

Deakin Research Online

This is the published version:

Beattie, Keith 2006, From city symphony to global city film : documentary display and the corporeal, *Screening the past : an international, refereed, electronic journal of screen history*, no. 20.

Available from Deakin Research Online:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30016120>

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner.

Copyright : 2006, The Authors



From City Symphony to Global City Film: Documentary Display and the Corporeal

[Keith Beattie](#)

Films...testify to bodies that were present before the camera.

David MacDougall

In the introduction to his history of the relationship between the body and the city in Western civilisation, Richard Sennett includes an anecdote about attending a cinema in New York. Sennett uses the story of watching film as a way of commenting on the place of the body and senses within urban settings and is concerned to document 'physical sensations in urban space' as a way of addressing what he sees as the 'tactile sterility which afflicts the urban environment.'^[1] While Sennett's work performs an important task by drawing attention to various historical conditions implicated in urban and metropolitan experience, it is possible to rework the categories he deploys - bodies, the city, and film - into a very different argument concerning representations of the city. Indeed the three categories coalesce in the so-called city film - works which include the 'city symphony' of the 1920s and subsequent documentary representations of urban spaces, among them the New York City films of the 1940s and 1950s, and films of non-Western cities produced in the decades from the 1960s to the present - within which the city is realised through a focus on people.

Common descriptions of the 'kaleidoscopic' and 'rhythmic' visual regime of the city film emphasize the city as a complex spatial arrangement of buildings, traffic, streets and boulevards.^[2] While the kinaesthetic visual modes of the city symphony, for example, alluded to in references to 'rhythm', partially revive the visual intensity and pleasurable looking characteristic of the early 'cinema of attractions', all too frequently, however, critical analyses of the extraordinary visual capacities of the city film, including the city symphony, ignore the fact that such a visual regime depicts cities which are traversed and occupied by people, 'as material presence...as child and adult'.^[3] Specifically, representations of the corporeal in the form of individual and collective inhabitants of a city function in association with 'kaleidoscopic' and kinaesthetic depictions of the 'concrete' (buildings, streetscapes) to reinforce what is here called the documentary display of the city film.

In this relation, David MacDougall's term 'social aesthetics' draws attention to the role of the body in representation in a way which productively informs understandings of the city film and its capacity as documentary to construct knowledge about the world. As the term suggest, a social aesthetics foregrounds embodiment within what MacDougall identifies as the 'sensory and formal qualities of social life'. MacDougall applies the original meaning of 'aesthetics' - relating to perceptions by the senses - and in these terms the field of aesthetics is concerned with a wide range of culturally patterned sensory experience through which knowledge is produced.^[4] Michael Taussig explicates this process when he notes that everyday experience (the 'content' of documentary) includes 'much that is not sense so much as sensuousness, an embodied and somewhat automatic "knowledge" that functions like a peripheral vision, not studied contemplation, a knowledge that is imageric and senate rather than ideational.'^[5] This paper takes up the reference to aesthetics as a form of representation which is located within and operates through a focus on the body and emphasizes, following Sennett, the role of such an embodied aesthetic within the documentary display of the city film.

Within a focus on the corporeal, this paper reassesses and reviews the visual language and formal components of the documentary display of European city films of the 1920s - the so-called city symphonies - and New York City films of the 1940s and 1950s. The reassessment of the city film is informed by analysis of approaches to filming the city's inhabitants, as in the use of concealed cameras in the city symphony and the open acknowledgement of the camera in the New York City films. The traditional focus in city films and criticism on representations of European and North America cities has functioned to divert attention from the existence of representations of non-Western cities. Hanoi, Calcutta, Benares, Beirut, and Tehran have all been represented in films which in their scrutiny of people and place deploy the camera in ways which extend the codes and styles of the city film. Such a revisionary interpretation of a form which, from its inception, has innovatively combined elements of the avant-garde with documentary representation, points to and reveals the visual capacities of the documentary display which is the productive basis of the city film.

Importantly, the study of the formal and aesthetic components of the documentary display of the city film implicates considerations of the historical and political contexts associated with the form. Michael Renov, one of the few critics to have drawn attention to the connections between the 'poeticism' of the city film and historical and political concerns, interprets the form in terms of a documentary mode of 'expression'. While the

documentary tradition contains a number of examples of so-called poetic and expressive works, Renov identifies the city symphonies of the 1920s, among them Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (*Berlin, die Symphonie der Großstadt*, 1927), Dziga Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera* (*Cheloveks Kinoapparatom*, 1929), and Jean Vigo's *A propos de Nice* (1930) as works which combine an 'artfulness' derived from the 'function of purely photographic properties' with 'the possibilities of editing to create explosive effects - cerebral as well as visceral.' Renov informs the documentary bases of 'the powers of expressivity' of such works by recognising that such a mode of representation is deployed 'in the service of historical representation.'^[6] In this way the subtitle of Ruttmann's film was applied to numerous films within which practices of visual kinaesthesia constructed a 'symphony' based on the diurnal cycle of life in the modern metropolis, while simultaneously infusing avant-gardist perspectives with a historically and politically cognizant form of social criticism.

However, despite the presence of historical commentary and political critique evident within the form, charges of excessive formalism, with its inference of apoliticism and ahistoricism, were frequently levelled at the city symphony. A work as revolutionary - in terms of its Communist ideals and ground-breaking formal innovations - as Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera* was not beyond such criticism. Eisenstein's infamous attack on what he interpreted as the 'formalist' jack-straws and unmotivated camera mischief' of Vertov's film typifies a line of accusation which has been directed at the city film generally.^[7] Within this critique the presence of formal experimentation within the city film - a poetics - is said to deny any sense of a politics defined as various expressions of power structuring the production of city films. One aspect of this paper is a revision of this dominant line of interpretation. Such a revision is undertaken within an analysis of the social aesthetics of the documentary display of the city film, which is historicised here through reference to varying political and historical contexts and filmmaking practices within and through which city films have been produced and circulated. The following delineation of these contexts and practices implicates works from the 1920s to the present thereby providing an overview of the texts analysed in the following sections and an outline of the structure of this paper.

The City Film and its Contexts

Criticisms of the city symphony as a form which displaces politics within its aesthetics have congealed around Ruttmann's *Berlin*, a prominent example of the form. Contrary to the widespread criticisms of the film, the aesthetic strategies of *Berlin* encode a specific political analysis, particularly a politics of gender and class. Indeed, it is through innovative narrative and visual techniques that gender and class are foregrounded within the film's depiction of cosmopolitan Weimar Berlin. One of the central strategies whereby class, gender and other aspects of content are realised in certain city films of the 1930s is through the use of a hidden camera, a practice typically associated with social regulation and surveillance. Surveillance - as a 'top down' monitoring of people's lives - is here recast, as in the use of a hidden camera in Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera* - as a way of displaying the demotic as a revolutionary reality. In *A propos de Nice* Vigo deployed a hidden camera and covert filming to construct a work within which the practices of intellectual montage critically document class differences within the city of Nice.

In contrast to the differing though decidedly leftist critiques in the city symphonies of Vertov and Vigo, the New York City films of the mid-twentieth century seemingly deny any sense of politics in their depictions of the inhabitants of the modern metropolis. However, the presence in certain New York City films of a subject's 'return look' to the camera brings issues of power and representation to the fore. The returned look demonstrates not only a familiarity with the camera but also an expression of the subject's refusal of its objectifying gaze. In these films the corporeal is not a disempowered presence before the camera. In such New York City films people openly (and literally) confront, return, and playfully engage with the camera's powerful stare. William Wheeler Dixon has argued that '[t]his "gaze of the screen", or "look back", has the power to transform our existences, to substantially change our view of our lives, and of the world we inhabit.'^[8] Such a hyperbolic claim does not necessarily do justice to the practice, though it does point to the fact that the 'return look' is, as Elizabeth Klaver argues, 'one of the most powerful looks operating in the media culture...[and is one which bolsters] the opportunity for agency.'^[9] In these terms the corporeal presence in certain New York City films is not the passive object of a gaze, but an active agent who openly confronts the camera. In this way the return look features as an important component of the city film which productively informs the vocabulary of the form beyond visual 'rhythm' or filmic inventories of architectural features. Within the return look in documentary - largely overlooked in accounts of the politicised gaze of 1970s and 1980s film theory - an object is exchanged for a subject in a way 'which might be termed Sartre's possibility of "being-seen-by-the-Other"'.^[10]

The irruptive presence of the Other was radically expressed throughout the 1960s in the processes of decolonisation and national liberation, and with them new ways of conceiving people within urban centres characterised by resistance and rebellion. One effect of such global political realignments and attendant filmic imagery was to shift the city film from its entrenched focus on the urban centres of Europe and North America to representations of the inhabitants of non-Western cities involved in struggles for national liberation. In this way, for example, while a central component of numerous city films - a day in the life of a city - was reinforced in the media's day in the life (September 11, 2001) of New York City in time of terror, another representation of a day in the life of citizens of a terrorised city in the throes of a war of national liberation, Hanoi in Santiago Alvarez's 1967 film *Hanoi, Martes Trece*, extended the formal capacities of the city film. Alvarez's film uses the 'day in the life' format to construct epistemological positions based on the individual within images of a city which had previously been beyond the conceptions and categorisations of the city film. Robert Kramer's film

Starting Place (Point de depart, 1993), similarly focused on Hanoi, also expands the language of the city film within its representation of the history and contemporary condition of the city's inhabitants.

As the works of Alvarez and Kramer attest, among the questions which became prominent as a result of the political disruptions of the 1960s were those pertaining to forms appropriate to the representation of people constructed politically as Other (and as politically Other). Not coincidentally such questions were addressed by filmmakers who recast the filmic practices of an ethnography which traditionally claimed to interpret the non-Western Other. Adopting such practices, Louis Malle's *Calcutta* (1969) and David Gardner's *Forest of Bliss* (1985) intervene within and revise the formal techniques of ethnographic film in their respective representations of Calcutta and Benares. Within this context both films provoked a marked amount of adverse criticism (and approbation) in their deployment and examination of an 'aesthetics of everyday life' which is the core of the works' documentary display.^[111]

The decolonisation struggles of the 1960s, and with them new modes of depicting the people of cities involved in such struggles, are echoed in the conditions of diaspora, exile and displacement experienced by the populations of various contemporary postcolonial cities, as represented in the practices of exilic filmmakers. Varieties of so-called Third Cinema and the closely aligned forms of exilic and intercultural cinemas document postcolonial and emergent social conditions within and through a focus on the transformations wrought internally to a city and a nation by its citizens and externally by what is often an invasive military and political force. Hamid Naficy argues that the films of exilic and diasporic filmmakers, what he calls an 'accented cinema', are characterised by a 'tactile optic'.^[12] Such an optic informs the aesthetics of the documentary display of representations of cities of the Middle East analysed in the final section of this paper. The emphasis in this section on a corporeal tactile or haptic optic as the basis of exilic representations of the city reprises Sennett's intention of writing a history which addresses and overcomes the 'dullness, the monotony, and the tactile sterility' of the urban environment. More specifically, the following analysis of the innovative representations of the city film is undertaken within the features of the varying political contexts and filmic practices outlined in this section. It is within these contexts and attention to the corporeal - the privileged site of the meeting of aesthetics and politics in the works examined in this paper - that the documentary display of the city film is realised.

From the Bowels of the Earth to City Streets: *Berlin* and its Critics

The critical interpretations which have functioned to specify features of the city film were advanced through Grierson's contribution to the process of defining the notion of documentary. Grierson consolidated his thoughts on documentary film in a series of essays he published during 1932-34 in the journal *Cinema Quarterly* under the title 'First Principles of Documentary'. Notoriously contradictory and inconsistent in his writings, Grierson presents here a unified statement of his early position on the aesthetic, social and political approaches of documentary. Importantly, he referred to the essays as his 'manifesto', a word which evokes modernist declarations of creative (and political) intent and one which reinforces the systematic and purposive elaboration of ideas found in 'First Principles'.^[13] Though Grierson was later to revise a number of statements he made in the essays, the work nevertheless stands as an effective and significant summation of his early ideas on forms of documentary, including Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922), Ruttmann's *Berlin*, and his own film *Drifters* (1929). Grierson insisted that a documentary is organised via the narrativisation of incidents and events and praised Flaherty in this regard for his rigorous story form, structured from and around the actions of individuals. Grierson, however, was not entirely supportive of Flaherty's romanticised depiction of the individual. In a 1935 essay Grierson criticised what he called Flaherty's positioning of his subjects in natural environments in the form of a 'man against the sky' approach, preferring forms 'of industrial and social function, where man is more likely to be [working in a mine] in the bowels of the earth'.^[14] In 'First Principles' Grierson praises 'man', not in the bowels of the earth, but on the deck of a deep-sea fishing boat, as featured in his film *Drifters*, which he presents in the essays as a film which usefully depicts individuals as exemplary of labour in the modern industrial economy. Ignoring his developing criticisms of Flaherty, Grierson's film includes poetic images of the 'high bravery of upright labour' in scenes of fishermen at work at sea. Grierson acknowledged that the film's subject 'belonged in part to Flaherty's world, for it had something of the noble savage and certainly a great deal of the elements of nature to play with. It did, however, use steam and smoke and did, in a sense, marshal the effects of a modern industry'.^[15] For Grierson, focusing on the individual was a method capable of 'cross-sectioning reality' to reveal 'complex and impersonal forces'.^[16]

Such an interpretation is not, however, extended to Ruttmann's *Berlin*. Grierson found Ruttmann's associational montage - what Kracauer, echoing Grierson, called Ruttmann's 'cross-section' of Weimar Berlin^[17] - wanting in its capacity to produce documentary insights into daily life.^[18] According to Grierson, '[i]n so far as the film was principally concerned with movements and the building of separate images into movements, Ruttmann was justified in calling it a symphony... In *Berlin* cinema swung along according to its own more natural powers: creating dramatic effect from the tempo'd accumulation of its single observation'.^[19] Ignoring the film's representation of individuals, Grierson concludes that the visual effects of *Berlin* were 'not enough'.^[20] Grierson refuses to admit that it is via the embodiment of human subjects that the film performs the task of 'cross-sectioning' to expose the forces behind the 'daily doings' of the city.^[21] It was through the representation of human subjects that, to paraphrase William Uricchio, the new language of rhythm and evocation through which the city symphony invigorated documentary was informed by a dose of reality and a capacity for social criticism.^[22]

This capacity was achieved within an abandonment of the Griersonian representation of people as 'social types'. The form of social critique practised by Grierson in *Drifters*, as with his film criticism in 'First Principles', stereotyped individuality or misrepresented identities (as in his reference to the fishermen in *Drifters* in terms of 'high bravery of upstanding labour', for example). A similar stereotyping or misrecognition of identities infuses criticisms of *Berlin*. Ruttmann's film conveys the accelerating pace of a day in the city through an aesthetic abstraction of shapes and a montage which juxtaposes images within and between scenes. The film's documentary display is fully realised in a combination of these elements within what one critic has called 'an almost voyeuristic record of the little human dramas of public life. Children go to school, people chat in cafés, a policeman helps a little boy across the road, prostitutes ply their trade, street performers appear in silly costumes, a woman commits suicide.'^[23] The recognition of the place of people in the film is, however, framed through a false identification of women as prostitutes. The scene which is typically misinterpreted in these terms involves a woman who turns a street corner and looks at a man, who returns her gaze, though the window of a department store.

As Anke Gleber notes, 'In...criticism of the film by (male) critics, this woman has commonly been considered as a professional one, a woman who goes after her business as a "street-walker".' Gleber points out that Kracauer, writing in 1947, concludes his description of the film's street scenes with reference to 'The many prostitutes among the passers-by.'^[24] William Uricchio's analysis is similar: 'After several shots whose common element involves streetwalkers as a subject, a specific mating instance is presented. A prostitute and potential customer pass one another on the street.'^[25] Sabine Hake reads the scene differently: 'The camera [follows] several young women on the streets by themselves: one as she is being picked up,...another as she waits impatiently at a corner, and yet another as she window shops on elegant Kurfurstendamm.'^[26] Gleber argues that 'The striking discrepancies in judging and naming these women might well provoke another look at the function and scenes of the female image in *Berlin, Symphony of the City*.'^[27] Indeed, such a reappraisal could also note that far from lacking a narrative, as a number of critics have claimed to be the case, Ruttmann's film constructs a narrative line around the actions of women in the urban environment. The narrative is enhanced through the woman's unswerving gaze, a sign of the social and political status of women within the liberal Weimar republic. The suicide of a woman in later scenes, for example, is structured into a narrative concerning the 'harsh modern city.'^[28] Gleber informs understandings of the film's narrative development by noting that the reconstructed scene involving a woman's suicide follows a scene depicting a fashion show in which women parade the latest styles. 'A narrative of women's lives is suggested that seems to connect their existence and demise in the city to the ways in which their images are exhibited and exploited in this society.'^[29] In Ruttmann's *Berlin* display operates largely through a complex representation of gender which is structured into a narrative which features the so-called rhythm of the city.

The space left within the critical literature devoted to *Berlin* by the marginalisation of gender was filled to an extent by debate over another category of personal and political identity, that of class. Kracauer lamented the absence of references to class within the 'radius' of city spaces plotted in the film. In this way Kracauer asked where 'is the Berlin of the worker, the white collar worker, the shopkeeper, the upper bourgeoisie...?'^[30] Friendlander echoed Kracauer when he argued that Ruttmann 'should have shown a day in the life of a proletarian or bourgeois from beginning to end.'^[31] The argument is extended by Chapman who, in an analysis of *Berlin* and Cavalcanti's city symphony *Nothing but the Hours* (*Rien que les heures*, 1926), contrasts the depiction of city inhabitants in both films. 'The city is its people; the people (different kinds and classes) are what make up the fabric of the city. In fact, one could almost go so far as to say that *Rien que les heures* is concerned only with people... Cavalcanti is immediately concerned with people as individuals, while Ruttmann is more concerned with people as a mass. The people in *Berlin* are anonymous beings... In *Rien que les heures* the people are specific individuals who also serve as symbols for specific types of people.' According to Chapman, Cavalcanti 'through his concentration on the poorer classes of people in the city...turns *Rien que les heures* into a rather blunt personal statement which compares the mode of life of the wealthy and poorer classes' while in *Berlin* 'there is relatively little overt social comment about the various classes.'^[32]

Replicating Grierson's arguments, Chapman insists that for Ruttmann 'the essence of the city is its rhythm, and nothing else.' For Chapman the editing of *Berlin* produces a 'coldness' in the work which 'exhibits no real feeling for anything' especially 'not the people.'^[33] Chapman here reformulates Kracauer's criticism of what he sees as Ruttmann's antihumanist position. According to Kracauer, 'Human beings are forced into the sphere of the inanimate. They seem molecules in a stream of matter... People in *Berlin* assume the character of material not even polished. Used up material is thrown away... The life of society is a harsh, mechanical process.'^[34] Kracauer agrees with Carl Mayer (Ruttman's one-time collaborator, who disassociated himself from the film during production, arguing that Ruttmann had abandoned the original idea of 'a film about ordinary people in their normal surroundings'^[35]) that *Berlin* offers only a 'surface approach.'^[36] The reference to 'surface' alludes to the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (the New Objectivity), a term used to designate a modern economic order and related stylistic emphases in the cultural sphere, notably in the form of depictions of machinery, which gave close attention to the shiny - or 'modern' - surfaces of such objects.^[37] Critics on the left charged that the New Objectivity reified aestheticised objects and celebrated the mechanical and mass-produced processes of modernity devoid of human agency. Kracauer espoused similar objections in relation to *Berlin*, arguing that the film's aesthetic formalism was at the expense of political critique.^[38] Kracauer's critical line - one which has been replicated to the point of plagiarism within numerous successive interpretations of *Berlin* - is that Ruttmann's montage mechanises humanity by equating the body with machines. However, beyond a sequence in which images of mechanical toys are cross-cut to images of people on the city's streets, and a brief sequence

of a stamping press, the film has only a few shots of industrial machinery. In contrast, Vertov's revolutionary *The Man with a Movie Camera* (a film frequently contrasted to Ruttmann's *Berlin*) includes shots which tend to aestheticise machines.^[39] It is therefore difficult to deduce from shots of machinery alone the incipient fascism that many critics identify in Ruttmann's film.^[40]

According to Kracauer, Vertov stresses formal rhythms but without seeming indifferent to content. His 'cross sections' are 'permeated with communist ideas' even when they picture only the beauty of abstract movements. Had Ruttmann been prompted by Vertov's revolutionary convictions, he would have had to indict the inherent anarchy of Berlin life. He would have been forced to emphasize content rather than rhythm.^[41] Kracauer here accepts Vertov's 'formal rhythms' though denies similar effects in *Berlin*. It would seem, as Natter comments, 'that formalism can be excused in a revolutionary society, while the treatment of Weimar Republic's society demands content (story) and interpretation.'^[42] Kracauer does not recognise that it is possible to interpret Ruttmann's film as a form of display which includes 'visual rhythm' and the prominent inclusion of representations of women and class, thereby metaphorically equating the city, modernity, and femininity.^[43] Such an approach opens a productive line of comparison between the ways in which films in the city symphony cycle deploy the camera to represent human subjects, thereby implicating related political and aesthetic issues.

Displaying 'Life As It Is': The Concealed Camera of the City Symphony

As it follows the peripatetic paths of the urban flaneur and flaneuse Ruttmann's film seems 'omnipresent', as Sabine Hake observes.^[44] A camera capable of capturing the errant and unmotivated gazes of its subjects is an unobtrusive presence in the profilmic scene. Indeed much of the footage edited into the film was shot in the streets of Berlin over a period of a year by concealed cinematographers.^[45] Earlier in the century taking photographs secretly in the urban spaces of New York City and London was a relatively widespread practice conducted 'to provide documentation for certain forms of social discourse, as well as journalistic investigation.'^[46] The camera's role at the turn of the century in gathering evidence used in the service of a reformist documentary impulse spurred the relatively well-known photographic work of Jacob Riis. An attenuated version of Riis's motives informed the actions of certain journalists of the day who used so-called detective cameras to surreptitiously take photographs of court-room proceedings and permeated the activities of street photographers who used hidden cameras to stalk unsuspecting subjects. The prevalence of such practices was reflected in the contemporary concern with the intrusiveness of the camera and a consideration of the new legal right to privacy.^[47]

Ruttmann's use of a concealed camera draws on certain elements of the documentary impulse which insists on unobstructed access to profilmic reality and also partakes of the prurient drives behind unscrupulous journalistic conduct. Certainly the ethical questions circulating around the practices of filming secretly have yet to be addressed in relation to Ruttmann's film or other works in the city symphony cycle which employ the practice such as Vigo's *A propos de Nice*, a film which rigorously foregrounds its human subjects within its swirling montage. Vigo's outline for the opening of the film emphasises the ways in which the inhabitants of Nice feature within a 'kaleidoscopic' burst of images in which panoramic views of the city would be superimposed over images of a roulette wheel and its ball:

The ball skips around. A hand throws in a chip. The ball slows down. A hand slides a chip along the table. The ball slows down. The croupier makes a sign with his finger. The rake pushes the chip back. A hand plays with some chips. The ball slowly skips around. Close-up of ball. Distorted view of the gamblers' faces. Impassive faces of the croupiers. A stack of chips seen in close-up. The rake. The stack of chips seen from a distance. The ball is spun again. The numbers on the green cloth. Travellers leaving the station. Travellers sitting on their suitcases. Commissionaires. Hotel employees. Taxis. Cars. The interpreter. A hotel door opening. Bellboys. A porter hurrying along. A terrace being swept. A restaurant. A headwaiter adjusts his tie. The hotels seen upside-down right themselves. A waiter checking the parting in his hair. A gnarled tree becomes a palm tree. A palm frond. A street cleaner's broom. A wave depositing garbage on the beach. The street cleaner sweeping. The casino on the promenade. A small pile of garbage near the street cleaner. The sea. The broom. The street cleaner leaves, pushing his cart. A view of the promenade desolate and treeless. The beach chairs being set up. The sea. The gulls. The lines of trees. The clear sky.

^[48]

During the filming Vigo realised that he should focus on the beachfront Promenade des Anglais and its many bourgeois patrons. Boris Kaufman, Vigo's cameraman, filmed such scenes using a camera concealed in a cardboard box or camouflaged on his lap as he sat in a wheelchair pushed by Vigo along the boardwalk.^[49] For Vigo such a filming method was integral to his conception of what he called '*point de vue documenté*', an approach predicated on propinquity, concealment, and direct access to subjects.^[50] If people became aware of being filmed Kaufman immediately stopped the camera. Vigo insisted that 'social documentary' is achievable only through close attention to individuals in order to reveal, in Vigo's words, 'the hidden reason for a gesture... [To] extract from an ordinary person his interior beauty - or a caricature of him - quite by chance'. According to Vigo, '[c]onscious behaviour cannot be tolerated, character must be surprised by the camera if the whole "documentary" value of this kind of cinema is to be achieved.'^[51] Vigo's *point de vue documenté* was, he maintained, a unique way of filming which would reveal social and political conditions within the city of Nice. Vigo emphasised in his comments on a 'documentary point of view' that such an approach was the basis of 'social documentary' or 'social cinema', a form of analysis which implicates commentary on classes depicted in

terms of distinctions between wealth and poverty. Vigo's 'social consciousness' is applied to the specific historical context of Nice to produce a strident social statement which contrasts the lives of the idle rich with the experiences of working poor. The montage featuring a roulette wheel is suggestive of the theme in its reference to Nice as 'a city which thrives on gambling'.^[52] Vigo's Surrealist-inflected politics and the montage of his intellectual cinema are evident in sequences in which wealthy female patrons of Nice's promenade are intercut with shots of an ostrich, and images of sun-bathers are accompanied by shots of crocodiles lazing in the sun. The critique of bourgeois conditions is extended in the contrast between the scenes featuring wealthy seaside flaneurs and those depicting Nice's working class quarter. While not as trenchant as the shots of poverty in Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures*, Vigo's film effectively emphasises social distinctions within the juxtaposition of scenes of the leisurely and free-wheeling life of the Promenade des Anglais and shots of the narrow confines of the working district.

Vertov, seeking in a similar way to capture 'life unawares' in his composite Soviet city constructed in *The Man with a Movie Camera*, employed the practice of unconcealed filming through which he produced a revolutionary image, in the dual sense of revolution as innovative and avant-gardist and as an expression of the Communist ideals of the Revolution. In places the film abandons concealed filming within self-referential moments constructed in part through the responses of people within the film to the act of filming. The film includes, for example, a number of scenes in which workers reveal an awareness of the presence of the camera in the form of indirect looks to the camera. The complicity between filmmaker and social actor results in a form of 'unconcealed empathy' with the camera and filmmaker.^[53] In other scenes, however, Vertov's commitment to *kino-pravda* (film-truth) is applied through means of filming with a hidden camera. In a valuable interview published in 1979 Mikhail Kaufman, Vertov's brother and the cameraman on the film, explained the filming method he and Vertov adopted in the film. 'The special problem', argues Kaufman, 'was filming people.'

After an argument between us, Vertov decided to publish a sort of ban ruling out the 'kinokina' and temporarily ruling out the subject as an object of filming because of his inability to behave in front of a camera. As if a subject absolutely has to know how to behave! At that time I put it as follows: In the narrative feature one has to know how to act; in the documentary cinema one has to know how not to act. To be able not to act - one will have to wait a long time until the subject is educated in such a way that he won't pay any attention to the fact that he is being filmed. There's no school like that yet, is there? ^[54]

Vertov supplanted his ban on filming people with a revised approach in which he conceived of the method of secretly filming subjects, a process he interpreted as an ethical component of a class-based mode of filmmaking. The method of hidden filming followed a principle of film-truth that maintained that a camera operator must film people in such a way that he does not impede on a subject's work - and, by extension the realities of proletarian daily life.^[55] Kaufman and Vertov therefore addressed the 'problem of people' in part within scenes in which social actors became such through the method of film-truth which documents what can be called a subject's 'performance of the real' through the use of concealed cameras.^[56] 'Following that line of thought', notes Kaufman,

I constructed a sort of tent, something like a telephone booth, for The Man with a Movie Camera. There has to be an observation point somewhere. So I made myself up as a telephone repairman. There weren't any special lenses, so I went out and bought a regular camera and removed the deep-focus lens. Standing off to the side I could still get things very close up, and that's why you saw those wonderful faces of the children and of the Chinese magician in The Man with a Movie Camera. This method supplied us with material which was more expressive. ^[57]

In other examples Kaufman refers to practices of distracting people's attention so that he could shoot 'life as it is'. Kaufman emphasises that in these terms the revelation of film-truth produces 'totally new and fresh material' which informs the film's documentary 'display of emotions.'^[58]

The documentary display of *The Man with a Movie Camera* was not merely based on observation, however. Kinaesthesia as a form of display results from a style of editing conducted to a set of principles which were almost mathematical in their precision. In his 1929 essay 'The Alphabet of the "Kinoks"' Vertov explains the method whereby shots and scenes function kinaesthetically. According to Vertov the juxtapositional editing of shots must be considered in relation to '(a) the frame's scale, (b) the pictorial/graphic composition of the image, (c) the shooting angle, (d) the play of light and darkness, (e) the multidirectional motions within the shot, the physical movement of the camera, and (g) the differing speeds of the camera/projector (in order to create an illusion of fast or slow motion on the screen)'.^[59] In Vertov's approach this 'film-eye', the montage of associated shots, interacted dialectically with film-truth (the ontological veracity of the shot) to reveal or perceive a new, progressive reality hidden below the surface details of experience. The combination of film-eye and film-truth vigorously inscribes a form of documentary display which relies on showing, not telling, to achieve aesthetic resolution and a perception of a revolutionary reality.

New York City Films and the Look to the Camera

The indirect acknowledgments of the camera found in *The Man with a Movie Camera* were attended by a 'look back' at the camera by subjects in a range of works produced after Vertov's ground-breaking film, among them a number of city films made in New York City during the 1940s and 1950s.^[60] New York City films of the mid-twentieth century were preceded by various nonfictional works from the 1920s and 1930s which depicted the

city. *Manhatta* (1921) by Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler is a six minute paean to urban technology constructed from shots of ferries, skyscrapers and streets in a form derived from the pre-nickelodeon genre of urban panoramas. Panoramas, typically one-take short static vignettes depicting city views of traffic or buildings, also included shots taken with a camera mounted on a moving object, such as a tram, train, subway or ferry. In its focus on the city as technology *Manhatta* eschews the corporeal. Flaherty summed up the thematic perspective of the film when he pointed out that *Manhatta* is 'not a film of human beings, but of skyscrapers which they had erected, completely dwarfing humanity itself'.^[61] Flaherty's own city film *Twenty-Four Dollar Island* (1925) similarly ignored the inhabitants of New York City, thereby contradicting the focus on individual protagonists in his films *Nanook of the North* (1922), *Moana* (1926), *Man of Aran* (1934), and *Louisiana Story* (1948). Jay Leyda's *A Bronx Morning* (1931) is indebted to the European city symphony in its diurnal passage of time in an urban environment defined as a corporeal space. Comparing *Manhatta* and *A Bronx Morning*, Horak notes that Leyda's film is 'more celebratory of the city and also more humanistic in its view of city dwellers'.^[62] Other works from the period, including Irving Brown's *City of Contrasts* (1931) and Herman Weinberg's *Autumn Fire* (1933), foreground the inhabitants of New York City as a way of criticising urban conditions.^[63]

While the films of Brown and Weinberg suggest the possibility that the New York City films of the following decades would build on a legacy of socially-aware critique, such a possibility is denied within critical reactions to New York City films of the mid-twentieth century which were typically, as with the reception of Francis Thompson's *N.Y., N.Y.* (subtitled 'A Day in New York', 1957), characterised in terms of 'visual interest' and a 'sense of the city as a sublime, romantic environment, full of color, upbeat energy, and intellectual beauty'.^[64] However, the emphasis on the urban dweller established in works such as those by Leyda, Brown and Weinberg (and continued in Thompson's *N.Y., N.Y.*, contrary to a critical focus that ignores the presence of the corporeal in the film^[65]) points to the multiple ways in which subjects within certain New York City films perform as 'social actors' before the camera, and in certain cases openly acknowledge the camera. Such a practice and an associated politics are not necessarily concerned with social critique in the ways that, for example, certain city symphonies of the 1920s were intent on revealing urban class divisions. Rather, the 'look back' at the camera foregrounds the corporeal as a presence within the city film capable of confronting and resisting the camera's objectifying gaze. It is within such a practice that people in a number of New York City films from the 1940s and 1950s express mastery over technology (specifically in this case, visual technology) which otherwise (in the form of automobiles, trains, and feats of engineering) is typically interpreted in films of the city as swamping or engulfing subjects.

In this way Rudy Burkhardt's films - *Up and Down the Waterfront* (1946), *The Climate of New York* (1948) and *Under the Brooklyn Bridge* (1953) - meld an intensive focus on architectural features of the city with close observation of the city's inhabitants to reveal instances of the 'look back' at the camera. *Under the Brooklyn Bridge*, for example, the most ambitious of the films within the trilogy, documents the river and waterside near the bridge and begins with a sequence featuring doorways and windows of houses around the approach to the bridge. The following sequences depict the demolition of a building near the bridge, and workers on a lunch break. The next sequence documents young boys swimming in the East River, followed by a sequence in which people leave work and walk home. The film concludes with shots of deserted streets in early evening and shots of the Brooklyn Bridge framed against the lower Manhattan skyline in the background. In his analysis of the film Scott MacDonald pays particular attention to the sequence involving boys swimming in the East River. According to MacDonald the sequence reveals what he suspects is 'a change in the way American boys relate to the movie camera. Most of the boys in the swimming sequence are nude, and they betray no particular consciousness of their naked bodies before the camera.' MacDonald reflects on the representation of the boys by comparing the process of their filming in Burkhardt's film with potential contemporary reactions to such a representation: 'It is difficult to imagine a group of 1990s boys so at ease with themselves or with the fact of being filmed under these circumstances. In the intervening half-century, Americans have become well aware of the power and potential personal danger of the motion picture camera and automatically suspicious of the motivations of those using it.'^[66]

The open and unaffected acknowledgement of the camera in *Under the Brooklyn Bridge* is in contrast to the depiction of subjects in earlier city films. The hidden camera filming of the city symphonies was undertaken in order to avoid provoking a subject's response. In those shots in which subjects recognise the camera the look to the camera is in the main indirect or oblique. The direct look at the camera within *Under the Brooklyn Bridge* is extended in Burkhardt's *The Pursuit of Happiness* which assertively privileges the social actor through the inclusion of close-ups of faces. The 'fractured travelog' format of the city represented in *The Climate of New York* is reworked in *The Pursuit of Happiness* within a mode reminiscent of ethnographic film in which subjects in the process of being visually documented openly return the camera's gaze.^[67] Here as elsewhere in his work, Burkhardt's camera captures individuals within the crowded city who unblinkingly look directly into the camera, 'eye to eye'.^[68]

The returned look to the camera was also a prominent feature of the city films produced in the early 1950s by New York street photographer Weegee (Arthur Felig). *Weegee's New York* (1950^[69]), edited into two parts by Amos Vogel ('New York Fantasy' and 'Coney Island') is, according to MacDonald, 'one of the most underrecognized independent films of the 1950s'.^[70] The opening 'New York Fantasy' sequence begins in the early morning in Manhattan, and uses time-lapse photography to suggest an increasing pace in the 'awakening' city. Other expressionistic shots include scenes of New York harbour and Times Square at night, and time-lapse images of night-time streets. The Coney Island section captures the popular seaside boardwalk and beach on an

extremely crowded summer Sunday afternoon. MacDonald observes that 'Weegee's Coney Island reveals a population seemingly at ease with its bodies, even under the persistent gaze of the movie camera.'^[71] Weegee's film restages his well-known photograph 'Coney Island, 22nd of July 1940, 4 o'clock in the afternoon', a captivating image of the wide beach and neighbouring boardwalk next to the Coney Island amusement park crammed with sun worshippers. The photograph is echoed in the opening intertitle of the Coney Island section of Weegee's film ('A million people on the beach of a Sunday afternoon is normal') and the film's Coney Island sequence reproduces a similar unguarded and generous look to the camera by the numerous subjects captured in the beach photograph.^[72]

Emile Benveniste called the 'return look' the 'great "repressed of narrative cinema"'.^[73] Such a practice finds open expression in documentary film, and, as the examples of Burkhardt and Weegee demonstrate, constitutes a significant component of the visual display of certain New York City films of the 1940s and 1950s. Notably, this process is one component within and through which the visual language of the city film is informed and expanded beyond a focus on architectural features and 'kaleidoscopic' and 'rhythmic' visual styles typically ascribed to the form. Replicating the usual focus on such features and styles, Paul Arthur, in an essay entitled 'The Redemption of the City', isolates various formal configurations and the presence of 'inventories' (of doors, windows, water towers, chimneys, and other architectural features) within the city film.^[74] Arthur opens his essay with brief reference to the European city symphonies and German 'street films' before concentrating his analysis on American, specifically New York, city films thereby reinforcing an unstated aspect of criticism of the city film - that such representations pertain only to cities in Europe and the US. Eschewing Arthur's preoccupation with architectural features and his strict geographical focus, the category of city film can be expanded to include the visual language of a form deployed in the representation of urban populations in works which abandon a strict focus on cities within the Europe-North America geographical axis.

Beyond the European and North American City

Struggles for national liberation in various parts of the world in the late 1960s informed the content and form of representations of inhabitants of cities involved in such struggles. Liberation from colonial powers provoked a range of expressive works which sought to endorse and replicate political liberation in 'agit-prop' forms. In this way the 'descriptive poetics' of Santiago Alvarez's *Hanoi, Martes Trece*, for example, revise the visual grammar, prevailing apoliticism, and excessive formalism of certain (New York) city films and constitute a profound engagement with the people of war-torn Hanoi.^[75] Unlike the directors of the portmanteau film *Far from Vietnam (Loin de Vietnam, 1967)* Alvarez, as a citizen of a country allied with North Vietnam in its struggle against US imperialism (Alvarez's homeland, Cuba, named 1967 the 'Year of Heroic Vietnam'), was able to film in North Vietnam during the war. *Hanoi, Martes Trece* reworks the traditional diurnal schema of the city symphony to produce a poetic evocation of a city under siege. As with Humphrey Jennings' *London Can Take It!* (co-directed with Harry Watt, 1940), another film focused on a city at war - which, like Alvarez's work, is routinely ignored in analyses of the city film - *Hanoi, Martes Trece* depicts an urban population forging ahead in the face of intense aerial bombardment.

The title of Alvarez's film is the date, Tuesday the 13th (of December, 1966), of an attack by US warplanes on North Vietnam, an event which occurred soon after Alvarez and his cameraman, Ivan Napoles, arrived in Hanoi. Alvarez's scorching indictment of the US invasion of Vietnam is shot in black and white, though the film begins and ends with colour footage of paintings and engravings by Vietnamese artists which foreground the rich cultural traditions of a people whose history is presented in voice-over from a text dealing with nineteenth-century Vietnam (written by Cuban national hero, José Martí). The history is suddenly interrupted by a montage that constructs a rapidly-delivered savagely satirical biography of Lyndon Johnson (The biography begins with the title '*Nace un niño en Texas*' - 'a boy is born in Texas' - accompanied by images of a baby's birth which are intercut with shots of a cow giving birth). The film returns to a different pace with images of Vietnamese fishermen and farmers, though the scenes of rural labour are transformed into the reality of war as workers in the fields abandon their tasks to operate anti-aircraft guns against an air attack.

After the air raid a title fills the screen, 'We turn anger into energy', a statement of resistance which is enacted in the opening scenes of rural workers/fighters and in the second section of the film which concentrates on the activities of the inhabitants of Hanoi. Alvarez includes shots of street stalls, people going to work on bicycles, and among other tasks, people moulding large concrete tubes which are embedded in the streets for use as air-raid shelters, another reminder of the continuous bombing and the fortitude and originality of the Vietnamese people in the presence of the massive US aerial campaign. In the wake of a US bombing raid Alvarez depicts the effects on the civilian population of the city: people putting out fires with hand-held buckets of water, and shots of broken bodies and destroyed houses. Despite the destruction of its infrastructure and the killing and maiming, Vietnamese society is depicted as one which, in its fortitude, is capable of resisting the US onslaught. Alvarez's film revises the sociologically and journalistically inflected Griersonian approach in which subjects tend to be depicted as victims of historical conditions, a trace of which lingers in city films which implicitly allude to the city as a space which crushes or smothers individuals.^[76] As Alvarez noted during the making of the film, the Vietnamese despised being framed as victims.^[77] Moving beyond the aesthetics and politics of victimage Alvarez also avoided depictions of the Vietnamese as exoticised Other. Within a montage composed of a violent collision of images of war and daily life, *Hanoi, Martes Trece* foregrounds the Vietnamese people as, to revive an ignored term, agents of history.

The representation of the Vietnamese people, not as victims, faceless enemy or exotic Other was informed within Robert Kramer's film *Point de départ*, a film which in many ways can be considered a sequel to Alvarez's film - though in fact *Point de départ* was made as a follow-up to Kramer's 1969 film *People's War*. Twenty-five years after *People's War* Kramer returned to Hanoi to make a film on the effects of the war on the people of what was North Vietnam. *Point de départ* mixes archival footage from the 1960s, expository sequences in the form of interviews, and observation within a reflection on the passage of time and the reconstruction of post-war Vietnam. Well-known architectural landmarks in Hanoi provide a form of 'cognitive mapping' orienting the viewer within the city's urban space.^[78] The mausoleum in central Hanoi containing Ho Chi Minh's body and the Long Bien Bridge, constructed by the French, are among the sites included in the film. Shots of the bridge, which was seriously damaged during the war by US bombing, and patched and rebuilt numerous times in response to each attack, are featured throughout the film and come to function as a metaphor for the city's reconstruction program. The theme of rebuilding is extended in a direct and didactic way in a sequence depicting a brick factory and the laborious mode of producing bricks by hand. The analogous linking of the brick factory scenes to an interview with an urban planner reinforces the theme of reconstruction and the spatial refiguration of Hanoi exemplified in the building program. In terms of the city film the interview with an urban planner is a wry comment on a work such as *The City* (1939), directed by Van Dyke and Steiner and produced by the American Institute of Planners, which structures its city imagery around a thematic focus on urban planning. The Griersonian-influenced tradition of urban planning films (among them *When We Build Again*, 1943, *Proud City*, 1945, and *Town and Country Planning*, 1946) are also implicated in Kramer's reference to the planning of Hanoi's future in a way which is implicitly critical of the heavy-handed expository approach of a number of Griersonian documentaries.^[79]

Point de départ removes subjects from Griersonian positions of authority and victim and confirms their individuality. Kramer ends the sequence in the brick factory with a long take of a factory worker framed against a (brick) wall who looks into the camera with a resolute gaze. In fiction film the extended shot of a character's face 'is not warranted by the simple communication of information about character emotion. Such scenes are also intended to elicit emphatic emotions in the spectator.'^[80] In Kramer's documentary portrait of a city, the long take of a subject mobilises empathy in the provision of knowledge. The long take, with its absence of voice-over or commentary, the site of authority and knowledge in the expository documentary, here articulates the knowledge and experience encoded in the worker's body which 'tells the story' of a city caught between the past and the future. The lack of finality or closure for the city - its continual planning and construction - is evoked in the on-going static long take. The camera's scrutiny reveals the brick worker as an historical agent who will effect social and political change and whose body bears the memory of both the city and the nation. In this way the subject is positioned as a synecdochic representative of the fate of the nation within a Jamesonian national allegory of the conditions of Vietnamese history and society.^[81] In these terms the story of the subject in *Point de départ* - implicit within the allegorical frame of Kramer's long take - encodes a different history of the urban environment to that evoked in the casual and insouciant look to camera of certain New York City films.

Revising the Ethnographic in the City Film

Kramer's *Point de départ* was conceived, as the title of the film suggests, as a starting place for a reflection on change, the passage of time and forgetting within the context of urban space.^[82] These positions are enacted within the film in which Hanoi becomes a spatial metaphor for the lives of its inhabitants through whom the film functions as a reflection on the political past and future of the Vietnamese people. In a similar way Louis Malle's *Calcutta* constitutes what Malle called a 'departing point of a reflection' on the city and his direction as a filmmaker.^[83]

Paul Arthur's inventories of the formal components of the New York City film, particularly commonly used shots of windows, chimneys, and doors reveals the city filmmaker as archaeologist minutely documenting the hieroglyphics of physical objects for meaning.^[84] In contrast, Malle dispels a fetishistic fixation on objects within the language of 'uncontrolled' observation. His approach eschews the complex montage of the European city symphony or New York City film to attend to the actions of human subjects and the body as the focus of an understanding of the city as people. Within this equation Malle manages to avoid or revise certain assumptions implicit in an ethnographic approach which begins with the epistemological position that the filmic subject is Other, to be analysed and 'explained' to a (Western) audience. In contrast to such a form of ethnographic depiction Malle's reflections on Calcutta are mixed, and as Gitlin notes of *Phantom India (L'Inde fantôme, 1968)*, Malle's companion piece to *Calcutta*, he 'seems aware of the risk he is taking, steering between total acceptance and his Cartesian skepticism.'^[85] Just as in *L'Inde fantôme* he acknowledges the limits of documentary representation, admitting in voice-over that the camera is 'impossible' - that is, incapable of penetrating the Indian consciousness and culture - so too in *Calcutta* people unselfconsciously return and resist the camera's disciplinary gaze thereby mitigating the camera's predisposition to forms of ethnographic positioning and ways of knowing.^[86]

Such ways of knowing are reworked in *L'Inde fantôme* in which Malle uses voice-over, typically the site of interpretation and analysis, to emphasise that he had failed to understand anything about India, and in *Calcutta* he eschews voice-over or titles. Malle's reliance in *Calcutta* on observation, as with Robert Gardner's abandonment of exposition in the 'ethnographic film' *Forest of Bliss*, forces the viewer to extract meaning from the visual. In these films '[o]bservational techniques no longer give the impression of "capturing" the referential realm itself, the historical world as it is, so much as lend stress to qualities of duration, texture, and expression'

within a focus on a city's inhabitants.^[87] The representation of Benares and the city's cremation rites in *Forest of Bliss* is undertaken within the traditional diurnal cycle of the city symphony, though in other respects the film reworks established codes of the form. The locus for this revision is a mode of documentary display in which the capacities of 'showing' (operative within and through visual components, informed by aural features) take precedence over formal attention to 'telling' (expository claims concerning the experiential). This process is common to city films, including city symphonies, though in *Forest of Bliss* 'showing' - which is marked to a degree not necessarily evident in other city films - results in a work of sensorial and affective intensity.

Forest of Bliss maps the holy city of Benares, concentrating on the area close to the Ganges - its streets, the Durga temple, a hospice, the steps leading down to the river and the Manikarnika ghat on the river's edge. The geography of the city is established within the lives of three individuals who traverse the river's bank: Mithai Lal, a healer, Ragul Pandit, a priest who daily worships at the river and at the Ganga Devi temple, and the Dom Raja, the 'King of the Burning Grounds' (the river-side cremation site). A spatial outline of the city is established principally through long sequences in which Mithai Lal is followed as he walks from his house to the river, and back to his house and to the Durga temple. The actions of these 'characters' is focused on the funerary rites conducted on the bank of the river adjacent to the city.^[88] The depiction of death in Ruttmann's *Berlin* (a reconstructed scene of a woman's suicide) and in Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures* (a staged murder) function as metaphors alluding to the essence of the city as a place which crushes or destroys individuals. In *Forest of Bliss* Gardner constructs a series of metaphors which support the interpretation that death is a transcendence of life and the holy city of Benares, the City of Light, far from a 'crushing' (or even 'kaleidoscopic') space, is the avenue to a transcendental realm.

The representation of individual lives, and death, is realised within a practice that Gardner refers to as 'telling the story by relying primarily on visual strategies.'^[89] Gardner's emphasis on showing over telling, or telling via showing, and its move away from the expository construction of argumentation and knowledge provoked a strong critical response within quarters of the ethnographic community concerned with maintaining ethnographic filmmaking practices based on certain formal strategies and distinctions.^[90] Typical of the criticisms of *Forest of Bliss* were comments by Jay Ruby who admitted that 'I rarely can figure out what the people are doing [in *Forest of Bliss*] and when I can, the significance of the action is lost to me.'^[91] Ruby, as with another of the film's critics, Alexander Moore, insisted that the film requires a voice-over or titles to interpret the action.^[92] Extending this line of criticism, the perpetually perplexed Ruby points to a distinction, and its effect on readings of the film, between (social) scientific interpretative approaches and artful positions.^[93] Ruby's disquiet over the suggestion that ethnographic film is, or should be, 'art' was countered by defenders of the film who have argued that the film is not an ethnography and that *Forest of Bliss* includes various devices to cue the viewer to such an interpretation.^[94] Such a position, however, inherently accepts Ruby's distinction between a 'scientific' visual ethnography capable of presenting and interpreting empirical evidence in the form of rational knowledge and a visual text dedicated to 'artistic expression' which therefore lacks any informational capacity.

Gardner's ethnographic city film obviates such distinctions through the application of a set of practices summarisable in terms of 'social aesthetics'.^[95] The emphasis on embodiment within what MacDougall identifies as the 'sensory and formal qualities of social life' is produced through immersion in the "'foreign" Benarese culture of death rituals... Gardner's film invites us into this space of unfamiliar images and sounds in order for transformation to occur: a transformation in cognition, emotion, and the senses, a transformation that, ideally, stimulates and informs our...cultural understanding'. The resultant encounter with 'the imagery and sounds of Gardner's film without [contra Ruby] the distraction of a literal translation of dialogue forces the viewer to prereflectively encounter the world Gardner is showing us.'^[96]

Within the film's audio realm Gardner constructs a densely textured sonic tapestry composed of numerous recurring sounds, among them temple bells, dogs barking and growling, vultures and crows cawing, laughter, prayers, chanting, shouts, wailing, fires crackling, a conch shell blown like a trumpet, and creaking boat oars, the latter a sound which is repeated to the point of a 'symphonic' refrain. Gardner's visual montage is equally as complex, and includes an array of arresting images, among them, dogs fighting, children flying paper kites, cows and monkeys in the city's streets, the Ganges in morning mist, boats on the Ganges, priests at prayer, and numerous shots of birds soaring, scavenging and darting across the Ganges. The effective force of such images is pushed to an intensity of emotion in the film's rampant imagery of death: the dead carried through city streets to funeral pyres built next to the river, the flames of the burning ghats, marigolds strewn over the body and the streets, the chants of priests, and wails of mourners. Gardner's imagery does not merely replace or substitute the inventories and categories of the city symphony and New York City film, which contain the magnitude of urban experience within a 'kaleidoscopic' montage. In *Forest of Bliss* images powerfully and directly bespeak 'the city' in terms of the fate of the city's inhabitants. Gardner's death imagery evokes the shock Benjamin accorded to the multiple sensory assaults of the city and informs it with an existential shock of death in the city.^[97]

Counter-pointed to the images of death Gardner builds a web of imagery that serves as a buffer against the visual and sonic assault of the city and its shocks. Gardner notes that '[a]s an *observer* who regards the city as having endless possibilities for confusion, I was no different from anyone else living in Benares. Here was a city of institutionalized chaos - and what can you do with chaos?... Photographed, it just becomes visual noise, and the only way I could see to get away from the visual noise of Benares was to find refuge, almost literally, in [images of] marigolds or the wood [of the funeral pyres] or something extremely simple'.^[98] The multiple

images of the work associated with making funeral wreaths of marigolds, framing what becomes a 'marigold theme', is mobilised as a structural device through which Gardner balances the 'din and clatter' of populace Benares.^[99] The flower device gains its visual force through repetition and via seemingly unincorporated scenes such as those depicting people bringing marigolds into the city from the fields, and shots of hands picking marigolds, stringing marigolds as offerings, marigold wreaths on funeral pyres, and a holy cow devouring the flowers from rubbish in the street.

The chaos of the city is further balanced by attention to and sympathy for the people in the city, in particular the three central characters associated with the funerary rites, the healer, the priest, and the Dom Raja. For Gardner '[t]hese people are a great deal more to me than mere informants and characters in an anthropological field project. To me, they represent Benares in the best sense'.^[100] The personality of each individual is revealed through certain details, as in the case of Mithai Lal descending steps to the Ganges, grunting as his arthritic limbs move him to the water's edge for his morning prayers. Gardner discusses the meaning of such details in an interview:

[T]he grunting on the [sound] track at this point was not as apparent in actuality as it is in the film. The sound was deliberately enhanced in post production... [I changed] the balance and intensity of the sound so that it really stood out. Very often when you're doing sound and image at the same time you don't get good sound quality. The image concerns are usually greater and, as a rule, take precedence. So we had to really work on the sound to bring it up and make it clear that Mithal Lal was not wholly enjoying this stretching of his arthritic limbs right after having gotten out of warm bed... If everything is portrayed properly, the person is fleshed out as an individual. The camera can actually endow him with some personality or even some character. ^[101]

Though Gardner admits that '[t]he very idea of finding a way to reproduce some reality that can be called another person is, on its face, a total absurdity' he does achieve character insights through sympathetic attention to each individual.^[102] Against the 'din' and 'chaos' of the city, such insights form a counter narrative which is developed at a slower, more measured, pace than the funerary narrative with its inexorable movement of the dead being transported toward the Manikarnika funeral pyre. It is within the focus on individuals that Gardner captures moments of wonder and intimacy, as when he records the Dom Raja waking in the morning. At such times 'you're at the height of your power, at the height of your ecstasy as a filmmaker,' says Gardner.^[103] The accretion and combination of such moments, which are informed by the visual shock of death, contribute to an aesthetics based in the sensory qualities of social life. Such an approach anchors showing and seeing - and the sensorial knowledge it produces - as the productive bases of the film's documentary display.

Sense and the City

The sensory aesthetic deployed in Gardner's *Forest of Bliss* is summarisable through reference to what David MacDougall calls the 'corporeal image', and intercultural focus on images of the body and the experiential presence of the filmmaker. As MacDougall states, 'corporeal images are not just the images of other bodies; they are also images of the body behind the camera and its relations with the world.'^[104] The subjective, intercultural cinema which MacDougall refers to is in certain respects similar to the practices of exilic filmmakers who, as a result of political disruption and forced exile or banishment are located between the homeland and their adoptive countries. Hamid Naficy has examined the ways in which the constraints of the experience of exile have resulted in a particular filmmaking style. According to Naficy, exilic filmmakers 'memorialize the homeland by fetishizing it in the form of cathected sounds, images, and chronotypes that are circulated intertextually in exilic popular culture, including in films and music videos. The exiles' primary relationship, in short, is with their countries and cultures or origin and with the sight, sound, taste, and feel of an ordinary experience.'^[105] Emphasising the sensory capacity of exilic films Naficy insists that '[t]he dominance of vision...is attenuated for the exiles by the prominence of the other senses, which continually and poignantly remind them of their seemingly irrevocable difference, loss, or lack of it.' Naficy adds,

A particular fragrance on a hillside, a stolen glance in a restaurant, a body brush in a crowded street, a particular posture by a passenger in an elevator, a flash of memory during daily conversations, the sound of familiar words in one's native tongue heard from an adjoining car at a red traffic light - each of these [experiences] activates private memories and intensifies the feeling of displacement. ^[106]

Significantly, memory occupies a privileged place as facilitator and mediator of sensory impressions which are central to the experience of exile and the evocations of exilic cinema. Naficy notes that exilic cinema 'is propelled by the memory, nostalgic longing, and multiple losses and wishes that are experienced by the diegetic characters, exilic filmmakers and their audiences.'^[107]

Memory and its 'sensory reports' is, as Naficy and other theorists of exilic cinema note, a structural device prevalent within numerous city films produced by exilic filmmakers from the disrupted nations of the Middle East.^[108] Within these terms filmmakers exiled from Lebanon, a nation wracked by warfare within and beyond its disputed borders, have structured filmic depictions of Beirut around the memories of the city's inhabitants. Zeini Sfeir's video *In Spite of the War* (2001), for example, focuses on the inhabitants of post-civil war Beirut and prominently includes interviews with members of a young generation who are nostalgic for the war. Their memories are ironically interspersed with a portrait of rebuilt downtown Beirut, a non-place in which all signs and memories of the conflict have been erased.

The themes of memory and remembrance are further examined in Lebanese American Walid Ra'ad's *In the Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs* (1996-1999), a video composed of three works (*Missing Lebanese Wars*, *Secrets in the Open Sea*, and *Miraculous Beginnings*) which examines the history and memory of the religious, gender, and class experiences of the wars. Other city films focused on memory produced by film and video makers who move between cultures and whose work is thereby not reducible to the experiences or discourse of a single culture include *A Place Called Home* (1998) by Iranian American Persheng Sadlegh-Vaziri, which traces the filmmaker's return to Tehran after years of living in the US. Sadlegh-Vaziri explores a new Tehran which is a very different place to her childhood memories. The revolution has altered lives and the physical terrain of the city and within this scenario Sadlegh-Vaziri demonstrates the relationship of memory, people, and place.

The documentation of memory, and the evocations of memories of the homeland, operates within exilic cinema in association with other identifiable filmic practices. Naficy argues that memory and nostalgic longing experienced by the diegetic subjects, exilic filmmakers, and their audiences is a determining factor in the production of films which are marked by what he calls a tactile optics, 'that is, their nonlinear structure, which is driven by the juxtaposition of multiple spaces, times, voices, narratives, and foci - the montage effect'.^[109] Naficy's account of the formal features of 'tactile optics' is little different to descriptions of the practices of numerous avant-garde productions from the past twenty years, the essential difference is that Naficy emphasises that such practices are motivated by a sense of loss experienced by exilic filmmakers. Naficy's description of 'tactile optics' is informed by Laura Marks' references to what she calls a haptic visuality, a term she applies to the formal processes of intercultural cinema in a way which clarifies Naficy's less specific 'tactile optics'. Marks uses the term to refer to works which 'invite a look that moves on the surface plane of the screen for some time before the viewer realizes what she or he is beholding. Such images resolve into figuration only gradually, if at all. Conversely, a haptic work may create an image of such details, sometimes through miniaturism, that it evades distanced view, instead pulling the viewer in close.'^[110]

The term haptic (like tactile) emphasises the seemingly paradoxical role in visuality of a sense of touch which 'involves the body more than is the case with optical visuality. Touch is a sense located on the surface of the body: thinking of the cinema as haptic is only a step toward considering the ways cinema appeals to the body as a whole.'^[111] The haptic features of the text are evident in Jayce Salloum's *This is Not Beirut* (1994) a video that, while composed of images of Beirut streets, visually reworks accepted notions of the city and the city film. Evoking the damage and destruction caused by the Lebanese wars, Salloum mixes scenes shot from a speeding car with static shots of buildings in rubble, with scenes of the city which are violently interrupted by jump cuts which also fracture and disrupt dialog.^[112] The emphasis in the work on the haptic qualities of the image - the surface texture and manipulability of the image - is matched by a nonlinear structure and a montage of radical juxtaposition of foci characteristic of a tactile optics. The effect of haptic or tactile visuality in Salloum's video criticises the ways in which the global news media have 'covered' Beirut and the political situation in Lebanon as a zone of chaos and unintelligibility. As Marks comments, '[m]ore than an antiportrait of Beirut, the tape is a mediation on political representation.'^[113]

The freneticism of Salloum's anti-city film, and a resultant tactile or haptic effect, is evident in Waël Noureddine's *Ca sera beau. From Beyrouth with Love* (2005), a tape which intersperses long tracking shots and short, rapidly edited shots of Beirut filmed over the course of days and nights (in an echo of the diurnal cycle of 1920s city symphonies). Images of a city scarred by war - pock-marked buildings, and military patrols - recur within the video. Part of the human toll of war in Beirut is drug-taking, exemplified in scenes in which Noureddine and his friends indulge in various narcotics. Ironically, and fittingly, Noureddine's 'city symphony' is scored to a soundtrack of punk music (as in the film's final scenes, which are accompanied by music by the 'Messageros Killer Boys').

The works of Salloum and Noureddine underscore the effects of national political disruption, displacement and exile, and the role of such experiences in the practices of exilic and intercultural filmmaking. Politically-informed contexts and effects have an influential role in the formal practices of the city film. With their primary emphasis on the corporeal, the representations produced by local and intercultural film and video makers construct the city film as it is defined here as a transnational form which is applied to differing locations in works which commonly deploy the corporeal image to 'physically' locate, describe, and interpret varying cityscapes. The avant-gardist city film, in its meld of documentary and 'experimental' forms constructs an insider and often subjective perspective on the corporeal presence of the people who inhabit a city. The variety of styles through which such a representation is constructed - from the 'kaleidoscopic' city symphonies of the 1920s to the revision of Western media modes in recent city films produced in the Middle East - operate through reference to varying political and historical contexts and effects to focus on the inhabitants of a city as the visual basis of the city film's documentary display. Such a display, with its emphasis on the body and local spaces, is both a form of knowledge and a set of stylistic innovations which together produce a complex seeing in the form of an expressive documentary re-imagining of the city.

The inscription for this paper is from D. MacDougall, *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006, p. 13.

Endnotes

[1] R. Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*, Norton and Co., New York, 1994, p. 15.

[2] Scott Bukatman elaborates various perspectives on 'kaleidoscopic' visuality in a range of texts, including city films, in 'Kaleidoscopic Perceptions', chapter 5 of his *Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Supermen in the 20th Century*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2003. On 'rhythm' in the city symphony see, for example, J. Kolaja and A. Foster, 'Berlin, Symphony of a City as a Theme of Visual Rhythm', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1965, pp. 353-358, M. Medhurst and T. Benson, 'The City: The Rhetoric of Rhythm', *Communication Monographs*, vol. 48, March 1981, pp. 54-72, and W. Schobert, "'Painting in Time" and "Visual Music": On German Avant-Garde Films of the 1920s' in D. Scheunemann, *Expressionist Film: New Perspectives*, Camden house, New York, 2003. The metaphor of 'rhythm' was, perhaps inevitably, implicated with descriptions of 1920s city films as 'city symphonies'. The word 'symphony' was a common part of avant-garde film production in Weimar Germany. Viking Eggerling's experiments in 'revolving pictures' resulted in his *Diagonal Sinfonie* in 1924. His collaborator Hans Richter extended the musical metaphor in the title of his films *Ryththmus 21* (1921) and *Rhythmus 23* (1923). Prior to his *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* Ruttmann made four abstract films informed by music: *Opus I-IV* (1919-1923). The 'symphony' popularised by *Berlin* led to further experiments in 'visual music', among them Richter's *Renn-symphonie (Racing Symphony, 1928-29)* and *São Paulo, Symphonie d'un métropole* by Rudolph Rex and Adalberto Kemeny (1929). Soon after the completion of his *The Man with a Movie Camera* Vertov published a statement in which he argued that his film is constructed in the 'form of a visual symphony'. The statement is reprinted in A. Michelson, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984.

Tracing a lineage for the city symphonies of the 1920s to avant-garde formalist experiments raises the question of origins of the city symphony form, a point which has attracted a degree of critical attention. Most critics concerned with this question propose Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures* (1926), a film completed before *Berlin*, though not premiered until after the release of Ruttmann's film, as a precursor. Annette Michelson presents a more cogent answer to the question of origin when she notes that in 1926 Mikhail Kaufman made the documentary *Moscow, a day in the life of the city*, a structure which, it seems, influenced both Ruttmann's *Berlin* and Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera*. A. Michelson, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984, p. xxiv.

[3] On the 'cinema of attractions' see T. Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde' in T. Elsaesser and A. Barker (eds.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, British Film Institute, London, 1990. The quotation is from David MacDougall, *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006, p. 2. The absence of people within analyses of the city film is exemplified in Paul Arthur's study of the form in terms of 'categories' and 'inventories' of architectural adornment. See P. Arthur, 'The Redemption of the City' in his *A Line of Sight: American Avant-Garde Film since 1965*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2005. A similar analysis is undertaken by Scott MacDonald in 'The City as Motion Picture' in his *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001.

[4] David MacDougall discusses 'social aesthetics' in I. Barbash and L. Taylor, 'Radically Empirical Documentary: An Interview with David and Judith MacDougall', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 2, p. 7, and in D. MacDougall, *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006.

[5] Quoted in H. Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001, p. 28.

[6] M. Renov, 'Toward a Poetics of Documentary' in M. Renov (ed.), *Theorizing Documentary*, Routledge, New York, 1993, p. 32.

[7] S. Eisenstein, 'The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram' in *Film Form*, Cleveland World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1957, p. 43. Vertov, in return, reserved his 'sharpest and most aggressive polemic attacks...for the "art film", that compromised product of aesthetic Menshevism represented most dangerously, in his view, by Eisenstein's work.' A. Michelson, 'Dr. Crase and Mr. Clair', *October*, vol. 11, winter 1979, p. 32.

[8] W. W. Dixon, *It Looks at You: The Retuned Gaze of Cinema*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1995, p. 7.

[9] E. Klaver, 'Spectatorial Theory in the Age of Media Culture' in P. Auslander (ed.), *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. II, Routledge, London, p. 286.

[10] *ibid.* With reference to film theory of the 1970s and 1980s, Laura Mulvey's influential paper from the mid-1970s on the look in fictional cinema ignores the look back. L. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 3, autumn 1975, pp. 6-18.

[11] Critical assessments of *Forest of Bliss* are examined in this paper within an analysis of Gardner's film.

[12] H. Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Princeton University Press, Princeton,

2001, p. 28.

[13] J. Grierson, 'First Principles of Documentary' (1932) in I. Aitken (ed.), *The Documentary Film Movement: An Anthology*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998, p. 83.

[14] J. Grierson, 'Summary and Survey: 1935' in F. Hardy (ed.), *Grierson on Documentary*, Faber and Faber, London, 1979, p. 64. Grierson made this comment in 1935. A number of documentary films produced within the context of the British Documentary Movement around that time depicted mine work, among them Jack Holmes' *The Mine* (1935), Cavalcanti's *Coal Face* (1936). More particularly Grierson was most likely reflecting on *Industrial Britain* (1932-32), a film that he co-directed with Flaherty, which includes a sequence on coal mining.

[15] Grierson, 'First Principles', op. cit, p. 89.

[16] Grierson, 'First Principles', p. 86.

[17] Siegfried Kracauer identifies a cycle of 'cross section' films in his *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1947, p. 187.

[18] J. Grierson, 'First Principles of Documentary' (1932) in I. Aitken (ed.), *The Documentary Film Movement: An Anthology*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998, p. 86.

[19] *ibid.*

[20] Grierson, 'First Principles', p. 87.

[21] Grierson, 'First Principles', p. 85.

[22] Uricchio quoted in S. MacDonald, *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, p. 153.

[23] J. Donald, 'The City, the Cinema: Modern Spaces' in C. Jenks (ed.), *Visual Culture*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 86.

[24] A. Gleber, 'Female Flanerie and the *Symphony of the City*' in K. von Ankum (ed.), *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997, p. 76. Versions of this essay appear as 'Women on the Screens and Streets of Modernity: In Search of the Female Flaneur' in D. Andrew, *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1997, pp. 55-85, which was reprinted as chapter 9 of *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flanerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999. Susan Buck-Morss argues that male authors have consistently interpreted women in the modern urban context in terms of the figure of the prostitute, in 'The Flâneur, The Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering', *New German Critique*, no. 39, Fall 1986, pp. 99-140. Janet Wolff maintains that male authors have generally failed to recognise the ways in which women experience modernity. 'The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1985, pp. 37-46. Patrice Petro addresses both the absence and the stereotyping of women in Weimar film and its criticism in *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989.

[25] Quoted in A. Gleber, 'Women on the Screens and Streets of Modernity: In Search of the Female Flaneur' in D. Andrew, *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1997, p. 67.

[26] Quoted in Gleber 'Female Flanerie', *ibid.* Gleber refers to an unpublished manuscript by Hake. Hake's argument was subsequently published as 'Urban Spectacle in Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin, Symphony of the Big City*' in T. Knieche and S. Brockmann (eds.), *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, Camden House, Columbia, South Carolina, 1994, pp. 127-137.

[27] Gleber, 'Female Flanerie', p. 76.

[28] Kracauer's references to cinema as a mode of production, particularly the Weimar cinema of Ruttmann's *Berlin*, as a 'mass ornament' that exploits visual pleasures over cognition is one aspect of the denigration of narrative in Ruttmann's film. T. Levin (ed.) *The Mass Ornament*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1988. As in *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1947), in *Theory of Film* Kracauer decries what he sees as the lack of (narrative) 'content' in Ruttmann's film. S. Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1960. p. 207.

[29] Gleber, 'Female Flanerie', p. 77.

[30] Quoted in W. Natter, 'The City as Cinematic Space: Modernism and Place in *Berlin, Symphony of a City*' in S. Aitken and L. Zonn (eds.), *Power, Place, Situation, and Spectacle: A Geography of Film*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland, 1994, p. 220.

[31] Quoted in Natter, *ibid.*

[32] J. Chapman, 'Two Aspects of the City: Cavalcanti and Ruttmann' in L. Jacobs (ed.), *The Documentary Tradition*, Norton, New York, 1979, p. 37, 39-40.

[33] *ibid.*, p. 40.

[34] Quoted in W. Natter, 'The City as Cinematic Space: Modernism and Place in *Berlin, Symphony of a City*' in S. Aitken and L. Zonn (eds.), *Power, Place, Situation, and Spectacle: A Geography of Film*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland, 1994, p. 220.

[35] P. Rotha, in collaboration with S. Read and R. Griffith, *Documentary Film: The Use of the Film Medium to Interpret Creatively and in Social Terms the Life of the People as it Exists in Reality*, Communication Arts Books, New York, 1952 (first published in 1935), p. 86.

[36] S. Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1947, p. 187.

[37] M. Gaughan, 'Ruttmann's *Berlin*: Filming in a "Hollow Space"' in M. Shiel and T. Fitzmaurice (eds.), *Screening the City*, Verso, London, 2003, p. 41.

[38] Quoted in J. Donald, 'The City, the Cinema: Modern Spaces' in C. Jenks (ed.), *Visual Culture*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 87.

[39] Malcolm Turvey discusses Vertov's representation of machinery in 'Can the Camera See? Mimesis in "Man with a Movie Camera"', *October*, vol. 89, summer 1999, pp. 25-50.

[40] In many cases charges of fascism against Ruttmann are related to the fact that he stayed in Germany during Hitler's rise to power and was recruited to contribute films to Hitler's propaganda projects. Biography is used *ex post facto* as a way of maintaining that Ruttmann's early films reflect fascist concerns. Biography or the mechanical visual metaphor are not as persuasive as clues to an emerging fascism in Ruttmann's work as is *Berlin's* satirical and scathing critique of the Weimar Republic's liberalism and modernity.

[41] S. Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1947, p. 187.

[42] W. Natter, 'The City as Cinematic Space: Modernism and Place in *Berlin, Symphony of a City*' in S. Aitken and L. Zonn (eds.), *Power, Place, Situation, and Spectacle: A Geography of Film*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland, 1994, p. 220.

[43] J. Donald equates the city, modernity, and femininity in Ruttmann in 'The City, the Cinema: Modern Spaces' in C. Jenks (ed.), *Visual Culture*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 88.

[44] Quoted in A. Gleber, 'Female Flanerie and the *Symphony of the City*' in K. von Ankum (ed.), *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997, p. 76.

[45] S. Barber, *Projected Cities*, Reaktion Books, London, 2002, p. 32. Barber states that the camera was concealed in a suitcase. Weihsmann comments that the camera was camouflaged in a box which was wheeled along the streets and boulevards. H. Weihsmann, 'The City in Twilight: Charting the Genre of the "City Film", 1900-1930' in F. Penz and M. Thomas (eds.), *Cinema and Architecture: Méliès, Mallet-Stevens, Multimedia*, British Film Institute, London, 1997, p. 22.

[46] T. Gunning, 'Embarrassing Evidence: The Detective Camera and the Documentary Impulse' in J. Gaines and M. Renov (eds.), *Collecting Visible Evidence*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999, p. 51.

[47] Emerging rights to privacy and the deployment of cameras at the turn of the twentieth century are discussed in *ibid.*, p. 56, and R. Mensel, "'Kodakers Lying in Wait": Amateur Photography and the Right of Privacy in New York, 1885-1915', *American Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 1, March 1999, pp. 24-45, and T. Gunning, 'Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema' in L. Charney and V. Schwartz (eds.), *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995, pp. 15-45.

[48] P.E. Salles Gomes, *Jean Vigo*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1972, p. 57.

[49] Gomes, *ibid.*, p. 58, and E. Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, p. 77.

[50] Vigo quoted in B. Kaufman, 'Jean Vigo's *A propos de Nice*' in L. Jacobs, *The Documentary Tradition*, Norton, New York, 1979, p. 77.

[51] *ibid.*

[52] Vigo quoted in P.E. Salles Gomes, *Jean Vigo*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1972, p. 55.

[53] V. Petric, *Constructivism in Film: The Man with the Movie Camera: A Cinematic Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 81.

[54] M. Kaufman, 'An Interview with Mikhail Kaufman', *October*, vol. 11, winter 1979, p. 64.

[55] Petric, op. cit., p. 82.

[56] The phrase 'performance of the real' comes from John Corner in his discussion of televisual popular factual entertainment, 'Performing the Real: Documentary Diversions', *Television and New Media*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2002, pp. 255-269.

[57] M. Kaufman, 'An Interview with Mikhail Kaufman', *October*, vol. 11, winter 1979, p. 64.

[58] *ibid.*

[59] In V. Petric, 'Vertov, Lenin, and Perestroika: The Cinematic Transposition of Reality', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 15, no. 1, March 1995, p. 16.

[60] Hansen notes that a central feature of the early so-called cinema of attractions was 'above all, an openly exhibitionist tendency epitomized by the recurring looks of actors at the camera.' The return look in New York City film is a core characteristic of the genre's nonfictional cinema of attractions, what is referred to here as documentary display. M. Hansen, 'Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: "The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology"', *New German Critique*, no. 40, winter 1987, p. 180.

[61] Quoted in J-C. Horak, *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Avant-Garde, 1919-1945*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1995, p. 32.

[62] J-C. Horak, *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Avant-Garde, 1919-1945*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1995, p. 32.

[63] S. MacDonald, *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, p. 153.

[64] S. MacDonald, *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, p. 163.

[65] In most cases critical attention to Thompson's film has focused on the use of trick photography to provide 'visual interest' and, consequently, the place of the corporeal within the film is typically denied. (See, for example, S. MacDonald, *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, p. 163). Such an approach echoes Kracauer's description (and denunciation) of Ruttman's *Berlin*, a point carried in MacDonald's characterisation of *N.Y., N.Y* as a film which 'is as detached from particular lives as Ruttman's *Berlin: Symphony of a Big City*.' (S. MacDonald, *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, p. 163). Contrary to such claims, just as Ruttman's film is structured around the actions of the (female) inhabitants of Berlin, so too the visual capacity of Thompson's film is built from and around the presence of the corporeal. The opening segments, for example, depicting the beginning of the day are evoked by a man stretching after a night's sleep, followed by a close-up of teeth being brushed, and the accelerating pace of the day is constructed within images of pedestrian traffic in Manhattan, and the start of the day's work is signalled by shots of hands at a typewriter. Thompson's film lacks the open look at the camera which is deployed as a structural device in the films of Burkhardt and Weegee though it does rally forms of embodiment as a central component of the visual organisation of the city film.

[66] *ibid.*, p. 158.

[67] The reference to a 'fractured travelog' is from P. Arthur, 'The Redemption of the City' in his *A Line of Sight: American Avant-Garde Film since 1965*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2005, p. 52.

[68] S. MacDonald, *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, p. 159.

[69] Barsam puts the production date at 1950, MacDonald puts it at 1952. R. Barsam, *Non-Fiction Film: A Critical History*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1973; S. MacDonald, *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001.

[70] S. MacDonald, *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, p. 161.

[71] *ibid.*, p. 162.

[72] Other New York City films of the period constructed a visual 'rhythm' within 'kaleidoscopic' urban imagery.

Pennebaker's *Daybreak Express* (1953-58), a six-minute film that echoes *Manhatta* in more than its brief duration, which was filmed from a subway train traversing the length of Manhattan from north to south, depicts New York as a visually arresting, modern metropolis. Pennebaker's use of fish-eye lenses and angular framed shots is reminiscent of the multiple visual manipulations in Francis Thompson's film *N.Y., N.Y.*

[73] Benveniste is quoted in M. Vernet, 'The Look at the Camera', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 28, no. 2, winter 1989, p. 48.

[74] P. Arthur, 'The Redemption of the City' in his *A Line of Sight: American Avant-Garde Film since 1965*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2005.

[75] The phrase 'descriptive poetics' is from T. Wilkinson, '*Hasta la victoria siempre*', *Senses of Cinema*, <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/17/cteq/hasta.html>.

[76] The Griersonian representation of the 'victim' is discussed in B. Winston, 'The Tradition of the Victim in Griersonian Documentary' in A. Rosenthal (ed.), *New Challenges for Documentary*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988, pp. 269-287.

[77] Quoted in Wilkinson, op. cit.

[78] The phrase 'cognitive mapping' is by Fredric Jameson, from his *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1991.

[79] British urban planning films are discussed in J. Gold and S. Ward, 'We're Going to Do it Right this Time: Cinematic Representations of Urban Planning and the British New Towns, 1939 to 1951', in S. Aitken and L. Zonn (eds.), *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle: A Geography of Film*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland, 1994, and N. Bullock, 'Imagining the Post-War World: Architecture, Reconstruction and the British Documentary Film Movement' in F. Penz and M. Thomas (eds.), *Cinema and Architecture: Méliès, Mallet-Stevens, Multimedia*, British Film Institute, London, 1997.

[80] C. Plantinga, 'The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face on Film' in C. Plantinga and G. Smith (eds.), *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1999, p. 239.

[81] Fredric Jameson discusses the concept of what he calls national allegory in 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text*, vol. 15, 1986, pp. 65-88.

[82] Kramer quoted in S. Blum-Reid, *East-West Encounters: Franco-Asian Cinema and Literature*, Wallflower Press, London, 2003, p. 98.

[83] Malle quoted in *ibid*, p. 91.

[84] P. Arthur, 'The Redemption of the City' in his *A Line of Sight: American Avant-Garde Film since 1965*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2005.

[85] T. Gitlin, 'Phantom India' in A. Rosenthal (ed.), *New Challenges for Documentary*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988, p. 537.

[86] The French publisher Gallimard has recently published Malle's notebooks from his trip to India, wherein Malle expands on his observations on *Calcutta*. See L. Malle, *L'Inde fantôme: Carnet de voyage*, Gallimard, Paris, 2005.

[87] B. Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994, p. 95.

[88] Ostor, Gardner's collaborator on the film, refers to the individuals featured in the film as 'characters' in A. Ostor, 'Forest of Bliss: Film and Anthropology', *East-West Film Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1994, pp. 70-104. The essay provides a detailed explication of the film's sequences.

[89] R. Gardner, 'The Impulse to Preserve' in C. Warren (ed.), *Beyond Document: Essays in Nonfiction Film*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, 1996, p. 176. Brakhage pays particular attention to the film's skein of metaphorical allusions in S. Brakhage, *Telling Time: Essays of a Visionary Filmmaker*, Documentext, New York, 2003.

[90] The debate for and against *Forest of Bliss*, which took place mainly in the pages of the *SVA (Society for Visual Anthropology) Newsletter* in the late 1980s and sporadically throughout the 1990s in the *Newsletter's* successor, the *Visual Anthropology Review*, is set out in D. MacDougall, 'Gifts of Circumstance', *Visual Anthropology Review*, vol. 17, no. 1, spring-summer, 2001, p. 69, and E. Merman, 'Being Where? Experiencing Narratives of Ethnographic Film', *Visual Anthropology Review*, vol. 13, no. 1, spring 1997, p. 50.

[91] J. Ruby, 'The Emperor and His Critics', *SVA Newsletter*, spring 1990, p. 11.

[92] A. Moore, 'The Limitations of Imagist Documentary: A Review of Robert Gardner's "Forest of Bliss"', *SVA*

Newsletter, fall 1988, p. 1. Marcus Banks' observations on the interpretative strategies applied by ethnographic scientists to ethnographic film exposes the naiveté of the positions implicit in the comments by Ruby and Moore: 'In my own experience of watching films with other social scientists I have noticed a pronounced desire to read the film as a sequence of animated photographs, each accompanied by explanatory narration. When this desire cannot be fulfilled, as in *Forest of Bliss*, the tendency seems to be a retreat into incomprehension.' M. Banks, *Visual Methods in Social Research*, Sage, London, 2001, pp. 22-3.

[93] Ruby, op. cit. Nichols casts the distinction in terms of 'social science canons of evaluation and cultural theory modes of interpretation' and argues that 'The adoption of reflexive, text-centered strategies in many cross-cultural forms of representation has yet to be matched by a comparable adoption of cultural theory in ethnographic film criticism.' B. Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994, p. 80.

[94] Ruby tempered his assessment of the place of the 'artistic' within ethnographic filmmaking - though not his criticisms of Gardner's work - in his essays collected as *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000. The argument that *Forest of Bliss* resists categorisation as 'ethnographic film' has been made by Peter Loizos in his book *Innovation in Ethnographic Film: From Innocence to Self-Consciousness, 1955-1985*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993, p. 162. Loizos presents a variation of the same argument in 'Admissible Evidence? Film in Anthropology' in P. Crawford and D. Turton (eds.), *Film as Ethnography*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1992, pp. 50-65.

[95] See D. MacDougall, *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006.

[96] K.T. Anderson, 'Toward an Anarchy of Imagery: Questioning the Categorization of Films as "Ethnographic"', *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 55, nos. 2-3, summer-fall 2003, p. 82.

[97] Reflecting on Baudelaire's writings Walter Benjamin drew a parallel between city strolling and watching film in terms of a series of 'shocks' registered by the spectator during both experiences. W. Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in *Charles Baudelaire*, Verso, London, 1983, p. 132. According to Benjamin in his 'Artwork' essay, cinema irrupts within urban life, producing its own version of shock, notably in relation to the visual impact of montage. Benjamin's notion of the cinematic shock-effect is discussed in M. Hansen, 'Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: "The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology"', *New German Critique*, no. 40, winter 1987, pp. 179-224, and S. Buck-Morss, 'Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered', *October*, no. 62, Fall 1992, pp. 3-41.

[98] R. Gardner and A. Ostor, *Making Forest of Bliss: Intention, Circumstance, and Chance in Nonfiction Film: A Conversation between Robert Gardner + Akos Ostor*, Harvard Film Archive, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2001, p. 46.

[99] *ibid*, p. 47.

[100] R. Gardner and A. Ostor, *Making Forest of Bliss: Intention, Circumstance, and Chance in Nonfiction Film: A Conversation between Robert Gardner + Akos Ostor*, Harvard Film Archive, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2001, p. 33.

[101] *ibid*, p. 29.

[102] Quoted in D. MacDougall, 'Gifts of Circumstance', *Visual Anthropology Review*, vol. 17, no. 1, spring-summer, 2001, p. 79.

[103] *ibid*, p. 83.

[104] D. MacDougall, *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006, p. 3.

[105] H. Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001, p. 26.

[106] *ibid*, p. 28.

[107] *ibid*, p. 29.

[108] The term 'sensory reports' is by Laura Marks, quoted by Naficy, *ibid*, p. 28.

[109] *ibid*, p. 29.

[110] L. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2000, p. 163.

[111] *ibid*.

[\[112\]](#) *ibid*, p. 58.

[\[113\]](#) *ibid*, p. 59.

*Page maintained by: [Editor](#) © 2006. NO SPAM. Email addresses throughout this site are provided to facilitate communication with bona fide researchers and students. In accordance with the Spam Act 2003 (Australia) the provision of email addresses is not to be taken as consent to receive unsolicited commercial email, malicious code or spam.
Created on: Monday, 27 November 2006 | Last Updated: 27-Nov-06*