’, mother, wife. You can’t escape it. I will always be ‘wife’. You can’t fight fire with fire, you have to give up sole authorial status in the future. In a Ph.D. that’s very difficult! There are certain institutional restrictions there. A Ph.D. submission has to be a single authored work for it to qualify for the award of doctorate. There are also institutional restrictions with the theoretical methodologies you are employing, namely feminism and deconstruction. Although things may have moved on a little since Dian Elam’s *Feminism and Deconstruction* her points about its irritability in an institutional context may still be relevant.⁷⁷ In the end it strikes me that you are in a pickle you can’t get out of.

GARY: Maybe it’s a waste of time after all.

(A long pause)

SEKA: No, no. Listen, do you remember what you said at the beginning of your studies for a Ph.D.?

⁷⁷ Elam states:

I would argue that all of these objections [that deconstruction and/or feminism is elitist, espouse political causes etc] are intended to eliminate the ways in which both feminism and deconstruction disturb the carefully drawn institutional boundaries of academia. What is especially disturbing [...] is the way in which feminism and deconstruction challenge the line between the ivory tower and the world. Feminism and deconstruction are thus dangerous because they are neither solely in the ivory tower or the world but on the line in between them. In this context, the two different ways of dismissing their academic importance are really two sides of the same coin: the current coin of the established institutional realm. (Elam 1994: 92)

GARY: Who?

SEKA: You! Remember what you said about lots of the artwork you had seen recently? You said you were sick and tired of looking at people's work where everything, all the issues – aesthetic, ethical, personal - had already been solved. You said your ambition was to make an artwork that, amongst other things, spoke of its own difficulties.

GARY: I was thinking that conversations might be a good way of providing an outlet for those difficulties to emerge. Also a place where I can admit to them and take responsibility.

SEKA: Yes, this is the place where I get to put you on the spot. You have to defend yourself and the decisions you have made.

GARY: You are right. Disagreements are also interesting in artworks.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Kristina Leko's work, a Croatian artist active in Zagreb, is a good example of how conversations and discussions between people as part of an arts practice are interesting ways of exploring a political problem.

As with Kristina Leko's other works, *Amerika* seems designed to set a debate in motion, to stimulate discussion of the issues it raises without providing ready answers.

Maja & Reuben Fowkes <<http://www.translocal.org/writings/amerika.htm>>
last accessed 16th March 2006.

SEKA: Do you see what I've been getting at though? I am trying to say that feminist discourse has moved on from critiquing representation through notions of essentialist sexual difference; that feminist thinkers like Butler and de Lauretis have contributed to this by claiming gender is an artifice, culturally constructed – which doesn't mean we live in a sexist-free society now or that all the problems of representation have gone away. The battles are still to be won. The question now might be: 'where do we look for them?' De Lauretis tells us gender is also constructed in some of the most unlikely places, not least of all in radical, avant-garde practices. Maybe like your own. The key message it seems to me from feminist thinkers like Butler and de Lauretis as well as Spivak is to be vigilant. This seems especially relevant in your case where you need to watch out for when uncritical familial practices creep into your own filmmaking as 'natural and normal'. If you are insistent on critiquing the familial my suggestion is that you do it through all of the members of the family. Avoiding the situation where the others in the family are undemocratically 'spoken for' by a single individual, namely you!⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Ironically this is in part a return to the collectivist notion put forward in Barrett and McIntosh's seminal anti-family polemic *The Anti-Social Family*, 1982. However there would be a distinctive difference in exactly who constituted the collectivity. Where for Barrett and McIntosh it was a feminist, radical collective, in Seka's example the collectivity would be composed of family members who, being critically aware of the culturally constructed nature of gender and its relationship to the institution of the family, might engage in a critically self-reflexive Home Movie practice. In this sense the family might disengage from its

GARY *a little dejected goes to the kitchen and brings in another Radnicko Pivo*
“*worker’s beer*”.

SEKA: Gary, listen! In this sense we, despite a tendency in critical thinking to divide into two camps on the family, one *for*, one *against*, we could investigate family, not by getting rid of it or hailing it as a haven, but investigating what it can do.⁸⁰ What is a family capable of? Or more precisely the relationships between the individual members could be tested. I don’t mean

‘anti-social’ configuration and move more towards a politically engaged arts practice. This is something Lena and I, for different reasons, that derive from our current doctoral investigations, wish to explore post-doctorally. To that end we have set up *The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home*. See <<http://www.twoaddthree.org>> last accessed 16th March 2006.

⁸⁰ The ‘getting rid of it’ camp’s most obvious example might be the Women’s Liberation Movement:

From the start, WLM feminists looked on the family as an oppressive, patriarchal institution [...] Radical and Socialist feminists in the 1970’s were largely united in their rejection of the traditional nuclear family. By the end of the decade, this rejection often seemed to be virtually unthinking. (Lovenduski & Randall 1993: 269)

‘The family as haven’ camp’s most obvious perpetrator might be Steven Goldberg in the aptly titled *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, which explains the ‘natural’ dominance of the male through natural selection. Here the family figures as a haven especially for the superior male. In the words of George Gilder: ‘Women domesticate and civilise male nature’ (1973: 23) or more recently:

In creating civilisations, women transform male lust into love; channel wanderlust into jobs, homes, and families; link men to specific children; rear children into citizens; change hunters into fathers; divert male will to power into a drive to create. Women conceive the future that men tend to flee; they feed the children that men ignore. (Gilder 1992: 5)

psychoanalytically, I mean politically.⁸¹ There would still be demonstrations, spoiling ballot papers, visiting dodgy left-wing memorials, but all done together.

GARY: (*with guarded optimism*) In the end I am the sole author. This makes a radical film practice much more difficult to generate. But I've come some of the way!

SEKA takes the bottle of beer and empties it into his glass.

SEKA: It's your turn to put the kids to bed! Come on, up you get. Leave the beer there. (*calls into the hall*) Kids! Kids! Bedtime.

GARY leaves the room and picks up the children, takes them over to their bunk-beds and kisses them goodnight. SEKA comes in behind him and kisses first Maro then Lee goodnight before switching off the light. The light automatically sets the children's musical toy to 'PLAY'. In the darkened room, lit only by the gently revolving toy the children drift off to sleep. SEKA gently closes the door.

⁸¹ Walter Benjamin's insight is very relevant for the project SEKA is imagining here:

Brecht has said of Communism that it is 'the middle term'. Communism is not radical. It is Capitalism that is radical. How radical it is can be recognized, among other things, in its attitude towards the family. It insists upon the family at any price. [...] Communism is not radical therefore it has no intention to simply abolish family relations. It merely tests them to determine their capacity for change. It asks itself: can the family be dismantled so that its components may be socially refunctioned? [...] can this social function become a revolutionary one? (Benjamin 1977: 33)

We can just about hear the tinkling tune. It plays a well-known children's song.

SEKA and GARY go and sit on the sofa in the living room.

SEKA and GARY (*singing along*) The-farmer-wants-a-wife, the-farmer-wants-a-wife, e-yay-yadd-ee-oh, the-farmer-wants-a-wife.

Screening 3

Introduction

My aim in this conversation is to draw upon the relevant theoretical framing for my film practice in terms of activism and political resistance. The conversation has two parts. The first part takes place in a screening room at an arts centre, and the second at the art centre's café. Both conversations take place after the screening of *Home Movies: Summer 2005*.

The first part of the conversation takes the form of defending the film practice with relevant theoretical back up from thinkers engaged in ideas of social transformation through an arts practice. Cultural theorist Malcolm Miles' work features centrally especially his ideas of the Kantian Maxim of disinterested judgement in art criticism and its possible inversion into a practice of making interested, but non-judgmental statements. The conversation looks to make explicit what this might mean for my film practice and how I, as filmmaker have understood it.

The second part of the conversation takes place in the café with the other Ph.D. candidates. This takes the form of reported speech, as I wanted to emphasise the difference in tone between the two parts of the conversation. The first being academic in the sense that it locates and references appropriate theory, while the

second is a more informal chat in the café over a coffee. However the second part leads on from the first in that it continues the conversation along the lines of political protest and explores to what extent a film practice can be a efficacious addition to the efforts of social transformation.

The actual conversation, from which the present conversation has been radically altered, took place after I delivered a paper entitled 'Politicizing My Film Practice' on the 18th January 2006 at 1pm at the School of Media and Photography, University of Plymouth in the presence of four senior lecturers from Faculty of Arts, one subject leader in Media, two lecturers in Media Arts, two Ph.D. candidates as well as a technician who helped with the data projector and sound system. The paper lasted 30 minutes and included a 12 minute version of *Home Movies: Summer 2005*.⁸²

I have fictionalised the conversation to protect the identity of those present at the screening event in Plymouth, but also to enable me to interrogate certain theoretical aspects of my film practice that were not raised at the original event.

⁸² A modified version of this film was given as part of a paper at: Research Spaces: Materialization of Practice in Art & Architecture, 14th - 20th November 2005, hosted by the Slade School of Fine Art and the Bartlett School of Architecture for more information see website <<http://www.homepages.ucl.ac.uk/~ucwagpa/conference2.htm>> last accessed 16th March 2006.

Another version of this paper was given at *Critical Spaces*: a seminar chaired by Malcolm Miles at the University of Plymouth at ERRN (Exeter Campus) a few weeks earlier.

To this end I have thinly disguised myself as a doctoral candidate, nervous, but motivated by his commitment to the film practice, to provide full, elaborated answers to difficult and pertinent questions.

Extensive footnotes have been provided as support for some of the points made in the conversation. This is with a view to providing as full an account as possible of where some of the ideas for the film practice came from. Footnotes also provide a necessary space for information that if included in the conversation itself might disrupt its flow.

Characters:

DR ADAMS. *A Cultural Studies Lecturer from an American university with an international reputation, very confident.*

DR FANOWSKI, *a colleague of DR ADAMS', but senior in years, was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship for her doctorate in City Cultures back in 1987, a little more cautious in praise than her colleague.*

DR CALLOWS, *head of Media and Design at Northumbria College of Arts, Hertfordshire, a little dissatisfied with his own research.*

DR TERENCE, *a rising star of research at the University of Padmore, she has just received an AHRC Fellowship to research film and video distribution in the South West of England.*

DR BRANLEY, *A dour-faced administrator with a chip on his shoulder, currently unhappily housed at the University of Dartmoor.*

DR APPLEBY, *A Film and Media Lecturer at the School of Media and Culture, Warwick Institute of Education, a quiet, thoughtful personality, very softly spoken.*

GARY, *a Ph.D. candidate, feels he has to hide his vulnerability in front of these distinguished academics.*

JENNIFER, KATHERINE, DANIEL and VARIOUS *other Ph.D. candidates and junior lecturers.*

The action takes place at the John Kay Arts Centre, Dartmoor's screening room and afterwards café. It is early afternoon. The windows are blacked out. The audience sit with notepads, some are busy scribbling away, their notebooks tilted towards the video screen to catch its light, others sit a little more defiantly with their arms folded. Dr Fanowski has dozed off, but is wakened as the film playing on the screen comes to a close. There is a brief, unconvincing round of applause. Gary goes over to the window and opens the blind to let the light in. The room is immediately more animated as people shuffle in their chairs and exchange a few words about how bright it is outside. Gary thanks everyone for their attention and sits down just below the screen, ready for interrogation, but still nervous.

DR ADAMS: Thanks for that Gary. Let me get straight to it and ask you about political resistance. I would like to open by referring to what you said very early in your introduction to the screening. You mentioned privilege. I welcome the fact that you have been eager to look at the position of Ph.D. researcher as a position of privilege. I was wondering if your idea of privilege might link into or adumbrate a sense of responsibility and if contained in that sense of responsibility is the idea of political resistance. Am I right in thinking that the film you have just shown us is a protest film?

GARY: I think the political can be seen as being made up of many, small, personal responsibilities. I think of privilege as something integrally connected to the position I speak from and make it my responsibility to acknowledge that privilege. This is the first part of politicizing my position of privilege. I'm uncomfortable with the word resistance in that context. To an extent I am refusing to let my privileged position slip in unnoticed. It could be argued as an act of resistance, but I do prefer 'politicized'. Once my position is included I might be able to make a film which involves resistance. I am thinking of Gayatri Spivak's work here in terms of positionality and the work of Malcolm Miles in terms of artworks intervening in the reproduction of hegemonic structures.⁸³

⁸³ See McRobbie (1985: 5-9). Malcolm Miles is Professor of Cultural Theory at the University of Plymouth and has published extensively the relationship between cultural production and social transformation. See Miles (2008, 2004).

DR ADAMS: Is that Malcolm Miles who runs *Critical Spaces*?⁸⁴

GARY: Yes.

DR ADAMS: I gave a paper there just last year!

GARY: It is important for me to frame my film practice by thinking about my responsibility to politicize what I produce. By politicizing what I do, I engage in resistance. I am thinking about intervening in categories that are thought of as natural, or normal. Naturalised categories, if you like. Politicizing, in this context, is the act of intervening in the production of categories that are taken for granted. For example, through the film practice I attempt to make statements that are not disinterested judgements, after Immanuel Kant, but rather offer statements that are 'interested - meaning engaged - but non-judgemental'. Malcolm Miles' work has been useful for me here.⁸⁵ A combination of Spivak's

⁸⁴ The research group *Critical Spaces*:

aims to facilitate and extend critical dialogues between academic researchers in relevant fields in the arts and social sciences, and cultural producers and critics, on issues of contemporary culture and society and its possible transformation. *Critical Spaces* reads the function of a university as critical reconsideration of the society and culture in which it is situated. *Critical Spaces* operates across the boundaries of discipline, and of theory and practice (theory being a practice), to contest the means of cultural and social production, re-examine concepts of subjectivity and identity, agency and intervention, and test the limits of liberation within academic research. <<http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research>> last accessed 16 March 2006.

⁸⁵ Miles writes:

ideas of positionality⁸⁶ and Miles' idea of a Kantian Maxim turned on its head are always floating at the forefront of my mind when I make films. So, yes, you are right, my privileged position is deployed in the politicizing of my film practice that acts as intervention into the production of categories that appear natural or normal.

DR FANOWSKI: I know Kant has come in for a bit of a drubbing especially in the past 40 or so years, possibly longer... would you be so kind as to tell me how, *exactly*, you feel Kant, or an inverted Kantian Maxim plays a role in your film practice?

GARY: Kant's formulation of making disinterested judgements about something is suspect because it is a mechanism for the production of totalising statements. First of all I have to pretend I have no part to play in what I am speaking about, that the position from which I speak has no bearing on the statements I might make. Second I am to deliver a judgement upon the thing in question. I am obliged to say whether or not I think it is of value, and not just for me. I am very

Far from a Kantian statement of disinterested judgement, this appears to be a statement that is interested (engaged) but non-judgemental. (Miles 2004: 109)

Miles' work contains the idea of an inverted Kantian Maxim. After Cultural Geographer Doreen Massey (Massey 1994: 232), Miles asked if this is not merely a by-passing of Kantian aesthetics, but a possible inversion. See Miles (2005: 243-248).

⁸⁶ See Screening 1 for discussion of how positionality in an academic context has been crucial for the film practice and this submission.

uncomfortable with this. I do feel that my position is crucial to the statements I make and I can't really say one way or the other whether I think the thing in question is of use for mankind generally. I just don't know. I might have an opinion, but am reluctant to totalise in order to manufacture a value judgement that is supposed to have universal application.⁸⁷ In the particular case of my film practice I am much more comfortable stating my interest - meaning my engagement - so that I move from the position of disinterested to an interested participant. In a nutshell, this is what my film practice is geared towards. I make the films interestedly. This means with emphasis on my position as a film maker and family maker. For example, my children play a large part in the Home Movies, my wife, my home, my holiday. I then open that out to different audiences in different contexts. What generally happens at these events is that I am asked to defend some of the decisions I have made. So both inside the filmic text and outside in the film practice, I look to this inverted Kantian Maxim.

DR CALLOWS: And you see this as an act of resistance?

GARY: Yes. It intervenes in normative practices of art criticism, and in my case art production.

⁸⁷ Scruton (2001: 99-101).

DR CALLOWS: Isn't there another form of resistance here? The demonstration you filmed, the Che Guevarra museum, spoiling the ballot paper. They are also acts of resistance, aren't they?

GARY: Yes, they are.

DR CALLOWS: As I sat here it slowly dawned on me that these were not straight-forward acts of resistance. You don't just perform those acts, you make films out of them.

GARY: Yes, that's important.

DR CALLOWS: They circumvent a more orthodox trope of political resistance. Most video activism I have seen has emphasised how terribly violent the police are at political rallies, caught in the act of bludgeoning innocent demonstrators with their truncheons.⁸⁸ The films themselves are evidence driven. The point is to provide incontrovertible proof of police brutality. That has its place. But here you are showing your wife and children eating ice cream as the demonstrators

⁸⁸ See for example <<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/03/337223.html>> last accessed 16th March 2006, as one contemporary example from many.

file past.⁸⁹ Another resistance trope, very popular again these days, is wearing Che Guevarra hats and t-shirts.

DR APPLEBY: It's something many of my students do.

DR TERENCE: One of mine came in the other day dressed in a Saddam Hussein T –Shirt. I asked her if she were fighting a political cause. She said no, her boyfriend spilled coffee on her top, and this was all that was clean.

(General laughter)

DR CALLOWS: But what I was most struck by was the fact that the acts of resistance were not particularly committed. The children spoil the ballot paper as if by accident, your family are busy eating ice creams at the demo in Edinburgh, you went to the Che Guevara museum as tourists not as left wing sympathiser/worshippers. That's the impression I got, and comically one of the children got lost and was found and made to sit at one of the big guns. These are

⁸⁹ The original idea for this scene was to construct a joke that was slapstick in nature: a family man trying to get a picture of his family on their day out, can't quite manage because thousands of rude people keep getting in the way. Inspired by *Modern Times* (Charles Chaplin 1936), particularly the point where Chaplin is unintentionally leading thousands of socialist protestors by waving a red flag the road workers had inadvertently dropped and left behind a moment before. Chaplin is waving the red flag to get the road worker's attention, not to lead the protestors. The double irony is that Chaplin was more than sympathetic to workers' rights, as I am to the marching demonstrators.

not straight forward, orthodox acts of video activism or resistance. But neither are they simply tongue in cheek exercises. In the light of what you have just said I do sense you have tried to find a position where you could make interested non-judgemental statements about your own role in resistance. That's interesting.

DR TERENCE: Is it then a personal resistance? I agree with Dr Callows. At first glance the film looks superficial, shall we say. By superficial I mean that you haven't taken great care to understand the ins and outs of politics, but are very happy to go on demonstrations, spoil ballot papers etc. In actual fact you have layered those acts of resistance with something very personal, very specific to you. You have also made complex your position as filmmaker in these contexts, haven't you?

GARY: Is that too complex, do you think?

DR TERENCE: To make complex is different than to make complicated. Complicated just means it is unnecessarily confusing, whilst complex means it has depth and bears thinking about.

GARY: I use Miles who is working with politicized thought, rather than go directly to other, perhaps more influential thinkers.⁹⁰ Emphasising Miles' work is also a form of what I have come to call 'positioned contextualisation', whereas my referencing other thinkers would be less so.⁹¹ A lot can be said for using contemporary material, or material whose access is generated from the position I

⁹⁰ There might be an interesting parallel with the inauguration of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research:

Kellner sees the institute's use of the term *critical theory* as 'a code for the institute's Marxism during its exile period. (Marcuse 2001:9)

Although the conditions are radically different I do feel that declaring one's project 'Marxist' is to invite stigmatisation. It might be something that closes down a conversation rather than opens it up. I have been careful, as have the Frankfurt School to avoid closure through the use of negatively loaded terminology. Architectural historian and art critic Jane Rendell addresses a possible relationship of extant theory to arts practice in a doctoral research context. Rendell suggests that 'extant theory' is there not to 'be pinned down' by artwork but rather that the artwork 'let it loose'. This is taken from an unpublished paper delivered at *Critical Spaces* 7 June 21st 2005, University of Plymouth, and has been influential in the execution and presentation of my research methodologies.

⁹¹ 'Positioned contextualisation' is not strictly tautologous. The idea is that contextualising one's position with what is already available to that position might help establish a more solid foundation from which to speak. This is connected to the idea of 'lived experience' and the cultural studies category of 'the everyday'. The rationale behind this is to investigate one's position through that which is already available to that position. In concrete terms I look to my own position through a Home Movie practice that features my family and colleagues at the university in screening sessions. But also I look to explore my own position through the work of people I come into contact with. In this sense Miles is more suitable than Marx. But this is not to say that those outside my immediate context are irrelevant. It is a question of focus: do I focus on my immediate surroundings for clues and help, or do I look further afield? My own research methodology has been to begin in the immediate surroundings of home and university and from that position get to others through connections I might be able to make. For example Miles gets me to Lefebvre, then to Marx. In Screening 1 the Senior Researcher gets me to Spivak and Derrida. In Screening 2 SEKA gets me to de Lauretis and Butler.

am in, in my 'here and now'. Miles, like Macleod play active roles in my 'here and now'.⁹²

DR TERENCE You seem adamant to avoid feigning a 'naturalness' where it doesn't exist. This seems to be your point. I see this in your insistence on referencing your tutors at the Faculty of Arts, University of Plymouth and also in your reluctance to omit the stating of a position of social and cultural privilege that goes with doing research.⁹³ Might I be right in thinking this is an attempt to make yourself accountable, by disclosing where you get your ideas from, however banal it may sound in the end. I appreciate it to a certain extent but I think you lay yourself open to criticism. It sounds a little incestuous – most students don't reference their tutors as key thinkers, and second there's an awful lot of naval-gazing in reflexive art work, a lot of the time it is highly unnecessary.

GARY: It might sound like so much naval-gazing, but in the interests of politicization - and that's what I'm interested in, politicization - I feel very comfortable with naval-gazing. I think measured naval-gazing might be one of

⁹² Miles and Macleod run a research training programme for the Faculty of Arts, University of Plymouth. Through attendance at their sessions I was curious to read their work and subsequently found it very useful for my own doctoral project. See Screening 1 for more on the work of Macleod.

⁹³ My Director of Studies is Chris Rodrigues and my Second Supervisor is Liz Wells.

the most appropriate things to do in the context that leads to the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy.⁹⁴ However, it is important to achieve a balance between measured naval-gazing and vigilance to larger cultural structures in society. I have to be looking ‘in AND out’. This is a good way of thinking about Miles’ inverted Kantian Maxim where the focus is on the interested or engaged (the ‘in’) and the making of non-judgemental statements (the ‘out’). In looking in and out one is of course making ‘in and out’ transitional.

DR ADAMS: What do you mean?

GARY: I am not saying ‘in’ OR ‘out’, or even ‘in’ THEN ‘out’. I am saying in ‘AND’ out. I am not setting up a false binary. The personal and the political are co-present. Of course there is a danger in thinking that the political is only personal. This is clearly not the case. There are broad political policies that are carried out and delivered. Spivak talks about this in relation to being a ‘public individual’, that is not making endless personal confessions but looking at the

⁹⁴ It is interesting to note Derrida’s frustration with philosophy’s reluctance to engage with the personal/biographical. An accessible example of this is in the film *Derrida* (Dick & Ziering-Kaufman 2002). Derrida parodies Heidegger and philosophy’s reluctance to engage with the positional. Quoting Heidegger Derrida says: ‘Aristotle’s life holds in one sentence: He was born, he thought, and he died. The rest is pure anecdote.’ Derrida goes on to explain, ‘...this politeness is philosophy itself.’ The ‘politeness’ refers to philosophy’s reluctance to include positional/personal or biographical information.

ways in which you are personally implicated in hegemonic structures.⁹⁵ And also to make sure that you are aware of the limits of ‘the personal is political’. That it is not much use in broad public policy planning. My own practice is useful for contact politics, one-on-one or small group politics.⁹⁶ I am paraphrasing Spivak here. On a personal note I particularly enjoy listening to people who make a point of insisting on the position from which they speak. This is one of the obvious things that attracts me to the work of Spivak, but also to the work of Miles – who is not reluctant to position himself in his work.⁹⁷ I see that as intervening in a certain mode of address. Naval-gazing in itself is not an act of resistance, but naval-gazing with an eye to positioning oneself in one’s work where one’s work is situated in larger cultural frameworks might be a way of resisting hegemonic, cultural practices. My film practice tries to keep this on the tip of its tongue as it were.

DR BRANLEY: Thanks Gary. I enjoyed your film/paper very much. I wanted to ask if, alongside resistance to cultural norms, like the Kantian ‘disinterested judgement’ there might be an intervention in the production of the categories of production and reception? Is the reference to Benjamin in your introduction to

⁹⁵ Spivak (1990: 133).

⁹⁶ Spivak (1990: 134).

⁹⁷ Miles writes:

I write here in the first person, having previously used the academic third person because it seemed to place greater emphasis on the material than on my view of it. Perhaps now I am relaxed enough to see ‘I’ as affirming a legitimate presence of the writer in what is discussed. (Miles 2004: XIV)

the paper in connection to the work of the Marxist thinker Antonio Negri? I recall a conversation, a few months ago, we had about Negri and some of the other Italian Marxists including Virno and Lazzarato,⁹⁸ and I wondered if you were still using those thinkers as references in your film practice. My view is that they follow on very nicely from Benjamin, especially the Benjamin of 'The Author as Producer' from 1934.⁹⁹ It does seem to me that your practice is a version of Benjamin's 'The Author as Producer' taken to a certain logical conclusion. In fact Benjamin ends his essay with something like 'It has perhaps struck you that the train of thought which is about to be concluded presents the writer with only one demand: to think, to reflect on [their] position in the process of production.'¹⁰⁰ Of course here writer could equally be taken to mean filmmaker. It seems that, like Benjamin, you are adamant to avoid the dreaded 'isolated object.'

⁹⁸ See for example <<http://www.generationonline.org>> last accessed 16th March 2006, for an excellent resource on Negri, Lazzarato, Virno et al. This website also contains interesting ongoing discussions on contemporary anti-capitalist thought and practice.

⁹⁹ Benjamin (1977: 85-103). Benjamin's much less quoted text in a film studies context certainly less than the 'Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility' from 1937, was an important foundation in the formulation of my film practice. I saw Benjamin's insistence that the relationship between *what* and *how* something is said in an artwork as very relevant to the research project I had undertaken. This led me to a concomitant insistence on my own positionality in reference to my film practice, insisting on the position from which meanings are generated then communicated.

¹⁰⁰ Benjamin (1977: 101).

GARY: I've understood the isolated object, a book, a novel or a film, to be something that does not contain within it the power to articulate, with criticality, something about the living social relations that produce it. My Ph.D. might well end up being an isolated object gathering dust on a library shelf...

(General laughter)

GARY: But more importantly with nothing in it that can get at those lived and living social relations. It is from this that I am determined to try to generate a film practice that is engaged in and cognizant of the living social relations that produce it. By engaging with, and being cognizant of, the living social relations I mean to say that I fuse them together and make that one of the focal points of the film practice. I began my Ph.D. with the idea of developing a Guerrilla film practice, a practice that would be at home with the most radical filmmaking.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Looking at my initial proposal for doctoral study I could trace the archaeology of my film practice back to a desire to engage in what I called at the time 'Guerrilla Filmmaking' practices. These I saw, perhaps naively, as powerfully oppositional to mainstream practices. I had read the *Guerrilla Filmmakers' Handbook* (2004) and was all too impressed. This was a far cry from my film director training in Slovakia (see Screening 4). However, I quickly began to realise that 'autonomy' in filmmaking, which is what is supposed to be attractive in the *Guerrilla Film Makers' Handbook* 'Free to make the movie you always wanted to make', 'The ultimate guide to independent Film Making' (Jolliffe & Jones 2004: Front Cover) was not necessarily the case with Guerrilla filmmaking or filmmaking that engaged in political resistance. I looked to more 'serious' formulations of Guerrilla filmmaking practices in Latin America and Africa, particularly through Gabriel Tesholme's ideas of Third Cinema (T. Gabriel, 1982, 1993, 2002), Paul Willeman's conceptualisation of some elements

There's an awful lot of things throughout my Ph.D. that I have moved away from after an initial enthusiasm.

DR TERENCE: Was one of those the new enclave of radical thought, Virno and the like?

GARY: Concretely one of those is Virno's 'virtuosity'.¹⁰² I feel uncomfortable with the term 'virtuosity' in relation to the kinds of films I make. I think Virno

of the practices of 'third cinema' (1989, 1990, 1994) and Mike Wayne's insistence on cinema as 'always political' (1997, 2001, 2005). I also looked to formulations of Latin American cinema especially in Cuba. For this I looked to the now online contemporary media journal *Jumpcut* which contains a plethora of articles on the Nuevo Latino and Michael Chanan (1976, 2004) but also, most importantly Espinosa (1969), Solanis and Getino (1969) and Gabriel Tesholme (1989) all in Miller and Stam (2000). Although inspired by this I was continually struck by the idea that the living social relations that produce their 'Third' cinema were not the same living social relations that produce my film practice. I decided that if I were serious about wanting to make subversive films, I might be better off looking at my own position and seeing what might be going on there. My reading of Benjamin's 'The Author as Producer' is to see an engagement of critical self-reflexivity as the *sin qua non* of any cultural production I might engage in. I realised that what was radical about the film practices I had studied was that they all talk about, although in different ways, their immediate environments. In this sense my film practice owes a debt to those formulations of radical film practice. See Screening 4 for more on this topic.

¹⁰² Virno writes:

Each one of us is, and always has been, a virtuoso, a performing artist, at times mediocre and awkward, but, in any event, a virtuoso. In fact, the fundamental model of virtuosity, the experience which is the base of the concept, is the activity of the speaker. This is not the activity of a knowledgeable and erudite locutor, but of any locutor. Human, verbal language, not being a pure tool or a complex of instrumental signals [...] has its fulfilment in itself and does not produce (at least not as a rule, not necessarily) an 'object' independent of the very act of being uttered. (2004: 55)

might well be relevant for a whole host of other reasons, but my way into Virno was through ‘virtuosity’. Having said that, the problem with referencing Virno is precisely the word ‘virtuosity’. I thought it would be misleading to use the word ‘virtuosity’ as an anchor for my film practice. I was worried that it might be taken to mean that I think my films are especially masterful, made by a filmmaker virtuoso. At conferences where you speak to people who don’t necessarily know your work and might not be up to speed on Virno’s ‘virtuosity’ you run the risk of misleading them. And at home for example with Home Screenings I don’t really want to get embroiled in debates about what Virno means by ‘virtuosity’. I have experience of having to justify formulations of theory in relation to my film making. This happened particularly with the French philosophers, not least of all, or rather especially, in the case of Gilles Deleuze.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ I looked to Deleuze and was very interested, perhaps naively, in how Deleuzian thought might be employed in a film practice. I was particularly interested in Deleuze and Guattari’s *Kafka: Towards A Minor Literature* (1972) and the possible formulation of a ‘minor cinema’ from their idea of a *minor literature*. After a number of experiments I realised three very crucial things; first, at every screening I would have to spend large amounts of time explaining Deleuze’s cinema books and my relation to Deleuze’s theories of the crystal-image; second, being a white, male, educated western European, I felt I was not ideally placed to engage in a ‘minor’ literature or cinema. If I were to explore this aspect I would have had to clear an enormous amount of ground first. Third, I realised it didn’t make much sense to make films according to a philosopher and in the words of a Ph.D. colleague at the University of the Arts, London ‘This is not especially what the philosophers intended either’ (Nicola Kirkham, personal email 22 April 2006 in response to an earlier version of this Screening). It also struck me that it might have been a better idea to look closer to home for relevant departure points. I looked to Lena Simic, my partner, also doing research as an artist (see Screening 2) and other colleagues at the University of Plymouth including Malcolm Miles and Katy Macleod.

DR BRANLEY: I agree that the work and effort required to dispel non-specialist impressions of the word ‘virtuosity’ might well be a waste of valuable time for a filmmaker. But I wanted to say that Negri is interested in the collapse of the distinction between production and reception. I thought there might be some intention in your work to comply with this practice.

GARY: I sympathise with the view Negri takes but I have found some of those views more workable in Miles. Miles is working on notions of art as resistance, artworks and cultural practices as agents in social transformation. Miles’s work has developed ideas along similar lines in relation to the failure of avant-garde arts practices.¹⁰⁴ Negri doesn’t really foreground art practices and so might be less relevant for me as a theoretical source. In the interests of contextualisation I prefer referencing Miles to Virno or Negri. Not to mention I can knock on Malcolm’s office door or send him an email.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Miles writes:

Can Art or Architecture change the world? Is it possible, despite successive failures, to think of a new cultural avant-garde today? What would this mean? *Urban Avant-Gardes* attempts to contribute to the debate on these questions, by looking back to past avant-gardes from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries...and by profiling a range of contemporary cases of radical cultural practices. (Miles 2004: Blurb - Inside Flap)

¹⁰⁵ John Smith, film-maker, now Professor of Fine Art at the University of East London, was useful in formulating my own take on what contextualisation might mean. His films engage in high levels of self reflexivity and on that topic he summarises by saying: ‘If you look hard enough all meanings can be found or

DR TERENCE: In other words whatever it is that makes up your context – in relation to your film practice - you welcome and investigate critically. Being from a cultural studies background I am inclined to position your interest in your own context with the everyday, perhaps the here and now or the lived. Does that ring any bells for you?

GARY: This is useful to appropriately theorise my film practice in regard to ideas of resistance and political agency. In *Art, Architecture and Change* Miles is concerned at one point with Herbert Marcuse and in particular a lecture series Marcuse gave in 1967.¹⁰⁶ The topic for Marcuse was how to bring about revolutionary change. Marcuse, a couple of years later, admitted that, in effect, what he was proposing was impossible; namely a revolutionary consciousness coming about without the dismantling of the mechanisms that make revolution impossible. Revolution is therefore doomed to remain unrealised because it can't, of itself, come into existence.¹⁰⁷ The problem, then, for Marcuse, is that revolution is impossible. Where I find Miles particularly useful is in his refusal

produced close to home.'

<<http://www.luxonline.org.uk/artists/id/607868/index.html>>, last accessed 16th March 2006.

¹⁰⁶ See Miles (2004: 70-80) for a critical commentary on Marcuse's Roundtable lecture series given in 1967.

¹⁰⁷ Marcuse states:

You have identified what is unfortunately the greatest difficulty in the matter. Your objection is that, for new, revolutionary needs to develop, the mechanisms that produce the old needs must be abolished. In order for the mechanisms to be abolished, there must first be a need to abolish them. That is the circle in which we are placed, and I do not know how to get out of it. (Marcuse 1970: 80 cited in Miles 2004: 71)

to privilege ‘tomorrow’ as the site for revolution. Miles, with adeptness, brings in Henri Lefebvre’s idea of ‘moments of liberation’,¹⁰⁸ stating that ‘this offers a speculative way out of the dilemma.’¹⁰⁹ Lefebvre maintains that a revolutionary consciousness already exists in the here and now and you don’t need to be a member of the intelligentsia to own it. Everybody has it. It does not need ‘bringing about’. It is detectable when people can see, if only for a moment, the world as it could be, a better world. This brings in a very particular set of questions for my film practice. These questions focus on the ‘here and now’ as a site for a radical practice. I said that rather than ask the question ‘What is to be done?’,¹¹⁰ one might ask the question ‘What is already happening?’¹¹¹ If I ask

¹⁰⁸ See Shields’ description of moments of liberation as:

those instants that we would each...categorise as ‘authentic’ moments that break through the dulling monotony of the ‘taken for granted’...[to] outflank the pretensions of wordy theories...and challenge the limits of everyday living. (Shields 1999: 58) cited in Miles 2004: 81)

¹⁰⁹ Miles (2004: 80).

¹¹⁰ After Lenin’s infamous question (1987 [1902]), a question that privileges tomorrow as the site of revolution. For Miles it is ‘a tomorrow that never dawns, except as a reproduction of today’ (Miles 2004: 86).

¹¹¹ Miles asks the same question with a slightly different tense. Miles asks ‘What already happens?’ This is present simple, signifying routine and habitual action. From the perspective of a writer engaged in writing about, amongst other things, other people’s art practices, the present simple might be the most appropriate tense for this question. In that sense there is a particular perspective available from the question, namely looking at a larger picture and seeking to identify habitual strains of resistance. I have modified the tense from present simple to present continuous to ‘What is already happening?’ This is a reflection on my own practice which seeks to foreground my own position in the film practice. In that sense it becomes crucial for my film practice to focus, through conversations and Home Movies, on the ‘here and now’. Miles’ practice is in part to identify and write about how art is a site of resistance to hegemony – that resistance is habitual. This is what I have taken to understand by ‘everyday’ and ‘here and

that question of my film practice I am left with looking at my role in the production of my films. So here I have my reading of Walter Benjamin's 'The Author as Producer' and Miles' reformulation of the question 'What is to be done?' Both of these direct attention to the 'here and now'. Lefebvre is also relevant here. I have been trying to ask questions along the lines of these particular thinkers directly in relation to the generation of a radical film practice. This has led me to some interesting positions. For example in my film practice I find myself complicit in the reproduction of the categories of production and reception as standard, normal, natural. Again I, the filmmaker am the active expert and you the passive viewer. I felt that looking at the 'here and now', asking myself what is already happening, or to put it another way, how am I already involved in the reproduction of repressive ideologies in relation to my filmmaking, has persuaded me to attempt an intervention in the categories that generally slip in unnoticed: production and reception.

DR APPLEBY: The introduction to the film you read opened with Benjamin's 'The Author as Producer'.

now'. I understand 'everyday' as habitual and 'here and now' as specific and transient. This has been an intellectually convenient distinction for me in regard to my film practice. I make no attempt here to put it forward for philosophical consideration. See Miles (2004: 228-31) for his own formulation.

GARY: Yes. This is because I wanted to make a point about how, since 1934 ideas were being put forward concerning the inseparability of ‘the what’ one produces and ‘the how’ it is produced. Although this is just a personal opinion, a lot of art that hangs or sits in galleries or shows in cinemas does not engage very readily with ‘the what’ and ‘the how’ of its production and reception. Having a film practice that lends weight to the screening and subsequent conversations that take place is my way of intervening in the processes of production and reception. Walter Benjamin uses the example of the Russian newspaper that invited its readers to be correspondents.¹¹² Miles cites the architects Sarah Wigglesworth and Jeremy Till.¹¹³ What interests me so much about Miles’ thoughts on those architects is that he frames the work as something that intervenes in the production of categories. This is also true of Miles’ views on the Slovenian artist Marjetica Potrc with whom he closes his book *Art, Architecture and Change*.¹¹⁴ I think the positioning of the everyday, and

¹¹² Benjamin (1977 [1934]: 88-90).

¹¹³ Miles writes in reference to *9/10 Stock Orchard Street* (in North London) by Sarah Wigglesworth and Jeremy Till:

Thinking again of Benjamin’s idea of the artist (architect) as producer I see this building as intervening in the production of categories such as domestic space and work space...beginning with people not things, its form is not an engineering solution to a visual concept but follows from its means of production. This refuses modernity’s privileging of visibility (but does not mean it is not visually unrewarding), suggesting that in a new architecture the act of building and engagement with materials might be as important as the design, and not relegated to the secondary tier or delegated to technicians and construction workers. (Miles 2004: 186)

¹¹⁴ Miles writes:

running through the work is the problematization of the boundaries between the affluent and non-affluent societies, between art and cultures in an

specifically the ‘here and now’ is already to enact a dissolution of some boundaries. Miles, in the *Uses of Decoration*, writes ‘to consider the everyday is itself to begin to imagine futures other than those prescribed by market economy.’¹¹⁵ The everyday, or the asking of the question ‘what is already happening?’ is an invitation to inspect my own position in the ‘here and now’ and how it might be being produced. I find Miles particularly useful in that he combines an insistence on the ‘here and now’ with a critical eye on the production of categories.

DR APPLEBY: I might try to characterise your film practice as the exercising of a voice, a voice I don’t often hear especially in academic texts. I might then characterise that voice as oppositional.

GARY: Here I would prefer ‘resistant’ to ‘oppositional’.

DR APPLEBY: Well, what is it you are resisting?

GARY: There are different modes of resistance in different situations. Every place has its particular struggle. Here, as we sit together asking and answering

anthropological sense, and between spectators and representations of material cultures which are not their own [...] moral panics break out when boundaries are questioned [especially those] which undermine the dominant society’s self-image. (Miles 2004: 227)

¹¹⁵ Miles (2000: 154).

questions the topic has turned to the production of categories specifically production and reception. Those categories often get passed off as natural, normal, god-given. I resist that. I don't oppose it and fight directly against it. I resist using it. The reason I don't like the word oppositional is that it too easily falls into false binaries, to the detriment of getting a picture of the complexity of the situations in which my 'resistance' is voiced. I don't get into conflictual situations, or oppositional situations, I rather try to rethink things that are passed off as normal or natural. I feel that voices are crucial for doing this though. Simic¹¹⁶ and Rendell¹¹⁷ are such voices as well as Miles and Macleod.¹¹⁸ These are exemplars in the way a personal and particular voice positions itself in an academic environment. All of them have been inspirational, and are all inside academic environments. In looking at their own 'here and now', each have

¹¹⁶ Lena Simic is a particularly relevant artist in this context. Her research, which involves Live Art performances, centres on dis-identifying female archetypes through lived experience – in other words dealing critically in her own 'here and now'. See <<http://www.joantrial.org>> and <<http://www.medeamotherclothes.org>>, both last accessed 16th March 2006, for more information on this topic.

¹¹⁷ Professor Jane Rendell is currently Head of Research at The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, 'Rendell uses a conceit [...] deconstructing the conventions of architecture she was taught through a story of physically taking apart a house.' (Miles 2000: 50) which is a reference to her essay 'Doing it, (un)Doing it, (over)Doing it Yourself: Rhetorics of Architectural Abuse, (Hill 1998: 283-291). Rendell was also panel chair at the *Research Spaces* Conference Nov. 05 at Slade School of Fine Art, UCL at which a version of my paper (the one referred to in the above conversation) was given.

¹¹⁸ See Screening 1 for more about Macleod. In this context her work is very carefully positioned. I especially enjoyed her paper delivered at one of the Research Training Workshops which she co-runs with Miles, 'What is Writing' (Nov 04) where the relations of sense-making to non-sense making in an academic environment are tested with reference to doctoral studies.

managed, in their own way, to intervene in the production of categories, categories that might usually be thought of as ‘natural’. For me this is an extremely interesting area. Intervention is not necessarily oppositional, it’s more like adding a new layer that you can’t ignore anymore. Or put another way making the working of hegemony visible. Exercising a voice that looks at its own position, its own ‘here and now’ is an interesting form of resistance. Getting back to Miles, exercising a voice with reference to a ‘here and now’ is rather like making interested, non-judgemental statements.

Dr Adams thanked everyone for their attendance and brought the Screening to a close. He suggested that those without immediate teaching engagements interested in further discussions to take advantage of the arts centre café’s cappuccino. With false confidence that served to hide his anxiousness Gary thanked the participants and offered whoever was interested a cappuccino on him at the café.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ At this point the conversation becomes less focused on theoretical frameworks to position the practice and more about personal preferences. I thought some important topics could be raised at the more informal setting of the café, and have taken this opportunity to insert them into this particular screening. This is because some of the points made follow on nicely from the ideas of positioned contextualisation in the previous conversation at the John Kay Arts Centre Screening Room. I have put the discussion in the café in reported speech to try to emphasise the difference in tone between the research seminar and the café discussion and to highlight how that change in context can have a influence on not only what, but also how, something is said.

A Café. As we sat down with our coffees Rachel, a Ph.D. candidate in Textiles said that she would like to ask, just out of interest, if I thought I could send these Home Movies to festivals, or even possibly to television for broadcast. I said that I thought television broadcasting and festivals were enormously overrated events. I mentioned my experience in festivals and on television coming away very disappointed. I said that in my view there was still a perpetuation of mystique of what ‘getting a film shown’ really meant. I said that as I walked down the corridors of the department of Media and Culture the day before I saw a variety of ‘Calls 4 Films’ on the notice boards and the walls. One of them in particular I remember began ‘Are you the next Quentin Tarrantino? Send your movies to this address.’ Another read ‘Waiting To Be Discovered? Get Your Films To Us, NOW!’ I said I thought that what lay behind some of these calls was a desire to exploit filmmakers’ vulnerability. I said they perpetuate a mystique surrounding film making practices and their reception. I said there were of course exceptions, but that filmmakers would be wise to be careful where they sent their work. Or at least not hold high expectations. I said that I thought there was a popular myth amongst filmmakers that to get your work shown anywhere at all is an accomplishment. I said I preferred to mull over the conditions of screening and the contexts that the screenings produce. I said that if this is to the detriment of the wider dissemination of the films then so be it.

Jennifer, an architecture doctoral candidate at the Bartlett, asked what the reason was for my going to the Edinburgh march and filming it might have been.¹²⁰ She complained that if I didn't want to show films nationally, internationally, then how did I think my films could contribute to changing things. I said that I didn't believe films could change things. I said that the reason for going to Edinburgh was to try to find out what was happening. I said that my own personal opinion was that, like Spivak, I didn't have a practical role to play in policy-politics but that the tools I used were very good in contact politics, not in broad planning. It's good for tactical situations. In electoral politics it is not much use at all.¹²¹

Katherine, a Ph.D. candidate in Sculpture at the Slade School of Fine Art said she had an impossible question to ask. She said she would try to keep it short. She made reference to many thinkers who suggested that liberation and oppression were two sides of the same coin and could not exist separately. She quoted Laclau, whom, she said, claimed a new future was impossible, and went on to uncover the logical contradiction inherent in the idea of a new and radical future.¹²² She went on to ask what the point of my film practice might be if not to help, in whatever small way, bring about that new, radical future. She said that if

¹²⁰ *Make Poverty History Public Demonstration* 2005, Edinburgh (coincidental with the G8 meeting at Gleneagles, 2005).

¹²¹ Spivak (1990: 133-137).

¹²² See Laclau (1996: 17), for an eloquent formulation of the logical contradiction in a new future. Laclau is clear that the future must to a large extent be forged from the present and reminds us that a future divorced from the here and now complies with the original formulation of 'Utopia' as a 'nowhere'.

my films were tactically conceived, then those tactics must embody ends. Thereby the films are at least in part conceived instrumentally. She went on to ask whether protest was, in the end, useless or not. I said that what I did was not conceived in order to bring about a radical future. I said that in a way I was not concerned with the future, nor did I have to take seriously the responsibility of the future of humanity. I said that the future of protest was none of my business. I said I was interested in the problems of the here and now. To that end I employ a film practice. I went on to reference Paolo Freire and his emphasis on the individual as the 'host' site of the production of hegemonic practices.¹²³ I said that I thought this made a lot of sense. It required a recognition of 'oppression' and the subsequent 'denaturalising' of its mechanisms.

Daniel, an MA student thinking about an application for a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies asked me what has been my single most valuable experience in my studies. I said there had been so many and that they still continue. But one that remained important for me was a weekend away with a group of artists and academics and cultural activists. Malcolm Miles had organised a *Critical Spaces* Seminar in May 2005 where a group of people met, to some extent, not so

¹²³ See Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in particular:

How can the oppressed, as divided, inauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their own liberation? Only as they discover themselves to be 'hosts' of the oppressor can they continue to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy. (Freire 1972: 25)

constrained by the pressures of the institutions they were working at.¹²⁴ I told Daniel, that this was called a ‘retreat’ to facilitate discussion about social and radical change. There were a few ground rules, one of them was the prohibition of the use of power point presentations and laptops or any other sorts of devices. The idea was that a bunch of people in the middle of a valley in Devon, discuss possible social transformation. Daniel said it all sounded very utopian. I said it might well have been, but what I remembered most about that event was sitting

¹²⁴ *Critical Spaces 6: Symposium May 2005. ‘Culture and Radical Change’, Retreat for 18 invited participants. It was described as follows:*

This is an unusual event. It brings together artists, curators, and academic researchers from a number of countries to reconsider the issues of cultural work and radical social change. Among the issues are how cultural work (such as art, performance, and writing) contributes to change; whether there is a way out of the conventional instrumentality of avant-gardism; and how constituencies for the work are delineated and approached. An assumption is made that the general direction of the change imagined is towards social and environmental justice. It is hoped that participants will feel able to go beyond positioning statements (though there will be an opportunity to state a background or context, and a viewpoint, at the outset) to an open dialogue during the 24 hours of the retreat. Because the purpose is to deepen the conversation, rather than to share information, there will be no visual aids, no power point facility, etc., only a room with chairs in which participants speak to the group. The group is small enough that break-out sessions are not foreseen as necessary. The retreat centre offers extensive grounds for walks, however – 67 acres of meadows, woodlands and orchards. The event is entirely free. Participants’ reasonable costs of travelling to Exeter will be reimbursed (rail and/or budget air). Transport will be provided from the art school in Exeter to the retreat centre near Kingsbridge (and back), and overnight accommodation and meals are included (12th May). Participants (in alphabetical order): Gary Anderson (researcher, U.Plymouth), David Butler (writer and academic, Newcastle), Daniela Brasil (artist, Lisbon and Weimar), Andrea Maria Noronha de Andrade Caeiro (Lisbon), Mario Caeiro (writer and curator, Lisbon), Sarah Carrington (curator, London), Sean Ferris (researcher, Dartington), Nelson Guerreiro (Lisbon), Andy Hewitt (artist, Sheffield), Sophie Hope (curator, London), Mel Jordan (artist, Sheffield), Nicola Kirkham (researcher, London), Laima Kreivyte (academic, Vilnius), Katy Macleod (academic, U.Plymouth), Malcolm Miles (U. Plymouth), Christian Nold (digital artist, London), Jane Rendell (UCL). (Miles on invitation email 10th May 2005)

there in an old armchair listening to everyone fiercely debating social change. I found I didn't really agree with a lot of what was said. But as I continued to try to understand the perspectives people were looking at things from, I started to understand that other ways of thinking, ways other than my own, were possible. I said that this was something of a minor revelation to me. I said that some people seem to go through life holding strong beliefs about how the world could or should be righted. I said that I always considered myself one of those people. I said I realised that some of the things I heard and didn't agree with had a definite and clear logic to them. I said that they were obviously very deeply held views and beliefs. They happened to be views that I had always dismissed as unfounded or esoteric or not very well thought through. But as I listened more and more closely I found that certain schemas of meaning that I recognised started to emerge. All this just by listening. I felt so completely convinced by this insight that I remained silent for the entire afternoon session. Later on that day, back in Exeter, after saying my goodbyes to everyone, I went off to catch my train back to Liverpool. As I sauntered along the edge of the canal to Exeter St David's station I couldn't help thinking to myself, half jokingly, half serious, that I might just have experienced a Lefebvre-like 'moment of liberation'. I could see that another world was possible just by really listening to people you don't agree with.

They continue chatting over the next few minutes as Gary gets up to pay for the coffees. As he does so he fumbles his wallet and some coins drop out onto the floor and roll off in different directions. Katherine, Jennifer and Rachel all jump up to help. The four of them crawl around the café floor on their hands and knees looking for the coins as Gary remonstrates saying he'll find them all himself. At that moment Dr Fanowski walks into the Café with Dr Adams.

DR FANOWSKI: (to Dr Adams) Behold the falling standards in education where doctoral candidates are forced to look for funding on café floors.

Katherine, Jennifer and Rachel all get up and go sheepishly to their chairs to finish their coffees.

Screening 4

Introduction

The aim of Screening 4 is to provide the relevant filmmaking background for the film practice. It aims to trace and expand on how I arrived at the particular formulation of the film practice as it stands today. This is with reference to other filmmakers. I have laid out the development of my film practice more or less chronologically. This is to afford the examiner/reader insights into how the film practice was built up in the course of the research.

The conversation begins with questioning the film director training I received in Eastern Europe. It goes on to imaginatively interrogate the film making practice I am now engaged in with specific reference to a history of film practices, including those specifically relevant to Slovakia, the country where I received my film training. The conversation goes on to chart the contemporary influences on my film practice with reference to international film making practices outside Slovakia.

This screening is an amalgam of four screenings that took place on the evenings of 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th of January 2006 in Bratislava, Slovakia. I invited around twenty filmmaker/artist colleagues overall whom I have subsequently fictionalised and compressed into three. This was to try to construct and reflect

the sense of intimacy and trust between the interlocutors and thereby allow for the free flow of information as though it were between friends. This in turn allows for a more interrogative, although perhaps more personalised and informal - than for example in Screening 3 - approach to the film practice and its multiple derivations.

This screening is conceived to highlight the film making methodology itself. In this sense it provides the last piece of the jigsaw for the film practice in terms of the appropriate positioning of research methods and claims.

Footnotes provide, especially in the case of some of the lesser-known Slovak film practices, reference to sources. They also, as with the footnoting in the previous three screenings, allow a space for me, the author of the conversations, to provide extra material to consolidate what is being put forward in the conversation without disrupting its flow.

Characters:

PALO, 34, handsome, highly skilled actor, temperamental, emotionally intelligent, employed by Slovak National Theatre, where he is currently playing Hamlet. Speaks Spanish and a little English but with a strong Slavic accent.¹²⁵

VALERIA, 33, highly intelligent and successful arts producer and director in alternative circles, very strong willed, but also extremely generous. Speaks English fluently.

MAREK, 33, leading young editor in Slovakia, works internationally, often travelling to Vienna to work on TV, films and music spots, technically proficient and orderly. Speaks English fluently.

GARY, 34, English filmmaker, a little under confident and unsure of himself. Speaks Slovak well but with errors and strong English accent.

The action takes place in Bratislava, Slovakia at a mutual friend's flat.

Late night. Snowing heavily outside. Despite this the window in the kitchen is slightly ajar. The heating system is controlled from the basement and is at full blast. PALO, MAREK, VALERIA and GARY sit together on the sofa each with a beer in their hands. They all watch the television screen that plays Home

¹²⁵ Palo's English improves as the conversation goes on. After the initial indication of the difficulties of communication between Palo and Gary, that I thought important to emphasise, I allow Palo's speech more fluency as the conversation deepens. This is purely because I needed him to put some important points across for the film practice later on. Also, symbolically, Palo and Gary see eye to eye by the end of the conversation and there is therefore no longer need for me, the author, to emphasise the difficulties in communication between them.

Movies: Summer 2005. *Gary's bottle is empty. He gets up at the closing credits and walks over to the open window. Outside the window, balanced on the outside shelf, are lots of chilled beers each with a small heap of snow around them.*

PALO: (*calls across the room*) Garicko, daj mi este jedno pivo, prosim ta!

[*Gary, pass me another beer, please!*]

MAREK: Mozem prekladat ako chces, Paly. Ked nieco treba, nieco dolezite, povetz mi.

[*I can translate if you want Palo. If you need anything, anything important, tell me.*]

PALO: Dik, Marek. Skusim nieco po anglicky povedat, a potom uvidime. No, co mam povedat o tvojom filme?

[*Thanks Marek. I'll try to say something in English, and then we'll see. So, what can I say about your film?*]

Gary I don't like your new film. Maybe I don't understand it too much, but I think your other films was much better. This film looks very, ako sa povie 'neporiadny'?

[*How do you say 'neporiadny'?*]

VALERIA: 'Messy'.

PALO: Rozumies, Gary?

[*Do you understand?*]

I think you used to be very professional now they look very messy. Ako sa povie 'Blato'?

[*How do you say 'Blato'?*]

MAREK: 'Mud', like 'mud'.

PALO: I think it gets like mud. And the ideas are not clear. Did you know that every director is a small diktator, rozumies, 'diktator'?

[*'dictator', do you understand?*]

GARY: Yes, 'dictator', it's the same in English.

PALO: You have to be small dictator. In *Zazrak*, your Slovak film, it was good, because you were the dictator. In this new film, I did not know what to think. I think it is experimental film, but I don't know what it wants to say to me.¹²⁶ I

¹²⁶ *Zazrak* [*The Miracle*] was my graduate short fiction film. I directed it and co-wrote it with Peter Pavlac, now dramaturg at the Slovak National Theatre. It concerned a small village outside the capital where a family were eager to have a wooden cup verified as the actual Holy Grail by the Vatican Church. The fraud

look very hard for the meaning and I don't find nothing. Nic! [Nothing!]. I think you go to the demonstration with Lena and children and you make the film that you are at the demonstration. So what?! What is this to me? I did not go to the demonstration. What now? Why should I look at you at the demonstration?

Ako sa povie 'smetie'?

[*How do you say 'smetja'*]

MAREK: 'Rubbish'.

PALO: It is like watching rubbish! I think you did not good thinking about it. It look like a big bag of rubbish that you put together and make a film and say, here is new kind of film with all sorts of different rubbish. There's no story, no character making, no respect for the spectator. There are no actors, no script, no good camera, no nothing. I got nothing from this. Garicko, Nic. Vobec nic. Ja som velmi sklamany!

[*Gary, nothing. Absolutely nothing. I am very disappointed!*].

was exposed but ironically divine retribution was dished out to all involved. The film was made according to an industrial model of production with discrete roles for the Producer, Editor, Director, Actors, Co-producers etc. For a student film in Slovakia it was very well funded by a number of co-production bodies including Slovak National Television, Soros Foundation for the Arts, Slovakia and LIT Fond, the writers guild of Slovakia. Palo was the lead actor in this film, Valeria produced it and Marek edited it.

GARY: Thanks for your honesty. First, I think your response to the film is absolutely valid. I don't want to argue against it. It is your response.

PALO: But, in Slovakia we have big tradition of defending your own artwork. You know this from your studies here. I say your work is rubbish, you must to say how it is NOT rubbish. That's the challenge for you now. To tell me how I must to like it.

GARY: I hate doing that!

PALO: But, it is not a game. It is responsibility. You must to defend your work. You must to say why it is a good idea for me to sit and watch your rubbish. You have to say something about why you make it this way. You, as an artist have to have, more than anything else, a big feeling of... ako sa povie 'povinnost'?

[How do you say 'povinnost'?]

VALERIA: Duty.

PALO: This is what it means to be a Slovak artist. Here you are in Bratislava, with a beer! Today you are a Slovak artist! So speak, I want to listen.

Palo slumps himself back on the sofa with his arms folded.

MAREK: Palo is right. I agree. It is your responsibility to tell us about this film and why you want to show it.

VALERIA: Yes! Defend it!

GARY: OK. Let me have a big swig of beer first for courage! (*he drinks*) Ah! I've been very nervous thinking about what to say to you at this screening. But as I was watching this Home Movie I remembered a film exercise we did together at VSMU.¹²⁷ It was in the first year of Film School for the directing class. I was asked to film a 'place'.

MAREK: I remember, it was so you could learn about how background operates in a film.

GARY: Yes. The exercise was to film a 'place'. The 'place' could be anywhere and the idea was that you film the place as background for action. To get to grips with the place, a real place, before you put the action inside it. After some thought I chose to film a disused railway line in the centre of the city. I got up at the crack of dawn to catch the sunrise on camera and filmed all day long on my

¹²⁷ Vysoka Skola Muzickych Umeni - The Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, Bratislava, Slovakia. I studied Film Directing here from September 1995 to July 1999 under Lubomir Fifik. See <<http://www.vsmu.sk>> last accessed 16th March 2006, for information about the school and its history.

own. I walked around the train line filming. I went up to the top of a hill and filmed the train line from there. I went down under the rusty train that had been left on the line and filmed from under there. I filmed it in as many ways as I could think of. I finished filming when the light faded that evening. I ended up with more material than I could possibly edit together. I took it to my tutor, who is, as you know, an experienced film director and showed some clips from it. He wasn't very impressed. He said it was unprofessional. That it was 'messy'. He told me to go away and make it again, only this time with a cameraperson, an editor and a producer. I went again to the disused railway line. Only this time together with Marek and Valeria. We made the exercise quite well, very professionally, for students. The shots were perfect.

VALERIA: Villo Tutko was the cameraman.¹²⁸ He was excellent. He did insist, a little unnecessarily, that we called him Dee-oh-pee.

PALO: Co?

[What?]

VALERIA: Dee-oh-pee. Director of Photography.

¹²⁸ Viliam Tutko studied cinematography under Prof. Szomolanyi. He graduated in 1999 and is still active in photography in Slovakia. See <<http://www.barrandov.com/en/cameras-contacts>> last accessed 16 March 2006.

MAREK: You made a full schedule with Valeria as producer and planned lots of shots. I remember the storyboard we drew up together with Villo. We followed it to the letter. Everybody got a lot from the experience. I showed it to Patrick Pass.¹²⁹ He said I had a bright future in editing. I was so proud of myself.

GARY: We had been given a very small budget from the Film School and had accounted for every crown of it. The visual results from the professionalised visit to the disused railway line were of a high standard. I took it back to my tutor and he was very pleased. I remember him saying something like there's no excuse for non-professional standards.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, I always secretly preferred the stuff I had shot on my own. Not because I thought I was a better cameraman, or editor, or producer, but because I remember learning about the disused railway line, about the place I was in, by spending all day there filming it and thinking about it. I remember trying to negotiate the limited resources in order to film for the whole day. I had two small battery packs that lasted about 90 minutes each. I

¹²⁹ Patrick Pass remains the most prominent film editor in Slovakia. He still teaches at VSMU and runs his own commercial editing studio TRIGORIN in the suburbs of Bratislava. He currently runs the Editing Faculty at VSMU.

¹³⁰ A comment I have come to vehemently disagree with. I quote the opening sentence of Espinosa's article 'For an Imperfect Cinema', written in Cuba in 1969 at the beginning of *Home Movies: Summer 2005*. This is with a view to introduce ideas of professional/non-professional modes of film production in an amateur film practice and to begin to think through ways in which certain ideological predispositions are at work in any aesthetic decisions, not least of all 'professional' film practices. I used Julianne Burton's seminal translation, (Barton 1979: 24-26).

had to recharge them in the local pub where I got to talking to people about the railway line in the middle of the city. I remember thinking about how interesting it was to find a disused railway line in the centre of a city. I remember trying to think through how certain modes of industrial production become outdated, or are underfinanced, and how Bratislava was a city that thought of itself as ‘catching up’ with the rest of Western Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This was something I kept hearing from people ‘catching up’ as though State Socialism had left everyone at a distinct disadvantage.

PALO: We still think this! Bebo said to me once that Slovakia will only ever catch up when the little Bolshevik that lives inside every Slovak has finally died away.¹³¹ Slovaks think very strongly that state socialism has put them at a disadvantage. I thought it too until I came to Liverpool last year to visit you and Lena and it changed my mind. I could not believe some of the areas in Liverpool. People with absolutely nothing. Totally excluded.¹³² I came back to Bratislava thinking ‘Thank Meciar’.¹³³ At least we have neighbourhoods!

¹³¹ Peter Bebjak, ‘Bebo’, studied Directing under Prof. Parnicky at VSMU He graduated in 1999. His film *Lottery* – also about a fraud perpetrated by villagers to win new investment for their small town – won the ACKO student awards in 1998, Bratislava, Slovakia. Peter continues to work in television and films in Slovakia.

¹³² Palo is thinking particularly of the area surrounding Liverpool Football Club (LFC) in Anfield, north Liverpool. Most of the streets off LFC are derelict or marked for dereliction with the unhappy result of decimating local communities. I always take visiting friends from abroad to Anfield and more often than not they comment on the marked contrast of LFC’s ostentatious affluence and the

MAREK: It is something that goes deeply against the grain of my beliefs. I started worrying about how Slovakia was so enthusiastic for a kind of entrepreneur professional.

GARY: I think the idea of this kind of professionalism is very prevalent in filmmaking too. There is a danger when a country starts to copy another country's film making production models. Slovakia has an extremely rich film history, shared and separate from the Czech Republic.¹³⁴ Our film about the

surrounding streets' all too apparent multiple deprivation. For the unsettlingly high rate of multiple deprivation in Anfield compared to other areas of Liverpool and the UK see 'Geodemographic Composition' (Audit Commission 2006: 3) at:

<<http://www.auditcommission.gov.uk/neighbourhoodcrime/downloads/example3.pdf>> last accessed 16th March 2006. Although I would refuse to second the recommendations of the audit commission and have strong reservations about its ideological predispositions it does seek to identify multiple deprivation in Anfield. However it's predisposition to criminalise Anfield's youth culture is in my opinion unfounded and unfair. Taking visiting friends on a tour of Liverpool always reminds me of my own positionality and makes me think about ways in which to negotiate that position in a film practice. This became an important theme of my research.

¹³³ Vladimir Meciar was the Premier of The Slovak Republic, very unpopular with the more cosmopolitan, entrepreneurial Bratislava, but very popular in rural Slovakia. In 1997 he threatened to close VSMU down as something of a den of imperialist philosophy and activity (After personal conversation with Dr. Lubomir Fifik, a politically active film director then employed in the Ministry of Culture, also my tutor for film directing). For more information on Meciar's threat to close down the film school see *SME* – the daily newspaper website archive on

<http://www.sme.sk/diskusie/reaction_show.php?id_extern_theme=3952926&extern_type=sme-clanok> last accessed on 16th March 2006. 'Sme' translates roughly as 'We Are'.

¹³⁴ See the Slovak Film Institute at: <<http://www.sfu.sk/home.php>> for a good introduction to Slovak Film. Also the seminal Macek & Pastéková (1997),

‘place’, the disused railway line, I found out something about how these attitudes spill over into arts practices. I was being asked to imitate a kind of professionalism that was more akin to the studio production model in Hollywood,¹³⁵ than a Slovak or Czech production model that owed a lot to the Russian film School model particularly VGIK. There the central idea was that the student learn the craft through practice, rather than by sale of product.¹³⁶ The idea that it be made for the market is not a Slovak model of film production. A Slovak model might have been, just as rigorous professionally, but like other film schools of Eastern Europe was based on the VGIK model. Here the student is to learn by practice, by experiment; where a key function of the learning is to

unfortunately not yet translated. For more academic papers on the History of Slovak Film in English see the special issue of *KinoKultura*, guest edited by Martin Votruba of the University of Pittsburg: <<http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/3/slovak.shtml>>. Also available, although possibly less valuable, is the Cannes Slovak Film Guide available in English on: <http://www.sfu.sk/english/articles.php?category_id=1> all last accessed on 16th March 2006.

¹³⁵ See Branston & Stafford (1996: 240-245), especially their idea of how the studio system in Hollywood trained its own writers and directors to produce for the market under the auspices of the studio name. This constituted the first kind of commercial ‘film school’.

¹³⁶ Lenin set up the world’s first Film School in Moscow, VGIK (All-Union State Cinema Institute), two years after the Revolution in 1919. The filmmakers were instructed to produce ‘agitprop’ but because resources were limited students and teachers were encouraged to find creative solutions to effectively portray and disseminate revolutionary information. <<http://www.vgik-edu.ru/>> last accessed 16th March 2006. At VSMU the introduction of a small budget for first year exercises in 1996 launched a new pedagogical practice. Less emphasis was placed on creative solutions to practical and financial problems whilst more emphasis was placed on students being able to get an exercise completed on time and within or under budget. (After personal conversation with Dr. Lubomir Fifik, 1998, Bratislava).

be able to negotiate creative solutions to the financial restraints upon the medium. Dziga Vertov is the perennially quoted example. He made his films with a very limited budget, but with inventive solutions. Vertov was the original inspiration for me. Remember his: 'We see no connection between the true kinochestvo and the cunning and calculation of the profiteers!'¹³⁷ How we used to quote it to each other! He was denounced by the state in 1935 for 'formalist' practices, putting the art of film before its ideological function as propaganda. So his influence at VGIK was curtailed. But still, it is along Vertovian lines that the films schools of Eastern Europe were modelled.

MAREK: Kuleshov and Pudovkin were more influential in the way VGIK was run.¹³⁸ I think you have a slightly sentimental view of Vertov. His influence has been crucial, but even today it comes in waves. I think these days people are very interested by Vertov for his experimental, self-reflexive filmmaking.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Michelson (1985: 5). 'Kinochestvo' is a difficult word to translate. In Slovakia we used it to describe a practice which is more interested in film as a means of conveying political thought, rather than the practice of making films for a commercial audience. 'Kinochestvo' then roughly translates as 'committed filmmaking.'

¹³⁸ Under the influence of Kuleshov's Experimental Film Lab set up in 1919 (later VGIK) Pudovkin developed a practice of montage that maintained that the juxtaposition of images was always the most articulate form of film practice. He taught at VGIK until 1938 before returning to his own successful film practice. See <<http://www.vgik-edu.ru/>> last accessed on 16th March 2006, for more on their own history.

¹³⁹ See John MacKay's article in KinoKultura available at: <<http://www.kinokultura.com/articles/apr05-mackay.html>> last accessed 16th March 2006. Here is a description of the three waves that Vertov's reputation has

VALERIA: Careful Gary, now you're on our ground. We know Vertov like you in England know Chaplin or Hitchcock. Any one of us could list his films and probably the years they were made. I know you came to study in Bratislava, partly out of chance, but partly because you were so fascinated by the Eastern European film production models. I remember you going on and on about Vertov. We were all pretty bored with it! Daj mi este jednu pivo!

[Pass me another beer!]

GARY: It was with Vertov in mind that I went to film this disused railway line. I wasn't kinochestvo, but I was looking for a way to comment politically on what I was doing and what I was seeing through the 'kino-eye'. The difference between the two versions of the disused railway line was that when I was there under, let's say, non-professional circumstances, I was actually trying to put what I thought into visual terms, through experimentation. When I went in more professionalised circumstances, I was only interested in following the storyboard, getting all the shots on time and within budget. I wanted to appropriate the place as a means of heightening the pressure for the action that would take place within the narrative. In the end the professionally produced exercise looked empty and unengaged, but clean and well shot. The non-

enjoyed, especially in relation to western scholarship. Also see Tsivian (2004). Yuri Tsivian also curated the largest-ever presentation of Vertov's films in Sacile, Italy 9th to 16th October 2004.

professionally produced video looked messy and untidy, but it did seem to articulate the place in a much more interesting way. I was experimenting whilst investigating. I came away with something I have never forgotten. And yes, I was thinking of Vertov all the time.

MAREK: Vertov didn't work alone though.

VALERIA: Professionalism isn't absent from Vertov. Yes, it is not as though Vertov was unprofessional.

GARY: I only want to point out that there are some unnecessary institutional constraints. Getting mediocre work in on time and under budget, especially in a film school context, is unnecessary and in many ways a lost opportunity. We learnt a lot from doing it, but now I'm busy making sure I'm unlearning some of the things I learnt about budgets and schedules and professional-looking films.

PALO: Are you saying that working alone is better for a thinking film practice?

GARY: No, I'm saying that professionally produced work has its distinct disadvantages. I always collaborate now. I never make anything alone. These days I make it with Lena and the kids or some other friends or colleagues.

MAREK: You are using Patricia Zimmermann's formulation of a Home Movie as a potentially radical form of arts practice.¹⁴⁰

GARY: I didn't know you read Patty Zimmermann over here.

MAREK: We don't. You sent me a copy of *Reel Families*.

VALERIA: Memory like a sieve!

MAREK: I started to think about how it might be possible to rethink amateur film practices through the lens of the everyday – how political isn't always with a capital P, but that through the everyday or the political with a small 'p' we can still change the world. It is in the everyday that Home Movies are circulated and screened. Like here and now. Your project works very well with a little 'p' for politics.

PALO: Use 'politics' with a small 'p' and you get nothing but 'small change'.

MAREK: But it's healthy to think bottom-up when you have no access to top-down power. This is what Zimmermann is saying. Amateur filmmakers can do this as well as social historians of film and the arts. They can turn the telescope

¹⁴⁰ Zimmerman (1995: ix-xii).

the other way round – sometimes it's much more interesting and productive. Part of turning the telescope the other way round is Gary's distribution process that works like this, through word of mouth, through interested parties, through university conferences and arts institutions.¹⁴¹

GARY: It has been crucial for me to try to find appropriate venues for this kind of cultural production. The circulation of Home Movies – through enthusiasts and hobbyists was not enough for me.¹⁴² I felt those practices were founded on too uncritical a basis for commenting on the world we live in. They tended to celebrate rather than criticise the technology of video and film as well as the familial. I wanted to look down the other end of the telescope in exactly those contexts that I'm trying to critically engage with. In that sense the film practice grows directly out of the contexts I'm critical of and therefore has an ideal venue in them.

VALERIA: This screening is about other modes of film production that you have been engaged in but are critical of?

¹⁴¹ See page 6-7 of this submission for a list of the university conferences and arts establishments that *Home Movies: Summer 2005* has been screened at.

¹⁴² Zimmermann formulates some of the intrinsic problems of the celebratory mode of amateur film production in her chapter entitled 'Entrepreneurs, Artists, Hobbyists, and Workers' (1995: 12-55).

GARY: I think professional or industrial modes of production are like having the telescope the wrong way round. Sometimes I think these modes of production are the least rigorous of all structures. They often require a minimum creative application, but demand maximum amounts of energy spent managing things.

VALERIA: It's true but the cross-over between Home Movie making, at least your kind of Home Movie making, and independent film is a really fruitful area.

GARY: This is where I got really excited. I was somebody who was trained in film directing and worked for television directing short features. There was something wrong with my two positions. I felt caught between a Home Movie practice, whose theoretical formulation owed a debt to Zimmermann and a film maker training that was based on an European avant-gardist cinema. But if I thought about it properly I realised I was able to draw on a rich history of independent film practices, experimental film, observational documentary AND develop a Home Movie practice. I felt I was not entering a confused field made of many parts, but a field crying out for connections to be made. Staying away from what I've come to call the 'obviously institutional' has been a real boon for me because it left me with the Home Movie practice.

PALO: What do you mean 'obviously institutional'?

GARY: Like television or film production studios that deal mainly in the production and selling of film and video. Since I left them I've stayed away from them. But I have engaged with what I call the 'not-so-obviously institutional'. These are things that I use in my film practice that have institutional bases but that don't necessarily engage in film production and dissemination.

PALO: Like what for example?

GARY: The family, the knowledge industry – meaning university and education, the arts institutions that screen works at gallery venues etc.

PALO: Are you against those institutions?

GARY: No. What I am against is treating them as though they were natural. I feel that with an independent film practice it is especially important to reference the institutions that make the work possible.

PALO: You mean saying 'thank you' to them on the back of the DVD case?

GARY: No. I mean trying to think through what those institutions mean, what their influences are in relation to the artefact you are producing. That their operations are made visible in the film practice itself. In that sense the Home

Movie practice I have generated is a kind of independent film practice that takes its subject as the family and adapts its means of production to suit the particular institution it is seeking to critically engage with. In other words engaging in the 'place' the film is made, in terms of its socio-political conditions, is a crucial feature of my practice.

MAREK: I would go so far as to say that your distribution practices are just as much a part of your thinking on institutions as are the Home Movies themselves.

GARY: Yes, the place of the screening, with whom and when, is crucially important and there's a rich history of that in the amateur film circles. Zimmermann is particularly eloquent on those groups and their potential radicality. The aesthetic quality of the Home Movies differed enormously. Some filmmakers were eager to get work outside the family circles to show off its qualities. Others seem to be more content with private shows.¹⁴³

MAREK: Aesthetically your film practice is very much a part of Home Movie making traditions. On STV 1 we have a programme where people send in clips from video films they have made that involve some mishap or other.

¹⁴³ Zimmermann's historical survey of the screenings of amateur footage over the past 100 years testify to its established and rich traditions and varieties (1995: 43-7 and 153-7). My own Screenings have a part in that tradition albeit a critical take on uncritical Home Movie practices.

GARY: Yes, we have it in England too.

MAREK: Aesthetically your work fits with theirs. Pure Home Movie – Daddy behind the camera, Mum walks in with a few ice creams, slips over the paddling pool onto the kids. The classic set-up.

PALO: But don't you feel ashamed, Gary, having been trained as a film director to produce stuff that looks so bad, of such poor quality?

GARY: No. I'm more ashamed of my elitist education as a film director. The rough, Home Movie, quality is to accentuate the homemade aesthetic, the everyday, the banal. I didn't want to abuse that aesthetic by just bringing it in now and again to authenticate a family moment in an otherwise professionally produced film. There are countless example of that. Wim Wenders in *Paris Texas* (1984) uses it to look back at the 'good old times' before things went wrong in the family – for one example from many.

VALERIA: So you didn't want to use that as though it were a trick – a way of saying something shorthand?

GARY: No, I wanted to see if a Home Movie could retain its ‘rough’ aesthetics and still get something done, still be able to say something interesting. If it could be linked to its institutional base critically by focusing on its place of articulation – the family, the home.

VALERIA: (*jokingly*) You see, you can’t escape the institutions!

But the ‘place’ exercise was very useful for me as a producer. I started thinking about place in my own work. We made a theatre piece last month about the places we are from. All of us working in our small collectivist theatre in Prague are strangers, not born in Prague. So we decided to look at some of the issues this raises for us as artists.

PALO: I saw this work Valeria. I thought it was very strong.

GARY: I am very interested in the place where I shoot and how the place inflects the action that unfolds within it. I was thinking about this at the Cuban train museum. Me and the kids are tourists looking at this place of historical interest. The idea of a radical politics being seen through the filter of a tourist attraction where a young family take their holiday video shots was very interesting to me. But it’s the background that’s crucial. I spent a lot of time there videoing, trying to find out what the place could mean to me as a tourist, a film maker, a father with two young kids who like trains very much. This would have been very

difficult had I a tight professionalised schedule to follow and a storyboard to copy.

PALO: Well you need a little money of your own to make this film. You say it cost £8, but who paid for the flight to Havana, the bus connection to the hotel, accommodation and food?

GARY: We went to Cuba because Lena was taking part in a theatre festival. That's why we were there. The film cost what it cost because I was going there anyway. I try to keep my filmmaking and my life as close as possible. I abandoned the idea very early on to travel the world to make films. Now, a little humbler, I film whatever is in front of me in an attempt to understand it.

VALERIA: But you have no sponsor for the filmmaking?

GARY: None! I don't need money for the filmmaking. I need maintenance money to eat and live and pay the rent. I get that from the university. But there is absolutely no funding of the film practice itself whatsoever. I take the money I need, which is often laughably little, from the scholarship. I have to buy new tapes and pay for the electricity for the laptop and recharging the battery etc. I had to buy a camera. I bought the cheapest I could find. It cost less than £200. With that I have made around 20 films. So that means each film has cost less

than £10 to make taken together with the mini dv tape, the firewire lead that connects the camera to the laptop...

PALO: Well how much was the laptop?

GARY: OK, yes, you're right. I needed to make an initial investment in the laptop, camera and software programmes...

PALO: You film makers always exaggerate! Nothing is worth telling unless it is extreme in some way. You are all addicted to tall tales!

GARY: Well, it depends on how you cost it.

MAREK: OK, but the point is not that it cost £10 or £1,000. In terms of making films it's very cheap. It's not free, but it's cheap. It is not the professional-industrial model of film production, but the Home Movie model of film production. Let's leave it at that!

VALERIA: You wrote to me when you started your Ph.D. that you were a Guerrilla filmmaker. Is this what you meant?

GARY: My original ambition was to be Dziga Vertov. I decided I wanted to be a Guerrilla Filmmaker. I wanted to make films like the Cubans just after the revolution. I wanted to be Espinosa¹⁴⁴ or the Argentinians Solanas and Getino,¹⁴⁵ I wanted to make politicized and political films. I knew the capitalist industrial model from Western Europe and America was no good for revolution. I wanted to make films that would belong to a revolution. It was a very romantic idea and in the end a very misguided one. But it worked as a starting point. There is a part of my film practice that owes something to the thinking of the guerrilla filmmakers from Cuba.

¹⁴⁴ I think Chanan's succinct observation of the central idea running through Espinosa's seminal text 'For an Imperfect Cinema' (1969) is very useful in this instance:

First of all, Julio García Espinosa's idea of an imperfect cinema was never intended as an apologia for badly made films. It was an argument for low-budget film-making which didn't waste resources on trying to imitate the commercial values of Hollywood. It was also a statement about the filmmaker's need of the audience and the audience's need of films of a kind that mobilised their intelligence instead of dulling it. Additionally, it was Brechtian in its appeal to film-makers to be open about the nature of the process of representation. In other words, not to hide the poverty of means with which the film is made, and not to try and imitate the production values or the ideology of the super-productions of the North. <http://www.tau.ac.il/eial/IX_1/chanan.html> last accessed 16th March 2006.

Espinosa was central in setting up the ICAIC Cuban Film Institute where Espinosa, after a long interval, is again its head. <<http://www.cubacine.cu/>> all last accessed 16th March 2006.

¹⁴⁵ I was particularly drawn to Solanas and Getino's inclusive idea of third cinema:

What determines third cinema is the conception of the world, and not the genre or any explicitly political approach. Any story, any subject can be taken up by third cinema. In the dependent countries, third cinema is a cinema of decolonisation, which expresses the will to national liberation, anti-mythic, anti-racist, anti-bourgeois, and popular. (Solanas & Getino 1969: 23, also in Stam 2000: 265)

MAREK: What is it?

GARY: After trying to make connections between the two nations' cinemas, I discovered that the impulse was to make films about present conditions, films about their own and their audiences' here and now.¹⁴⁶ Regardless of where or when the films are set, whether documentary or fiction, the underlying

¹⁴⁶ Particularly in relation to ICAIC (The Cuban Film Institute) which was the first cultural institution to be set up after the Revolution in 1959. There is an interesting parallel with VGIK set up in similar revolutionary circumstances by Lenin in Moscow in 1919. T.G. Alea was one of its leading lights as was Espinosa (Chanan 1985). I especially enjoyed Chanan's focus on the meaning of 'conciencia' which translates as both 'revolutionary consciousness' and 'conscience'. I always thought of it as something akin to Vertov's 'kinochestvo' where, for my own practice a combination of 'conciencia' and 'kinoschestvo' might mean a politically and ethically committed film practice. Also see Perez-Stable on 'conciencia' and its relation to communist thought: 'The politics of radical experiment shared with the radical [factions] a paramount concern with the development of conciencia. Fidel sounded a favourite Guevarra theme when he said:

We will not create a socialist consciousness, much less a communist consciousness, with the mentality of shopkeepers. We will not create a socialist consciousness with the dollar sign in the minds and hearts...of our people...we will not reach communism by using a capitalist road. Using capitalist methods no one will ever reach communism. (Perez-Stable 1999: 113)

For more about the multi-faceted relations between the USSR and Cuba see the astoundingly dexterous *Soy Cuba* (Kalatazov, *I am Cuba*, 1964) In four parts it tells the stories of how imperialist policies imposed on the Cuban people (by the US and Batista's compliance) led them to revolution. Interestingly this film was not seen outside of Cuba or Russia until 1992. It recently got a screening at the BFI in London. Also See Perez-Stable for more on the Soviet influence on Cuba's nationalization policies around the time *Soy Cuba* was made (Perez-Stable 1999: 61-74).

motivation in the Guerrilla filmmaker is to describe their present situation. For my own practice, making films and showing them is one part of doing that.

MAREK: I remember you telling me that you realised pretty quickly some of the social and economic differences between yourself and the Cuban filmmakers. You wrote me an email about first, second and third cinema and the kind of people who write about it.¹⁴⁷ You explained how you had political sympathies

¹⁴⁷ As I was thinking through some of the prominent academic commentaries on third cinema I found I could group Mike Wayne and Michael Chanan together along with Paul Willemen and Robert Stam. It struck me that these prominent academics all shared certain characteristics not least of all their race and gender. Although I would not begrudge them their chosen areas of interest nor the insights gleaned I remained uncomfortable with their positionality in regard to a third cinema practice that is more often than not sourced in other countries. It further struck me that the academic privilege of providing commentaries on other people's work, especially in other cultures, was very much akin to the ethnographer's privilege. Part of the rationale of my film practice was to avoid the 'ethnographer's paradox' where cultural insights are extracted from an outsider's position and passed off as disinterested judgement. See Grimshaw's eloquent epilogue where she calls, in the form of a manifesto, for the strengthening of feminist anthropology – an anthropology that would be able to better negotiate this paradox by openly critiquing Ethnography's dominant structures (Grimshaw 2001: 172-3). See also my commentary on Miles' refusal of disinterested judgements in the previous chapter, Screening 3. From these considerations I started to think seriously about my own positionality as both a filmmaker and a researcher, as well as a family-maker. I developed an interest in contemporary film and video practices that were closer to home. In this vein I traced a connection between three UK filmmakers; Humphrey Jennings, Derek Jarman and John Smith. I realised that like the Guerrillas of Latin America they too were deeply concerned with their own, immediate contexts. Widely held views on Jennings are that his most interesting works are the propaganda films of the Second World War where audience and filmmaker had obvious, vested interests in the profilmic events. Jarman, from a gay underground scene, made a number of Home Movies *with* his friends expressly *for* his friends, thereby again enacting a concern with his immediate environment. This concern is mirrored in

with third cinema, but could not see how, in terms of your own position as a white, Western European, educated male, you could contribute to this practice without referencing your own privileged position.

GARY: And I remember you wrote back about my privileged foreigner status in Slovakia when I was studying here and some of the advantages it afforded me. It made me regret the fact that I never really tried to deal with it in filmic terms. I always sort of ignored it. Which is what I'm determined not to do now in my current film practice.

his more 'mature' work where his Britishness becomes a site of critical investigation. I used *Jarman: Early Works* from the ICA Anthology. I found it at The Study Collection, housed at Central St Martins, University of the Arts, London. See also *The Last of England* (1988). John Smith, from the LFMC tradition of leftist intellectual film practices sought to layer his filmmaking by focusing on his immediate environments, namely his east-end milieu in London *The Girl Chewing Gum* (1976), *The Black Tower* (1985-7) and *Blight* (1994-6) as three films, from three decades that attest to an interest in positionality. For my purposes I adduced that interesting critical/political film practices tend to emerge when filmmakers engage critically in their own immediate surroundings. This is something I took from the filmmakers themselves, rather than the commentaries I found. I think Chanan, Wayne, Willeman and Stam all highly informative but admit that notions of positionality do not seem to play a central role in their attitudes towards their own writing, at least on the subject of third cinema. Chanan has a film/video practice of his own, but again, the links between his positionality and his film practice are not immediately apparent, at least not to me. However he does have a very interesting blog where a formulation of his positionality seems to be central. The title of his blog is indicative of this. See <<http://humaninbristol.blogspot.com/>> last accessed 16th March 2006.

VALERIA: But the Guerrillas made things very cheaply, too. Your Home Movies are a way of making things cheaply. Making films without recourse to funds from the Arts funding bodies, or so-called generous commercial supporters is a real bonus. From the beginning I think you tried to find a form that would not require you to spend inordinate amounts of time and energy applying for funding. Of course you can't make films for free, they always cost something, but the point is that working like this is sustainable. In effect there is nothing to stop you making films for the rest of your life, if you want to. Your audience can always be your friends, your family and your colleagues.

MAREK: Isn't that a bit limited? Shouldn't Gary go to festivals and widen the environments that he practises in?

VALERIA: Why? What is this insistence on wider environments? At the moment he has two little kids and is doing a Ph.D. where filmmaking is a tool for exploring his immediate contexts. What's the rush? What's this natural insistence? To get famous? When he needs to I sure he will. Won't you?

GARY: Espinosa wrote a piece on the difference between being famous and being talented.¹⁴⁸ I especially like Espinosa because he never seems to be taken

¹⁴⁸ Espinosa's 1998 polemic on the globalisation of fame as a concept and how it is particularly important to resist it was useful here. He sees fame as a kind of

in by the lure of fame or the slickness of high production values. Remember *Zazrak* [*The Miracle*] cost us more than 300,000 SK? Do you remember all the work we did to get that money? We got it all just so the film would look professional and slick! By the time we got it I was thoroughly exhausted, I just wanted to get the film finished. We filmed and edited it in record time. We got the big Slovak stars to act in it, paid them as much as we could. Valeria, you did an amazing job. But looking back on it all, was it worth it?

VALERIA: No! With the years gone by I can look back and say no. We had a great time, we made friends with lots of people. But no, I agree. In terms of the film itself, which was successful... But remember that part of the reason we got the money was because you were an interesting foreigner. An Englishman in

cloning and talks of ‘fame seekers’ as ‘Dollies’ (after Dolly the first cloned sheep) he writes: ‘With more noise than talent, Dollies make the same type of music, films, best sellers, because they are reared in the ancient totalitarian desire of achieving a single sensibility, the single thought in a single direction that Orwell prophesied.’ Espinosa goes on to defend a similar formulation of what I have referred to as the ‘true kinochestvo’, after Vertov:

A globalization of diversity opposing the present globalization [...] A culture opposing the markets facing a culture enslaved by the markets. A replacement of the success of those who subordinate themselves to the markets by the success of those who overcome the markets. Failure belongs to those who, trying to play by the rules of the game, do not reach the success they are after. Those who intend to transform markets may not be successful, but will never be the victims of failure. The rules of the market do not rule them.

<<http://www.cubanow.net/global/loader.php?secc=8&cont=films/num15/1.htm>>. Last accessed 16th March 2006.

This links well with the Vertov adage that there is no relationship between ‘the true kinochestvo and the cunning and calculation of the profiteers,’ (Michelson 1985: 5).

Bratislava. You were the first Western European to study at our school.¹⁴⁹ *Zazrak* still plays on Slovak Television and we made it more than 5 years ago. It went to festivals etc. But no, the film was rushed, the script was changed a lot, we were forced to shoot the interiors in three days and the exteriors in two. The amount of organising required! I'd say no, it wasn't worth it. I don't regret it, but it wasn't worth it. I wouldn't do it again. As you know I stayed in theatre, I started a small collectivist practice in Prague, that is going well and a lot of the reasons why I started it up was because of the conversations we had when *Zazrak* was finished. I remember you were furious! You vowed never to make a film again!

GARY: I was so angry! We all felt compelled to make the film as professionally as possible. Somehow it seemed natural that way. After I calmed down and looked into other possible production models I realised there were lots of different ways in which institutional constraints make their presence felt in arts projects. I started the Ph.D. thinking I might get a chance to investigate how close I could work with non-industrial models that didn't have direct recourse to

¹⁴⁹ Jasen Nannini and Martin Repka, born and raised in Italy and Germany respectively, but with Slovak descendency, also studied at VSMU. Both Jasen and Martin were fluent Slovak speakers before entry to the film school and both qualified as home status students but still had to pay school fees, albeit at a reduced rate. The Willy Russell Foundation, based in Liverpool, funded my first year of study at the nominal cost of £1,500. That was full price. Comparing it with other Film Schools in the UK it was a very affordable education. I worked as an English teacher at Akademia Vzdelavania (The Academy of Education, Bratislava, Slovakia) in addition to studying in order to keep myself in food and board.

public or private funding. Before too long I realised that institutions make their way into art projects not only in the shape of money. I realised I was just as subject to institutional constraints working with a certain kind of cheaply produced American video equipment, a laptop and certain software programmes. All of these things have an enormous influence on how ideas are shaped. I was reading the Czech born philosopher Vilém Flusser at the time. It became clear to me that the camera was not a kino-eye: it couldn't see things better, or more fully, or more clearly as Vertov seemed to suggest. A camera was a product in a capitalist system and had its very particular properties, many of which were direct influences on what was shot and how it was shot.¹⁵⁰ I had always secretly suspected as much. I'll give you a banal example. The video camera I used to film all of this was a Mini DV Canon MV830i. It videos well in the daytime outside, or inside during the day in strong interior light. So, if you are looking for 'better' quality pictures you'd be well advised to film medium to close up shots. They don't perform very well in long shot and tend to go out of focus on close-ups. These are some of the things that need to be taken into consideration when you film something. It made sense for me to film medium close-ups during the daytime, outside. You see the shots in Cuba are following shots of the kids

¹⁵⁰ Buchler writes:

The apparatus is not just the camera; it's the entire photographic culture and industry in which it partakes. Every time the photographer manages to produce an 'improbable image' against the pre-programmed possibilities of the camera, that newly discovered possibility gets built back into the apparatus, through the means of publication, exhibition and critical response. (Buchler 2005: 8 & *The Internationaler* 2007: 12)

Also see Flusser's own account (2000: 21-25).

around the museum. The picture holds best when Neal is in the frame walking around in medium close-up. But the constraints are omnipresent. There isn't a film you can make that doesn't belong to a certain discourse, there isn't a shot you can take that isn't ideologically inflected. Flusser made this clear to me. The trick is to try to bring the institutional constraints out into the open. To move as far away as possible from transparent filmmaking, where you pass everything off as natural, from fade-outs to characterisations. I think of them as tricks to manipulate the spectator. It strikes me as devious. I have tried my best to make visible not only some of the determining conditions in which I live, at least some aspects of them, but also the conditions of the filmmaking.

MAREK: I noticed there wasn't a lot of shot variation in the Home Movie. As an editor it provides ways in which we can manipulate the pictures to tell stories. I think I also noticed that you film very long takes. If I remember correctly, the final scene where you destroy the ballot paper is all in one shot.

GARY: It is not all in one shot, but there are relatively few edits.

MAREK: There was also the instructions you gave your children to turn the music on or turn the music off. Music is one of those things I employ as an editor to disguise some of the technicalities of film editing. Patrick Pass, my old tutor at

the film school, told me a secret. He said that music was the editor's best friend. I think you made friends with music, but you don't want to keep it a secret!

GARY: I feel it is an ethical issue. I don't feel comfortable tricking a spectator. I respect them. I feel there's too much at stake to just trick them. But of course if you enter into a screening situation with a patronising idea of what an audience needs to be made aware of, then the experience is probably not going to be positive. If you bring into a situation something you have worked on very hard and thought very long about then the chances are that the audience will respond accordingly. I feel Flusser is very useful here. He seems to want to make certain that artists know what materials they are working with and that the materials are not neutral. They play an active role in the proliferation of those ideologies that are made manifest through uncritical use. In other words, cheaply made, mass-produced video cameras that are sold on the high street, alongside adverts of happy family holiday shots, fulfil an ideological function. So, having no recourse to institutional funding might look like a guerrilla practice, but it's only the tip of the iceberg. Everywhere you look there are institutional restraints. They are inescapable. The trick is to make them visible. Once they are visible, you can start negotiations. You can start asking questions. This has been my experience.

VALERIA: I was interested in Home Movies, too.

GARY: Home Movies, or amateur filmmaking, on the one hand, represent all I am against: consumer culture, uncritical film practice, reproduction of repressive patriarchal ideologies through family, fetishisation of family archives, of children, weddings, etc and how all of these things get professionalized.¹⁵¹

PALO: My father made lots of Home Movies. For him he was more interested in mastering the technology than filming us children. I looked at some of the 8mm prints a few months ago. Most of them are filming birds in trees and hills and some churches. But there was one where me and my sister are running around in the garden, then my mother comes in with a plate of Brinzove Halusky.¹⁵² The film cuts to a perfectly set table in the garden where me and my sister sit waiting for mother to serve. We both looked very uncomfortable, like we had been told off. I remember father being very strict when we were young. But I don't remember him ever filming us. This must have been his birthday or something. Everyone knows children hate Brinzove Halusky, so it must have been a horrible day for us. I think father tried to film it professionally. There is a tripod used, all the shots are very still and well composed. The editing is rough though, all done in the camera and the shots run for a long time, but on the whole you

¹⁵¹ Zimmermann writes:

Historically amateur film's trajectory transformed from an economic to a social category: from a participation in entrepreneurial myths to a popularization of professional equipment as consumer items and, finally, to a professionalization of leisure time. (1995: xii)

¹⁵² The Slovak National dish. Made from gnocchi and a special cheese made in the areas surrounding the High Tatras mountain range in central Slovakia.

can see he had prepared everything, Mother waves to the camera, we sit giggling sometimes...

MAREK: Yes, you have similar shots Gary. Your children look used to being filmed.

GARY: They are. But that's because I want to educate them. I feel it is important to teach them about media and communications and how messages and meanings are constructed and disseminated. I encourage the children to film sections of the Home Movies we make. Neal made a film about the Iraq War. He built a little Baghdad with his building blocks and an airport for the US army.¹⁵³ Later in the film he says how naughty armies are. It is very interesting when he films something. He often tells us what he is filming, what he is looking at. So in this film about Baghdad he names everything he sees on the viewfinder as he's filming. It's my responsibility to teach the kids, especially if I am using them in the films, just how filmmaking works, how it requires ideas to make it work. In short how nothing is natural, how everything is produced and subjected to manipulation.

VALERIA: What about the filming style, where does that come from? When we made films you would spend hours fixing the camera position and rehearsing and

¹⁵³ This Home Movie is available on DVD 2 accompanying this written text.

rehearsing and rehearsing with the actors. As a producer I kept having to tell you to hurry up! Here it looks like you just turn the camera on and run around, or is it more constructed than that?

GARY: One of my heroes, although I mostly disagree with what he says, is Ricky Leacock. I spent three days with Ricky Leacock in the South West of England in 2003. He was visiting his old school in Dartington. David Hilton arranged for me to follow Leacock around with a camera.¹⁵⁴ I'd always been a big fan of *Primary* which he made in 1961 and knew his status as one of the 'fathers' of documentary filmmaking. I read up on his cinema practice and watched as many films as I could get my hands on.¹⁵⁵ I realised that he was a marvellous filmmaker, but a less successful commentator of his own work.

¹⁵⁴ Hilton is currently Subject Leader of Media Arts in the School of Media and Photography at the University of Plymouth. Hilton's Ph.D. (2004) was partly based on the activities of Dartington Hall's film unit, which included Richard Leacock's first ever film (Hilton 2004 unpublished). Also see the accompanying DVD 2 with this written text for a 'screening' of Leacock's first film with Hilton. The film was started at Dartington Hall over 50 years ago and finally completed in 2004.

¹⁵⁵ See <<http://www.rickyleacock.com>> last accessed 16th March 2006, for a selection of his essays on his own film practice.. Also I recorded the talk he gave at Plymouth University, 2003 which included a retrospective of his films and sneak previews of work he was busy with at the time. The School of Media and Photography also filmed the event. In a private conversation Leacock informed me he was working on his autobiography and that he plans to publish it on the website, characteristically claiming 'Like hell am I gonna give it to those money grabbing publishers!' (Private conversation, Dartington 2004)

However, to my mind it didn't change his films. I found them fascinating.¹⁵⁶ I asked him lots of questions about his practice when we were filming. He had an enormous amount of advice to offer. He was eighty-two at the time. I remember one time specifically. We were sitting in Dartington Hall and he was negotiating with one of the arts admin people there about the screenings of his films. I was filming him and David Hilton who was also involved in the negotiations. I felt a little lull in the conversation and switched the camera off onto standby in order to save the battery. Leacock gave me a look of utter contempt and then roared at me 'HOW ARE YOU GOING TO GET SOMETHING GOOD IF YOU KEEP SWITCHING THE FUCKING CAMERA OFF ALL THE TIME!' Embarrassed I fumbled around to switch the camera back on and resume shooting. For Leacock switching the camera off was akin to switching the mind off. The mind works through the camera. I can still hear his booming voice 'LOOK

¹⁵⁶ Stella Bruzzi writes eloquently on the mismatch between direct cinema's films and what the practitioners said about them:

The key issue is that observational cinema has been mis-defined and has mis-defined itself. Any documentary, including observational ones, testifies to the absence rather than the presence of purity at its heart. Having presented itself as the mode most capable of collapsing the difference between the image and reality, of best representing an unadulterated truth, direct cinema suffers particularly harshly from such a realisation. If one strips the films of the theoretical baggage they come burdened down by, they offer less stifling, more exciting possibilities. *Salesmen* and *Meet Marlon Brando*, or the political films *Primary* and *Crisis* [...] show the notion of documentary purity to be deeply flawed, but this is not what makes them significant and interesting. Rather it is the suggestion that the dynamism of the documentary text is predicated upon and created by the central dialectical relationship between content and unadulterated truth and representation, not destroyed by it. The core of the direct cinema films is the encounter before the camera, the moment when the filmmaking process disrupts and intrudes upon the reality of the world it is documenting. (Bruzzi 2000: 72)

THROUGH THE FUCKING LENS! THAT'S WHERE YOU FIND THINGS OUT!¹⁵⁷ I kept this as a part of my practice to try to accentuate a positionality in the filming. He talked about Flaherty a lot too.¹⁵⁸ What made sense for me out of all of Leacock's essays about his own films was the presence of the filmmaker. Leacock's idea was to minimise the presence of the film crew. Rouch and others in the continental version called *cinema verité* made sure they maximised the presence of the filmmaker. In simple terms this was the difference between being behind the camera in Leacock's cinema or in front of it asking questions as provocateur in Rouch's cinema, especially his early *Chronicle of a Summer* in 1960. In my practice I found a happy medium. I am vocally present in the films, offering instructions as a filmmaker 'Turn the radio on! Put that music down. Let's find Gabriel' but crucially I am present at the screenings where the

¹⁵⁷ It might be interesting, because it is often overlooked, to trace a heritage for Leacock in Dziga Vertov. Leacock's lineage is often traced through Flaherty and his film practice. But perhaps a subtler reading of Leacock's political films especially *Primary* (1961) and *Crisis* (1963), in regard to positionality and looking through the lens, might read as a 'political act of joining forces with one's subjects' which is often the link provided between Rouch and Morin's *cinema verité* and Vertov's kinopravda (Nichols 2001 117-118). It is no coincidence Leacock worked as cameraman on Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* (1948), a film that is arguably a justification for the expansion of Standard Oil of New Jersey into the Louisiana bayou (Barnouw 1983: 216-7) but it is also clear that Leacock's filmmaking was politically committed and again no coincidence that he was a one-time member of the Communist Party. I would suggest that a relationship between Vertov's joining forces with one's subjects and Leacock's 'creating the feeling of being there' are not as dissimilar as might first appear.

¹⁵⁸ Leacock first met Flaherty at Dartington Hall while Flaherty was filming in the courtyard. For a full account of this meeting see <<http://www.richardleacock.com>> last accessed 16th March 2006. I have footage of Leacock re-telling this meeting at Dartington Hall to Hilton.

discussions take place. Here I am in front of you now, having a beer trying to answer questions.

MAREK: But there are also jerky camera movements, the mundane, arbitrary moments that slip in when you leave the camera running, ‘voice-overs’ from behind the camera – where you speak into the microphone. You ask the kids to put the music on, or come closer or come into the other room, or give certain directions. These are small indications of a positionality. The difference between a Leacockian Direct Cinema and your Home Movies is that the presence comes from a combination of the filmic language and the screening event, not the minimisation of the cameraman.

GARY: That’s true.

PALO: I saw that there was something like a problem in the film that had to be solved. Gabriel needs to be found, the train line had exploded, the ballot paper is spoilt.

GARY: One of the key positive influences, but something I have since tried to problematise is the ‘crisis structure’ Leacock deploys. Leacock always insisted, at least in the three days I was with him, that if you don’t have a crisis, you don’t have much for anybody to look at. In my own film practice I started playing with

crisis structures as background events, then bringing them to the foreground. I structured the films around these events, but became more interested in how the crisis wasn't necessarily something the people in the film needed to respond to. Leacock's characters are all motivated by the crisis around them. The drama comes out of how each of them responds to that crisis. I wanted to see what would happen if my characters ignored the crisis or were simply unaware of it. I used this in the 'Make Poverty History' demonstration where Lena and the kids are eating ice cream, ignoring the 'crisis'. I found this strategy helped in creating room for me as a filmmaker to layer the pro-filmic events with something thicker, more muscular. We set up situations, very deliberately and carefully. In the film the kids eat ice cream ostensibly oblivious to the political march that is taking place before their eyes.

VALERIA: Do you mean that by extension this is what we are like when we see American and British foreign policy raping and pillaging certain parts of the world? Oblivious, happy to eat our ice creams and ignore it. Is this what you mean?

MAREK: Or the kids unknowingly conduct a form of political protest in spoiling the ballot paper.

VALERIA: I can see how your thinking has developed. I remember one of the first experiments was with Lena and Gabriel and Neal by a very rough sea in Scotland.¹⁵⁹ In the end the baby, Gabriel, got drenched by the sea spray. It took us all by surprise. But I can see how you were interested in exploring the idea of a crisis structure for a film. I can see how your filmmaking has developed from that to this where the crisis is the political crisis of the invasion of Iraq. A real crisis. What makes it all the more poignant is that the characters in your film seem to largely ignore it.

MAREK: Yes, I get the sense that the position you take up as an author is one critical of the Iraq War for example, but as a character in the film, as the father, you seem more interested in the foreground, in filming your family eat ice cream, watching them spoil a ballot paper, whilst in the background the war rages, or the demonstrators shout and scream...

VALERIA: ...or democracy is out of joint.

PALO: It's not democracy, Valeria, it's time. Time is out of joint...

¹⁵⁹ *Home Movies: Early Spring 2004* was shot on location on the east coast of Scotland near to where my mother lives and in the old town of Dubrovnik, where Lena's mother lives. We were interested in exploring crisis situations, through familial contexts. This can be found on DVD 2.

VALERIA: Oh, OK!

MAREK: PALO is playing Hamlet at the SND at the moment, Gary.

GARY: I know, I went to see him last week. We talked about it. I thought it was excellent!

VALERIA: Anyway, go on. Democracy is out of joint I said.

GARY: I don't think it is so clear-cut. I feel I am both of those things you describe, both the apathetic character in the film and the activist filmmaker; they are two positions. The key concept in the film practice is that I am WITHIN it. My practice is the film AND it's screening with me present having a chat with you.

PALO: Everything comes from the 'crisis' you are in. It seems a bit much but I can see how it works.

MAREK: I think it is very simple in action. Here we are doing it. I think the idea in the end is to protest.

VALERIA: I was just thinking that protest is something we normally do on the streets, demonstrations, public events. But here protest is something much more ordinary. There is a crisis in the world. The Invasion of Iraq, consumer capitalism, third world debt, chronic social alienation. Maybe talking about it is something like a protest. My own personal feeling is that theatre does it best, but I can see what you are driving at. Theatre is by nature the collection of people to share a live experience.¹⁶⁰ I can see that we have influenced you a little. You have made a little theatre out of the screening event.

GARY: But the idea is not that we meet just to watch the film. The film comes along with everything else. We have a drink, a chat about how we've been the past months. The film comes as something to do, a little activity. Then we see where it takes us.

PALO: Another beer please. That is where you have taken me!

MAREK: What other influences are there in the films. You wrote to me about some British filmmakers you were excited about. John Smith and something about the London Filmmakers Co-Op.

¹⁶⁰ Vajdicka (1996: 22). Theatre director at the Slovak National Theatre and tutor for student directors and dramaturgs at VSMU.

VALERIA: Really? You wrote to me about Godard and Chris Marker and essay filmmaking.

PALO: You tell everybody a different story! You wrote to me about Brecht!!!

GARY: Well – to each their own.¹⁶¹ Everyone responds differently. To some people I want to contextualise my film practice with great politically-minded artists: Brecht and Godard. When the situation is right for historical documentary practices I cite Leacock or Rouch, depending on which side of the Direct Cinema - *cinema verité* debate is in ascendancy.¹⁶² To other people I want to talk about the relationship between writing and making when doing a practice-led Ph.D. To other people I want to talk about protest and resistance in the wider frame of cultural activism. To other people I want to talk about family and parenting. To others I want to talk about the Iraq War, democracy, Anglo-American foreign

¹⁶¹ Here I am interested in bringing together the Staub/Godard Avant-Garde and the Co-Op Avant-Garde. See Wollen (1982: 92-104). For me the relevance of an historical contextualisation partly depends on who I am in conversation with. This links with the idea set out in Screening 1 which maintains that a ‘context’ becomes a synonym for a ‘reading’ and that meanings cannot travel across contexts unmediated.

¹⁶² In academic circles *cinema verité* after Rouch seems to be in ascendancy. A high profile 10 day event at the French Institute in London ‘Building Bridges: The Cinema of Jean Rouch’ 5th-14th Oct 2004 attests to this. Also see Catherine Russell (1999: 220-1) and Paul Arthur’s inveighing against Direct Cinema’s insupportable claims in Renov (1993: 108-135). However a recent surge in popularity of Direct Cinema ‘classics’ as evinced by BBC 4’s season of the Maysles brothers back catalogue and a specially commissioned documentary about Al Maysles *Al Maysles: The Poetic Eye* broadcast on 6th June 2006 suggest a broad, popular interest in direct cinema.

policy. To others I want to talk about the power of representation. To others the privileged life I lead being a white, male, western European, educated artist-scholar. And sometimes I don't feel like talking at all. Sometimes all I want to do is be quiet and listen.

PALO: Gary! Are you saying that all of those themes are in your Home Movie. You can't be serious.

GARY: This Home Movie provides an opportunity to talk about those things. This is what my favourite filmmakers do. With Godard I studied some of his films closely. I watched *Passion* and *Scenario of a Passion* in particular.¹⁶³ Although you might not see a visual influence I would argue that having listened to this filmmaker, and I mean listened in the sense of trying my hardest to understand what he seems to want to do through his practice, I would say in this sense I am deeply influenced by Godard. Godard was asked why he made *Le Petit Soldat*¹⁶⁴ – the one about the Algerian War. Godard replied that he made the film because he didn't know what to think about the Algerian War.

¹⁶³ *Passion* (1982) and *Scenario of a Passion* (1982) seemed to me particularly relevant for a Practice-led Ph.D. in filmmaking. Together they comply with one of the dominant requirements of doctoral arts practice which is to engage in critical self-reflexivity. Godard does this through a film practice.

¹⁶⁴ See Tom Milne interview for a special edition of *Visions* entitled *Godard: History. Cinema*, produced by Keith Griffiths, 1984 for Channel Four.

MAREK: So making a film was a way of finding out. You make a film about your family at the demonstration in order to find out what to think about your family at the demonstration.

GARY: Yes! Just like when I was finding out about the disused train line in that film exercise from VSMU. Godard, in *Scenario of Passion* is always duly inclusive of his/the investigator's own position and this relates back to the Dziga-Vertov group with Gorin where Godard responds to the, then current, political crisis through a film practice.¹⁶⁵ The key to it all is the focus on the positionality of the investigator coupled with a cognizance of the means through which the films meanings and readings are produced. In the end I tried to find a route through film history via the filmmakers who were avowedly 'positionalist'. In other words those that looked to their immediate surroundings for ways to comment on wider environments.

MAREK: Godard, Rouch, Marker are all positionalsists?

¹⁶⁵ Godard writes:

For a while I was like the students – emotional [...] But now I realize you have to know who you are, where you're starting from. Each place has its specific struggle. I can't describe anything except what I know [...] Movies are only a screw in the mechanism of the revolution, a secondary part [...] but for us, filmmaking is our main activity (for others it may be time to take a gun). (Sterritt 1998: 57)

Also see Godard's *Sympathy For The Devil* (1968) (curiously 'free' with the Sunday Times, 6th August 2006) for a staunchly politicized take on 'radical' groups from the Rolling Stones to Black Liberation and how a film practice is fore-grounded as a potential tool of the revolution.

VALERIA: All men, of course! No women at all! It's a sexist world, there's no doubt about it! There's a long way to go before we look to Agnès Varda or Jane Campion, or Kathryn Bigelow or Margeret Tait or Sally Potter or Anne Crilly or Jayne Parker or Lourdes Portillo or Susana Munoz or Jill Godmilow or even the distinct contributions of Judith MacDougal or Francis Flaherty. Instead we look to Godard, Marker and Rouch. I'm tired of it!

MAREK: Gary, I think you wrote to me once that you were interested in the politicization of contextualisation. Is this what you mean by positionality?

GARY: I have used the politicization of contextualisation as a methodology for the generation of a potentially radical film practice. The contexts within which I operate are necessarily those which are already accessible to me. I understood that these contexts must have as much cultural weight, or are as culturally important as any other context of which I might strive to be a member. It is not as though exclusive enclaves of film production practices and their concomitant milieus, for example Cannes Festival or 'Hollywood' Oscars or Film Four/Orange Awards are places of higher cultural calibre than those in which I am already situated. This is the crucial insight of cultural studies that I have responded to in my film practice, that culture is everywhere all the time being produced and reproduced. I look to my own everyday in this regard as the

location of and inspiration for my film practice.¹⁶⁶ It seemed to me that I would do well to try to investigate those contexts to which I am already aligned and seek to either make visible the ways in which ideologies are at work in those contexts and/or intervene in the uncritical reproduction of them. In other words I am saying that contextualisation can be a form of politicization if it is undertaken critically and self-reflexively.

VALERIA: In the end I think it might be about being a kinochestvo in the zone with conciencia.

PALO: You wrote to me something about the zone. I didn't understand what you meant.

MAREK: Tell us what you mean.

GARY: Have all the beers gone?

¹⁶⁶ Gardiner's commentary on Lefebvre's notion of the everyday as the site where revolution is always possible is relevant here. See who formulates it thus:

It is through our mundane interactions with the material world that [we] are fully constituted and humanized through the medium of conscious human praxis. (Gardiner 2000: 25)

I found Gardiner's 'conscious human praxis' a useful term when thinking about my film practice. It reminded me of Vertov's 'Kinochestvo' and Espinosa's 'conciencia', all of them founded upon the relation between a person and their immediate contexts.

VALERIA: Yes.

GARY: The zone. I think about it before I start planning a project. The zone is the place where all the influences can come together and overlap. Filmically the influences are Home Movies - amateur filmmaking, *cinema verité*, the essayist film makers and the experimental artists film and video in the UK. That's filmically. In terms of theory there are different critical perspectives; deconstruction, feminist readings of family, protest filmmaking and a focus on the everyday, the here and now. When all of these things come together and overlap then I say I'm in the zone. In filmmaking I set up situations so that I can get to the zone. Cross-breeding large political events like demonstrations, wars, elections with the small things of everyday life, like my family, has proved productive for me. This helps me get to the zone.¹⁶⁷

VALERIA: Is there really no beer left?

¹⁶⁷ I had Tarkovsky in mind when I formulated this idea of 'the zone' (after *Stalker*, Tarkovsky 1979). I watched *Stalker* again recently and realised Tarkovsky's use of the 'zone' and mine were very different. I spent some time trying to marry the two ideas together with reference to the film schools VGIK (where Tarkovsky graduated) and VSMU (where I graduated), but I couldn't really make it work as I am in this conversation starting to complain that VSMU is reverting to commercial models away from VGIK's original Vertovian experimental model where creative invention was crucial to compensate for a lack of funding and resources. Also, and perhaps more definitively for me, Tarkovsky's zone has too many 'spiritual/religious' overtones that might not fit with my more materialist oriented zone.

MAREK: Here, I have half a bottle. You three can share it between you! There now, you can get back to the old VGIK principles of compensating for a lack of funds and resources! No more beers.

PALO: I suppose that means there's nothing left to say!

Gary, Palo and Valeria pass Marek's beer between them each taking a swig. Palo picks up the remote control and flicks through the channels. Nobody seems particularly bothered. An advert for Smedny Mnich Pivo [Thirsty Monk Beer] comes on TV. Palo turns the volume up. A very busty young waitress carries three Steiner glasses of beer over to a table. The camera pulls back to reveal three Franciscan monks in brown robes. Each of them snatch at their glasses and drink the beers greedily ignoring the voluptuous charms of the waitress. The ad ends with a faux warning 'Only for the wickedly thirsty.' Marek, Palo, Valeria and Gary 'tut' to each other and shake their heads.

Conclusion

Exempting my original creative films and the creative, imaginative treatment of reflecting upon those films, my contribution to knowledge in the field of no-budget experimental film and video making is in two parts. First the bringing together in a film practice various, established knowledges from other film practices; namely contemporary and historical experimental film and video practices, observational documentary and finally amateur film practices, specifically Home Movies. All this is concurrent with extant modes of reading that material, namely deconstruction and critical perspectives of cultural production. That is the first part of my contribution to knowledge.

My second is in how I have brought those two sets of knowledges together. This has been done through the tripartite positioning of myself as researcher, family-maker and filmmaker. My intention has been to critically engage with those positions through the contexts those positions belong to. For example, in Screening 2, I look critically at the position of a family-maker by interrogating some notions of 'the family' in a familial context. Or in Screening 4, I investigate my position as a filmmaker by interrogating my filmmaker training in a film school context with filmmaker colleagues. From within those contextual perimeters I have sought to activate a politicization of contextualisation.

Contextualisation is a generic requirement for any doctoral research. In my case it has been important to examine film practices and ways of reading those

practices in order to determine, amongst other things, a position or history for my own practice. This is both in the interests of strengthening one's own practice and making sure research aims and claims are made accessible to wider research constituencies. Whilst I condone such contextualising practices I have been careful to contextualise my film practice in a special way. My intention has been to load the exercise of contextualisation with political connotations. I thought of self-politicization, the original aim of the research project, as realisable through a committed contextualisation that looked not only to extant practices but also to the investigator's position in the contexts I wanted to investigate. The second part of my contribution to knowledge then in the field of no-budget, experimental film and video is that the practice of committed contextualisation that treats the investigator's position as valid and crucial material for interrogation is a form of self-politicization.

The reason I have done this is in part to move away from a film practice that relies too heavily on sporadic funding and vacillating public recognition. I have been interested in the generation of a potentially ongoing, organic and sustainable film practice that arises from and is nourished by the contexts it seeks to engage critically in. This is necessarily from an insider's perspective. I am, so to speak, always-already the inhabitant of the contexts I seek to politicize my position and film practice through. In this particular case I have developed some of the initial thinking in Zimmerman's social history of amateur film and video

as a potentially radical practice. Through this I contribute a practical application to knowledge in the form of a politicized Home Movie practice that is deeply cognizant of the contexts it seeks to critically engage in. This approach of critical self-reflexivity is a particularly relevant contribution to the fields of amateur and experimental film and video production in today's practice-based research culture. Through this intricate, self-reflexive process I can realise a form of self-politicization – the original aim of the project. The research outcome is a workable model for other research projects that might be concerned with a practical application of politicized thinking through an arts practice. This approach is inextricably linked to the central methodological feature of the research project which is the politicization of the practice of contextualisation.

In the end I found out that my thesis *can* work, that self-politicization can occur through the politicization of my own film practice where my film practice is not just making films but also engaging in critical reflection on those films with audiences at film screening events. Because every screening context differs, sometimes only slightly, every formulation of self-politicization is subject to reappraisal or renewal. It became clear to me that self-politicization does not happen once, but many times and each time differently. Self-politicization is not something that *takes place* and is then forever *in place*. It requires activating and re-activating in each new context. It has been crucial for me to remain vigilant to the different formulations of self-politicization that I have been generating. Each

of the four screenings is a different formulation of this precept. For each new screening, so far there have been around a hundred, there is a new emergent formulation of self-politicization. In other words if the practice of self-politicization is to be successful it should be accompanied by the politicization of contextualisation. That is another way of saying that each new context requires critical appraisal. In this sense the work goes on and is never finished but a workable methodology of engaged critical self-reflexivity has been put in place.

Annotated Bibliography

This bibliography is selectively annotated. Those entries that are not developed or expanded upon in the main body of the written text are given priority here. This is in the interests of presenting the areas of research that this project has visited. It is possible to have constructed other ‘Screenings’ that include the annotated references here in the bibliography. In this sense the annotated entries are to give the reader an idea of how a selection of different references could also fit into the model of the Home Movie screening practice that is outlined and developed here in the written and audio-visual texts. The annotations are kept short in the interests of brevity but also to indicate, rather than fully develop, how new conversations could be constructed around a particular reference or set of references.

In this sense the bibliography, as with the rest of the written text, is set down from a positionalist perspective, where the annotations provide opportunities for the reader to pick up on the views of the author towards the literature engaged with. This is often not the case with bibliographies that consist of a list of printed references. The selected annotation of the bibliography is in keeping with the spirit of the research and its insistence on declaring a particular position towards materials dealt with. In the final analysis the hope is that an annotated bibliography helps the reader understand the thinking

behind some of the choices the research has made in terms of references and discourses. Unless otherwise stated, all references to websites were last accessed on the 16th March 2006.

Adorno, T., *Minima Moralia*, Verso, London, 2005.

(‘Every visit to the cinema leaves me, against all my vigilance, stupider and worse.’ One of my briefs to myself was to try to generate a film practice that didn’t leave me, or a potential audience, stupider or worse. Although perhaps overly pessimistic Adorno’s position with regard to cultural production has been very useful as a critical tool. Minima Moralia was one of the original inspirations for my writing experiments, where I tried to find a writing form for getting across some of the points I had discovered in the filmmaking. I particularly enjoyed Adorno’s refusal to entirely finish the point he was making. Many things are left floating in the air, or with a metaphorical three dots at the end of a section. However I moved away from this strategy for writing as I became increasingly convinced that a doctoral study has more chance of being taken seriously if it hammers its points home, unambiguously and explicitly.)

Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 2001.

Alea, T. G. *The Viewer’s Dialectic* 1984, found as:

‘The Viewer’s Dialectic, Part One’, *Jump Cut*, no.29, 1985.

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<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/index.html>.

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(The book was a popular text in VSMU, Slovakia which is where I first encountered it. It sets out the basic steps for the construction of scenes and the possible positions of the camera from an editor’s perspective. However there is no discussion of the related ideological assumptions in the ‘correct’ positioning of camera, actor, lighting etc. I always saw this text as a ‘how not to...’ rather than ‘how to...’ This links with my reading of the Cuban filmmaker/theorist Espinosa and his thoughts on an ‘imperfect cinema’ which sought to define the ideological assumptions in a particular film making practice as closely as possible to its aesthetics.)

Aufderheide, P., *Cross-cultural Filmmaking: A Handbook for Making Documentary and Ethnographic Films and Videos*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997.

Barnouw, E., *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, London, OUP, 1983.

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(Seminal study of some of the ways in which family and the familial are obstacles to radical action. I used this as one of the jumping off points when thinking about how I, engaged in Home Movies, might be uncritically aligned to the reproduction of repressive familial ideologies.)

Beck, U., *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage, London, 1992.

Benjamin, A., & Osborne, P., (eds.) *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994.

Benjamin, W., *Selected Writings Volume 2 1927-1934* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England 1999.

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Biggs, I., 'An Open Letter to the AHRC', 2004

<<http://www.amd.uwe.ac.uk/index.asp?pageid=771>>.

Boundas, C. V., & Olkowski, D (eds.) *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy*, Routledge, London, 1994.

Bruzzi, S., *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, London, 2000.

(Here I found some corroboration to the idea that films can be viewed and interpreted despite what the filmmaker themselves say about their own work. Richard Leacock is a good example of a filmmaker who made highly engaging films but made much less engaging comments about those films. From this difficulty I decided it was important for me to appropriately mediate what I say about my own films, that I had to be careful about what and where I said it, This is obviously preferable to remaining silent about them – something the doctoral culture would find difficult to tolerate in any case.)

Brunette, P., & Wills, D., (eds.) *Deconstruction in the Visual Arts*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1993.

Braidotti, R., *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994.

Buck-Morss, S., *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1989.

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Burke S., *The Death and Return of the Author: criticism and subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

Burton, J., 'Revolutionary Cuban Cinema Part 1' *Jump Cut*, no. 19, December, 1978, 17-20.

Butler, J., *Gender Trouble*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999

Butler, J., *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Verso London and New York, 2004.

(I am sympathetic to Butler's idea that being confounded by the other is a way of recognising that the other is already a part of you – at least of your wonder. This linked well with developing a tactic inside the film practice that would allow me to listen to other people's views and ideas about the filmmaking and other related areas specifically political issues, especially views I didn't agree with or were 'confounded' by. Along these

lines, complemented with a post-Kantian practice of making statements about artworks that were engaged (meaning interested, involved - but non-judgemental - after Malcolm Miles) I developed the idea of including the screening conversations at the heart of my film practice. This was designed to provide a space where I would have a chance to listen to other people's views.)

Caputo, J (ed.) *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: Conversations with Jacques Derrida*, Forham Univeristy Press, 1996.

Chanan, M., *Cuban Cinema*, BFI, London, 1976.

(I had a problem with the idea of a British academic going to Cuba to find out about Cuban cinema practices to report back to fellow academics and practitioners in Britain and elsewhere. Instead I went to Cuba as a tourist and made Home Movies about the possible relationship between a relatively affluent family on holiday and the Cuban Revolution. I saw this as an exercise in positionality where my possible insights were always already tied to the position from which those insights could be gleaned.)

Cheal, D., *Family and the State of Theory*, Harvester/Wheatsheaf, London, 1991.

Colebrook, C., *Gilles Deleuze*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002.

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<<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/02/23/haunted.html#b12>>.

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Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F., *A Thousand Plateaus*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987.

Deleuze, G., & Parnet, C., *Dialogues II*. Athlone, London and New York, 2002.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F., *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, The University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 1986.

(This was the first book I really read for my research degree. After many experiments I come to realise that I could not apply Deleuze's model of a minor literature to my own practice of cinema. But there were lots of concomitant ideas that still inflected my film practice: For example the notion of 'connections' between apparently disparate entities. I also found that when I presented films and contextualised them along Deleuzian lines I would spend a lot of time explaining exactly what Deleuze meant before I had a chance to say how my films operated. As the research deepened I realised I could dispense with Deleuze's ideas of a minor literature in order for my film practice to function. So I let it go. Second to that I realised that Deleuze's notion of a minor literature was predicated on the particular historically specific position of the author, in this particular case, a Prague born Jew writing in German, where I am a British born Brit living and writing in Britain! I decided to look for more immediate ways in which my identity might be a useful way of looking critically at my own film practice. In the end I turned to Feminism and Deconstruction. However my interest in Deleuze still stands as evinced by my membership of the Deleuze Studies Community, The English Research Institute at Manchester Metropolitan University. See: <<http://www.eri.mmu.ac.uk/deleuze/GaryAndersonBiog.php>> for more details and my recent peer reviewed publication.)

Deleuze, G., *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Verso, London and New York, 1998.

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Else, E., & Kelly, A., *In Short: A Guide to Short Film-making in the Digital Age*, BFI, London, 2002.

Elshtain, J. B., 'Public Man, Private Woman' in *Women in Social and Political Thought*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1981.

Engels, F., 'The Origin of the Family; Private Property and the State 1884', in *Marx-Engels: Selected Works*. Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1970.

Etzioni, A., *The Parenting Deficit*, Demos, London, 1995.

Faludi, S., *Backlash: The Undeclared War against Women*, Vintage, London, 1992.

Felshin, N., (ed.) *But is it Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1995.

Findlen, B., *Film Fatales: Independent Woman Directors*, Seal Press, Washington 1997.

Fischer, M. J., 'Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory.' In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus, University of California Press, Berkeley 1986.

Flusser, V., *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Reaktion Books, London 2000.

(Interesting for my film practice because he identifies ways in which, not just the aesthetic choices made in a film but also the mechanisms themselves, eg the camera, are always-already productive of ideologically inflected material. This linked well with the Espinosian notion of an 'imperfect cinema', a cinema that is aware of its ideological function by critically reflecting on its aesthetic choices. A combination of these considerations, and understanding how they are intricately related, encouraged me to try to find a way in which my film practice could reflect critically on both the camera and the way I chose to use the camera. This was one of the strands that led me to the idea of Home Movies as a possible film methodology. Home Movies seemed to be a good example of a filmmaking that had an ideological bias (eg. 'pro-family') built into it. It was from this position that I looked to critique Home Movies and some of its ancillary predispositions. The lesson I

learnt from this is that no film practice is ideologically free. Furthermore that a bias is detectable in the aesthetic choices the film evinces AND the production processes including the camera equipment, lighting, acting styles etc that are deployed in production.)

Foster, H., (ed.) *Postmodern Culture*, Pluto Press, London, 1985.

Frayling, C., (ed.) *Practice-based Doctorates in the Creative and Performing Arts and Design*, UK Council for Graduate Education, 1997.

Freiden, B., *Beyond Gender: The New Politics of Work and Family*, Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, Washington D.C., 1997.

Freire, P., *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972,

Fukuyama, F., *The End of Order*, The Social Market Foundation, London, 1997.

Furedi, F. *Paranoid Parenting*, Penguin, London 2001.

Gabriel, T. H., *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation*, UMI Research, 1982.

Gabriel, T. H., *Otherness and the Media: The Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged*, Routledge, London, 1993.

Gabriel, T. H., & Ukadike, F., *Questioning African Cinema: Conversations with Filmmakers*, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis and London, 2002.

Gaines, J. M., & Renov, M., (eds.) *Collecting Visible Evidence, Visible Evidence vol 6*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1999.

Gardiner, M., *Critiques of Everyday Life*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000.

Garmonsway, E., *Penguin English Dictionary*, Penguin, London, 1979.

Gidal, P., *Materialist Film*, Routledge, London, 1989.

Gidal, P., 'Film as Materialist Consumer Product', *Cinemantics*, no 2, 1970.

Gidal, P., 'An Interview with Hollis Frampton' in *Experimental Cinema the Film Reader*, Dixon, W. W., & Foster G. A., (eds.) Routledge, London and New York, 2002.

(I liked this short piece especially because it is a conversation, not just an interview. Gidal does not just ask questions, he offers his own reading of the film in question - Hollis Frampton's Zorns Lemma (1970) - and the discussion takes off precisely because Gidal has his own thoughts on the film that might or might not correspond to Frampton's. I particularly enjoyed Gidal and Frampton's joint warning about the problem of 'talking film in art-critical terms'. Gidal goes on to say that "one may be rationalising all one wants and a film doesn't work. That aspect one can't deal with easily". This conversation is also highly accessible where other parts of Gidal's writing is less so. Accessibility to research findings and methodologies is something I have kept in mind throughout my research degree.)

Gilder, G., *Sexual Suicide*, Quadrangle, New York Times Book Company, New York, 1973.

Gilder, G., *Men and Marriage*, Pelican Publishing Company, New York, 1992.

Gittins, D., *The Family In Question*, Macmillan, London, 1985.

Godard, J. L., *Godard on Godard : critical writings / by Jean-Luc Godard*, Narboni, J., (ed.), Faber and Faber, London, 1995.

Gregory, S., Caldwell, G., Avni, R., & Harding, T., (eds.) *Video for Change: A Guide to Advocacy and Activism*, Pluto Press, London, 2005.

Grimshaw, A., *The Ethnographer's Eye: Ways of Seeing in Anthropology*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Grotowski, J., *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Barba, E., (ed.), Methuen and Co, London, 1978.

(A text I came across in Slovakia and revisited at the start of my research degree. I was interested in how Grotowski, through an arts practice, that involved a good deal of experimentation (as well as highly disciplined exercise), was able to reach solutions to certain problems. I was also attracted to his ideas of a theatre that did not depend on audiences, at least in the early stages. I developed my film practice with a similar aesthetic in mind, and like Grotowski invited audiences in at critical moments. My own practice however developed to integrate the audience as a crucial element of the film practice through conversations and then folding the audience responses back into the film making itself. In the end I ended up quite far away from Grotowski's working method.)

Guevara, E., *Guerrilla Warfare*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1985.

(My original proposal for a research degree was to think about how some of the ideas laid out in Guevara's Guerrilla Warfare could be applied to a film practice. The central tenet, in my view of the guerrilla was their adaptability to new or different situations. This remained an element of my film practice throughout. However, my ideas developed away from a 'hit and run' tactic, as advocated in Guevara's text towards a 'hit and wait to see what happens' tactic followed up with some critical reflection.)

Habermas, J. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, MIT Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989.

Hamlyn, N., *Film Art Phenomena*, BFI, London, 2003.

*(I enjoyed Hamlyn's polemical insistence that a film/video maker, in the 'gallery' tradition or out of the Film Co-op, be made to think through their work reflexively. His distinction is "between those who use the media unreflexively and those whose work necessarily includes an investigation of their manner of operation." This is clearly designed to discredit 'films' which do not work reflexively. My own view is that reflexive work is very important for my film practice, but I would hesitate to condemn work that did not operate along those lines. I found it was very important to listen to other filmmaking methodologies/practices and to try to think through what they were seeking to achieve. Tarkovsky is a good example of a film maker who is not particularly self-reflexive – with the possible exemptions of *Mirror* (1972) and *Tempo di Viaggio* (1983) - but who nevertheless offers a very well thought through film practice.)*

Harding, T., *The Video Activist Handbook*, Pluto Press, London, 1997.

Hardt, M., & Negri, A., *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts and London, England, 2000.

Harris, G., *Staging Feminities: Performance and Performativity*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1999.

Harris, M., (ed.) *Review of Postgraduate Education*, Higher Education Funding Council for England, 1996.

Harvey, S., *May '68 And Film Culture* BFI, London, 1980.

Heckitt, R., & Phelan P., (eds.) *Art and Feminism*, Phaidon, London and New York, 2003.

Highmore, B., (ed.) *The Everyday Life Reader*, Routledge, London, 2001.

Highmore, B., *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction*, Routledge, London, 2002.

Holloway J., 'Gleneagles: Breaking Time' in Harvie, D., Milburn K., Trott B., Watts, D., (eds), *Shut Them Down, Dissent!* and Autonomedia, Leeds and New York, 2005.

Irigaray, L., *Sexes and Genealogies*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993.

Jameson, F., *Postmodernism Or, The Cultural Logic Of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, London and New York, 1991.

Jennings, H., *Pandaemonium, 1660-1886 : The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1985.

(Although Jennings was clearly multitalented and worked across disciplines, I found this a very useful example of how a filmmaker might think in a literary form. Especially useful was looking at and thinking through his montaged texts of other people's 'voices' where another perspective, which I take to be his own, becomes available. It emerges out of the way the texts are ordered and the interplay between the contents of each of those texts. I developed the written text with some of what I had discovered through Jennings, in mind, namely the idea that an author can be 'behind' other voices, emerging when it becomes appropriate. Of course this has a long literary tradition in the English language including Chaucer's 'naïve' narrator in The Canterbury Tales (began in 1387) esp. The General Prologue as well as Mark Twain's naïve Huck, first person narrator, in the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884) – each arguably foundations for their nations' literary canons. I

rather stayed with filmmaker's who 'write' in different forms like Jennings, Gidal or Godard in interviews, conversations or scripts or Bunuel's mischievous, at times unreliable, first person narrator in his autobiographical My Last Sigh (Bunuel, 1983)).

Jordan, J., 'In the Footnotes of Library Angels: A Bi(bli)ography of Insurrectionary Imagination' from Live Art Development Agency Study Guides, London, 2004.

www.thisisliveart.co.uk/pdf_docs/SRG_Jordan.pdf.

Kearney, R., & Rasmussen, D., (eds.) *Continental Aesthetics - Romanticism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* Blackwell, Oxford, 2001.

Kelner, D., Homer, S., *Frederic Jameson A Critical Reader*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004.

Kester, G., *Art, Activism and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage*, Duke University Press, 1998.

Kobler, H., *Final Cut Express for Dummies*, Wiley Publishing, New York, 2003.

Koller, M. R., *Families, a Multigenerational Approach*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York and London, 1974.

Kuhn, A., *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*, Verso, London, 1995.

(Interesting position in her writing as she sees ideologies revealed not so much in the Home Movie recording but in its subsequent organisation and compilation of material. A position I respected, but ultimately came to query. In my own film practice the selection of material for recording, for example the Make Poverty History demonstration in Home Movies: Summer 2005, became as ideologically pertinent as what I did with that material once I had it. For my film practice it became increasingly important to dedicate lots of thought to the situation I was filming before I went and filmed it. Although Kuhn is talking largely about found footage from her own family's Home Movie archive, for my own film practice I found disagreeing with her general point very productive in terms of how it encouraged me to think through the pro-filmic event before I started filming.)

Laclau, E., *Emancipation(s)*, London, Verso, 1996.

Laqueur, W., (ed.) *The Guerrilla Reader*, Wildwood House, London, 1978.

Landry, D., & Maclean, G., (eds.) *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. Routledge, New York and London, 1996.

Lasch, C., *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Beseiged*, Basic Books, New York, 1974.

Lefebvre, H., *The Production of Space*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004.

(The place where I found the sentence that I most often repeat to remind myself of the location of my film practice. Lefebvre says 'Everything here is calculated because everything is numbered: money, minutes, metre... Yet people are born, live and die. They live well or ill; but they live in everyday life where they make or fail to make a living... It is in everyday life that they rejoice and suffer; here and now.' (Lefebvre 2004: 21). This sentence alone could be the basis for my film practice. It cries out for interventions in the 'conceived spaces' – the spaces we are supposed to live in – with 'lived spaces', those spaces that are always undergoing change as we keep refusing to follow the rules. I find this idea both inspirational AND highly accessible.)

Lefebvre, H., 'Some Questions About Asking Questions', 255-7 in *Key Writings*, Continuum, London, 2003.

Le Grice, M., *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, BFI Publishing, London, 2001.

Le Grice, M., *Abstract Film and Beyond*, Studio Vista, 1977.

Lenin, V. I., *Essential Writings of Lenin: "What Is To Be Done?" and Other*

Writings (ed) Christman, H. M., Dover Publications, London, 1987.

Lindemann, N. H., *Feminism and Families*, Routledge, New York, 1997.

Lippard, C., (ed.), *By Angels Driven The Films of Derek Jarman*, Flicks Books, Trowbridge, 1996.

(Chris Lippard conducted a telephone interview with Jarman. I particularly enjoyed Jarman's response to the question of whether or not there is a tension in his films between being British and the things Jarman is trying to achieve in his films. He answers: 'Not particularly. I suppose that all filmmakers would react to their immediate surroundings, wherever they were. I think that's the natural reaction. I never wanted to move from here: looking at it practically, I've always been quite happy in London. I've never thought I wanted to travel to LA or anywhere else really, because everything that I needed was here. I could do whatever I wanted to do, partly because the scale of the operation is quite small.' (Lippard 1996: 161). This idea ties in very nicely with my own film practice where, in the words of another experimental filmmaker John Smith 'If you look hard enough all meanings can be found or produced close to home.' I have worked hard to make a consideration of my own positionality a necessary feature of my film practice. I haven't wished to pursue a deeper investigation into Jarman's work as I have been more concerned with politicized film practices, those which look critically at their own production methods and reflect critically upon them. Although Jarman's oeuvre is arguably a critical practice I would hesitate to call it a politicized practice.)

Lomax, Y., *Writing The Image*, I.B. Taurus, London and New York, 2000.

Lorde, A., *Sister Outsider*, Berkeley, CA 1984.

Olkowski, D., *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruins of Representation*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1998.

Macdonald, K., & Cousins, M., *Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of Documentary*, Faber and Faber, London, 1996.

MacDonald, S., *A Critical Cinema 2: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

Macek, V., & Pastéková, J., *Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie [The History of Slovak Cinema]*, Slovak Film Institute, Bratislava, 1997.

Macleod, K., & Holdridge, L., (eds.) *Thinking Through Art: Reflections on Art as Research*, Routledge, London, 2006.

(It is worth putting my response to this work in the bibliography, outside the formulation of the conversations as it gives me a chance to be pithy about the key points in this text. Here, as the culmination of a decade's research into the doctorate in Fine Art, I found some exacting thought into the 'discipline' of 'practice-led' research. It became an area of interest for me because I was faced, in my own research degree, with the dual demand of

the production of 'artefact' and 'written text'. I developed a submission predicated on the inward coherence and consistency of those two elements: writing and making. Macleod's thoughts on the relations between writing and making where both are supported by the propositional thought put forward for testing (or the thesis), is the foundation upon which my submission stands.)

Macleod, K., & Holdridge, L., 'Practice and Theory Related Objects of Thought' in Miles, M., (ed.) *New Practices/New Pedagogies*, Routledge, London, 2005

Macleod, K., & Holdridge, L., 'The Enactment of Thinking: creative practice research degrees' in Special Issue Mey, K., (ed.) *The Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, Vol 3, nos 1&2, 2005.

Macleod, K., & Holdridge, L., 'The Doctorate in Fine Art: The Importance of Exemplars to the Research Culture', *The International Journal of Art & Design Education*, Vol 2&3, no 2, 2004.

Macleod, K., & Holdridge, L., 'Theory/Practice: a relationship in the making' *European Journal of Arts Education*, Vol 3, nos 2&3, 2001.

Macleod, K., & Holdridge, L., 'The Enactment of Thinking', Special

Conference Issue, *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, Vol 2, Nos 1&2, 2002.

Makela, M., 'Constructing Female Genealogy: Autobiographical Female Representations as Means for Identity Work' in *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol 9. No. 4, 2003.

Massumi, B., *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*. MIT, Cambridge and London, 1992.

McNay, L., *Foucault, A Critical Introduction*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994.

Miles, M., *The Uses of Decoration*, Wiley, Chichester, 2000.

Miles, M., *Beyond the Public Realm*, Aguaforte, Lisbon, 2001.

Miles, M., *Urban Avant-gardes: Art, Architecture and Change*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004.

Miles, M., (ed.) *New Practices/New Pedagogies*, Taylor & Francis, London and New York, 2005.

Miles, M., 'Interruptions: Testing the Rhetoric of Culturally Led Urban Development' in *Urban Studies*, Vol. 42, Nos5/6, 889-911, May 2005.

Miles, M., *Urban Utopias: The Built and Social Architecture of Alternative Settlements*, Routledge, London, 2008.

Mitchell, J., & Oakley, A., (eds.) *What is Feminism?*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986.

Mitchell, J., & Oakley, A., (eds.) *Who's Afraid of Feminism, Seeing Through the Backlash*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1997.

Murray, R., *How to Write a Thesis*, Open University Press, Maidenhead and Philadelphia, 2002.

Murray, R., *How to Survive Your Viva: Defending a Thesis in an Oral Examination*, Open University Press, 2004.

Nelson, C., & Grossberg, L., (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, University of Illinois, 1988.

O'Pray, M., *The British Avant-Garde Film: 1926-1995, an anthology of*

writing, University of Luton Press, London, 1995.

O'Pray, M., *Avant-Garde Film: Forms, Themes and Passions*, Wallflower Press, London, 2003.

O'Pray. M., 'John Smith Profile' on

<http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/essays/john_smith/detail1.html>.

(I enjoyed O'Pray's insightful comments on John Smith's work as being expressive of a political position without falling into facile political posturing. Instead Smith dissimulates his personal views through structures and forms, which are, in his case, rich and complex, but also full of humour and wit. My own film practice has sought to express a political stand without relying on overtly political posturing. My hope has always been that a politics is also detectable through the formal aspects of the film practice. For example, if I take as a profilmic event the spoiling of a ballot paper it is not necessarily because I wish to express my political antipathies for the current representational democracy that our polling system supports. Rather I am interested in juxtaposing a representation of the family with an 'anti-representational' act of spoiling a token of representative democracy. In this vein, although nowhere near as witty, I feel close to John Smith's work.)

Orr, M., *Intertextuality Debates and Contexts*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2003.

Pasolini, P. P., *The Scent of India*, Olive Press, London, 1985.

Pasolini, P. P., *Lutheran Letters*, Carcanet New Press, Manchester and New York, 1983.

Patton, P., & Protevi, J (eds.) *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, Continuum, London and New York, 2003.

Patton, P., *Deleuze and the Political*, Routledge, London, 2000.

Peplar, M., *Family Matters: A History of Ideas About Family Since 1945*, Pearson, London, 2002.

Perez-Stable, M., *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Cause and Legacy*, Oxford University Press, London, 1999.

Philips, E. & Pugh, D., *How to get a PhD a handbook for students and their supervisors*, Open University Press, Buckingham and Philadelphia, 2000.

Pines, J., & Willemsen, P., (eds.) *Questions of Third Cinema*, BFI, London, 1991.

Protevi, J., *Political Physics: Deleuze Derrida and the Body Politic*, Athlone, London, 2001.

Rajchman, J., *The Deleuze Connections*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2000.

Rees, A. L., *A History of Experimental Film and Video*, BFI, London, 2002.

Renov, M., (ed.) *Theorizing Documentary*, Routledge, New York, 1993.

Riley, D., *'Am I That Name?' Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History*, The Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, 1988.

Roberts, A., *Frederic Jameson*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000.

Rogers, J., 'Jean-Marie Straub and Daniele Huillet Interviewed: *Moses and Aaron* as an object of Marxist reflection' *Jump Cut*, no. 12/13, 1976: 61-64.

Rogoff, I., *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture*, Routledge, London, 2002.

Rouch, J., *Cine-Ethnography*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2003.

Royle, N., *Derrida*, Routledge, London and New York, 2003.

Russell, C., *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1999.

(I was very interested in Russell's formulation of 'auto-ethnography' as it sought to position the investigating subject within its own analysis. I later became uncomfortable because I was unsure about ethnographic film practices generally and wondered if they didn't suffer from an internal contradiction: the ethnographer being always outside of that which they seek to understand and investigate whilst still producing authoritative insights into cultural practices. Russell is clear on the dangers of this position and proposes her auto-ethnographic practice. I was initially very impressed and I played with the idea of a possible auto-ethnography of my own. However I soon started realizing that the film practice I was using to investigate my immediate surroundings auto-ethnographically as it were, were not being engaged in critically. In other words I was using a certain form of documentary practice that I had borrowed from ethnographic films I had seen in the past, most notably elements from Jean Rouch's oeuvre. Although I admired Rouch enormously I started feeling awkward about using a style that had come to me almost already fully developed with its own particular historically specific determinants. As my original research question was related to how I might generate a radical film practice of my own I looked to the video equipment I was using and tried to think of ways in which that particular camera might best be critically investigated along with its corollary predispositions. In this sense my Home Movies film practice came out of my struggle with the aborted practice of auto-ethnography. I also became uncomfortable with the idea of

auto ethnography with its emphasis on 'ethno', which might limit my research to 'White British'. Anyway, for my film practice I preferred to situate myself as a producer of cultural artefacts who is keen to intervene critically into some of the repressive ideologies that might try to slip in unnoticed when I was in the act of producing the cultural artefacts themselves, in my case Home Movies.)

Sennett, R., *The Fall of Public Man*, Faber and Faber, London, 1993.

Silverman, K., & Farocki, H., *Speaking About Godard*, New York University Press, New York and London, 1998.

*(A missed opportunity. I admit being very excited by the prospect of a conversation between an internationally renowned filmmaker and a leading theorist on the topic of radical filmmaking. I was disappointed. Again I thought of this as a "How not to..." rather than a "How to..." What was particularly disappointing for me in this series of conversations is the lack of interplay between the two views. The chapters are structured so that the film is introduced in a few paragraphs by each of the speakers, it then proceeds to lay out each of the different readings. One from Silverman, one from Farocki. It could be argued that this book is only a combination of two readings of Godard's films because they share its pages, not because the different views are explored in dialogue, as with Gidal's interview with Frampton, or Angela McRobbie's interview with Spivak's or even Derrida's roundtable discussion *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*. In other words the 'findings' of this book are not appropriately mediated to the form the book takes, or is supposed to take that is, 'a conversation'. My own conversations, although imaginative, are dialogues*

between the people speaking, not monologues cut up and pasted together as seems to be the case with this book. The intention of the dialogue in my film practice is to ensure that the points raised are interrogated and defended.)

Scruton, R., *A Very Short Introduction to Kant*, OUP, 2001.

Sitney, P. A., *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism, Visionary Film (3rd Edition)* Oxford University Press, London, 2002.

Sitney, P. A., *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-1978 (2nd Edition)*, Oxford University Press, London, 1979.

Shields, R., *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*, Routledge, London, 1999.

Smart, C., *Ties That Bind*, Routledge and Keegan, P., London, 1984.

Smith, R., *Derrida and Autobiography*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1995.

Somerville, J., *Feminism and the Family: Politics and Society in the UK and USA*, Macmillan Press, London 2000.

Spivak, G. C., *The post-colonial critic: interviews, strategies, dialogues* (ed. Sarah Harasym) Routledge, New York and London, 1990.

Spivak, G. C., *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, New York and London, 1993.

Spivak, G. C., *The Spivak Reader*, Landry, D., & MacLean, G. (eds.), Routledge, New York and London, 1996.

Spivak, G. C., 'Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow-Sacrifice', *Wedge*, Winter-Spring 1985: 120-130.

Spivak, G. C., 'Interview', *Art Network*, Winter 1985, 20-27.

Spivak, G. C., 'Strategies of Vigilance: An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak', *Block 10*, 1985, 5-9.

Spivak, G. C., 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, 1987, 197-221.

Spivak, G. C., 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism',

Critical Inquiry, Autumn 1985, 12(1), 243-261.

Stam, R., *Film Theory an Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts and Oxford, 2000.

Stam, R., & Miller, T., (eds.) *Film and Theory an Anthology*, Blackwell Publishing, Massachusetts and Oxford, 2000.

Sterritt, D., *The Films of Jean Luc Godard Seeing the Invisible*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1999.

Sterritt, D., *Jean Luc Godard Interviews*, University Press of Minnesota, Jackson, 1998.

Tarkovsky, A., *Sculpting In Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, The Bodley Head, London, 1986.

(An interesting but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to put his own thoughts about film down in book form. Again this is the filmmaker changing hats, and although he is a very fluent writer I always feel that the cross-over between the filmic and the written is laboured and ultimately imprecise. I used this example as another way of 'how not to...' rather than 'how to...' I feel there needs to be an appropriate mediation of meanings and points in order for the filmic to translate successfully into the written. My own view is that

Tarkovsky often comes across as imprecise, often using platitudes, which is something I never feel about his film practice. His diaries Time Within Time, (Tarkovsky, 1992) are, for me, much more interesting and engaging, partly because they do not seek to formulate in writing what he already does so successfully in his filmmaking. Instead they treat some of the detritus of the everyday; shopping lists, things to do, salary problems along side some of his 'deeper' considerations on the Russian Novel or Chinese Philosophy. I find the juxtaposition more informing than the sometimes 'preachy' tone in Sculpting in Time.)

Thoburn, N., *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, Routledge, London and New York, 2003.

Thompson, E. P., *The Making of the English Working Class*, Penguin, London, 1963.

Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *When The Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics*, Routledge, London, 1991.

Tsivian, Y., (ed.) *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties*, Giornate del Cinema Muto, Sacile, 2004.

Tyler, P., *Underground Film: A Critical History*, De Capo Press, New York 1972.

Virno, P., *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Semiotexte, London, 2004.

(Not unlike my problems with Deleuze. I was initially very attracted to Virno's thought, along with Negri and Lazzarato and was told about a great website www.generationonline.org that contains a large number of interesting articles both about those thinkers and by them. Although the website comes highly recommended I found it became very difficult to match my film practice with this theory. Not least of all, and again like Deleuze, because of the plethora of new terms they employ. 'Virtuosity', 'disobedience' and 'exodus' are just three of the many, each of which have their very specific function in the overall thought of Virno. Although I remain very sympathetic to these contemporary Italian Marxists I found it became more of a problem to introduce them into my Home Movie practice than to leave them unmentioned. My brief to myself in this instance was to try to allow for the logic of the film practice, its internal coherence, to take precedence in screening situations. As was the case with Deleuze, that internal coherence might correspond to Virno's thought, but it does not derive from it.)

Walsh, M., *The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema*, BFI, London, 1981.

Wayne, M., *Theorising Video Practice*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1997.

Wayne, M., 'Family Video, Oral History and Reflexivity: My Uncle Wolf'
Journal Of Media Practice, Vol 1 Issue 1, 2000.

Wayne, M., *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, Pluto Press, London, 2001.

(The book that opens with the sentence 'All films are political, but films are not all political in the same way'. I repeat this sentence to remind myself that filmmaking is a necessarily political act, especially when that involves exchanging views with other people; a key feature of my own film practice. The fact that there are all sorts of different ways in which a film is political was inspirational for me to find out exactly in which ways my own film practice was political. And, crucially, in what ways I could make that visible. My aim with the film practice was as a pathway into political activity. With Wayne, I came to realise that it was always already a political activity, the trick became to make explicit just what that activity involved and to critically reflect upon those processes. This is also the book that claims 'Third Cinema, as Gabriel [Tesholme] insisted, is not a cinema defined by geography; it is a cinema primarily defined by its socialist politics.' However I shied away from this definition of third cinema for largely the same reasons as I shied away from Deleuze's 'minor' literature. I felt identity was always crucial to the kind of cinema you are liable to produce. Even though that identity might be fluid and unstable. I am suspicious of 'third cinema' that comes from comfortable, middle class or affluent environments, socialist in intention or not. My own personal belief is that you are always unavoidably implicated in the systems you live in, just by living in them. In other words late Capitalism is at work not only when I make socialist inflected films, but also when I sit down at lunch time to eat my sandwich and Starbucks Frappuccino. Part of the brief to myself has been to recognise my films as political, but not necessarily the 'righteous' kind of political. I have tried to let the film practice suggest ways in which I am implicated in the systems I, in my own very small way, am fighting against.)

Wayne, M., *Understanding Film: Marxist Perspectives*, Pluto Press, London, 2005.

Willeman, P., *Looks and Frictions, Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory*, Indiana University Press, Indiana and BFI, London, 1994.

Winston, B., *Lies, Damn Lies and Documentaries*, BFI, London, 2000.

Zaretsky, E., *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life*, Pluto Press, London, 1976.

Zimmermann, P., *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film and Video*, Indiana University Press, Indiana, 1995.

Selected Filmography

This is a selected filmography to give the reader/examiner a sense of the kinds of films I've been engaged with over the past three years. Most of the films listed below belong to the contested categories of 'art-house cinema' and 'experimental film and video in the UK'. The list also includes some observational documentaries. The hope is that an interdisciplinary rather than a confused picture emerges and helps suggest where the influences upon my own film practice are sourced.

2 x 50 Years of French Cinema, Jean-Luc Godard, 1995.

A Bout de Souffle, Jean-Luc Godard, 1959.

Accattone, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1961.

A Diary for Timothy, Humphrey Jennings. 1945.

Aerial, Margaret Tait, 1974.

A Happy Mother's Day, Richard Leacock, 1963.

Almost Out, Jayne Parker, 1984.

Alphaville, Jean-Luc Godard, 1965.

Ancient of Days, Bill Viola, 1979-81.

Associations, John Smith, 1975.

Assumption, Peter Gidal, 1997.

A Stravinsky Portrait, Richard Leacock, 1965.

Autumn, Catherine Elwes, 1990.

Battle of Algiers, Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966.

Bedroom, Peter Gidal, 1971.

Belle de jour, Luis Bunuel, 1967.

Berlin Horse, Malcolm Le Grice, 1971.

Blight, John Smith, 1994.

Blue Black Permanent, Margaret Tait, 1992.

Bowling For Columbine, Michael Moore, 2001.

Brussels Loops, Richard Leacock, 1957.

Canary Island Bananas, Richard Leacock, 1935.

Condition of Illusion, Peter Gidal, 1975.

Chronique d'un été, Rouch-Morin, 1960.

Crystal Aquarium, The, Jayne Parker, 1995.

Daughter Rite, Michelle Citron, 1978.

Decamerone, Pier Paolo, Pasolini, 1971.

Delaware Chicken of Tomorrow, Andrea-Luka Zimmerman, 2002.

Derek Jarman Early Works, ICA Programme 1,2,3 2003.

Deux ou Trois Choses que Je Sais d'Elle, Jean-Luc Godard, 1966.

Diary of a Chambermaid, Luis Bunuel, 1963.

Digital Videoworks (selection) Stefan Szczelkun, 1992-1999.

Dilapidated Dwelling, The, Patrick Keiller, 2000.

Directed By Andrei Tarkovsky, Michael Leszczylowski, 1986.

Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, The, Luis Bunuel, 1972.

Don't Look Back, Pennebaker, 1967.

Edipo re, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1967.

E.Etc, David Larcher, 1986.

El, Luis Bunuel, 1953.

Eloge de l'amour, Jean-Luc Godard, 1996.

Etre et Avoir, Nicolas Philibert, 2002.

Exploding Cinema, selection, 2003-6.

Fahrenheit 911, Michael Moore, 2004.

F for Fake, Orson Welles, 1973.

Flight, Michael Maziere, 2003.

For Ever Mozart, Jean-Luc Godard, 1996.

Gallivant, Andrew Kötting, 1996.

Gargantuan, John Smith, 1992.

Girl Chewing Gum, The, John Smith, 1976.

Granny's Is, David Larcher, 1989.

Grey Gardens, Maysles Brothers, 1975.

Guilt, Peter Gidal, 1988.

Hiroshima Mon Amour, Alain Renais, 1959.

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

Hoi Polloi, Andrew Kötting, 1990.

Horror Film 1 Performance with slide projector, two film projectors, Malcolm Le Grice, 1970.

Hugh MacDiarmid - A Portrait, Margaret Tait, 1964.

Il Fiore delle Mille e Una Notte, P. P., Pasolini, 1974.

Immemory CD-Rom, Chris Marker, 1982.

Interview With Orson Welles, Lelslie Megahey, BBC Arena, 1982.

It's All True, Orson Welles, 1942/1993.

I Was A Fireman (Fires Were Started), Humphrey Jennings 1943.

Key, Peter Gidal, 1968.

Kingdom Prostita, Andrew Kötting, 2000.

King Lear, Jean-Luc Godard, 1987.

L'Age d'Or, Luis Bunuel, 1930.

Las Hurdes, Luis Bunuel, 1932.

Lettre de Sibérie, Chris Marker, 1958.

Letter to Jane, Jean-Luc Godard, 1972.

Lifting A Dark Cloud The Kathleen Thompson Case, Anne Crilly, 2004.

Limbo, Anne Crilly, 2005.

Listen To Britain, Humphrey Jennings, 1942.

London, Patrick Keiller, 1994.

Lulu in Berlin, Richard Leacock, 1984.

Madame l'eau, Jean Rouch, 1983.

Magnificent Ambersons, The, Orson Welles, 1942.

Maitres Fous, Les, Jean Rouch 1954.

Mapping Perception, Andrew Kötting, 2002.

Man With The Movie Camera, Dziga Vertov, 1929.

Man Who Listened To Britain, The, Channel Four/Figment Films, 2004.

Masculin Féminin, Jean-Luc Godard, 1966.

Mépris, Le, Jean-Luc Godard, 1963.

Medea, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1969.

Meet Marlon Brando, Maysles Brothers, 1966.

Meshes in the Afternoon, Maya Deren, 1943.

Migration, Bill Viola, 1976.

Mirror, Andrej Tarkovsky, 1972.

Moi Un Noir, Jean Rouch, 1958.

Morning Sun Cultural Revolution in China, Richard Gordon, 2003.

Musical Adventure in Siberia, A, Richard Leacock, 2000.

Nanook Of The North, Robert Flaherty, 1922.

Night and Fog, Alain Resnais, 1955.

Night Mail, Wright & Watt, 1936.

Notre Musique, Jean-Luc Godard, 2004.

Numéro Deux, Jean-Luc Godard, 1975.

Obsessive Becomings, Daniel Reeves, 2000.

Oeufs a la coque, Richard Leacock, 1991.

On Being, Chris Meigh-Andrews, 1984.

One Minute on Housing, One Minute on the Beach, Flying for One Minute, Andrea-Luka Zimmerman, 2001.

Out of Conflict, Catherine Elwes (with Mathew Cornford), 2004.

Paris, Texas, Wim Wenders, 1984.

Passion, Jean-Luc Godard, 1982.

Petit Soldat, Le, Jean-Luc Godard, 1960.

The Phantom of Liberty, Luis Bunuel, 1974.

Philosopher Queen, Ruth Novaczek, 1994.

Portrait of Ga, A, Margaret Tait, 1955.

Portrait in Light and Heat, A, Bill Viola, 1979.

Primary, Richard Leacock, 1961.

Racconti di Canterbury, Il, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1972.

Reflecting Pool, The, Bill Viola, 1977-1979.

Rehearsal: The Killings of Cariola, Richard Leacock, 1992.

Remember Me, Michael Maziere, 1994.

Robinson in Space, Patrick Keiller, 1997.

Roger & Me, Michael Moore, 1990.

Room Film 1973, Peter Gidal, 1973.

Rootless Cosmopolitans, Ruth Novaczek, 1990.

Rose Street, Margaret Tait, 1956.

Rouch's Gang, Jean Rouch, 1998.

Salesman, Maysles Brothers and Charlotte Zwerin, 1968.

Salo o le 120 Giornate di Sodoma, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975.

Sans Soliel, Chris Marker, 1982.

Scenario of Film 'Passion', Jean-Luc Godard, 1982.

Script, Baldersarri, 1974.

Shoah: A Film, Claude Lanzmann, 1985.

Sketches for a Sensual Philosophy, Malcolm Le Grice, 1986-9.

Smart Alek, Andrew Kötting, 1993.

Song of Air, A, Merilee Bennett, 1987.

Spring, Catherine Elwes, 1987.

Stalker, Andrej Tarkovsky, 1975.

Sorrow and the Pity, Marcel Ophuls, 1972.

Stock Exchange – Women's Peace Action, Annabel Nicolson, 1983.

Sympathy for the Devil, Jean-Luc Godard, 1968.

Tarnation, Jonathan Caoulette, 2004.

Tea Leaf, Ruth Novaczek, 1988.

Tempo di Viaggio, Andrej Tarkovsky, 1983.

Teorema, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1968.

That Obscure Object of Desire, Luis Bunuel, 1977.

Ties That Bind, The, Su Friedrich, 1984.

There is a Myth, Catherine Elwes, 1984.

Three Songs of Lenin, Dziga Vertov, 1934.

This Filthy Earth, Andrew Kötting, 2001.

Tokyo Story, Ozu, 1953.

Touching The Void, Kevin Macdonald, 2004.

Tout Va Bien, Jean-Luc Godard, 1972.

Triptych, Michael Maziere, 2002.

Tristana, Luis Bunuel, 1970.

Trying to Kiss the Moon, Steve Dwoshkin, 1994/5.

TV Interruptions (7 TV Pieces), David Hall, 1971.

Chien andalou, Un, Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali, 1929.

Viridiana, Luis Bunuel, 1961.

Vivre sa Vie, Jean-Luc Godard, 1962.

Volcano, Peter Gidal, 2003.

Weekend, Jean-Luc Godard, 1967.

Winter, Catherine Elwes, 1987.

Worst Case Scenario, John Smith, 2001.

DVD 1

Running Time 13:01

DVD 2

Winter 2003 (6:13)

Early Spring 2004 (2:46)

Spring 2004 (5:31)

Winter 2004 (7:05)

Spring 2005 (7:02)

Home Movies

Running Time 28:37