

CAUGHT IN THE FABRIC OF WORLD  
LANDSCAPE AND DOCUMENTARY,  
A DIALOGIC PRACTICE

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CAUGHT IN THE FABRIC OF WORLD  
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## Caught in the Fabric of World

### Landscape and Documentary, a Dialogic Practice

#### Abstract

This practice-led research investigates the artistic practice of documentary filmmaking as a means to explore tensions of place and visibility in landscapes of the South Pennines in the north of England. Created through an iterative process of practice-led and theoretical research, the thesis comprises four films: *The North Wind* (2013, 6'), *Uplands* (2014, 11'), *Archipelago* (2016, 19'), and *Crossing* (2017, 7'), and a written exegesis.

The research addresses the dialectic between landscape's visual epistemology and dynamic human-centred senses of place. Tensions between the 'frame' as a 'bounded' world of vision and place as dynamic and mobile engenders, and is developed through, an artistic documentary film practice that is processual and emergent (Hongisto 2015, MacDougall 2014), bringing pictorial and phenomenological concepts of landscape into a new relationship.

The research is critically underpinned by Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'flesh' (1968) as a means through which a 'chiasm' or 'crossing over' between concepts and experiences of place in the research location, and methods of artistic practice which explore and mediate themes of place, is created. An approach to film practice as 'process' has engendered a methodology of filmmaking as 'weaving' as a generative ontology of 'making', in which form 'unfurls from within' (Ingold 2005). This concept of weaving analogises the overarching filmmaking process, as well as becoming a means to navigate tensions of place in the landscape as a dynamic 'play of forces'.

Meanings of place in the South Pennines, a region of gritstone moorland straddling the Yorkshire-Lancashire border in the north of England, are central to the research. I argue

that distinct tensions of landscape in the South Pennines - a pastoral 'wilderness' tied to northern England's industrial histories - are pivotal to its 'specific ambience' (Ingold 1993) as a site of dwelling. Entangled senses of place generating themes of place and landscape in each of the films, interact with a development of practice methods, producing an approach to 'form' and 'content' that is reciprocal and interdependent. I argue that this triangulation of documentary filmmaking and landscape via theories of embodiment advances a critical understanding of filmic tensions of place and landscape. Valuable insights are also gained into processual and material approaches to documentary film, and film practice as a form of knowledge creation about experiences and senses of place and landscape.

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## Introduction

### Overview of the research

'This initial paradox cannot but produce others. Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is one of them. It is caught in the fabric of the world.'  
(Merleau-Ponty 1964: 163)

This research investigates documentary film practice as a means to explore tensions of place and visuality in landscapes of the South Pennines in the north of England.

An intrinsic dialectic between a vision of the South Pennine upland landscape as 'a world before creation' (Hughes 1975), and its complex and dynamic human-centred sense of place are central to this study. I argue that distinct tensions of the South Pennines - an area of mainly gritstone moorland straddling the Yorkshire-Lancashire border - as pastoral 'wilderness' tied to northern England's industrial histories, produced through the business of dwelling, are pivotal to its 'specific ambience' (Ingold 1993). Described as 'desolate, wild and abandoned' (Defoe 1724) and a landscape of 'huge light' (Hughes, 1979), the South Pennines are at once urban, rural and wild; bleak and sublime. Enlaced with former manufacturing centres of industrial Britain, the region constantly co-constructs a landscape 'world' for, with and around the towns and their populaces, creating narratives of place that are dynamic, temporal and networked (Massey 1994), thereby disrupting the fixing of place that landscape, through its historical pictorial frameworks, is commonly associated with. Approached through a documentary film practice that is processual and emergent, this research argues for a 'pictorial' and 'dynamically and temporally emplaced' concept of landscape - so that place as conceived by Massey, and pictorial 'framing' as associated with certain forms of landscape and documentary, become reciprocal and interdependent. This dialectic between the 'frame' as a 'bounded' world of vision, and place as dynamic and mobile engenders and is developed through a documentary practice that brings pictorial and phenomenological concepts of landscape, commonly theorised as opposing forces, into a new relationship.

The research is founded in a critical dialogue between embodiment theories of both landscape and moving image informed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of the 'flesh' (1968), and modes of documentary film practice that are embodied, active and processual. The research advances a critical understanding of filmic tensions of place and mediations of landscape by drawing on the concept of 'flesh'. This concept underpins the generation of methods and forms of practice-led research, which seek to discover how meaning can be created through a 'chiasm' or 'crossing over' between concepts and experiences of place in the research location and methods of artistic practice which explore and mediate these themes. I identify and draw into relationship a series of interconnected themes of landscape and place, and documentary filmmaking, to critically situate the research. Film practice methods are then developed out of an encounter between this dialogic process and distinct tensions I perceive as imminent to the research site. This includes a rethreading of filmmaking methods, so that field research, image/sound recordings, and post-production become an intertwined, 'conversational' process rather than a linear one. This is an active form of documentary (Hongisto 2015, MacDougall 2006, 2014), which approaches filmmaking as a kind of drawing (Grimshaw & Ravetz 2015). I use an overarching framework of 'weaving', understood as an ontology of making in which form is generated from 'within' the making process (Ingold 2005), to navigate tensions of place as a 'play of forces', which interact with visualised framings of landscape. This concept of weaving further connects with editing methods of contrapuntal sequencing developed as a means to visualise the dynamic 'play of forces' within senses of place, in the South Pennines.

The conceptualisation of the filmmaking process as a modality of 'weaving', emerging from the filmmaking practice, links to themes of temporality and rhythm as shared discourses, in partnership with the push-pull dynamic between theories of landscape and documentary filmmaking. This exchange has raised questions of form and structure, from which particular approaches to structure including musical rhythm, montage and contrapuntal sequencing have been developed. This continual interplay between practice and theory generates a honed, active and conscious development of the weaving concept, leading in turn to a reimagined aesthetic in which 'threads' are 'pulled' between shots through a process of contrapuntal sequencing. This is periodically visualised structurally in the films through juxtaposed horizontal and vertical planes which visually reference the embodied act of

weaving as a play of forces, as well as the more literal figuration of warp and weft. Metaphorically, it also relates to the horizontal/vertical analogies used to describe not only the poetic in film (Deren 1953) but also the melodic/harmonic structural methods of musical counterpoint.

Situated as a 'journeying forth' (Coessens, Crispin, Douglas, 2009: 27), the research positions my documentary practice as artistic research, shaped by emergent processes – a form of 'becoming' (Hongisto 2015) and a mode of emergent and tacit knowledge production (Barrett 2007) generated through an iterative process of theoretical and practice research. Chantal Akerman wrote 'I follow an opposite trajectory to that of the makers of political films. They have a skeleton, an idea and then they put on flesh: I have in the first place the flesh, the skeleton appears later' (Akerman in Margulies, 1996: 42). Similarly, the modality of documentary practice developed here connects with the poetic documentary mode (Nichols 2001) and forms of observational and experimental ethnographic film (Grimshaw & Ravetz 2009, MacDougall 2006, Russell 1999), in their fleshy approaches. This conceptualisation of documentary film dovetails with new materialist positions, which situate documentary as active, affective and explorative (Hongisto 2015). Questions of representation, aesthetic and the languages of expression as they interact with materialities, visualisations and experiences of landscape as both picture and place arise as part of this emergent process.

A key concept in the study is Merleau-Ponty's chiasmic reversibility, or 'flesh' (1968) which is used to reconceptualise the human-world relationship by dismantling the subject-object binary, involving a 'chiasm' - or 'crossing over' - of subjective experience and objective existence (Baldwin 2003: 247). The concept is encapsulated by Merleau-Ponty's frequently cited example of one hand touching the other, an action which he argues reveals our existence as both toucher and touched, subject and object; a crossing-over that is reversible, as touched becomes toucher and vice-versa. This 'chiasmic reversibility' between subject and object is the essence of flesh: 'our bodies and the world are two aspects of a single reality: flesh' (Evans 2008: 187). Phenomenological theories of landscape draw on the notion of 'flesh' to enlase self and landscape as socially produced space rooted in dwelling, (Tilley 1994, Ingold 1993), resituating the visual in corporeal terms (Wylie 2007).

A similarly situated phenomenological turn in film theory beginning in the late twentieth century conceptualises moving image as a 'viewing view' (Sobchack 1992): an enfolding, reversible experience involving the bodies of the filmmaker, spectator and the film itself. This concept has important repercussions for documentary and its presumed objectivity, connecting to recent theories of documentary film as experiential and active (Hongisto 2015, MacDougall 2014).

The 'frame', common to both landscape and documentary theory and practice, is a key theme of the study. The 'intensely visual idea' of landscape (Cresswell 2004) is analysed from its pictorial origins in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, theorised for example as a 'blank screen' onto which cultural meanings are projected: a 'way of seeing' (Cosgrove 1984) situated within the perspectival traditions of Western art cognate with the figure of the gazing spectator (Wylie 2007). Documentary filmmaking is also defined within the terms of the research as a visual discourse, with ideas of 'framing' developed through theories of observational cinema and the embodied camera (Grimshaw & Ravetz 2009, MacDougall 2006) and a connected new materialist 'aesthetics of the frame' which theorises framing as dynamic and intersubjective (Hongisto 2015). Embodied framing methods have also been developed in the research as a means to conflate the everyday with the surreal, a 'continuous play of the familiar and strange' (Clifford 1981), reminiscent of Trinh T. Minh-ha's concept of the painting-image (2005) creating space for 'altered' meanings to emerge, and a phenomenological concept of the documentary image as 'a continual movement of consciousness between perception and reflection' (Hezekiah 2010) which can express 'hidden' complexities of place through connotative aesthetics or unexpected juxtapositions. Related to Trigg's theory of phenomenology as a means to 'draw our attention to the strangeness of things' in the concurrently hidden and familiar nature of the uncanny (Trigg 2012), these methods extend from embodied filming methods to post-production processes. This approach to the documentary filmmaking process as embodied and active, interacting with subjective responses to place and landscape to 'attack the familiar' (Clifford 1981) is developed in the research to express ideas about tensions of place, as well as tensions in the dialectic between the frame and the subject.

The research advances a critical understanding of filmic tensions of place and mediations of landscape and insights are gained into processual and material methods of documentary film practice, and as a form of knowledge creation about experiences and senses of place.

### **Personal context to the research**

The origins of this research project lie in my background as both a painter and a television documentary maker. As a painter, my practice of landscape art was rooted in the tension between landscape as subject matter and its representational form. Making work of and about landscape was a form of placemaking, locating oneself in one's environment at the same time as conveying something about that environment and its role in personal and cultural identity. Landscape was a way to express ideas about inner states while intrinsically connected to the world 'out there'. Landscape as a visual art practice to explore and question identity and culture through the nature of specific places, became particularly visible in my practice during a visual arts fellowship in Australia in the late 1990s. Here, I developed a strong interest in thematic/aesthetic tensions in Australian landscapes, which developed in my later work back in Britain. The end of the fellowship coincided with a move to the north of England which began to formatively influence my thinking about landscape and identity with and through place.

Soon after this relocation I made a career move which would lead to several years working in television documentary production. I was instantly attracted to the documentary process, and although television production was not creative in the way I was used to working, I became very interested in the collaborative process that emerged between the filmmaker and participant in documentary production. The process of narrative filmmaking in itself was also a new experience, and although I did not continue to develop the particular storytelling approaches I had learned in television on my return to personal practice, the impact of documentary had asserted itself on my work and ideas, and I worked solely as an

artist-documentary filmmaker<sup>1</sup> from that point on.

Thematically, place and landscape resumed with my return to art practice. Developing my previous thinking about landscape painting into the film form via my recent documentary experience in television production revealed new ways of thinking about and visualising landscape. The film project which directly preceded and lay the foundation for this research was undertaken in the Lake District and funded by Arts Council England. *Not giddy yet aerial* (2011) was exhibited at the Wordsworth Museum in the village of Grasmere, where the film was made. The title is a reference to Wordsworth's poem *Home at Grasmere* (1806), recalling his own first sighting of Grasmere vale, later to become his home. The viewpoint, one of the picturesque 'stations' in West's *Guide to the Lakes* (1778) – the region's first tourist guidebook - overlooks Grasmere from the south side of the lake. This picturesque 'framing' of Grasmere and its surroundings became the locating scene of the film.

200 years after the poem was written, the Lake District's familiarity as image, arguably 'created' through the picturesque, has evolved into a brand. In a valley many visitors are drawn to for its revered and familiar rural landscape, yet where 40% of its residential properties are second or holiday homes, Grasmere has a complicated relationship with tourism, and a difficult balance to sustain. This balance between, or collision of, 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives (Relph 1976) represented by the residents and tourists, became the subject matter and theme of the film, which sought to find a way to address the tensions between these narratives of place: landscape as object and personal experience; inhabited working environment and tourist gaze; the Romantic sublime, and the vulnerability of landscape; the spiritual and the commoditised. The project aimed to look into this 'scene', invoking landscape through interwoven lines of everyday narratives. Observed everyday activities, shot over the course of a year, evoke both residents' and tourists' perspectives – marking lambs before turning them onto the fell; a coach party in a gift shop; hill walking

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<sup>1</sup> In this written thesis I position my practice in terms of artistic documentary, exploring the histories and critical contexts for the form. As I explain in the thesis, I do not see art and documentary at odds with one another but mutually generative; however I frequently use the term artist-documentary filmmaker to make more explicit the nature of the practice. Related terms in use to describe similar practices include experimental documentary (Hilderbrand 2009), experimental ethnography (Russell 1999), poetic documentary (Nichols 2001) and avant-doc (MacDonald 2014).

on Helvellyn; lessons in the local school. These narrative lines, interwoven by means of a loose symphonic structure approximating four themes, counterpoint the tensions provoked by a landscape created by farming and a present-day economy sustained by tourism, conceptualising the landscape as a place of experiences, while remaining in dialogue with its views. The sustained period of research for this film, leading from the framing device of the picturesque to inform ideas about present day experience of landscape, and methods of integrating observational filmmaking and contrapuntal sequencing to address tensions between insider and outsider relationships with landscape, directly fed into and laid the groundwork for 'Caught in the Fabric of World'.



Figure 1. *Not giddy yet aerial* (2011) - film still

### **Overview of the written exegesis**

The written element of the thesis is organised into three chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 explore the debates and critical contexts in which my research is situated and methods of filmmaking practice, while Chapter 3 focuses explicitly on the practice produced as part of the research. While the practice is alluded to in Chapters 1 and 2 where appropriate, the arrangement of the exegesis invites the reader to consider the debates and contexts of the research before a more explicit reading of the films; however, the films themselves should ideally be viewed after this introduction, and before reading Chapter 1.

Chapter 1 is a critical investigation of the terms 'landscape' and 'documentary', providing a contextual backdrop and defining the concepts which help to lay the foundation of the research. Its three parts are structured around the three key terms of this investigation, arrived at through the process of the research – 'the framed world', 'embodiment', and 'temporality and rhythm'. Part 1 is a foundational exploration of landscape and documentary film as visual discourses incorporating a contextual background to and expanded definition of 'landscape' and 'documentary film' according to the concerns of the study. I position the entwined meanings of landscape as image and a mode of place with an overview of documentary film as a 'framing of world', locating my own approach to documentary as a form of art practice related to the poetic mode and experimental ethnography<sup>2</sup>. To explore my commitment to the documentary enterprise, I have found it valuable to trace its histories towards a personal central definition as a mode of response (Vaughan 1999), an enfolding process which does not separate but invests in the entanglement between matter and signification (Hongisto 2015). Part 2 develops this position, focusing landscape and documentary through theories of embodiment. As in Part 1, the section is organised by focusing on landscape first, then documentary film, and both are critiqued in terms of the related phenomenological turns in critical theory as well as practice. In both fields, visualist epistemologies are brought into question but remain critical: the visual is enfolded into the corporeal, the 'framing' discourses of both becoming integral to ideas of embodiment (Hongisto 2015, Wylie 2005). Part 3 explores temporality and rhythm as a development from embodiment theory into more specific ideas of process and unfolding time. In its discussion of walking as experience of landscape, and rhythmic patterns and montage in moving image, these ideas can be seen to pave the way for the practice methods, which are analysed in the following chapter.

Chapter 2 is also organised into three parts, and focuses on the research contexts and methods of artistic practice. Part 1 expands on Chapter 1's analysis of 'landscape' to explore the specific meanings of the South Pennines - its geology, topography and agricultural, industrial and post-industrial histories. This lays the context for how distinct tensions of the

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<sup>2</sup> Theory and practice of ethnographic film forms part of my enquiry and has been influential in this research. In this written thesis, I have tended not to reference ethnographic research or practice as a defined discourse separate from the documentary enterprise, but as part of it.

landscape, generated from social, cultural and economic histories and the 'business of dwelling' from past into present, impact on the research themes and methods of practice. Part 2 is a review of my critical contexts of moving image practice, with a focus on documentary and artists' films with themes of place and landscape. Contextualising the role of landscape in moving image according to Lefebvre's studies (2006, 2011), I analyse the field of film practices with which the research correlates and contributes to. In Part 3 I discuss my research practice methods. This section is organised into sub-sections which aim to make connections between the key themes and ideas explored in Chapter 1, and the filmmaking methods which evolved from the process of the research. I first provide an overview of the practice production methods such as field research, interviewing and workflow before reviewing particular methods of practice in more detail. 'The embodied frame' synthesises Chapter 1's 'Framed world' and 'Embodiment' contexts to explore the frame as both pictorial, active and emergent. I also explore 'weaving' both as an overarching modality of making and a practice method, which developed as a response to the iterative nature of the research. Throughout this chapter but particularly in Part 3, ideas are illustrated through case studies of particular films, filmmakers, artists and ethnographers, including referencing to the research films themselves. This helps to lay the groundwork for the specific critique of the research films in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 is a critical analysis of the four films made as part of 'Caught in the fabric of world': *The North Wind* (2013, 6'46), *Uplands* (2014, 11'), *Archipelago* (2016, 19'14), and *Crossing* (2017, 7'). The films have developed out of the landscape's specific topographies and histories in distinct ways, summarised as follows -

**Film 1: *The North Wind* (2013, 6'46)**

Top Withens is a ruined farmhouse high up on Haworth Moor said to be the location of *Wuthering Heights*, and a popular destination point for walkers and Brontë tourists. Filmed over the course of a year, the film explores a dialogue between the historical 'wild' landscape of the Yorkshire moors viewed through the prism of Brontë mythology, and the rhythms of time; the weather, as in *Wuthering Heights* permeating the site. The farmhouse in its eroded state is fixed in the space, while its human visitors are ghost-like, haunting the site in fractured scraps of image and sound.

**Film 2: *Uplands* (2014, 11')**

*Uplands* addresses the experiences of a particular Pennine community - those whose families settled as migrant workers from Asia to work in Yorkshire's textiles industry, becoming intrinsic to the social and cultural life of Pennine mill towns today. Although many from this community originate from rural areas, they are often viewed in Britain, and see themselves, as town-dwellers, the moorlands and hills an un-travelled-to backdrop to urban existence. This film focuses on a Muslim man from Bradford who belongs to a small and recent trend beginning to redress this balance. Reflecting on cultural challenges his community face in experiencing the outdoors, the film re-imagines the character of the Pennines, generating alternative encounters with the landscape while reconsidering it as a landscape of home.

**Film 3: *Archipelago* (2016, 19'14)**

A housing estate lies on the outskirts of Halifax, a former mill town in the north of England. Edged by moorland and enclosed by wooded valleys and pastoral hills, the estate appears as a finger of land in which the town washes up onto the moors. A post-war countryside sanctuary built in response to slum clearance initiatives, its strong family community is complicated by a more recent media-fuelled reputation for crime and drugs. Run-down and ghettoised, or one of the most beautiful valleys in the area? *Archipelago* explores this entangled identity through everyday observations, caught within the seasonal changes of the year.

**Film 4: *Crossing* (2017, 7'11)**

A portrait of the landscape at Windy Hill where the M62 traverses the Pennine moorland. East meets West, high speed traffic meets the Pennine way footpath, and with Windy Hill transmitter overlooking the landscape, the film interweaves the play of forces at the location, cloaked in Pennine weather.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Crafting a relationship between documentary film and landscape**

The aim of this research is to investigate documentary film practice as a means to explore tensions between landscape's pictorial paradigms and dynamic senses of place, drawing 'landscape' and 'documentary film' together into a new relationship. To do this, one of my first research strategies has been to identify, critically examine and draw together key interconnected themes relating to theories of both landscape and documentary film practice. This entails an interrogation of the terms 'landscape' and 'documentary film', and their histories, forms and contexts. The chapter is organised into three parts that are intended to create a dialogue between the shared ideas, contexts and forms I have been working with, and critically underpin the research. Part 1: 'The framed world' examines landscape and documentary film as visualisations of world, providing an historical and contextual overview of each concept from the birth of their respective ideas: landscape as 'image' and 'place' from the early middle ages, and documentary in the early twentieth century. Part 2: 'Embodiment', develops these definitions through theories of embodiment in landscape and moving image, critiqued in terms of recent phenomenological interpretations based in Merleau-Ponty's theory of 'flesh', and expands on the paradigm of the frame set out in Part 1 by developing concepts of framing as active, expressive and processual. Part 3: 'Temporality and rhythm' develops ideas and contexts reviewed in Part 2 towards specific ideas of process and unfolding time, including the concept of 'taskscape' (Ingold 1993), walking as experience of landscape and the moving image as 'lived time'.

#### **Part 1 - The framed world**

My enquiry into the relationship between documentary film and landscape begins with a review of each under their broad delineations as visualisations, or 'framings' of world. I first review landscape as 'image' from its etymology in the middle ages as a pictorial concept through its paradigm as a 'way of seeing' (Cosgrove 1984). I then contextualise landscape

as 'placescape' (Casey 2002) where global and localised senses of place are integrated and networked (Massey 1994). I move on to explore documentary film as a visual construct, a way of seeing and framing the world. Since its original proposition as a 'creative treatment of actuality' (Grierson 1966: 147), the form and definition of documentary film has been questioned and contested. I analyse some of its ideologies, criticisms and practices, towards a personal definition of documentary's meaning for my practice, which helps to position, and lay the critical foundations for my practice in the research. Concepts of embodiment are raised in this section - particularly in reference to documentary - and these are expanded on more fully in Part 2. Positioning documentary's visual referencing here in relationship with the landscape idea is the first stage in drawing together the constructs and practices of landscape and documentary film and their role in my research.

### **Picture and place: towards a definition of landscape**

The present-day meaning of the word landscape has evolved from twin roots: the Germanic 'landschaft' from the middle-ages, referring to a 'bounded area of land' (Wylie 2007:21), and the Dutch 'landschap' denoting a pictorial representation of a stretch of land. The origin of the English usage is said to have come from the Dutch, with John Milton the first to use the word 'lantskip' in reference to 'scenery' rather than 'painting' (Bourassa 1991:3). Most contemporary definitions of landscape incorporate the idea of 'nature', 'view' and 'human culture' and often distinguish between landscape as physical 'scenery' and its pictorial representation<sup>3</sup>, but the idea of vision – landscape as 'view' - remains a defining factor. The European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe<sup>4</sup> defines landscape as 'an area as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (2000), a definition linking human activity with the land humans occupy, but also see before them, as a 'view', before an implied perceiving gaze. What

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<sup>3</sup>For example, Webster's dictionary defines landscape both as 'a picture representing a section of natural inland scener, as of a prairie, woodland, mountains' and 'an expanse of natural scenery seen by the eye in one view'.

<sup>4</sup> The European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe exists to 'promote the protection, management and planning of European landscapes, and organises European co-operation on landscape issues'.

follows is an overview of the evolution of the concept of landscape, considering the intertwining meanings of landscape as an 'intensely visual idea' (Cresswell 2004) and a 'mode of place' (Malpas 2011) as they inform the research.<sup>5</sup>

## Landscape as image

Landscape. It seems a clear enough subject at first. Then you start to look closely, and as Benediktsson and Lund remark, it unexpectedly becomes 'forbiddingly difficult to define'<sup>6</sup>. Conceived by scholars as both a catch-all term for 'outside'<sup>7</sup>, and 'obviously enough a painter's word'<sup>8</sup>, and also through what it is not – not land, not nature, not space<sup>9</sup>, landscape is not at all as clear as it first appears. Cosgrove's description of landscape as an 'imprecise and ambiguous concept'<sup>10</sup> instigated his own theory of landscape as a 'way of seeing', a composition of world. Landscape can be 'picturesque' – like a picture – but also is a picture, both form and representation of form wrapped up in one definition, 'both a package and the commodity inside the package'<sup>11</sup>. The pictorial framework of landscape has broken free to take on its own meaning, so that you choose 'landscape' to print out your documents in a horizontal format. Take a rectangular piece of paper, lay it horizontally, draw a line across it - ideally a third of the way up the page - and you conjure an instantly recognisable 'landscape': a representation of 'landscape' in 'landscape' format. This 'landscape' form - similar in shape to a cinema screen or widescreen TV - provides the clue to its key meaning as an 'intensely visual idea'<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> In this section I reference underlying contexts of landscape as image and representation, but it is not within the remit of the exegesis to review the history of landscape art.

<sup>6</sup> Benediktsson & Lund (2010) argue that 'landscape is at once a fascinating subject for research and forbiddingly difficult to define once and for all. A concept with the ring of the familiar and everyday, it has often been understood in a taken-for-granted manner as purely objective and material reality, exterior to the subjective self.' (2010: 1)

<sup>7</sup> Relph describes landscape as 'anything I see and sense when I am out of doors - landscape is the necessary context and background both of my daily affairs and of the more exotic circumstances of my life'. (1981:22)

<sup>8</sup> Barrell, J. *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place* (1972: 70)

<sup>9</sup> Ingold, T. *The Temporality of the Landscape* (1993)

<sup>10</sup> Cosgrove, D. *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (1984: 13)

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell, W.J.T. *Landscape and Power* (2002: 5)

<sup>12</sup> Cresswell, T. *Place, An Introduction* (2004: 17)

In *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (1984) Denis Cosgrove traces the evolution of 'landscape' entwined with landscape painting as it evolved in Renaissance Italy, which he identifies as the cradle of the landscape idea. He argues that 'landscape' emerged as a term in the 15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, achieving prominence during the period of transition between feudalism and capitalism (1984:3). Central to this birth of the landscape idea is perspective. Cosgrove argues that landscape is essentially a visual term because it was borne out of Renaissance concepts of space – a revolution in visual thinking which he aligns with the physical appropriation of space as property. A new taste for the aesthetic of perspective reflected this new phenomenon of land ownership, with perspective regarded not just as a visual device, but as a 'truth' in itself (1984: 21).

Visions of arcadia permeating landscape painting<sup>13</sup> became a key influence on the picturesque movement of 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain, popularising a new interest in and reverence for the material landscapes of Britain and Europe more widely<sup>14</sup>. Britain's more mountainous landscapes became fashionable with tourists of the picturesque; West's hugely popular *Guide to the Lakes* (1778), the Lake District's earliest guidebook, describing where visitors should position themselves in order to contemplate views conforming to picturesque ideals. Displaying the correct taste in landscape was a valuable social accomplishment (Barrell 1972), early tourists seeking scenery that could be treated as a series of pictures duplicating the aesthetics of landscape painters of the period.<sup>15</sup> Landscape as art and as material terrain thus became more cogently linked, concepts of aesthetics and vision underpinning both. As the picturesque aesthetic modelled natural scenes into compositions of idealised beauty, the sublime<sup>16</sup> hyperbolised landscape into visions of awe, wonder and spectacle, signalling a cultural shift in landscape perception from visualist and pictorial to emotional and experiential. Landscape paintings themselves pictured this shift

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<sup>13</sup> For example: Bellini, Giorgione, Titian and Veronese; developing later through Claude, Poussin and Rosa (Andrews 1999)

<sup>14</sup> Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* (1770), influencing traveller/writers including West, Brown and Gray, idealised Britain's landscapes as aesthetic wonders to be viewed in terms of their pictorial possibilities at a time when travellers were prevented from visiting revolutionary Europe.

<sup>15</sup> West described the varied Lake District landscapes as 'the delicate and elegant touches of Claude, the noble scenes of Poussin, and the stupendous romantic ideas of Salvatore Rosa.' (West, in Andrews, 1989: 159).

<sup>16</sup> Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* published in 1757, was highly influential on landscape aesthetics in the Romantic period.

in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism's paradigmatic landscape images. Although the sublime foregrounds subjectivity, there remains an essential Cartesian duality of self and object – man's gaze holding dominion over the realm of world – a dichotomy recently brought into question by phenomenological critiques of sublime experience<sup>17</sup>.

Landscape's continued significance as a pictorial art form became a prism through which to articulate ideas about and relationships with the world, reimagined through new processes and means of expression. Landscape became a canvas for the internal world - a focus both for emotional expression, and innovative depictions and processes of space and place. Photography's embrace of landscape<sup>18</sup> drew on established modes of pictorial representation for environmental as well as aesthetic purposes.<sup>19</sup> Photography played an integral role in America's conservation movement, transforming America's wilderness into sublime 'nature icons' (Schama 1995), which tapped into the nation's growing identity and established the profile of its National Parks<sup>20</sup>. Giblett argues that the camera 'objectifies the land as landscape and in doing so renders it as a visual phenomenon for the sense of sight and as a surface for aesthetic appreciation' (2012: 53), through setting up a subject-object distinction between viewer and viewed. This is suggestive of a 'fixing of place' through image, in parallel with Cosgrove's ideology of landscape, though one which emphasises the aesthetic rather than systems of power.<sup>21</sup>

Cultural geography's focus on landscape as material terrain was brought closely back into the pictorial fold by Cosgrove's landscape ideology (1984). Drawing in part on Berger's

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<sup>17</sup> A reinterpretation of sublime experience, resituating the sublime from detached gaze to embodied experience via Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'flesh' (Trigg 2012) is referenced later in the chapter.

<sup>18</sup> The subject of landscape was central to photography from its inception; according to Giblett, 'photography was made for landscape... landscape photography has remade the way land is seen' (2012: 15).

<sup>19</sup> For Giblett (2012), Anselm Adams' work references the sublime; Carleton Watkins' the picturesque.

<sup>20</sup> Solnit argues that the Sierra Club, which John Muir founded and to which Anselm Adams belonged, used aesthetic as a political tool in a way no other environmental organisation had managed (2007: 235).

<sup>21</sup> Photographic images from this period have imprinted onto the popular imagination and become target in part of a 'chocolate-box' critique of American wilderness - although there is no doubting the impact Anselm and others like him had on the environmental movement, in an echo of the Romantic poets' impact on the Lake District. The *New Topographics* exhibition of 1975 subverted the idea of the romantic wilderness they saw as fetishised by photography to focus on what they viewed as the realities of landscape's alteration by humans, a discourse that younger photographers such as Andreas Gursky have expanded on by combining these ideas with the spectacular imaging processes and aesthetics pioneered by Adams.

influential essays on visual art<sup>22</sup>, Cosgrove theorised landscape as not only as a construction or composition of the world, but as a 'way of seeing' which is not subjective but symbolic, critically conscious of collective historical and social meaning. To speak of landscape beauty or quality is intrinsically to adopt the role of observer rather than participant, implying that participant (insider) and observer (outsider) are not interchangeable, but fixed. This belief that an individual cannot be both 'inside' and 'outside' landscape leads to a cleaving of landscape as subject and object, creating a clear definition of landscape as a perceived view, contemplated by an observer - if it cannot be defined in these particular terms, it is no longer 'landscape'. This applies to the pictorial representation of landscape as well as the 'real' world. A landscape painting may hold human figures, but their purpose is a pictorial one - they are in but not of their surroundings. Landscape paintings thus only offer an illusory affinity with an insider experience. Andrews argues that landscape paintings are 'crucial shaping influences' (1999: 1) generating familiarity both with places and the pictures which represent them. Further, because we have been making mental conversions which pictorialise landscapes for centuries, landscape is already an 'artifice' before it has become the subject for a work of art. This analysis of landscape as a historicised visual image, pictorially fixed by the constraints of perspective and made meaningful by the detached gaze of an observer, is challenged by theories of embodiment, explored later in this chapter. Although I reject the cleaving of subject and object implicit in ideologies of landscape as visualised epistemology, the concept of landscape as an aesthetically 'framed world' is meaningful to my research. The dialectic between a pictorial framing of world through landscape and its dynamics of place is explored in the following section.

### **The place of landscape**

Landscape as 'image' is doubly visual - a 'view' of world 'framed' by the scope of human vision, both shaping and shaped by its dual identity as material land-scape, and as representation, a picture of land. My research is predicated upon the South Pennines

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<sup>22</sup> *Ways of Seeing* is a book and BBC television series which John Berger wrote and presented in 1972.

landscape's particular topographic, cultural and experiential narratives, including its visual environment and processual site of dwelling, both inextricable to the sense of the places which make up the landscape. Edward Casey's 'double aspect' of landscape, complicates some earlier 'visualist' understandings of landscape by arguing that to be in landscape is in fact to always also be in the 'midst of places'

'place is the module of landscape – indeed its very element. Landscapes are in the final analysis, placescapes; they are congeries of place in the fullest experiential and represented sense. *No landscape without place*: this much we may take to be certainly true. Not only is it difficult to imagine or remember an actual landscape devoid of places; it is not possible to come upon a landscape that does not contain them in some significant way.' (2002: 271)

For Casey, landscape is the meeting of earth and world, a common outline, pivot, or shared surface of an earth/world interface (2002: 272). Composed of many various objects and entities, landscape exceeds the sum of its parts, and can be experienced as a 'whole' (Brook 2011). At the same time, this sense of wholeness escapes totalisation: landscape is an 'encompassing detotalized totality' (Casey 2002: 6). Further, as well as 'containing' places, landscape is itself a 'mode' of place; a vital shaping influence which, in its pictorial identity both mediates ideas about the nature of place, and is understood through the conceptual topographies of place that give it meaning as landscape (Malpas 2011). Bringing together this understanding of 'landscape' with the complex and contested nature of place (Cresswell 2004) opens up meanings of place pertinent to this research.

Early theories of space and place enshrined space as an absolute phenomenon, which could be analysed in a pure form as a spatial science (Cresswell 2004). 'Place' emerged as a way of describing a meaningful form of social space, where distinct activities, interactions and naming occurs, defined by people's experiences in, or attachments to, a particular locale. Places are, then, theorised as synonymous with identity, and senses of belonging for the people who live in them (Hubbard et al, 2004: 5). Although emphasising the distinct and particular, investing the abstract notion of 'space' with meaning, place remained until the late twentieth century a 'static concept' (Cresswell 2009), dependent on a separation from other places by literal or implied borders, in which a singular form of identity grew from a

rootedness in a particular location<sup>23</sup>. This concept of place has been challenged by recent theories which foreground dynamic and interconnected processes of place as part of a constantly transforming, globalised world. Massey's 'global sense of place' (1994) is defined by 'flow' rather than 'territory': places are, in fact, not fixed or stable but overlapping and interconnecting global phenomena, meaningful precisely because of their mobility. Massey challenges the focus on 'groundedness' of place as central to meaning, questioning identities of place as inevitably tied to authenticities and presumed natural histories of particular locations. In *Landscape as a provocation: reflections on moving mountains* (2006) Massey draws attention to the geological fabric of Skiddaw, the familiar mountain overshadowing the Lake District town of Keswick, to illustrate her case. She notes that the Ordovician slates which comprise the mountain had drifted to their current position from an area south of the equator where they were laid down; as such the rocks which form the fabric of the mountain can in fact be defined as 'immigrant'. Massey demonstrates that even presumed unquestionably fixed and iconic symbols of place are part of a continually transforming, temporal and spatial process. The notion of the Lake District's 'immigrant rocks' shows that senses of place and place identities do not essentially depend on a fixed locatedness, and further, this does not mean these place identities are any *less* grounded if seen as part of a process, of a continual 'moving on', rather than a fixed process. Massey further points out that the Lake District only became 'a place' in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a result of a cultural turn towards picturesque tourism and a developing valorisation of nature associated with Romanticism, referenced earlier.

Massey argues that as the world becomes more globalised and more fluid, the notion of place as provisional and localised has increased in importance; as 'symbolic value', place is 'endlessly mobilised in political argument' (2005: 5). She argues that 'drawing lines around a place' (1994: 152) is not only reductive, but idealises the notion of place as coherent and homogenous, where senses of place are generated from inward-looking localised histories and fixed boundaries. But this does not mean that 'local' histories are *not* integral to the generation of place and senses of place – they are. A 'progressive' or 'global' sense of place conceptualises time-space dynamics differently, so that there is no single meaning of place

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<sup>23</sup> A connected humanist turn in studies of place, based in existentialism and phenomenology, is referenced in Part 2.

generated from one essential 'past', but a constantly moving set of relations or processes which Massey conceives as 'happenings' or 'events', integrating the global and the local. Identities of places are 'inevitably unfixed' (1994: 169) because social relations are dynamic and mobile. This is true not just of today's interconnected world, but has always been the case: 'that lack of fixity has always been so. The past was no more static than is the present' (ibid).

Massey's conception of place as progressive and global - especially this last point - is particularly pertinent to my research location. Cultural and economic narratives of the South Pennines have long been mobile and networked. Unlike many other rural/agricultural regions of Britain (what we might call 'the countryside') this area is marked by long histories of passage, migration, changing economies and industries, and as such, 'entangled' senses of place<sup>24</sup>. This does not mean that there is not a strong sense of place in the region - quite the contrary. Senses of place identity seem very much to spring from the intertwining ideas, aesthetics and experiences of place. In the South Pennines, specific geological, topographic and culturally produced materialities of landscape, mingled with particular agricultural and more recent industrial histories have co-created particular meanings of place. At the centre of this research is the 'double aspect' of how 'place' and 'image' correlate as landscape and (visualisation of) landscape, and how the entangled tensions of place in the South Pennines are visualised, experienced and imagined in dialogue with the visual medium of film practice. Thus, this research aims to challenge an apparent dichotomy between 'drawing lines around a place' (Massey 2005) - a pictorial view of landscape as a 'framed world' - as reductivist and homogenising, and a concept of place as dynamic and mobile. Some of the meanings and aesthetics of the mode of documentary filmmaking I employ in the research to investigate these dynamics of landscape and place are explored in the following section.

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<sup>24</sup> These histories and themes of place and landscape in the South Pennines will be explored in more detail in Chapter 2.

## **Documentary film: a visualised encounter with world**

Like Cosgrove's description of landscape as 'imprecise and ambiguous' (1984:13), documentary film is a continually shifting and contested paradigm, named a 'fuzzy concept' (2001: 21) by its leading scholar Bill Nichols. Trinh T. Minh-ha's criticism of historical classifications of film and their influence on filmmaking<sup>25</sup> is a stance I sympathise with - yet I also feel it is important and helpful to identify my practice within the documentary paradigm. In this section I will attempt to tackle the question of 'documentary' and why defining certain practices as documentary seem to me meaningful to how we create these works as well as respond to them. To do this I will briefly explore some of the histories, tendencies, voices and meanings of documentary, and in the process, ascribe a personalised definition which in my view addresses its ethos and the reasons for its centrality to the way I think about my practice.

Since John Grierson's coining of the term, a growing field of documentary scholarship has generated claims and counter claims about its purpose, form, method and meaning. Nichols' description of an 'essence' of the form – a fundamental kinship that resides at the core of films we may describe as 'documentaries' – begins to create a framework for the mode and considers how we might engage with and experience documentary differently from fiction films. Foundationally, Nichols argues, we can ascribe the word 'document' to represented images and sounds of the world because they 'have their origin in the historical world we share' (2001: 35). These images and sounds can be assigned 'documentary value', which serves as an index of that which produced it. Nichols suggests this process relies on a kind of contract between the filmmaker, film and viewer, in that we have to believe in the authenticity of the world represented for it to have meaning. This representation process is two-fold - 'documentary re-presents the historical world by making an indexical record of it' but it also represents the world through shaping it:

'Documentaries marshal evidence but then use it to construct their own perspective or argument about the world, their own poetic or rhetorical response to the world. We expect this transformation of evidence into something more than dry facts to take place. We are disappointed if it does not'. (2001: 38)

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<sup>25</sup> Trinh argues: 'there is no such thing as documentary ...despite the very visible existence of a documentary tradition' (Trinh T. Minh-ha 1993: 90)

This is significant, as Nichols here argues that although the text may bear the status of a 'document', what makes the film a documentary is the *treatment* of that material. Balsom and Peleg call this transformation of the document into documentary its 'founding contradiction' (2016: 12), citing photographer James Agee's quest to ethically and effectively 'triangulate reality, meaning and form' (ibid). Fiction films also bear an indexical relationship to their sources - the things in the world they are recordings of - but the meaning of a film and its effect on the viewer is fundamentally conditioned by a reading of the film as 'documentary'. Vaughan's definition of documentary similarly proceeds from the point that film exists as both record and language. The filmmaker is 'forced by the logic of his craft to acknowledge the distinctions between film and reality: that film is about something, whereas reality is not' (1999: 21). Unlike fiction, which is based on imaginary situations and events, film always has a 'real referent' - the pro-filmic world that exists for the camera. Making a documentary is to 'persuade the viewer that what appears to be, is'..... 'the evolution from 'actuality' to 'documentary' is the point at which the primordial image becomes articulated as language.' (1999: 60) The photographic image is a 'physical imprint of the world' - and like photography, film stakes a claim on reality. This is the claim that, most strongly among modes of cinema, documentary aspires to fulfil. Documentary then is not defined by a style or approach, but as a mode of response:

'The term 'documentary' properly describes not a style or a method or a genre, but a mode of response to film material: a mode of response founded upon the acknowledgement that every photograph is a portrait signed by its sitter. Stated at its simplest: the documentary response is one in which the image is perceived as signifying what it appears to record; a documentary film is one which seeks, by whatever means, to elicit this response; and the documentary movement is the history of the strategies which have been adopted to this end' (1999: 58).

This analysis of documentary as at its core a mode of response, as both record and language, is significant for my research. By focusing on documentary as a mode of response rather than an object, artefact or essay, Vaughan places experience at the heart of the documentary project. This positioning of 'experience', partly relating to the prior knowledge of the world viewed which we bring to the film, and also to the experiential process which can unfold as we watch and relate to the world represented, strongly resonates with embodiment theories of film. It also connects to the experimental ethnographic and new materialist positions that the experience and process of making is a

vital constituent of the documentary enterprise, expressive of the world as active and performative but also embracing and expressing the emergent relationship between filmmaker and world, or self and object, as I discuss later in the chapter.

## **Documentary and art**

I locate my practice within a form of documentary filmmaking drawing on the subjective language of a poetic aesthetic, structuring narratives shaped and motivated by that aesthetic or the emotional tone of an image or sound to create meaning. Unlike an agenda-driven expository approach of journalistic narrative, this is an explorative aesthetic, a 'merging of art and life' (Steyerl 2013), evocative rather than descriptive (Koppel 2007); speculative and interpretive (Renov 2007).<sup>26</sup> In *The Film as an Original Art Form* (1951) Richter argues that the documentary approach to cinema allows film to get back to its fundamentals, claiming-

'Here it has a solid aesthetic basis: in the free use of nature, including man as raw material. By selection, elimination and coordination of natural elements, a film form evolves that is original and not bound by theatrical or literary tradition...These elements might obtain a social, economic, political or general human meaning according to their selection and coordination. But this meaning does not exist a priori in the facts, nor is it a reproduction (as in the actor's performance). It is created in the camera and the cutting room. The documentary film is an original art form. It has come to grips with facts – on its own original level. It covers the rational side of our lives, from the scientific experiment, to the poetic landscape study, but never moves away from the factual.' (1955: 17 [1951])

Richter's definition of the documentary enterprise is positioned firmly as an aesthetic one, meaning created through an artistic engagement with the 'raw material' of world. Documentary is an original art form, but one that is always located in and cannot be separated from the 'factual' world.

Similarly, a documentary turn identified in visual art (Nash 2005), locates an engagement

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<sup>26</sup> See also: Macdonald's *Avant-Doc: Intersections of Documentary and the Avant-Garde Cinema* (2014), and Nichols' taxonomy of 'documentary modes' in *Introduction to Documentary* (2001) which includes the 'poetic mode', addressing the avant-garde impulse in documentary forms.

with the real in subject matter, aesthetic and form from within the art world<sup>27</sup>. These practices - documentary filmmaking, ethnography and art - externally perceived to originate from different locations towards a shared practice, have common roots in the early era of European cinema. Significantly, these films - in particular the 'city symphonies' of the 20's [Ivens (1929), Sauvage (1928), Ruttmann (1927)] - have been claimed by the histories of both documentary and avant-garde film (MacDonald, 2015: 5). Nichols argues that the established history of documentary's roots perpetuates 'a false division between the avant-garde and documentary that obscures their necessary proximity' (2001: 581). Arguably documentary's most prolific theorist, Nichols makes clear that the 'necessary' symbiotic nature of art and documentary is founded in documentary's inception. Renov also argues that the city symphonies represent a core dynamic in the early history of documentary, the artistic impulse of Vertov's 1920's *Kino Pravda* at the heart of a total commitment to a cinematic art of the real, or 'life caught unawares'. Committed to reality, Vertov is opposed to 'copying', and through a combination of new ways of seeing liberated by the camera-eye and its choreography through the practice of montage, the world could be seen anew (2007:15).

Renov argues that Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, made in 1929, illustrates that within the first few years of documentary's life, 'its claims to the status of art by virtue of its unprecedented power to defamiliarize and thus transform the world were aggressively posited' (Renov 2007: 15), arguing that a growing anti-aesthetic born of a certain perception of social realism in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century cut documentary off from its avant-garde roots, the point at which the practices began to diverge. This concern for social issues which moved away from the expressive forms of cinema and embraced the camera's mimetic qualities in parallel with the advancement of broadcast journalism conditioned the development of the documentary form.

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<sup>27</sup> For example, see Nash's article *Reality in the Age of Aesthetics* (2008) *Frieze* [online] [accessed May 2015] <https://frieze.com/article/reality-age-aesthetics>. Exhibitions and events such as *Making History: Art and Documentary in Britain from 1929 to Now*, Tate Liverpool (2006), *Truth or Dare: Art and Documentary*, Whitechapel Gallery (2006) and the Channel 4 Britdoc Foundation 'Documentary Meets Art' symposium (2007) suggest that the mid 2000s was a pivotal time for a renewed consideration of the art-documentary dynamic.

Hilderbrand argues that documentary has been historically defined in large part by its struggle between reality and construction, the central tension residing at the heart of the documentary project (Hilderbrand 2009:2). He applauds the 'duality of actuality and creativity' which energises the intersection between documentary and the avant-garde; but, given that the documentary genre seeks in his words 'absolute truths', argues for the use of a new term such as 'experimental documentary' to define this mode. Jewesbury also prefers the term 'experimental documentary' to describe an artistic documentary practice, but makes a pertinent point about the relationship between 'form' and 'content' provoked by their interrelationship. He writes that 'experimental documentary' makes us more active participants in the construction of meaning through its concern in making 'form and content mutually supportive of one another, which is to say, mutually enquiring' (2013: 76). He suggests that the provocation of documentary representation through alternative means of expression creates a constantly renewing collusion of practices within the paradigm of factual filmmaking: 'new structures and forms, new ways of combining moving images, sounds, subject matter and meaning are continually innovated by artists who are as concerned with the formal integrity of a piece of work as with its communicative potential' (2013: 77). This is an important factor in my research. Conjoining documentary's collaborative processes with, and ethical tie to the real, with the imaginative construction of cinematic languages creates new possibilities of forms and modes of expression. Returning to Vaughan, documentary is both 'record' and 'language' (1999).

For Renov, there is little incompatibility between documentary 'truth' and aesthetic expression, making a case for the importance of the sensory, the materiality of the film form as a medium of expression (2007: 16). He resolves the question of the 'apparent clash between the 'authenticity' or 'realism' that documentary has claim to and the association of the imagination and experimentation with art' (McLaughlin & Pearce 2007:9) through a positioning of documentary as an 'encounter' between seer and seen (2007:14). Renov believes that a credible expansion of recent work exploring the real through the prism of the imaginary or the subjective, reveals a 'new balance being struck between the subject and object and the result is a reinvention of documentary practice' (ibid).

A parallel inclination toward the more experimental practices of visual art in visual

anthropology has opened up the discipline (and in doing so, the documentary paradigm more broadly) to new ideas and methods. Working across perceived boundaries of practice can create a less fixed, more fluid, conception of reality, Russell suggests, where 'meaning is not 'closed' but escapes and evades representation' (1999:4). This form of practice embraces subjectivities, ambiguities, and pluralities to craft (or implicate) meaning through a more expressive, experimental approach to film language. A critique of the connection between reality and representation in documentary accepts the inevitability of the slippery nature of truth, as Trinh T. Minh-ha observes - 'truth and meaning: the two are likely to be equated with one another. Yet what is put forth as truth is often nothing more than a meaning' (1993: 92, my italics). Connected to the critique of documentary representation more widely referenced above, the result rethinks ethnographic film practice and what it can achieve. This practice necessarily involves interaction with the imaginative prism associated with art practice, as 'rather than threatening untruth, imagination is an essential part of the ethnographic task' (Ravetz 2002: 24).

Anthropologist/filmmaker David MacDougall, one of the pioneers of this re-imagined ethnographic practice, situates the visual at the heart of the text. His belief that 'images reflect thought, and they may lead to thought, but they are much more than thought' (2006:1) expands cinematic aesthetic as a means of expression beyond the descriptive. Images are 'responsive, interactive, constructive...a perceptual as well as a conceptual kind of knowledge' (2006: 5). MacDougall holds that 'appearance' lays claim to visual and sensory forms of knowledge, and this communication of knowledge begins with the filmmaker as observer:

'..before films are a form of representing or communicating, they are a form of looking. Before they describe anything, they are a form of looking. In many respects filming, unlike writing, precedes thinking. It registers the process of looking with a certain interest, a certain will.' (2006: 7)

Observing, or looking, carefully, heightens awareness and is a way of knowing that can be different from thinking. This form of knowledge, or experience, mediated through filmic representation, thus becomes a new experience in its own right, as MacDougall points out 'film is one of the newer technologies to create new disturbances at the boundaries of art and everyday experience' (2006: 16). This is most pertinent to the form of filmmaking

undertaken by MacDougall – the ethnographic film – and the documentary. MacDougall emphasises close observation as the key to a film language which could be tactile, sensory and experiential (2006: 62). He draws attention to the work of Robert Gardner for example as ‘not simply films ‘about something’ but the products of a distinctive and rigorous imagination’ (2009: 156) generating a form of experience. Approaches to methods of embodied framing in observational filmmaking connect with new materialist concepts, in emphasising the intersubjectivity of the camera frame in a creation of agency. These ideas of documentary filmmaking are developed in Part 2, and discussed as methods of practice in Chapter 2.

## **Part 2 - Embodiment**

‘The landscape thinks itself in me, and I am its consciousness.’  
(Cezanne, in Merleau-Ponty 1964:17)

Part 1 traced the histories and evolving meanings of landscape and documentary as aesthetic discourses by placing them in juxtaposition. Part 2 continues this process by exploring concepts of embodiment in both areas, starting with landscape and moving on to moving image/documentary. A simultaneous phenomenological turn in academic landscape discourses and film studies in the early 1990s lays the foundation for this investigation. Pertinently, key texts from both fields were published within a year of each other: Sobchack’s *Address of the Eye* (1992) and Ingold’s *Temporality of the Landscape* (1993). Merleau-Ponty’s theories of perception are the generating point and framework for each enquiry. Put forward in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1964 [1942]) and developed further in his final and unfinished text *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), these concepts have been seen as a radically new way of conceptualising the human-world relationship (Brook 2005:355). Moving beyond previously-held phenomenological enquiries which re-positioned but maintained a subject-object binary, Merleau-Ponty sought to revision vision itself, as an embodied activity, thereby abolishing the duality between subject and object altogether (Wylie 2005: 150).

This redefinition of the visual is extended to include the world we are part of and participants in. If we 'see' with our bodies, our vision and our embodied selves are enfolded together in the act of seeing, and the world we see 'outside' of our selves is also enfolded in this process- we are 'caught in the fabric of the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Reciprocity between seer and seen intertwines self and world, creating a fundamental 'reversibility' between subject and object. This chiasmic reversibility, also referred to as 'flesh', rests in the body's existence as both subject and object, illustrated by Merleau-Ponty's often-cited example of one hand touching another, an action which immediately reveals the indistinguishability of subject and object in us all.

Expanding this analogy from the tactile to the visible, Merleau-Ponty argues that we are both seer and seen, subject and object, a 'dynamic chiasm' or crossing-over, which privileges the area between things (Trigg 2012: 2). These ideas can be seen as a potential challenge to visualist discourses, but it can also be argued that embodiment theories do not so much overturn ideas of visualisation as expand on them, by providing a deeper and more experiential enquiry into the ontology of the visual and its meaning as part of the 'fabric of world'. The phenomenological turn in landscape studies particularly through Ingold does appear to intentionally counter the then dominant visualist discourse of landscape as a disembodied way of seeing, but this challenge opens up visual art to regenerated ideas of landscape's depiction and expression, particularly, in my view, within the field of moving image practice. In fact, Merleau-Ponty analogised his ideas about the reversibility between subject and object through an exploration of the processes of visual art. He was inspired by how the painter could feel inhabited by the world they sought to depict as if the self and the visible world were enfolded or even switched places, exemplified by Paul Klee's account of painting in a forest:

'In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me.... I was there, listening.... I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it.... I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out'. (1964:167)

This is significant for my research, and its investigation of the pictorial 'frame' of landscape as meaningful in moving image explorations of landscape and senses of place.

## **Landscape, place and embodiment**

'The landscape, I hold, is not a picture in the imagination, surveyed by the mind's eye; nor however, is it an alien and formless substrate awaiting the imposition of human order... through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are part of it.' (Ingold 1993:154)

Previously I described how twentieth century geographic theories saw the abstract concept of space move into the meaningful locale of place, which tended to define place as a necessarily bounded territory. During the 1970s a phenomenological turn in humanistic geographies (Tuan 1977, Relph 1976, Buttner 1976) began to emphasise subjective human experience of and in place, where human agency and the world are mutually implicated and enfolding. It was argued that human culture - primarily meaningful through place - only exists through embodiment, as to be located in place 'culture is carried into places by bodies' (Casey 2011).

If place is 'not just a thing in the world but a *way of understanding* the world' (Cresswell 2004: 11, my italics), place is not only central to our sense of being-in-the-world, but is *created* by our being-in-the-world. Phenomenological ideas including Seamon's 'place-ballets' (1975) and Lefebvre's 'rhythmanalysis' (2001) are predicated on the principle that rhythms of everyday human activities and movements underpin and create place, describing a view of the world as embodied process and thus perpetually 'in becoming'. Extending into wider academic discourses, this humanistic approach to place and landscape came to fruition in influential phenomenological treatments of landscape in anthropology (Ingold 1993) and archaeology (Tilley 1994), which diverged from humanistic theories by collapsing binaries of self/world more fully and revisioning 'vision' to reclaim spectatorial epistemologies of landscape as embodied practices (Wylie 2007).

As referenced above and significantly for this research, Merleau-Ponty illustrated his theories partly through the framed world of landscape art. His extended analysis of Cezanne's struggle to 'make visible how the world touches us' (1964:19) in paintings of Mont St Victoire in particular, visualise the intrinsic reversible movement between self and world that Merleau-Ponty's theories are predicated on. Wylie also uses Cezanne to

illustrate his thesis of the inherent 'tension' of landscape through contemplating one of the painter's depictions of Mont St Victoire, describing his process of encapsulating simultaneous binaries of object/subject, closeness/distance, a landscape in which a 'view' is both clear, and fragmented: 'It is a tension between proximity and distance, body and mind, sensuous immersion and detached observation. Is landscape the world we are living in, or a scene we are looking at, from afar?' (2006:1). Herein lies one of the essential paradoxes at the heart of a phenomenologically-charged visual representation of landscape; and if landscape is an essential 'tension', the visual representation of landscape complicates this tension further.

Tilley and Ingold sought to challenge the 'way of seeing' ideology which described landscape in terms of iconography and elitist systems of power (Cosgrove 1984). Ingold's influential text *The Temporality of the Landscape* (1993) argues that time and landscape are inextricably linked, creating a 'dwelling perspective' which exists as a record of generations of lives lived, dwelling in and shaping the landscape. Like earlier theorists, Ingold frames this discussion with his own definition of landscape: firstly, by describing what landscape is not: 'It is not 'land', it is not 'nature' and is it not 'space' (1993: 153). As an anthropologist, Ingold's thinking implicitly draws on ethnographies of non-Western peoples for whom nature/culture dichotomies do not exist in the same way. He argues that definitions of landscape as a cultural image create a false distinction between nature on one hand as a physical reality, and landscape on the other as symbolic construction, stating: 'I reject the division between inner and outer worlds – respectively of mind and matter, meaning and substance – upon which such distinction rests' (1993: 154).

Ingold argues that landscape, like the body, is generated through a process of unfolding, or 'embodiment'. He uses music as an analogy to illustrate his ideas about temporality and the landscape as a form of dwelling, resulting in a new concept he terms the 'taskscape'. Countering the long-standing privileging of a Western prioritising of form over process, Ingold's 'taskscape' is a merging of 'landscape' and 'temporality', embodying patterns of existence over time on the land: 'by considering how taskscape relates to landscape, the distinction between them is ultimately dissolved and the landscape itself is shown to be fundamentally temporal' (1993: 174). Ingold's provocative ideas about the taskscape and

its musical/rhythmic nature are highly pertinent to this research and dovetail with its processual methods of film practice. Parallel temporal and rhythmic characteristics of landscape and moving image are explored further in Chapter 3.

Benediktsson & Lund (2010) use the analogy of 'conversation' to describe the process of landscape experience as one of integrated movement rather than 'view' sublimated by the gaze:

'Landscape is not comprehended as a predetermined, culturally contrived and passive 'text', but as a conversational partner that is certainly more than human. The concept of the horizon, with its implication of movement and constantly shifting positions, takes landscape away from the often romantic and rather static association with place. It brings forth the importance of the visual as a part of a more encompassing sensuous engagement of humans with landscape.' (2010: 8)

Extending their argument that vision is one of embodiment involving all the senses, they note that conversations are based on 'mutuality and direct affect' (2010: 7), and a dialogue between humans and landscape depends on the particular form of encounter between them – the specific situation, location and intentionality for action involved. This analogy of the 'conversation' or 'dialogue' resonates strongly with this research, and is enacted on multiple levels. The 'conversation' then can be seen as a form of 'reversibility' between subject and object, between seer and seen; the idea of 'conversation', a mutual discourse in which no one element has overall authority but are engaged in a 'movement' between each other, is also strongly suggestive of 'rhythm', which is explored in further detail later in this chapter.

### **Moving image and embodiment**

'A film is an act of seeing that makes itself seen, an act of hearing that makes itself heard, an act of physical and reflective movement that makes itself reflectively felt and understood.' (Sobchack 1992: 3)

Sobchack's *The Address of the Eye* (1992) and its concern with the reciprocity of vision has been credited with breaking new ground by a generation of film theorists. Her enquiry is

founded in Merleau-Ponty's argument that 'in a sense the whole of philosophy.. consists in restoring a power to signify, a birth of meaning, or a wild meaning, an expression of experience by experience' (Merleau-Ponty 1968, quoted in Sobchack 1992: 3), to which she responds - 'what else is film if not 'an expression of experience by experience?' (ibid).

Sobchack argues that film, uniquely among the arts, is a 'viewing view': a reversible, enfolding experience involving the bodies of the filmmaker, spectator and the film itself. The filmmaker perceives, and creates an expression of their perception which is enacted through the filmmaking process. The film's 'body' then enables this perception and expression as an act of seeing: 'seeing made visible'. What we experience when viewing a film is an expression of visual perception, rather than an objectively recorded event (2010: 11). This idea has further repercussions for documentary, and discussion around its presumed objectivity:

'The film experience not only represents and reflects upon the prior direct perceptual experience of the filmmaker by means of the modes and structures of direct and reflective perceptual experience, but also presents the direct and reflective experience of a perceptual and expressive existence as the film.' (1992: 9)

Sobchack argues that film uses modes of 'embodied existence' - seeing, hearing, physical and reflective movement – as well as the structures of direct experience as the basis and substance of its language (1992:5). She uses Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'flesh' to further describe a breakdown between subject and object, viewer and viewed in the cinematic experience. 'Flesh' is to Sobchack a term that emphasises the shared materiality of the living body and the objective world as intertwining and reciprocal (1992: 56). Significantly for this research, Sobchack later integrated these ideas into her analysis of documentary (1999). In comparing different modes of filmmaking and how they affect the viewer, she argues that documentary is 'less a thing than an experience' (1999: 241), which supports Vaughan's idea of documentary as a 'mode of response'. Sobchack takes issue with cinematic theories rooted in psychoanalysis as incompatible with what she terms documentary consciousness, introducing a phenomenological model which she says allows for a more dynamic and fluid reading of film, taking into account the 'charge of the real' so pivotal to the experience of documentary film viewing (2004: 258). Sobchack argues that within a fictional mode of spectatorship, we understand images to only exist in the

cinematic world, which is a virtual one. We are dependent on what we see to understand that world, focusing on the image rather than through it. The documentary viewing experience is however continually caught up in the fact that there is a 'real' subject beyond the screen object. This creates an existential charge of the real, as well as an innate positioning and understanding of the screen object as placed in the 'real' world rather than an 'invented' one. The profilmic world in a documentary film is indelibly connected to a world we already have knowledge of and can identify with- so that we look 'beyond' the image rather than 'on' it. Her reference to the shocking effect of the 'real' death of a rabbit in Jean Renoir's *Rules of the Game* (1939), in which the 'charge of the real' splices an otherwise fictional film world supports the idea that documentary operates, or can operate, more strongly as an experiential medium than as a screen object (2004: 268). There is a meaningful correlation between Sobchack's analysis and Merleau-Ponty's reflections on painting (1964). Merleau-Ponty argues that art is not an imitation of the world, but a process of expression:

'..we forgetting the viscous, equivocal appearances, go through them straight to the things they present. The painter recaptures and converts visible objects that would, without him, remain walled up in the separate life of each consciousness: the vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things.' (1964:17)

This idea of documentary mirrors Sobchack's reversibility of 'viewer and viewed': the documentary film is not an object to be looked at passively, but is intertwined with the filmmaker on the one hand and the viewer on the other: it is the filmmaker/viewer's 'mode of response' which creates the conditions for documentary. When considering documentary, one would additionally include the filmmaker's subject, with whom a dialectic relationship also occurs during the filmmaking process. That the filmed images of a subject may be said to be 'a portrait signed by its sitter' (Vaughan 1999: 58) further acts to highlight the centrality of the figure of the film: the subject at the heart of the encounter.

This phenomenological positioning of the film experience strongly correlates with the exploration of documentary as art practice in Part 1. Following Sobchack, Marks (2000) and Hezekiah (2010) focus on filmmakers whose practice crosses the art/documentary dynamic to extend concepts of cinematic embodiment. Marks' theory of 'the skin of the film' (2000) not only makes a case for film's ability to signify through its materiality, but suggests that

vision itself can be tactile 'as though one were touching a film with one's eyes' (2000: xi). Correlative with landscape theorist Katrin Lund's idea of the 'touching eye' (2005), Marks positions the senses at the centre of her study of intercultural cinema, a mode of personal filmmaking concerned with the histories and lives of diaspora communities, in which colonial histories are dismantled and new stories unearthed, in 'acts of excavation' (2000: 25). These new stories emerge not simply as enactments or representations, but 'find life' through the filmmaking process. This is partly realised through an audio/visual disjunction – a technique utilised in my own practice. Breaking apart the reassurance of a synchronised 'sound plus image' which reinforces one with the other and lends 'a sense of authenticity to conventional documentary' (2000: 34) – new, suggestive, meanings are evoked through sound/image association. In this case, for Marks, the disjunction between sound and image expresses the gap between different orders of knowledge and cultural histories, revealing a 'new combination of words and things that cannot be read in terms of the existing languages of sound and image but calls for new, as yet unformulated languages' (2000: 31). In common with MacDougall's case for filmmaking as experiential knowledge creation (2006) Marks argues that film is not just grasped intellectually but perceived as something that 'means in itself' (2000: 145). Drawing on Marks' research, Hezekiah (2010) analyses Caribbean filmmaker Robert Yao Ramesar's filmic excavations of Trinidadian histories as 'Caribbeing'. She argues that the films themselves perform a phenomenological reduction through the aesthetics of 'Caribbeing', in a continual movement of consciousness between perception and reflection.

Barker (2009) uses Merleau-Ponty's analogy of subject/object reversibility as 'one hand touching another' to illustrate the phenomenological tactility of vision and experience in the cinema conceptualised by Marks. A visualisation of this idea can arguably be seen in Varda's semi-autobiographical film *The Gleaners and I* (2000). Varda's film continually plays with the dissolution of subject and object: she holds the camera while filming others who directly relate to her as the filmmaker (we hear their continual communication throughout the film) but also when she is filming herself, as another character in the film (the 'I' of the title): digging for potatoes, sorting through rubbish. In an extrapolation of Merleau-Ponty's analogy of 'one hand touching another', we see Varda filming her own hands (one hand filming another) as she contemplates her ageing body. This is a filmic act that has developed

organically from a scene in which she explores Rembrandt's self-portraiture, sorting through and filming a stack of postcards in front of her. Object, subject, self, world, visual world, and film world seem to come together, in an intertwining act of perception and expression.

Also applying Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'flesh' to film criticism, Trigg (2012) revisions the cinematic landscapes of Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, Wrath of God* (1972). Analysing Herzog's visualisation of man/landscape through the lens of a Schopenhauerian sublime, Trigg then seeks to dismantle the dichotomy between 'the domesticated self encountering the objective realm of wilderness' (2012: 142). Challenging subject/object binaries which situate wilderness as 'out there', with human subjectivity remaining 'here', Trigg describes Aguirre and the landscape in which he travels as extensions of each other, each aspect 'under the skin of the other' (2012: 143). Applying Merleau-Ponty's idea of 'flesh' to a reading of the film, Trigg resituates Aguirre as a movement of reversibility between humans and landscape, rather than an opposition. Describing the celebrated opening shot in which a line of soldiers descends a massive scale of mountainside, Trigg turns this scene from a sublime encounter - a representation of man 'finite and egotistical' against the 'boundless grip' of an unbending force of nature - to situate humans and mountain as forming a continuous surface, giving form to each other, common and interdependent, caught in the flesh of world.

### **Documentary film as 'flesh'?**

Drawing on critical theories of phenomenology and moving image explored so far, I will attempt to address ideas towards an approach to documentary film associated with Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'flesh'. Significant to this idea is a recent material turn in critical thinking. In its de-privileging of human agency towards a focus on how assemblages of bodies and matter, animate and inanimate together produce the world (Allred and Fox 2015), new materialism rethinks relationships between humans and non-humans, de-

centring the binary between subject and world towards an entangled mutual agency of beings in the world which co-exist and co-relate. Bolt (2012) argues that 20th century cultural theory had leached matter out of art, creating a plane of signification which failed to take into account the social character of artistic activity and the agency of matter. Her argument that art aesthetic is situated as 'a relationship between – the human and non-human, the material and immaterial, the social and physical' (2012: 6) has clear connections with Merleau-Ponty's concept of flesh in its breaking down of the binary between subject/object towards a shared co-compositional relationship. Barrett (2012) uses Kristeva's concept of the 'triple register' to describe how this idea can be applied to artistic aesthetics. She argues that the grafting of the symbolic to affect in arts practice gives rise to what she terms 'the aesthetic image' (2012: 63). Unlike images which only operate through symbolic codes serving to communicate information, the aesthetic image is 'performative', emerging through sensory processes activated through material relationships, creating 'multiplicity, ambiguity and indeterminacy' (ibid).

Extending this thinking into the documentary image, Hongisto's landmark new materialist-inflected treatise (2015) argues that the indexical image at the heart of the documentary is 'repudiated' by her concept of the 'aesthetics of the frame', which foregrounds the filmmaker's engagement and interaction with the world as a dialogic process. The aesthetics of the frame does not elevate the author/maker within a hierarchy of practice which positions the world as 'dull matter' to be imaginatively interpreted by the filmmaker, but has its own exhibiting agency which intertwines with active processes – such as the processes of observing, interacting and making - which then co-compose what the documentary film will turn out to be. In parallel with Barrett's 'aesthetic image', Hongisto argues against the dichotomisation of 'matter' and 'signification', one imposed upon the other. Her notion of the aesthetics of the frame positions documentary film not as a representation of matter that is distinct from reality, but as on a par with reality – that documentaries do not solely operate as signification, but are entangled in the material processes that actively create the real:

'The main difference between representational considerations of documentary film and the aesthetics of the frame comes down to conceptions of reality. The paradigm of representation maintains reality as matter upon which a form of signification is positioned. It is not expressive in itself, but knowable through modalities of

representation and signification. The aesthetics of the frame, on the other hand, bypasses the gap in representation by insisting on the emergent consistency of matter and the ways in which the frame taps into reality as occurrent.’ (2015: 16)

Kara and Thain (2014) employ a new materialist understanding to *Leviathan* (Castaing-Taylor & Paravel, 2012) to extrapolate on the film’s ecological premise. *Leviathan* is situated on board a fishing trawler in the Atlantic Ocean and filmed primarily using GoPro cameras attached to bodies and equipment. The film’s visceral energy and uncanny aesthetics derived from its unpredictable and unusual perspectives locates itself inside and within embodied activity. Kara and Thain describe this approach as an ‘assemblage’, expressive of a ‘relational ecology of rhythm’:

‘Within such a context, the distinctions between inside and outside, machines and nature, the sea and the sky, and fishermen and fish get blurred, with each human and nonhuman agent becoming a fold in the larger assemblage of a liminal, monster-like audiovisual ecology.’ (2014: 194)

This ‘intensive folding of subjectivities and materialities’ blurring boundaries of machine, animal, human and nature as part of a ‘mutant and monstrous assemblage of audiovisual materialities, micro-rhythms, and micro-affects’ (2014: 195) emerging from the film’s expression and generated from its methodologies bears a strong correlation with Merleau-Ponty’s notion of flesh. Bringing to mind Merleau-Ponty’s quotation of Klee referenced earlier - that the trees ‘were looking at me, were speaking to me’ (1964) new materialist approaches to documentary open out the documentary form as an expressive force where agencies collide and meaning emerges from the rhythms between them. These critical ideas are extended into practice research methodologies in the next chapter.

### **Part 3 - Temporality and rhythm**

The third shared characteristic of landscape and documentary to be explored in this study is that of ‘temporality’, within which ‘rhythm’ is embedded. Characteristics of time and duration are of deep significance to moving image perception and film theory; I will limit

my investigation in this area to ideas of temporality and rhythm which touch on the other main areas of research in this study, reflecting on and beginning to draw out areas of dialogue which may impact on my practice. Thus, the following section extends the investigation initiated in Part 2, developing landscape phenomenology's perception of landscape as a temporal site of embodied process in which the rhythms of the world are revealed. As in the previous sections, I explore concepts of temporality and rhythm pertaining to landscape, before investigating moving image, with particular reference to documentary.

### **Temporality, rhythm and landscape**

Originating from the continuous movement of dwelling, integrating time, place and activity, Ingold's concept of the taskscape (1993) is embedded in sociality. Significantly for this research, Ingold analogises the taskscape to music – through its ebb and flow of activity as intrinsic rhythm and by its existence only through movement. Ingold argues that as music exists only when it is being performed, so the taskscape only comes into existence when people are involved in the activities of dwelling. Ingold then questions the pictorial framework of landscape by drawing attention to a Westernised priority of form over process as signified by its landscape art histories, to argue that Australian aboriginal landscape paintings' relationship to performance elevates process over fixed form. Thus, the difference between landscape and taskscape is less clear: instead, Ingold suggests, the landscape is the taskscape in its embodied form, created through the process of dwelling, and is 'perpetually under construction' (1993: 162). This concept has strong associations with Massey's theory of place as dynamic and networked, a 'particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus' (1994: 154). For Massey, the sense of place as rhythmic imagines a landscape that is provisional and intertwined, a nexus of 'ongoing, unfinished stories' (2006: 21).

These ideas of landscape as continuously mobile taskscapes correlate with Lefebvre's concept of 'rhythmanalysis' (2004), a practice which studies the world through its rhythms.

Rhythmanalysis works from the premise that 'everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm.... every rhythm implies the relation of a time with space, a localised time or if one wishes a temporalised place' (2004: 15). Lefebvre defines 'rhythm' as:

- a) repetition (of movements, gestures, action, situations, differences)
- b) interferences of linear processes and cyclical processes
- c) birth, growth, peak, then decline and end

a definition of rhythm relating closely to Ingold's concept of dwelling, intimating process as life experience and constitutional of everyday practices.

Drawing on the theory of taskscape, Johannesdottir (2010) attempts to resolve the paradox of objective/subjective definitions of landscape while reclaiming the aesthetic as central to the study of landscape, which she describes as a 'multi-layered concept'. Beyond the surface of the visible, 'invisible relationships' emerge, generated through interactions between the visual and of 'people's actions, movements, speech, thoughts, imaginations and narratives' (2010: 114). This intertwining of the visible and the invisible invites us to perceive landscape as a 'whole picture' – the meaning of landscape deriving from the intertwining of subject and object, human and land. Johannesdottir argues that recent phenomenologies of landscape, while realigning subjective/objective concepts of landscape, neglect ideas of the aesthetic: 'with their emphasis on how we react to the landscape as bodies they are attempting to get away from the perspective that is confined to the visual, and this may result in an overall phobia of the aesthetic' (2010: 116). She argues that an analysis of Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh', which draws out the spaces in between the object and the subject, may lead to a discovery of the 'source of aesthetic meaning' in the landscape. In her study of visitors' perceptions of Icelandic landscapes Johannesdottir found a strong parallel between physical qualities of nature and emotional responses towards it, concluding that the landscape's aesthetic value lies in this in-between space between the physical land and the human perception of it. Interestingly, she does not extend her debate towards landscape as aesthetic representation – landscape art – which can be seen as generative of the landscape idea, but contains her argument to aesthetic qualities resident in the landscape as a physical form. Nonetheless, her attempt to conjoin phenomenologies of landscape with aesthetic value is significant to this research.

## Rhythm and walking

Characterising landscape as an embodied process – a way of being rather than seeing – challenges the subject/object binary of self/world, engendering a heightened sense of what it is to be ‘in’ landscape. The processes of life-world, encapsulated by the activity of ‘dwelling’, position movement and rhythm at the heart of a revised landscape idea. Walking is an experientially rhythmic process of both being in and viewing landscape, in an integration of temporality, movement, and ‘view’. The act of walking as embodied experience of landscape and tool towards a knowledge of and representation of landscape is a strong field of interest among academics, writers and artists evolving over two centuries since the Romantic poets first walked the fells. This history of the Lake poets’ pursuit of walking – as landscape experience, connecting physical exercise with poetic rhythm – initiated my research in this area. During the making of *Not giddy yet aerial* (2011) I became interested in the movement between the fixed view of the picturesque, the emotional dynamism of the sublime - both connected in different ways to pictorial landscape aesthetic and rooted in the cultural appreciation of landscape in Britain at that time - and the experiential, temporal and rhythmic qualities of walking. These ideas have grown in this research, connecting to rhythmic qualities of film and generative of practice methods.

Wordsworth and his companions have been credited as initiators of the British walking culture as aesthetic experience (Solnit 2000), connecting their humble mode of transport with their political ideals: ‘climbing a mountain has become a way to understand self, world, and art. It is no longer a sortie but an act of culture.’ (2000: 113). This ‘new, exciting, rebellious’ act of walking for pleasure (Jarvis 1999: 36) generated a new way of experiencing landscape, revealing how, not long after the picturesque movement which was synonymous with the growth of tourism in the Lake District, encouraging a sense of viewing landscape as an image, the Lake poets were experiencing it through walking. The art of walking created a new relationship between body and nature, which in turn generated new ideas about nature (Edensor 2000). Excursive walking is experientially different from ‘insider’ (Relph 1976) relationships with landscape, such as the ‘body in being’ (Edensor 2000) of the farmer. The walker’s experience as an aestheticised rural one, Edensor argues, is bound up in ideas of retreat from an industrialised world. This idea is particularly relevant to the

popularity of walking in the 20<sup>th</sup> century among textile workers in the north of England, notably in the South Pennines. Walking in the neighbouring countryside was a means of flight from the daily grind and smoky towns of the industrial north. It was a mobilisation of ramblers from the British Worker's Sports Federation that led to the Kinder Scout mass trespass in 1932, a protest against the lack of access trails across moorland estates in the Peak district. This protest led directly to an opening up of footpaths across the region, and ultimately to the 'right to roam' legislation only recently passed. Another local, chairman of the Rambler's association Tom Stephenson, was responsible for the eventual creation of the Pennine Way in 1965 after 30 years of dogged campaigning.

A recent literary phenomenon focusing on walking as theme, motif and narrative<sup>28</sup> can be seen in parallel with a similar surge in academic research about walking as practice of place and landscape experience<sup>29</sup>. Wylie's experimental narrative *A Single Day's Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South West Coast Path* (2005) uses the format of a walk along the South West coast path as both subject and methodology. Wylie's narration ebbs and flows between the physical encounter of the landscape and his own corporeal experience of the walk, and the more abstract intellectual ideas which Wylie says 'crystallise' as a response to the walking experience. Drawing on Derrida's portrayal of walking as 'perpetually caught between arriving and departing' (2005: 237) he describes this experience as 'spectral'. Wylie's phenomenological reading of landscape through walking is interrupted by a spectacular viewpoint, leading him to query the axiom that looking inevitably cleaves subject from world. He uses Lingis's model of 'the imperative' (1998) to conceptualise elemental experiences of looking in terms of 'seeing *with*' than 'looking *at*': 'it is to suggest the possibility of another hopefully distinctive account of the emergence of a corporeality and sensibility that is 'all eyes'.' (2005: 242). Correlating with

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<sup>28</sup> For example: Armitage, S (2013), Jamie, K (2012), MacFarlane, R (2012), Oswald, A (2002), Sinclair, I (2002), Sebald, W (1995).

<sup>29</sup> For example: Lorimer, H (2005), Lund, K (2005), Ingold, T & Lee, J (2004, 2008), Wylie, J (2001, 2005), Edensor, T (2000). At the AHRC conference *Living Landscapes* (2009), a large proportion of papers and performances centred on the act of walking (from geography, anthropology, art theory, art practice and performance academics). The journal *Visual Studies* published a special issue *Walking across disciplines: from ethnography to arts practice* in 2010, describing this recent expansion in walking as research as 'increasingly central as a means of both creating new embodied ways of knowing and producing scholarly narrative' (2010: 1)

Johannesdottir's reclaiming of landscape aesthetic (2010), this re-engagement of vision as phenomenological landscape experience is particularly meaningful for this research.

An expansion in methodologies of walking as ethnographic and artistic practice has become increasingly important to the creation of new knowledge through embodiment (Visual Studies, 2010). Walking as a form of artistic practice, considered an established practice in the UK (2010:1) has its roots in both performance and land art in the 1960s, led by Hamish Fulton and Richard Long. Temporality is one of the defining aspects of Long's performative practice, capturing a 'continuous folding-in of space and sensation' (Edensor 2010: 74), but specific landscapes are also key: 'I may choose rolling moorland to make a straight ten mile walk because that is the best place to make such a work, and I know such places well' (1986: 234). Long does not associate with the Romanticist endeavour, but uses the world as he finds it, his art founded in naked interactions and responses to landscape experience. His text pieces in relationship to this remark are interesting: the use of text is poetic, but formally bare – an economy of style which mirrors the minimalistic rigour of his thinking and practice.

For example, *Dartmoor Time* (1995)<sup>30</sup> bursts with polyrhythmic energy, measured by beats of time - references to the world's temporality which structure each detail (Edensor 2000). Many of the descriptive terms are first person, present-tense and active: 'skirting', 'fording', 'passing', 'holding', 'climbing', 'thinking', evoking an unfolding, embodied observing and feeling movement through landscape, as if the walker, environment and time are entwined. Allusions to the elements (morning mist); the natural environment (river, crow, skylark); the cultural history of the landscape (grimspound, great gnat's cairn); the artist's practice (a pile of stones, a future walk) pulsate in a rhythm of thoughts, senses, time and actions in an equal, formal purity. The present tense poetry of these breathing moments is in one sense counteracted by their temporal measure ('holding a butterfly with a lifespan of one month') – a reminder of mortality (but also of life) – the overall effect being to ground the work in the physical heartbeat of world. Long's texts works' dialectics between a framing of a

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<sup>30</sup> A reproduction of *Dartmoor Time* can be viewed on Long's website:  
<http://www.richardlong.org/Textworks/2011textworks/40.html>

specific location and its temporal experiential rhythms of landscape, meaningfully correlate with this research and its approach to documentary film practice.

### **Moving image and 'lived time'**

'Let us say right off, that a film is not a sum total of images but a temporal gestalt.'  
(Merleau-Ponty 1964:54)

Writing about the phenomenology of image and time, Wahlberg notes that the analogies between moving image and photography, and moving image and music are defined as 'competing models of importance for attempts in film history to theorize the physical medium of cinema and the existential impact of time in moving images' (2008 :4) – so that two art forms ontologically opposed in terms of their time experience, are enmeshed in the form of the moving image. Merleau-Ponty similarly describes temporal structure as intrinsic to moving image and a decisive interlocutor of meaning:

'the meaning of a film is incorporated into its rhythm just as the meaning of a gesture may immediately be read in that gesture: the film does not mean anything but itself. The idea is presented in a nascent state and emerges from the temporal structure of the film.' (1964: 57)

The cinematic fusion of time-experience and photographic representation creates in the moving image a visual art that has been described as the most closely aligned to human experience<sup>31</sup>. Bazin argues that the conjoining of the photographic image and temporality, in which the recorded image is indelibly bound to its own duration, is key to film's meaning, explicitly that 'now for the first time, the image of things is likewise the image of their duration' (1960:8). For Bazin, photography 'embalms time', whereas cinema exists in 'lived' time. The subject of the reproduced image may be the same, but ontologically and

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<sup>31</sup>Russian documentary filmmaker Atravazd Pelechian said that 'It is often said that the cinema is a synthesis of the other arts, but I think this is wrong. For me, it dates from the tower of Babel, from before the division into different languages. For technical reasons, it appeared after the other arts, but, by nature, it precedes them. I try to make a pure cinema, which owes nothing to the other arts.'  
Atravazd Pelechian quoted in Fairfax, D. *Artavazd Pelechian, Senses of Cinema* [online] [last accessed December 18<sup>th</sup> 2015] <http://sensesofcinema.com/2012/great-directors/artavazd-pelechian/#87>

experientially, the photographic image and the moving image are perceived in fundamentally different ways. The qualities of 'lived time' intrinsic to cinema are particularly pertinent to the documentary form, arguably connecting us more experientially to the lived time of the subject represented on the screen. This relates to an experiential process of viewing documentary, in which the realism of the encounter is revealed more fully through the unfolding of the subject's movements within the experience of their lived time, a process arguably expressed most fully in observational modes.

Wahlberg writes that the complex relationship between the time of the image, and the experience of time in the non-fiction film have been overlooked by classical film theory (2008: x). Film's 'sculptural and existential dimension of time' (2008: 4), can perhaps be more acutely perceived in the work of the documentary film and its engagement with issues of time, history and memory. This tension between unfolding present and historical time is particularly pertinent to my practice research in its collisions of observational scenes and rhythmic contrapuntal phases, tied to experiences and historical dimensions of landscape.

### **Musical rhythm and the avant-garde**

Musical rhythm in moving image derives from the early histories of avant-garde experiments in cinema. Its pertinence to this research lies in its relationship to Ingold's idea of the 'taskscape' - histories of dwelling in the landscape explored earlier - combined with a rhythmic sequencing method which enables tensions of landscape to inform each other, collide, contradict and coalesce. This includes a method of audio-visual counterpoint developed from a form of dynamic montage, also relating to a modality of 'weaving', discussed in the following chapter. What follows briefly summarises some of the histories of musical rhythm and avant-garde cinema as a means to contextualise my practice research in this area.

Analogies between film and music can be traced back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the quality of film as a temporal medium at the centre of early avant-garde film theory and generating some of the most significant philosophical ideas about film experience and meaning of the period. An analogy with music allowed practitioners and theorists to 'borrow' a language from an existing art form, but also a way of thinking about temporal structure and how film is experienced, which was all the more pertinent given the absence of synchronised sound technology at the time. Experimentation and theoretical investigation among artists and filmmakers in the 1920's and 30's emphasised musical aspects of film language and investigated ways to translate musical scores into dynamic visual rhythms. Richter and Eggeling were among the first to make deliberate experimental attempts to visualise musical rhythms, using methodologies akin to musical composition to find a mechanism towards creating music within visual cinematic forms. Robertson (2009) describes how Richter sought the advice of the composer Busoni, who recommended he study counterpoint at the piano: Richter's studies of the 'up and down, the movements and counter-movements all leading to a definite unity' (2009: 21) helped to develop interplay between the abstract forms of his new non-representational cinema, in which counterpoint learnt not only a technical means but an overarching philosophy.

During this period, Eisenstein was also wrestling with problems of form and audio-visual structure, but within narrative rather than abstract cinema. His early development of visual dialectical montage encountered new challenges in the introduction of the sound film, and like Richter he sought the solution in musical forms. Eisenstein found answers to many fundamental questions of form through a study of contrapuntal techniques, including fugue. His extended study of contrapuntal forms in literature – James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) in particular - augmented his research, and brought narrative and thematic ideas into the process. His study of Gilbert's treatise on *Ulysses* helped deconstruct the complex narrative woven by the individual internal voices of Joyce's characters:

'In fugue, the horizontal element is totally married to the vertical, the melodic with the harmonic, multiple voices tonally united. This is a key aspect of fugue which Eisenstein learns from Gilbert's analysis, which specifies the presence of two to four parts in the episode, overlapping and interweaving through the same sentence, sometimes closely juxtaposed to heighten the vertical and harmonic aspect of this fugue. He also notes that Gilbert advises the reader to listen to this verbal fugue in

harmonic (vertical) and in contrapuntal (horizontal) ways simultaneously.’ (2009: 37)

Wahlberg notes that the development of rhythm so central to Eisenstein’s practice became a kind of ‘tool’ to control meaning, with rhythm becoming the vehicle for the viewer’s affective response to the film. The film’s internal pulse creates an emotional interaction between film and viewer but also conveys meaning, both through its internal rhythm and via the overarching structure created by movement through the rhythmic form. She describes how the cinematic avant-garde of the 1920s and 30s associated deeply with the rhythm, tempo and sequencing of musical art, linking the pulse and durational qualities of film with the mechanics of the human body:

‘these assumptions and experiments posit film in terms of measure and interval – a kinetic event that requires the viewer’s sensory reception. Put differently, cinema was the great promise of a visual poetry, with direct appeal to the viewer’s imagination and desire. Just like music the ultimate cinematic expression would directly interact with the viewer’s emotions’ (2008: 68).

Wahlberg here places embodiment centrally to the rhythmic experiments of the avant-garde, connecting this practice with visual poetry. Expanding the idea of embodiment and rhythm towards methods of practice in further ways is explored in the next chapter.

### **Temporal structures of montage**

Early cinema’s experiments with rhythmical and musical structure are intrinsically tied to the concept of montage. Defined by Eisenstein as two shots side by side which produce, through the conflict of their interrelation, an expressive effect (1977: 64) montage was conceived and developed by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Soviets and evolved hand in hand with political upheavals in the newly-formed USSR at that time. The radical effect of the Soviet’s form of montage on film language and film perception was also firmly embedded in the modernist ethos of the time:

‘Montage is conflict.... if montage is to be compared with something, then a phalanx of montage pieces, of shots, should be compared to the series of explosions of an

internal combustion engine, driving forward its automobile or tractor: for similarly, the dynamics of montage serve as impulses driving forward the total film.' (1987: 38)

The modernist experiment of montage, caused by a collision between images creating new effects, new ideas and new meanings, also generated an 'open-ended, ambiguous play with time and space' (Nichols 2001: 594). The combined forces created by the play of meaning and consequent temporal and spatial disruption caused by montage had a particular effect on the non-fiction form and its association with indexical representation. Nichols argues that avant-garde artists were attracted to film as a medium because of the distinctive influence of montage on aesthetic and meaning, creating a new way to combine representations of the world with the authorship of art, pointing out that 'It was precisely the power of the combination of the indexical representations of the documentary image and the radical juxtapositions of time and space allowed by montage that drew the attention of many avant-garde artists to film' (2001: 595).

Vertov's development of rhythmic qualities of film and dynamic use of montage as a structuring force have left a lasting legacy on documentary and ethnographic film. Wahlberg argues that his rhythmic montage is in opposition to Eisenstein's, depending more on the idea of the 'interval' – the movement between shots and the visual correlation created by transitions between shots. The dynamic qualities of *Man with a Movie Camera* create interplays between energies of city life, but also through reflexive means, between the many layered processes of the making and viewing of the film, which are transformed into an interwoven process via its rhythmic pulse. Vertov's manifesto makes strong claims for montage as a 'conquest' of time and space, relocating the boundary between representation and an artistic 'feel of the world' through montage (Michelson 1984 xxv). Drawing on Vertov's ideology, Suhr and Willerslev (2013) also argue for a reassembling of reality through montage, which can be utilised in documentary to express the invisible by creating a fissure - 'breaking the visual 'skin' of the world' (2012: 298), explored in more detail in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2

### Research Context & Methods of Practice

Chapter 1 began the process of crafting a relationship between landscape as both pictorial and mode of place, and documentary film. Guided by Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'flesh', an investigation of proposed thematic interconnections between the site/subject of the enquiry (landscape/place) and the mode of research practice used to investigate and mediate it (documentary film) have been drawn together in an iterative relationship, and acted to critically underpin this research. Having laid out some of the key contexts of my research, in this Chapter I now turn to develop enquiries relating to the specific location of the research, contexts of my filmmaking practice relating to themes of landscape and place, and my methods of practice research.

Pictorial and phenomenological enquiries of landscape and place in Chapter 1 are now brought into the tangible environment of the research location. In this chapter I explore the South Pennines' 'specific ambience' (Ingold 1993) as a mode of place (Casey 2011), a core factor in the production of landscape meaning, as well as ideas relating to its visual aesthetic as meaningful to our experience and understanding of landscape, and as an artistic means of investigation. Thus, Part 1 of this chapter is an overview of the research site - the South Pennine uplands. This section provides a contextual framework for an investigation into how the area's specific histories, topographies and cultures, generative of and generating particular tensions of landscape, correlate with the study's critical and practice research to generate the films' themes and practice methods of research. I also integrate the specific themes of the four research films as part of this exploration. Part 2 is an investigation of my critical contexts of moving image practice, focusing on films which explore themes of landscape and place, particularly in the documentary and artists' film paradigms. I set this enquiry against the background of Lefebvre's positioning of landscape in film as either 'setting' or 'subject', definitions which have helped me analyse relative meanings, visualisations and expressions of place and landscape in moving image, and how these meanings are conveyed within particular cinematic paradigms. Part 3 is an exploration of the generative character of my practice methods, in relationship with the

critical dialogue between landscape and moving image as laid out in Chapter 1, together with ideas emerging from the research location context explored in Part 1 of this chapter. There is some overlap of the critical contexts explored in Chapter 1, and Part 2 and Part 3 of this Chapter, as I attempt to work concepts and practices through, as they relate to various aspects of the research.

## **Part 1 - The research location: the South Pennine uplands**

'Moors

Are a stage for the performance of heaven.

Any audience is incidental.'<sup>32</sup>

(Hughes 1979)

The sense of ravaged grandeur emanating from the gritstone moorlands described by Ted Hughes in *Remains of Elmet* (1979) cheek by jowl with the scattered remnants of an industrial past, came as something of a shock when I moved to the region 20 years ago. It was a sense of an unexpected recognition of (to me) previously hidden narratives of place in the north of England bound up in a strongly resonant visual landscape - an embodied response to the landscape which partly informs the generation of this research. Hughes' depictions of the South Pennines convey a dark dominion of landscape, and are full of strange and often contradictory details engrained in the landscape's narratives of place. This sense of the uncanny through tensions of landscape have also emerged through my practice research and imposed themselves on its aesthetic.

Significantly, Hughes collaborated with photographer Fay Godwin for *Remains of Elmet*, and although the landscapes were already well known to Hughes - born in Mytholmroyd, some of his family still lived in the Calder Valley at the time - the poems in the *Elmet* collection were written in response to and in dialogue with the photographs Godwin made. Godwin's powerful monochromatic images strongly convey the particular tensions of place in the South Pennines which Hughes' poetry imagines - at the same time expressing in the images

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<sup>32</sup> Ted Hughes, 'Moors', in *Remains of Elmet* (Faber & Faber, 1979) 1-3

of the moors, through ‘framed worlds’, a fixed sense of the eternal. Although landscape, as Ingold argues, can be likened to the ‘congealed’ time of the taskscape (1993), there is a sense of landscape here as also being outside of, or beyond time – as Casey says, a ‘totalizing’ image. This has affinity with the contradictory senses of place observed in the South Pennines by another author, Glyn Hughes, writing in the same time period:

‘I have walked through this empty, spacious landscape, and realized that it is a derelict one. The paradox of this countryside is that, from the densities of old industrial towns, you may turn a corner or climb a hill, and be in a world that seems pristine, and utterly untouched, like a world before creation. The soft ever-changing light; the ever-shifting peat bogs that are formless as putty; the lifeless earth and air; and the lack of human activity, seem like the soft and shapeless mass of the earth before anything was created upon it.’ (1975: 25)

The landscape as both tied to its historical context but also aesthetically and experientially somehow pre-human and beyond time is a prescient image, and one meaningful to the dialectic between the pictorial ‘frame’ of the South Pennines and its social networks of place investigated in this research.

Geographically, the South Pennines lie between the industrial centres of Bradford, Burnley, Huddersfield, and Manchester - Lancashire to the West and Yorkshire to the East - arguably defining the character of this area of Britain. The 250-mile-long ridge of Pennine hills - known as the backbone of England - were formed by a distant collision of continents, their distinct visual aspect shaped by sandstone, shale and gritstone deposits washed down by river deltas, covered over and forming rocks. Deforestation, grazing, and relatively high rainfall combined to create an acidic and waterlogged soil, an eco-balance made vulnerable by 200 years of industry. The moors’ association with the industrial revolution is said to have been the cause for the South Pennines’ under protected landscape status today. During the 1950s, when creation of Britain’s National Parks and designated landscapes was most active, the area was considered blighted by industry: sandwiched between the Derbyshire Peak District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks, the South Pennines is today the only upland area in Britain

not to have been granted National Park or AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) status.<sup>33</sup>

Today, many are concerned about the combined forces of over-drainage, over-grazing and peat burning, said to be degrading Britain's peat bogs, causing an erosion of the natural wildlife of the moor, flooding in the valleys and releasing carbon into the atmosphere equal to the entire British transport system<sup>34</sup>. Organisations including Moor Watch, Pennine Prospects and Yorkshire Peat Partnership are attempting to halt and reverse the effects of peat erosion so that the moors regain their function as carbon banks and a home for wildlife. If this bio-diversifying intervention develops, the impact on the landscape's visual aspect will clearly be a factor; there are strong opinions, for example, about plans to reduce the prevalence of heather, grown to support young birds on grouse moors.

The region's social, economic and cultural history is bound up in the upland landscape's physical formation. Historically, the poor land of the moors was unsuitable for agriculture except for the grazing of sheep, which led to a further depletion of the land. Arable land was kept to lower lying pastures, and lime brought in to enrich these fields, a costly and cumbersome process. Farmers needed a supplementary income to sustain their stark agricultural livelihoods, and a dual economy developed as families began spinning and weaving cloth as a cottage industry. This history is still visible in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century 'laithe' houses, which combined a barn area for animals and mullioned windows to maximise light sources for weaving. Writing in *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* Defoe's 1724 journey through the 'frightful country' over Blackstone Edge to Halifax reveals the cottage weaving industry at its height. Defoe marvelled over the industrious zeal of the people who inhabited it: '...for, in short, this whole country, however mountainous, and that no sooner we were down one hill but we mounted another, is yet infinitely full of people; those people all full of business; not a beggar, not an idle person to be seen'. Defoe describes the scattered houses on the sides of hills, coal and plentiful water running from streams, combined forces in a community of manufacturing. There is a fervent joy in the picture Defoe paints of the cottage clothing trade at work in the sun:

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<sup>33</sup> Pennine Prospects Ltd

<sup>34</sup> Yorkshire Peat Partnership

'We could see that almost at every house there was a tenter, and almost on every tenter a piece of cloth, or kersie, or shalloon, for they are the three articles of that country's labour; from which the sun glancing, and, as I may say, shining (the white reflecting its rays) to us, I thought it was the most agreeable sight that I ever saw, for the hills, as I say, rising and falling so thick, and the vallies opening sometimes one way, sometimes another, so that sometimes we could see two or three miles this way, sometimes as far another... yet look which way we would, high to the tops, and low to the bottoms, it was all the same; innumerable houses and tenters, and a white piece upon every tenter.' (Defoe 1724)

The rushing water appearing to fall from every hilltop was one of the conditions for the industry's success, supported by another material aspect of the landscape – its rock. Gritstone is not as water-permeable as the surrounding limestone fells of North Yorkshire and Derbyshire, and streams spilling down steep rocky hillsides enabled the growth of textiles in this area into the industrial age. Water was harnessed into power, and textile mills began to be built along the banks of steeply wooded streams. Gradually, the productive cottage industries described by Defoe died away as larger-scale cotton and wool mills replaced them - first water powered and then steam. Steam power meant textile mills crammed into the valley floors as centres of manufacturing grew up around them.

As the industrial age was at its height in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë were employing literal and metaphorical light and shade of the moors they often walked upon as subject and theme. Eagleton argues that it is tempting to mythologise the Brontës as 'three weird sisters deposited on the Yorkshire moors from some metaphysical outer space' (2005: 3). Although the perception of the wild moors permeates the Brontë mythology (Spracklen 2016) their home was in the centre of the region's rapid industrial development, huge social upheaval and class struggle: 'they lived, in short, through an aspect of events which Karl Marx described in *Capital* as the most horrible tragedy of English history' (Eagleton 2005: 4). In Emily Brontë's sublime vision of wilderness, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Cathy, Heathcliff and the house itself are personified as belonging to, or as aspects of, the landscape. The contradictory forces at play in the novel are pictured through the moors - threatening and savage, yet spiritually nurturing and symbolic of freedom. This complexity of place reflects volatile social and economic tensions in West Yorkshire at the time, as well as visible tensions seen in the exponential growth of the woollen industry in the valleys below the moors.

In the context of this research, the idea that the moorland landscape and human personality, culture and spirituality can be said to 'join forces' or 'switch places' so that aspects of each 'become' the other is pertinent. Further, considering the dynamics of place in West Yorkshire during this period, Massey's global sense of place as not a new phenomenon, the past being 'no more static than the present' is also evident (1994: 169). Certainly, the industrial age, emerging as a result of the region's specific environmental and social fabrics, was a period of particular forms of powerful transformation to senses of place. Yet *Wuthering Heights* depicts strong identities with place prevailing through these changes, becoming enfolded into an ever-mutating idea of place, throwing fresh symbolic light on its landscapes. The first film made as part of the research *The North Wind*, located at the ruined farmhouse 'Top Withens' said to be the location of *Wuthering Heights*, considers some of these notions of place within the context of fragments of the everyday at the site, juxtaposing human 'hauntings' with the relative fixity of the ruins' eroded stones.

Driven by global market forces the sudden and steep decline in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century of the industrial age that had defined the South Pennines for two hundred years again brought rapid social and economic as well as visual change to the area, as the textile mills which had dominated the townscapes for generations were dismantled or left to rot. Recent years have seen these abandoned buildings given new life in their regeneration as offices or apartments. Groups of itinerant and migrant workers, drawn to the area's textile trade, drifted away leaving houses too abandoned: these houses have also been regenerated and can command high prices. In larger towns such as Halifax, Bradford and Huddersfield, some of these migrant workers stayed on, most notably sizable Pakistani communities, to build strong social networks and develop new religious and economic cultures. The second film made as part of the research, *Uplands*, explores senses of place and belonging experienced by diaspora communities in relationship with the landscapes surrounding the former mill towns and cities. For example, people from South Asian communities in Bradford predominantly originating from the rural area of Mirpur in Pakistan, rarely travel to nearby countryside villages, hills or fells. This is often due to a feeling of not belonging in the countryside – skin colour, wearing 'the wrong' clothes, religious culture; walking for leisure or visiting the countryside for pleasure are also not part of the context of family life in Bradford, or in Mirpur, where walking was considered a necessary activity rather than a

pleasurable one<sup>35</sup>. The film's narration is from the perspective of a Muslim man from Bradford, who belongs to a small, recent trend beginning to embrace outdoor culture, reinterpreting the Yorkshire landscape as a place of contemplation and belonging.

Ted Hughes wrote of the Pennine watershed uplands and gritstone valleys as an 'island', cut off by the glaciated moors which formed 'the top of the tide, from both seas – where the wrack washed up and stayed' (1979). Glyn Hughes also wrote of 'archipelagos' and 'peninsulas', his tidal metaphors evoking both a sense of abandonment and the physical apparition of the humped backs and long grasses of the moors likened to the choppy waves of a seascape (1975). The third research film, *Archipelago*, builds on these tidal metaphors to envisage a post-war housing estate on the outskirts of Halifax as isle-like. Waves of moorgrass wash up onto its northern edge, and two hill streams, springing up in the moorland above the estate, carve lines around its perimeter. Described as both 'run-down and ghettoised' and 'the most beautiful valley in this part of Yorkshire', the estate feels like a place adrift, physically 'cut off' by the infringing natural landscape but also from conventional ways of thinking about place, its identity embedded in an entanglement of urban and rural culture.

The South Pennines has also been associated with historic routes of passage, borne both out of the scattered patterns of dwelling on the gritstone landscape and its watershed location between traditionally significant centres of economy and religion<sup>36</sup>. The fourth research film *Crossing* explores routes of passage through the Pennines informed by dramatic visualised juxtapositions of embodied senses of place, and non-place<sup>37</sup> (Augé 1992). A visually spectacular tract of Pennine moorland on the Lancashire/Yorkshire border, cleaved by the brutalist force of the M62 motorway in the 1960s, is now a vital transport link between the East and West of England, and home to a transient passage of many

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<sup>35</sup> From an interview, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> These routes include the limer's ways which brought ground lime to pastureland claimed from the moor, bridleways and stone footpaths known as 'causeys' lain for miles across peat bogs, and the countless footpaths created between clusters of houses and textile mills built in the valleys. These historical rights of ways have been added to by more recent long distance walking trails including the Calderdale Way, the Bronte Way, the Pennine Bridleway and the Pennine Way.

<sup>37</sup> For Augé (1992), a 'non-place' is a location which can be viewed in opposition to an 'anthropological place': it is not lived in and has no meaningful significance, as is usually defined by 'place'. A non-place is commonly a location of transience such as a shopping mall, airport or motorway.

thousands of vehicles per day. The Pennine Way long-distance footpath, originating from the same time period, traverses the motorway at its highest point, which is also the highest altitude of any motorway in England. The film continually loops the two forms of locomotion over this summit as a 'play of forces'; the contrasting embodied and disembodied experiences of the landscape in counterpoint equalised by persistent cloaks of what might be called 'Pennine weather' – cloud, rain and fog. Weather is visualised in all four films but becomes much more central in *Crossing*, and alongside the visualised humped backs of moorland and windscreen-framed horizons, creates a kind of pressure of 'place' over the 'non-place' environment of the M62.

## **Part 2 – Landscape, place and moving image: a research context**

In this section I analyse some of the moving image contexts I consider most significant to my research, and where my practice is contextually situated. As such, the review focuses on films which deal in themes of landscape and place within documentary and artists' moving image paradigms, the field in which my research practice aims to contribute to and expand on. First, I summarise the cinematic landscape modes, (Lefebvre 2006, 2011) as 'setting' and as independent subject matter, as a framework to my enquiry.

Despite its prodigious tradition in Western art, Sitney argues that 'landscape seems to have been granted no place among the topics of argument in the aesthetics of cinema' (1993: 103). In mainstream narrative film, this is associated with its evolution from theatre, where landscape is reduced to a colourful backdrop in service to plot and human emotion. Lefebvre's investigation of cinematic space (2006, 2011) differentiates between this idea of landscape as setting and spatial accessory, or *parergon*, and landscape as primary and independent subject matter - *ergon*. Narrative cinema's focus on events and action creates a hierarchical system of spectatorial modes, in which 'landscape' exists in the 'spectacular mode' - distinct from the 'narrative mode' which incorporates plot, character, events and action. These modes cannot exist simultaneously but come into play at different times, effectively halting the narrative progression and isolating the object of the gaze, 'freeing it

from its narrative function' (2006: 29). Eisenstein theorised<sup>38</sup> that landscape in narrative film is able to duplicate the emotional quality of music, using landscape sequences interwoven into dramatic action as montage to provoke emotional responses to narrative events. This 'doubly-temporalised' function of landscape in narrative cinema allows it to exist as setting, and autonomous landscape, within a shifting process, drawing attention to itself and referring to landscape as painting or photography, temporarily borrowing the contemplative quality associated with a still visual image to the cinematic image, as well as its relationship with landscape art history, haunting the narrative (Lefebvre 2011: 70)<sup>39</sup>. Although I consider my practice situated in the 'autonomous' landscape mode of this analysis, I find the concept of the still image aesthetic as haunting the narrative pertinent to my enquiry. In my exploration of the dialectic between landscape as both pictorial and a mode of place, the use of the held, fixed image of the landscape 'view' inserted within the rhythm of the film creates a moment of the 'spectacular' mode, an evocation of Glyn Hughes' vision of the upland landscape as like 'a world before creation' (1975: 25) permeating the pulse of dynamic senses of place.

Some forms of narrative cinema explore characters and plots which are embedded in the landscape within which they are set.<sup>40</sup> Arguably, these characters and plots only exist the way they do *because of* that landscape: the Western being an obvious example. In a later paper (2011) Lefebvre integrates Ingold's concept of the taskscape into his analysis, noting that as cinematic space is always temporalised 'film narrative... may in its quality as a temporal representation of human dwelling, actually function as a key element in the experience of landscape as a lived space in film' (2011: 74). He asks whether landscape as a 'view' or 'picture' in the cinematic frame (in terms of the extracted image, or autonomous landscape) is incompatible with Ingold's concept of taskscape, concluding that we can consider two ways of experiencing narrative: either one which conceals landscape, or one

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<sup>38</sup> In *The Music of Landscape* (1945), Eisenstein wrote '...for landscape is the freest element on film, the least burdened with servile, narrative tasks, and the most flexible in conveying moods, emotional states and spiritual experiences' (Eisenstein quoted in Lefebvre 2006, xii).

<sup>39</sup> Lefebvre illustrates this idea with examples from Michelangelo Antonioni's films. More recent examples, from my own research location in West Yorkshire, are *Wuthering Heights* (Arnold, 2013) and *God's Own Country* (Lee, 2017).

that reveals landscape through dwelling (2011: 76). Under these conditions, the binary can be collapsed: narrative can be seen to serve landscape. Narrative cinema's contribution then, to the landscape idea, is to be uniquely capable of combining 'in the spectator's gaze and consciousness, the *pictorial* and the *temporalized* landscape' which is able to confer onto landscape its 'specificity and true depth' (2011:76). This evolution of Lefebvre's analysis in the light of more recent phenomenological ideas is strongly applicable to my research, and its interest in creating a dialogue between landscape as 'image' or 'vision' and landscape as place, and site of narratives of dwelling.

Lefebvre's theory of the 'autonomous' landscape in moving image can perhaps be most clearly identified in an avant-garde mode known as 'landscape film'<sup>41</sup>. Originating in the early 1970s on both sides of the Atlantic (Benning 1974, Welsby 1972, Snow 1971, Gottheim 1970, Raban 1970), these structural films harnessed film's intrinsic bond between visual frame and temporality. Unlike the symbolic mode of *parergon* or landscape-as-setting of narrative cinema, these practices can be seen as direct descendants of landscape painting (MacDonald 2001, Dusinberre 1983), though transformed by film's intrinsically mechanistic processes and temporal qualities- a radical rethinking of landscape expression (Elwes and Ball 2008: 3). The landscape's dual illusionistic and shaping elements of light, movement, texture and colour create the films' interdependence of shape and content (Dusinberre, 1983: 50). By making landscape subject matter as well as a form of narrative, these visual records of time reflect on the shaping rhythms of the world.

For example, in Welsby's *Seven Days* (1974), a highly orchestrated process of recording sounds and images at a stream-side location in Wales is shaped by the unpredictability of the weather. The film is thus formed via an interaction between the systematic nature of technology and the chance-like qualities of the natural world, which attempts 'a symbiotic relationship between camera/structure, filmmaker and the landscape' (1983:122). Welsby and Raban's two screen projection *River Yar* (1971-2) combines time-lapse and real-time recordings of a river landscape at the autumnal and vernal equinoxes. O'Pray attributes the achievement of the film to the totality of its effect, culminating from an inextricable binding

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<sup>41</sup> The term 'landscape film' is used on both sides of the Atlantic (MacDonald 2001, Dusinberre 1983)

of visual beauty and formal procedures of filmmaking, its melancholic mood connecting it with the English landscape painting tradition (1983: 109). This concept of the English landscape film originating with Welsby and Raban has continued to develop in the UK, often taking on explicit themes of place and implicitly addressing the environmental crisis of our age (Andrews, 2008: 14)<sup>42</sup>.

Landscape film in the US has also been critiqued in regard to theoretical constructs of historical national landscape painting. Macdonald (2011) applies opposing poles of the 'grand opera' and the 'still small voice' (2011:127) of 19<sup>th</sup> century landscape painting to moving image representations of landscape, ascribing the latter phrase to avant-garde works which frame quietly composed everyday observations. In Gottheim's *Fog Line* (1970), the careful framing of the image (of a field with horses, wires carving a line across the frame overhead) draws attention to and interacts with subtle meteorological 'narratives' as the slowly clearing fog gradually shifts visibility of the landscape. Hutton's contemplative Hudson river films are rigorously formal observational films, described by the artist as 'a little like daydreaming' (Hutton in MacDonald 2011). Also formally composed, the fixed frames and systemised durational qualities of Benning's American landscape films more consciously narrate political and ecological themes of landscape. *El Valley Centro* (2000), the first in Benning's *California* Trilogy, is made up of 35 fixed shots of 2½ minutes each, each depicting a different 'scene' along the 550-mile length of California's central valley. As in *Fog Line*, narrative occurs through a dynamic interaction between the structure of the fixed frame (referencing pictorial qualities of landscape) and the observed scene which unfolds within the frame. A nuanced emergence of meaning – of ownership, power, political economy in the American West and landscape as working environment – is reconstituted by the final sequence, a series of text panels conveying information about each of the shots in the film. Benning has said that his intention was to generate a political reading of the film at its close – so that a viewer 're-reads' their memory of the image, with

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<sup>42</sup> In the *Figuring Landscapes: artist's moving image from Australia and the UK* (2008) exhibition catalogue, Andrews particularly notes the work of Richardson, Watt and Latta in this respect, noting that their films 'brood on or allude to environmental change, natural and man-made: twenty-first-century landscape art in any medium is inevitably haunted by this.' (2008: 14)

new information regarding the ownership and economies of the landscape in each image<sup>43</sup>. The complication of the landscape image and formalised play with memory enact Massey's idea of places as 'events' – fluid and dynamic, containing conflicting meanings (Cowie, 2011: 18).

The symbiotic integration of subject matter and image production in these landscape films is clearly relevant to my research practice. Dusinberre argues that the landscape films of Raban and Welsby resolved issues of a subordination of 'content' over 'shape' associated with some modes of structural film, by elevating the illusory power of the cinematic image, and integrating specificities of place in particular landscapes so that 'not only does shape determine content, but content determines shape' (Dusinberre 1983: 50). The ideology of the fixed frame and its associations with aesthetics of landscape traditions also bears a strong relationship with my concern for pictorial qualities of landscape as image in the research, the fixed frames of landscape 'views' punctuating the films, expressive of the vision of landscape. Although there is a kinship in the contingency between form and content, my process is less grounded in the formal integrity of structural film, and more reliant on embodied and improvisational responses in filming and editing. The method of integrating my interactions with people and experiences of places I engage with as emergent, and working with filming and editing as a conversational process - or as I have defined it in the research, method of 'weaving' - is described in Part 3 of this chapter.

There is a methodological and aesthetic bond between structural or 'landscape film', and films using alternative observational methods to explore rhythms of landscape and processes of dwelling. Some observational films are informed by structuralism's formal process-led approaches, or more explicitly tie the material means of production to experiences of dwelling, such as can be seen in Spray & Velez's *Manakamana* (2013). A synthesis of ethnographic and structural film *Manakamana* is a movement through landscape from the fixed position of the interior of a cable-car rising up through the forested mountains of Chitwan, Nepal. Ferrying worshippers to the temple of the Hindu goddess

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<sup>43</sup> From an interview with Benning [online] [last accessed September 11<sup>th</sup> 2017] <https://filmkritik.antville.org/stories/24350/>

Bhagwati, the cable car now takes just 10 minutes to travel 3500 feet up the mountain, a previously arduous pilgrimage on foot.

The film depicts 11 of these 10 minute journeys, each separated by a dark screen as the car docks at the station. These are the indiscernible editing points between each journey; the journeys themselves are fixed images and not picture edited. Already referred to as ‘a classic of observational cinema’ (Schauble 2015) the structural and formal integrity of the film - as well as the identical compositions, each shot lasting the length of a 400’ magazine of 16 mm film – is underscored by the film’s overarching tension between stasis and motion, visual restraint and uncontrolled observation. The mountainous landscape, its implicit religious meaning and physically domineering, sublime sense of place underscoring the entirety of the film, is merely suggested via tantalising glimpses through framed windows and conversational references. Spray, having worked in Nepal for many years, has remarked that she finds representation of its mountain landscapes problematic, saying that the stunning beauty of the place when visualised transforms it into a ‘National Geographic postcard picture’, which is a ‘different kind of filmmaking’<sup>44</sup>. This is a significant point, and highlights some of the problematics of landscape representation in particular locations which have been excessively mediated or aestheticised as images. I encountered this issue to some extent when filming in the Lake District for *Not giddy yet aerial* (2011), but was aware when filming in the South Pennines that different, more contradictory tensions of landscape aesthetic were at play, creating a sense of ambiguity in the image and allowing for a more nuanced interplay of ideas and meanings to emerge.

Less structurally configured but nonetheless formally and aesthetically conceptualised, observational films such as Sergei Loznitsa’s *Portrait* (2002) and Chantal Akerman’s *D’Est* (1993) explore people and places through formal observational compositions. *Portrait* is a composite of several rural villages in Russia, the villagers posing for the camera in their landscape environments. The subjects silently pose for 2 - 3 minutes, staring straight at the camera, occasionally in static positions of work which remind us of the constructed nature of the film. *D’Est’s* similarly observed tableaux subjects are active in their everyday

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<sup>44</sup> From an interview with Stephanie Spray [online][last accessed February 1st 2017]  
<https://www.fandor.com/keyframe/fieldworks-stephanie-spray-in-nepal>

movements – cooking, working, waiting, as Akerman directs her cinematic gaze on those she encounters along the route of a journey she made from east Germany to Moscow not long after the collapse of the Eastern bloc. Her motivation, to capture a political and cultural transition before the soviet era disappeared completely, is conjured through impressionistic moments of everyday stillness and movements. A certain neutrality of observation is counteracted by a strong intentionality in aesthetic and framing, which seems to combine two modes of spectatorship in an expression of place simultaneously assured and uncertain, on the precipice of significant change.

Ben Rivers' films also frequently blend methodological modes in their poetic, hybrid narratives of place. *Two Years at Sea* (2013), is a film 'documenting'<sup>45</sup> the everyday life of a man who lives in the middle of a forest in Aberdeenshire. Rivers' slow-moving cinematic gaze observes the protagonist, Jake Williams, having a shower, making tea, drifting in a home-made raft on a loch; but also surveys mosses and light shafts in the forest surrounding Jake's home. There is an enigmatic aesthetic at play amidst the everyday-ness of the images, gently shifting Jake's forest home into strangely beautiful, dream-like terrain. Like *Portrait* and *D'Est*, *Two Years at Sea's* meeting of the observational and the constructed produces a sense of the uncanny which strongly chimes with some of the defamiliarisation aesthetics I aim for in my research practice. A strong atmosphere of the uncanny is also generated in films in which rhythms and patterns in landscape are shaped by technologies – for the oil industry in *Petrolia* (Richardson 2005) and for winter sports in *Out of Bounds* (Manchot 2016) for example. *The Drift* (Brennan 2017) contains strongly designed images in which cars are driven across vast landscapes, or around in circles for fun, creating patterns in the dusty landscapes of Lebanon, a meeting between the pictorial and mechanised movement within landscape which resonates with my some of my ideas connecting senses of place with landscape as image, and with filmmaking as an aesthetic medium<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Although the film is based on genuine activities, the action in the film is directed.

<sup>46</sup> The subject of these sequences also connects with *Crossing*, and the 'play of forces' in part created by motorway traffic streaming across the Pennines.

My practice is also positioned within films which explore and convey senses of place, landscape and dwelling via an embodied approach to observational filming in tandem with a structural/editing method as emergent from the encounter with the subject and filmmaking experience, in what might be termed a more phenomenological approach to practice (Barbash & Castaing-Taylor 2009, Koppel 2009, Casas 2008, Loznitsa 2001, MacDougall 2000). Of particular interest to my research are films of this mode which explore dwelling as patterns of work in specific landscapes. In *Artel* (2006), *Settlement* (2001) and *Life, Autumn* (1999), Loznitsa creates softly apparitional images of seemingly timeless patterns of life and work in northern Russia, where people and places seem to merge in seasonal rhythms of landscape. *Northern Light* (Loznitsa 2008) diverges from these atmospheres through its switch to colour and imaging of family life in close-up. The gently mobile framing and rhythm between everyday activities and landscape bears relationship with Koppel's *sleep furiously* (2009), a loosely narrative work filmed in a Welsh village over the period of a year. The continual movement between everyday activities and images of landscape develops a feeling for the landscape as a shaping of the life-world of the village, from landscape into 'taskscape' (Ingold, 1993). Austin writes that the film's shaping structure around interdependent practices of work 'link together humans, animals and the landscape and weather in which they are all situated' (2011: 377). For example, in the final scene of the sheep-shearing sequence, a Land Rover with a trailer full of wool drives away into the landscape while the sheepdog looks on: 'duration, composition and movement within the frame quietly emphasise the reciprocity between sheep (living on the fields), humans (making a livelihood from the sheep) and the land itself, all sharing the profilmic space' (2011: 378). This imaging of 'dwelling' is held in tension by the active framing; the timing of the cut at the precise moment the dog trots out of the frame in mutual agency with the material language of the film. In my practice, similar strategies have been developed; the unfolding internal rhythm of the shot and the 'external' rhythm of the film held in tension with each other to capture a sense of the world in 'becoming', in dialogue with the film's overall material aesthetic.

Explicit themes of the English landscape are explored in a handful of 'journey' films as a means to investigate personal, political and cultural narratives of place (Gee 2012, Hulse 2009, Petit 2002, Kötting 1997, Keiller 1994, 1997, 2010). The temporal act of walking is

difficult to visualise cinematically, as Sinclair and Petit came to realise when attempting to transfer Sinclair's book *London Orbital* (2002), a literary account of his walking trip around the 'road to nowhere' M25 to the screen. The experiential qualities and measured pace of walking in counterpoint to the roar of the road lie at the core of Sinclair's original project, but the film version shifts completely onto the road. Sinclair explains that their early attempts to record the film as a walk didn't work, as 'the fact of it being a film meant that it couldn't follow the procedures of walking ... Chris is famous as a maker of road movies, and he couldn't cope with filming the walking aspect because by the time he'd set up his camera the walkers had gone over the horizon. He shifted it all into the car. Once you were in the car, you were much closer to entering a Ballardian space' (Sinclair 2006)<sup>47</sup>.

A similar phenomenon is encountered in Keiller's *London* (1992) and *Robinson in Space* (1997). Essentially journey films, Keiller opts to present the locomotive narrative as a series of fixed 'views'. In *London*, Robinson's investigation into 'the problem of London' leads him on a number of walks - or pilgrimages - around the city, to which the narrator (an un-named ex-lover of Robinson) is asked to be witness and chronicler. The protagonists' 'drifts' in and around the city imply walking and so movement, but are visualised through a series of composed destinations, the experience of walking itself absent. The use of a continual series of still shots and absence of movement between them is suggestive of the picturesque subordination of locomotion to the destination, or 'view' (Ingold 2004). Robinson even alludes to picturesque ideals by showing the narrator one of the 'sources of Romanticism' – the viewpoint on Richmond Hill from which Reynolds painted the Thames valley. Keiller's *London* turns out to be a blistering attack on 1990's Britain - its politics, economy and culture - and the pilgrimages become a conceit for the visualisation of the city and the events which Keiller sees as defining it. The walking methodology provides the conditions for the unfolding of this narrative to take place as well as its overarching logic.

I also position my work within the city symphony mode of filmmaking and its descendants, touched upon in Chapter 1. The 'symphonic' as a musical device applied to cinema has

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<sup>47</sup> From an interview with Iain Sinclair in Chapman, T. (2006) *'When in doubt, quote Ballard': an interview with Iain Sinclair*. Ballardian. [Online][last accessed 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016] <http://www.ballardian.com/iain-sinclair-when-in-doubt-quote-ballard>

roots in the cinematic avant-garde. The 'city symphonies' of the '20s and '30s including *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (Ruttman 1927), *Etudes Sur Paris* (Sauvage, 1928), *Rain* (Ivens 1929), and *Man with a Movie Camera* (Vertov 1929) depict the city as 'both an externally experienced spectacle and an internal rhythm, creating a dual sense of anonymity and intimacy' (Jilani, 2013). Although the term suggests a clear patterning of rhythm to mirror the musical symphonic form, 'symphony' is a loosely descriptive analogy in which interplays of time and space through rhythm and tempo splinter, fuse and intersplice visual fragments of everyday life. The use of a musical structure fragments but also collates and orchestrates, 'its spatio-temporal fragmentation balanced *against* its accumulative rhythms to create a multitudinous but still coherent whole' (ibid). Bazin's (1960) argument that in music, time experience is evoked as an aesthetic construct, whereas in film it is based on the transfer of 'lived time' creates a potential paradox at the heart of symphonic documentary, in common with the debate about the place of montage as a construct within observational film.

More recent practice relating to city symphony methods and aesthetics include Gardner's ethnography of Benares *Forest of Bliss* (1986)<sup>48</sup>, and Raban's *Under the Tower* trilogy - *Sundial* (1992), *A13* (1994) and *Island Race* (1996). Raban's *Under the Tower* films construct meaning through rhythmic juxtapositions and audio-visual collisions of the everyday to explore particular social and political narratives of 1990s London. The focus in *Island Race* on events highly pertinent to time and place - Ronnie Kray's funeral, VE day parties, political shifts in London at the time - underscore tone and meaning in the film. In a recorded interview (2004)<sup>49</sup> Raban explains that although the film germinated from unsettling political upheavals in East London, he didn't set out to make a political film 'as such', but to see how far meaning could be constructed through interwoven sequencing of observed everyday scenes. The subjects of the counterpointed scenes, although relating to theme as a constant undercurrent of meaning flowing through the film, are married to the close observations and embodied framing of their aesthetic. Images coalescing with their

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<sup>48</sup> *Forest of Bliss* (Gardner 1986) is analysed for its use of montage later in the chapter.

<sup>49</sup> This interview is a special feature on a BFI DVD anthology of Raban's films, *William Raban: British Artists Films*, British Film Institute (2004).

rhythmic juxtapositions in mutual agency produce metaphor and meaning in construction of a pertinent document of 1990s Britain.

I position my work within the contexts of documentary and artists' films above, which employ methods and concepts of observation, embodiment, metaphor, materialism and rhythm to explore and express aesthetics, themes and narratives of place and landscape. Where my work diverges from the strategies and affect of the films referenced here resides in its specific research methodology, which draws on embodiment theories grounded in Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'flesh' as a means to conceptualise and actualise the relationship between 'form' and 'content' in my filmmaking research. This methodology depends upon but extends the concept of embodied camera employed in modes of observational film, in a dialogue with other forms of filmmaking structures which have developed from the concept of 'weaving' as an embodied and emergent process. Guided by a chiasmic 'exchange' between content and form, the research has been influenced by ideas and aesthetics of structural film, but differently develops interdependence between content and form through an improvisational, 'conversational' process of filmmaking which relies on a dialectical process of filming and editing. This methodology blends unfolding observational, durational cinematic images with a rhythmic and contrapuntal structure, generated from an improvisational approach to editing which emphasises the 'lively' materialities of form to explore and express tensions of place and landscape. This process integrates subjectivities of experience of place and making to entwine poetic and uncanny aesthetics in responsiveness to the form *and* content of the film. The conscious formation of these methods, interacting with the dynamic between the pictorial aesthetics of landscape and its entangled senses of place, aims to create a practice that, while situating itself with these filmmaking contexts, develops a new pathway. These methods will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

### Part 3 - Methods of filmmaking practice

This section details methods of filmmaking practice that were developed and deployed throughout my research. Some of these methods, such as primary and secondary research and interviewing techniques associated with the documentary paradigm and observational filming were methods I had employed in earlier projects, but were developed or modified in this research. Others – such as the methods of ‘weaving’ and contrapuntal sequencing - were provoked through the iterative practice/theory/place-experience dialogue of the research, and developed through the course of the project. By ‘place-experience’, I refer to the distinct tensions of place I identified, emerging through the process of textual research, personal experience (actively ‘being’ in the landscape), making recordings, or conducting interviews in and about the research locations. This process was not causal one-way but rather a rhythmic back-and-forth dialogue in which each aspect of the research informed the other. I first provide an overview of my practice methods including production techniques, before expanding on specific methods, which are organised to bear a relationship with the critical contexts of landscape and documentary explored in Chapter 1. In Chapter 1, ‘the frame’ and ‘embodiment’ were dealt with separately, although a relationship between them was introduced. This section extends this relationship to explore the ‘embodied frame’ as one of my key practice methods.

I use the term ‘field research’ to describe the process of information gathering, experiential research and reflective enquiry in the field. This involves embedding myself in a place - looking, listening, going for walks<sup>50</sup> or fell running, drawing, making notes, photographs and recordings. It also involves secondary and primary research, such as archive research and informally interviewing or instigating conversations with people (residents, workers or visitors for example) I encounter or deliberately locate. This period of filmmaking is often called ‘pre-production’, and is partly informed by my background in television production.

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<sup>50</sup> My walks experimented with different forms of navigation and exploration of the landscape through the eyes and experiences of others. I joined local rambling groups for long distance walks, organised walks to particular locations with family or friends as a way to discuss ideas of landscape through walking, and I also let my dog take me for walks – letting her off the lead and allowing her to choose the route, which generated some surprising new directions.

However, in this research I have not treated these stages of production as linearly fixed, as in the workflow of my television sector experience. Informal research conversations and interviews took place across all four of the films, and were recorded in *Uplands* and *Archipelago*. *Archipelago* involved the highest number of participants<sup>51</sup> in terms of informal field research interviewees as well as participants who were filmed and appear in the film. *Uplands* and *Archipelago* also made use of recorded interviews, which took place after I had already spoken at some length with the participants<sup>52</sup>. I did not make any decisions about who would be included in the film – if anyone – until these conversations/informal interviews had taken place, making these choices after a preliminary period of filming and editing materials related to the theme.

In parallel with Rabiger's idea of interviewing as 'midwifing' others into eloquence (1987) I used my previous conversations with the participants as springboards for conversations, using active listening and conversational prompts. Being able to develop a conversation actively through an interview means that new thoughts and ideas often emerge through the interview process. This was the case in every one of the interviews, and is particularly true of *Uplands*, in which, out of our conversations, the most meaningful insights and questions were raised during the recorded interview. Although narrative voice can be valuable for certain forms of filmmaking, I also sympathise with observational cinema's credo of 'showing' not 'telling', and will only use an interview voice if I feel it is significant to the film's expression. In common with Casas's use of interview voice as means of expression and exposition in his ethnographic *End* trilogy<sup>53</sup> of films, I felt that the quality of the voice in *Archipelago* and *Uplands* not only created a stronger personal connection to the more human-centred qualities of the films, but added complexion and meaning to the ambiguities of place I was trying to explore and mediate through the films.

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<sup>51</sup> Those I talked to about and for the research included several residents; community groups including the pensioner's lunch club and the toddler group; the outdoor centre; the Reverend and parishioners of the local church; the local school and its headmaster; the library; the local ward forum and the job club.

<sup>52</sup> There is some debate as to the purpose and effectiveness of research interview techniques, prior to recording: some documentarists, for example, believing strongly that the research interview as 'rehearsal' can be counterproductive. In this study, it was important to research the subject through the personal stories, ideas and thoughts of the participants as part of the research process before making any recordings.

<sup>53</sup> Carlos Casas' *End* Trilogy comprises three films dedicated to the world's remotest environments. They are *Hunters Since the Beginning of Time*' (2008) made in Siberia; *Aral, Fishing in an Invisible Sea* (2004), made in Uzbekistan, and *Solitude at the End of the World* (2002-5), made in Patagonia.

Each of the films produced as part of the research were made in a processual way (MacDougall 2014), so that the sequential conventions of pre-production, production and post-production were not linearly fixed but a more 'conversational', integrated process. *Crossing* for example was initiated by recording/editing of sounds gathered via a contact microphone attached to a metal footbridge over the motorway, instigating ideas about the location and the film, and prompting an archive search for information on the motorway's construction. I began researching for *The North Wind* by intermittently filming and recording sounds at the ruins of 'Top Withens' over the winter into spring while researching the location through literature, historical and biographic texts<sup>54</sup>, 'playing' with the recordings in the edit when I got home, before I was properly 'tuned in' to the location. Its sense of place as one of 'haunting'- juxtaposed with embodied fragments of my own and others' visits to the location - was realised through these repeated filming trips, a reflective, embodied attitude towards filming at the site and a continued interplay between filming, editing and researching the location. In making *Archipelago* and *Uplands*, I was much more concerned about ethics of representation concerning the films' particular communities and narratives of place. As mentioned above, this led to a more strongly collaborative process, with informal (unrecorded) conversations and interviews with participants strongly informing the films' themes and instigating most of the filming activities. Although these films are also narratively informed by and structured through the use of recorded interview voice, they were both, as with the other two films, processual and active, each stage of filming and editing informing further filming. For example, *Archipelago's* structure was guided by initial recordings of walking on the moor near the estate, and recordings inside the lift on my visit to one of the residents on the top floor of the flats: editing these horizontal/vertical movements in juxtaposition created ideas about a 'warp and weft' of the 'play of forces' at the location. This helped to define visual ways of thinking about themes of landscape as well as visual ideas for the film, and eventually also evolved into the warp/weft ideas central to *Crossing*.

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<sup>54</sup> These texts include: *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë 1847) and other novels by the Brontë sisters; poems by Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes including *Two Photographs of Top Withens* (1979), written in full in Chapter 3; *Walking Home* (Armitage, 2013); *Ways to the Stone House* (Warner 2012); *The Brontë Myth* (Miller 2001); *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (Gaskell, 1857).

I describe this processual method of practice as a modality of ‘weaving’ (Ingold 2005) in which filmmaking is active, materialised and emergent, also relating to a concept of filmmaking as drawing (Grimshaw & Ravetz 2015)<sup>55</sup>. This process meant that I filmed and recorded over a relatively long time scale: *The North Wind* and *Archipelago* were shot over the course of a year, *Uplands* and *Crossing*, over several months. In *The North Wind* and *Archipelago*, this allowed me to harness narrative qualities intrinsic to the passage of seasons as structural components in the films; primarily, though, this strategy enabled me to use the filmmaking practice itself (shooting, recording, editing) as a ‘thinking’ process, a way to generate knowledge about senses of place and landscape in the research locations, as well as formulating creative ideas for expressing these themes of place and landscape through moving image practice. MacDougall calls this process a kind of ‘alchemy’ (2014)<sup>56</sup> recalling Morin’s description of certain filmmakers as ‘ciné-plongeurs’ (filmmaker-divers), a term I relate to. While filming observationally for the Doon School project<sup>57</sup>, this attitude to practice transformed the way MacDougall thought about the school and its students, his originating themes and those which emerged during the recording period. This idea of an ‘alchemic’ method of filmmaking is significant to my research, correlating with my research process.

### **The embodied frame**

In Chapter 1, I explored visual constructs and phenomenological concepts of embodiment in landscape and documentary as distinct themes, although connections between framing and embodiment were introduced. This section draws the relationship between the pictorial and the phenomenological together, as the ‘embodied frame’: rather than a ‘limit’ on the world, the frame creates agency, participating in the emergence of meaning. I draw

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<sup>55</sup> These methods are discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

<sup>56</sup> These citations, and others through the exegesis relating to MacDougall’s concept of documentary as process, originate from his unpublished conference paper *Documentary Filmmaking as Process* presented at the *What is Documentary?* conference at the University of Oregon, 2014. I am most grateful to David MacDougall for his generosity in allowing me access to a written form of the presentation for this research.

<sup>57</sup> MacDougall made 5 films in total for the Doon School project between 2000-2003, focused on a boys’ boarding school in Dehra Dun, India.

on critical concepts of both observational cinema in ethnography, documentary and new materialism, referenced here in relationship with my own research methods of practice.

Guided by Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'flesh', a chiasmic reversibility between subject and object situates observational filming as a humanised, embodied process. The act of filming as a practice of 'looking with' rather than 'looking at' is interactive and collaboratively engaged, creating the opportunity for new forms of knowledge to surprise us (MacDougall, 2006). If, as Grimshaw and Ravetz propose, the making process is central to ethnographic research, the act of filming itself is revelatory, an activity where ideas are generated and knowledge acquired. They argue that the observational camera should be interactive and inquisitive: 'using a camera positions one differently in the world. It serves to radically realign the body such that a different range of questions about experience and knowledge come into view.' (2005 :6). Nichols describes observational film as a 'particularly vivid form of a 'present-tense' representation' (1991:40). To observe involves 'attending to the world – actively, passionately, concretely – while at the same time relinquishing the desire to control, circumscribe, or appropriate it' (2009: 5).

The pictorial framing of world which is so intricately tied to the process of documentary filmmaking involves not only an authorial control but expresses the filmmaker's interaction with the world. It addresses and expresses a material presence of the process of practice, which cannot be separated from its depiction. MacDougall describes the act of framing as 'a way of pointing out, of describing, of judging' (2006: 3), an act which reminds us that filmmaking is always 'about something'. He describes this process as one in which the filmmaker examines something more closely, 'as we might pick up a leaf in the forest' (2006: 4). It reveals the unnoticed and overlooked, creating connections and concentrating experiences.

Similarly, Hongisto argues that the frame in documentary filmmaking is a symbol for documentary's participation in the world, so that the frame's authority is mediated by the presence of the filmmaker, making aesthetic and conceptual choices while engaging with the world before the lens, performing 'a double movement that both captures the real and expresses it.' (2015: 17). She argues against a tendency in documentary theory to 'freeze

process' by focusing on the social world represented within the frame as a given narrative, contending that 'the real' depicted in the documentary form is 'dynamic in its own right' (2015: 11). Theorising this approach within the critical discourse of new materialism which emphasises the 'lively powers of material formations' she argues for a foregrounding of material processes of practice as participatory in documentary meaning: 'Here, matter is not dull substance for vibrant interpretations but "an exhibiting agency" that co-composes what documentary films will turn out to be' (ibid).

Hongisto describes a potential friction caused by this artistic/observational approach in recounting a story about Maya Deren's experience of filming a Haitian ritual (2015). She tells us that Deren's documentation of the rituals challenged her practice as an artist: "'I began as an artist, as one who would manipulate the elements of a reality into a work of art in the image of my creative integrity; I end by recording, as humbly as I can, the logics of a reality which had forced me to recognize its integrity, and to abandon my manipulations.'" (2015: 10). However, Hongisto points out that although she does not recognise her embodied framing as artistic intervention herself, Deren the artist is in fact interacting with strong personal creativity with the events she sees before her.

When I am engaged in that act of filming, I am simultaneously engaging with the world behind the lens and despite the lens (as if the camera wasn't there). This sense of being part of the world, the location, the subject being filmed, and at the same time framing that subject - isolating elements of the world as an image-making process - is a complementary process of seeing, experiencing and responding. The living body of the filmmaker and the living world are caught together in an encounter of 'duration' which itself lives and breathes. The longer-duration 'tableaux' shots in *Archipelago* – a school assembly, a girl jumping on a trampoline – involve a durational quality of unfolding time which is at a variance to the faster-paced montage sequences. Watching a scene unfold through time involves a relationship between viewer and viewed which is different from a moving camera or shot-constructed scenes. These moments unfolded durationally, their temporality 'felt' at the time of filming. The same attitude towards filming, being 'in the moment' and experiencing the unfolding present can also be applied to some of the more metaphorical images, framed and documented for something they seemed to express at the time,

implicated as part of the experience of filming with the subject at that particular time or location, perhaps drawn by the conversation or a feeling about the subject and their experience of the world. An example of this in *Archipelago*, are the images of tigers which populate Pam's 15<sup>th</sup> floor flat. Pam's love of tigers was evident from the many images - tapestries, statues and paintings - in her domestic space, and seemed very important to document. I wasn't sure at the time how they would find their way into the film if at all, but the metaphorical and aesthetic value of these images later became important as an intertwining contrapuntal 'tiger/river' sequence: the symbolism of the 'creatures great and small' following from the school hymn interacting with images (and sounds) of a mattress abandoned in the river just below the block where Pam lives. An association between the textures of the fabrics and their colours deepen the metaphorical meanings of the images as they intersplice: on a broad level, the intertwining of nature and an urbanised culture slowly revealed (the mattress revealed as rubbish, ideas of urban culture provoked by the image also disturbed by the music aesthetic), and more specifically, the details of Pam's interior world - both in the sense of the physical details of the inside of her flat as well as her personal love of tigers - juxtaposed with the exterior world she can see from her window - the river which is simultaneously beautiful and tainted.

This practice has commonality with Grimshaw and Ravetz's research which proposes imaginative and process-led links between drawing and filmmaking (2015). Taking issue with a 'making'/'taking' binary applied to drawing and lens media, they argue for a reconceptualisation of the frame as 'something flexible, organic, and emergent from within the shared environment in which subjects and filmmakers (and by extension viewers) are situated' (2015: 265). Resituating the camera as a tool rather than a form of technology, they argue that certain forms of filmmaking, in their complex relationship between process and representation, can be considered as forms of drawing – improvisatory, imaginative and fluid. Bodily movement is intrinsic to this process, as the filmmaker and subject meet in an intersubjective encounter in which each are moulded by the other.

This aligns with my own approach, and although rooted in partnership with the subject and shaped by their everyday experience, is also influenced by the subjectivity of the poetic: my interaction with the subject often involving interruption with the pro-filmic world to create

possibilities of meaning. For example, it may entail asking a subject a direct question, using specific framing, isolating objects or composing an image in a particular way, influencing the meaning of a shot. This process is rooted in a dialogue with the subject but is extrapolated from ideas that may occur intuitively and at the time of shooting. This 'present-tense' approach to a poetic form of image-making may also be thinking ahead to editing, which might be said to counter the naturalism of a more strictly observational approach to cinema. In documentary, this is both documentation and artistic intervention: a present-tense encounter foregrounding the experiential or haptic potential of an image/sound to create meaning and express a feeling or an idea about the moment.

These approaches toward the act of filming enable a filmic expression as an act of seeing – or seeing made visible (Sobchack 1992). What we see when viewing a film is an expression of visual perception, which is itself stimulated by the encounter with world, rather than an objectively recorded event. A 'seeing with' rather than a 'looking at' – correlating with Klee's observation about the forest which 'speaks to me' - responds to concepts of 'reversibility' in landscape and film theories, as outlined in Chapter 1. The 'fleshy space' of 'reversibility' - between 'subject' and 'object' is enacted by this encounter, in which the filmmaker and the subject framed by the lens 'meet'. The intertwining of self and world, enacted both in terms of landscape and film, enacts a double reciprocation when making film about landscape.

### **Observation and the poetic**

'A film is born of direct observation of life; that, in my view, is the key to poetry in cinema. For the cinema image is essentially the observation of a phenomenon passing through time.' (Tarkovsky 1986: 67)

In Chapter 1 I described my methodology of documentary practice as an artistic one – poetic, speculative and explorative. Connecting to concepts of embodied framing linked with a pictorial vision of world explored in the previous section, this exploration of the 'poetic' as a method of practice begins with observation. Tarkovsky argued that the aims of

great cinema – authenticity and inner truth - can only be achieved through poetry, and that central to poetry is observation: ‘if time appears in cinema in the form of fact, the fact is given in the form of simple, direct observation. The basic element of cinema, running through to its tiniest cells, is observation.’ (1986: 66). His argument that observation is key to art’s purpose - to create a spiritual vision and express the inexpressible - echoes Vaughan’s comment ‘that film is about something, whereas reality is not’. Tarkovsky’s interest in Japanese Haiku structure illustrates the power of the poetic to harness meaning through closely observed and strongly felt everyday moments, for example:

*No, not to my house.  
That one, pattering umbrella  
Went to my neighbour.*

and

*Reeds cut for thatching  
The stumps now stand forgotten  
Sprinkled with soft snow*

(Basho, in Tarkovsky 1986: 106-107)

Gogol’s idea that image should ‘express life itself, not ideas or arguments about life. It does not signify life or symbolise it, but embodies it’ (quoted in Tarkovsky 1986: 111) underscores Tarkovsky’s belief in the purity of image and distrust of the symbolic, which obscures reality.

MacDougall’s belief that ‘images reflect thought, and they may lead to thought, but they are so much more than thought’ (2006:1) expands cinematic aesthetic as a means of expression beyond the descriptive. Images are ‘responsive, interactive, constructive...a perceptual as well as conceptual kind of knowledge’ (ibid). MacDougall holds that ‘appearance’ lays claim to visual and sensory forms of knowledge, and this communication of knowledge begins with the filmmaker as observer, arguing:

‘..before films are a form of representing or communicating, they are a form of looking. Before they describe anything, they are a form of looking. In many respects filming, unlike writing, precedes thinking. It registers the process of looking with a certain interest, a certain will.’ (2006: 6)

Observing, or looking, carefully, heightens awareness and is a way of *knowing* that is different from *thinking*. This form of knowledge, or experience, mediated through filmic representation, thus becomes a new experience in its own right, film being one of the 'newer technologies to create new disturbances at the boundaries of art and everyday experience' (2006: 16). In documentary filmmaking observation is key to a sensory and experiential film language, reflective of the filmmaker's own experience of seeing. In this mode for example, Koppel's linking of subjectivity and observation in *sleep furiously* (2009) creates an 'art of the inexplicit' (Ford 2009) in a narrative which is allowed to 'emerge from my experience of landscape and people' (2007: 314). Reflecting MacDougall's claim for filmmaking as a form of knowledge, the film provokes new knowledge through its making – a process of 'poetic' observation allowing for 'a way of creating the circumstances in which new knowledge can take us by surprise' (1998: 163).

Russell argues a similar case for what she terms 'the utopian project' of experimental ethnography, being to 'overcome the binary oppositions of us and them, self and other, along with the tension between the profilmic and the textual operations of aesthetic form' (1999: 19). She believes that a new critical vocabulary needs to reclaim a film practice which is both aesthetic, and ethnographic, 'work in which formal experimentation is brought to bear on social representation' (1999: 3). One could consider this way of thinking about the ethnographic project as finding a path to knowledge through 'observation plus aesthetic', a concept which echoes an approach to documentary more broadly, as proposed in Chapter 1. Considering how this might be achieved in practice would be dependent on the individual author/filmmaking and their particular way of seeing and interacting with the world. This concept has commonality with Knudsen's (2008) proposition of a form of 'transcendental' film practice which springs from a revised idea about the cause and effect of emotions, feelings and the physical world. His suggestion that, by rejecting the scientific paradigm which assumes that the physical world 'creates' feelings and emotions in favour of a world view that the physical world is a *product* of feelings, a renewed way of thinking about and creating documentary narratives about the world can be generated. Similarly, Trinh T. Minh-ha argues for a fluid conception of reality in which meaning is not 'closed' but escapes representation: 'truth and meaning: the two are likely to be equated with one another. Yet what is put forth as truth is often nothing more than *a* meaning' (1993: 92). The concept of

'a' meaning is a consciously subjective idea, and opens up ways of thinking about the poetic as a bridge between a visualised objective world of 'reality' and a subjectively explorative process, which sees an author (the filmmaker) imaginatively responding to and collaborating with the 'actuality' of world.

### **The role of the imagination and the uncanny**

During the research, the concepts and practices explored above – of framing, the poetic and embodiment – in conjunction with a conception of landscape as specific, a site of tension – have generated an aesthetic strategy of suggestively shifting or defamiliarising the everyday observations central to the filmed recordings. As Grimshaw and Ravetz (2015) propose, the imagination should not be discounted or overlooked by the ethnographic enterprise (and in my view, the documentary project more broadly) but be embraced as an active participant in a complex, generative mode of enquiry. In my research, one of the 'defamiliarising' effects emerged through the editing process, in experimentation with juxtapositions and effects applied on images and sounds, to develop aesthetic ideas and senses of affect, as a response to and generative of my feelings towards tensions of place. My aim from this process was to create a disturbance, or friction between ideas. Clifford challenges the ethnographic/surrealist binary, arguing that they are two facets of a shared enterprise:

'The ethnographic label suggests here a characteristic attitude of participant observation among the artefacts of a defamiliarized cultural reality. The surrealists were intensely interested by exotic worlds, among which they included a certain Paris. Their attitude, while comparable to that of the fieldworker who strives to render the unfamiliar comprehensible, tended to act in the reverse sense, by making the familiar strange. The contrast is, in fact, generated by a continuous play of the familiar and the strange, of which ethnography and surrealism are two elements.'  
(1981: 542)

The idea of the continuous play of the familiar and strange is pertinent to my research. In the practice process, strange or uncanny moments are sometimes created through isolating an image belonging to the afilmic geography of a space - but taken out of context, isolated or juxtaposed with other shots, taking on another plane of signification. Although the image is a 'documentary' one, originating in the afilmic world of the film, this recontextualisation

might work to defamiliarise the image or create another, previously hidden layer of meaning or affect. Referring back to the example of 'Pam's tigers' in *Archipelago*, the tigers, seen in the background of a framed wide shot on the walls of Pam's flat, later become isolated in close-up, and juxtaposed with the shots of the river which runs in the valley just below the flats. Their new environment, as part of a rhythmic sequence combining river/Pam's domestic environment/flats overlooking the river/discarded mattress is described in detail above, but in the context of the 'uncanny', the images of the tigers here also act to (in Clifford's words) 'attack the familiar' of the everyday.

Other examples in *Archipelago* are in the frequent slippage between diegetic sounds and images - where sounds from a preceding scene, or evocative of an environment other than the one shown create a detemporalising shift in an everyday scene. In other sequences, images are slowed down to slightly detemporalise the image, sometimes slightly jump cut and looped to create a rhythm which offsets the direct 'witnessing' of the scene to create a slight fissure to provoke different meanings. In common with Ramesar's strategy of 'Carribbeaning' (Hezekiah 2010), these effects emerge from their specific environments. One of many instances from *Archipelago* is the slightly slowed down image of a school-boy goalkeeper. In the midst of a game of football but with the action happening at the other end, the boy is isolated in wide-shot, wandering and waiting, the moorland hills framed behind him. By slowing the shot down slightly, and continuing the sound of the water lapping from the previous scene of a canoeing lesson in the reservoir next to the school, the everyday image of a school football match becomes slightly incongruous, a feeling of the boy being in water rather than on land, isolated rather than part of a team. Framing, sound and motion thus combine to produce a defamiliarising effect which remains geographically, aesthetically and thematically tied to the overall film meaning. In Trigg's phenomenology of place and the uncanny (2012), the uncanny's dual nature of being hidden and familiar is revealed through phenomenology's ability to 'draw our attention to the strangeness of things' (2012: 26), a concept which is pertinent to the connections between ideas of the poetic, embodiment and the uncanny as aesthetic strategies developed in my research.

## **'Weaving': a practice method**

'Form giving is movement, action. Form giving is life.' (Klee, 1973: 269)

Two aspects of the idea of 'weaving' are pertinent to this project. The first draws on Ingold's broad concept of 'weaving' as an ontology of the practice of 'making'. This is a way of thinking about the production of cultural objects which reframes the generative processes of their production. Rather than the accepted notion of an artefact as a substance to which form is applied, generated from a pre-formed, conceptualised idea, Ingold asks us to consider process as the generative force – artefacts shaped through embodied rhythm inherent to the activity of making, or 'weaving'. Ingold starts with the assumed distinction between an organism and an object - that with an organism, design is supposed to have been 'unfurled from within' (2000: 51) - but with an artefact, form is thought to be applied to a substance from without. This 'hylomorphic model' is founded upon the Aristotelian concept of creation which brings together 'form' and 'matter'. Form came to be seen as imposed from without by an agent with a goal in mind – matter passive and imposed upon by the maker. Ingold's reframing of the hylomorphic model – following Klee's assertion that form-giving is life; form itself, death - assigns primacy to processes of formation as against their final products. Ingold claims then, that practitioners are 'wanderers, wayfarers, whose skill lies in their ability to find the grain of the world's becoming and to follow its course while bending it to their evolving purpose.' (2010: 92) Wayfarers are 'gatherers', their practice not 'shooting arrows at a target' (2011: 178) but creating their own paths 'or lines of becoming into the texture of the world' (ibid) an improvisatory process which works things out as it goes along (2011: 10). Ingold references medieval cathedral builders, who did not work from a planned design: skilled workers of different trades working in collaboration, the building taking shape over time (2010: 93). Western modernity however prioritises design over execution, intellect over labour, generating hierarchies which dominate the making process.

Ingold extends this theory into the actual practice of weaving, describing how the process of weaving a basket subverts the hylomorphic model. The fibrous materials that will make up the basket combine with the rhythmic movements of the weaver to build up a surface

with neither an inside or an outside, generated by the play of forces: The form of the basket may be imagined in advance but does not issue from the idea: 'It rather comes into being through the gradual unfolding of that field of forces set up through the active and sensuous engagement of practitioner and material. This field is neither internal to the material nor internal to the practitioner.. rather, it cuts across the emergent interface between them' (2000: 342).

Objects are often seen as static, the process of their making masked by their finished forms. We look for the meaning of the object in the idea it expresses, rather than the process of activity from which it was generated. This focus on spatial structures created from rhythmic temporality realigns making as a 'modality of weaving' (2000: 54). Ingold reclaims making as weaving through the example of the carpenter, the etymology of which comes from the same root as 'to weave' – the Latin 'texere': 'The carpenter, it seems, was as much a weaver as a maker. Or more precisely, his making was itself a practice of weaving: not the imposition of form on pliant substance but the slicing and binding of fibrous material' (2000: 64). Ingold applies this thinking to the world around us, considering how the world is populated not with 'objects' but with 'things', which find meaning through their interaction with each other. For example, on considering a landscape, Ingold argues that it is important not to see the land, the sky and the clouds as separate 'objects' but as a temporally rhythmic, interlacing process: 'there could be no life in short in a world where earth and sky do not mix and mingle' (2010: 6)

These ideas coincide with a mode of thinking about observational cinema. Herb di Gioa's *Peter Murray* (1981), a filmic observation of a chair-maker at work, draws together filmmaking method and the practice of the subject: Di Gioa analogised Murray's shaping of the chair to his own documentation of the activity. Peter Murray, Di Gioa writes, is-

'trying to release what is inside of the chair.. it's already in the chair – I just have to find it, I have to release it – or rather it is already in the wood. And in a way I thought the same about the film editing especially – that is there in the material. I have to look at the material, understand the material, see what's there and sort of find a way to release it from the rushes, from the material itself; rather than trying to force it to be this or force it to be that' (cited in Grimshaw & Ravetz, 2009: 118).

That the form of an object is resident inside a material, from which it is then shaped – involves an understanding of the act of making as a process not tied indelibly to vision alone: ‘to work in this way uses a cinematic rather than a textual language, to think through visual and aural materials, rather than to use these to give form to an autonomous idea. It is about finding the shape rather than marking the line of a film’ (2009: 119), or to return to Paul Klee, who once remarked that art does not reproduce the visible but rather, makes visible.

This research project draws upon the idea of a ‘modality of weaving’ as a broad ethos for filmmaking practice. Additionally, the project develops a further, more literal concept of ‘weaving’ in terms of practice-based editing processes. This involves a way of thinking about and ‘handling’ images and sounds as material substances or textures as if they are threads of warp and weft in a weave of cloth. I have previously analogised editing documentary film as a form of ‘painting’, collected images and sound recordings creating a ‘palette of life’<sup>58</sup> which is reconstructed in the form of a filmic narrative through the editing process. The weaving analogy materialises the moving image in another way - transfiguring the recordings as physical substances or textures that can be ‘woven together’ to create a kind of ‘fabric’ of film. Digital forms of moving image are of course not material substances but perceptual media; but an approach towards filmmaking which conceives of moving image in terms of a tangible materiality shifts the maker’s perception of the medium and embodied relationship with it. Conceptualising and treating the moving image in terms of its materiality creates different ways of viewing and shaping images and sounds; it realigns the aesthetic of the medium as one involving tactility, textures and juxtapositions. It encourages a sense of movement as instigator of a shaping force, a feeling towards knitting together, breaking up or sharpening the edges between colours, textures, sounds and movements within a narrative dynamic. The concept of ‘weaving’ in this respect relates to contrapuntal sequencing (detailed later) and can also be evidenced in many other ways in the work. These include a method of breaking apart and dropping of diegetic sounds from their images, drawing attention to a reflexive practice of filmmaking as a shaping process and as a craft; treating observed images and sounds as ‘found footage’ to form montage sequences which depend on textural juxtapositions and edges to generate aesthetic

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<sup>58</sup> Holt, J, *The Palette of Real Life: Documentary as Art Practice*, Documentary Now: A Conference on the Contemporary Contexts and Possibilities of the Documentary, Birkbeck College London, January 2010

meaning; drawn out observational tableaux scenes cut against fast-paced rhythmic sequences; and tiers of sound which layer diegetic soundscapes together and drift across scenes to connect disparate shots. This also extends to the use of 'colour fields' or blocks, introduced in *The North Wind* and developed through the following films. These colour fields most often relate to or are picked out from colours inhabiting images preceding or following them, acting as a kind of coloured 'thread' linking discourses and ideas evoked by the images, perpetually in movement. Their 'threadness', which links images through sequential rhythms, is at the same time counteracted by its 'objectness' which 'pulls' the film another way, pausing sequential movement briefly, before moving on again into the next sequence.

## **Montage**

In Chapter 1, principles of montage were explored in relationship to temporalities of the film form, and as a means to create meanings through metaphorical, symbolic and expressive juxtapositions. Tarkovsky believed that the poetic had to exist completely *within* the shot itself, and denigrated the use of montage. Eisenstein's montage, for instance, operated to exercise control over a viewer, depriving 'the person watching of that prerogative of film.. namely the opportunity to live through what is happening on screen as if it were his own life, to take over, as deeply personal and his own, the experience imprinted in time upon the screen, relating his own life to what is being shown' (1986: 183). Bazin believed montage was a disruptive imposition of meaning on cinema's potential naturalism; a meaning not embedded in the integrity of the image but 'in the shadow of the image, projected by montage' (2005: 26).

In my view, an associative juxtaposition of shots is one of the most important strategies towards the creation of cinematic poetic structure and texture. In documentary film, montage can create opportunities to explore relationships and open up meaning. Returning to Tarkovsky's reference to Basho's Haikus, an imagined montage, intercutting the two images might create an alternative sequence:

*Reeds cut for thatching*  
*No, not to my house.*  
*The stumps now stand forgotten*  
*That one, pattering umbrella*  
*Sprinkled with soft snow*  
*Went to my neighbour.*

The rhythm is no longer effective and the unity of the poetic image sacrificed for another kind of vision - but it is one which offers an imagined alternative, evoking new ideas through their juxtaposition.

Suhr & Willerslev (2012) examine the practice of montage within the documentary form as a means to express the 'invisible'. They define montage as a disruptive power which can 'break the visual skin of the world' (2012: 209), going so far as to suggest that it is the responsibility of the ethnographic filmmaker to break 'the mimetic dogma of the humanized camera' to create an enhanced perception of social reality which can reveal invisible aspects of life not visible to the camera eye alone. These interruptions or disruptions are unlikely to be arrived at consciously or planned beforehand, but 'rather seem to erupt unexpectedly in contradictions that arise in the tension between the profilmic, the shooting and the putting together of shots during editing'. (2012: 287) Citing MacDougall, they explore how to embrace the 'surprise' element of their practice, working with the tensions inherent in the collecting and gathering of material:

'...we use 'found' materials from this world. We fashion them into webs of signification, but within these webs are caught glimpses of being more unexpected and powerful than anything we could create.. a good film reflects the interplay of meaning and being, and its meanings take into account the autonomy of being. Meaning can easily overpower being' (2012: 291).

It is the way we – as author/filmmakers but also responsive human beings – recognise and interpret the possibilities emanating from our material that create the conditions for these patterns of meaning to emerge. The 'something extra', the excess, that is produced by the effect of montage speaks back to interact with the other elements, which all transform as a consequence: Montage then opens up 'a gap or fissure, through which the invisible

emerges' (2013:1). The strangeness this excess produces – what Suhr and Willerslev describe as 'generative instability' - is a reminder of the concept of the uncanny as an attack of the familiar, explored earlier.

The use of montage within the observational documentary paradigm creates tensions, fissures, and thus meanings, from the 'extra thing' or surplus, that it creates. As viewers, we are thus forced to recognise that filmed images are realised through technical and social processes, and are not a simple documentation of a natural reality (2013: 6). So although montage is seen by some as cinematically manipulative, it can here be recast as the opposite: these unfamiliar juxtapositions point out the fabrication of the filmmaking process, positing the artist/filmmaker as a 'maker', not a neutral observer, the film as an artistic artefact, not posing as an unmediated reflection of reality. This recasting of social life through the unfamiliar decodes meaning to produce a fuller understanding of everyday existence. Montage is the 'splintering of pre-established orders of visibility', but it is also the 'reassembling; and beyond these reassemblages, new order may appear.' (2013: 12).

These ideas are significant to my research. When I am engaged in filming, a connotative evocation of the world is often produced through a certain experience felt or intuited through or during filming. During editing, a similar process occurs – but this time it is a dialogue between myself and the palette of images and sounds - and extending through them into aspects of the world they represent. As with the filming process, this can only occur through an opening up of the relationship between the images and sounds as a connotative one, rather than an overtly expositional or continuity-based one, and is also dependent on the fact that I filmed the material myself and thus feel the experience of filming through viewing the footage. The 'extra thing', frisson or tension that can be produced from the relationship between images and sounds is created by their release from the shot-constructed framework of the dominant narrative documentary form.

In observational documentary, montage can be used to evoke meanings of place while maintaining its intrinsic naturalism, as in the gently interwoven images of *sleep furiously* (Koppel 2009). Gardner's *Forest of Bliss* (1986) similarly finds its structure through an arrangement of shots and sequences informed by montage and aesthetic rhythm. Henley

writes that Gardner's use of montage in order to get past surface meanings is produced subtly, within the prism of the semi-observational, semi-continuous language of the film, so that unless you are attuned you may mistake the sequencing as merely descriptive (2007: 36). An example is a sequence introducing us to one of the three main characters Dom Raja, intercut with a statue of a tiger being circled by vultures, and a bird seller. The juxtapositions of Dom Raja, tiger/vultures, and the fervent cheeping of the caged birds, creates a powerfully suggestive character-study of Dom Raja, who, we find out later, is 'King' of the cremation ghats, and sells the sacred fire – his relationship with the ghats a financial rather than spiritual one.

Henley's observation that Gardner's juxtaposed spatial tensions – in particular the vertical interchange between sky and river, and the horizontal relationship between upstream and downstream – evoke the 'symbolically opposed values' of spirit and body, and of life and death (2007:39) is significant. These spatial juxtapositions are formally comparable to the vertical/horizontal tension of the lift/walking sequence in *Archipelago* – a warp and weft of spatial directions analogising ideas of urban and rural, inside and outside, both journeys encompassing (albeit the lift journey, only as a final resolution) landscape perspectives. These vertical/horizontal structures are further developed in *Crossing* through the motorway, footpath and transmitter juxtapositions.

In a 'retreat from language' towards the connotative, Gardner 'has conjured a more phenomenal, prediscursive relationship between spectator and screen and between film and the world' (Barbash & Taylor 2007: 8) which is simultaneously closely experiential and distant. Gardner's heightened awareness and expression of the visual and aural worlds of his subjects intensifies the spectator's experience of the Benares ghats and its life-world; but at the same time, Barbash & Taylor argue, his rejection of narrative and observational continuity in favour of montage, cuts across different subjects, locations and emotions, offering up the world in a symphony of fragments at the cost of character development and detachment from the subject. This is a pertinent addition to the question over the extent to which observational filmmaking and montage can co-exist, and what balance can be created between the two to form the most effective language.

Aesthetic rhythm corresponds with montage to inform structure - for example, the sequence in which Mithai Lai lays out marigolds on the ghats, cutting to images of marigold farming in the countryside beyond Benares. This juxtaposition creates a link between the countryside and the city, and the cottage industries supporting Benares's religious practices, but is also generated by aesthetic qualities. Talking about the positioning of the marigold sequence directly after the Mithai Lai sequence, Gardner says he was 'trying to burn the colour of marigolds into people's minds' (2007: 170) – a remark which resonates with the use of colour as an aesthetic strategy in my research. MacDougall notes that these shifts of mood and modes of expression 'seem to propel the film forward, as though releasing and storing up energy, then springing forward in a new way' going on to analogise musical and filmic construction in *Forest of Bliss*, and its 'movements, recurring motifs and fugue-like overlapping of actions' (2007: 141). These musical constructions go hand-in-hand with the aesthetic rhythms often informed by montage, also connecting to the 'city symphony' mode explored earlier in the chapter.

### **Musical analogies: the contrapuntal and the symphonic**

In Chapter 1 ideas of temporality and rhythm were seen to cut across both documentary film practice and landscape. I explored musical analogies of film, discussing rhythm, temporality and referencing ideas of 'counterpoint' which the research project develops as a 'narrative' form of montage. My use of the term 'counterpoint' has its roots in Eisenstein's use of the analogy as means to reconcile his struggle with temporal structures of 'audio-visual cinema', as referenced in Chapter 1 (Robertson, 2009). Here I intend to contextualise the idea of counterpoint – particularly in terms of documentary before describing how counterpoint is developed in this research project.

Counterpoint in music is defined as two lines or more of music that are independent in melody and interdependent in harmony'. Contrapuntal methods can be said to be applied in the moving image by conferring the status of 'musical line' to a given visual or sonic component, each constituting an individual narrative thread resonant of the main theme, or 'cantus firmus'. These are independent but connected elements, with no 'line' privileged,

but each working with, through and against the other, aiming to liquefy narrative strands and create a sequencing montage through their juxtaposition.

Experimentation with explicitly contrapuntal techniques applied to sound and moving image that relate to my practice include Gould's 'contrapuntal radio' *Solitude Trilogy* (1967-77), *Nu\*tká\** (Douglas 1996), and *Timecode* (Figgis 2000). In these works, counterpoint interplays related but separate thoughts or ideas, with no dominant thought, or narrative, laying claim over another<sup>59</sup>. Gould's *Solitude Trilogy* is of particular interest due to its connection to themes of landscape. For example, *The Idea of North* (1967) juxtaposes the voices of five Canadians living in the Arctic circle, describing what the 'north' means to them: the voices drift over each other, harmonise and break apart, creating not a single idea but simultaneous voices and ideas which 'coalesce, antagonize, support, subvert, mingle, and separate. The North acts, for Gould, as a name for a certain multiplicitous music, an imaginative zone in which the voices, noises, and ideas of the human community entangle and sound themselves out' (McNeilly 1996: 87).

This concept of counterpoint as a means to create a fabric of voices - or narratives - equalising and intermingling at the same time as drawing attention to the substance of different ideas and meanings, is mirrored by literary counterpoint theory. Said's model of the contrapuntal in literature (1993) proposes counterpoint as a means to interplay cultural narratives as equal to each other, collapsing notions of a 'dominant culture' (colonial power) and 'otherness'. Lachman argues that this model created a theoretical approach that was equipped to cope with 'the complex mappings of the postcolonial world' (2010: 163), taking into account the connections and contradictions between opposing histories:

'Gone are the binary oppositions dear to the nationalist and imperialist enterprise... The old authority cannot be simply replaced by the new authority, but the alignments made across borders, types, nations, and essences are rapidly coming into view, and it is those new alignments that now provoke and challenge the fundamentally static notions of *identity* that have been at the core of cultural thought during the era of imperialism' (1993: xviii)

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<sup>59</sup> Composer Steve Reich also discusses this idea in relation to his treatment of pulse: 'you create a rhythmic ambiguity, points which are equal, and receive equal status' (from an interview with Reich in a 1987 TV documentary *Steve Reich: A New Musical Language* [online] [last accessed 12<sup>th</sup> February 2017] [http://www.ubu.com/film/reich\\_new.html](http://www.ubu.com/film/reich_new.html)).

In this model, counterpoint does not offer any resolutions or synthesis but enables us to 'think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant.. all of them co-existing and interacting with others' (Said 1993: 37). Opening a dialogue with previously marginalised voices, the model can develop a 'compassionate, nuanced and inclusive approach to history' (Lachlan 2010: 162). There is a clear connection to these ideas and the earlier exploration of the art/documentary dynamic – a poetic, connotative means of visualisation creating a different kind of indexical response from the dominant informational model traditionally associated with documentary. There is also a pertinent relationship between the post-colonial positioning of Said and Lachlan's literary counterpoints, and the focus on intercultural, post-colonial cinema chosen by both Marks and Hezekiah to visualise their phenomenologies of film, explored in Chapter 1.

Pelechian's development of a montage juncture of images into a juxtaposition of 'scenes' in order to create meaning, mirrors the idea of counterpoint as narrative juxtaposition unfolding through time. In his films, these ideas of 'distance' or 'contrapuntal' montage, in which connected shots are placed at intervals, to create meaning across and along a sequence, rather than solely in a focused shot-against-shot reciprocity, generate a circular, spiralic or orbital movement, creating a distance between two shots in a way which simultaneously 'unites them so firmly that it cancels out this distance' (2012). This structural method he believed built on Eisensteinian montage which was ultimately linear, operating like a 'chain': 'For me, distance montage opens up the mysteries of the movement of the universe. I can feel how everything is made and put together; I can sense its rhythmic movement' (2012).<sup>60</sup>

In my research, counterpoint has been developed as a method of filmmaking practice both as a means to 'liquefy' narrative strands and themes, and to create interplays between images, sounds and sequences in unfamiliar juxtapositions. The collapsed binaries of subject/object, self/world are implicated in this practice, and again, ideas of Merleau-

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<sup>60</sup> Fairfax, D. *Artavazd Pelechian, Senses of Cinema* (2012) [online] [last accessed December 18<sup>th</sup> 2015] <http://sensesofcinema.com/2012/great-directors/artavazd-pelechian/#87>

Ponty's chiastic 'flesh', the in-between space of self and world, are provoked. There is an essential grounding of purpose in this, a generic idea of seeking a between-space - and by conceiving of experiences through images and sounds in this way an attitude to practice is formed, a mutuality between filmmaker and world which tries to provoke meaning through formal and temporal relationships. In practice, 'oppositional' or provocative sets of ideas are held in tension with each other, including inside/outside, urban/rural, wasteland/idyll (*Archipelago*), and 'indigenous'/'other' (*Uplands*).

### **Soundscape and the audio-visual contract**

Following Schafer's depiction of the world's sonic environments as soundscape - 'a macrocosmic musical composition' (1977: 5), for each of the films I aimed to tune myself in to the acoustic worlds of my specific research locations to explore place, and develop ideas in the research. For example, my experiments with contact microphones in various environments included the initial recordings on the metal railings of the Pennine Way footbridge across the M62, the starting point for *Crossing*. For this film, I also used a VLF receiver to record sonic electrical activity at the site inaudible to the human ear. Schafer proposes three main elements of landscape sound: keynote sounds, sound signals and soundmarks. The idea of the sonic environment's keynote sound is particularly interesting to this research project, as Schafer describes:

'*Keynote* is a musical term; it is the note that identifies the key or tonality of a particular composition. It is the anchor or fundamental tone and although the material may modulate around it.. it is in reference to this point that everything else takes on its special meaning' (1977: 10).

In tracing a history of the notion of an auditory perception of space, Feld notes that phenomenology's revisioning of place barely explored its acoustic dimensions. His concept of 'Acoustemology' - sonic ways of being and knowing or 'local conditions of acoustic sensation, knowledge, and imagination embodied in the culturally particular sense of place' (1996: 91) - builds on Schafer's soundscape theory. His study of Papua New Guinea's Kaluli people's sonic environments and practice of singing as place-making, develops ideas of soundscape as an intertwining of landscape and the people who dwell there. The sound of water and song cascading through the rhythms of dwelling in the world of the Kaluli people

resonates strongly with Schafer's idea of soundscape, the water as the 'keynote' sound of the landscape:

'Places may come into presence through the experience of bodily sensation, but it is through expression that they reach heightened emotional and aesthetic dimensions of sensual inspiration.. Kaluli sing about waterways, sing with water, imagine song as water flowing like an embodied voice. Here the poetics of place merge with the sensuousness of place as soundscape and with the sensuality of the singing voice.' (1996: 134).

While filming in the Pennine landscape this idea of the keynote sound(s) of the environment around me came into particular focus: in *The North Wind* for example, the qualities of the 'keynote' sound of the wind (or 'wuthering') of the location is one of the central concerns of the film. In *Crossing*, however, the roar of motorway traffic dominates the landscape, although sonic qualities of traffic differ dramatically depending on the weather, and your position due to the acoustics of the hilly environment. Inside the car, the muffled engine sound, car radio and other interior sounds (rattling, indicators, windscreen wipers) take on a more central sonic position in contrast to being outside, looking down on the motorway. In *Uplands*, an urban/rural counterpoint is often imagined through a sonic layering of wind, rain and street-sound rumbles, a device developed in *Archipelago*, along with the 'wind' of the lift shaft and mechanised sounds of the lift itself, which becomes a motif in the film.

Metz makes a meaningful point that our underlying grammatical system describes sight more concretely than sound: visual elements are 'things' – objects – while sounds cannot be objects but are instead descriptive of an object; sounds are always attributes, always existing in deference to the object emitting the sound (1980: 25). Describing this process as an 'ideological undermining of the aural dimension', Metz notes that a recognition of a sound directly leads to the question a 'sound of *what?*' – the initial identification "(('whistling, 'hissing', rubbing'))" (1980: 26) being superseded by the source: '(the wind, the river), which have nothing of the auditory, name the source of the sound rather than the sound itself' (ibid). This thinking is directly relevant to the documentary paradigm, as a constituent of which the diegetic sound world is vital.

Ihde's phenomenology of sound argues that 'it is to the invisible that listening may attend' (2007: 14), an important factor in this research. However, this positioning of sound in a

phenomenological context, while critiquing a dominant visualist framework which tends to overlook the sense of hearing, also make clear that sound should not be sensually isolated:

‘the move to separate the senses into discrete faculties and to divide properties categorically among them is an empirical notion, not a phenomenological one. In fact, to the contrary, through concentrating on auditory experience, a re-evaluation of all the “senses” is implied. For the first gain of phenomenology in regard to sensory experience is a recovery and reappreciation of the fullness and richness and of the global character of experience. The very notion of an auditory dimension is problematic for phenomenology’ (Ihde 2007: 21).

This thinking correlates with an underlying consensus among other theorists who, while elevating the sonic as part of a sensory world, challenge the idea of ‘soundscape’ in terms of its dichotomy from vision. Feld himself takes issue with this pioneering work in its erection of an ‘anti-visualist’ discourse, which acts to separate visual and auditory dimensions of experience. Chion preferred to use the term *Audio-Vision* to fully investigate how sound and vision operate in relationship with each other (1994). Ingold likewise throws doubt on the term soundscape (2011), arguing that the world we experience is not compartmentalised according to separate sensory pathways: ‘The world we perceive is the *same* world, whatever path we take, and in perceiving it, each of us acts as an undivided centre of movement and awareness’ (2011: 137). Although I commonly use the word ‘soundscape’ to refer to the sonic elements of my work, my practice very much enacts an ‘audio-visual contract’, through a variety of methods. I use sounds and images in an editing timeline as ‘equal’ to each other, editing sound and image simultaneously and within the same software programme. This I believe is connected to the feeling I have for editing as ‘painting’, referenced earlier in this chapter – sounds and images as tactile and material, likened to a palette of paint. My concept of ‘weaving’ as methodology develops this idea. Sounds and images, as equal aesthetic or narrative elements are like ‘threads’ woven together. This rhythmic process then, first needs to break images and sounds that are in sync with each other, apart. Sometimes these images and sounds remain together, and other times they break apart, fragment, drift and coalesce, connecting to other images and sounds, in a kind of audio-visual fabric. This treatment of sonic and visual material – although it is a mediated expression of the ‘real’ world ‘out there’ – is generative as an emergent process, dynamic in its own right.

## **Chapter 3**

### **'Caught in the Fabric of World': four films**

This chapter critically evaluates the film practice submitted for the thesis: four films, under the collected project title 'Caught in the Fabric of World'. The chapter draws on the contexts and methods detailed in the previous two chapters, pulling together their ideas and theories in reference to and in dialogue with a critique of the process of the production contexts and film practice methods. The evaluations are organised in the order the films were produced, making transparent how ideas and methods were developed from one film to the next.

The decision to make four short films rather than one longer film reflects my established way of working, but it also allowed me to focus on four different locations, themes and ideas relating to landscape as subject/theme and also film language and form. While the films are very much related to each other within the overarching research project, I was able to test out different ideas and approaches discretely, developing ideas from one project to the next. There is a clear creative kinship between the films, but the different locations and themes at the centre of each project allowed different practice-led methods to be arrived at through fieldwork in dialogue with practice-based experimentation.

## Film 1: The North Wind



Figure 2. *The North Wind* (2013) – film still

‘But the tree –  
That’s still there, unchanged beside its partner,  
Where my camera held (for that moment) a ghost’.<sup>61</sup>  
(Hughes 1979)

Top Withens is a ruined farmhouse high up on Haworth Moor, said to be the location of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1848). Memorialising a visit to the ruins with Sylvia Plath and his Uncle Walt several years earlier, Ted Hughes’ *Two Photographs of Top Withens* (1979) evokes a haunted landscape,

‘Mad heather and grass tugged by the mad  
And empty wind  
That has petrified and got rid of  
Everything but the stones’<sup>62</sup>,

Plath’s excitedness at visiting the renowned literary landmark, echoing the spirit of ‘the fierce book’<sup>63</sup>, counterposed by Hughes’ and Walt’s dour attitudes toward the effects of tourism at the location. The camera’s shutter, capturing Plath’s ‘ghost’ as she poses in one

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<sup>61</sup> Ted Hughes, ‘Two Photographs of Top Withens’ in *Remains of Elmet* (Faber & Faber, 1979) 32-34.

<sup>62</sup> Hughes, ‘Two Photographs of Top Withens’, 16-19.

<sup>63</sup> Hughes, ‘Two Photographs of Top Withens’, 5.

of the sycamores which grow next to the house, symbolises the location's layered histories, cut through in a snap-shot moment.

Along with *Wuthering Heights*, this poem felt like a conceptual undercurrent to my own filming visits to the site. *The North Wind* was partly developed from an earlier film located in Haworth<sup>64</sup> focusing on the Brontë tourist trade, together with *Not giddy yet aerial* (2011) described in Chapter 1 and directly preceding *The North Wind*. The focus on 'literary' or 'historical' landscape as an imaginative prism for emotional attachment to and experiential understanding of landscape was developed in *The North Wind* from the two earlier films through an iterative practice/theory process of research which had become established by this stage of the study. In particular, my research into the phenomenological turn in epistemologies of landscape and moving image for my literature review at that time, was influential in how I rediscovered the site, in comparison with my previous filming experience there a few years earlier. I aimed to approach the film without preconception as to the narratives that might emerge there. I was already familiar with the site, so began filming and recording sounds at the location to see what ideas would emerge from this process as a first stage.

Walking to Top Withens from the nearest road is an hour's uphill climb across the moors. The building, marked out by its twin sycamore trees, can be seen in the distance for much of the climb. This sense of visual anticipation and embodied rhythm of walking to the site come together when you reach the location, and add to the sense of drama of the location and its *Wuthering Heights* connection, despite the building's rather underwhelming aspect (for those who might be expecting the *Wuthering Heights* of the novel). There are often others at the ruins when you reach them, even if the walk had been an isolated one, and very frequently, the temperature seems to drop after the climb, the wind far more noticeable, seems always to be buffeting around the building.

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<sup>64</sup> 'Top Withins' (Withins is a local alternative spelling of Withens) , made in 2006, was the first film I made on return to art practice after leaving television production. It was an attempt to use moving image as a form of placemaking and try out new methods; to see if I could make a film expressive of the Brontë mythology through its place and landscape. A passage of Cathy's dialogue from *Wuthering Heights* is used as a voiceover, juxtaposed with images from inside the Brontë Parsonage, Haworth village and Haworth moor.

Although Top Withens is a popular pilgrimage site for tourists of Brontë culture, it's also a resting spot for hikers on the Pennine Way which traverses right in front of the building, so weekend afternoons can be quite busy. Unlike Haworth village, Top Withens is a reluctant monument, as Hughes described it –

'Squared with Water Authority concrete, a roofless  
Pissoir for sheep and tourists'<sup>65</sup>.

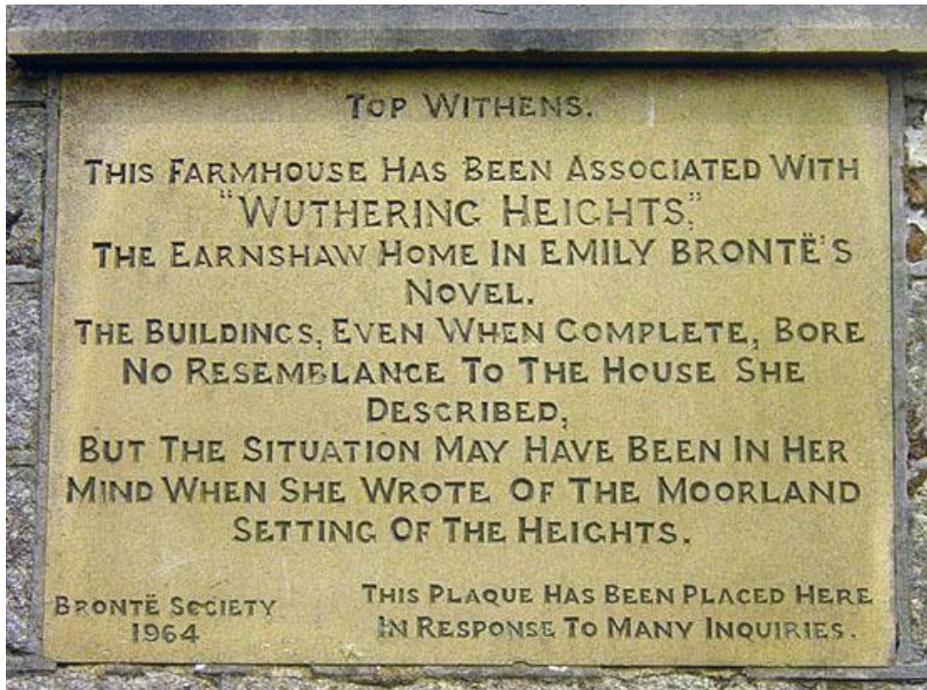


Figure 3. The Brontë Society plaque at Top Withens

Similarly, in *Walking Home: A Poet's Journey* (2013) Simon Armitage writes that Top Withens is 'resolutely non-commercial.. even the carved plaque, set into the gable end by the Brontë Society in 1964, reads as a series of apologies, qualifying statements with outright disclaimers, with such phrases as 'has been associated with', 'may have been in her mind', and the altogether unequivocal 'bore no resemblance to' (2012: 232). The uncertainty about the building's status as the 'true' Wuthering Heights of the novel creates a layer of ambiguity at the site which somehow seems to add to rather than detract from the experience of being there. As one of the fell-race marshals in the *The North Wind* is heard to remark in reference to the wording of the plaque - 'it's so Yorkshire'. The Brontë Society plaque became one of the film's narratives, marking out the film through repeated

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<sup>65</sup> Hughes, 'Two Photographs of Top Withens', 29-30.

fragments of wording, partly as exposition and partly to underscore the ambiguity of the location: 'Wuthering Heights', 'moorland', 'no resemblance' - before being assembled in voiceover at the end of the film.<sup>66</sup>

When I first started filming at the site, I began by framing landscape 'views' in a picturesque sense. This seemed like a logical starting point: I would set the camera up, frame the subject - the ruins themselves or a view of the landscape from the location - then allow a scene to unfold. Visitors or sheep might wander in out of shot but generally the movement consisted of the pattern of wind in the grass and clouds overhead. This practice was a natural response to reaching the site after the uphill climb - the gaze of the walker, stopping to rest and take in the landscape at a particular viewpoint or landmark spot. As referenced earlier, Wylie's experimental walking narrative (2005) describes this process of walking/pausing/gazing on a walk on the South Coast path, prompting in him a repositioning of vision in landscape phenomenology as a 'seeing with' rather than a 'looking at'. Reclaiming visual depth as a 'medium', vision becomes a corporeal experience rather than a detached one. How these framed 'views' operate in *The North Wind* interested me. By using these wide-shot, or what might be termed 'establishing' shots - framing the ruins in the context of their moorland setting, or the view of the moors from the ruins' perspective - sparingly in the film, they become punctuation points, or pauses. In the context of the film's rhythm, much like Wylie's concept of the paused gaze during a walk, they become moments of recognition, the visual framing participating in the experience of the site - and the film - rather than a disembodied visual 'picture' of a landscape.

Although I set out making the film without preconceived ideas, later I recognised that I was on the path of making an observational film in the model of *Not giddy yet aerial* which I had recently exhibited. At Top Withens, I began trying to film tourists at the site in this mode, and talked to visitors about what I was doing, asking for their views, but was very uneasy about the direction this was taking. The human visitors to the site were too 'solid', central and dominant: the landscape as I was engaging with it filmically seemed, as in Lefebvre's anatomy of landscape as 'setting' (2006), in service to human discourse. I decided to return

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<sup>66</sup> A similar effect can be seen in Jewesbury's film *Gilligan* (2009) in which fragments of a graffitied message painted on a wall are narratively assembled throughout the course of the film.

to the location at regular intervals over the following few months to find out if patterns of weather would generate new possibilities. It was very interesting to discover that as Top Withens is so high up on the moor (an unusual location for a farmhouse in itself), seasonal changes do not mark themselves as pivotally as they might at a lower altitude. It was very rarely warm when I was filming, even in summer – visitors to the site are often wearing hats and coats at all times of the year, and the coldest rain I experienced while filming was during June. Visually, the site also doesn't change much through the year: the moor grass was greener through the summer but the two trees at the site, unusual at this altitude, never looked particularly healthy and the duration of their full-leaf condition in the summer was startlingly short. I had visited the site on many occasions prior to filming but had never really noticed this before; filming at the site gave me a new awareness of how visually uniform the location was throughout the year. My repeated trips involving the same uphill climb, and filming/sound recording activities began to loop themselves more insistently as an internal rhythm. Beginning to connect the rhythm of my own experience making the film with the rhythm of the site - the seasonal cycles, the coming and going of tourists and walkers – the landscape as a historical site visited by literary tourists since the Brontë's own era to the present day seemed to impress itself much more keenly.

One of the methods of practice research as detailed in Chapter 2 is a reorientation, or rethreading, of a traditional documentary workflow, so that the filmmaking activities of recording images and sounds, editing, and also elements of forms of secondary and primary research, are not linearly fixed but become a more 'conversational' process. Linked to the overarching methodology of 'weaving' that developed through the research, this process allowed the film to emerge from 'within' – so that a materialised process of filmmaking is able to become more fluid, active and emergent. Thus, each filming visit to Top Withens added to an ongoing palette of images and sounds, which I would explore between each visit, improvisationally editing images and sounds, experimenting with structure and aesthetic as I went along. What began to emerge was a rhythmic, looping structure, the mood of the moorland in shifting climactic conditions inflecting the picturing of the place, structured within a reflexive echo of my own filming experience and its repeated patterns. The eroded stones of the building became more insistently fixed, despite their crumbling textures, and the tension between the central fixity of the building and the rhythms of place

in motion around it started to emerge as a dialogue. I began to view Top Withens' visitors as ghosts, visualising them haunting the site in fractured scraps of images and sound. Breaking apart the sounds from their images and looping them – sometimes to build metaphor, such as the fell-race marshals' repeated direction to the runners, 'round the building' and 'watch the ice' – a rhythm of the location as simultaneously permanent and transitory began to emerge.



Figure 4. *The North Wind* (2013) – film still

My daughter's frequent presence during my trips to Top Withens insinuated itself on the film. At first, I would ask her to try to keep out of shot while I was filming, but soon became drawn to what she was doing to pass the time. Her interaction with the site - climbing and jumping off the walls, hiding, playing with the ice and so on - started to become a point of interest in the film, and extended to sounds she recorded to entertain herself at the location. The soundscape is otherwise dominated by the weather. The film's situation in one location lends itself to an investigation of Schafer's concept of the 'keynote sound' of landscape (Schafer, 1977). The keynote sound here is clearly the wind (the word 'wuthering' is itself related to wind). I practiced different techniques of recording qualities of wind, which was challenging and painstaking: the building is itself a wind barrier – the prevailing wind produces a loud sound on one side of the house and barely any on the other. Other elements of sound were mined from recordings at the site: words or conversational

phrases were pulled out and repeated as a way to create a textural fabric of sound - akin to the images of visitors to the site - as a form of haunting presence, carried on the wind.

*The North Wind* became the most personal and reflexive film I've made to date due to the way my experience of filming and personal interaction with the site were allowed to 'take charge' of the process. Through this dialogue, interacting with my simultaneous research into phenomenological epistemologies of landscape and moving image, documentary as process and haptic visuality, some new ways of working through – intertwining concepts of landscape as both visual and embodied in relationship with practice methods – began to emerge.

## Film 2: Uplands



Figure 5. *Uplands* (2014) – film still

*Uplands* explores contrasting senses of 'otherness' and 'belonging' in the landscape. Focusing on the experiences of a particular Pennine community - those whose families settled as migrant workers from Asia, primarily Pakistan, to work in West Yorkshire's textiles industry - the film re-imagines the character of the Pennine upland through a British Asian sensibility, generating alternative perceptions of and encounters with the upland landscape. Intrinsic to the development of textiles manufacturing and the social and cultural fabric of Pennine mill towns today, Asian migrant workers and their families are viewed by many, including themselves, as town-dwellers; the moorland hills overshadowing the towns an un-travelled-to backdrop to urban existence.

The film focuses on Kabeer, a Muslim man born in Bradford from Pakistani parents, and part of a small and recent trend among ethnic minority people in Britain beginning to redress this balance. He feels a strong affinity with the Yorkshire landscape, enjoys walking and encourages others in his community to do so. Kabeer is very sensitive to what he calls his community's hesitancy about visiting the countryside surrounding the towns. As he explains in the film, cultural issues including what you might choose to do on a day out, and the practicalities of dress can have an unexpected impact on people visiting the countryside, but religious practice clearly plays a major role. As a Muslim, Kabeer explains the pre-planning involved in finding a spot to pray near water when going for a long walk in the hills for example, and also reflects on the suspicion he senses others have for Muslims in the outdoors after the July 7th terrorist attacks in London. For Kabeer however, being close to nature is also being close to his religious belief, getting away from everyday life to contemplate existence as 'just a blip in time'.

Kabeer's family along with many others in his close community in Bradford originate from Mirpur, a rural area of Pakistan. He talks about the effects of change from rural to urban existence, and the culture of walking as something that just 'isn't done'. Walking as a necessity in a rural area of Pakistan does not easily translate to walking recreationally in Britain, and his practice of walking to enjoy himself is an unusual one in his community. Kabeer puts this into a wider personal context as he expresses his feelings of identity with the Yorkshire landscape, symbolising a sense of home being in Britain rather than Pakistan. As he explains, people travel hundreds of miles to go to what they call 'back home' but the

essence of what they travel for can be found on their doorstep – ‘it’s easy to slip into saying ‘back home’. But it isn’t ‘back home’ for me. ‘Back home’ for my parents was Pakistan, but I’ve stopped consciously saying it now’.<sup>67</sup>

Compared with *The North Wind*, *Uplands* appears to be more agenda-driven in terms of its subject and theme. It differed in that I set out to make a film about the landscape experience of a particular community rather than focusing on a geographical location, but in its production methodologies as a form of ‘process’ (MacDougall, 2014) the film developed similar approaches towards the subject. Instead of, in a sense, ‘collaborating’ with a particular place, I collaborated with an individual as generative of ideas and methods.

The initial idea grew from my own experiences and thoughts about the subject. Living in an almost exclusively ‘white’ village on the edge of the moor, I would often think of the curious cultural separation between the rural and urban areas of the South Pennines. Halifax and Bradford a stone’s throw away are bustling centres of Asian (primarily Pakistani) culture but it’s rare to see any non-white people either in the rural villages or out walking on the hills. Starting to research the subject, I came across Mosaic, a project which exists within the Campaign for National Parks (CNP), aiming to build and foster ethnic minority engagement with Britain’s national parks. Kabeer had been a project worker with Mosaic, and met with me to talk about it. What Kabeer told me about his own experience and that of his community was compelling, and I invited him to become the central figure of the film. His direct way of talking about the subject and the ideas that his words nurtured had a pivotal impact on the film’s overall concept, aesthetic and narrative.

This led to an early decision to let Kabeer’s voice narratively influence and shape the film through a recorded interview, a method I have used before but did not employ in the previous two films. Reinstating the figurative quality of the voice centrally to the work seemed right, given the focus on a particular individual at the heart of the film: the narrative is not essayistic but built around the reflections of the individual in question. On a fundamental level, this method can foster an intimate connection between viewer and

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<sup>67</sup> From a recorded interview, April 2013.

subject: a collaborating subject who 'talks to' the viewer acts as an agent to convey information and ideas, and is a common device in documentary. The technique acts to create co-authorship between the filmmaker and the subject: voiceover governs the process of reading a film (Chion 1994) and this can create a sense that as viewers we are entering the world of the subject more directly. Whether this co-authorship is real or illusory will depend largely on the filmmaker's ethical position and the viewer's willingness to engage with the experience as one of truth, or, is aware of the potentially manipulative structures of leading questions and judicious editing to fit an authored agenda. I had no doubts about the necessity for Kabeer to voice the film, deciding on the conventional interview approach as means to this end after considering alternatives. However, it's interesting to note how my engagement with the interview as a method altered as a result of my doctoral research, and conscious conceptualisation of the process as one related to Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'flesh'. I had already talked with Kabeer and made notes on some of the topics we discussed, largely initiated by himself with some sporadic prompts from me. This research interview took place before I had resolved to ask him to appear in the film, and was a direct rationale for doing so. During the recorded interview I was much more aware than I had been on previous films to be open to the possibilities the interview direction might take; the process was informal and conversational, yet at the same time encouraged space for reflection.

The only concrete filming method I had in mind before the interview took place was to accompany Kabeer on a walk in the hills, so I decided that we would do this first, followed by the interview. Only after this stage would I consider how to visualise the film in other ways. Allowing Kabeer's words to inform the visualisation could have been very causal one-way, whereby the visualisation of the film would feel illustrative or supportive of vocal narrative. This was something to be aware of and again the conscious attitude towards the 'chiasm' of the filmmaking experience allowed me to 'feel' an intertwining relationship between Kabeer's voice and ideas generated from it, images, sounds, and ideas of landscape in a new way. I also began to see a relationship between Kabeer's spiritual, almost cosmic, reflections on experiencing nature '...to think about the meaning of life - It's a break from everything else, to just get away from it all and realise that although our life is important to us and other people around us, it's just a blip in time really', and Merleau-

Ponty's notion of flesh as neither mind, nor matter, nor substance, but 'the common horizon where all things belong' (1968).

These ideas are suggested through the imagery in the film, including the pavement puddle image, shot just after a sharp rain storm and reflecting a glinting sun: as we gaze down onto the street we are at the same time looking up at the sun, ground and sky combined in the same image. I was reminded of Merleau-Ponty's account of gazing at the sky: 'as I contemplate the blue of the sky I am not set over against it as an acosmic subject; I do not possess it in thought, or spread out toward it some idea of blue.. I abandon myself to it and plunge into this mystery, it thinks itself in me' (1968:214).

This shot, like several others in the film, holds its duration a few beats longer than might be expected, as part of an overarching rhythm which unlike the other films in the series, is paced quite slowly, the shots more uniform in duration. This gentle rhythm has been influenced by Kabeer's monologue, and feels appropriate to the theme of the film.



Figure 6. *Uplands* (2014) – film still

Margulies (1996) identifies an effect in Chantal Akerman's work she terms the 'hyperrealist everyday', an excess created through extended duration, which tips the image from realism to abstraction, and then back to figuration. The representative image is thus altered when returning back into 'focus' by having passed through the associative plane of abstraction,

via the duration of the shot. This 'strategic indiscrimination between registers' (1996: 4) emerges in *Uplands* partly through the duration of the shots, but also by the introduction in the film (and developed in the subsequent three films) of periodic fields of colour. The first instance of this method – a blue colour field mid-way through the film – appears in *The North Wind*. I was unsure of any solid concept behind using this piece of abstraction inserted into the film at the time, but once it was there it felt so knitted into the film I couldn't take it out. It clearly got under my skin and immediately asserted itself as a strong rhythmic element in *Uplands*. As I had begun developing ideas of the filmmaking process as one of 'weaving' I conceptualised my gravitation towards the use of colour fields as rhythmic elements with the materiality of my process towards editing as an embodied process. Having been a painter for a number of years working in both abstract and hyperrealist modes I felt a kinship, almost a muscle memory, with the use of the colour fields as if they were 'threads' being 'pulled' from one frame into another. The colour fields generally generate, in a design sense, from one of the dominant (I would say most expressive to me) colours in a preceding image, to formulate a new sensation, related to but independent from the represented image it grows from. In *Uplands*, there was a further meaning connected to the Asian identification with the landscape: the bright colours selected for the colour fields generated mostly from images relating to Bradford's colourful Pakistani culture. Sometimes, these colours work to pre-empt rather than follow this essence, such as the bright red and pink colour fields near the start of the film. Structurally, these flashes of colour also act as a pause, a transition or interlude between ideas.

One example in the film is the yellow colour field fading into the slow-moving shot of script from the Qur'an painted on the wall inside Kabeer's mosque. This is from the middle phase of the film, juxtaposing shots of Kabeer inside the mosque and outside on the moors. It was the first sequence of the film to be edited, and includes Kabeer's comment 'and then July 7 happened, and people became suspicious of Muslims in the outdoors': this would be I felt a pivotal point in the narrative, so I wanted to edit a sequence around it as the first stage of editing (although I anticipated it would be positioned approximately in the centre of the film). The bright yellow colour field, gradually transitioning into the image of the script with its daffodil yellow painted background, seems to oscillate between representation and pure form, taking the observed 'documentary' image from the mosque's interior into a

dimension of sensation. This relates to Kristeva's (1980) idea of the 'triple register' of the artistic function, whereby aesthetic experience involves an intertwining of the physical, the psychic and the social. She defines the function of colour in painting as an 'instinctual pressure' (1980: 219), linked to visible external objects. The unconscious 'pull' of colour into the symbolic order of painting endows colour with meaning; and likewise, the painting's 'system' is interrupted by the unconscious spectacle of colour and pulled into a materiality of sensation. Kristeva argues that, beginning with 'Giotto's blue', colour has been developed in Western painting as a means to escape the constraints of narrative norms, as well as representation itself (1980:221) - colour creates an excess which shatters meaning. In *Uplands* this transference of the indexicality of the documentary image into aesthetic sensation directs us to the aesthetic function of the documented image at the same time as dissolving its signification into another kind of meaning generated through the colour field as an abstract form. In connection to Margulies' remarks about Akerman's use of the long-duration shot as a form of abstraction, this process is a dialectic one.



Figure 7. *Uplands* (2014) – film still

I must also reference the drifting movement of some of the framing used in the film, which is the first time I have used such an aesthetic strategy. The most significant example in 'Uplands' is the fore mentioned shot of script from the Qur'an painted onto the wall of the

inside of the mosque. The shot came about through an experimentation with the 'aesthetics of the frame', a means of expressing the interior of the mosque and central purpose of the script as an aesthetic tension, allowing the shot to continue on, drifting through the film in dialogue with the film's internal rhythm. This was a reflection of the filming experience itself, as a form of meditative attention to and respect for the spiritual space in which I had been given permission to film. The strategy was repeated in *Archipelago* with different intentions in a depiction of graffiti (described below); and although a similar sense of duration and drifting movement generated from close attention to the environment was employed, the signification of the image created a very different tension.

### Film 3: Archipelago



Figure 8. *Archipelago* (2016) – film still

'It's been stigmatized so long, has Mixenden, that if you say you're from Mixenden you're either a thief, a junkie, or a hard man'.

'You see, to me I think we are living in paradise.'<sup>68</sup>  
(Kersley, 2015)

Mixenden estate is a post-war housing development, crouched on the side of a hill on the very edge of Halifax. Edged on the north by moorland and enclosed east and west by two narrow wooded valleys with running brooks, the estate appears as a finger of land in which the town washes up into the landscape of the moors. Conceived and built as part of the UK-wide slum-clearance initiative of the 1950s, it was a sanctuary with fresh air, gardens and interior bathrooms. But with post-war regeneration came economic decline, and as the new housing estates went up, the textile mills defining this part of Yorkshire and the main source of employment for generations began to close their doors. Sixty years later, the estate is described by many as 'run-down and ghettoised', shored up by a media-fuelled reputation of unemployment, crime and drugs. The agricultural economies of these parts of Yorkshire have survived the rise and fall of manufacturing; and this pastoral landscape, intermingling the estate and entwined with the brooding presence of the moorland hills complicate this vision of England. When invited, residents can't be drawn on whether they live in the countryside or the town, and although recognising the estate - in one resident's words - has its 'rough side', the beauty of the valley landscape and close community create a strong sense of home.

The estate lies a couple of miles from my house, and although has been built on the edge of a vast tract of hilly moorland - you can walk many miles in a northerly direction before coming across any other signs of civilisation - and lies close to scattered archetypal country villages, its innate appearance and atmosphere disrupts a cosy idea of the English village. A group of high-rise residential blocks was added in the late 1960s at the south-westerly point of the estate, now serving as a kind of visual 'gateway' into the estate from the Halifax direction.

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<sup>68</sup> From an interview recording (2015).

My interest in the incongruity of Mixenden's highly visible urban/rural tension was the impetus for the project, symbolised by the visual aspect of the flats seen against the moorland skyline when viewed from the Halifax side of the estate – an image which struck me every time I travelled along that particular road. The Hunter Hill area of the estate's northerly edge is also visually striking, post-war semis and terraces giving way to the moorland, which seems like a seascape ebbing onto the shores of the estate. The estate is often unfairly perceived through its reputation; for example, some residents showed a sense of humour about the suggestion that award-winning BBC drama series *Happy Valley*<sup>69</sup> had used the estate as inspiration for its criminal storylines, but at the same time see their reputation as undeserved. I was told of, and felt for myself, a sense of strong community and belonging in the estate, and a feeling of an independent identity from the rest of Halifax. There was a suggestion that this had also bred a tendency for people to stay local, generations of families living near each other as children become parents and move into their own homes down the road. During my research I was made to feel welcome by many residents who were happy to talk about their home and their feelings towards it and their community. The vast majority were full of praise for the estate and its people but were also critical of the infrastructure and the perceived lack of interest from the local council to support improvements in the estate. Regeneration funding has been promised and planned but is very slow in getting off the ground.

Again, with this project, foregrounding of documentary making as improvisatory 'process' was vital. I found this particularly pertinent because of a strong sense of responsibility towards representing a community perceived locally through a particular lens. I found that by exploring the estate as 'landscape', and being interested in its geographic location and the potential culture that might exist due to my perception of its co-mingled urban/rural identity, I was able to liberate the research process, which had an affect on people I met or sought out. Initial 'gathering' stages involved meeting and talking to people, as well as a lot of walking around, to get a feel for the estate and neighbouring moorland. Ovenden and Mixenden Initiative, a local support team run under the auspices of North Halifax Partnership Ltd was central to this process, and one of the Ward link workers was a strong

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<sup>69</sup> *Happy Valley* series 1 was first broadcast on BBC One in 2014. Series 2 was broadcast in 2016.

source of guidance in the research. I also met with the headmaster of Ofsted 'outstanding' primary school Ash Green, and the Reverend of Holy Nativity church - both later appeared in the film. I visited the pensioner's lunch club, the playgroup, the outdoor centre, and the library, and talked to many residents and people working on the estate. During this research stage I began filming scenes around the estate, carefully and non-judgmentally, trying not to tie myself too quickly to a particular vision but remain open-minded. As in *The North Wind*, the film was located in one particular location, and in the end my filming period lasted from autumn to the following summer, the seasonal changes becoming part of the film's narrative akin to *The North Wind*. I found it important to reflect this filming structure transparently, so that the film begins with early autumn when the filming began – hay baling, the school's harvest assembly (although this isn't apparent it was important to me), moving through autumn, winter and spring to the school's summer fete which ends the film.

My openness towards the subject, as in the previous two films, extended to the form of the film. The images of the moor as a sea lapping onto the shores of the estate, and the high-rises juxtaposed against the humped moor-line were there at the centre of my feeling towards the film, but these were a starting off point, and I wanted to liberate myself from any pre-judgment towards how the film might shape itself. As mentioned earlier, this was partly formed by a sense of responsibility towards representation of the estate, but also because of the contradictions raised by people I met, which were visualised in the estate and surrounding landscape – tensions which had drawn me there in the first place.



Figure 9. *Archipelago* (2016) – film still

I had decided again to use interviews with residents as a narrative in the film as I felt the voice of people who lived on the estate needed to be heard in the film. As in *Uplands*, this 'co-authorship' seemed vital to this particular film, but also it was these conversations and the ideas which sprang from them which initiated the visualisation strategies. In the end, two participants and their voices feature in the film. Both in their 60s, Pam lives on the top (15<sup>th</sup>) floor of one of the tower blocks, and Ken lives in one of the houses near the library not far from the towers. I had met Ken and Pam through different phases of the early research period. On visiting them both, talking to them and doing some informal filming, I realised that aspects of their everyday lives coincided strongly with ideas I was having about the film, connected with the modality of weaving explored in Chapter 2, which I was beginning to visualise as a strong horizontal/vertical structure that I thought might be at the heart of my thinking about the place in relationship with the film. This was an idea about walking as a horizontal movement through space, counterpointed with the lift in the tower block as a vertical one. These ideas came together when I was filming on the moors and noticed the tower blocks in the distance, their shapes sticking up out of the humped moorland as if they were ships' funnels in the sea.



Figure 10. *Archipelago* (2016) – film still

When I next visited Pam I filmed in the lift as I went up to her flat on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor, then returned to the spot on the moorland where I had filmed the flats in the distance, and filmed from the point of view of walking in the general direction of the flats. I then started to edit the sequence – the first piece of editing on the film – the vertical and horizontal journeys in woven juxtaposition. I edited the material at first to a musical soundtrack – a saxophone version of Bach’s ‘Unfinished’ Contrapunctus – as means to help support and inform rhythm. The embodied, very material, rhythm of this process seemed to draw together and speak about my research into Ingold’s ‘modality of weaving’ considering the act of making as a bodily engagement with material as process, creating form from ‘within’ (2000), the active and participatory new materialist approach to aesthetic, and my ideas about contrapuntal narratives as applied to moving image forms. This horizontal/vertical sequencing developed into a kind of rhythmic ‘fabric’ of film, also integrating the colour fields established in *Uplands*, this time as flashes of colour which seemed to me to act as literal, material ‘threads’, knitting the horizontal and vertical movements together in an embodied act of ‘weaving’. This sequence became the opening for the film and acted as a template for how the film progressed. As referenced earlier – the participants themselves symbolised these tropes through their own situations. Pam - residing on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor of the flats - lives in the sky, and is connected to the rest of the world through the vertical movement of the lift; Ken is a keen naturalist and walker who loves to explore the woods

and moors intertwining and surrounding the estate. Later in the film, these two activities are interwoven contrapuntally in a much more explicit way.

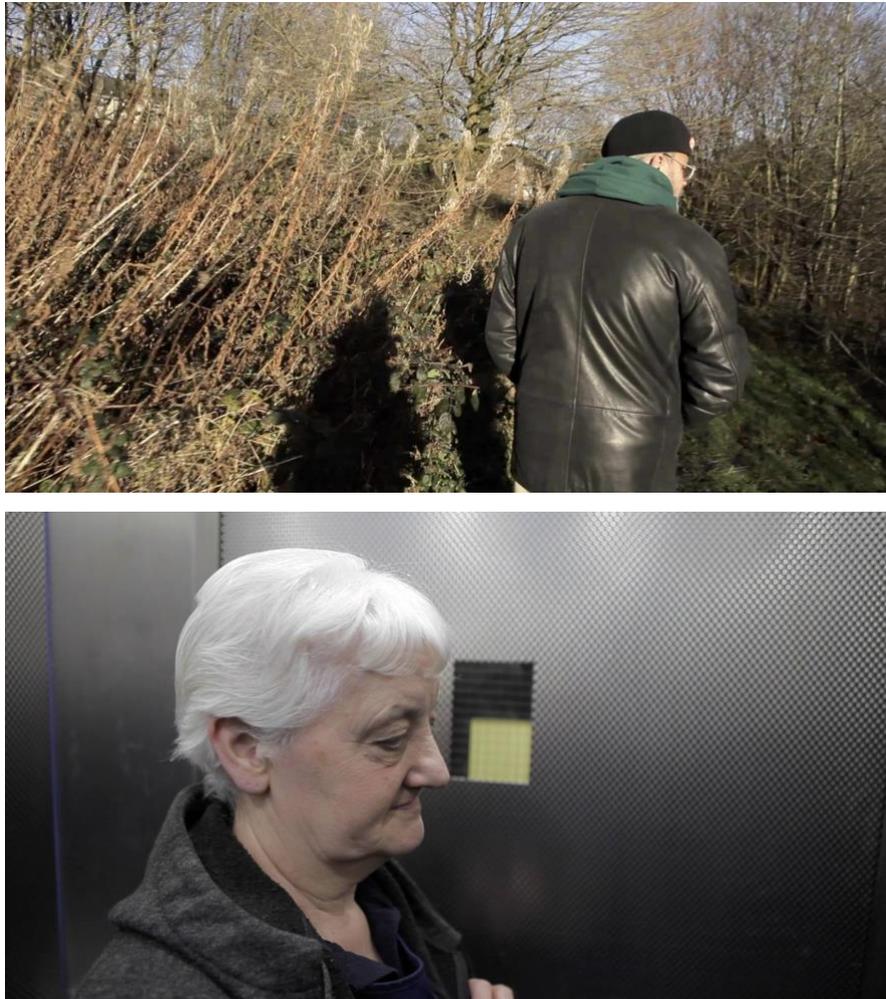


Figure 11. *Archipelago* (2016) – film stills

The image-making process was often concerned with capturing the tensions existing in the estate within a single image. In Chapter 2 I described the ‘mattress in the river’ image as part of a contrapuntal sequence interwoven with Pam’s tigers. This image typifies some of the visual evidence of fly-tipping and general rubbish which accumulates in the surrounding woodlands and gets caught up in the brooks. As Ken observes, on contemplating ‘the skeleton of a dead sofa’ in the woods, it’s when ‘the rough part of the estate collides with nature’.<sup>70</sup> In the film, these discarded, decaying objects symbolise this aspect of Mixenden’s

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<sup>70</sup> From an interview recording (2015).

dual identity. The 'dead sofa' in the woods is made more complicated through its aestheticisation, pictured on a clear cold day, sparkling with hoar frost. In a later image of this same sofa, shot six months later in the heart of summer, it has become charred remains, sunk into the now long grass which obscures it from the path - a suggested narrative hinting at the sofa's experience in the woods since the winter, and its final cremation at the hands of some imagined teenagers. The aesthetics of rubbish reclaimed by nature is in itself a representation of the estate's contradictory personality. Other images where the tension or relationship similarly exists within the frame include the image of the child jumping on a trampoline, tractors baling hay in the background; moor-fog swirling down into the estate and through a children's play area; sheep being herded in a field across the road from the high-rises; rusted supermarket trollies abandoned in streams bedecked with stringy bits of grass and twigs, testament to an earlier high water level brought on by downpours on the moors.

These juxtapositions within the image are distinct from the contrapuntal juxtapositions, which evoke ideas through creating relationships and tensions by interweaving different or unfamiliar images or sequences. I developed contrapuntal structures in a more extended way for this project given the visible tensions between urban and rural at the location. As I began playing with form in the edit at the same time as filming, I began to see how rhythm would become vital to the expression of the energies of Mixenden and a central 'movement' from which ideas could be evoked, and this sparked new ideas for filming. The structure of the film would gradually emerge through relationships engendered through the organic shaping and weaving process of filming, much like Gardner's approach to an internalised structuring process in *Forest of Bliss* (1986), in which forms emerge from 'inside' rather than being externally imposed. Koppel writes of a similar idea in reference to *sleep furiously* (2009), in which form is allowed to 'emerge from my experience of landscape and people' (2007: 314). Herb di Gioa's analogy between the documentation of Peter Murray making a chair and his own filmmaking process to 'find the shape' of the film is a pertinent reflection on the practice of filmmaking as a way of discovering but also making something through process. Akin to Ingold's 'modality of weaving', di Gioa (cited in Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009) talks about the film's shape emerging out of the process of making, much like the chair 'emerges' from the wood. My filmmaking process very much mirrored the internalised,

shaping approaches of these more observational films, although the faster, almost splinter-cut rhythmic structure in certain sequences to counterpoint images and ideas, are edited in collision with longer tableaux observational scenes. The overall structure thus integrates a loosely symphonic approach with a fluctuating pace and a reflexivity which more transparently considers the making process, - a more disturbing approach to structure perhaps.



Figure 12. *Archipelago* (2016) – film still

As I described in Chapter 2, these longer observational tableaux shots intercut against the rhythmic contrapuntal sequences create a ‘present tense’ unfolding, breathing moment, which acts on a very different temporal register to the contrapuntal sequences. Editing these two forms together – the long, unfolding observed shot and the fast-paced rhythmic sequences – is an extension from an experiment in *The North Wind*, but feels much more purposeful in *Archipelago*. As described earlier, these long held shots can ‘tip’ between representation and abstraction (Margulies 1996) and also relate to the ‘aesthetics of the frame’ (Hongisto 2015) in their deliberate compositions and suggestive, connotative relationship with the film’s themes. As described earlier, some of these shots involve a slow, drifting or explorative movement, a strategy of framing first applied in *Uplands*. An example of this is the shot of the graffiti, which in a similar way to the ‘frosty sofa’ images, deliberately aestheticises the image, acting to complicate its indexical connotations and

disturb its meaning by bringing out the aesthetic qualities of the movement and patina of the paint – its line, drip and calligraphic form. Referencing Kristeva’s ‘triple register’ (1980) summarised earlier, the aesthetic of the frame here can be seen to thwart representation and ‘shatter’ meaning. In this sense, it can be argued that this shot perhaps symbolises the film’s approach to the representation of the estate as a whole.

Another example of explorative framing movement in *Archipelago* is the shot of children playing with dolls and buggies at the church playgroup.



Figure 13. *Archipelago* (2016) – film still

In this extended shot, I was positioned close to the children who were so absorbed in their play they seemed completely unaware of my presence. The camera’s frame moves slowly through the scene, periodically refocusing, in an attitude of curious enquiry. Relating to MacDougall’s description of the act of framing as a means to examine more closely ‘as we might pick up a leaf in the forest’ (2005: 4), the ‘framing out’ of most of the context of the playgroup creates an uncanny frisson at the heart of the image. Fundamentally, the image represents two children playing with dolls, but the framing isolates and emphasises the odd patterns created by their repeated efforts to get the dolls sitting properly in the buggies. The children are turned into giants, their movements of pushing and squeezing seeming excessively tactile. The framing thus creates an anthropomorphic effect on the dolls,

emphasised by a melancholic feeling emerging from the end of the shot, held on the discarded, flopping dolls after the children have given up on their pursuit and moved away. The use of sound in this shot is diegetic with the image, although edited and layered slightly to embody the tension of the shot.

Sound design in *Archipelago*, as referenced in Chapter 2, is frequently used in relationship with image to create a textural 'fabric'. Often, diegetic sounds from one location or time are shifted slightly into other contexts and environments. This aesthetic creates a disturbance associated with montage, which attends to the 'invisible' (Suhr & Willerslev 2012), and works to connect disparate elements and activities happening in and around the estate to underscore its tensions of place. As referenced earlier, I had originally started editing the footage with Bach's 'Unfinished Contrapunctus' but later took the music out and re-edited the film as a consequence. Discovering the sound of the lift shaft I had recorded when filming in the flats created a new way of conceiving the opening sequence, with its rapid woven juxtapositions of the lift and outdoor walking shots. I had found editing this sequence without music highly problematic, and the linking 'idea' of the wind, through the associations created with the lift shaft connecting with the landscape, integrated these sounds. When the lift reaches its destination at the 15<sup>th</sup> floor, these sounds suddenly cut, and pre-emptive diegetic sound from the school assembly emerges, bridging the interior/exterior of the flats into the visual image of the assembly. Thus the first minute of the film establishes key elements of the overall soundscape aesthetic as it continues through the film.

#### Film 4: Crossing



Figure 14. *Crossing* (2017) – film still

The final of the four films *Crossing* is, like *The North Wind* and *Archipelago*, a portrait of a specific location: the landscape of and around Windy Hill, near Junction 22 of the trans-Pennine M62 motorway, right on the border between Lancashire and Yorkshire. The interchange, named Rockingham Moss, is situated at the highest point of the motorway – also the highest altitude at 1200 feet of any motorway in England. The Windy Hill cutting is one of the deepest of the M62, and is traversed at this point by the Pennine Way footbridge, constructed at the same time as the motorway itself. Windy Hill transmitter, overlooking the site, predates the motorway and in its position near the highest point of the motorway is a landmark for drivers on the M62. This ‘play of forces’ – the visual and expressive vertical and horizontal planes of signification and register at the site, developed partly from the embodied ‘weaving’ ideas that emerged from *Archipelago*.



Figure 15. Holt, J. *Autumn Afternoon* (1995)

In addition to this, my interest in the location stems from a much earlier painting project—a series of realist paintings depicting British motorway scenes as picturesque landscapes, exhibited in 1995. In these paintings I was thinking about the way we view landscape from the experience of motorway driving, as a kind of mobile visual screen of unchanging horizons. Visualising the motorway scenes as idyllic and pastoral—that they were paintings integral to their picturesque analogies – I was also attempting to symbolise, or freeze movement, not in a reductive sense but in expression of the motorway driving experience as hyperreal. It was interesting how, although there is a strong central thematic similarity with the earlier work, my ideas about this film many years later were generated from more embodied, processual and active landscape concerns, emanating from my research.

In an essential and uncomplicated way, I was drawn to the highly visual and sonic tension between the specific atmosphere of the moorland at this location and the brute force of the road; but also the sense of different forms of locomotion crossing each other at the site— driving and walking – symbolising contrasting experiences of landscape, embodiment and dwelling. Standing on the Pennine Way footbridge taking in the traffic streaming below you is a dramatic, almost uncanny experience and became one of the springboards for ideas

in the film. The traffic feels like a single mass, rather than a collection of separate vehicles with individuals inside them: I was reminded of a torrential river, in which you stare to see if you can identify the separate drops of water that produce it. Recordings made using a contact microphone on the footbridge at this early stage of the project initiated ensuing research ideas, including archive research into the planning and building of the motorway in the 1960s.

My research into the history of the M62's construction fed into my perception of the location, and elements of this history have been woven into the film. Proposals for a trans-Pennine motorway were initiated in 1961; by 1964 the line of the motorway had been established (Johnson 1972) and work began in 1968. The greatest challenge of the project was its 'Pennine section'. Dubbed 'England's mountain motorway' it is seven miles in length, commencing near the border between the two counties at Windy Hill and traversing across the West Riding moors towards Huddersfield. The combined challenges of peat bog and Pennine weather created engineering obstacles which greatly hampered the planning process. Yorkshire's county surveyor Colonel Lovell set up a series of weather stations along the projected 'high' and 'low' routes to meticulously record the effects of the weather at the location – most notably snow, ice, rain and fog. Documents I researched at the Wakefield History Centre relating to the weather surveys reveal complex weather-related issues impacting on the finalised route of the road, and resulting in new engineering techniques to control weather problems as far as possible. The main priority was to try to keep the road open throughout the year, and new schemes including fencing, road surface and embankment design were developed to deal with the multiple kinds of drifting snow, fierce winds, and persistent low cloud. Once construction began, the geological and climactic obstacles created almost continual problems. The peat, up to 20 feet deep across the moor, had to be removed before building could begin. As chief engineer Geoffrey Hunter, in a 2015 interview with the BBC <sup>71</sup> explained – 'It's not possible to build a road over a peat bog, because it will not support anything. Bearing in mind the high moisture content – better going through it in a boat actually'. The contractors lost machines in the peat and had to rethink their strategy. Continual driving wind and rain together with dramatic drops

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<sup>71</sup> *Secret Life of the Motorway*, BBC Television TX 28<sup>th</sup> April 2015

in temperature made it frightening work for the contracting teams, the project becoming a matter of survival<sup>72</sup>. Lovell's report on the construction of the Pennine section records 'the whole of the area, not only the peat bogs, is among the wettest in the country. For two of the three summers worked on this contract the Pennines were lashed by some of the heaviest rains on record. Moreover the cloud base here is often down to around 1000 feet and much of the site was frequently lost in cloud which at times reduced visibility to almost nil'<sup>73</sup>.

This research into the history of the M62's construction, combined with my own visits to the site which were frequently beset with high winds, driving rain and fog, led to an interest in a focus on weather at the site. Although I had referenced weather in the previous three films, it seemed the right opportunity to now focus on weather as a 'controlling force' in the film. Partly, this was to combine the 'play of forces' I was interested in at the location with a perception of the weather - specifically, the 'Pennine' weather of rain, mist and fog - as 'medium', a combining, cloaking substance which pulls the elements of the landscape together. In this 'weather world', there is no distinct horizon line, sky and land as separately drawn elements. Ingold draws on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to reflect on the weather as a vital medium which connects people to landscape, arguing that it is only because of their common immersion in what he terms the 'fluxes of the medium' of weather that people and landscape interact:

'..in the open world persons and things relate not as closed forms but by virtue of their common immersion in the generative fluxes of the medium – in wind and weather. Fundamental to life is the process of respiration, by which organisms continually disrupt any boundary between earth and sky, binding substance and medium together in forging their own growth and movement. Thus to inhabit the open is not to be stranded on the outer surface of the earth but to be caught up in the transformations of the weather-world' (2011: 122).

Glyn Hughes' description of the transforming effect of changeable weather and particularly mists evocatively configures the contrasting senses of solidity and mobility the weather creates in the Pennines, and is strongly reflective of my own experience of repeated filming visits to the location:

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<sup>72</sup> Geoffrey Hunter interview (ibid)

<sup>73</sup> ibid

'This most solid of landscapes, made of bare rocks and treeless slopes and black mill towns, seemed a constantly mobile, liquid one, as it was transformed by the weather. In one valley it might be raining; in another the sun might be shining; and I could watch these weathers moving, and guess which was approaching. The moving clouds often seemed more solid than the hills they veiled. I learnt how varied mists, that constant element in which we lived, could be. There were mists that seemed as delicate as grey flower petals strewn on the valley floor.... There were more solid mists that hid in the valleys, rocking in the valleys like porridge in a bowl, but throwing tongues of mist into the air, and up the sides of hills. There were mists that gathered at the ends of valleys and pushed back fists over the tops of hills and gradually widened until they engulfed us in a storm of hail and snow. (1975: 131)

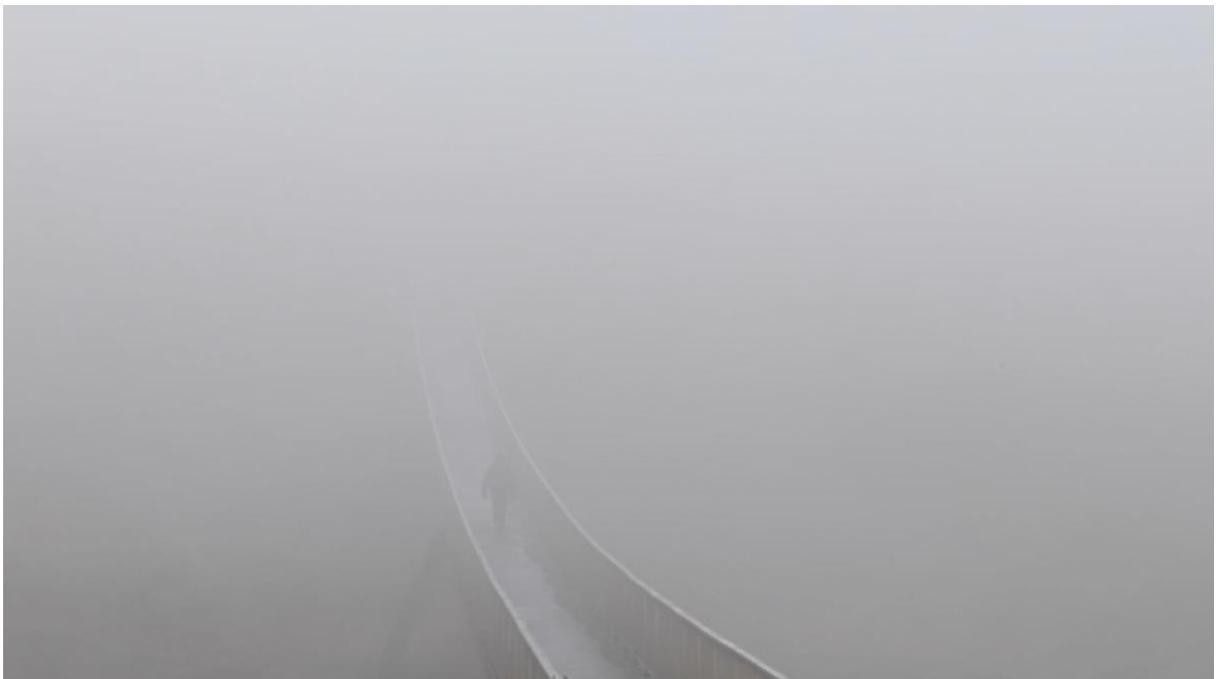


Figure 16. *Crossing* (2017) – film still

This image of the simultaneously solid and mobile landscape to me takes on further meaning via the movements through the landscape explored in the film.

Although there are clear similarities to the previous three films in the research – the method of experiential immersion in the location, treating documentary as ‘process’ and allowing ideas and methods to emerge; the visual basis in observation; and edited contrapuntal interplay of the play of forces at the site – there are also notable differences, which grew out of my research at the site and in the archives. Firstly, the film is the ‘least human’ of

the four. This came about through a feeling I had towards the traffic as non-human, and the fact that while filming at the site I came across very few people – filming mainly through the winter there were a few runners and walkers but the Pennine Way at this spot was not particularly busy. There were possibilities of including a more human aspect in the film – using voice in the soundscape for example – or focusing more explicitly on drivers, walkers, or the BT engineers I filmed climbing the transmitter, traffic officers at the Highways Agency, but I made the decision not to focus too strongly on particular human agency at the location. I did later see a connection with the strategy at *Top Withens*, which visualised visitors in scraps of image and sound, realising the similarity between the process of making that film and *Crossing* - that the human presence would be too 'solid' if focused on too centrally, effectively sending the landscape into a modality of 'setting' (Lefebvre 2005).

*Crossing* was also the first of the four films to be more consciously instigated by sound as generative of the production process. Before I took a camera, I spent time at the site recording sounds, and as referenced above was particularly interested in sounds recorded using a contact mic on the metal railings of the Pennine Way footbridge. These sounds seemed to combine the mechanism of the traffic with crashing waves, which, connecting with the previously explored ideas of the moorland as seascape, generated further metaphorical ideas, this time linked with the flow of traffic as well as the surrounding moorland. The presence of the transmitter led to further sonic ideas. The BT engineers I filmed with explained how the transmitter, although owned and maintained by BT, was now leased by many different mobile phone companies. This led me to think about the thousands of 'invisible' phone conversations being carried in the air and bouncing off the transmitter at the site, and also connected to ideas about using radio sound, imagined unheard sounds encapsulated in the many cars flowing through the cutting. This led me to using a VLF (very low frequency) receiver at the location, to record inaudible but ever present sounds including 'sferics' – the crackling of constantly occurring electrical activity in the sky – and the more prosaic electric hums of modern life.

Filming only in low cloud and rain - except for the transmitter climbing footage, as the engineers rarely climb in bad weather – I started to think about the structure of the film as simultaneously a journey, and a point of stasis – landscape as both mobile and a fixed 'view'.

This conceptualisation of the film, together with an underlying expression of the play of forces at the site, led to the creation of a rhythmic, looping structure based on the many filmed journeys I had taken in the car on the route - using a GoPro camera attached to the windscreen - in which different journeys are intercut to create a fragmented detemporalised 'fabric'. This process clearly relates to the 'weaving' process discussed earlier, and also connects to ideas from *Regen* (Ivens 1929) and *The Train Stop* (Loznitsa 2000). In *Regen*, Ivens edits multiple rain storms filmed in the city of Amsterdam together, to create a 'single rain shower' narrative. Loznitsa's *The Train Stop*, depicting people sleeping at a train station, is edited as if unfolding in a single space and time, but in fact was filmed for many separate nights over a course of several months.



Figure 17. *Crossing* (2017) – film still

A new strategy emerged during the making of *Crossing* involving a much more deliberate post-produced manipulation of the footage. This idea came about through repeated viewings of the driving footage I had filmed using the GoPro camera. Because the footage has been filmed not by me, but a fixed camera attached to the car, I found the clear disembodiment of the image contradictory to some of my ideas. I somehow wanted to 'get inside' this footage, move around it and explore the image in the way I had done with the drawn out, explorative shots introduced in the previous films. I then experimented with

doing precisely this by projecting the footage on a cinema screen and refilming it. This process, and subsequent editing of the footage, sparked off many ideas and led more or less directly to the fractured, looping rhythms of the journey described above. Another example of this deliberate aesthetic manipulation is the occasional rotation of the image through 90 degrees. This emerged from the process of juxtaposing the vertical/horizontal forces at the location, and conceiving the motorway as a river or a waterfall.

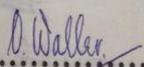


Figure 18. *Crossing* (2017) – film still

*Crossing* also diverges from the previous films in its explicit use of archive footage and elements of text. This grew out of a desire to include histories of the planning and building of the M62 as part of the film, to in a sense permeate the images from the present day and hold the present and the past in a much more explicit tension than I had attempted in previous films. The footage I found at the North West Film Archive, filmed by the Rochdale Cine Club of the building of the M62 in the late 1960s, also served as exposition, to introduce the film and its subject. I also found that elements from the materiality of the cine film – visual blotches and projector’s whir which can still be heard on the digitised version of the film – connected to the aesthetic experiments I was making with the projections, and began to use these references to technology as aesthetics in relationship with one another.

Mr Jones (a newcomer, a Welshman) from Highways came to discuss the geological and mining aspects regarding a slight diversion being considered at Outlane, and a considered by-pass of Elland to join up with the motorway.

He was satisfied with the discussion; the schemes appear to be dreams at the moment.

  
 .....  
 O. Waller.  
 Senior Assistant Mining Engineer  
 27th February, 1963.

Messrs. F.R. Oliver and H.E. Roberts

Mr. Lovell



Lancashire-Yorkshire Motorway  
Field Trials

First of all, I want to thank you for a very excellent report on the Field Trials for the Lancashire-Yorkshire Motorway. This is most interesting reading.

2. However, I do not think you have gone far enough at the moment. I think the approach must be that we must draw some general conclusions from the first winter, but of course they are subject to modification. The approach should be that you should draw every possible general conclusion from the first year's experience and submit these for discussion to the Road Research Laboratory and the Meteorological Office; similarly with the proposals for next winter.

3. You will appreciate this now needs dealing with quite quickly because with holidays occurring and allowing time for the two other offices to consider these reports, you would be faced with trying to work on the Pennines on any alterations in the winter, unless you have these discussions and recommendations finalised not later than the end of August, or better still of August. We do not want to be at work up on the

Figure 19. Memos from the Wakefield History Centre, West Yorkshire Archives

I experimented with several ways of using elements from the archives I had discovered at the West Yorkshire Archives. Initially researching the impact of adverse weather on the planning and building of the motorway in the form of meteorological reports and surveys, I became much more drawn to the correspondence documents between the surveyors, councillors, contractors and engineers. So expressive of forms of communication during that era, I became engrossed in the meticulous documentation through memos and letters detailing informal conversations in addition to significant findings – as well as the forms of language used which seemed so resonant of the time they written. Taken out of context, these - slightly mystifying – phrases, such as ‘Your letter of the 5<sup>th</sup> March calls for an answer’

and 'I refer to our telephone conversation this morning' – appearing in juxtaposition with present day footage of the site, seemed to me to connect with some of the ambiguities I was creating in the film, eroding some of the 'brute force' of the motorway through the conversations between the individuals responsible for its creation, their personalities coming through in the official language of the time. Other, more direct quotes about weather are also included, and my personal favourite: 'I have now transcribed in pencil the line of the motorway...Its line follows eastwards along the strike of that geological horizon for more than one mile and a half' which imagines the aesthetic of drawing as well as evoking the road planning at its ideas stage, a series of lines sketched on a map. The use of text appearing on screen came about through experimenting with various strategies. I think it bears some relationship with the use of text in *Zidane: a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Portrait* (Gordon & Parreno 2006), in which unexpectedly philosophical first-person thoughts, obtained from an interview with Zidane and appearing occasionally on screen, create a tension between written and visual forms, opening a gap between them yet informing each other in the process.

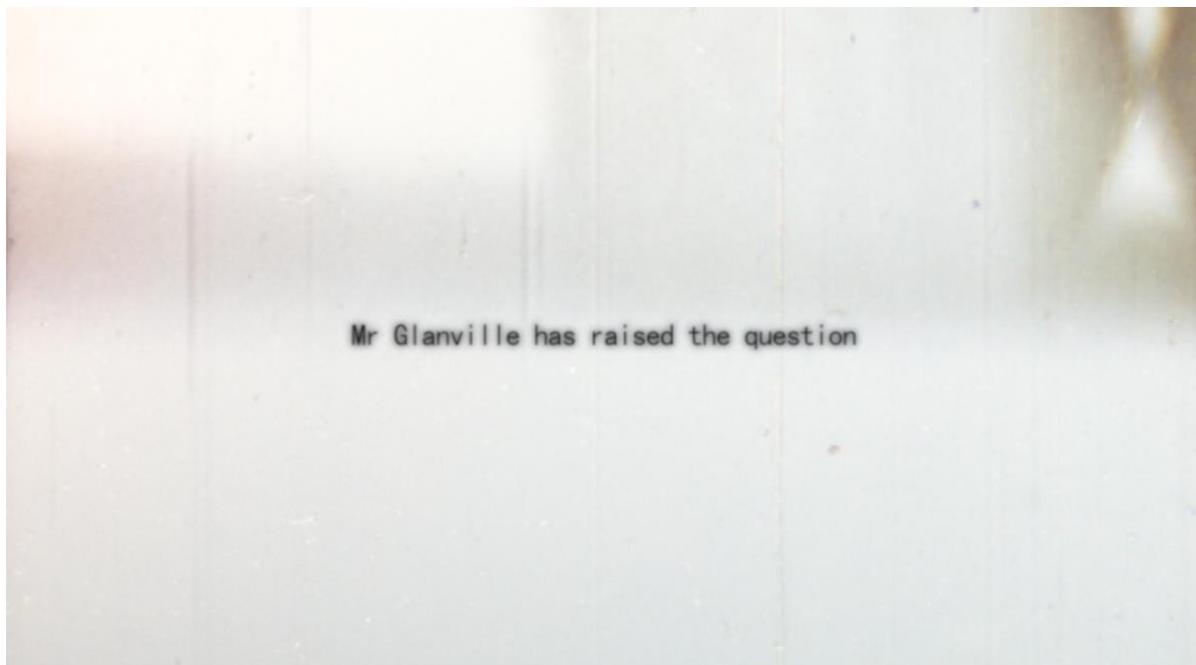


Figure 20. *Crossing* (2017) – film still

## Conclusion

This study has allowed me to research the artistic practice of documentary filmmaking as a means to explore tensions of place and visuality in South Pennine landscapes.

The research's contribution to knowledge lies in its triangulation of documentary filmmaking and landscape as 'form' and 'content' of visual arts practice, via theories of embodiment, advancing critical understandings of filmic tensions of place and landscape through artistic practice. Insights are gained into processual and material methods of documentary film practice, and as a form of knowledge creation about experiences and senses of place. The dialectic between the 'frame' as pictorial world of vision and place as dynamic and networked, is developed through a generative and interdependent series of filmmaking methods to create a practice which is 'caught in the fabric of world'.

Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'flesh' (1968) the research aimed to investigate and mediate the dialectic between the 'double aspect' of landscape as pictorial and as a dynamic human-centred sense of place, through a dialogue with documentary film as processual and emergent. I was interested in the dynamic between the particular landscape aesthetic of the uplands, and the entangled human-centred senses of place pertinent to South Pennines landscapes which I termed a pastoral 'wilderness', tied to northern England's industrial histories. In common with Godwin's photographs, Ted Hughes' poetry and Glyn Hughes' writing in the dying days of the textiles era, I set out to visualise the dialectic between the aesthetic of the South Pennine uplands as beyond time, 'like a world before creation' (Hughes G, 1975), and its dynamic senses of place. Following Massey's concept of place as progressive – a nexus of global and localised, historically pertinent but continuously mobile narratives of place - and Ingold's identification of landscape's 'specific ambience' created through the business of dwelling, my research developed particular tensions of place, identified through practice and field research, as different enquiries in each of the research's four films.

Guided by the overarching concept of 'flesh' as a means to conceptualise 'form' and 'content' - not as a binary in which form addresses content through a symbolic 'cloak' of meaning - but as an 'exchange' of ideas, materialities and narratives, I developed methods of practice which were generative and interdependent with meanings of place and landscape. These ideas were developed in relationship with research into my practice contexts of filmmaking, as well as new materialist approaches to aesthetics. New materialist approaches to artistic practice emphasise the materiality of the process as energising and active, and helped me to conceptualise the dialogue between form and content in my practice as performative, activated through the 'multiplicity, ambiguity and indeterminacy' of the aesthetic image (Barrett 2012).

MacDougall's concept of 'documentary as process' (2014), also meaningful, involves a visceral and intellectual responsive 'pleasure', which he likens to the improvisatory reflex of jazz music, and Morin's analogy of 'Ciné-plongeurs' – 'filmmaker-divers'. This practice is exploratory, speculative, open to opportunities and to meanings, placing 'both filmmaker and film subject in a more exposed position — in situations that are fluid and in which almost anything can happen' (MacDougall 2014). In this way, my approach towards a conscious and reflective integration of pre-production, production and post-production forms of filmmaking practices is a significant aspect of my methodology. As editing in my work is vital to its aesthetic - analogised as a form of 'painting' in which images and sounds form a 'palette' of material - it was essential that I allowed myself the freedom to move back and forth between filming and editing over time. The ideas emerging through the intellectual, yet improvisatory editing process, in which juxtapositions of images and sounds were shaped through rhythmic sequences, as forms of knowledge creation in themselves stimulated new ideas about themes of place and landscape, as well as ideas for further filming strategies. It became important for each film then, that I spent time 'playing' with the material after every filming or recording session, allowing these ideas to emerge and take shape: it could be said that a lot of the creative thinking in the research took place during these reflective editing phases. This also created filming periods which would take place intermittently over time, and in two of the films, *The North Wind* and *Archipelago*, this seasonal passage of time participates in the films' structural design.

The filming and recording phases were also creatively reflective, involving similar visceral and intellectual responses. The critical exploration of landscape and documentary as visual framings of world, developing into theories of embodiment in Chapter 1, allowed me to see how concepts of framing and embodiment, first analysed as distinct themes, were interconnecting through the research. Drawing on theories and practices of the embodied camera primarily originating in ethnographic, observational approaches to filmmaking (Grimshaw & Ravetz 2009, MacDougall 1998, 2006) I also analysed the work of other film practitioners to research the form and its affect. My focus on filmmakers who were also working with themes of landscape and place allowed me to reflect on the mediation of these meanings as part of the affect response in conjunction with embodied framing methods. The work of Rivers, Loznitsa and Akerman are meaningful in this regard, in their combinations of visual construction and embodied framing, expressive of a form of curiosity, a 'reversible relationship' with the living world. This translates into imagery which expresses a world in 'becoming' in which the documentary image is not merely a representation of the real, but is entangled in the processes that actively create reality (Hongisto 2015). I am also interested in the links between these ideas and the proposition put forward by Grimshaw and Ravetz of the filming process as a form of 'drawing' (2015). This idea resituates the camera as participant in a fluid and improvisatory process which collapses the binary between 'making and taking'. I find the idea of 'drawing with a camera' pertinent, relatable partly due to my personal histories of drawing/painting practices.

Significantly for the research, these ideas linking embodiment to methods of filmmaking practice relate to arguments about the positioning of landscape as visualist or experiential/embodied, as laid out in Chapter 1. In the research I questioned the perception of landscape as a reductive framing or 'fixing' of space as critiqued by phenomenologies of landscape, and have through my theoretical and practice research aimed to connect the concept of the frame and aesthetics of landscape with dynamic and mobile senses of 'placescapes' as processual sites of dwelling. Analysing the 'double aspect' of landscape as 'framed world', both in terms of a visualist epistemology and as a mode of place, I explored the dialectics of this identity of landscape, finding that different claims for landscape - as pictorial and aesthetic on one hand, and experiential and embodied on the other - were frequently theorised as opposing forces: a tension I find meaningful, especially

in terms of my particular exploration of landscape as theme in visual arts practice. I am interested in Johannsdottir's view that despite phenomenology's invigoration of landscape, it had largely neglected the aesthetic as part of landscape meaning, which she terms a 'whole picture' - an intertwining of subject and object, the visual and the embodied (2010). Following Merleau-Ponty, Wylie, however, enfolds vision into embodiment (2005), and I find his ideas about reclaiming depth from the strictures of perspective as an existential medium of place illuminating. His description of being 'all eyes' on arriving at a spectacular viewpoint on a coastal walk (2005) is not the detached gaze of dominion, but an embodied and affective sense of place. In my films these moments are sometimes visualised: in *Archipelago*, Ken climbs above the estate to look down over the fields; in *Uplands* Kabeer is seen walking amidst an archetypal rainy Yorkshire hillscape; I picture my own walking trips to and viewing experience of 'Top Withens' in *The North Wind* which is in itself, a destination point for many walkers, a place visitors pause and look out from.

I relate to this embodied/visualised aesthetic relationship with landscape through my own experiences of places through landscapes, from walking, running and cycling in the South Pennines. Taking into account the sense of a 'fixed' or bounded image, such as we find in painting and photography, emulates the scope of the human vision of landscape as 'view' and relates to the 'shaping influence' (Andrews 1999) of landscape art, something I am also aware of as meaningful in visions of South Pennines landscapes. Following Lefebvre's theories of landscape meaning in film (2006, 2011), these 'fixed' landscape views, used periodically in my films as part of their rhythmic structures, temporarily borrow the language of an art historical aesthetic, and, correlating with Wylie's coastal narrative, 'haunt' the film with images in the 'spectacular mode'. In their durational unfolding through time, the images sometimes hold for a few seconds longer than might be expected, effectively drawing out the relationship with the viewer and signifying the reversible relationship with viewer and viewed (Sobchack 1992). This holding of the image through extended duration is expanded to other shots of everyday activities in the research locations, correlating with Margulies' (1996) identification of images in Akerman's work which she terms the 'hyperrealist everyday', an 'excess' generated through extended cinematic duration. I feel that this idea in some of my extended shots – particularly the slightly mobile, drifting shots discussed in Chapter 3, also relate to a sense of the uncanny

– a play between the ‘strange and familiar’ (Clifford 1981) - which began to materialise in the work during the making of the first film. This slight defamiliarisation of the everyday is used in the films to create affect, to open a gap between meaning and representation, and embody my ideas regarding entangled senses of place. These aesthetic ideas evolved directly out of the research process – partly as a result of my embodied framing approaches but also from my ongoing and continual reflective editing method, which creates space for meanings to emerge as part of an active and materialised process. Other forms of aesthetic emerging through this processual way of working include the use of generated colour blocks which act to both disrupt, fragment and connect images; in relationship with a literal idea of weaving, in which ‘threads’ are ‘pulled’, creating a kind of fabric of film. I was interested to discover through my research, Kristeva’s ideas about colour as a register of ‘sensation’ which ‘shatters meaning’ (1980) a concept which became influential in the development of these ideas in my practice.

This leads me to a discussion of my practice in terms of a modality of ‘weaving’ – a pivotal concept in the research which was developed through an insight into the relationship between my filmmaking methodology as processual and integrative, and Ingold’s concept of weaving as an ontology of the practice of making. This way of conceptualising the process of filmmaking as generative, created through the ‘play of forces’ of embodied rhythms ‘unfurled from within’ (2000: 51) enabled me to expand my developing ideas of documentary as process, connected with new materialism’s aesthetics of the frame. As well as the overarching idea of weaving as a methodology of practice, I began to apply the idea of weaving to methods of rhythm, montage and contrapuntal sequencing in my practice, as means of exploring and expressing entangled senses of place. This method developed into a means of interpreting what I conceive as a ‘play of forces’ of senses of place in my research locations, which translate into sequencing devices of editing practice but also as ways of observing and experiencing these forces in the landscape. These ‘forces’ are visualised explicitly in the films, often through vertical and horizontal rhythms I began to observe, leading to for example, the vertical/horizontal ‘warp and weft’ of the urban/rural interface in Mixenden, visualised as walking across the moors towards the estate, and travelling in the lift to the top floor of one of the estate’s high-rise flats. This conflation of embodied rhythm of place and ‘view’ expresses one of the dialogues between

pictorial and phenomenological discourses of landscape in the film. Expressive of the interdependence between form and content aimed for in the research, these sequences, created through a combination of experience, mobility, vision and embodied practice in the research location and in the reflective editing process, developed directly into an interpretive sense of place in the landscape at Windy Hill as a 'play of forces' in *Crossing*.

My critical investigation into theories and practices of the documentary paradigm has been fruitful and led to renewed ideas about the form. Through the research I interrogated the histories and theories of documentary film, as well as my own practices, and instinct towards thinking of myself as a documentary filmmaker. I also describe myself as an artist, and when my work is screened at film festivals - which often programme work according to cinematic categories (although this has recently begun to change), the same film could be screened in either experimental or documentary programmes. I'm happy to describe my work, or for others to describe it, as experimental film/artists moving image, or documentary, or as a hybrid of the two – but in terms of *making* the work, the sense of the documentary process as an ethical 'bond' to the afilmic world is I feel, vital to my practice. I have a certain sympathy for critiques of documentary, which describe the term as naïve and reductive, pointing out that all filmmaking practices are equally coded and constructed. However, I agree with Balsom and Peleg, who argue that 'while tempting, to take up such a position is to woefully relinquish the unique demands that documentary images place on their viewers' (2016: 14), and extend this to the practice as well as the viewing of documentary films. They also note that documentary's future 'no longer appears fragile' through a 21<sup>st</sup> century documentary turn:

'In place of postmodernism's delight in the rubble of signifiers, today one senses a renewed interest in thinking about the relationship between reality and aesthetic form. There is a palpable need to attend to actuality and interrogate the processes by which we transform lived experience into meaning through representational practices while, at the same time, never relinquishing the necessary critique of objectivity and transparency.' (2016: 15)

Perhaps a return to the avant-garde roots of documentary, opening up the form to new ideas and practices and reinvigorating the intersection between self, subject and object (Renov 2007) is partly responsible for this renewed interest.

I have come a long way on this research journey, and feel I have expanded my practice in new directions, finding new relationships between practice and theory, new connections between my ideas and those of others, and new ways of challenging and pushing myself artistically. I did not want to start this process of research with any kind of pre-judgement, but be open to the opportunities and directions offered by the research. This can be a challenging process which has to embrace the risk of failure along with the adventure of new discoveries. I found that my integrated process of research, reflection and writing between concepts of landscape and place and filmmaking practice in parallel, crystallised interconnections between the 'form' and 'content' of the practice as research, and enabled a development of the dialogic process between them which I was aiming for in the research. The fertile intersections between practice and theory have opened up my practice to renewed and expanded ideas of documentary filmmaking as an artistic practice - as a way to explore the world, as a form of knowledge creation and as a material process which moves beyond representation to create its own dynamic. I hope to expand on the findings of this research through developing the particular form of interdependent and generative force between form and content into other models of practice and environments, and am working on developing the overarching methodology of the research so that it might be applied to filmic explorations of and collaborations with, particular social communities. I am particularly interested in developing themes raised in *Uplands*, and have recently begun to research this subject.

The research has already had an effect on my teaching, particularly as I navigate the complexities of teaching documentary in an art school environment which nurtures the subjectivities of personal and artistic imaginations as well as more journalistic modes of documentary practice. The in-depth enquiry I undertook into the meaning and relevance of the documentary paradigm, and necessity to formulate a personal definition of documentary, has created for me a much stronger position of understanding and knowledge. It has also led to a reinvigorated belief in the expanded documentary form and its relevance to the world, and a new documentary research group has been initiated in the art school as a result. It aims to be open to new ideas, forms and narratives, involving cross-pollination with other disciplines, art forms and dynamics. I also aim to pursue links with and expand my creative/critical thinking and practice more consciously towards visual

ethnography. My research opened up a meaningful dialogue between my practice and the work of other filmmakers in the ethnographic field, and I became particularly interested in the theoretical and practice research of MacDougall, Gardner, Grimshaw, Ravetz, Spray, Suhr and Willerslev, among others.

The films themselves have been screened in public environments, and it has been extremely valuable to receive feedback on the work, causing me to reflect on certain meanings of the films as perceived by others. To date, *Uplands* has screened at Ethnografilm Paris, and London Short Film Festival where it was nominated for best documentary; *Archipelago* at Ethnocineca Vienna and London International Documentary Festival, where it was nominated for best short documentary. *Archipelago* has also been screened in the community where it was filmed which was an especially valuable experience – this included a talk/screening in the church which features in the film, and screenings in libraries across the Calderdale region. *Crossing* is due to screen in an artists film programme at HOME Manchester, and London Short Film Festival, January 2018. Through this ongoing dissemination of this research I will continue the process of reflective enquiry into a new stage of artistic research, building on the energising interconnections between filmmaking and the fabric of world.

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