

The Essay Film and Space: The Essayistic Filmic Space as a Location of Thought

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ABSTRACT

This practice-led research investigates the function of filmic space in essayistic discourse through the dialogic relationship between the essay film *My Pink City* that reflects on post-Soviet urban space in Yerevan and a written thesis that examines the role of space in the essay film. The research considers essay film as a distinct modality of thought in moving image practices that incorporates multiple processes, a diversity of forms and heterogeneous material in its discursive logics. Reacting against the privileging of the temporal in the thinking operations of the moving image, the research addresses the renewed importance of spatial imagination, as a first step in establishing the significance of filmic space in cinematic consciousness.

Filmic space has been mainly conceived as a static space that forms a background to action by centring movement, thus restricting the thinking potential of the moving image. Mapping a series of theorisations of filmic space in film theory, in geography of film and in the Deleuzian conception of cinema, the research identifies that filmic space can contribute to the thinking operations of the image when it precisely opens up to movement. Locating moments of spatial thinking in fiction and avant-garde film, the written thesis redefines filmic space as open, relational, heterogeneous and always under construction and relates this expanded notion of filmic space to the thinking modality of the essay film.

The written thesis and *My Pink City* both demonstrate how the expanded notion of a fluid and dynamic filmic space, expressing thought via a variety of strategies, functions on multiple levels in the essay film and thus contributes to the thinking operations of the moving image. Following essay film's ability to continuously make visible its own thinking operations, the research proposes that filmic space (as the spatial imagination inherent in the image) also makes visible its own procedures, resulting in an essay film that does not only think about (the changes and complexities) of space but also thinks through filmic space.

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My Pink City, HD video, 48 minutes, Pal, Col & B/W, stereo sound

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INTRODUCTION

The research examines how filmic space contributes to essayistic thinking through the production of an essay film, entitled *My Pink City* (2014) shot in location in Yerevan, Armenia and a written thesis that considers the function of filmic space in the thinking modality of the essay film. The research evolved through a dialogue between *My Pink City* and the written thesis, with the practice informing the interpretation of the academic literature and subsequent theorisation and the written thesis reflecting on how the film utilises filmic space as a location for the expression of essayistic thought. Both *My Pink City* and the written thesis highlight the importance of filmic space and identify diverse spatial thinking operations and thus expand the understanding of the essayistic discourse.

The initial intention of the research project was the examination of the transformation of urban space in Yerevan and particularly the transition from a Soviet to a capitalist landscape, as well as the desire to investigate the city as a complex social production where many conflicted visions collide, due to global flows and diasporic movements. The research's early focus was the examination of the post-Soviet transition in the architecture and the daily life of the city. However, in the process the focus shifted in exploring how the foregrounding of spatial thinking in the essayistic thinking modality can be utilised in order to comment on the construction and consumption of both the city and of its cinematic incarnations. At the same time, as it is suggested by the title *My Pink City*, the making of the film was also linked to the personal.

One of the reasons for choosing Yerevan, apart from the attraction to the Soviet urban landscape, was the questioning of diasporic belonging and nostalgia. Thus, the location of female subjectivity became very important. In that sense, the film is as much about the city as it is about the struggle of the female author to project her own voice.

My Pink City is constructed as a double reflection on the urban space of Yerevan and the cinematic topography of the moving image. In addressing the post-Soviet landscape of Yerevan and its role in the construction of Armenian identity, the film utilises the form of the city film, as a way of contemplating on the symbolic construction of urban space. In the film many lines of spatial inquiry converge, from the militarisation of public space and the intimacy of domesticity, to the substitution of Soviet symbols with consumer signage, modernist architectural ruins and the panorama as a specific convention of urban representation. All these spatial concerns are compared with the representation of Yerevan in Soviet photographic and film archives, as way of contemplating both on the nature of filmic space and on the unique role assigned to the image, as the site of ideological consumption, in Soviet cultural life.

The written thesis departs from privileging the temporal when describing the thinking operations of the moving image by stressing the spatial dimension of discursive practices. Thus, it elaborates on the role of filmic space in the thinking procedures of the moving image and on the way that spatial thinking is expressed in a range of essay films and in *My Pink City* in particular. It

takes on an interdisciplinary approach and examines the link between the expression of thought in cinema and essay film as a thinking modality, as well as reflecting how new spatial frameworks can enable to refine the function of filmic space in moving image practices. The aim of the research is to expand essayistic discourse by redefining the notion of filmic space and asserting its importance in the thinking operations of the moving image.

The research approaches the moving image as a diverse set of practices – encompassing early film and fiction cinema, documentary, avant-garde, essay film and artists' film and video– with distinct technical and conceptual approaches, developed through oppositional, parallel or even overlapping genealogies. Following such conception of the moving image, the research breaks from previous theorisations of the essay film that describe it either as a hybrid form or a separate film genre and considers it as a distinct modality of thought in moving image practices, following a Deleuzian theorisation of cinema as a configuration of images and signs that express thought.

However, it is very important to clarify how the research approaches space in relation to Deleuze's writing and in relation to moving image practices.

Although, space is an important tool in Deleuze's philosophical thinking, especially expressed as a world that is being constantly territorialized, de-territorialized and re-territorialized, the written thesis does not account for Deleuze's general approach to space but focuses singularly on Deleuze's writing on cinema, his theorisation of the relationship between cinema and thought and his description of the operations of space and frame in the

movement-image. The main reason for deciding to focus on Deleuze is because he conceives cinema as a thinking modality rather than as a language and thus his theorisation emphasises the thinking operations of the image. Moreover, the research interrogates filmic space in single-screen essay films (irrespective of the medium used) since its aim is to explore spatial imagination within the fixed parameters of cinematic linearity rather than foreground the physical fragmentation of space in the gallery context. Thus, the research does not account for the differences between video or film technologies, or the multiplicity of spaces in audio-visual installations, since its main focus is the exploration of the spatial imagination in the thinking procedures of the essay film irrespective from the spatialisation ascribed to the gallery context.

The written thesis begins in Chapter 1 with a historical and genealogical survey of the essay film and its relation to the literary essay form. It investigates the association of the form with documentary and avant-garde practices and identifies a series of essayistic filmic functions. The research highlights essay film as a thinking modality that incorporates diverse and multiple discursive logics, while at the same time explores its own thinking operations, by searching for thought that is inherent in the image. The chapter highlights the privileging of moving in time in the conceptualisation of thinking in cinema, which has obscured the role of the spatial imagination. It concludes with examining how the essay film *My Pink City* that forms the dialogic pole of the written thesis expands the understanding of the essay film.

Addressing the disregard of filmic space in the theorisation of the thinking operations of the moving image, Chapter 2 focuses on the renewed importance of spatial imagination in a series of theoretical frameworks. Addressing the 'spatial turn' in Humanities and its interdisciplinary nature, it reflects on the conceptualisations of space in the work of Lefebvre, Foucault, Harvey and Massey, as well as the distinction between space and place. It rejects phenomenological accounts of space and considers space as a social product of complex heterogeneous interrelations and as always under construction.

Chapter 3 opens the discussion on the role of the spatial imagination in moving image practices by exploring the notion of filmic space. It addresses filmic space through film theoretical, geographical and Deleuzian conceptions of cinema. It reflects on how traditional film theory frames filmic space around the limitations of the frame and the ambiguous relationship between moving image and narrative structure. With the introduction of spatial theories in film studies, filmic space stops functioning as a simple backdrop to narrative and becomes a central formal tool in the textual analysis of film. At the same time geographic research on film considers cinema as a particular type of space that shapes our perception of the world. However, in both occasions although filmic space is opened up to spatial theories that highlight its social structure, it continues to operate as fixing things down and conceived as immobile. The chapter identifies how in Deleuze's theorisation, filmic space is associated with movement and how it takes a discursive quality as the undetermined *any-space-whatever*. Thus, it proposes that filmic space can contribute to the thinking operations of the image when it is connected to movement.

Chapter 4 explores how narrative space and the centring mechanisms of the image that limit the potential of filmic space are broken in a series of avant-garde and experimental films. It explores the connection between filmic space and movement and establishes a series of spatial discursive functions in moving image practices, as for example the strategy of an undetermined space created by isolating camera movements, of conceiving the non-space of cinema as a space to be traversed and explored or in the layering of spaces impregnated with historical and political references. The chapter concludes by redefining filmic space as every spatial relation present in film, from the frame, the movement of the camera, off-screen space, narrative space, film as space and the cinematic world and considers filmic space as open, relational, heterogeneous and always under construction.

The last chapter of the written thesis (Chapter 5) explores space and spatial imagination in the essay film. Spatial concerns in the essay film are located in the form of the travel essay, the city film or in the notion of the essay film as an imaginary platform. In the travel essay, the transnational mobility of globalisation and the acknowledgement of diasporic subjectivity pushes essayistic discourse into exploring a variety of spaces produced by global movement by bringing into relation disparate geographical locations, pierced together not by the continuity of narrative space but through a reflexive subjectivity. In the city film the urban environment becomes a terrain for examining the social production of space, the ideologies inscribed in the process of urban regeneration and the failure of urban modernity. On the other hand, space in essay film can also become a platform for reflecting on the complexities of global movements and thus pull filmic space away from a

documentary function. However, since essay film incorporates many discursive operations, it can explore space not only through the metaphor of traveling, or by mediating on global movements and the changing nature of social space or by layering various spaces but also by the layering of diverse spatial thinking operations expressed in the image. Thus, Chapter 5 concludes by considering how the expanded notion of a fluid and dynamic filmic space, expressing thought via a variety of strategies can function on multiple levels in the thinking operations of the essay film, using as an example the spatial discursive structure of *My Pink City*.

CHAPTER 1: THE ESSAY FILM AS A THINKING MODALITY

Chapter 1 reviews academic literature on the emergence of the essay film as a cinematic form that expresses thought. The chapter begins with a historical overview of the term essay film and its relation to the literary essay. It investigates the conflicting categories under which the form has been placed, especially in relation to documentary and avant-garde practices. However, the chapter departs from the literary heritage of the essayistic discourse and focuses on how the thinking operations of the essay film have been described in relevant academic literature. It proceeds by evaluating the functions of the essayistic discourse in relation to Adorno's theorisation of the essay form and Deleuze's ideas on cinema's thinking ability. The chapter theorises the essay film as a distinct modality of thought in moving image practices and concludes with an examination of the essayistic modality of *My Pink City*.

1.1 The Essay Film

The essay film up until recently was a relatively obscure and under-theorised moving image practice. However, over the past two decades the renewed interest in non-fiction (ten Brink, 1999; Corrigan, 2011; Montero, 2012) and hybrid moving image forms (Biemann, 2003; Steyerl, 2011), as well as the critical attention towards filmmakers that have been associated with the essayistic, such as Chris Marker (Lupton, 2005; Alter, 2006; Cooper, 2008) and Harum Farocki (Elsaesser, 2004; Ehmman and Eshun, 2010), has resulted in a flourish of new publications and film seasons. The earliest academic studies in Anglophone literature¹ on the nature of the essay film could be traced to Joram ten Brink's doctoral thesis on *The Essay Film* (1999) as a distinct film genre with roots in the avant-garde tradition; followed by Ursula Biemann's edition of articles on the video-essay in *Stuff it. The video essay in the digital age* (2003); Michael Renov's focus on essay film as part of subjective documentary practices in *The Subject of Documentary* (2004); Laura Rascaroli's study of subjective cinema in *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* (2009); Timothy Corrigan's tracing of the relationship between thought and public experience in *The Essay Film. From Montaigne, After Marker* (2011) and David Montero's exploration of essay film as a 'heteroglossic' discursive practice in *Thinking Images. The Essay Film as a Dialogic Form in European Cinema* (2012).

¹The research focuses on Anglophone literature on the essay film. In the last decade there has been a significant output on the essay film in French, German and Spanish

In relevant scholarly research one can trace an expansion of the field of references from an initial questioning of the ontological relations of the essay to other film forms and the relationship with subjectivity and reflexivity towards the notion of the essayistic as a critique on the institutions of the image. This has led to an opening up of the essay form to a range of films placed up until recently in the avant-garde, artist's film and video or documentary traditions, an expansion that is also evident in the programming decisions in a series of seminal films seasons held over the last 15 years, starting with *Le film-essai: identification d'un genre*(2000)² at The Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Jean-Pierre Gorin's influential programme *The Way of the Termite: The Essay in Cinema 1909-2004* at Vienna Filmmuseum (2007)³, Vienna, Austria; the continuation of this program as *The way of the Termite: The Essay Film* (2009)⁴ at the TIFF Cinematheque, Toronto, Canada and the very recent *Thought in Action: The Art of the Essay Film* (2013)⁵ at the British Film Institute.

Most historical overviews of the essay film (ten Brink, 1999; Alter, 2003; Rascoli, 2009; Corrigan, 2011) suggest that the first theorisation of the form

² Centre George Pompidou [online] http://www.bpi.fr/fr/la_bpi_et_vous/voir/programmation/cinema_documentaire.html. [Accessed 16th Sept 2013]

³ Film Museum [online] http://www.filmmuseum.at/jart/prj3/filmmuseum/main.jart?rel=en&reserve-mode=active&content-id=1219068743272&schienen_id=1215680368485. [Accessed 16 September 2013].

⁴Museum of the Moving Image [online] <http://www.movingimagesource.us/events/the-way-of-the-termite-the-20091106>. [Accessed 16 September 2013].

⁵British Film Institute [online] <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/deep-focus/essay-film>. [Accessed 16 September 2013].

was put forward by Hans Richter⁶ in his 1940's article *Der Filmessay: Eine neue Form des Dokumentarfilms* (The Film Essay: A New Form of Documentary Film)⁷. Richter argued for a cinema that involved the intellect and emotion, a cinema that merged the sensibility of expressing abstract ideas with concerns over social reality, and thus combined avant-garde with documentary techniques (Richter, 1992: 195-198). However, the earliest mention of the term essay film is attributed to Eisenstein, who in his 'Notes for a film of Capital' contemplates on how to film Marx's *Das Kapital* as a series of small film essays that express (in a similar manner to Richter's ideas) abstract thought (Rascaroli, 2009: 24; Montero, 2012: 29-31).

Continuing a line of film theoretical inquiry on the thinking ability of cinema, Alexandre Astruc proposed in 1948 that film was gradually becoming a language that can express thought and that the camera can be metaphorically equated to 'a subtle and flexible tool' of writing (Astruc, 1968: 18-22). Using the metaphor of the 'camera-stylo' Astruc envisaged a cinema of the future with the potential to move beyond the symbolic associations of montage and 'the tyranny of what is visual' (ibid: 18). The new cinema that Astruc foresaw was free to explore cinema's inherent relation to thought, which according to him was linked with cinema's capacity to move in time, to be a 'theorem' (ibid: 20). Astruc's theorisation is important in essayistic film literature since it links

⁶ Hans Richter (1888 – 1976) was a German painter and experimental filmmaker associated with the DADA movement.

⁷ There is no complete English translation of the German text, apart from an extract translated by Richard Langston available as a resource at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill website. University of North Carolina [online] <http://www.unc.edu/courses/2007spring/germ/060/001/readings.html#1>. [Accessed 27 October 2010]

for the first time the expression of thought with the subjectivity of the author and the idea of language (ibid: 18). Furthermore, as David Montero points out Astruc's text dismantles the association between thinking in cinema and the 'language of the real' that was present in Richter and Eisenstein's usage of the term (Montero, 2012: 33). However, although Astruc's thinking cinema moves away from the real in emphasizing the symbolic possibilities of narrative, dialogue and camera movement, his proposal excludes the thinking operations that the surrealist imagination might offer. As he writes: 'Problems such as the translation into cinematic terms of verbal tenses and logical relationships interest us much more than the creation of the exclusively visual and static art dreamt by the surrealist.' (Astruc, 1968: 22).

Between Astruc's article and more recent theorisations of the essay film, only two texts exist on the film essay, one being Jacques Rivette's analysis of Rossellini's *Journey to Italy* (1977: 54-64)⁸, where he claims that it is the first film to explore the essayistic structure (Kovács, 2007: 118; Rascaroli, 2009: 26). In a more widely quoted article⁹ first published in France Observateur¹⁰, André Bazin pronounced that Chris Marker's *Letters from Siberia* (1957) is an essay film (2003: 44-45). In his review, Bazin characterises the work as 'an essay documented by film' and stresses the importance of the reflexive voice-over in the expression of intelligence and thought (2003: 44). Bazin claims that *Letter from Siberia* enacts a reversal of the reliance of political documentary on the reality of the image to focus more on the scripted text,

⁸ First published in *Cashiers du cinema* 46 (April 1955).

⁹ Quoted by Rascaroli, 2009; Corrigan, 2011; Montero, 2012 and Tracy, 2013.

¹⁰ Published on the 30th of October 1958.

thus, describing the particular way of linking images and text in the work of Marker as 'horizontal montage' (ibid). According to Bazin in 'horizontal montage... a given image doesn't refer to the one that preceded it or the one that will follow it, but rather it refers laterally, in some way, to what is said.' (ibid: 44). As I shall explore in more detail later, in Bazin's theorisation of the essay film one can trace the subsequent and recurrent association of the form with voice-over and verbal commentary.

Historical Lineages and Genre Distinctions

In the historical examination of the essay film attempted thus far, the term has been loosely used to describe film as a particular type of thinking that relates to abstract ideas expressed by the filmmaker, sometimes in connection to a reflexive voice-over. In more recent literature, the essayistic filmic form has been more systematically read in relation to the literary essay and especially the work of Michel de Montaigne (Lopate, 1992; ten Brink, 1999; Renov, 2004; Corrigan, 2011, Montero, 2012) as well as in connection to the writings on the literary essay as an art form of Georg Lukács, Theodor Adorno, Aldous Huxley and Roland Barth (ten Brink, 1999; Renov, 2004; Alter, 2003; Rascaroli, 2009; Corrigan, 2011, Montero, 2012). Although in the academic studies mentioned above a series of historical and formal connections were drawn out, the presumed fluidity of the essay form was paralleled to the difficulty in theorising the literary essay form (Renov, 2004; Rascaroli, 2009; Montero, 2012). As a result, on one hand the essay film was analysed in relation to the avant-garde or the documentary film traditions and on the other

hand configured either as an ambiguous, hybrid form, mode or modality of film practice or as a distinct category and separate film genre.

In tracing the relationship of the essay film to the literary essay the first association was made by Philip Lopate, who in his article *In Search of the Centaur: The Essay-Film* equated the essayist with the personal voice of the filmmaker by emphasizing the importance of voice-over, text and script in projecting his authority (Lopate, 1992: 19-22). Although Lopate was not concerned with situating the essay film within a particular cinematic tradition, by stressing the importance of textual strategies in the construction of the essayistic filmic argument, which echoes Bazin's focus on the voice-over as the vehicle for expressing thought, he clearly subordinated the visual sensibilities of the form to the literary (ibid: 19-22). Michael Renov also based his theorisation of the essay film as a distinct modality of documentary filmmaking on the analogy to the literary essay (Renov, 2004: 69-89). Similar to Lopate, Renov draws out subjectivity and authorial expression but furthermore he stresses reflexivity as a distinctive characteristic of the essay film (ibid). However, he is most concerned with expanding the limits of documentary to include the 'expressive potential of the medium', which has been suppressed in previous theorisations of the genre and links the subjectivity of the essayistic discourse with personal documentary (ibid: 69). Thus, he frames the essayistic as an autobiographical practice operating as a double viewing, looking outwards in the world and at the same time looking inwards into the self, while discussing the diaristic work of Jonas Mekas (ibid: 69-89).

Although the connection to a documentary sensibility is maintained, a series of recent studies complicate the relation of the essayistic to other cinematic forms. For example, Laura Rascaroli claims that the essay film has a fluid and hybrid quality and that it does not constitute a coherent genre but is a field or domain, still very loosely linked to the documentary tradition (2009: 39).

Rascaroli places the emergence of essay film as part of the developments in subjectivity in the French Nouvelle Vague and the Cinema des Auteurs and she analyses it in terms of its reflective qualities as subjective filmmaking, referencing the work of Chris Marker, Harum Farocki and Jean-Luc Godard (ibid: 27-39). Furthermore, András Kovács in his seminal study *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950-1980* traces a similar lineage to Rascaroli and the Cinema des Auteurs (2007: 116-119). However, Kovács analyses the 'film essay' as one modality of modernist cinema (without making any reference to documentary traditions) distinguishing it from the mental journey genre (ibid: 116-119). He stresses that the 'film essay' is governed by the abstract logic of thought, where a line of argument illustrates different propositions and argues that it is not the story but 'the conceptual logic of the argument that rules the construction of film' (ibid: 117). In Kovács's brief analysis essayistic thinking is equated to a single line of argument, a viewpoint that goes against most other theorisations of the essay film that conceive it as a unsystematic discursive form.

Other recent examinations of the essayistic suggest an alternative lineage, away from the documentary and modernist cinema traditions by tracing the avant-garde roots of the essay film (ten Brink, 1999; Alter, 2003; Corrigan,

2011; Montero, 2012), while at the same time stressing the relation to the literary essay (ten Brink, 1999; Corrigan, 2011; Montero, 2012) and the hybridity and in-betweenness of the form (Alter, 2003; Biemann, 2003, Corrigan, 2011). For example, Nora Alter links the essay film with the literary essay and early soviet cinema, and claims that it is not a genre but a transgressive and hybrid form that goes against binary oppositions and pushes traditional cinematic conventions and boundaries (2003: 12-23). The in-betweenness of the essay form is also highlighted by Ursula Biemann, who conceives the essayistic not as a genre or formula but as a mediator between different cultural spaces and artistic traditions (2003: 8-11). Biemann is concerned with the influence of digital technologies in the evolution of earlier 'post-structuralist cinematographic' essay practices towards the development of the 'video essay', which she places in-between 'the documentary video and video art' traditions (ibid:8). According to Biemann this mediating quality makes the essayist text difficult to situate, thus video essays become suspended operating across the cinema and gallery contexts (ibid). Renov also differentiates between the electronic essay and the essay film drawing a connection between video as a technology that offers greater possibility for self-expression (2004: 182-190). However, in his discussion of the electronic essay he mainly stresses the corporeal and bodily connections of video art to the centrality of the corporeal self in the Montaignian conception of the essayistic (ibid).

On the other end of the spectrum we can locate theorisations that treat the essay film as a specific film category. For example, Joram ten Brink clearly

theorises the essay film as a separate genre and places it outside the documentary and within the avant-garde tradition, and thus draws a direct connection between its form, modernist poetry's free association techniques and modernist montage, following its trajectory from Dziga Vertov to Chris Marker (1999: 73-76). Timothy Corrigan explores the historical development of the essayistic via the literary and photo-essay and links their particular way of expressing thought to the development of the essay film (Corrigan, 2011: 16-36). However, he foregrounds the essay film as emerging from the twin traditions of the documentary and the avant-garde, to claim that it only arose as a distinct form in the 1950s, pointing to Chris Marker as a seminal figure in its constitution (ibid: 51-58).

In the most recent study in the field, David Montero considers the essay film as a non-fiction practice discrete from the documentary genre (Montero, 2012: 1-20). He moves away from questions on what constitutes the essay film as a genre category and proposes a reconsideration of the essayistic form as corresponding 'to the logic of the utterance' (ibid: 2). He continues the tradition of reading essay film in connection to the literary essay and the work of Montaigne, as well as Adorno's (1984) theorisation of the form, but furthermore utilises Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) concepts of 'heteroglossia' and 'dialogism'¹¹, in order to open up the essayistic to the multiplicity of discourses and voices present in language (Montero, 2012: 42-48). Montero conceives essay film as 'a discourse of discourses', as a critical form that does not rely on revealing the documentary nature of images but on analysing the different

¹¹I will explain in more detail Montero use of Bakhtinian concepts in the next section of this chapter.

historical and temporal contexts of 'visual utterances' (ibid: 3-46). Thus, he locates the insistence of linking essay films to the documentary tradition to the lack of adequate theoretical tools to describe 'their link to reality' (ibid: 51). Montero's proposition is that essay films are not documentaries but that they use documentary among many other techniques and that they function as 'heteroglot utterances' (as multi-layered signs) that are 'measured against reality' (ibid: 51-52).

It is clear that parallel and contradictory historical lineages of the essay film exist, some tracing the roots of the form to early cinema (ten Brink, 1999; Alter, 2003), while others highlighting the post second world war period as the origin of its development (Rascaroli, 2009; Corrigan, 2011). The difficulty in pinpointing the essay film's historical and formal relations to other cinematic forms is further complicated by the complexity of the genealogical connections asserted. Thus the essay film is theorised either as part of the documentary tradition (Renov, 2004), as a hybrid modality (Alter, 2003; Biemann, 2003), as part of modernist film (Kovács, 2007), as subjective cinema (Rascaroli, 2009), as a distinct genre linked to the avant-garde (ten Brink, 1999; Corrigan 2011) or as a non-fiction practice (Montero, 2012). In addition, some writers concentrate on the links between essayistic practices and video technologies, video art and the gallery context, proposing the separate category of the 'video' or 'electronic' essay (Biemann, 2003; Renov, 2004). However, as I have mentioned in the introduction, this research focuses on single screen works irrespective of the medium used (either film or video technologies) made by filmmakers or artists, since its general aim is to explore spatial

imagination in the essay film separated from the fragmentation or spatialisation attributed to the gallery context. Furthermore, the attention to the single screen and multiple technologies is justified by the fact that the research does not approach essay film as a genre category but emphasises, as we shall see in more detail below, the specific way that as a moving image practice expresses thought.

Subjectivity, Reflection, Theory, Critique

The interest in outlining the historical and genealogical trajectories in the theorisation of the essay film lies in the fact that depending on the root chosen, different essayistic thinking operations are emphasised; from the focus on the voice-over (Lopate, 1992; Rascaroli, 2009), to the reflective 'cinematic text' (ten Brink, 1999), the public experience (Corrigan, 2011), the organisation of complexities (Biemann, 2003) or the critical stance (Montero, 2012). However, an overall dominant influence could be discerned, one that links the essayistic to the literary, either as the persistence of literary metaphor's in describing its thinking operations, such as Astruc's focus on the process of writing (the 'camera-stylo') or Bazin's 'verbal intelligence' or in stressing its relation to the literary essay and especially the writings of Montaigne (1952) linking essayistic expression with the subjectivity of the author. A major consequence of reading essay film through the literary is the magnification of the role of the voice-over as the ultimate location of the subjectivity of the filmmaker, forming the main avenue through which the essayistic expresses thought (Bazin, 2003; Lopate, 1992; Rascaroli, 2009).

Stressing the relation to the written text such conceptions of the essay film restrict the possibilities of visual thinking as hinted by ten Brink (1999) and Montero (2012). However, as I will argue apart from the persistence on the voice-over and the subordination of the visual, the focus on the literary has also shaped an understanding of the essay film as 'text', either critical or reflective, constructed via the cinematic language in order to be read by an audience.

Another dominant pole in the academic study of the essay film is Adorno's seminal article *The Essay as Form* (1984). Adorno considers the essayistic as a breaking free from systematic or scientific knowledge production, following a fragmented and non-linear development of thought (ibid: 151-171). For Adorno, the essay is the 'critical form *par excellence*'¹² testing the instability of knowledge and subverting dominant discursive logics (ibid: 166-169). Since the essay is a type of knowledge and thinking rooted in experience, Adorno places the essayist inside the text attempting to find its subject from within, a structure that enables both reader and writer to test the production of meaning (ibid: 151-171). Furthermore, characterised by a 'childlike freedom' and a certain type of autonomy, the essayistic expresses thought via free association, discontinuity and experimentation (ibid: 152-165). In foregrounding non-linearity and uncertainty, Adorno's analysis has contributed to understandings of the essay film not only as a subjective but also as a self-reflective text that examines the limits of knowledge, as well as to conceptions that emphasise the critical, fragmented, hybrid and heterogeneous qualities of

¹²Italics in the original. Adorno (1984) *The Essay as Form*, p. 166

its structure. His theorisation has also been seminal in locating the authorial position inside the essayistic text, placing the filmmaker inside the work addressing the viewer from within.

The circling of essay film around the literary (either on the work of Montaigne or in Adorno's theorisation of the form) has resulted in setting up subjectivity and reflexivity as its main interlocking characteristics. In other words, one way that the essay film operates critically, one way that it might be seen to approach reflection is via the subjectivity of the author. Following this configuration, most scholarly research adopts as the defining element of the essay film the fact that it creates a specific modality of viewing; the filmmaker is present inside the work and introduces it to the audience, and through this dialogue with the spectator meaning is created (ten Brink, 1999: 75; Rascaroli, 2009: 35; Corrigan, 2011: 31-35). However, the function and quality of this dialogue between filmmaker and audience is framed differently depending on the historic and genealogical trajectories acknowledged.

In her study on subjective cinema Laura Rascaroli describes the main structure of the essay film (its modality of viewing) as interpellation: 'each spectator as an individual and not as a member of an anonymous, collective audience, is called upon to engage in a dialogical relationship with the enunciator, hence to become active, intellectually and emotionally, and interact with the text' (Rascaroli, 2009: 35). As I have mentioned above, she equates the subjectivity of the enunciator with the personal viewpoint of the filmmaker expressed principally via the voice-over that addresses a singular

spectator (ibid: 30-35). According to Rascaroli it is this direct address to the audience that distinguishes essay film from other subjective documentaries, while in her analysis subjectivity is both the motor for reflecting on society as well as the platform for questioning the authorial position (ibid). The author sometimes inside the film and other times removed becomes a 'metacritic' that examines the process of thinking in the essayistic discourse, as well as questioning the relationship between image and reality (ibid: 44-63). Thus Rascaroli links the reflection on the image as a document of specific socio-political contexts with questions of reality, a connection that Renov also utilises but in order to argue for the essay film's documentary nature (Renov, 2004: 90-97). For Renov, is reality that is being questioned in the essay film and that '... the representation of the historical real is consciously filtered through the flux of subjectivity.' (ibid: 90).

It is not always an authorial voice that speaks to a singular spectator but the relationship between authorial subjectivity and spectatorial position can be fragmented and uneven. For example, while Corrigan acknowledges the dialogic modality as central to the essay film and places the filmmaker inside the work addressing the audience, he nonetheless claims that in the process of constructing the essayistic discourse this position - the 'personal voice of the filmmaker' - is tested, fragmented and questioned (Corrigan, 2011: 10-33). As he states, the essay film is:

‘(1) a testing of expressive subjectivity through (2) experiential encounters in a public arena (3) the product of which becomes the figuration of thinking or thought as a cinematic address and a spectatorial response’ (ibid: 30).

The emphasis is again on subjective expression, since Corrigan specifically relates subjectivity to experience and the public sphere claiming that the value of the essayistic discourse lies precisely in the fact that it ‘troubles and complicates’ the authorial voice (ibid: 10-33). Thus, in Corrigan’s definition of the essay film expressive subjectivity is tested against experience, against being in the world and as such essayistic thinking is formed by complicating, troubling and creating gaps between subjectivity and experience (ibid: 33).

On the other hand, ten Brink opens up the dialogic relation between filmmaker and audience by configuring the cinematic text as a mediating mechanism (1999: 75). As he points out:

“The essay film creates its own discourse by using tools of cinematic language – image, sound, editing and the organisation of time and space – to create the cinematic ‘text’. It creates narrative and non-narrative structures, ‘methodically-unmethodically’ edited together. This is bound together with the notion that the filmmaker is present inside the work and introduces it to the audience, asking them to take part in the construction of the films’ meanings. As a result, the cinematic ‘text’ becomes ‘the reflective text’, the mediating medium between the filmmaker and the spectator.” (ten Brink, 1999: 75).

This definition distinctly departs from most widespread notions of the essay film, outlined above, that either stress subjective expression (Lopate, 1992; Renov, 2004) or the dialogic relationship with the audience (Rascaroli, 2009; Corrigan, 2011). The essay film is not just expressing thought via a dialogic subjectivity but actually involves the construction of a 'cinematic text' that becomes a reflective medium, thus, essayistic thinking is shaped by the trialectic relation between 'cinematic text', filmmaker and audience. In ten Brink's theorisation we can detect an attempt to map the essayistic expression not only in terms of subjectivity but also in relation to the nature of the moving image, to the way cinematic language constructs texts via image, sound and montage. Thus, by stressing the quality of the moving image as a language we move away from the question of reality (how the essayistic reflects on the real) to questions of how cinematic structures produce meaning. As ten Brink further mentions the meaning of the essayistic 'lies in the structure itself' (ibid: 75).

Another crucial element in ten Brink's foregrounding of the reflective qualities of the cinematic text is that he locates the questioning and fragmentation of the subjectivity of the author (as we have seen a defining characteristic of the essayistic) precisely in challenging the conventions of cinematic language (ibid: 73-76). To continue with the metaphor, by breaking up cinematic conventions the authorial position is also questioned. Following Adorno's theorisation, ten Brink also suggests that the authorial fragmentation occurs by not adopting a direct line of argument or a linear progression of thought (ibid). As the essayistic thinking is expressed through 'things, objects and

associations', for ten Brink quoting and sampling results not only in questioning authorial subjectivity but also in fragmenting the spectatorial position (ibid: 21-76). Similarly, for Corrigan essay film in the process of thinking through 'other forms, including narrative, genres, lyrical voices' also fragments the position of the spectator (2011: 35). As he states: 'Not only does that subject become made and remade through the pressure of the resistant reality of the film but also the lack of a single, dominant, or sometimes even coherent discourse disperses that viewing subject through its pastiche of forms, its mix and subversion of generic structures, and its cannibalization of narrative teleologies or lyrical voices.' (2011: 35-36). From the above, we can conclude that in ten Brink's and Corrigan's theorisation we move away from a singular authorial subjectivity and spectatorial response (Rascaroli) and towards a conception of the essayistic as the space where both the authorial and viewing positions become shifting and unstable.

The mediating quality of the essayistic also surfaces in Ursula Biemann's¹³ conception of the video essay, framed not as the dialogue between filmmaker and spectator but as making visible the transitions between cultural spaces and media realities (2003a: 10). For Biemann, in the context of global movement and in the layers of media information, the video essay's function is not that of documenting reality but rather the essayistic provides a theoretical platform where many reflective moments converge. As she claims:

¹³ Ursula Biemann is an artist and writer based in Zurich, Switzerland. She has produced a series of video essays and written extensively on the form. Her writings on the subject are interesting for this research as they evolve from a practice-based perspective. I will focus on her particular way of dealing with the space of globalisation in her video essays in Chapter 5.

'The essayistic intention lies much rather in a reflection of the world and the social order, and it does so by arranging the material into a particular field of connections. In other words, the essayistic approach is not about documenting realities but about organizing complexities.' (2003b: 83). She relates this organisation of complexities not to thinking as a general modality but to the testing of '... the possibility of theory-building through visual means ...' (2003a: 9). Thus, she sets up a clear connection between essay film and theory, an alliance which is further elaborated in Jörg Huber's paper in the same volume (edited by Biemann) as the core function of the essayistic discourse (Huber, 2003: 92- 97). Following again on the idea of mediation, Huber argues that the essay film enacts a 'performative transfer between theory and aesthetic practice'¹⁴ and that this transitional quality enables the filmmaker to test how the world is being perceived (ibid: 93). Huber's position is peculiar in the literature of the essay film, as his reading follows a phenomenological trajectory, linking essay film with questions of perception and being-in-the world. This is a line of inquiry that this research stays clear of since its focus is not on a phenomenological account of film and space but its emphasis lies on the social construction of space, as I will examine in detail in the next chapter.

In the ability of the essay film to contribute to theory building, one can discern the influence of Adorno in Biemann's and Hueber's understanding of the form. The essayistic 'builds theory', transcends disciplinary boundaries and constructs a new discursive space by challenging conventional knowledge

¹⁴ Huber, J. (2003). *Video-Essayism. On the Theory-Practice of the Transitional*. p. 93.

production and by organising the complexities of a mediated and saturated image world following a non-linear and non-logical trajectory. (Biemann, 2003a: 9; Huber, 2003: 92). However, although Adorno also acknowledges a connection to theory, he is very careful to differentiate essayistic thinking operations from an association with theory production. As he states: 'Disaster threatens intellectual experience the more strenuously it ossifies into theory and acts as if it held the philosopher's stone in hand. And yet, intellectual experience itself strives by its own nature towards such objectification. This antinomy is mirrored by the essay. Just as it absorbs concepts and experiences, so it absorbs theories.' (Adorno, 1984: 165-166). The idea of absorption is crucial here since as I will argue in more detail in the next section, it highlights a specific thinking function of the essayistic as incorporating in its thinking modality diverse thinking operations rather than following a specific discursive logic as theory production.

The metaphor of theory in Biemann's and Huber's writings is limiting but in their work essayistic discourse moves away from a dialogic subjectivity to the idea of transfer and mediation between different media spaces, between complex positions and heterogeneous material. However, for Biemann the main organisation tool of the diverse layers lies again in the voice-over, not as a narration or explanation of facts (as in documentary or scientific conventions) but as a personal situated voice that draws from a variety of textual sources (Biemann, 2003b: 83-89). Thus, the voice-over connects the heterogeneous material and ensures that a critical position is maintained (ibid). The emphasis on the complex organisation of heterogeneous material,

removed from the problems of representing reality, but relying in questioning the changes in society brings to the surface the conception of the essay as media critique, a notion that is again present in Adorno's theorisation, as well as in more recent discussions on the field ¹⁵ (Biemann, 2003; Otolith Group, 2010; Tracy, 2013). From the point-of-view of the essay as critique the reflexivity of the essay film as double viewing, as proposed by Renov, changes and can be reformulated as the author looking outwards into the world and at the same time looking inwards into how images are constructed on the individual and ideological level.

In relevant scholarly research, the conception of the essay film as media critique has not been analysed in relation to Adorno's theorisation of the form. However, in revising his text, one can identify that Adorno clearly draws attention to the relationship between the essayistic discourse with cultural phenomena and texts (Adorno: 1984:167-168). Thus, the essay does not merely reflect on reality or express abstract ideas but it has a critical relation to cultural events and discourses (ibid). However, this critical potential of the essay form, what Adorno characterises as the core function of the essayistic and what film and video essayists, such as Biemann and The Otolith Group stress in their work, is what another practitioner Hito Steyerl claims in her article *The Essay as Conformism?* has been lost (Steyerl, 2011: 101-110). Steyerl isolates in Adorno's analysis the relation between the essayistic and

¹⁵The essay film as a critique on the institutions of the image was one of the recurrent themes in the Sight & Sound Deep Focus Panel Discussion, held on the 28th August 2013 at the BFI, London as part of the season *Thought in Action: The Art of the Essay Film* organised by the BFI and Sight & Sound magazine. The panel included Laura Mulvey, Laura Rascaroli, John Akomfrah and Kodwo Eshun and was moderated by Chris Darke.

the construction of identity and claims that if Adorno's essay challenged the fixity of identities of the industrial age, the contemporary essay expresses a post-Fordist hybridity, flexibility and mobility (ibid: 101-103). Thus, the contemporary essay not only mirrors a transient and departmentalised identity but also reflects the 'copy and paste' aesthetic of the contemporary global production (ibid). As Steyerl argues: 'The multiple and heterogeneous forms of essays thus closely mimic various formations of a contemporary brand of capitalism based on the compulsory manufacturing of differences, custom-tailored niche markets and flexible and modular forms of production.' (ibid: 103). However, Steyerl traces an alternative space for the critical articulation of the essayistic, one that does not rely on the combination of heterogeneous material but is based on creating 'alternative audiovisual economies' (ibid: 104). She reads the criticality of the essay now relying on challenging the commodification of images through alternative networks of distribution and web-based platforms, grounded on practices of theft and appropriation that contribute to 'a possible transnational global common' (ibid: 110). Nonetheless, Steyerl acknowledges that these 'alternative audio-visual economies' are becoming in themselves a battleground of competing interests and ambivalent spaces.

In revisiting Adorno's text, upon which Steyerl bases her argument, I will argue that linking the criticality of the essayistic with its heterogeneity in her analysis is limiting. Adorno noticeably differentiates the essayist mode from the mimicking and copying of the heterogeneous sources, the texts and cultural phenomena it approaches (1984: 167-170). For example, as I have

already stressed above, the concepts, theories and ideas that the essayistic utilises (the heterogeneous discursive logics and positions it visits) are not just mimicked but absorbed into its thinking operations. Furthermore, the concepts, material, theories rhetoric and communicational devices employed become within the essayistic discourse ‘...a compelling construction that does not want to copy the object, but to reconstruct it out of its conceptual *membra disjecta*.’¹⁶ (Adorno, 1984: 169). Thus, as I will explore in more detail below, as far as the essayistic film articulates (makes visible) its thinking operations it cannot function as the ‘copy-paste’ aesthetic that Steyerl decries, as the diverse material that it employs are the vehicles through which other discursive possibilities are conceptualised.

The theorisation which comes closer to the idea of the essayistic as thinking through the heterogeneous material it absorbs is Montero’s description of essay film as a critical form that examines the multiple and layered contexts of images (Montero, 2012: 1-20). The critical quality that Montero stresses in the essayistic does not simply rely on investigating media realities or questioning the institutions of the image but following Bakhtin’s ideas he describes the essayistic critique as addressing the ‘heteroglotic’ nature of images (ibid). Thus the essay film is framed as a dialogue with other discourses:

“... the essay film becomes a ‘discourse of discourses’, a space where images recognise themselves as such and are finally able to address their role in the systems which produce, distribute and consume them. Cinematic

¹⁶ Italics in the original. Adorno (1984) *The Essay as Form*, pp. 166

essays, then, do not show reality, nor do they simply examine it critically. Their images offer an access (however oblique) to the domain of lived experience. Pictures become utterances: they are informed by intentions, represent a specific world view, and enter into dialogue with other images.” (ibid: 3)

Montero recognises the difficulty of applying in the field of the moving image Bakhtinian principles developed primarily to describe the operations of the novel. However, he bypasses the problem by highlighting the notion of dialogue present in Bakhtin’s conception of truth, which he parallels with the critical nature of the essay form (ibid: 10-16). Thus, as I have already mentioned, he develops his reading of essay film based on two concepts; firstly on ‘heteroglossia’ designating the multiple languages (discourses) present in language (their different ideological and social contexts) and secondly on ‘dialogism’ interpreted as the diverse ways that ‘heteroglotic’ discourses interact within texts and the power relations enacted within and across them (ibid). One can assert a connection between Montero’s analysis and Biemann’s description of the essay film as a theoretical platform, as both theorisations highlight the essayistic as a space where different discourses converge (Montero) or where complexities are organised (Biemann).

Another interesting aspect of Montero’s analysis is that he reconfigures subjectivity and reflexivity in essayistic thinking as an amalgamation of many voices (ibid 2-16). In his theorisation, the expression of essayistic subjectivity is liberated from the autobiographical (one of the main arguments that

scholars have used to link essay film with documentary and subjective cinema) and reframed no longer as a clear subjective authorial voice-over (Bazin, 2003; Lopate, 1992; Rascaroli, 2009) but as 'an interpersonal dialogue, which mobilizes a number of voices in its exploration of a particular subject.' (Montero, 2012: 4). Thus, the central viewing modality of the essay film (the author inhabiting the text and addressing the viewer) that ten Brink, Rascaroli and Corrigan place as its main organisation principle is opened up to incorporate a dialogue between many voices and opinions. This multiple dialogue contains some of the characteristics that ten Brink and Corrigan have identified in the relationship between a fragmented authorial voice and spectatorial position. However, I will argue that the thinking through other genres, quotations, narrative moments and lyrical voices, which ten Brink and Corrigan have utilised in order to describe the instability of the authorial and spectatorial location, when configured as part of a dialogue between discourses, it undergoes a subtle change. The multiplicity of forms is not part of a reflective function that reveals the constructed nature of the text and the author, nor is the heterogeneous material used to expose the contested nature of reality or adopt a media critique. But the reflective quality of the film essay discloses the different ideological and social contexts of the moving image (Montero, 2012; 56-59).

The exploration of essay film as a 'discourse of discourses' expressed through the subjective orchestration of utterances apart from removing essayistic thinking from its association with subjectivity and reflection, it also highlights juxtaposition and comparison as its main operations, processes

which according to Montero have been ignored in other theorisations of the practice (ibid: 38). Essayistic thinking is expressed by setting side-by-side and via the collision of multiple and diverse viewpoints and voices, resulting in an unsystematic and uncertain knowledge production, a type of gleaning (ibid: 36-38). In that sense the heterogeneity and hybrid quality of essay film does not rely in its appropriation of other genres and of diverse material but in the dialogic relationship between contrasting opinions and visual languages (ibid). As Montero succinctly points: ‘... essay films are profoundly dialogical in that they stage this clash of utterances at multiple levels; formally, by opposing different images ... via the counterpoint of images and soundtrack and also by contrasting pictures and written text and also conceptually, by placing different world views off against each other in a way that demands a reaction from the viewer.’ (ibid: 105-106).

It is not just the relationship between voice-over and text that expresses thought (Bazin, 2003; Lopate, 1992; Rascaroli, 2009) or the voice-over that organises complexity and ensures criticality (Biemann, 2003b) but also thinking is expressed in the juxtaposition of images and in the comparison of discourses (Montero, 2012). The image is no longer viewed as subordinate to the literary but in foregrounding the ‘clash of utterances’ Montero also emphasises the central role of the visual in the thinking operations of the essayistic (Montero, 2012: 105-106). There is a close affinity between the reflective quality that ten Brink assigns to the cinematic text, which expresses thinking in the relationship between images, sounds, text and montage and Montero’s close reading of ‘visual utterances’ and the many discourses of the

image. In both occasions, the literary functions of the essayistic are interpreted in relation to the specific qualities of the moving image. This is a line of inquiry that this research adopts since it acknowledges the common discursive function between the literacy and cinematic essays but the focus, which will become evident in the next section, is on the particular ways that the moving image expresses essayistic thought.

To summarise, the discussion so far, the review of scholarly research on essay film has underlined the relation of the form to documentary and avant-garde film traditions, its heterogeneity and hybrid quality, as well as the influence of the literary essay and Adorno's theorisation in the conceptualisation of its thinking operations. The insistence on reading essay film through the literary essay has created a series of limitations. On one hand, the expression of thinking in the essay film has been located in the use of voice-over as a subjective expression or a critical device that organises complexities and on the other hand thinking has been approached as a type of musing, either self-reflective or meta-critical associated with the subjective presence of the author or as a mediation between different genres, media and positions. Furthermore, authorial subjectivity has also been utilised as the main anchor that links essayistic reflection with the problems of representing reality. Thus, the two main poles recurring in essayistic literature are the relation of the essay film to the documentary tradition and the literary essay. As I have argued in this section by recognising how the discursive functions of the literary essay are transformed by the specific qualities of the moving image, essay film is freed up from the chain of literary metaphors, from the

subordination of the textual to the visual and from the tyranny of reality.

Finally, the problem of representing reality and the connection with documentary traditions is dismantled when we consider the essay film as a critique on media structures and on the discourses of the image.

Current theorisations of the essay film stressing the critical and dialogical nature of the essayistic depart from notions of subjectivity and the documentary impulse and associate the form with discursive processes. Thus, in this section, I have stressed how in relevant literature the modes of reflection, subjectivity, critique but also the dialogue between discourses have all been identified as tools in articulating thought that is fragmented and unstable. Furthermore, thought is expressed in the essayistic form via a dialogic viewing modality. The filmmaker is present inside the work and addresses the viewer, a dialogue that can be mediated via the 'cinematic text', tested against public experience or fragmented by other forms and genres. However, the dialogic sensibility does not lie only in the relationship between author, spectator and text but also functions on the level of discourse. Thus, the reflexivity of the essay film is not only expressed as a questioning of the authorial or viewing positions, of the constructed nature of the text and reality or as a mediation between genres and heterogeneous material, but as a critique of the different ideological contexts of the image. By framing the essayistic as the clashing of discourses, we move away from the interplay between subjectivity and reflection and discover comparison and juxtaposition as its main thinking functions. The process of comparing meanings embedded in different discourses and of placing visual or written material that were

previously kept apart together, contributes in making visible aspects of the social and ideological contexts of images that were ignored or obscured.

1.2 The Essayistic Thinking Modality

The review of scholarly research has highlighted a range of essayistic functions, such as reflexivity, subjectivity, critique, comparison and juxtaposition that operate as thinking mechanisms in essayistic discourse. In the academic literature essay film has mainly been explored in relation to the literary form and not analysed based on other theorisations of thinking in moving image practices, as for example in relation to Sergei Eisenstein's, Rudolph Arnheim's, or Gilles Deleuze's complex frameworks of 'visual thinking' in cinema (Eisenstein, 1949; Arnheim, 1977; Deleuze, 1986). This has resulted in the foregrounding of textual functions, either as the subjective presence of the filmmaker that expresses thought via a voice-over narration. The focus of current theorisations on the visual aspects of essayistic discourse, highlighting the qualities of the 'cinematic text' and considering the function of 'visual utterances', has liberated essayistic thinking from the chain of the voice-over. However, the persistence of reading essayistic operations in relation to the literary essay and on framing the essayistic as 'text' has resulted in essayistic thinking being framed around the idea of cinema as a language. This has limited the thinking possibilities of the essay film, which has been considered as only able to think about images and not through them. Furthermore, although current discussions on the essay film stress the discursive function of the image, they neglect the ability of the essay to explore its own thinking procedures.

This research while it acknowledges the importance of the literary essay in the conceptualisation of the essay film and although it recognises that literary and cinematic essays share the same discursive functions, it argues that these operate differently on the account of the specific qualities of each form. Thus, in this section, I will precisely focus on the essayistic thinking functions and I will analyse how the essay film reflects on its own thinking operations by revisiting Adorno's (1984) theorisation of the essay form, since his theorisations allows me to differentiate essayistic thought from the general thinking operations of cinematic consciousness. Furthermore, I will link essayistic discursive practices located by Adorno with the Deleuzian conception of thinking in cinema. I will dispel the problem of the textual by drawing attention to Gilles Deleuze's analysis of the relationship between cinema and thought, since in Deleuze's particular exploration of thinking in cinema his emphasis is on the function of images (Deleuze, 1986; 1989). Thus, I will attempt a paradigm shift from ontological questions on what constitutes an essay film towards a consideration of the essay film as a thinking modality.

The reflective quality of the essay film has been a recurrent theme in academic literature. However, as I have mentioned in the previous section, it has primarily been linked to the subjectivity of the author and discussed in terms of a critique on reality, on media institutions and the ideological contexts of the image. Similarly, Adorno's theorisation of the literary essay is also a recurrent reference in essayistic literature but his text has mainly been used to draw out the unmethodical, unsystematic and heterogeneous nature of

essayistic discourse. However, Adorno's analysis also highlights the process of absorption of diverse material into the essay form and the quality of reflecting on essayistic operations (1984: 169-171). Following on these two processes, I argue that the multiplicity of forms and the heterogeneous material (each following a specific discursive logic) that the essayistic appropriates are not only part of the reflection/dialogue on discourses of the image but also part of its thinking operations (since the form absorbs them). In other words, the essay film incorporates in its thinking modality diverse and multiple thinking operations and thus cannot only express particular types of thought excluding for example the surrealist imagination, as Astruc envisaged for his cinema of the future. The essay film cannot be limited to reflecting on reality or performing a media critique but in the fact that it combines many discursive processes, it can also include those that are related to the subconscious. In addition, the essayistic does not only combine many discursive processes but as Adorno also argues it expresses thought in the process of being thought (ibid). Thus, I argue that if essay film is to reflect, critique, compare or juxtapose the multiple levels of discourses, its thinking operations should also reflect how thoughts are formed through images in the cinematic universe.

The essay film is not only an essayistic form, it is not just governed by the laws of language, but is also a moving image practice that has the ability to express thought. As I already mentioned, Deleuze conceives cinema as a configuration of images and signs that are not only visible but also legible, in other words, cinema is 'a pre-verbal intelligible content' (Deleuze, 1986: xi).

Looking for a cinematic consciousness outside predetermined categories Deleuze does not analyse cinema based on technical, critical or linguistic concepts, but breaks the notion of the cinematic apparatus and of genre conventions, in order to compose an analysis of cinema as a thinking mode based on a series of types of images and signs (ibid). Even though Deleuze mainly uses examples of fiction films and works of European auteurs, he works across genres and categories and across the history of cinema. He does not produce a historiographic analysis but finds cinema independently of its history as this allow him to escape from a self-referential and internalised mode, from the notion of cinema as a fixed language. Thus, Deleuze's analysis provides a framework for considering the thinking operations of the moving image outside the textual and irrespective of historical and genre categories, which provides a framework with the potential for application across all moving image practices and screen-based media.

In accounting for a mutation of thought after the Second World War, Deleuze describes a similar change in the shift of cinema from the movement-image to the time-image (Deleuze, 1986: xi). With war as its marker, he conceives pre-war cinema as that of the movement-image that treats time as succession. Film functioning as a precise mechanism that links shot to shot, sequence to part and part to the whole constructs a chronological account of time that subordinates time to movement. Basing his analysis on Henri Bergson's philosophical positions on time and duration, Deleuze critiques the notion of clock-time as a way of spatialising the image (ibid). His first cinema book (Cinema 1, 1986) concentrates on establishing a methodological framework

for the study of film based on the subdivision of the movement-image into perception-images, affection-images and action images, with film being composed as a montage between all of them. The social and political consequences of the war produce an upheaval, an undoing of these images that move cinema from its reliance on movement towards cinema as a direct image of time. Deleuze specifically emphasises the crisis of the action image, which operates through the centring operations of sensory-motor schemata, as crucial in the development of the new time image. Furthermore, he notes a series of characteristics evident in Italian neo-realism and later the French New Wave as providing the preliminary conditions for the emergence of an optical-sound film that prefigures the time-image (ibid).

However, even as Deleuze highlights the rupture of the Second World War, his cinematic universe does not function as a rigid taxonomy but as a layered and fragmented network of movement-images and time-images and their various components that have the potential to produce cinematic consciousness and thought. This composite circuit of images is Deleuze's new taxonomy of cinema that enables him to identify the types and modalities of thought produced by particular films (ibid). Cinema's ability to create autonomous consciousness has political and ethical implications since for Deleuze thought has a political function that brings cinema closer to philosophical concepts (Deleuze, 1989: 268-270). As he states in the conclusion of *Cinema 2*: "A theory of cinema is not 'about' cinema but the concepts that cinema gives rise to and which are themselves related to other concepts corresponding to other practices ..." (ibid: 268).

One of the surprising findings in accessing the impact of Deleuze's thought in the essay film is that while his cinema books had a partial impact in Anglophone film theory as a way of articulated a new taxonomy of cinematic forms (Rodowick, 2003; Bogue, 2003; Martin-Jones, 2006) and of screen-based media (Colman, 2011), their discussion is virtually absent in essayistic film literature. Although his analysis of cinema as thought could provide a framework for how the essay film might function, as I mentioned already, theorists have relied on the relationship of the cinematic essay to its literary counterpart. The only academic article that connects the essay film with Deleuze's ideas is Raymond Bellour's *The Cinema and the Essay as a Way of Thinking*, contained in a German publication on the essay film, *Der Essayfilm: Ästhetik und Aktualität* (Kramer & Tode: 2011).

In the article, Bellour claims that Deleuze is indifferent to essay film as a category and does not discuss any filmmakers associated with the form, while he mainly focuses his analysis of cinema as thought on fiction films and more traditionally documentary practices (Bellour, 2011: 45-58). Bellour is not interested in the thinking functions that Deleuze assigns to cinema but instead uses the realisation that Deleuze conceives thinking in cinema independently of the essayist form as a way of demonstrating that the essay film is impossible to categorise, except as an oppositional strand to documentary and fiction film (ibid: 50-58). Thus, Bellour conceives the essayistic as one quality that enters the cinematic work, a quality that coexists with other genres and sub-genres, such as fiction, the documentary or the self-portrait, rather

than as an overarching filmic genre (ibid). However, although Bellour acknowledges the Deleuzian cinematic consciousness, he does not account for its thinking operations or for how essay film functions. He does not clarify what this essayistic quality is, if it has the potential to think and how it differs from the general thinking of cinema.

I acknowledge as Bellour that Deleuze demonstrates that cinema produces autonomous thinking, however, unlike him as I have already claimed, I do not read Deleuze's framework as only restricted to the examples of fiction film and documentary. Since Deleuze is not interested in historical categories and film genres but in describing a new taxonomy of cinematic consciousness, one can extrapolate from his analysis that the moving image (in its many incarnations) has also the potential to express thought. Thus, I consider the essay film as a moving image practice (alongside fiction film, documentary, artists' film and video, video art and other categories) and focus on unearthing the many strategies that the moving image in general and the essay film in particular utilise to express thought. By such shift in focus, I open up the Deleuzian framework to other cinematic forms and conceive the essayistic form as a specific way (as one modality) of thought in moving image practices.

The moving image for Deleuze is foremostly characterised by his ability to move. As such he begins his analysis of the relation between cinema and thought by exploring how thinking is expressed in the cinema of movement-image (what he calls classical cinema) and especially the work of Eisenstein

(1989: 151-159). In classic cinema thought is produced by the shock effect of automatic movement and by the associative powers of montage. It is governed by dialectic movement that passes from image to thought and vice-versa and which resembles the process of bringing to light the unconscious mechanisms of thought (ibid). As Deleuze points out: 'The whole was thus being continually made, in cinema, by internalizing the images and externalizing itself in the images, following a double attraction. This was the process of an always open totalization, which defined montage or the power of thought.' (ibid: 173). Thus the cinema of the movement-image ruled by movement and montage and by placing the intelligence of the author in the fabric of the film produced a totalised unity of thought. The idea of montage as an expression of thought in cinema is one of the recurrent legacies of early Soviet cinema and I argue it is one of the reasons why the origins of the essay film have been traced back in the work of Dziga Vertov by ten Brink, Alter and Corrigan.

However, the moving image does not only think through montage but as for example Astruc mentions can involve camera movements, the gestures of characters or dialogue. In Deleuzian cinematic analysis the thinking operations of the cinema expand due to the shift that occurs in the movement-image after the second-world war (ibid: 167-181). The undoing of classic cinema dismantles the centring operations of the movement-image (located in the function of the action-image) and transforms its thinking operations (ibid). Cinema moves away from metonymy, metaphor (that integrates thought into the image) and the internal monologue (signifying the presence of the author)

towards finding thought that is immanent in the image. The image is pushed to its absolute limits, to the point where it becomes completely automatic so that thought is not produced by the association or attraction of images (since these have been deduced) but it is 'the material automatism of images which produces from the outside a thought which it imposes, as the unthinkable in our intellectual automatism.' (ibid: 173).

In modern cinema thought abandons the chain of associations and is informed by differentiation or disappearance, produced in the gaps, through 'the *interstice* between images, between two images: a spacing which means that each image is plucked from the void and falls back into it... in such a way that a difference of potential is established between the two, which will be productive of a third or of something new.'¹⁷ (ibid: 173-174). Deleuze describes this process as 'the method of BETWEEN'¹⁸ operating between many levels and not only on the plane of the image but also between actions, affections and sounds, between visual and sound images (ibid: 174).

Furthermore, Deleuze locates in modern cinema the dismantling of the unity offered by thought expressed as an internal monologue, as the unification of the subjectivity of the author, of the characters and the world which both inhabit (ibid: 176). Through interstices, irrational cuts and 'unlinked' images cinema produces distinct series, each signifying a way of seeing or speaking. Thus, what emerges is an author that speaks through different series and positions or an idea or thought that is formed indirectly in each section. In any case the breaking of 'the uniformity of the internal monologue ... [is replaced]

¹⁷ Italics in the original. Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2*. p. 173

¹⁸ Capitalisation in the original. Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2*. p. 174

... by the diversity, the deformity, the otherness of a free indirect discourse.’
(ibid: 177).

As I will argue in detail in the remainder of this section, the thinking operations of the moving image that Deleuze describes echo some relationships already acknowledged in the analysis of the essayistic discourse. For example, the Deleuzian double process of movement through which the thinking of classical cinema operates, could be compared to the reflexivity of the double viewing (looking inwards into the self or the image and at the same looking outwards into the world), which is found in Renov’s analysis and which I have noted in the conception of the essayistic as media critique. At the same time the function of the internal monologue could be compared to the subjective presence of the filmmaker that marks most of the literature on essay film. However, in Deleuze’s theorisation we can observe a shift from metaphor and montage as the way cinema expresses thought, to the embracing of the interstice and the abandonment of the internal monologue, a shift that also points to the breaking of the unity of thought in favour of a fragmentation that comes from an outside. Thus, in the breaking of the totalising thought of classical cinema and the emergence of gaps we can find an analogue with the unstable and fragmented thought of the essay film, which following Deleuze’s theorisation can be located more specifically in the function of the interstice. Thus, the interstice is what makes cinematic thought open and full of potential and as I will argue is a concept that brings together a range of thinking operations associated with the essayistic.

To begin with, Bazin's 'horizontal montage' as the relationship between voice-over and image (between what is said and what is seen) operates precisely through the interstice, the spacing between image and sound. But the interstice does not only operate in the level of the voice-over but also in the relationship between images and other sounds, affections and actions, thus implying a multiplicity of possible thinking operations. Thus, the essay film can express thought not only in the gap between voice and image but through the gaps between different types of images, in the gap between voice and sounds or between image and text. Furthermore, the interstice is not only a gap but functions precisely as the 'method of BETWEEN' by placing diverse material one next to each other, side by side and thus could be related to the process of juxtaposition and comparison that was previously identified as a major element of the essayistic discourse. Finally, thinking relations are no longer placed in the level of the internal monologue of the author but operating again through interstices and irrational cuts, they are shattered into a kaleidoscope of voices and responses as a 'free indirect discourse'. This could be easily understood as the fragmented authorial and spectatorial position in the essay film. I can thus conclude that there are overlaps between the thinking mechanisms of the essay film and the thinking operations identified in the Deleuzian theorisation of cinema.

But if cinema as described by Deleuze operates through complex thinking processes that intersect with essayistic thinking operations, what does then make the essay film a distinct modality of thought? I will argue that the distinctiveness of the essay film lies in its ability to absorb multiple thinking

operations and reflect on its own thinking procedures through the function of the interstice. As I have already argued based on Adorno's analysis of the essay form, the essay film operates through the material it approaches and incorporates in its thinking diverse and multiple discursive logics and articulates (makes visible) its thinking operations. At the same time, Deleuze demonstrates that the moving image can think in many ways through movement-images and time-images and it can produce autonomous thought that abandons the function of montage, metaphor or metonymy and embraces the operations of the interstice. Thus, I argue that thinking in the essay film is expressed not only through the instability of discourse, the shifting and fragmented authorial and spectatorial position, the reflections on media realities or the cinematic text, the critique of the institutions of the images and the dialogue between discourses but recognising all the above functions as ways that cinematic consciousness is produced. The essay film in its ability to combine heterogeneous material, various logics, movement-images and time-images opens up to both conscious and unconscious imagination and expresses thought by creating interstices between these diverse thinking operations and discursive logics. But since the essayistic also reflects on its own thinking, critique, juxtaposition and dialogue are used not only in order to comment on the image and its meaning but also in order to explore how images produce thought. However, since the image can produce autonomous thought outside other discursive logics, it also has the potential to reflect through the operations of the interstice, through the gaps between images, sounds and texts on thought that is immanent in the image. Thus, the essay

film reflects on its own thinking procedures by making visible its quest to locate thought that is inherent in the image.

By now, I have established how the essay film combines multiple thinking operations and how it reflects on thought that is inherent in the image.

However, in most theorisations of thinking in cinema thought is related to movement in time. For example, Astruc locates cinematic thinking in its ability to move in time, to be a 'theorem' (Astruc, 1968: 20), while Deleuze also highlights the primary nature of the cinematic image as movement in time and the potential of automatic movement for thought (Deleuze, 1985; 1989).

Analysing cinematic thinking operations in relation to movement in time has obscured the potential of movement in space and the role of the spatial imagination and of filmic space in the production of cinematic consciousness. If thinking in cinema is so much grounded on its temporality, is it possible for spatiality and for filmic space to have any role in its thinking operations? In the analysis of the thinking modality of the essay film, I have noted the importance of the interstice that replaces the chain of associations and metaphor as a central mechanism for producing thought. However, the interstice is a spatial term that functions as the spacing, the gap between various functions of image and sound, and which already points to a spatial contribution in the thinking operations of the moving image. Thus, I will proceed in the next chapters to evaluate the importance of the spatial imagination in moving image practices and its contribution to the thinking operations of the essay film.

The Essayist Modality of *My Pink City*

The theoretical exploration of the essay film outlined in this chapter was developed alongside the production of the essay film *My Pink City* (2014). The film critically informed the interpretation of the academic literature and particularly the decision to define the essay form as one modality of thinking in moving image practices through the re-reading of Adorno's theorisation of the essay and by embracing Deleuze's analysis of cinema as thought. Moreover, the dialogic relationship between *My Pink City* and the written thesis resulted in an expansion of the definition of the essay film, pointing to its ability to utilise a multiplicity of thinking processes through the operation of the interstice (already a spatial term), which in return shifted the attention towards the questioning of the role of space in essayistic thinking. In this section, I will discuss how the essayistic modality of *My Pink City* expands the understanding of the essay film, while its specific contribution to the understanding of filmic space will be examined in Chapter 5, after I explore spatial imagination and the thinking potential of filmic space in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

My Pink City is an essay film that comments on the urban transformation of Yerevan, the relationship between Soviet past and present reality, the tension between cultural amnesia and nostalgia, as well as issues of peripheral modernity, Armenian identity and diasporic consciousness by utilising a variety of audio and visual material and a heterogeneity of sources (archive material, TV images, YouTube videos, location footage, songs, location

sounds and voice-over narration). Structured as an intercut between the public spaces of the city and domestic scenes filmed at a house in the suburb of Zeytun, the film explores the many manifestations of essayistic thinking (the instability of discourse, the fragmented author placed inside the film, the reflection on media realities, the critique of the institutions of the image, the dialogue between discourses) recognising them all as ways that the moving image can produce thought. *My Pink City* also expresses thought via the juxtaposition and comparison of diverse thinking operations (accepting both conscious and unconscious thought) and via interstices between images and sounds, texts and images, sounds and other sounds. Furthermore, since as I have identified in the previous section, the essay film is not only able to adopt and absorb other discursive modes but also has the ability to reflect on its own operations, *My Pink City's* overall structure is punctuated by moments when the moving image becomes automatic, acquiring a certain autonomy of thought. Thus, *My Pink City* explores a multiplicity of essayistic thinking operations through a variety of interstices, expressed as gaps between images, sounds and discursive logics.

I have noted in my analysis of the essay film how the form has been dominated by the Bazinian theorisation of 'horizontal montage' as the interstice between what is seen and what is said. This has resulted in the voice-over narration becoming the dominant indicator when considering the reflective and dialogic form of the essayistic. *My Pink City* accepts the voice-over but it plays with the prevailing position of a single narrator by adopting three female voices, narrating short extracts from various textual sources

(from *The Female Novelist*, a short story by Patricia Highsmith & an extract from a walk of Yerevan taken from a Soviet tourist publication)¹⁹. The film does not completely reject 'horizontal montage' since at points it sets the voice-over against the visual flow. For example, in the section where the Soviet walk is narrated (00:05:34 – 00:07:19) the specific quality of a Soviet propaganda text is juxtaposed with current images of the city that describe the urban environment through the new gas pipe infrastructure. This juxtaposition results in a slight dislocation between the present of the city and its recent past precisely articulated in the film through the gap that image and text creates. This is also an example of how the film juxtaposes two different ideological positions (the soviet rhetoric and the point-of-view of the filmmaker), a strategy that reveals the instability of its discursive operations.

The film, however, does not rest on the horizontal relationship between voice and image. Not only it creates gaps between the voice-overs by literally placing them in different sections of the film but it further complicates the nature of the voice-over by the actual fragmentation of the narration through other sounds. For example, in the introductory section of the film, the voice-over narration (an extract from *The Female Novelist*) is intercut by short sounds clips (00:00:13 – 00:01:53), a strategy that expands the operations of the horizontal montage to include the relationship between voice and sound²⁰. The sound clips that introduce the film are doubly important, as they become recurring rhythms, a sort of punctuating devices, repeated in different

¹⁹. For details on the sources of the film, please see *My Pink City: Technical Information, Sources and Credits*, pp.188-193.

²⁰ I will explore the introductory scene of the film in more detail in Chapter 5, where I will focus on the spatial quality of sound.

sections of the film. Each time a sound cue from the introductory section comes back its function changes, revealing the multiple discourses and ideological contexts that each sound can embody. The pattern of repeating not only sounds cues but also specific images, aesthetic qualities and film textures is a recurrent motif in the film, a motif that highlights how the thinking possibilities of the essayistic are expressed in *My Pink City* through the creation of gaps.

The relationship between the different voice-overs, their fragmentation by other sounds, and the recurrent appearance of sounds and images are also strategies used to inscribe a fragmented and multiple author(s) in the fabric of the film. As I have already described in this chapter, similarly with the 'horizontal montage', the location of a reflective author in the essay film has been mainly assigned to the function of the voice-over. However, in *My Pink City* the female author is constructed out of fragments of voices and images. It appears as three different voices and as a series of motifs, ranging from textual extracts (*The Female Novelist*) to a variety of images, including a woman roaming the streets of Yerevan, a runner from a Soviet Armenian film, as well as the Indian dancer from a Soviet-Indian film production²¹. Thus, *My Pink City* expands the understanding of the essay film by challenging the dominant relation between voice-over and authorial position; the latter is now opened up to a variety of images and sounds.

²¹ I will describe in more detail the function of the fragmented and multiple author(s) in Chapter 5.

In its continuing creation of interstices *My Pink City* not only addresses the voice-over and authorial position but also explores the relationship between images and sounds or between images and other images. The film uses sound to displace the image in many occasions, as for example in the recurrent use of the sound qualities of water (referencing the importance of water in the narration of the Soviet transformation of Yerevan) in instances where there is no water evident in the image: the sound of the dripping tap against the domestic interior of a sink (00:10:21 – 00:11: 46) or the sound of the sea and waves against the panorama of the city with the view of the mountain Ararat in the background (00:08:24 – 00:10:07). In the section with the panorama of Ararat the gap does not only rest in the dislocation that the sound creates between the fixed concrete of the city and the expansion of the sea that the sound references but the gap is further experienced in the relation between images, in the juxtaposition between the panoramas and the housing blocks. The perspective of the city defined by the looming presence of Ararat (which ironically culturally functions as a national symbol of Armenianness although it is actually located in Turkey) is set against the flatness, repetitiveness and restriction that the balconies signify. And it is in this gap between the panorama and the enclosure of the balcony that the space of the city is imagined and in a sense narrated.

To conclude my investigation on the function of the interstice in *My Pink City*, I will focus on how this functions in the relationship between discursive logics. I have clearly identified in the previous section that in the understanding of essayistic operations that the research has reached (through the dialogic

relationship between theory and practice) the Deleuzian interstice, as a spacing between things, is not only expressed in the level of image and sound but is also articulated as the gaps between different discursive logics and representational systems. To give an example, the military parade although it mainly occurs in the film as the contemporary celebration of independence (00:27:22 – 00:32:18), it nonetheless first appears much earlier, as an extract from a Soviet Armenian documentary²² (00:15:26-00:15:44). The archival image of the parade emerges in a section of the film that describes the daily life of the city by intercutting it with Soviet archival footage on the construction of the soviet urban reality. The military procession appears as archival footage, as a contemporary moment shot on location by the filmmaker, while the same event appears in shots filmed through the TV screen (00:29:05 – 00:29:20 & 00:30:20 – 00:30:25 & 00:30:40 – 00:30:44) as the official produced state representations. The relationship between these different modes of representation (featuring archival, contemporary and televisual material) is not presented as a seamless succession but by their literally separation. Thus, the tensions build up in the section of the film where the archival footage of the parade first appears (between Soviet past and present day) is complicated when the parade resurfaces in its contemporary form, since this continuation of state rituals problematises the idea of the post-Soviet transition.

²² *The Lenin Square / Lenini hrparake*. Documentary Film Studio of Yerevan, 1970. Directed by A. Vahuni.

My Pink City, from the level of the shot to that of the whole, is structured around the continuous creation of interstices between images, between material, between aesthetic regimes and discursive logics. This endless interplay of gaps creates moments where the moving image falls through the cracks and is suspended. And it is at these moments that the image gets detached from the weight of the discourses inscribed on it and thus becomes automatic. This is exemplified in the film by the tracking shot of the now disused Zvarnots airport (00:36:00 – 00:36:41). The airport is disconnected from its associations with the modernist Soviet architecture and through the slow tracking shot, its circular structure and dominant central tower peels off, while the image steadily pops up revealing a new potential.

To summarise, in this section, I have demonstrated how through the dialogic reflection between *My Pink City* and the written thesis the research has departed from an understanding of the essay film locked on the voice-over narration towards an expanding notion of the essayistic procedures functioning as gaps between many audio-visual modes and discursive logics. I have also shown how the continuous comparison and juxtaposition of different visual systems utilised in the film provides occasions where the moving image acquires an autonomy of thought. In the film the incessant spacing between different aesthetic systems and discourses is especially utilised to describe the space of the city, a topic that I will discuss in much more detail in the last chapter of the research, where I will demonstrate how *My Pink City* not only pushes the understanding of the essay film but makes a case for the importance of filmic space in essayistic thinking operations.

The chapter outlined the complex historical and formal genealogy of the essay film and explored how essayistic thinking has been linked to the function of the literary essay. It identified a series of mechanisms that the essay film uses to express thought and related them to the thinking operations of the moving image as described by Deleuze. Considering what makes essay film a distinct modality of thought in moving image practices, it reached the conclusion that the essay film expresses thought by absorbing a variety of discursive logics and by reflecting on its own thinking processes via the notion of the interstice. The chapter also outlined how the essayistic modality of *My Pink City* has enabled the research to reach an expanded understanding of essayistic discourse. However, thinking in cinema has mainly been associated with temporal movement, while the thinking operations of filmic space have been under theorised in moving image practices. Since the aim of this research is to establish the role of space in the thinking operations of the essayistic discourse, it explores in the next chapter how new understandings of space signified by the 'spatial turn' in humanities can enable us to reconfigure the importance of the spatial imagination. This would provide the building blocks for investigating in chapters 3 and 4 how space can enter the thinking operations of the moving image, before focusing on the essayistic filmic space in the last chapter of this research.

CHAPTER 2: SPATIAL IMAGINATION

Driven by the lack of academic literature on the role of space in the thinking operations of the moving image and especially the essay film, Chapter 2 explores the emergence of spatial discourse, what has been described as the 'spatial turn', and assess its contribution to the re-evaluation of space, as the first step in understanding the potential impact of spatial imagination in the thinking operations of cinema. The chapter teases out the interdisciplinary nature of the 'spatial turn' and considers a series of spatial frameworks by highlighting some of the most important debates that shaped the area. In particular, it explores the theorisation of space as a social construction (Lefebvre), as heterogeneous (Foucault) and as always under construction (Massey), as well as the distinction between place and space. The focus is on the social notion of space rather than on phenomenological accounts of the experiential nature of spatial perception.

2.1 The 'Spatial Turn'

In the past 30 years, a series of critical texts in a variety of disciplines have acknowledged that social sciences and humanities have privileged time as an analytical tool over space, a fact that created a gap in our understanding of the spatial (Tuan, 1979; Soja, 1989; Foucault, 1986; Chakrabarty, 2000; Massey: 2005)²³. The recognition of the suppression of the spatial perspective gave rise to a range of spatial thinking, in a move that has been characterised as the 'spatial turn'. The 'spatial turn' propagated a distancing from the domination of historicism towards new spatial frameworks, which often have been assigned the anti-historical and anti-temporal banner. However, as Edward W. Soja (one of the main thinkers reflecting on spatiality) argues the 'spatial turn' should not be understood as a battle of space for domination over time but as '... fundamentally an attempt to develop a more creative and critically effective balancing of the spatial/geographical and the temporal/historical imaginations.' (Soja, 2009: 12). Thus, what for Soja constitutes the 'spatial turn' is the 'assertion of the ontological parity of space and time' (ibid: 18). In a slightly different reading of the 'spatial turn', the feminist geographer Doreen Massey also acknowledges that the deprioritisation of space has often been the result of the domination of historical narratives, but argues that in many occasions the misrecognition of

²³The acknowledgment of the suppression of the spatial has also been associated with a wider critique, shaped by post-structuralist, postmodernist and postcolonial discourses, of the modernist grand narratives and the effects of European historicism (Foucault, 1986; Soja, 1989; Chakrabarty, 2000; Massey: 2005).

space is a result of the misreading of the spatial imagination rather than from its suppression (Massey, 2005: 14-18).

Regardless of the reasons, the paradigm shift from the temporal towards the spatial resulted in space becoming an important discourse in a range of disciplines, such as geography, anthropology, sociology, history and philosophy, so much so as to make some writers lament that it has become 'the everywhere of modern thought' (Crang and Thrift, 2001: 1). Another crucial aspect of the fluidity and confusion surrounding space is that since many lines of thought converge around spatiality, a distinct interdisciplinary direction has shaped the debates in the area (Wegner: 2002; Warf and Arias: 2009). The opening up of the concept to many thematic threads in conjunction with the fact that different disciplines approached space in different ways, has contributed to a general confusion, with the term used in numerous occasions without being clearly defined or utilised interchangeably to quote diverse qualities, such as actual, real, mental or inner space. Thus, an ill-defined space and a set of spatial terms (for example spatiality, mobility, locality) have become floating signifiers within a range of discourses (Crang and Thrift, 2001; Hubbard *et al*, 2004). Moreover, as often reference to the 'spatial turn' or spatial theory is made without a proper consideration of their genealogy, and due to the current domination of geographic debates in the rethinking of space, the confusion surrounding space has been transformed into a conflation of the terms spatiality and geography. Thus, although the 'spatial turn' has influenced a wide range of discourses, it is surrounded by convoluted and conflicting ideas.

The emphasis on spatial themes has not only contributed to the recognition of the importance of space in social relations but also, as I have already mentioned, to the development of an interdisciplinary methodological focus. This criss-crossing of disciplines around the spatial has given rise to two distinct approaches (Soja, 2009; Warf and Arias, 2009). On one hand, space has been considered as an extension of disciplinary fields of reference and as another tool of analysis, in other words as a way of adding a geographical dimension to cultural production. This additive function has been clearly described by Soja who claims that the 'spatial turn' sometimes involves '... the widespread use of spatial terminology and metaphors such as mapping, regions, place, space, territory, location, geography, cartography to suggest at least a dimensional spatiality to whatever subject is being discussed.' (Soja, 2009: 25). The injection of spatial and geographical concerns into disciplinary fields has also been reinforced by the constant reference in the cultural sphere of globalisation and cyberspace as dominant contemporary conditions in the work of postmodernist and postcolonial geographers and thinkers (Soja, 1989; Jameson, 1998; Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1994). On the other hand, and most importantly for my purpose here, the 'ontological parity' of space and time meant that attempts to incorporate space in disciplinary arenas were also driven by the need to stress the importance of space (as much as that of time) in the construction of socio-political dynamics (Soja, 2009: 25-26). Thus interdisciplinary research on space emphasised the process of spatial thinking and analysis, aiming to rework the '... the notion and significance of spatiality, so that space is as important as time in the unfolding of human affairs.' (Warf and Arias, 2009: 1). The focus of such manifestations of the 'spatial turn' was

in emphasising, in making visible, in codifying this paradigm shift and, thus, in the rebalancing of the spatial and temporal relations²⁴.

The seeds of this paradigmatic change have been attributed to the writings of Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre (Wagner, 2002; Soja, 2009; Warf and Arias, 2009). Working across different disciplinary perspectives and outside the geographical field both thinkers developed similar ideas regarding the 'ontological significance of space and forces in the spatiality of human life' (Soja, 2009: 18) and the ideological implications at play in the organisation of space. In reasserting the importance of space, Foucault and Lefebvre were reacting against two major attitudes dominating critical thinking that retrograded space to the background of daily life rather than framing it as a constitutive element of existence. Firstly, following a long tradition of Kantian philosophical reasoning, space was considered as a material condition, as a geographical terrain that could be measured and mapped or as an empty container governed by geometric logic and perspectival rules (Lefebvre, 1991; Foucault, 1986). Secondly, set against a Bergsonian line of inquiry on the dynamism of temporality and history, space was conceived as static, dead and fixed (Massey, 2005). In rethinking the role of space, Foucault and Lefebvre radically read space as central to capitalist structures and emphasised space not as a concrete material object (as governed by rules of geometry) but as ideological, lived and subjective (Soja, 1989; 2009).

²⁴ Edward W. Soja in *Taking space personally* argues that this route evolved in close connection with critical cultural studies and especially with input by postcolonial critics (Said, Spivak, Bhadha, Appadurai), whom in questioning European historicism explored the construction of geographical imaginations and the importance of localities (Soja, 2009: 25).

In the genealogy of spatial thinking, a major moment of the 'spatial turn' is widely considered Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* first published in France in 1974 but only translated into English in 1991. Lefebvre work has influenced a line of Marxist's geographers, who set out to link space to patterns of capitalist organisation, especially in relation to the urbanisation of injustice. For example, Soja (1989) asserts the importance of the spatial in the shaping of the social through his trialectic reading of space, time and the social, while Harvey (1985) reads space as an 'active moment' in the expansion and reproduction of capitalism and Castells (1989) focuses on the movements of globalisation as 'space of flows'. On the other hand, the attribution of a spatial dimension in the work of Foucault might seem perplexing at first, however, recent readings have stressed that in his questioning of historical rationality and power relations, in his 'archaeology of knowledge' lies latent a spatial perspective that does not just rest in metaphorical references to space (Soja, 1989; Philo, 2000, Elden, 2001). For example, as Elden (2001: 118) argues (echoing Soja's 'ontological parity') Foucault's 'histories are not merely ones in which space is yet another area analysed, but have space as a central part of the approach ... rather than merely writing histories of space, Foucault is writing spatial histories.' (Elden, 2001: 118) Furthermore, as we shall see in next section, Foucault's text *Of Other Spaces* (based on a lecture given in 1967 and translated in English and published posthumously in the journal *Diacritics* in 1986) has become an important reference point in the analysis of space in film.

2.2 Spatial Frameworks

After the brief discussion on the historical and disciplinary interconnections in the development of space as an area of research and of the different 'manifestations' of the 'spatial turn', I will highlight, in this section, changes in the conceptualisation of space and consider specific spatial theorisations. I will focus on unearthing the social importance of space and the role of spatial imagination. The spatial frameworks explored below both reference the particular spatial pathway that this research takes and also reflect recurrent strands in the application of spatial terms in film theory, which I will explore in detail in the next chapter.

Space as socially constructed

The first major shift in the thinking of space is the recognition that the spatial is related to the social. In current research, in new theoretical propositions, in collections and volumes evaluating the spatial impact, constant references are made to the relationship between space and society (Crang and Thrift, 2001; Wagner, 2002; Hubbard *et al*, 2004; Warf and Anas, 2009). To give one example, here, as Warf and Anas mention in their introduction to a book on the interdisciplinarity of the 'spatial turn', claiming that both additive or paradigmatic approaches have in common the fact that '... from various perspectives, they assert that space is a social construction relevant to the understanding of the different histories of human subjects and to the production of cultural phenomena.' (Warf and Anas, 2009: 1).

Discussions on the social dimension of space have their routes, as I have already mentioned, in the work of Henri Lefebvre, who in his seminal text, *The Production of Space* (1991), perceives of geographical space as fundamentally a social construction. Working from a Marxist standpoint, Lefebvre recognises that capitalist organisation enforces a fragmentation of psychical, mental and social space and jumps to the task of bringing together, in a single theory, these different modalities of space (ibid: 68-167). It is important to keep in mind the political urgency of Lefebvre's writing, as he develops the different strata of his spatial framework by stressing (in true Marxist form) the process of production, by looking at how space is actively produced (ibid: 68-167). Similarly, his contribution in spatial thinking could be summarised as the task of 'critical knowledge ... to capture in thought the actual process of production of space' (Merrifield, 2000: 173).

Lefebvre in developing a system of spatiality in relation to the production of space, considers a 'trialectic' structure, according to which space is constructed by the interaction of three forces, between 'conceived', 'perceived' and 'lived' space (Lefebvre, 1991: 68-167). He associates 'conceived' space with the 'representations of space' produced by developers, cartographers, architects, urban planners and a host of other technocrats (ibid). Controlled by specific power relations and ideological agendas 'conceived' space is the dominant space of capital (ibid). It is also an abstracted space, tied to particular relations of production and regulatory order, which manifests itself in factories, towers, monuments and office blocks, as the 'bureaucratic and political authoritarianism immanent to a

repressive space.’ (ibid: 49). On the other hand, ‘perceived space’ is the space of everyday social life expressed through ‘spatial practices’ that structure social relations around networks, routes and patterns of interaction. In other words, ‘perceived space’ as the material expression of social relations is deciphered (perceived) through ‘spatial practices’. Finally, ‘lived’ space is the space of experience that manifests itself through symbolic associations and visual patterns. It is the space of the imagination, kept alive by arts and literature, a space that ‘overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects’ (ibid: 39).

The relationship between Lefebvre’s ‘trialectic’ of space is not stable but shaped by historical and political forces (ibid: 68-167). The spatial triad is not a mechanical framework or topology, it is not a watertight regulatory system, but a lucid and complex interplay of modalities (ibid). For example, Lefebvre is aware that the social space of everyday experience is continuously attacked by ‘conceived’ space that attempts to map it out into order, to make it an abstract terrain. Such is the spatialised structure of capitalism that ‘lived’ and ‘perceived’ space are of secondary importance compared to what is conceived and what is conceived is an abstract space that represses conscious and unconscious levels of lived experiences. Thus, Lefebvre does not reject mental space (as Soja²⁵ does in his postmodern geography) but as Victor Burgin states: ‘it is precisely in his attempt to account for the simultaneous imbrication of the psychical and the psychological that the

²⁵Soja, E. W., (1989). *Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London & New York: Verso.

ambition, and difficulty, of Lefebvre's' work lies.' (Burgin, 1996: 28). Apart from Lefebvre's acceptance of the physical and mental nature of space, his emphasis on 'conceived space' as a representation highlights the dominance of the 'visual' over other senses in discourses of modernity and stresses the interconnection between visibility and the idea of abstract space (Wagner, 2002: 182-184). I will come back, in the final part of this section, to the issue of space as representation and the limitations it poses for the spatial imagination while discussing the ideas of Dorren Massey (1995). For the moment, Lefebvre's analysis remains influential in spatial theories and geographical debates and has shaped much of the understanding of space in relation to the moving image, a point that I will revisit in the next chapters.

Space and Place

It is not only that the relations between modalities of space that are fluid and unstable but also that the production of space is shaped critically by the movement from space to place and differs between individuals and cultural groups (Tuan, 1977: 8-18). The interaction of space and place²⁶ in the production of social relations has become a central issue in the debates of spatiality and has shaped a series of theoretical frameworks mainly in geographical discourses. The dichotomy between space and place has its

²⁶ Geographical and interdisciplinary explorations educed by the 'spatial turn' have also highlighted the concept of landscape often connected to the notion of space and place. Although landscape has also been associated with the production of social space, the concept falls outside the scope of this research since its focus is the production of filmic space in the essay film. For an introduction on the issues of landscape in geography see: Cosgrove, D., (1984). *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. Beckenham Kent: Croom Helm.

roots in two distinct interpretations of geography, viewed as either a 'spatial science' or as a discipline looking at the 'uniqueness of place' (Crang, 1998: 103). With the advent of the 'spatial turn', space and place were transformed from being synonymous with area, territory or landscape to becoming a central mechanism in understanding spatiality. Consequently, geographical and spatial thinking produced an array of interpretations that either kept their binary opposition or used the terms interchangeably.

The term place has multiple usages and metaphorical meanings but within spatial and geographical discourses it has been mainly used to describe the authentic, intimate and lived space of everyday life. Geographers have focused their analysis on how places are inhabited by people and how they create locations of meaning, where ideas of belonging are projected, these discussions often influenced by Martin Heidegger's notion of 'dwelling' (Crang, 1998: 104; Crewswell, 2004: 21). In cultural and human geography Heidegger's philosophy has become the locus of phenomenological explorations, pointing to the importance of 'dwelling' and of 'being-in-the-world' and thus of 'place' for the construction of meaning in human existence (Crang, 1998; Crewswell, 2004). On the other end of the spectrum, space refers more generally to the social. Discourses on space question how spaces are organised within societies, how institutions and states codify and map spaces and how spaces are defined and constructed (Soja, 1989; Foucault, 1986; Crang and Thrift, 2001). For example, we can talk about the spaces of writing and language, the spaces of sound and image, the space of theory or the space of the city.

In this general description of space and place we can already discern a profound tension between place as belonging and space as social formation, a tension that has informed geographical debates. For example, David Harvey has produced one of the earliest critiques of the notion of 'dwelling' by drawing attention to Heidegger's refusal to acknowledge that social relations can also produce authenticity of experience (Harvey, 1993: 13-14). Reacting against what he perceives as the 'imagined authenticity' of place in Heidegger, Harvey argues that space and place are interconnected and that 'place' has no power outside the social (ibid: 14). With its roots in Lefebvre's interplay of the trialectics of space, Harvey's theorisation has shaped a strand of contemporary spatial thinking that views both space and place not as abstract containers but 'as culturally produced' (Hubbard *et al*, 2004: 7). However, some commentators have argued that this proposition is what has created the confusion between space and place. As Cresswell notes, 'Although this basic dualism of space and place runs through much of human geography since 1970s it is confused somewhat by the idea of social space – or socially produced space – which in many ways, plays the same role as place.' (Cresswell, 2004: 10). Thus from the other end of the debate, according to some cultural and human geographers, one of the most important lines of inquiry is the fact that spaces become places when they are lived in and experienced (Tuan, 1977; Cresswell, 2004). It is not surprising then that the contrast between place as lived experience and space as social construction has become a recurrent theme in spatial analysis, producing theorisations that draw importance on the distinction of space and place. In these propositions space and place are linked to experience (Tuan, 1979)

related to subjectivity and embodiment (Thrift, 2003), to non-places (Augé, 1995), to capitalism and homogeneity (Castells, 1989) or connected to global flows (Massey, 1994; Bhabha 1994). However, for some observers the relation between place and space still remains diffused and ill defined. (Hubbard *et al*, 2004: 6).

Although the research does not focus on the different theorisations of space and place, it still recognizes the importance of thinking of space and place as culturally and socially produced and of places as spaces where experience resides. This debate is also important since it has influenced most of the literature considering 'the spatial turn' in moving image discourses and thus the two notions would be recurring in our examinations of space and filmic space in the next two chapters.

Space as relations between heterogeneous sites (Heterotopias)

Foucault in *Of Other Spaces* (1986) famously proclaims that 'the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space.' (Foucault, 1986: 22). In the text that forms his major contribution to spatial thinking, he attempts to sketch out a new type of space that corresponds to this new era, a space that diverges from the hierarchical ordering of medieval space and Galileo's opened up and measurable 'space of extension' (ibid). Unlike Lefebvre who in his trialectic network accepts the interplay between imagined (mental) and physical space, Foucault is very careful to differentiate between an internal perceived space (the space of Bachelard's phenomenological poetics) and

external space (ibid: 23). For Foucault space is not an empty container where one projects emotion but an actual, heterogeneous and lived space that is governed by a set of relations:

‘The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we can place individual and things. We do not live inside a void that could be coloured with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely super imposable on one another.’ (ibid: 23).

Foucault envisions space not as ‘a substanceless void to be filled by cognitive intuition nor a repository of psychical forms to be phenomenologically described in all its resplendent variability’ (Soja, 1989: 17) but as a relation among heterogeneous sites. Guided by this relational quality of space and in an attempt to define how the relations between heterogeneous sites might work, Foucault sketches out the notion of ‘heterotopias’ as the characteristic spaces of the contemporary world (Foucault, 1986: 22-27). Contrasting these heterotopias with the unreal spaces of utopias that describe society as an ideal form, he defines them as ‘something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted’ (ibid: 24). Foucault goes on to establish six principles for the function of heterotopias; they exist in all societies, they change over time and

they can be controlled by social order, while at the same time they can juxtapose many sites in a single space, they are not purely public spaces but are governed by opening and closing mechanisms and finally that they are inevitably linked to time via 'heterochronies'. In the process of formulating these heterotopic principles, Foucault describes a whole set of spaces that share this quality of mirroring, of reflecting not only of other spaces in society but also the relations that frame them, such as, the cemetery, the ship, the library, the museum and for our particular interest the cinema (Foucault, 1986: 22-27).

The description of specific sites that have a heterotopic quality in Foucault's text has resulted in academic attempts to identify heterotopic spaces, while the relational quality of heterotopic space was less acknowledged. For example, in terms of film, in relevant literature cinema was picked up as a heterotopic space and was analysed based on its ability to juxtapose in a two-dimensional screen, a series of three-dimensional spaces (Hopkins, 1994: 47-68, Lowenstein, 2012: 137-152). However, as Soja points out, heterotopic spaces should not simply be identified as specific sites but as a framework for thinking of space outside the bias of Western historicism (Soja, 2009: 19). As he claims Foucault's heterotopias is a way of 'looking at every created space, from the most intimate spaces of the body and the home, to the global spaces of geopolitics and military conflict, as heterotopias, redefining this term to exemplify his different or heterotopological mode of thinking about all spaces' (ibid). I agree with Soja and I also claim that heterotopias do not reference specific types of space, they are not specific spatial forms but function as a

particular spatial perspective, as a new spatial framework. Thus, I argue that heterotopias are mechanisms that enable us to understand how heterogeneous sites might be related. From this point-of-view, Foucault's heterotopic function of space stresses the physical nature of lived space and the quality of interconnectedness and heterogeneity. The limiting reading of cinema as a heterotopic site would resurface, in the following chapters, in my discussion of how the spatial turn has been applied to film theory but for the moment, I hold on to the relational and heterogeneous quality that Foucault brings to space.

Space as a representational strategy

Doreen Massey argues in her book *For Space* (2004) that the vision of instantaneity and interconnection that accompanied new readings of space has often resulted in replacing historical bias (the dominance of the temporal as the universal story of modernity) with a feeling of deathlessness, which, according to her perpetuates an assumption running through a certain genealogy of philosophical thought that equates space with the surface of representation (Massey, 2004: 20). This relation between space, the visual and representation has already been noted above in the Lefebvrian conception of the trialectics of space but the connection between space and representation can also be unearthed in a variety of disciplinary perspectives. For example, Crang & Thrift in their edition of *Thinking Space*, on the way the 'spatial turn' is expressed in theory, they assert that a common link across a variety of disciplinary approaches is that they treat space as 'a

representational strategy' (2001: 1). From another perspective, Soja driven by a completely different set of concerns (mainly a critique of mental space as illusory and as dominating the real space of material geography) he recognises a 'representational mode of spatial thinking', which he connects with the phenomenological explorations of Bachelard's in *The Poetics of Space* (1969) (Soja: 2009: 20). Motivated by such associations and based on Massey's theorisation of space, I will explore, in this section, the relationship between space and representation.

Building her argument against the notion of space as representation, Massey manoeuvre's through a series of philosophical formulations, starting with Bergson's temporalities, that set space against time and in the process associated it with representation²⁷ (2005: 20-30). According to Massey, Bergson in *Matter and Memory* especially through his reading of the Zeno's Paradoxes²⁸ conceives time as movement (a continuum) that cannot be

²⁷ Massey also unearths misreading's of space and the spatial in a series of other theoretical positions. For example, she sees the emphasis on structure in structuralism as perpetuating the idea of space as a-temporal, and reads Derrida's deconstruction, that treats space as an interval, as creating a horizontality that denies the multiplicity and simultaneity of space (Massey, 2005: 9-54).

²⁸ Zeno's Paradoxes is a set of philosophical problems attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea (ca. 490–430 BC) that arguing in support of the Parmenidean idea that 'all is one' and against the belief in plurality created a set of paradoxes that conceive motion as an illusion. As Bergson writes, the Zeno's paradoxes '... consist in making time and movement coincide with the line that underlies them, in attributing to them the same subdivisions as to the line, in short in treating them like a line. In this confusion Zeno was encouraged by common sense, which usually carries over to the movement the properties of its trajectory, and also by language, which always translates movement and duration in space.' (Bergson, 1911: 250).

broken up into separate elements (ibid). Since in Bergson's thinking it is impossible to reduce real movement to stasis, the breaking down of time/movement can only be attributed to space, which functions by creating a series of instantaneous time-slices. Therefore, space is related to the slicing of time, to the slicing of movement and thus to being still and a-temporal (Massey, 2005: 22-23). Furthermore, in space slicing time, space is treated as a dimension that is quantitatively divisible and thus, representation assumes the characteristics of spatialisation as fixing things down:

"This historically significant way of imagining space/spatialisation not only derives from an assumption that space is to be defined as a lack of temporality (holding time still) but also has contributed substantially to its continuing to be thought of in that way. It has reinforced the imagination of the spatial as petrification and as a safe heaven from temporal, and – in the images which almost inevitably invokes of the flat horizontality of the page – it further makes 'self-evident' the notion of space as surface.... Space conquers time by being set up as the representation of history/life/ the real world. On this reading space is an order imposed upon the inherent life of the real world. (Spatial) order obliterates (temporal) dislocation. Spatial immobility quietens temporal becoming." (Massey, 2005: 28 - 30)

Massey continues her analysis by excavating a similar line of thinking that reads the temporal through its polar relation to the spatial, conceives space as holding time still and equates it with representation in the work of Laclau (1990), Deleuze (1988) and de Certeau (1984). Thus, a genealogy of

philosophical thought is traced that treats space as a surface, as static, immobile and a-political (Massey, 2005: 20-35). Reacting against such conceptions of space, Massey defines space as 'a product of interrelations' and as 'a sphere of coexisting heterogeneity' (echoing Foucault's relational heterogeneity), which she moreover impregnates with the notion of space as 'always under construction' (ibid: 9). Thus, as time is open, space in Massey's theorisation finds the same potential in being multiple and relational, a strategy that defiles the vision of space as deathless and instantaneous (ibid: 59).

2.3 Spatial Imagination

The review of the 'spatial turn' has highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of spatial discourses, which either had an additive effect that expanded the field of references to include a consideration of spatiality or indicated a paradigm shift towards the ontological parity of time and space. However, although the role of the spatial has been reinforced in contemporary thought, many reflections on spatiality do acknowledge the interlinked nature of time and space (Foucault, 1986; Harvey, 1993; Massey, 2005). Even though I recognise this correlation between time and space, the lack of literature stressing the potential of spatial thinking in moving image practices had stirred the research towards privileging a spatial analysis, as a way of creating a topography for the functions of filmic space in the thinking operations of the essay film. I acknowledge the confusion generated around the idea of space and approach the 'spatial turn' not as a trial for domination of the spatial over the temporal but as the opening up and as a dismantling of misinterpretations of the spatial imagination. Thus, in embracing an interdisciplinary methodology and utilising spatial frameworks in the rethinking of filmic space in the next chapters, my aim is not just to account for an element of spatiality in film but consider space as important as time in the thinking operations of the moving image.

Through the spatial frameworks that I have explored in this chapter, I rejected phenomenological approaches that view space as a purely experiential terrain, in favour of conceptions of space as socially and culturally

constructed. I also emphasised theorisations that acknowledge the ideological implications of perceiving space as fixed, and thus stress the political consequences of the spatial imagination, echoing the political and ethical associations of the Deleuzian filmic imagination that I pointed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, I moved away from the idea of place as the locus of experience and unearthed the interplay of physical and mental space in Lefebvre's trialectic and the heterogeneous quality of lived space in Foucault, all of which point to the complicated relationship between materiality, representation, imagination and space.

In addressing these disjunctures and acknowledging that many interdisciplinary expressions of the 'spatial turn' understand space as a representational strategy, I have explored certain theorisations that complicate this relationship and stress the layered and dynamic nature of space. For example, in Lefebvre's trialectic framework, space is equated with the representational only when it functions as the 'conceived' space, as the measurable space controlled by capitalist structures. Thus, space becomes representational only when it is purposefully abstracted by certain ideological agendas. On the other hand, for Massey space is equated with representation not only as a certain capitalist function but also the representational nature of space is propagated by a lineage of philosophical thought that by stressing the fleeting, dynamic and elusive quality of time, perceive space as immobile, as static and as holding time still. Equating space with representation robs space from the openness and the potential that the temporal holds and thus limits the capacity of the spatial imagination. Massey rejects such

misconceptions of the spatial imagination that permeate the idea of space as a measurable surface, as a passive territory ready to be explored and as a 'black page' and instead proposes the idea of space as multiple, interconnected and always under construction. By accounting for space as socially produced, as relational, heterogeneous and as always in the process of being constructed, in the spatial frameworks that I explored in this chapter, I attempted to move beyond representational space to account for an open spatial imagination. Furthermore, I focused on space as a representation not only in order to dispel the limitations it poses for the spatial imagination but because the representational notion of space has also shaped dominant conceptions of filmic space, which in turn have equated filmic space with the surface of the screen. As I will argue in the next chapter, the equation of filmic space with the boundaries of the frame has restricted the potential of filmic spatial imagination and obscured its ability to contribute to the thinking operations of the moving image.

...

Chapter 4 reviewed the 'spatial turn' and explored a series of spatial frameworks proposed by Lefebvre, Foucault and Massey, as well as the distinction between place and space. It rejected purely phenomenological approaches that stress the experiential and perceptual nature of being in place, and addressed space as a social product based on complex heterogeneous interrelations between physical and mental space, and as always in the process of being formed. This understanding of space sets the basis for investigating in the following chapters the relationship between space and moving image practices. The exploration of filmic space begins in the next chapter with the interplay between space, movement and narrative in traditional film theory and in relation to the 'spatial turn' in film studies.

CHAPTER 3: FILMIC SPACE

Chapter 3 opens the discussion on the role of the spatial imagination in moving image practices by exploring the notion of filmic space. The chapter adopts an interdisciplinary perspective and approaches filmic space firstly from the prism of film theory, which has mainly described spatial operations in relation to narrative form. It proceeds by assessing the effects of the 'spatial turn' in the re-evaluation of the spatial function of film in film theoretical and geographical discourses. It establishes a correlation between spatial theory and filmic space, and utilises the distinction made in the previous chapter between an additive and paradigmatic functions of the 'spatial turn' in order to measure the effects of spatial theories in the conception of filmic space. Finally, the chapter explores the role of filmic space in Deleuze as a way of evaluating its thinking potential. Establishing a relationship between filmic space, narrative, spatial discourse and thought provides a framework for the analysis of the role of spatial imagination in the thinking operations of the moving image in the next two chapters.

3.1 Narrative Space²⁹

I have repeatedly stressed how the lack of academic literature on the role of filmic space in the thinking modality of the essay film has directed the research towards establishing an understanding of space in moving image practices as a first step in evaluating its thinking potential. Space in film is most commonly associated with the concept of filmic space (or film space or cinema space), which according to a dictionary definition is ‘the space created within the film frame as opposed to the space of the real world or the profilmic event.’ (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012: 165). In film terminology, filmic space is a particular type of space that contributes to the construction of meaning in film. Filmic space as one element of the film form is part of the cinematic apparatus, which by conflating a three-dimensional terrain into the two-dimensional frame and via editing creates its own topography. Filmic space has also been associated with a specific function of film spectatorship, as having the ability to draw the viewer into the world of the film. Such understanding derives from a phenomenological conception of filmic space

²⁹As I have mentioned in the introduction, the research focuses on single screen cinematic works rather than video art, audiovisual installations or any other expression of the moving image in galleries, since it reflects on filmic space rather than accounting for the fragmentation of the moving image in the gallery space, a fragmentation that has often been described in spatial terms. For example, Chrissie Iles (2001: 33-65) provides one of the first accounts of space in video installations, arguing that the main preoccupation of sixties video art was the interrogation of the boundaries between public and private space. More recently, Maeve Connolly in *The Place of Artists' Cinema* (2009) links the creation of a sense of place with the spatialisation of the moving image in the gallery space.

and has led to the development of the notion of haptic visuality³⁰ as shared embodiment between spectator and film (Marks, 2000). Haptic visuality places filmic space as part of the cinematic experience and explores how the world inside the frame reveals itself to us (ibid). However, apart from this brief reference, I am not going to follow a phenomenological line of inquiry on space and spectatorship³¹, since as I have established in the previous chapter, the focus of the research is on social and not phenomenological accounts of space. Thus, the starting point for my consideration of filmic space is the ambiguous and troubled relationship between moving image and narrative structure in film discourses.

Early film by focussing on theatricality, deep staging and a fixed frontal camera is thought to have missed the possibilities offered by movement in the moving image and therefore to have relied less on narrative structures (Heath, 1981: 26). However, this lack of movement allowed for space to acquire a more dominant position within the film structure, as the viewer's attention was directed to a single subject in the frame, allowing for the eye to wander through space (Keiller, 2008: 30). Although, the relationship between early film, static shot and space opens up an avenue for the consideration of the function of filmic space, I will not pursue it further in this chapter, as my intention is not on a historical analysis but in contemporary expressions of the

³⁰Haptic visuality is a term developed by Laura U. Marks in the book *The Skin of the Film* (2000) and refers to embodied spectatorship and the dissolution of intersubjective boundaries between cinema and its beholder.

³¹For a phenomenological reading of film as an emotional map and as motion and spatiality that conceives film as a haptic medium, see for example: Bruno, G., (2007). *Atlas of Emotion: Journey's in Art, Architecture and Film*. New York: Verso.

moving image. However, I would note that in the fixed camera position of early cinema one could trace a line of associations between the static shot and filmic space.

The construction of filmic space in film theory has been analysed in terms of screen and frame, ground and background, surface and depth, movement and transition. Noël Burch developed the first analytical account on the spatial potential of film and argued that the 'spatial and temporal articulations' are the essence of cinema (1973: 135-145). Burch emphasised the spatial organisation of film by distinguishing between spatial continuity (two shots working together to preserve continuity) and spatial discontinuity, which he divided into two subtypes, complete and radical discontinuity, or discontinuity of proximity (ibid). According to Burch narrative film creates spatial continuity through a series of cinematic techniques, such as the eye-line match, screen direction and matching screen position, ensuring that the viewer experiences a sense of spatial orientation (sometimes he argued this articulation is felt retrospectively) (ibid).

Burch's analysis influenced a series of film theorisations that emphasise the filmic frame and focus on the spatial organisation of film (Heath, 1981; Mistry, 2000). The frame as the material unit of film and as its par excellence space gave rise to examinations of space in terms of frame and off-frame space, the screen as a space with no behind, the spatial orientation of the spectator and finally to the problem of composition conceived as the possibility of superimposing a two-dimensional framing over the depth of a three

dimensional terrain (Burch, 1973; Heath, 1981; Mitry, 2000). Thus, apart from the idea of the matching eye-line shots and screen direction, filmic space was also theorised through the concepts of mise-en-scene (the arrangement of objects and people within the shot), the depth-of-field (the perspectival construction of the shot) or the 180 degree rule (placing the camera within the 180° degree line of the action in order to create spatial continuity within filmic narrative) (ibid). Such notions, arguing for the constructed nature of filmic space and advocating the creation of a transparent and homogeneous space, were either driven by the technical possibilities of the camera apparatus or asserted the filmmaker's mastery over space (ibid).

However, Burch also acknowledged the importance of spatial disjointedness especially in the work of the Soviet filmmakers, who stressed spatial discontinuity as part of the polemics of film form, making apparent the fragmented nature of shot transition and the ambiguity of cinematic space (1973: 135-145). According to Burch for Soviet directors '...only what happens in frame is important, that the only space is screen space, that screen space can be manipulated through the use of an infinite variety of *possible* real spaces, and that disorienting the viewer is one of a filmmaker's most valuable tools.'³² (ibid: 140-141). Inspired by Burch's spatial discontinuities, David Bordwell & Kristin Thompson traced a disruption of spatial articulations in the work of the Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu, which they linked to the breaking of the 180 degree rule and the creation of a 360 degree shooting space (1976: 41-73). Analysing such films as *Early Summer* (1951) and

³²Italics in the original. Burch, N. (1973). *Theory of Film Practice*. p.140-141

Tokyo Story (1953), Bordwell & Thompson observed that Ozu's shot transitions defy cause and effect relationships by presenting space as distinct from characters, by focusing on the space around the character or on spaces that are empty of characters (ibid). Thus, in Ozu's films space is foregrounded in a way that challenges narrative causality and supremacy, becoming at times the primary structural level of the film and as such demonstrating a certain autonomy.

In his seminal text 'Narrative Space', Stephen Heath moves away from Burch's focus on spatial composition that he sees tight to an understanding of film as art, and instead stresses the role of the look and point-of-view in the organisation of space in film (Heath, 1981: 19-75). Heath argues that the classical organisational economy of film is narrative, and thus reads cinematic filmic space as constructing a narrative space (ibid). And in this narrativisation of filmic space, the viewer's identification with the eye of camera, and the direction of the gaze of the protagonists are the fusing mechanism of spatial unity, thus, narrative space is organised so as to achieve 'a coherence of place' (ibid: 38). As he mentions:

'The drama of vision in the film returns the drama of vision of the film: the spectator will be bound to the film as spectacle as the world of the film is itself revealed as spectacle on the basis of a narrative organisation of look and point of view and moves space into place through image-flow; the character, figure of the look, is a kind of perspective within the perspective system,

regulating the world, orienting space, providing directions – and for the spectator.’ (Heath, 1981: 44).

The problem for Heath is that the complex mobility of film as both the movement of the camera and the movements within the frame continuously erodes the centring operation of narrative (ibid). That’s why attempting to convert space into narrative involves an on going struggle to derive a centred perception (through the gaze of the characters) from the accented mobility of movement. Furthermore, Heath recognises that the breaking of narrative frame in American Independent cinema and avant-garde practices (which he does not limit to the structuralist film’s relation to space) is primarily a concern over spatial determinations, and thus argues that the narrative space of film is ‘not simply a theoretical and practical actuality but is a crucial and political avant-garde problem in a way which offers perspectives on the existing terms of that actuality’ (ibid: 64).

To summarise, in traditional film discourses, filmic space is defined as the space inside the frame that organises film spatially through continuous transitions into a narrative space that becomes the place of film, its place of action. Following this line of thinking, early film rather than privileging space, as argued by Keiller, is rather able to perform the centring operations of narrative easier since it only needs to control movement within a fixed frame. Thus, my view is that early film does not really develop a radical spatial discourse, but the dominance of the static shot in the early days of cinema has contributed to the idea that the edges of the frame are equated with filmic

space. The description of narrative space in film theory also utilised explicitly spatial terminology by constructing filmic space as the place of film, a terminology that echoes the geographical distinction between the space of society and the place of experience, explored in the previous chapter. In the confinement of film theory, the association of narrative with space already contains the possibility for a political and radical functioning of space as the breaking of narrative temporality. It is important to note here that as Soja argues, based on David Gregory's analysis of the work of Walter Benjamin in *Geographical Imaginations* (1997), that the reaction against narrative causality in art scholarship prefigures the concerns of the 'spatial turn' (Soja, 2009: 26). For example, as Gregory has pointed out: "... Benjamin effectively 'spatialized time', supplanting the narrative encoding of history through a textual practice that disturbed the historiographic chain in which moments were clipped together like magnets" (Gregory, 1997: 234).

The critique of narrative causality is crucial because breaking free from temporal succession might offer a window for evaluating the contribution of filmic space to the thinking mechanisms of the image, since as I have noted in the previous chapter, one of the main reasons for the suppression of spatial imagination has been the privileging of the temporal. In the discussion on filmic space in film theory outlined above, I identified that narrative causality can be fragmented by spatial discontinuities or by constructing filmic space autonomous to narrative action. Furthermore, the potential of the spatial imagination might also lie in filmic space being disassociated from the background of narrative and read in relation to new spatial frameworks that

reject space as an empty container and stress its social and heterogeneous nature. In the next section, similarly to outlining the breaking free of space from being the backdrop of life in spatial discourses, I will explore how with the 'spatial turn' in film studies filmic space cut loose from being the backdrop of action.

3.2 The 'Spatial Turn' in Film Studies

From the early nineties, as the notion of space gained critical urgency in humanities and social sciences, film studies started taking into account its importance in the construction of film and not just as the background of action, but as it was already identified by Burch (1973) as a factor in the articulation of meaning in film. In this section, I will explore how film studies, influenced by what I have described in the previous chapter as 'the spatial turn', utilised spatial theories in the reading of film and furthermore, how the use of specific spatial frameworks has evolved.

The application of spatial theories in the analysis of narrative film, very much shaped by the popularisation of the idea that space is socially constructed (Lefevre, 1991) was first applied in the context of European cinema, while this geographic area was formulated as an analytical category in film studies in the beginning of the nineties (Sorlin, 1991). In the literature of the time, space was heralded not only as the background to action but also as a character within film narrative and was seen as having the power 'to control by fixing in place conflicting ideas about the constitution of social space' (Konstantarakos, 2000:1). For example, Konstantarakos argued that in this particular configuration of cinematic practices that is European cinema, space was approached in a unique manner compared to the way space was treated in Hollywood film and other national cinemas, one that was based on a series of spatial divisions between centre and periphery (for example in the work of

Passolini), between a gendered interior and exterior (in the work of Leo Carax and Agnes Varda) and between town and country (ibid).

These initial explorations on European film space were influenced by the work of André Gardies (1993), who in his study of space in film (*L'espace au cinéma*) claimed that space is more important than time in narrative forms.

Gardies not content with the traditional idea of filmic space as a two dimensional terrain, since it does not account for the difference between place and space, he instead proposes a division of cinematic space based on the concepts of 'here', 'there' and 'elsewhere' (ibid). Although Gardies (1993) work was the first major study to solely concentrate on the issue of space, his ideas received limited attention in Anglophone film studies³³. As we shall see later on, his main contribution, which by now has become a commonplace in the conceptualisation of space in film, is the notion that space functions as another character in film narrative.

A further theoretical proposition that accompanied these first attempts to think of the spatial organisation of film narrative is Bahtkin's notion of the chronotope, a concept that in Bahtkin's theoretical model functions as the intrinsic connective tissue of the spatial-temporal operations of narrative structures (Konstantarakos, 2000: 3-4). For example, Konstantarakos in her analysis of space in European film rejects the privileging of space in Gardies's writing and proposes the use of Bahtkin's chronotope as a way of

³³ Gardies (1993) work is still not translated in English. Thus, it is not surprising that the application of his ideas in Anglophone film literature has mainly rested within the context of European and especially French film.

foregrounding the interconnectedness of space and time in the shaping of narrative structures, since as she claims ‘the chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and unified’ (ibid: 3).

The ‘spatial turn’ diffracted film theory from the exploration of the formal spatial structure of the frame and moved film theoretical debates towards investigating spatial binary oppositions between centre and periphery, inclusion and marginality, which were quickly transformed into more fractured and mobile readings of space. The shift to nuanced evaluations of space was brought about by a new set of spatial discourses that became increasingly popular in critical theory and cultural studies. Over time, the key theoretical texts shaping the debates on film space became Walter Benjamin’s (2002) exploration of the flâneur as an articulation of the spatial self in the *Arcades Project*; Michel de Certeau’s (1984) distinction between strategies and tactics in *The Practice of Everyday Life*; David Harvey’s (1985) analysis of the flow of capital in *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* and Michel Foucault’s (1986) conception of cinema as heterotopic space in *Of Other Spaces*. The expansion of the spatial framework led to the acknowledgment of the complex position of space in film structure, an insight that challenged and expanded readings of the spatial organisation of film narrative. As Everett and Goodbody point out:

‘One of the reasons for both the complexity and fascination of the application of spatial readings to systems of cinematic representation is that film constitutes both the object and subject of the critical gaze, both the matter of

observation and the means for observing. In other words, we must recognise that it is the camera that simultaneously constructs and deconstructs the spatial configurations of narrative.' (2005: 12).

As the research on space in the context of European cinema evolved, its focus rested on drawing attention to the social organisation of space for the spatial reading of films. A recurrent set of thematic strands were identified on how space can be used to explore identity and subjectivity (for example in the work of Andreas Dresen and Joseph Losey), how the fragmentation and complexity of space affects geographies of exile and displacement, as well as looking at absent spaces that are alluded in the film narrative (in the work of Kristov Kieslowski, Terence Davis and Theo Angelopoulos) and exploring urban space (for example how cities are depicted in the work of Mike Leigh, Andrei Tarkovski and Peter Greenway) (Everett and Goodbody, 2005).

Urban space is an important part of the legacy of the moving image, since from the time of silent film, the cinematic medium was considered as the most appropriate to represent the dynamic new city environments of the modern era. As such a natural affinity between film and the city developed. When we consider this marriage of the city and film in terms of the 'spatial turn', it is obvious that on the first instance the city offers an accessible paradigm for the exploration of how space is socially constructed, since it relies on the dense configurations of space, people and architecture. As David Clarke has argued in his book *The Cinematic City* (1997) the constant representations of cities in films has morphed cityscapes so much so that they have become equated

with screenscapes. In other words, cinematic depictions of the city have actively shaped our perception of urban space.

The idea that urban screenscapes affect our perception of the city in conjunction with the development of a series of spatial theorisations that draw attention to the ways that people map urban social spaces (Benjamin, de Certeau, Harvey, Lefebvre) has become one of the key focus on the study of filmic space (Everett and Goodbody, 2005). For example Sorlin has argued that in European film '... is possible to observe a recurring fascination with the notion that cityscapes are created by the people that inhabit and use them.' (1991: 13). This is an important junction as the focus on the interplay between the mental mapping of the city and the way film spaces affect our perception of it has generated a series of readings that foreground the relationship between space and identity, sometimes in relation to gender and ethnicity (Everett and Goodbody, 2005; Konstantarakos, 2000). Such concerns have also crossed over into the discipline of the geography of film that I would explore in the next section.

A flourish of academic literature has sprung exploring urban space and film; research that sometimes directly addresses spatial theories and other times revolves around architectural and postmodernist debates. I will briefly mention here some of these explorations, for example on the relationship between the city film and modernity (Shiel and Fitzmaurice, 2003; Al Sayyad, 2007; Barber, 2002), the modern metropolis and transnational spaces (Mennel, 2008; Webber and Wilson, 2008; Shiel and Fitzmaurice, 2001), the global city

and architecture (Krause and Petro, 2003), postmodern cities (Mazierska and Rascaroli, 2003) and finally looking at the relation between city, mapping and cinematic cartography (Conley, 2006; Roberts, 2012). It is clear from this extensive engagement with urban space, aided by another recent tendency towards travel, mobility and the road movie (Mazierska and Rascaroli, 2006) that issues regarding the representation and crossing of space have become central themes in film debates, so much so that the systematic reading of how narrative films are spatially organised has evolved into a strategy in the textual analysis of films (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012).

The acknowledgment of the importance of space in film analysis, apart from foregrounding the contribution of filmic space to the construction of meaning in film, it also highlighted how contemporary social processes of migration, mobility and globalisation are reflected in filmic structures. For example, Frederic Jameson in *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (1998) assigns a geographical dimension to the cultural production of film. He links shifts in the notion of space and in the organisation of spatiality with the development of globalisation processes in late-capitalism and claims that we do not possess the cognitive skills to navigate such changes. He organises his reading of cinema and global space around the concept of 'cognitive mapping', which maps the gap between 'the local positioning of an individual subject' and 'the imaginary sense of the world as an abstract totality' (ibid: 1-6). He argues that films act as cognitive maps of the geopolitical imaginary and through a reading of a variety of films, from Soviet magic realism to the films of Godard, he reveals the inability of the

individual subject to perform the mapping operations involved in totalising cinematic representations (ibid). Informed by a postmodern reading of capitalist structures, Jameson's ideas have influenced the subfield of the geography of film, addressed in the next section of this chapter. Similarly, the focus on the transitory framing of spatial experience, driven to a large extent by postcolonial readings of locality and globalisation (Bhabha, 1994; Appadurai, 1996) not only affected the articulation of meaning in film narrative but also influenced the formulation of new cinematic categories, as the notion of accented and transnational cinema (Nacify: 2001, 2003). For example, Nacify claims that in transnational cinema (cutting across previously defined national and generic cinematic boundaries) the space of film is fraught with closed and phobic spaces mediating between order and chaos (ibid). However, mirroring new organisations of social space that shape mobility and migration onto new categories and genres of film, sits within the 'additive' function of the 'spatial turn', which I identified in the previous chapter as the expansion of the field of reference to include an element of spatiality.

In my view, the inclusion of space as one element among many in the way the filmic text articulates meaning had a two-fold effect. On one hand, a conscious attempt to apply spatial theories in film discourses led to the realisation that filmic space shapes narrative structures and acts as a character in film³⁴. On

³⁴It is not only film space that has been assigned the role of character in film but also filmic landscapes have thought to symbolically act as characters in narrative formations. However, since landscape falls outside the scope of this research and since it has not been addressed in the previous chapter, I have also kept out it of the consideration of filmic space. In brief, filmic landscapes have been analysed in relation to the construction of meaning in film, the tracing of visual histories and the representation of specific conceptions of

the other hand, the insistence on the spatial led to a foregrounding of the contemporary and mobile experiences of space as a reflexive tool for the analysis of spatial patterns in films. In other words, it was not enough anymore to articulate that space is crucial in the understanding of film but filmic space was also defined as a space that reflects the spatial organisation of society, as for example in the particular ways that space functions in European film, in the impact of screenscapes in the perception of urban space or in the categories of diasporic and transcultural film. However, as I have argued the 'spatial turn' in film had mainly an 'additive' effect, opening up film to account for contemporary experiences of mobility and travel, and reflecting the new configurations of social space in the determination of new filmic genres and geographical categories. In the reshaped film debates filmic space continued to be dominated by narrative structure.

nationhood (Lefebvre, 2006; Harper and Rayner, 2010; Christie, 2011). Filmic landscapes embody and project the feelings of the film protagonists, while specific landscapes are associated with specific film genres (for example the desert with the Western) (ibid).

3.3 Film as a specific type of space

The 'spatial turn' has not only influenced the reading of filmic space in film theoretical debates but consistent with its interdisciplinary manifestations, it has also shaped the reading of film in geographical discourses. Dazed by the rush towards space, geography started looking into a series of cultural forms such as print media, advertising, television and with some delay into film, since they epitomised certain representations of space that could assist in 'understanding our *place* in the world' ³⁵(Aitken and Zonn, 1994: x). Over the last 10 years, the study of film became more systematic so much so as to constitute a subfield within geographical research (Kennedy and Lukinbeal, 1997; Aitken and Dixon, 2006; Escher, 2006; Lukinbeal and Zimmermann, 2006). I will review in this section the contribution of the geography of film³⁶in the conception of filmic space, since the discipline considers space in film not only in relation to narrative but consciously links it with everyday life and thus could contribute new insights into the function of the spatial imagination.

Geography of film was shaped by concerns emerging both from within the field of geography, as well as by general trends in cultural theory. It

³⁵ Italics in the original. Aitken, S. C. and Zonn, L. E., (eds.) (1994). *Place, Power, Situation and Spectacle: A Geography of Film*. p. x.

³⁶ The sub-discipline of the geography of film has also developed extensive readings of filmic landscapes but such literature falls again outside the scope of this research (Kennedy, 1994; Aitken and Zonn, 1994; Peckham, 2004; Lukinbeal, 2005; Escher, 2006; Aitken and Dixon, 2006;). Recent theorisations in the geography of film claim that the construction of landscape in film cannot be thought independently of the subjectivity of the filmmaker, since the filmmaker has a very specific way of constructing and thinking of both the 'social' and the 'spatial' (Aitken & Dixon, 2006: 229).

questioned older uses of both documentary and fiction film, as a primarily educational tool in the teaching of geography that represented authentically and accurately geographic space (Aitken and Dixon, 2006: 327).

Furthermore, it was influenced by two tendencies of the field, firstly by humanism and landscape studies (Kennedy and Lukinbeal, 1997: 33) and secondly by the development of what is termed as 'aesthetic geosophy' (the idea that geography should also focus on studying the subjective reactions to spaces) (Lukinbeal & Zimmermann, 2006: 321). In trying to bring together overlapping contexts, geography of film developed around the binary opposition between space and society and place and people (echoing the distinction between space and place mentioned in the previous chapter), with Kennedy and Lukinbeal eventually proposing a holistic approach to research on film, one '*which can address both individual experiences and societal forces*' (1997: 35). Thus, the geography of film emphasised the experience of everyday life within social structures, and as Aitken and Dixon state, it 'elaborates insights through critical spatial theories, so that our studies are not only about filmic representations of space but are also about the material conditions of lived experience and everyday social practices' (2006: 326).

Space and place in Film Geographies

The first relation that I draw out from the geography of film is the well-documented tension between space and place, and in this case the relation between place in film and space of film. In popular film, filmic space is treated as a tool for driving narrative progression. Fiction film needs to create a

consistency and continuity between actions. Thus, filmic space endlessly decentres places by rendering them as abstract backdrops for action. However, as already mentioned in the previous section, Heath references the interplay between space and place in his account that cinema '...moves space into place through image-flow...' (1981: 44). Heath's description teases out an understanding of film as a continuous place making, progressing from the space contained in the frame through movement and shot transitions into creating a sense of place. Thus, in the geography of film line of analysis emerges, based on the distinction of space and place, which suggests that the space of film can be used to create place in film. For example, Aitken and Dixon parallels the construction of filmic space through mise-en-scene and shot transitions developed in film discourses with the conceptualisation of film space as an empty container controlled by the filmmaker (2006: 332). They contrast this understanding of filmic space with Lefebvre's (1991) formulation of the social construction of space, proposing that film geographers should look at the multiple forces that shape filmic space apart from the camera techniques (ibid). Taking this as a starting point, Aitken and Zonn argue that space is not just a backdrop to action but that film can animate particular characteristics of place, as part of the narrative logic, pointing out that:

'Place becomes spectacle, a signifier of the film's subject, a metaphor for the state of mind of the protagonist. The use of cinematic space in this way can be powerful. Places can be represented so as to cut against a descriptive meaning and narrative flow, or they can be constructed within cinematic

space to be used over and over again in a variety of circumstances'. (1994: 17).

The possibility of breaking free from the stronghold of narrative causality that I previously noted is expressed in the geography of film as the transformation of filmic space into the place of film, which gets animated by becoming autonomous from narrative action or by acting as a mirror that reflects the emotions of the protagonist. Thus, even if the analysis moves away from the formal construction of film into considering filmic space in relation to place and space, both in film theory and in the geography of film, filmic space acquires greater role when it becomes autonomous from narrative. Applying conceptualisations of the social role of space and place to actual films has produced a series of insights on the construction of identities (Cresswell and Dixon, 2002; Mains, 2004) or on masculinity, race and gender (Aitken and Lukinbeal, 1997; Cravey *et al*, 2004), providing similar conclusions to work undertaken on identity and subjectivity on European film in the context of the 'spatial turn' in film studies.

The Cinematic world

Although place and the everyday are important in the geography of film, in the establishment of the subfield the single major influence has been postmodern theory (Aitken and Zonn, 1994; Kennedy and Lukinbeal, 1997; Aitken and Dixon, 2006; Escher, 2006; Lukinbeal and Zimmermann, 2006). Reading film as a textual representation rather than as a mimetic practice, geographical

analysis of film was aligned with discourses on 'the crisis of representation', a concern on the forefront of postmodern philosophies. It focused on questioning film as representing a coherent reality, on exploring the subjective and indeterminate nature of 'truth' (Aitken and Dixon, 2006: 327), and on reading film as another commodity of late capitalism (Kennedy and Lukinbeal, 1997: 39). Thus, one of the central propositions of geography of film derives from an affinity with Frederic Jameson's analysis on the geopolitical implication of cinematic representations (his postmodern propositions already mentioned above in more detail) and particularly his suggestion that films are 'cognitive maps' of the geopolitical imaginary (1998: 1-6). In other words, the belief that cinema, and so cinematic space are dominant commodities that reinforce the 'hegemonic order' (Lukinbeal and Zimmermann, 2006: 315) by shaping in various ways how we experience, think of and perceive the world, (Kennedy & Lukinbeal, 1997: 33; Aitken and Zonn, 1994; 6-8) through the use of what is described as a *mise en abyme* (the endless and infinite circulation of images and narratives) (Lukinbeal and Zimmermann, 2006: 316).

Film as a cultural product is embedded in particular networks of production and circulation, forming what geographers called a 'cinematic world' (Escher, 2006). As a result, film's perpetual movement forces cinematic locations and specific landscapes to become 'metonymic' spaces signifying and substituting the real spaces of the world. For example, Escher describes how cinematic locations have become part of a tourist industry shaping perceptions of certain places and turning the experience of space to a form of consumption (2006: 311). Cityscapes constructed as panoramas for consumption (apart from

establishing the location of the protagonist's action) point to a specific view of space and a specific scale that reinforces power relations (ibid). Thus, film space is implicated in the construction of dominant spatial relations. This understanding of space in film led film geographers to explore urban space (this research sometimes has overlapped with film discourses) (Aitken and Zonn, 1994; Benton, 1995) or film tourism (Beeton, 2005), excavating the way films contain relations of dominance, reinforce particular conceptions of space and assist in its consumption.

The geography of film approaches film as a textual representation or 'a semiotic landscape' and addresses film space as a place where meaning is formed not only by the control of cinematic language but also by cultural and social processes that shape the organisation of space. Based on the distinction of place and space, film geographical debates suggest that filmic space stops serving narrative progression when it is considered as the place of film, able to reflect the feelings of the characters or as an autonomous space that contributes another layer of meaning. Furthermore, the geography of film places film within the larger context of the 'cinematic world' and thus, provides a complex understanding of the mobility of filmic space, one that is not only linked to the camera movement but also to the circulation of media images in the global landscape. Thus, I argue that the importance of the geography of film is its consideration of film as a specific type of space, which is linked to the spaces of the world, to other representations of space and to spatial theories that recognise the social construction of space.

However, although the geography of film provides a very useful account of the spatial implications of film, I will not adopt it as a framework in the exploration of the thinking qualities of filmic space in the next chapters but I will rest on the insights gained about the mobility of the cinematic world. One reason for this decision is that geography of film focuses mainly on popular narrative films, since they provide the most vivid examples for the study of dominant spatial relations. More importantly, film geographers asserting a postmodern critique of reality, address film space as a representation, while as I have explored in the previous chapter, the research rejects the fixity of representational conceptions of space in favour of an open spatial imagination. Similarly, the emphasis on the research is not on moving image practices as textual signifiers but on the examination of the thinking operations of filmic space.

3.4 Deleuzian Filmic Space

The discussion on filmic space has revealed that in film theoretical debates and in the geography of film the concept has been mainly associated with the construction of narrative space or addressed as another layer in the construction of meaning in film. Deleuze's theorisation of cinema offers an opportunity to consider the function of space in film independently from narrative structure and in relation to thinking operations, since as I have outlined in Chapter 1 he breaks away from the notion of narrative by exploring the thinking potential of the moving image. However, since Deleuze's general analysis of cinema is not the focus of the research but I only wish to excavate his understanding of the thinking potential and spatial operations in film, I would mainly focus on his theorisation of the movement-image (Cinema 1), since I have identified that it contains elements of his spatial thinking.

As I have sketched out in the introductory chapter, Deleuze in his two volumes on cinema, assigns to pre second-world war film a spatiotemporal organisation that ensures a continuity of action and emphasises a linear development of time, especially through action-images that operate based on sensory-motor schemata (1985, 1989). Deleuze identifies that the changes that post-war cinema brought about through the crisis of the action image and the emergence of the time-image derive from its shifting relation to time and movement (ibid). The Deleuzian distinction between movement-image and time-image is based on Bergson's three theses on movement and on his critique of the illusionary nature of cinema (the understanding of the cinematic

as an immobile section where movement is added) (Deleuze, 1986: 1-12). For example, in refiguring Bergson's first thesis, that 'movement is distinct from space covered' (1991), Deleuze claims that the cinematic image cannot be an immobile section (as Bergson thought) because to conceive it in this way you will need to regard time as succession, you would have to think of time as 'mechanical, homogeneous, universal and copied from space, identical for all movements.' (ibid: 1). Thus, Deleuze asserts that cinema is not an immobile section were movement is added but '...it immediately gives us a movement-image. It does not give us a section, but a section which is mobile...' (ibid: 2).

Continuing to plough through Bergson's thesis, Deleuze comes to the conclusion that movement is a mobile section that expresses change in duration, and that the change in duration is articulated through the relation between 'sets' that are artificially closed systems that change position in space and 'the whole, the wholes' that through relations change qualitatively and become duration (ibid: 1-12). Furthermore, according to Deleuze movement in whatever level it is expressed in cinema, from the part to the whole, has always two aspects 'that which happens between objects and parts' and 'that which expresses the duration of the whole' (ibid: 11). Thus, Deleuze in considering the relationship between the whole, a set, time and space points out that:

'The whole is therefore like thread which traverses sets and gives one the possibility, which is necessarily realised, of communicating with another, to infinity. Thus, the whole is the Open, and relates back to time or even the

spirit rather than to content and space. Whatever the relationship, one should not confuse the extension of sets into each other with the opening of the whole which passes into each one. A closed system is never absolutely closed; but on the one hand it is connected in space to other systems by a more or less 'fine' thread, and on the other hand is integrated or reintegrated into a whole which transmits a duration to it along its thread.' (ibid: 18)

Although Deleuze does not set out to account for space in the moving image, one can already sense that in his theorisation of the movement-image, space emerges as homogeneous and immobile, fixing things down and opposing time (since for example in the above quote the whole is open and relates to time but not to space)(ibid). This conception alludes to what Massey has already detected (in her critique of Bergson) as a lineage of philosophical thought that regards space as representation. But before I consider the full effect of Deleuze's movement-image on the articulation of filmic space, I would like to focus on two further aspects of his thinking, and particularly his discussion of the frame and shot and the association of the close-up with any-space-whatever in the affection image.

For Deleuze the frame is a collection of data, grouped, ordered and enclosed in a spatial section (ibid: 13-19). Being spatial, the frame is also a limitation since it acts as a common and standard reference for all measurements (from countryside to skyscraper all collapsing within the frame) and as such 'ensures a deterritorialisation of the image' (ibid: 16). The frame from this point of view is understood as part of a closed system (as part of a set), but

since 'every close system also communicates', (ibid: 17) the frame is never fully closed but its edges are inherently fluid (ibid: 17). Thus, the frame is not just a spatial enclosure but opens up to all sides by expressing the double movement of cinema identified above, by determining '...an out-of-field, sometimes in the form of a larger set which extends it, sometimes in the form of a whole into which it is integrated.' (ibid:19).

Similarly, the shot situated between the 'framing of the set' and 'the montage of the whole' expresses the double essence of movement, on one hand as a spreading out into space and on the other hand as a qualitative change of the whole, which is 'transformed in duration' (ibid: 21). Thus, the shot moving between framing and montage, between composing and decomposing, between '... a whole which changes and a set which has parts, and which constantly converts the one into the other ...' (ibid: 23) is the movement-image. Thus, in Deleuze's theorisation the notion of the shot and to some extent of the frame by being exposed to the double movement of cinema (between objects and parts and through duration) is conceived as mobile, as opening up to infinity and to the spirit (and thus to thought). Consequently, although Deleuze recognises the spatial limitations and the slicing of time in the movement-image, he recognises a fluidity, multiplicity and openness in the function of the frame and the shot by associating them with movement.

This strategy in Deleuze of relating spatial notions to movement is also evident in the three types of movement-images that he discerns in cinema. For Deleuze the way to understand film as a whole is not through the relations

between frames and shots (as it would have been the case in traditional film theory) but as a montage between the perception-image (associated with the long shot), the affection-image (corresponding to the close up) and the action-image (the medium shot)(ibid: 72). Thus, although his images are associated with spatial determined categories (long, medium, close-up) by insisting that only one of these types of movement-images dominates at any one time, that only one type becomes the point-of-view of the whole film, he considers the shots as no longer spatial; “each of these shots cease(ing) to be spatial in order to become itself a ‘reading’ of the whole film” (ibid: 72). Thus, once again spatial categories are transformed by being exposed to movement.

From the three different types of images that make up each film, Deleuze identifies a specific relation to space in the formulation of the affection-image (ibid: 105-126). He links the affection image with the close-up (and mainly the face), which although is a shot detached from its coordinates it still includes a space-time (like the fragment of sky in the background), it retains a singularity (ibid). However, since in Deleuze’s reconceptualization of cinema categories are never rigid, never totally closed, the affection-image does not rest only in the close-up of the face but through affective montage other types of shots (medium and long shots) are treated as close-ups and take on an affective quality³⁷. Furthermore, the assimilation of all shots in expressing affect creates a corresponding space, a space that Deleuze connects to Pascal

³⁷ Deleuze discusses, in particular, Dreyer’s *Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) and Bresson’s *The trial of Joan of Arc* (1962) as examples where affective montage is used making all shots particular instances of the close-up (1985: 109-112).

Auger's³⁸ concept of *any-space-whatever* (*espace quelconque*) (ibid: 112). Thus, for Deleuze leaving behind the simplistic divisions of medium shot and close-up and considering a more complex interplay of relations between shots, the any-space-whatever becomes 'the generic element of the affection-image' (ibid: 113). Although Deleuze does not elaborate on Auger's particular understanding of any-space-whatever, he nonetheless describes in detail how such space is constructed in film via shadow, light, lyrical abstraction and colour (ibid: 114-126). What emerges is not an abstract homogeneous space that the globalisation of capital constructs, it is not literary any-space as some of Deleuze readers suggest. For example, Adam Kossoff in his book *On Terra Firma. Space, Place and the Moving Image* (2008) reads Deleuze's close-up as simply a 'deterritorialised' space and contrasts it with his conception of the close-up as revealing the surface of the screen, as a 'thinning' out of space³⁹. However, his reading does not take into account the full complexity of the

³⁸ Both in the original French and the English translation the term *espace quelconque* is attributed to Pascal Augé, which according to Peter Osborne is a typographical error. The correct reference is the French filmmaker and theorist Pascal Auger. Osborne, P., (2013). *Anywhere or Not at All. Philosophy of Contemporary Art*. London: Verso.

³⁹ Adam Kossoff (2008) conceives the relationship between image, space and film through the concepts of 'thick' and 'thin' space. Although he provides the only direct reference to questions of space and place in relation to non-fiction film, since his theorisation is not strictly concerned with single-screen works but accounts for the spatial relations in immersive gallery installation environments, I will not elaborate further on his framework in this research. Furthermore, although he is sensitive to ideas of place, his analysis is more concerned with the cinematic apparatus, the techniques of the camera, ontological questions of film materiality, and a phenomenological approach to place making rather than engaging with current ideas of the complexity of the relationship between the spatial, the social, the representational and the political. Kossoff, A., (2008). *On Terra Firma. Space, Place and the Moving Image*. Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag.

affective image as heterogeneous and relational, as a space of 'virtual conjunction, grasped as the pure locus of the possible.' (Deleuze, 1986: 113). Any-space-whatever is an undetermined space, a space that has lost its coordinates but it is not a depotentialised space. As an amorphous set it is full of potential, it can become extension or disappearing, thus, can take on two complementary forms, being a disconnected space or a disserted space.

As I have already mentioned above, Deleuze views the Second World War as the turning point that gives way to a new type of cinema constructed no longer through the continuity of movement and the action image, to the cinema of the time-image. And here lies the difficulty in fully grasping his approach to space, since any-space-whatever is both the generic element of the affection-image, and as such part of his evaluation of the movement-image (the organisation of pre war cinema), while at the same time any-space-whatever highlights a crisis of the action-image emerging from specific socio-political conditions after the war that Deleuze associates with the development of the time-image. As Deleuze writes in Cinema 2: 'The space of a sensory-motor situation is a setting which is already specified and presupposes an action which discloses it, or prompts a reaction which adopts or modifies it. But a purely optical or sound situation becomes established in what we might call 'any-space-whatever', whether disconnected or emptied out ...' (1989: 5).

Thus far, I have underlined a complex function of space in the Deleuzian construction of the movement-image. On one hand, in his account of the movement-image he recognises that centring mechanisms that are located in

the function of space as immobile attempt to control the movement of the image. Thus, film centres and control movement when filmic space functions as fixed and immobile. So when cinema privileges the spatial is immobile, while the openness to change and the spirit comes from a temporal perspective. Similarly, in the transition from the movement-image to the time-image, time is no longer subordinated to movement and it is not totalised by space. This understanding of filmic space echoes Massey's critique of Bergsonian duration and the conception of space as representation that conceives space as slicing up time and holding the world still. And as the understanding of space as a heaven of petrification limits the potential of the spatial imagination, in a similar manner it also limits the potential of filmic space and restricts its ability to contribute to the thinking operations of the image.

On the other hand, Deleuze also describes a pattern in the function of the frame, the shot and the montage between images that opens up filmic space to movement and fluidity. It also identifies a particular type of space, the any-space-whatever, that becomes one of the sites that the crisis of the action-image in post-war cinema is expressed (1985: 210-214). For example any-space-whatever proliferates in Italian neo-realism that prefigures the birth of time-image, as the ruined, bombed out cities, while in the French New Wave strolling in the city, freed from its old spatial-temporal co-ordinates expresses a new type of society (ibid). Accordingly, we can discern a correspondence in Deleuze's thinking between new socio-political conditions brought about by the war and the organisation of space, and thus we can observe a sensitivity

to the social role of space, as it has also been articulated in my discussion earlier on the 'spatial turn'. Furthermore, in the undoing of the image that Italian neo-realism and French New Wave express, in the upheaval of the action-image, the affective-image and the perception-image after the war, we can trace the first steps of cinema's relation to thought, since as Deleuze claims 'thought begins by undoing the system of actions' (1985: 210). And since, as we have already explored, this undoing of the image is also situated in the function of any-space-whatever, we can conclude that any-space-whatever is a way that filmic space can contribute to the thinking operation of the image. Thus, although Deleuze recognizes that the movement-image attempts to control movement by centring the operations of the image around a fixed filmic space, in his theorisation by associating frame, shot and the montage between images with movement, it also connects filmic space with movement and thus open space up to multiplicity and fluidity. Finally, by drawing attention to the notion of any-space-whatever, Deleuze locates a type of space in film that is heterogeneous and relational.

3.5 From Narrative Space to Thinking Space

In film theoretical discussions filmic space is associated with the cinematic frame and conceived as one of the basic organisational units of film. Filmic space constructed by the limitations of the frame operates in narrative film as a background to action, or as a narrative space where a cohesion of place reigns, in both cases by attempting to centre movement it creates a continuity of action. The 'spatial turn' in the context of European film, mainly had an additive effect that extended the field of reference by addressing filmic space as another layer of meaning and by accounting for an element of spatiality in the construction of film narrative and genre categories. However, although film analysis acknowledged the social production of space, filmic space was read as fixing things down, as making solid the complexities of social organisation and thus acted as a limitation. In addition, film theoretical accounts of the 'spatial turn' conceived space as both the subject and the object of the critical gaze, and thus centred space around a point-of-view (either the filmmaker's, the characters' or the spectator's) and thus retained the fixity of place.

Similarly, Deleuze recognises in the movement-image an attempt to control the temporal flow of the film and its potential for thought by controlling mechanisms that he locates in the immobility of the spatial. Thus, from all these perspectives filmic space acts as a limitation when it is conceived as a centring mechanism, when it is conceived as static and as fixing things down.

I also noted that in film theory and in the geography of film, filmic space is animated when it breaks free from narrative, as for example in the spatial

discontinuities in work of the Soviet filmmakers', or Ozu's autonomous space, or by acting as another character in narrative structure or as reflecting the social organisation of space or as Deleuze's any-space-whatever. Therefore, filmic space not only creates cohesion of action but through discontinuities and by attaining an autonomous role stops serving narrative progression. However, I argue that filmic space can have a radical potential not only in the breaking of narrative causality but also in the disassociation of filmic space from the notion of immobility.

Unlike the dominant idea of space as slicing of the temporal and as fixing things down, filmic space is actually closely related with movement in the moving image. For example, I noted how Deleuze's theorisation opens up the potential of filmic space by associating it with movement and how the geography of film perceives film as a specific type of space that forms part of a cinematic world. In thinking how movement creates space in film, I also identified a series of different operations. On one level expressed as the movement within the frame, the movement of the camera and the movement between shot transitions, on another level defined as the movement through the spaces of the world from urban to transnational and the mobility of the cinematic world. These operations by associating filmic space with movement open up the edges of the frame to the out-of-field and to the spaces of the world and thus to a fluidity that cuts across the boundaries of the screen. Viewing space in film as controlled by the frame and as creating a boundary around cinematic space, robs filmic space of its complexity and reduces the ability of the spatial imagination in film. As Massey called for a space that is

open, multiple and relational, similarly this research will attempt in the final two chapters to associate the spatial thinking operations with the movement of filmic space. Thus, recognising the spatial in film as open, heterogeneous and always under construction would become one of the central propositions in the theorisation of the essayistic filmic space in the final chapter of this research.

...

This chapter explored the notion of filmic space from a variety of perspectives. It located a critique of temporality that prefigures the 'spatial turn' in the breaking of narrative causality in film and traced a conscious attempt to apply spatial theories to film. It explored how filmic space becomes a discursive terrain either when is treated as autonomous from narrative or when it fragments narrative action. It also argued that in order to open up the potential of filmic space in the thinking operations of the moving image we should stress its connection with movement. In the next chapter, I will explore how filmic space functions in the operations of non-fiction films, as a way of decoding different types of spatial thinking in film and in the process redefine the notion of filmic space and thus conceive filmic space as open, multiple, heterogeneous and always under construction.

CHAPTER 4: THINKING OPERATIONS OF FILMIC SPACE

Chapter 4 departs from the idea of narrative space and considers the thinking operations of filmic space in a range of avant-garde and experimental films. The focus on non-fiction film is two-fold; on one hand because the avant-garde has already been identified as a historical lineage of the essay film in Chapter 1 and on the other hand because experimental films have been strongly associated with the breaking of narrative conventions and centring mechanisms of the image, which as I claimed in the previous chapter are conditions that open up filmic spatial imagination. However, the chapter is not organised based on genre categories but instead emphasises instances where space becomes an important part of the thinking operations of the moving image. Thus, the discussion is not centred around distinguishing the spatial functions of categories such as avant-garde, structuralist, post-structuralist, experimental or Brechtian film, although some of the terminology is used when referencing specific literature, but the analysis focuses on deciphering types of spatial thinking. Identifying spatial thinking functions in non-fiction films is also a vehicle for the redefinition of filmic space as open, heterogeneous, relational and as always in the process of being constructed. This sets the basis for exploring in the next chapter the function of space in the thinking modality of the essay film.

4.1 Undetermined Space

In the previous chapter, I established how the fragmentation of narrative space offers an opening for the consideration of the thinking operation of filmic space. I also claimed that when filmic space opens up to movement, it departs from the notion of fixing things down and becomes open and relational. In this section, I will explore how the breaking of narrative temporality and centring mechanisms of the movement-image emphasises the function of filmic space in non-fiction films. Although, Heath argues that the destruction of narrative space is a common goal of American Independent cinema and not only the prerogative of 'structural film' (Heath, 1981: 56-57), in the avant-garde tradition the relationship between space and structure has mostly been fore-grounded as a concern of the Structuralist film movement. Structuralist film aimed at minimising the effects of content and narrative through an emphasis on the materiality of film (Gidal, 1976: 1-5) and in the case of the Canadian filmmaker Michael Snow this was achieved by interrogating the formal operations of filmic space and by highlighting the movement of the camera in and across space. For example, *Wavelength* (1967) is constructed as a continuous and progressive camera zoom. It begins with a wide angle shot of a room, the camera progressively zooming in, until it reaches a close-up of an image of sea waves pinned on the opposite wall. The zooming in, this forward camera movement, creates a sense of flow in space that pushes the edges of the frame away. And in this pushing aside of the frame, filmic space is emptied out and the visual field is re-defined. Snow continued the strategy of emptying out filmic space in

subsequent works, such as *Back and Forth* (1969) (the camera swelling back and forth across one end of the horizontal pan to the other and thus curving out space) and in the highly ambitious *La Region Central* (1971), where the camera becomes a machine of vision, moving in all directions, horizontally and vertically, creating an endless nauseating movement and radically breaking perspectival conventions.

The spatial and narrative implications of the isolated camera zoom in *Wavelength* have been widely discussed in film literature. For Deleuze the film pulls together all the elements that construct any-space-whatever. The changes in shadow and light through the camera's progressive movement, the fragmentation of the parts and the empty room all contribute to liberating space from its predetermined position, releasing it 'from its human coordinates' (1985: 125) and make it a location of pure possibility. On the other hand, discussing the film in relation to narrative space, Heath argues that the zooming in action is a crossing of space that results in 'narrating in time of the film the space covered, of making that crossing of space – with its frames ... the scene of a veritably filmic action, a process without any *single view*'⁴⁰(1981: 58). Moreover, the spatial operations in Snow's work as Michelson claims had the effect of reinstating filmic space as the space of action by questioning previously 'hypnagogic' avant-garde film strategies of capturing consciousness⁴¹, practices that by drawing attention to the poetic and the imaginary eliminated any sense of temporal expectation (1976: 41-

⁴⁰ Italics in the original. Heath, S., (1981).

⁴¹ Michelson (1976) uses as an example of such 'hypnagogic' the work of Stan Brakhage.

42). According to Michelson the zooming in of *Wavelength* is crucial as it exactly re-introduces a sense of expectation as part of the function of film form, an expectation that derives not from the unravelling of the narrative but from the anticipation of the forward camera movement (ibid: 42). Thus, she argues that in Snow's films the foregrounding of anticipation redefines filmic space as "essentially 'a temporal notion'. Voiding the film from the metaphoric proclivity of montage, Snow created a grand metaphor for narrative form." (ibid: 42).

From my perspective, Snow's work reveals the mechanics of the camera, foregrounding how the cinematic apparatus frames actual space and controls the construction of filmic space. Moreover, in isolating a specific camera operation, Snow constructs filmic space through the movement of the camera and thus clearly conceives filmic space as open and relational. This is the undetermined space of Deleuze's any-space-whatever that by being liberated for its coordinates becomes a space of pure potential that opens up to thought. However, although Michelson stresses that the emptying out of space corresponds to an emptying of narrative expectation, through the anticipation of the camera movement, the result of this controlled movement is the formulation of an abstract space (Snow describes *Wavelength* as "a definitive statement of pure film space and time"⁴²) that loses any referential connection to spatio-social organisation (ibid: 41-42). However, according to Heath *Wavelength* pure space and its withdrawal from social issues raise questions about its effectiveness to question narrative (1981: 19-75). As he

⁴² Quoted in Michelson, 1976, p.39

argues the deconstruction of narrative space does not just derive from the insistence on the film's materiality but by actually 'interrogating the limits of narrative within film, and the limits of its fictions of unity' (ibid: 64). However, I argue that even if *Wavelength's* insistence on the medium's materiality through the isolation of the camera movement creates an abstracted space that is unable to question the implications of narrative, in its structure, filmic space becomes a discursive space by being open to movement.

However, filmic space is not only restricted to the edges of the frame but since it operates in the multiple layers of a cinematic world, it can act as an undetermined and abstract space in an expanded level, as for example in the work of Peter Greenaway, who considers film as a space that could be navigated. By pushing some of the structuralist strategies to an almost comically absurd limit Greenaway interrogates the construction of filmic space within the limits of narrative. His work provides an interesting example of how narrative's space cohesion can be broken through the layering of different spaces. A work that exactly highlights this relation between narrative and space is Greenaway's early short film *A walk through H: The Reincarnation of an Ornithologist* (1979). Using the voice-over convention of the documentary, the film follows a fictional anonymous narrator as he takes a bizarre journey through 'H' aided by a series of 92 maps (Greenaway's own drawings). The film is set in a picture gallery and moves from the exhibition space and into the individual drawings (representing maps) hang on the wall, the camera panning on their flat surface. The journeying through the 92 maps is interrupted at times by images of migratory birds. In the end of the film, we

return to the gallery and we witness the exhibition assistant leaving her desk and closing the door behind her. Following the camera movement, the voice-over narration takes the form of an obsessive accounting of facts, charting a series of absurd encounters, with the keeper of the bird house at the Amsterdam Zoo (that's why the interruption of the abstracted space of the map by the actual shots of birds flying is not surprising) or with the mysterious Tulse Luper. The narrative points to a double temporality, on one hand the fictional narrator moving forwards through the maps (and through a series of imaginary cities) and on the other hand going back to past biographical events.

In the film, the narrator constantly references 'H' (he is walking or running through it) and questions what it might stand for. Elliott and Purdy argue that 'H' refers to Foucault's heterotopias and especially his formulation in *Of Other Spaces* of cinema as a heterotopic space (Elliott and Purdy, 2006). Elliott and Purdy adopt the dominant reading of Foucault's heterotopias as signifying specific spaces rather than as a spatial framework and thus analyse cinema as an expression of a heterotopic space. This results in equating the heterotopic quality of film with the language of cinema and thus bypassing the heterogeneous and relational nature of filmic space. Thus, according to Elliott and Purdy '... we might think of the narrator-protagonist's journey as taking place in a non-space (and non time) of the language of cinema ...' (ibid: 275). However, I argue that Greenaway's film does not just rely on a self-referential filmic space contained within the film structure (the homogeneous space of

the language of cinema that Elliott and Purdy describe) but that such filmic space is structured around a layering of spaces.

There is a constant movement in the film between a series of spaces, from the space that the protagonist traverses (constructed mainly through language), to the representational space of the drawings as maps and from the actual space of the migratory birds to the 'pure space' of cinema that the 'H' references. This movement is further reinforced through a series of formal techniques. Firstly, instead of using standard cartographic representations, Greenaway utilises drawings that function as quotes of space and which point both to an imaginary space and to the surface of the image. Thus, the space of the film is conflated with the space of representation. Secondly, he moves away from materialist approaches by utilising symbolic montage (cutting from the maps to the images of birds), as well as fragmented and looped (the film begins and ends in the gallery space) narrative structures. The film draws us into the space of the maps and expels us back into the space of the gallery. We follow the trails on the surface of the drawing, only to be pushed outside to the actual movement of the migratory birds. In other words as we are moved around from the drawing surface, to the idea of the map, from the space of cinema to the natural world, the film constructs filmic space as a space to be traversed and explored.

The films of Michael Snow and Peter Greenaway present a crucial juncture for this research, since in their work filmic space acquires a discursive function, in which a self-referential filmic space becomes the vehicle for expressing

thinking. From the prism of narrative, in Snow's works, although causality is broken down since narrative expectation now derives from the movement of the camera, this isolation of the mechanics of movement pushes narrative space aside, only for filmic space to emerge as an abstracted space contained purely within film structure. From a Deleuzian perspective the film produces an undetermined space of potential as any-space-whatever. On the other hand, Greenaway's work is built upon a layering of spaces that constructs filmic space as a space to be traversed. In Greenaway's film the movement through space (Snow's forward, backward or upside camera movement) does not derive out of a specific formal camera operation but from journeying through the different layers of space, which in the end all collapse into the self-referential space of cinema. In both cases, filmic space is addressed as a specific type of space connected to the camera movement and cinematic mobility, to the notion of crossing and traversing and thus filmic space is treated as a heterogeneous and relational. However, both filmmakers exercise an obsessive control over space that becomes the structuring device of their work. This structured space is either held purely within the language of cinema or treated it as an empty container without referencing the nuances and organisation of a socially constructed space and thus erasing or side-stepping the experiential, historical or social quality of space.

4.2 Memorial Space

In Chapter 3, I explored in detail how film theoretical debates adopted spatial theories in order to open up film analysis to considerations of the social nature of space and to contemporary conditions of global mobility. Having explored in the previous section the breaking of narrative space in the undetermined filmic spaces of Snow and Greenaway, I will consider now examples of films that by emphasizing the experiential, social and historical nature of space also stress the thinking potential of filmic space. An example of when an undetermined structural space can take on memorial functions lies in the work of a less known (in the Anglophone world) filmmaker, that of the German filmmaker Heinz Emigholz. From early on in his film practice, Emigholz focused on the interplay of natural and abstract space as a mechanism for exploring the relationship between concrete and conceptual space. For example, in *Scheme-Tady 1* (1972-3), the hills and meadows in north-eastern USA (and specifically a woodland clearing) are slowly constructed out of thousands of individual film frames through the use of stop motion animation techniques. The result is a flickering film in which as the landscape is slowly constructed by the mathematical composition of frames, the language of representation gets broken down into its basic building blocks (the isolated frames). Thus, in Emigholz's work there is a divergence from Snow's emphasis on the camera moving through space or Greenaway's traversing of the layered space of cinema to a preoccupation with how space is constructed in the relationship between the still image (frame) and moving image medium (movement).

The interrelation between still and moving image became more overtly the focus of Emigholz's practice from the eighties onwards with the development of the series *Photography and Beyond*,⁴³ which investigates the relationship between photography and film. Within this extensive body of work, the subsection *Architecture as Autobiography* documents the extant buildings of a group of architects and civil engineers. This subsection based on an analytical documentation of architectural space is once more framed through the interplay of stasis and movement that as I have already mentioned is a recurrent topos in the reading of the mechanics of filmic space. For example, one of the films in the series, *Sullivan Banks (2000)*⁴⁴ presents (in the chronological order that they were built) all of the eight banks constructed in US by the architect Louis H. Sullivan⁴⁵. The bank buildings are documented through a series of static shots, from a variety of camera positions with the camera sometimes placed inside the building and other times outside. The shots break the 90-degree symmetry of photographic documentary conventions, the work marked by tilted images and off-balance framing. This type of de-centring creates a slippage between the building as an objective structure occupying a fixed position in space and its subjective (a more elusive) presence that reflects the autobiography of its architect (this

⁴³The *Photography and Beyond* started in 1983 as an on-going series. It comprises of more than 30 films that focus on the themes of architecture, drawing, writing and sculpture.

⁴⁴ Other works in the *Architecture as Autobiography* series include; *Loos Ornamental (2008)* on Austrian architect Adolf Loos; *D'Annunzio's Cave (2005)* on Italian writer Gabriele d'Annunzio and his grotesque villa, *Goff in the Desert (2003)* exploring 62 buildings by architect Bruce Goff; *Maillart's Bridges (1999)* on Swiss civil engineer and legendary bridge builder Robert Maillart.

⁴⁵ Louis H. Sullivan (1856-1924) is a prominent American modernist architect and is associated with the development of the skyscraper into a dominant architectural form.

relationship is also very clearly suggested by the subseries title *Architecture as Autobiography*.

Sullivan Banks is constructed dialectically. One on hand, images are edited to underscore discontinuity (through the jarring point-of-views and the tilting of the camera), while the soundtrack creates a continuous acoustic space. This dialectical structure does not only succeed in presenting space in an ambiguous and less mediated fashion but also in producing a multiplicity of codes (a layering of meaning), as for example is expressed in the tension between the past of the banks and present of the traffic. Emigholz by constructing the film as a chronological succession of the eight buildings emphasises the taxonomical aspect of photographic documentary conventions, an analytical system that he very specifically connects with the histories of architecture (as spatio-social formations) rather with fictional numerical systems (as the 92 maps and the imaginary cities of Greenaway). Furthermore, in *Sullivan Banks* the focus is on a specific aspect of American history that of a particular built urban environment linked to the development of capital and its institutions (the banks), a relationship that is articulated in the work through the interplay between the notion of space (the building) and memory (their history). As Emigholz himself pondering on the possibilities of cinema as a memorial space states: '*As a technical medium, film projects the spaces of memory themselves rather than presenting them solely by means of a mental trick.*'⁴⁶. Thus in Emigholz's work the taxonomical documentation

⁴⁶ Emigloz has written widely on his work but his writings have not been translated into English. I am using here the translations provided in his online

of spaces, the static camera shot is not fixing space down but it is associated with memorial and historical processes that open up the discursive potential of filmic space.

The relation between cinema and a filmic space layered with historical and memorial traces is also noted by Martin Brady (2005: 243-255). Building on this relationship between camera, movement, memory and space, Brady argues that Emigholz's *Sullivan Banks* (2000) as well as a series of films by the filmmakers Straub/Huillet that deal with the reparations of urban space in the aftermath of the Second World War [*Machorka-Muff* (1963) and *Not Reconciled* (1965)] are connected in their documentation of space, through a practice that he calls 'spatial documentation'⁴⁷ (ibid). Brady claims that the potential of the camera to record and of film to organise space (his 'spatial documentation') enables filmmakers to link the historical, political and memorial functions of space (ibid). For example, Brady reads a panning shot (that sees one of the protagonist's Schrella visiting his old house now surrounded by new builds) occurring towards the end of Straub/Huillet's *Not*

profile page at <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/heinz-emigholz/biography/>. [Accessed on 10 July 2013]

⁴⁷ Brady's ultimate aim in developing the concept of 'spatial documentation' is to formulate a concept that provides the synthesis between the Brechtian and Structuralist avant-gardes that Peter Wollen sought for. As he writes: "What connects Wollen's two avant-gardes, it seems to me, is a concept of documentation, a taxonomy of space in which the camera inscribes time 'spaces to be read'..." (Brady, 2005: 253). This discussion falls outside the scope of this research, since, as I have already mentioned, this section does not approach the thinking function of filmic space based on categories of the avant-garde.

Reconciled (1965) as bringing together the documentary recording of space with the political traces of the past (ibid). Similarly, he sees Emigholz's chronological presentation of *Sullivan Banks* (2000) as providing a common frame of reference for Sullivan buildings and as such highlighting their historical presence (ibid). In both works, the documentation of space (both the location and the way it is framed) is used to unearth suppressed traces of the past. The sensitivity to the historical presence of space enables the films to encode space with political meaning, unlocking multiple references. Thus, the films become texts comprised of dense semiotised material. Brady's 'spatial documentation' is an interesting concept as it opens up the process of documentation to historical, memorial and political functions. However, the space that he describes in the films mentioned above becomes a semiotised space; it becomes another carrier of meaning in the film, and as such the opposite of the undetermined space of Deleuze. Thus, the way to locate a discursive quality in space according to Brady's formulation is by combining the abstract quality of filmic space through a documentary and taxonomical strategy to space as a semiotised texture.

Taking a closer look at Straub/Huillet's *Not Reconciled or Only Violence Helps where Violence Rules* (1965), apart from the historical and memorial layering of space, I have identified another function of filmic space, linked to the film's treatment of narrative space. *Not Reconciled* is based on Heinrich Böll's novel *Billiards at Half-past Nine* (1959) but it departs from a straightforward adaptation of its plot. The film revolves around the Fähmels, a middle-class German family. The reunion of the son of the family with his old friend

Schrella with whom he fought against fascism in the 30's, sets the stage for a series of recollections that alternate between different historical moments (1910, 1914, 1934) and the present. The intermingling of past, present and even future, alongside a series of formal strategies such as the elliptical narrative, the Brechtian distancing techniques, the elimination of historical referencing in the costumes and the atonal delivery of the script are all mechanisms for creating a text in which the historical time is flattened out, where past, present and future co-exist, a text that function according to Straub as a 'lacunary body'⁴⁸ and which reflects the aim of the filmmaker to comment on the historical continuity of fascism in German society.

For a moment, I would like to focus on the treatment of 'narrative space' in Straub/Huillet's *Not Reconciled*, before excavating a more complex relation to space in their work. According to Barton Byg the film's preoccupation with the aftermath of war and its dissolution of 'narrative space' aims at breaking free from the tyranny of the image (1988: 38-45). As he claims '*... liberation from an oppressive history means liberation from narrative itself, and from the power of the image.*' (ibid: 42). How is then 'narrative space' broken? The framing of the shots, the direction of the pans, the disregard for shot-reverse shot relations are all used to fragment the identification of the viewer with the camera's gaze and to prevent him or her from constructing the cohesion of place that is determinant of 'narrative space'. For example, in the last shot of the film, depicting the Fählmel family reunited, the camera pans not only

⁴⁸As mentioned by the filmmaker in the introduction to Chapter 3: *Not Reconciled* in Roud, R. (1971) *Jean-Marie Straub*. London: Secker and Warburg & BFI.

unconventionally from right to left but also in the opposite direction to the gaze of the characters, thus, inviting the audience to step out of 'narrative space'. Thus, narrative space is not broken and then reconstructed through camera movement or layering of spaces but this is done through the fragmentation of perspectival conventions of cinema spectatorship.

Moreover, and quite importantly, the film instead of creating a cohesion of place, instead of describing a continuity of space through transitions and montage techniques, it uses another formal strategy that locates the film in space. This is achieved by the repetition of St. Severin church in three important moments in the film, framed through open windows or balcony doors and each time featuring a different member of the Fähmel family. When St. Severin church appears for the first time in the film, we are with the son of the family and a young boy at the billiard room of the hotel that he often visits. The son and young boy approach a window in the room, and as they move, the camera follows them to reveal the church in the background of the shot. This is a rare moment in the film when a point-of-view shot is used. The second time the church appears, we see the father of the family with his back to the camera looking through his office window, with the church on view, now closer to us, taking over the middle ground of the shot. Finally, in a very important moment in the film, as the mother of the family (held for years in a mental institution) decides to shoot a government dignitary (her grandson's murderer), she steps into the hotel balcony and the church appears as a looming presence. St. Severin becomes the background of the shot, the enormity of the church overpowers the character, flattens the image

destroying any sense of perspectival space. Thus, as the film unfolds, the church moves from the background of the image to the foreground, moving closer to us, while the sense of place is not constructed by the creation of a coherent spatial framework but from the church placed in the middle of the film as a specific cinematic space, as a unique cinematic world. In the same way that Greenaway explores film as a space to be traversed, in Straub/Huillet's work filmic space is addressed as a specific type of space with its own topography. The church as a specific site of the city combined with particular framing and mixture of camera movements organises the topography of the film and in the process links filmic space to movement and thus treats it as open and relational. Thus, it is the church that organizes the narrative of the film spatially and breaks the illusion of filmic space as being a coherent and continuous space.

The return to the image of St. Severin that results in film being located in space in *Not Reconciled*, it could also be read as a moment where space becomes an autonomous discourse within a larger narrative. The idea of scenery and landscape being autonomous from narrative action is also noted by Paul Willemen in his analysis of a range of independent films that for him constitute a contemporary avant-garde of the 90s, such as *Maeve* (John Davies and Pat Murphy, 1981) or *So that You can Live* (Cinema Action, 1981)(1994: 141-159). Willemen stresses the role of landscape⁴⁹ (which I

⁴⁹Willemen reads landscape not as the background of action (as has been the case in classical film narrative analysis) or the reflection of the psychological state of the protagonist or as a character in the film (as it has been the dominant spatial analysis in narrative film discourses and geography of film) but sees landscape as another 'discursive terrain with the same weight, and

have kept out of the considerations of this research) but also refers more generally to setting or scenery (that includes the cityscape), which he sees as sites, where 'the dynamics of history can be read' (ibid: 142). Willemen's claims that the contemporary avant-garde of the '90s distinguishes itself from the tradition of modernism cinema because it is not interested in deconstructing narrative (as such practice does not reveal the power relations in traditions of representation) or in revealing the operations of film structure (how it constructs meaning) but 'seeks to address an audience's knowledge and experience of history' (ibid: 155). And the place that such audience experiences are addressed, where the dynamics of history could be read is the setting, the scenery, the landscape, the cityscape (ibid). Thus, as Willemen argues avant-garde narrative through the dialogue between scenery and socio-cultural experience mobilises setting as another text (another discursive terrain) among many within the film structure: 'Such a use of setting interacts with the other elements in the text in the same way that, for example, a written text inscribed in an image would interact with it: each of these texts has to be read, and a relation between them is to be constructed in the process of complex seeing ...' (ibid: 156). What then occurs is a splitting between narration and setting, with setting sometimes subordinated to narrative while other times taking the position of an autonomous discourse. Thus, we can observe a parallel between filmic space taking on a certain autonomy in Ozu's films and setting functioning as an autonomous discourse described by Willemen. However, Willemen's formulation differs from the use of space in Ozu, as autonomy of space does not just derive from the breaking

requiring the same attention, as the other discourses that structure and move the text.' (1994: 141).

of narrative causality but from addressing the socio-cultural experience of the audience.

Although, Willemen does not directly address the 'spatial turn', I would argue that his emphasis on how the audience reads history (on their experience and knowledge of it) through specific social-cultural dynamics and spatial formations (though landscape and setting), clearly echoes the relationship between space and the social propagated by spatial theory. Thus, his reading of narrative and scenery and their double discursive function in the contemporary avant-garde is based on the recognition of space as socially constructed. As he points out: 'such an in-between discursive regime offers the possibility, at least, of posing at one and the same time the problems of historicization of social as well as geographical space, together with the problems of representing such spaces'. (ibid: 158). However, Willemen does not elaborate on the formal mechanism that such a hybrid discursive formation takes on.

In the historical and memorial function of filmic space outlined above, filmic space is constructed as a conversation with society, as a documentation of spaces reflecting social structures and processes, a notion that has again and again been highlighted in the processes of the adaptation of spatial theories to films discourses. Thus, we can trace the influence of Lefebvre's theorisation of the social construction of space in the concept of 'spatial documentation' and in the opening up of filmic space to socio-cultural references and historical traces. However, the direct application of spatial theories in non-

fiction theoretical discussions has been limited, involving an attempt to address Foucault's conception of cinema as a heterotopic space and includes the utilisation of spatial frameworks (mainly de Certeau and Virilio) in Kossoff's (2008) theorisation of 'thin' and 'thick' space.

However, I have identified a turn away from the structural function of filmic space and towards a historical and memorial quality of space, a move that could be linked to the recognition of the importance of the limits of narrative that Heath (1981) was suggesting and to the recognition of space as socially constructed (as was the case in the 'spatial turn'). There is a letting go of suppressing or destroying narrative conventions and a move towards interrogating narrative and setting as political and historical formations. Space is not only Snow's any-space-whatever or Greenaway's no-space of cinema, but more intricately identified as an archival and historical space, in Emigholz's and Straub/ Huillet's work. Furthermore, filmic space is not only constructed as a narrative space ready to be broken but is also layered and traversed, while film gets displaced from time and located in space. The discursive function of filmic space is no longer the purity of the filmic structure, but also 'spatial documentation', the historical and memorial layering of space and the organisation of filmic space as a topographic space.

4.3 Redefining Filmic Space

In the previous chapter, I established how filmic space is constructed by centring mechanisms that aim to control movement and I identified that in moments when these orienting operations are broken, filmic space takes on a discursive quality either by being autonomous from narrative or when it is associated with movement. By now, I have explored how the construction of filmic space as action, as narrative space or as character, is further undone in non-fiction films and have distinguished instances when spatial filmic continuity is tarnished. The breaking of spatial continuity is often related to a renewed understanding of space as social construction that reflects political and economic relations, a shift that has been the result of the 'spatial turn' in the study of humanities.

Tracing the thinking operations of space in non-fiction film, I have again emphasized the relationship between filmic space and movement. For example, I noted how by isolating camera movements, filmic space is detached from its human co-ordinates, it becomes any-space-whatever, an undetermined space open to potential and thus to thought. Filmic space as an abstraction can also be the non-space of cinema, which is constructed again by expressing movement not anymore through the mobility of the camera but as a journey across layers of spatial representations. Therefore, filmic space expresses thought by being shaped as a layered spaced opened to movement and exploration. In both cases the abstracted filmic space destroys narrative conventions and their controlling and centring mechanisms and thus

treats space as undetermined, as open to potential, as relational and heterogeneous. However, as in the case of narrative space acting as an abstract container by the continuous decentring of places into backdrops of action (in geography of film), the abstracted and undetermined space, although full of potential for thought, also takes on the quality of an empty container. In the reading of space as heterogeneous and as social construction, filmic space can achieve potential in other ways, as for example by referencing social changes and historical processes.

The movement of the camera and the journey across layers of spatial representations in the non-space of cinema can also be expressed on one hand, as the transition from the still to the moving image and on the other hand, as a movement constructed through a variety of camera positions as a crossing of the space of the film. Working with static and panning shots emphasises the taxonomical and documentary nature of filmic space that inscribe film spaces with historical residues. Thus, filmic space can express thought by combining the abstracted nature of the undetermined filmic space, by addressing different representational histories of the image, that becomes via the documentary, memorial and archival role of the camera a semiotised space impregnated with political and historical references. Furthermore, film can break narrative space not only by detaching space from its co-ordinates but in addition by fragmenting perspectival relations and by treated space as a location where narrative operates. This is a reversal from the handling of space as a tool to create cohesion of place that enables the film to produce continuity of action, since now it is not the linearity of action, the temporal that

drives the function of space, but on the reverse it is film as space that organises the narrative. Thus, filmic space can take on an autonomous function not only against narrative causality but also in addressing the socio-cultural nature of space the camera documents. Furthermore, filmic space is not only the undetermined isolated space of cinema but it is a specific type of space with its own topography that is relational and heterogeneous, combining layers of spaces and representational histories of the image.

In the last chapter, I noted how the notion of filmic space as contained by the frame is opened up by Deleuze's theorisation, which stresses the relationship between filmic space and movement and by the geography of film, which perceives film as a specific type of space that forms part of a cinematic world. The frame becomes even more fluid when we consider filmic space as the non-space of cinema or as a specific type of space with its own topography ready to be traversed and explored. This is a conceptual space that cannot be delineated by the literal limits of the frame. It cannot be paralleled with the edges of the screen. Filmic space cannot collapse inside the frame, it cannot be equated with the rectangular of the cinematic screen and the measurements of the cinematic projection. Thus, by considering film as a particular type of space, as an abstracted space or a cinematic world, I define filmic space as every spatial relation in film, starting from the frame, the image space and moving to off-screen space, as well as narrative space, film as space and the cinematic world. To conclude, filmic space is not just a function of representation, it is not only part of a large mediatic environment but is a particular type of spaces that combines all spatial relations that are present in

film and which by being associated with movement, by being open, relational, heterogeneous and always under construction it contributes to the thinking operations of the moving image.

...

The chapter explored how narrative space and the centring mechanisms of the image can be broken by a variety of strategies that expose filmic space to movement in avant-garde and experimental film. It outlined how filmic space becomes an undetermined space full of potential, a layered space ready to be traversed, or a memorial space layered with historical and social traces and how film functions as a specific type of space governed by its own topography. Finally, the chapter defined filmic space as every spatial relation present in film, which by being open to movement has the potential to influence the thinking operations of the moving image. In the next chapter, I will focus on spatial discourses in the essay film and investigate how space has been addressed through the forms of the travel essay, the city film and the idea of the essay film as an imaginary topography. I will conclude by exploring how filmic space opens to movement in the essayistic thinking modality and its role in shaping essayistic spatial imagination.

CHAPTER 5: ESSAYISTIC FILMIC SPACE

Chapter 5 maps the relationship between space and essay film. It explores the connection between movement and filmic space in a variety of contemporary essay films by identifying three thematic modes: the travel essay, the city film and the notion of the essay film as an imaginary topography. The chapter explores how filmic space functions in these essayistic categories and identifies strategies utilised to express spatial thinking. It highlights the persistence of the voice-over narration as the location of thinking in essay film and emphasises the limitation it poses for spatial thinking. The chapter contemplates on how the notion established in the previous chapter of an open, heterogeneous, relational and always under construction filmic space can assert the importance of space in thinking operations of the essay film. The research concludes with a framework for the function of filmic space in the thinking modality of the essay film and by outlining how such thinking is expressed in the film *My Pink City*.

5.1 Essayistic Spaces

In the previous chapters, I established that movement in film (from the movement of the camera to the circulation of mediascapes) is an expression of cinematic spatiality. For example, I have argued in Chapter 3 that the movement of cinema has been tamed in fiction film by an attempt to create a centred narrative space. In addition, I have demonstrated how with the 'spatial turn' in film studies global mobility as a social phenomenon has been addressed in narrative film producing fragmented, layered and enclosed spaces. On the other hand in Chapter 4, I have emphasised how filmic space can become a discursive terrain in avant-garde practices by creating spatial discontinuities that free it from its co-ordinates or by taking on an autonomous function. Furthermore, I have stressed how the relationship between movement and space is expressed as the crossing of filmic space either by the movement of the camera or as the layering of diverse spaces. I have thus argued that filmic space can act as a thinking vehicle in moving image practices when it is associated with movement and when it is open heterogeneous, relational and always under construction.

The essay film, since as I have already defined in Chapter 1 combines a variety of thinking operations in its thinking modality, it offers the possibility of merging many operations of filmic space. Addressing filmic space as a character, reflecting issues of migration and mobility, stressing the layered nature of the cinematic world, alongside concerns about the movement of cinema could all potentially converge in the essayistic thinking modality as layered discursive operations. Such diversity of operations makes the

identification of overall spatial strategies in the essay film difficult. However in this section contemplating on a series of contemporary essay films, I have identified three overall concerns; the notion of the travel essay, the examination of the ideological and social constructions of urban space in the city film and the construction of essayistic filmic space as an imaginary topography. However, since the aim of the research is not to produce an exhaustive typology of space representations in essay films or to explore the metonymic function of space but to analyse the function of spatial thinking, what follows is a tentative genealogy of ways of thinking about and through space in the essay film, an exploration of the formal strategies of such thinking and an evaluation of the use of spatial theories in the analysis of essay film.

Travel Essays

The dominant spatial expression of the essay film is the form of the travel essay. In essay film the travelling mode acts as a mechanism for combining a variety of spaces produced by global movement and for addressing issues of globalisation, transnational mobility and diasporic subjectivity by bringing into relation disparate geographical locations. These diverse spaces are pieced together not by the continuity of narrative space but through the travelling form and a reflexive subjectivity. Essayist travels take many forms, from the explorer of extreme geographical locations (Werner Herzog, *Fata Morgana*, (1971), to the cosmopolitan traveller (Chris Marker, *Sunless*, 1983), from travelling as an effect of colonial legacies and transnational borders (Kidlat Tahimic, *The Perfumed Nightmares* 1977), to the mobile diasporic subjectivity

(Atom Egoyan, *Calendar*, 1993; Joram ten Brink, *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales*, 1996), and the female essayist on the road (Agnès Varda, *The Glaneurs & I*, 2000) or the poetic exploration of the self (Alexander Sokurov, *Elegy of a Voyage*, 2001). Furthermore, recent travel essays have focussed on apocalyptic spaces through the metaphors of space travel and alien worlds, as for example Werner Herzog's *Deep Blue Yonder* (2005), Otolith Group's *Otolith I, 2, 3*, (2003, 2007, 2009) and Ben Rivers' *Slow Action* (2010).

In the limited discussion of space in essayistic literature, the travel essay is the only essayistic spatial expression that has been consciously addressed (Biemann, 2003; Corrigan, 2011). For example, Corrigan traces a lineage of films that deal with the exploration and transformation of the self through scattered experiential encounters, through the 'being elsewhere' and through travelling (2011: 104-130). However, unlike the linear journeys portrayed in classical fiction-films, Corrigan argues that the travel essay performs the fragmentation of both the journey and the self (ibid). Thus, the exploration of the shifting cultural and national boundaries becomes a metaphor for addressing how changing geographies produce fluid, hybrid, and transnational subjectivities (ibid). Similarly, Ursula Biemann (2003a) identifies the form of the travel diary that utilises the monologue of the essayistic traveller as the central mechanism in exploring foreign lands (2003a: 8-10). Since Biemann's main interest is the notion of the transnational essay, she also expands the field of reference by addressing another group of films that deal with mobility, movement and migration through an essayistic voice that

speaks 'from a position of placelessness' (ibid: 10). In both Corrigan's and Biemann's analysis of the travel essay, the essayistic thought is expressed via an epistolary voice-over and through the exploration of diverse locations. Thus, for both Corrigan and Biemann the travel form is used not only in order to explore shifting geographical boundaries but also to address post-colonial, diasporic and transnational subjectivities.

Essayistic travel focusing on diverse and shifting geographical locations often takes the form of a fragmented or looped journey. The fragmentation of the journey, reflecting new dispersed organisations of space has also been noted as part of the undoing of the movement-image after the Second World War, in the Deleuzian cinematic universe. (Deleuze, 1986: 214). However, if the scattered voyage is not only the terrain of the essay film, since Deleuze assigns it to Italian neo-realism and the French New Wave, what then makes the essayistic travel a specific expression of thinking as a destabilisation of the self? This according to Corrigan is located in the epistolary narration, which he links to the tradition of travel writing, a literary mode based on documenting explorations and discoveries of new spaces and lands (that sometimes also involves a discovery of the self) (2011: 112-113). However, in essayistic travel is not only the journey that is fragmented but also in the epistolary narration expressed as a voice-over, the conversations are dislocated, creating gaps between the spaces traversed and the experiences of the traveller, that is left suspended, unable to find a subjective home. Thus, according to Corrigan essayist film travels '... create spatial puzzles that demand continual effort for the essayistic explorer to think through and out of

these geographies, geographies that at the same time frustrate those efforts to map and locate the self in them' (ibid: 120-121).

The description of the travel essay as expressing thought in the gap between an epistolary voice-over and disperse geographical locations, echoes the description of 'horizontal montage' in Bazin's analysis of Chris Marker's *Letters from Siberia* (1957) as the gap between what is said and what is seen, which as I have already identified, is one of the many functions of the interstice in the essayistic thinking. The travel form and the epistolary voice-over is also a recurrent motif in Marker's oeuvre, which in *Sans Soleil* (1983) takes the form of a female voice reading letters sent from Europe by the fictional author Sandor Krasna that might or might not be the cameraman of the film. Having acquired a seminal status as one of the most important essay films of our times, *Sans Soleil's* spatial discourse lies in the form of a disjointed cosmopolitan journey. The camera traverses a variety of disparate geographical locations, the spaces of Japan, Iceland, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde Islands, not as a way of identifying contrasts within different landscapes but as a journey to 'the extreme poles of survival'⁵⁰. Although, the film follows the pattern of excursion, a journey that returns to the starting point that Corrigan identified, nonetheless it is more concerned with exploring cultural flows in relation to memory, thus the spaces traversed act as a metaphor for temporal displacement. Marker's spatial thinking is expressed in the non-linear dislocated journey, that loops and returns and an epistolary

⁵⁰ Quote from the script of *Sans Soleil* (1983).

mode of address, a fictional narrator acting as mask or metaphor for the subjective presence of the filmmaker.

However, not all travel essays utilise an epistolary narration as a way of reflecting on the spaces traversed but use a more personal voice-over that directly address the audience, echoing the Brechtian distancing technique. The filmmaker being present in the film (a strategy that is also used in first person filmmaking and in contemporary documentaries) and directly inscribing his/hers subjectivity in the essayistic travel essay is a pattern that surfaces in a series of films that deal with globalisation and mobility. Thus, from the cosmopolitan journeys of Marker, essayistic voyages open up to transnational territories, addressing the process of globalisation, the homogenisation of space and the destruction of specific locales, in films that address post-colonial discourses, the political dimension of places and the diasporic experience. For example, Kidlat Tahimic's *Perfumed Nightmares* (1977), both described as a first person film and read as part of the Third Cinema movement, is concerned with the process of neo-colonialism in his native Philippines. The filmmaker inscribes himself in the grain of the film by becoming his protagonist. The film describes his life in a rural village, while dreaming of America and the West, and driving a jitney (an American army jeep ornately refashioned as a public bus). The process of the film's making becomes its formal structure, with the filmmaker protagonist being in constant dialogue with the material representations and spaces of the West. Blending pastiche and textual forms, Tahimic's eventual travel to the West (Paris and Germany) becomes the source of disenchantment, and forms the basis for a

critique on globalisation. In the end of the film, Tahimic returns home, only to proclaim his own independence. *Perfumed Nightmares* is an essay film that uses again the form of travelling excursion in order to build a discourse where the shifting identity of the protagonist is mapped and measured against a dialogic relation with the spaces of the world. However, his film is also interesting in its use of different archive material as cinematic quotes that reflect specific geographical locations.

On the other hand, Atom Egoyan's *Calendar* (1993) focuses on the relation of the diasporic subject with the idea of the homeland. Similar to Tahimic, Egoyan highlights his own subjective presence in the film by playing the role of a photographer whose assignment is to take twelve pictures of historic sites in the newly constituted Republic of Armenia for a calendar. Arsinée Khanjian plays his wife, guide and interpreter. The film takes place between Armenia where the frame captures an idealised postcard image of the ruinous churches and Toronto, where Egoyan interviews a series of actresses from different ethnic backgrounds for a role in his film. In the movement between the nostalgic spaces of the ruinous homeland and the cosmopolitan encounters of Toronto, the film both constructs and maps the spaces of diasporic subjectivity. In *Perfumed Nightmares* the journey moves from the homeland to a cosmopolitan West only to return back to the familiar, while *Calendar* juxtaposes two spaces that reflect the fluid and unstable identity of the filmmaker protagonist. Although the movement of the voyage differs, both films depart from the fictional voice-over that locates the subjectivity of the author as disembodiment as both filmmakers literally insert themselves in the

space of the film. However, in both films, as in Marker's work, the interstice still functions as the gap between image and voice, which as I will argue provides a limited understanding of the discursive spatiality of the essayistic.

The epistolary narration and the personal voice-over is not the only way that diverse geographical locations can be explored in the travel essay. For example, Joram ten Brink's *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales* fragments the literary tone of the letter by referencing different types of textual sources (such as scientific texts or educational manuals). The film acting as a travel diary is compiled from footage collected by the filmmaker over 10 years, alongside a diverse range of found and archive material. It traverses a variety of geographical locations and is punctuated by short narrations utilising different textual sources and voices and by a musical soundtrack. The filmmaker's presence inside the film is not only inscribed by his personal voice narrating a series of tales about men that could not feel but also through certain archive material and specific images. The role of the voice-over is further complicated by the use of another male voice in an English Language audio lesson recording, a fragment that is repeated throughout the film and which becomes a metaphor for the location of the dominant Western gaze. Thus, the film in its engagement with disparate geographical locations and political and social issues questions the position of the cosmopolitan traveller, while at the same time addressing the mobile diasporic subject. The film is important because by using a variety of auditory and visual material it opens up the function of the interstice to its full potential. Thus, the thinking operations of the travel essay are not only located in the gap between voice

and image but now the interstice is expressed as the gap between different types of images and archive material, between the different voice-overs, or the gap between voice-over and soundtrack or the gap between image and sound.

City Films

Apart from being travelogues, another range of contemporary essay films specifically question the spatial transformation of urban environments, a thematic preoccupation that has its foundation in the tradition of the 'city film' of the 1920's [*The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929); *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* (1927); *Manhatta* (1921); *Rien que les heures au Paris?* (1926)]. Although in academic literature, the 'city film', also referred as the 'city symphony', has mainly been discussed in relation to the documentary tradition (Renov, 1993: 12-37; Beattie, 2008: 32-58), theorisations of the essay film, explored in detail in Chapter 1, do highlight the city film's discursive complexity and pinpoint to Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) as a seminal moment in the development of the essayistic film form (ten Brink, 1999; Corrigan, 2011). In terms of their documentary capacity, Renov interprets the city film as part of the 'expressive' modality of documentary and argues that 'city symphony' films utilise the 'powers of expressing in the service of historical imagination' (Renov, 1993: 33). However, infused with a kaleidoscopic, fluid and rhythmical visual style early city films highlight daily life and movement in the city, not as an expressive and subjective way of documenting the city, but as a type of critical flâneury,

that examines the effect of the speed of time and class and gender relations in the new environments of modernity (ten Brink, 1999; Corrigan, 2011). Recent essay films by utilising the city as a platform for reflecting on the social production of space and as a way of revealing the power relations inscribed in the processes of urban regeneration question the position of the 'city film' as the discourse of urban modernity. Issues of urban alienation, the ruinous modern infrastructure, urban transformation and the cinematic deconstruction of the city are highlighted in films such as Chantal Ackerman's *News from Home* (1977); Patrick Keiller's *London* (1994), Hito Steyerl's *The Empty Centre* (1998) and Thomas Andersen's *L.A Plays Itself* (2003). As the thematic of these essay films moves away from the early celebration of the political and ideological potential of the modern city (as for example in Vertov's work) towards a critique of the production of urban space, the strategies used to express spatial imagination also shift; the dynamic montage, the criss-crossing of the city punctuated by the daily life of its inhabitants is now replaced by static camera shots devoid of any human presence, while the rhythmical musical score gives way to an epistolary narration or to a personal voice-over.

Empty static shots that highlight architectural details and an epistolary narration is utilised by British filmmaker Patrick Keiller's in his trilogy *London* (1994), *Robinson in Space* (1997), and *Robinson in Ruins* (2010). The trilogy highlights the social production of space and the transformation of the city by bringing together the form of the travel essay discussed in the previous section with the form of the city film. In all three films an anonymous friend

accompanies the eponymous Robinson, as he travels across the city of London (in *London*), across the sites and smaller cities of contemporary England (in *Robinson in Space*) and finally across the suburban stretches surrounding London (in *Robinson in Ruins*). The anonymous companion acts as a metaphorical figure, commenting on their conversations, contemplations and ideas on the spaces they traverse. As the travellers move through a dizzying variety of spaces, the camera always framing them as static shots, the film comments on the consumer packaging of space, on the process and failures of modernity, creating a landscape where historical and social layers coexist, a strategy that echoes the memorial function of spatial thinking that I identified in the previous chapter.

Kieller's trilogy is punctuated with literary and philosophical quotes, often referencing Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, thus inviting the viewer to read the work through this theoretical framework. It is not surprising then that Corrigan attempts to interpret Kieller's work through Lefebvre's 'trialectics' of space (Corrigan, 2011: 118-119). Lefebvre's trialectic structure (explored in detail in Chapter 2) constructed by the interaction between perceived, conceived and lived space, finds its cinematic equivalent in Kieller's work, where filmic space is produced by the perceived spaces of travel, the subjective questioning of those spaces and their inhabitation by the suspended travelling subject. As Corrigan comments:

'Robinson in Space is an exceptionally mobile, ironic and critical interlocking of those spaces as the travellers overlay lived experiences, their geographic

representations, and the struggle to infuse them with shapes, ideas, and value, a struggle that ultimately fails to cohere as a “dwelling” and leaves Robinson a drifting subject in both a figurative and a real outer space.’ (2011: 119).

However, Corrigan fails to recognise that Kieller’s juxtaposition of static camera shots with a detailed travelling reflection of the spaces traversed, although creating gaps and disjunctions, it equates the level of the ‘conceived’ space (the geometrical representations of ideological systems) with the frame, as the slice of space recorded by the camera. Thus, the only way left to account for ‘the perceived’ and ‘lived’ space is through the voice-over narration, which reduces the ability of the essay film to create other types of spatial thinking in relation to the movement of the camera. Unlike, the jarring static shots of Emigholz’s that produce a displacement of a centred vision and his ‘taxonomical’ structure that reveals a historical and memorial sensibility, the static shots of Kieller present themselves to us almost as evidence of the historical complexities of space, they literary are a slice of space, a fragment against which historical facts, personal thoughts and philosophical ideas are tested. Nonetheless, the texture of the scripted voice and the device of the fictional narrator do create displacements and dislocations, bringing to the surface the instability of Lefebvre’s structure, the ways in which the spaces of the lived and the imaginary are continuously under attack by ‘conceived’ space that attempts to map them into geometrical patterns. However, my view is that in Kieller’s work the static camera shots function in a manner that equates filmic space with the space of representation, in the same way than

early film did, and thus limits its potential to express thought. Once again spatial thinking as the function of the interstice is expressed in the gap between the static image and the voice-over. Furthermore, in Keiller's work the subjective presence of the filmmaker, the way she/he inhabits the work and addresses the audience is located solely in the voice-over, while the static shots provide a mirror against which ideas are tested. However, as in Vertov's voiceless *The Man with a Movie Camera*, as already noted in ten Brink's travel essay *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales* and as already discussed in Chapter 1, subjective presence can be inscribed in the essay film via a plethora of visual and textual strategies and motifs.

A film that locates the presence of the filmmaker in the empty fixed shots of the city by subverting the use of the epistolary voice-over is Chantal Akerman's *News from Home* (1977). The work stays firmly fixed in a strict and geometrical view of the public spaces of New York, intercut with a limited number of pans and two tracking shots in the end of the film, while the filmmaker's voice reads her mother's letter with news from back home in Belgium. By framing New York as a geometrical urban space, Ackerman comments both on the touristic construction of cityscapes as postcard views, while at the same time, this rigorous composition highlights the absent essayistic subject. *News from Home* articulates a displaced female subjectivity through the bridging of the familial domestic that is far away with a strict and enclosed framing of the urban public space. Unlike the subjectivity of the filmmaker located in the disembodied voice-over or in the literal presence of the filmmaker that dominates the essay films discussed so far, in

News from Home the filmmaker's presence lies in the image itself, in the strict geometrical patterns of the city, that reflect her feelings of alienation. Thus, the strategy of the epistolary narration as a subjective presence and as a commentary on the image is reversed and is now the image that carries the displaced female subjectivity and comments on the familiar domestic that the voice-over describes. This reversal complicates the role of the voice-over, as Margulies describes: 'The alienation between image and sound parallels the disjunction between the mother's space of letter writing and Akerman's space of performance – between the foreign reality and New York. Intermittently muffled by the sound of the city, the intimacy, warmth of the text claim closeness but spell distance.' (Margulies, 1996: 152). However, although the film reverses the role of the epistolary narration by placing the filmmaker inside the image, its thinking operations are still expressed as the dislocation between image and sound, which once more limits the function of the interstice to what is said and what is seen.

News from Home provides an example in which spatial imagination, the shots of the empty city, the constructed filmic space becomes the location where the subjectivity of the filmmaker is projected. In addition by framing the city through geometrical postcard views, the film poses questions regarding the popular media construction of the city and its consumption. The issue of the cinematic construction of cityscapes has already been addressed in Chapter 3 both in fiction films that shape the way cities are perceived by its inhabitants and when film becomes part of a wider media scape, of a cinematic world proposed in the geography of film. Fragments of films, television narratives,

action heroes, spectacular landscapes, glorified urban celebrations, documentary explorations create a universe, a world of images and spaces that are now part of our memory banks, our imaginary and thus are in a continuous dialogue with real world spaces and lived experiences.

The cinematic world, as the accumulation of media images could also be linked to the notion of the clichés, described by Deleuze as the floating moving images circulating in the external world, entering people's mind and thus becoming part of their mental world (1986: 212-219). However, in Deleuze's choice of word (the cliché) and in most considerations of the accumulation of dominant media representations, the worlds' mediascapes are usually ascribed an affirmative function, perpetuating the commodification of the world and its consumption as image. However, in moving image practices mediascapes could be used normative as a parodying and pastiche of forms or radically as a critique of the construction of the image and of media institutions. For example, Deleuze argues that the director has '... the chance to extract an Image from all the clichés and to set it up against them. On the condition, however, of there being an aesthetic and political project capable of constituting a positive enterprise.' (ibid: 214-215). Thus, my view is that in essayistic discourse archive material, forming mediascapes can take a radical function by being addressed as part of the cinematic word, as part of a mobile and flexible filmic space that is in constant relation with other media representations of space and the spaces of the world.

In terms of the essay film, one of the ways that the cinematic world has been addressed is through the use of heterogeneous filmic sources and archival material as visual quotes. As I already noted, *Perfumed Nightmares* uses archive material that represent different textual forms as a way of reference the geographical locations of the West, while in *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales* found images are in dialogue with the diverse locations the filmmaker crosses. The appropriation of cinematic representations is pushed to extreme in Tom Andersen's *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003) that explores how the city of Los Angeles has been represented in Hollywood films. The film is entirely constructed of film fragments juxtaposed with a voice-over narration that comments on the construction of the city through the movies. The film reveals how over the years the cityscape of Los Angeles has acted as the background for a range of films, actually depicting other cities and countries, thus acquiring the status of the everyplace of action. Commenting on the mingling of reality with representation, the film creates a spatial discourse by exploring how the city has been constructed and produced by filmic space, revealing in the process the commodification of its spaces, as both filmic locations and tourist attractions. *Los Angeles Plays Itself* links cinematic representations of the city (filmic spaces that will have either wise stayed purely placed within other filmic structures) with the realities of the city and the transformation of city life, working on in a serial fashion as in Emigholz's taxonomical examination of *Sullivan Banks*. The film treats the archive material it quotes as part of the cinematic world and addresses filmic space as open and heterogeneous space that is in relation with other filmic spaces and representations. Thus it explores the commodification of urban

space through a reflection on the actual construction of screenscapes by filmic spaces.

Essay film as Imaginary Topography

The work of the video essayist Ursula Biemann provides another example of the spatial possibilities of the essay film beyond the function of travel essay and the city film. As I have already noted Biemann stresses the transitional quality of the essay film as a mediation of media and environments (Biemann, 2003a). Her single screen essay works explore how conditions of global mobility impact on gender representations and on female sexuality. For example *Performing the Border* (1999) focuses on female workers on the high-tech factories in the Mexican-US border town of Ciudad Juarez, while *Remote Sensing* (2001) investigates the global sex trade. In her writings, Biemann describes how diverse representations of space move beyond their documentary quality by being put into relation and layered into the theoretical and imaginary platform created by essayistic discourse (2003b: 83-89). Thus, the ability of the essay film to juxtapose, to layer and compare various spaces transforms the diverse locations and transnational spaces of her videos when brought into the geography of the essay film (ibid). In her work, essay film acts as a 'videographic space', it is a particular type of space that opens up the meaning of disparate locales, so that new understandings of space could be produced (ibid). As she argues: 'In every work, essayists install this kind of space. We can think of it as an imaginary topography, on which all kinds of thoughts and events taking place in various sites and non-sites experience a

spatial order.’(Biemann, 2003b: 85). Thus, apart from the transitional, Biemann is also interested in the transnational as a conceptual quality that reflects the spatial function of the video essay and metaphorically equates the essay form with transnationalism by highlighting both as process that produce dislocations (ibid). In Biemann’s understanding the essay film takes on the quality of being a particular type of space, similarly to the conception of filmic space as a space governed by its own topography that I have identified in the work of Greenaway and Straub/Huillet, and which acts as a platform that brings together a variety of spaces.

The essay form as an imaginary topography in Biemann’s work becomes a platform for questioning the gendered conditions of transnational movement from a multiplicity of perspectives and essayistic space functions as a mechanism for inscribing a geographical female subjectivity. For example in *Performing the Border* (1999) she critiques the notion of the cosmopolitan traveller as the positive image of globalisation by contrasting it with the condition of the Mexican female worker in a transnational border setting. However, the mechanism that brings together these different spaces and multiple discourses is once again the voice-over narration. The voice-over does not take the form of the epistolary tone or a personal monologue but based on a variety of textual material, it represents diverse points-of-views. Thus, once the thinking function of the interstice operates in the film as the gap between image and voice.

Beimann produces a much more layered discourse in the film *Remote Sensing* (2001), where she literally and metaphorically maps the multiple positions of the female sex workers. Apart from the use of the voice-over that explores the construction of the sexualised female body in patriarchal and capitalist structures, the film is punctuated by moments when the screen is split into four, presenting interviews of women illegally trafficked narrating their trajectories and which coexist with satellite images and spatial data. Thus, the interstice in the thinking operation of the work functions now as the gap between different types of images and between image and text, as the gap between the image of the woman and satellite images. The images produced by new optical technologies and which represent a specific visual construction of a controlled and measured space are infused in *Remote Sensing* with personal and local perspectives. Thus, the women's narrated trajectories are literally reflected and refracted onto the images of satellite control. The conjunction of different spaces in Beimann's work, her imaginary topography apart from addressing film as a particular type of space, it also references the notion of the essay film as a space where many discursive functions converge. However, in her work the convergence functions as the combination and juxtaposition of diverse geographical spaces and different visual representational systems and does not address the different discursive logics and the thinking operations of the image. Furthermore, this convergence operates as a looking in, as a merging of spaces in the non-space of the film, treating essayistic filmic space as a centring mechanism that organises complexities by fixing them down.

In this chapter, I have sketched out the relationship between space and essay film, as a travel essay, a city film and as an imaginary topography. I noted that in the form of the travel essay, essayistic thought is mainly expressed as the interstice between a disembodied voice-over narration, the literal presence of the filmmaker and unstable spaces and sifting borders. The travel essay films, mentioned above, share a series of common strategies, such as the form of the excursion as looped journey and the use of epistolary narration, combined often with the use of a factious narrator (*Sans Soleil*, *London*, *Robinson in Space*, *Robinson in Ruins*, *Otolith 1, 2 and 3*). In these examples, essayistic thinking is expressed as a journey through fragmented spaces that is juxtaposed with a disembodied and fluid self. Moreover, the journeys combine a range of geographies, exploring transnational and diasporic spaces, while sometimes the subjectivity of the filmmaker is not expressed through the disembodiment of the voice-over but by the filmmaker now becoming present in flow of the film, as in Tahimic's and Egoyan's work. However, I stressed how in ten Brink's *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales* the filmmaker is inscribed in the film not only through the voice-over but also by certain images and how the film opens up the function of the interstice to the relations between diverse auditory and visual material.

I also noted how contemporary essay films question the city film as the discourse on modernity by addressing the social role of space. City films are often based on the mode of the travelling subject and the travel diary that expresses thought in the interstice between voice-over and static shots, as in Chantal Ackerman's *News from Home* (1977) and Patrick Keiller's *London*

(1994). Reflecting both on the travel form and on Kieller's work Corrigan privileges the epistolary narration and the looped journeying as the spatial expression of the essayistic. However, his limited definition of essayistic thinking as the expression of subjective experience in the public arena closes in the possibility of the essay film to other forms of spatial thinking that I have identified in the previous chapters. Thus, although Corrigan treats space as a major thematic thread in essayistic thinking and applies spatial theories in his analysis, in his theorisation filmic space mainly acts as a mirror (in the similar way to being background in narrative film) for the subjectivity of the author. In Ackerman's work I identified a moment when the subjective presence of the filmmaker is reversed, and is now expressed through the image, rather than through the voice-over or dialogue or other textual forms.

Finally, another common thread in the exploration of space in essay film is the use of textual layers (archive film or found footage) and different representational systems (satellite images, fiction films, newsreels and photographic material) that are either combined with newly filmed sources (*Perfumed Nightmares*, *The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales*, *Remote Sensing*) or are solely collaged together (*Los Angeles Plays itself*). By combining and juxtaposing diverse visual material these films open up the essayist discourse to the movement of the cinematic world, and thus address filmic space as open, relational and heterogeneous. However, their thinking operations are still mainly structured as the interstice between voice-over and image, apart from the Brink's work that opens up the function of the interstice to many visual and auditory sources. In Biemann's work the function of the

interstice also expands to include the relationship between other textual layers and representational systems, while in her work essay film becomes a platform for the convergence of different spaces (*Remote Sensing*). However, her imaginary topography treats filmic space as a way of locking in different discourses and ideas in the discursive space of the essayistic.

5.2 Essayistic Filmic Space as a Location of Thought

In my exploration of space in essayistic film discourse, I identified spatial concerns in the form of the travel essay and the city film, as well as the conception of the essay film as an imaginary topography. I highlighted how these spatial discourses express thought by privileging the function of the interstice as the gap between image and voice-over. In the beginning of the research, I noted how thinking operations in the moving image have mainly been associated with its ability to move in time, while the contribution of the spatial imagination in cinematic thought has not been explored. I also highlighted how the notion of the interstice as a thinking mechanism of moving image practices is already a spatial term, which operates as the spacing, as the gap between images and sounds, text and other images, affection and action. Since my intention in this section is not to simply account for an element of spatiality in essay film or to explore how it thinks about shifting understandings and experiences of space but also to consider filmic space as important as time in its thinking operations, I will now argue that the essay film does not only express spatial thinking as a travel essay, a city film, as an imaginary topography or through the interstice between voice-over and image but also by addressing filmic space as a location where thinking occurs. Thus, I will conclude the chapter by proposing a framework for filmic space operations in the thinking modality of the essay film and by outlining how such thinking is expressed in the film *My Pink City* (2014) that forms the dialogic pole in this practice-based research.

On one hand, I have argued in Chapter 4, that filmic space contributes to the thinking operation of the image when it is related to movement and when it is open, relational, heterogeneous, and always under construction. On the other hand, as I have explored in Chapter 1, essayist thinking combines many discursive logics in its thinking modality. Thus based on the above, I can conclude that filmic space operates in essay film by addressing many discursive logics and adopting many spatial strategies. The essay film expresses thought by comparing and juxtaposing diverse visual and auditory material within its structure and thus making visible functions of the image that were hidden or obscured. Considering this in terms of an open and fluid filmic space that has its own topography, then essayistic filmic space can be described as a fragmented space that relates to other discursive spaces, other visual forms and genres and addresses the mobility of the cinematic world. In this sense, the function of essayistic thinking as an interstice between different discursive logics is translated as a filmic space that has constructed in the gap between different functions, as for example the spacing between narrative space and undetermined space, between a memorial space and cinematic world. Furthermore, since the essayistic merges various thinking modalities, including conscious and unconscious thought, then essayistic filmic space can also reflect both on physical and mental space.

The cinematic world placed in the taxonomy of the essay film in dialogue with other spaces becomes a mechanism for reflecting on the construction of the image and for questioning the role of media institutions and distribution economies. Moreover, the essayistic filming space reflects the dialogic

modality of the filmmaker being placed inside the work and addressing an audience, by becoming a space where subjectivities (both of the filmmaker and audience) are questioned and where shifting experiences of being in the world are layered. The filmmaker is now placed inside the space of the film, and is able to traverse and explore its topography. Therefore, essayistic filmic space by locating authorial experience within the film structure and within its dialogic nature, it can also address an unstable viewing subject through space. One of the political implications of the essayistic modality lies in its ability to reflect on its own thinking procedures by searching for thought that is inherent in the image. This is translated as an essayistic thinking topography where spatial thinking that is internal to the image is located in the mobile, open, relational and heterogeneous filmic space. In other words, in essayistic thinking filmic space function as the site, as the location, where spatial imagination inherent in the image occurs.

Spatial Imagination in *My Pink City*

I have already investigated in Chapter 1 how the essayistic modality of *My Pink City* expands the understanding of the essay film by adopting the many thinking operations of the essayistic and expressing them as interstices between images, sounds and discursive logics. In this chapter, I have also demonstrated how the centrality of the interstice, which precisely functions as a spacing between heterogeneous material and representational systems points to the importance of the spatial in the expression of essayistic thought. In this final section, I will explore in detail how spatial imagination functions in

the essay film *My Pink City*, which has critically informed the theoretical framework of the written thesis and demonstrate how the film contributes to a reconsideration of the role of filmic space in the thinking operations of the moving image.

My Pink City is an essay film that utilises a heterogeneity of material and organises them into a spiral and mirroring structure, with its core, the central section of the film portraying the living room of a house in the suburb of Zeytun. The film by being constructed as mirror that opens up from the centre to its edges and by moving from the public spaces of the city to the private space of the house, maps, out of fractured reality, a portrait of a post-Soviet space. However, it departs from the position of the contemporary city film as a commentary on the social production of urban space, and employs the city of Yerevan and the context of the post-Soviet transition and stresses the spatial thinking operations of the essayistic thinking modality as a strategy for questioning the construction and consumption of urban space as both conditions of Soviet and capitalist modernity. This is achieved in the film by addressing spatial thinking as the interstice between the space of the city and the space of the film. For example, this double reflection is expressed in the thinking modality of the film as the mirroring between the way the city organises urban movements and flows and the way the image directs the gaze, as well as between the ways the city is symbolically constructed in order to be consumed and the way the moving image is constructed and consumed. The displacement and mirroring created by the interstices between the city and the film is also expressed as the spacing between

diverse discursive logics, in the relationship between different textual material and the cinematic world, the relationship between image and sound, and in the subjective positioning of the filmmaker inside the work.

My Pink City not only explores the urban transformation of the city of Yerevan by focussing on the militarisation of public space and the gendered divisions in the experience of the city but it is also a specific type of space that constructs its own topography. This topography is expressed as the movement from the public spaces of the city to a detached house with a garden in the suburb of Zeytun. Although the film does not traverse diverse geographic locations, one of the many ways that its filmic space opens up to movement is through the juxtaposition of public spaces with the private space of the house. However, each time the film returns to the house, it enters a different room, and thus a different space. In this way stasis becomes again movement. Zeytun House is isolated in the geography of the city and this is echoed in the geography of the film. Thus, the Zeytun House sequences although following a centring narrative editing style by being located as a repetition and by becoming isolated in the space of the film, they take on the function of an undetermined space. This is a radical departure from the idea that a centred narrative space can only create a homogenous space of narrative action, since in the film it is precisely such space that by its purposeful location in the topography of the film opens up filmic space to movement and thought.

Apart from the construction and deconstruction of narrative space in the Zeytun House sequences, *My Pink City* utilises a series of other spatial thinking strategies that I identified in Chapter 3 and 4, such as emptied out undetermined spaces, memorial spaces layered with historical traces, and also by addressing space at some points as a character, or directing the spectatorial gaze and breaking perspectival relations, or by traversing the space of the film as a layered cinematic world. These spatial strategies operate in the film as an interstice between different discursive logics, as for example in the gap between a taxonomical space in the sequence of shots depicting the new gas pipe infrastructure, which echo the representational logic of documentary photography and the surrealist imagination as expressed in the last sequence where an Indian-Soviet production enters the space of the film and gets connected with the public space of the city.

My Pink City adopts the many ways that filmic space can operate in the moving image and absorbs them in its thinking operations. In the film the interstice between types of spatial thinking is also expressed as the gap between a memorial space constructed in some of the public spaces sequences, and the narrative space of Zeytun House, which as I have explained is also transformed by being located in the topography of the film into an undetermined space. Finally, this interstice is expressed as movement between the purposefully filmed contemporary footage of life in the city and the filmic spaces of the past inscribed in archive material. This relation constructs the film as a space to be traversed, as a layered space that moves from archival cinematic representations to recently filmed footage. The

reflection of the spatial memories of the city via the exploration of the cinematic world in the topography of the film results in revealing the dominant ideological positions latent in the archive material. And these hidden layers of meaning are further subverted through the displacement created in the interstice between the cinematic world and the public memorial spaces of the city.

It is also important to point out here that the function of spacing between the different discursive logics, textual sources and types of spatial thinking in the topography of the film also shapes the function of the interstice as the spacing between visual and auditory material, as the gap between image and sound. As I have already discussed in Chapter 1, on the level of the image, the film utilises a variety of sources from the filmmaker's own footage, to archive material, found footage and footage filmed through television sets. On the level of the sound, the film does not rely on a voice-over narration but also layers many sound qualities, including three different female voices on short voice-over narrations, contemporary Armenian songs either recorded from TV or used as a soundtrack, as well as location sounds and soundscapes from a sound library. The diverse visual and auditory material are continuously connected in the film through interstices that function as dislocations between sound and image.

As I have explained in detail in Chapter 1, one of the problems in the theorisation of the thinking operates in essay film is the dominance of the voice-over narration as the subjective presence of the filmmaker. This is

expressed in many essay films as an interstice between image and voice, which limits the use of gaps between images and other types of sounds in the expression of essayistic thinking. Deleuze apart from foregrounding the many functions of the interstice in *Cinema 2* (1989) has also fore-grounded the dislocation of sound and image as one of the clearest expressions of ideas in cinema. As he points out in the paper '*Having an Idea in Cinema*': 'A voice speaks of something. Something is spoken of. At the same time, we are made to see something else. And finally, what is spoken of is *under* what we are made to see... This can be restated: speech rises into the air, while the visible ground sinks farther and farther. Or rather, while this speech rises into the air, what it speaks of sinks under the ground.'⁵¹ (Deleuze, 1998: 16). Although Deleuze points to the profound relation between image and sound in the creation of ideas in cinema, his example still rests in the use of the voice. However, *My Pink City* utilises the dislocation of image and sound as a way of creating its cinematic topography not only on the level of the voice but in all the different levels and textures of visual and auditory material that it employs. Therefore, apart from stressing the spatial function of the image the film also stresses the spatial quality of sound.

The emphasis on the spatiality of sound runs throughout the film, starting from the introductory scene, which is constructed as an interstice between voice and sound by the rhythmical intercut of a voice-over (an extract from *The Female Novelist*) by five different short sound clips (00:00:13 – 00:01:53). The

⁵¹ Italics in the original. Deleuze, G., (1998). *Having an Idea in Cinema*. (On the Cinema of Straub-Huillet). In: Kaufman, E. and Heller, K, (eds.) *Deleuze & Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 16

short sound clips appear in the following order: the sound of the venetian blinds closing, the dripping of the tap, the sound of the trampoline, the elevator making a stop and the sound of sweeping on a concrete floor. The fragmentation of the voice-over first occurs over a black screen resulting in effectively placing the voice within a specific auditory environment, constructing a particular sound space, a space that references and is defined by a series of domestic tasks and activities. The black screen is followed by the image of a woman with her back on the camera roaming the streets of Yerevan and selling fruits in plastic bags, while the voice-over and the sound cuts continue along the image. The auditory environment of the house with its task is now replaced with the streets of the city, while the woman-seller offers a short moment of possible identification between the image and the voice-over. Thus, the spacing that occurs in the fragmentation of the voice-over by other sounds cues in the beginning of *My Pink City* expresses the complex interplay between domestic and public space that as I have already explained defines the rest of the film.

In the introductory scene of the film the fragmentation of the voice-over by other sounds, by creating a specific acoustic space also pushes the soundtrack into functioning like an image. However, since as I have described the film is structured as a mirroring of scenes that open up from the centre to its edges, the introductory scene finds its reflective companion in the last section, where a series of panoramas of the city are marked by text featuring a date, a time and extracts from Soviet photo albums. In this last scene, the interstice no longer emphasises the spatiality of sound but by focussing on the

relationship between image and text the strategy is reversed. It is in the gap between the panorama and the fragmentary text that the sound enters the film as the silent whisper of the viewer. The opening up of the film to the spatial possibilities of sound, resulting in sound operating as image and image operating as sound, is a central strategy in the film's attempt to pinpoint moments where the image becomes automatic and thus reveal essayistic space as the location of thought.

To give another example of how sound functions spatially in the *My Pink City*, I will focus on the scene featuring the replacement of the Soviet symbols of Yerevan by capitalist advertising signs, constructed as a taxonomical serial montage of static shots (00:07:21 -00:08:10), sometimes centred and sometimes out of balance that echo the memorial function of space in Emiglohz's work. However, the taxonomical sequence is not connected together by unified acoustic space but through the repetition of the mechanical sound of a slide projector. The sequence expresses a dislocation between the moving image that documents specific details of the urban public space and a sound that points to the existence of a photographic image. As the mechanical sound of the slide projector rises into the air alluding to tourist or scientific photographic representations, it goes under the moving images of the city signs, suspending the image between a moving and photographic function, while commenting on the construction and consumption of space as a commodity. The scene with the military parade celebrating the 20th anniversary of Armenian independence (00:27:22 – 00:30:04) follows a similar logic but it focuses on the relationship between image and music. The choice

to intercut the parade preparations with a contemporary electro-pop song⁵² contradicts the gravity of the military apparatus, resulting in an ironic, self-reflective and personal exploration of the construction of Armenianness and masculinity. Thus, once more in *My Pink City* essayistic thinking on the transformation of the urban environment in Yerevan and the gender complexities in the experience of public space are expressed as a gap between images and sounds.

In the above examples, it is the sound that displaces the image, while at the scenes with the voice-over narration it is the image that displaces the sound. In the final sequence of the film, where the panning shot of the airport tower and the Indian-Soviet film collide, the two operations converge. The film by opening up to a surrealist imagination allows both for the sound to be displaced by the image and the image to be invaded by the sound, and thus express its failure to control and measure both the space of the city and its own topography.

Wrapping up my discussion of the film, I will rest for a moment on authorial positioning. In *My Pink City* the filmmaker, as I have described in Chapter 1, is inscribed in the film through three different female voices and three different images, in the form of the woman roaming the streets of the city in the introductory scene, as the runner from the Soviet archive film and as the Indian dancer. All these fragmented incarnations are literally separated in the different sections of the film creating the feeling of a female author that

⁵² *Togh u gna*. The Deenjjes (Mika Vatinyan & Tamman Hamza), 2010. Based on a poem by Nairi Zaryan.

appears and disappears. The authorial position also reflects the overall spatial concerns of the film, taking the shape of a gap between the space of the city and the space of the film, as the author is placed both in the space of the city (the filmmaker behind the camera filming) and in the space of the film. She is inscribed in the topography of the film firstly by the domestic familiarity of the Zeytun House where her presence behind the camera is directly addressed, as well as through the images mentioned above as the steadicam shot of the woman selling fruits in the streets, the archive image of the female runner and as the Indian dancer. The female author is not only fragmented and multiple but following the mirroring interstice between the film and the city, her subjective presence reveals another relationship: as she is exploring the space of the city, at the same time she is traversing the space of the film, moving in both cases from being displaced to being placed. The centrality of questioning how a female author could be inscribed in the space of the film is also evident by the film's title, the city is framed by the personal pronoun *My*, which very clearly articulates the personal investment in portraying the transformation of the urban environment. Thus, as the female author appears and disappears in the space of the film, the many motifs that are used to inscribe her subjectivity reveal her different emotional states and ideological positions.

The fact that the female author is placed inside the house in Zeytun is also important as it signifies an acceptance of the material traces of the Soviet past. This positioning enables the filmmaker to capture the impoverished interiors with beauty and appreciation of the mundane without aestheticism or

objectifying deprivation. This also signifies another crucial political function of the film, which avoids simply describing the domestic as a deteriorated interior environment (as a documentary film would have done) since the female author consciously positions herself inside such space. Furthermore, this ideological positioning of the filmmaker, placing herself alongside the marginalised, creates a measured distance that dominates the tone of the film. This is further reinforced by the continuous creation of gaps between representational regimes and discursive logics, between images and sounds, contributing to a feeling of calmness and clarity. Finally, this measured distance is also expressed structurally by the film's attempts to reach moments where the image and its thinking operations become almost automatic. Moments when the moving image separates itself from the filmmaker, from any other references or other images and pops up, it becomes visible and thus becomes in the topography of the film a space where thinking occurs.

Essayistic filmic space is not just part of the structure of the essay film and one layer where meaning is encoded but it is also a location of thought. *My Pink City* constructs its discourse by thinking through space, by weaving and creating gaps between different spatial logics and thus reinforcing the importance of space within its thinking operations. It also contemplates on the standardisation and homogenisation of space and its consumption as urban experience, on the way the movement from place to space is experienced, the position of space in relation to other spaces and its function as a cultural object. As filmic space becomes a space that is connected to other spaces,

which relates to the cinematic world and to global movements, the city of Yerevan becomes the site for reflecting on the global complexities of space from the position of the periphery. The decision to express thinking about the complexities of global space by staying fixed in the relative invisible city of Yerevan is a political positioning that reflects the belief in the critical potential of cinematic thinking and of the spatial imagination. Through *My Pink City* and this thesis I argue that by conceiving filmic space as important as time in the thinking operations of the essay film, spatial imagination takes on a radical role in questioning the construction and consumption of space.

Chapter 5 explored how space is addressed in contemporary essay films and investigated the strategies they utilise to express spatial thinking. It focussed on the form of the travel essay, the city film and the idea of the essay film as an imaginary topography. It pointed out how essayistic thinking about space has mainly been expressed through the interstice between a voice-over narration and the exploration of diverse geographical locations. It also noted how some films expressed thinking by locating the subjectivity of the filmmaker in the space of the film and how others addressed essay film as a layered cinematic world. The chapter and the research concluded with an exploration of the role of an expanded filmic space that is open to movement on the thinking operations of the essay film, looking at particular in the way diverse spatial thinking strategies are utilised in the film *My Pink City*.

CONCLUSION

The practice-based research explored the role of filmic space in the thinking operations of the essay film. In the written thesis, I began this investigation on the critical potential of essay film and filmic space by reviewing scholarly research on the emergence of essay film as a term. Early literature on the essay film emphasised the ontological relationship of the form to other moving image practices, tracing its historical and genealogical lineage to either documentary or avant-garde film. The essay film was either conceived as a hybrid format or as a separate film genre, while in both cases functioning by fragmenting discursive logics. Current scholarly research has detracted from ontological questions that stress subjectivity and reflexivity as the main interlocking characteristics of the essay film and moved towards a conception of the essayistic as a critical and dialogic discourse on the nature and institutions of the image, expressed via a dialogic relationship between an unstable authorial and spectatorial position and through the mediation of heterogeneous material, positions and media. However, these recent theorisations, by reading the essay film either in relation to the literary essay or by analysing its thinking operations based on the conventions of cinematic language, limit the potential of essayistic form and obscure the function of visual thinking. By unearthing a range of essayistic thinking operations described in relevant literature and comparing them to the relationship between image and thought in Deleuze's theorisation of cinema, I framed essay film as a distinct modality of thought in moving image practices.

By now it is clear that I conceive the essay film as one thinking modality in moving image practices that utilises a series of strategies in order to express thought, by absorbing a variety of discursive logics and by reflecting on thinking that is inherent in the image. Addressing the lack of literature on the discursive function of space in essay film, in Chapter 2, I investigated how spatial theories can enable us to reassert the importance of spatial imagination. With this as a basis I explored, in Chapters 3 and 4, how film space can enter into the thinking procedures of the image by breaking the centring mechanisms that attempt to control its movement. When filmic space is addressed as static and immobile it fixes things down, while when it is exposed to movement it has the potential to contribute to the thinking operations of the moving image. Thus, I rejected the idea of filmic space as representation that treats space as fixed and equates it with the edges of the frame, and I defined filmic space as open, heterogeneous, relational and always under construction. Mapping a series of relations between filmic space, movement and thought in a range of non-fiction films, I strongly demonstrated how filmic space becomes a discursive terrain. From the above, I concluded that filmic space has also the potential to contribute to the thinking operations of the essayistic thinking modality, a contribution that is shaped by the way the essayistic expresses thought and by a filmic space that is exposed to movement.

In the final chapter of the written thesis, I explored how spatial thinking is expressed in a range of essay films as the travelling narrator, an unstable and mobile self, which utilises an epistolary tone, or a personal poetic voice and

traverses a diverse range of geographical locations, exploring shifting national borders, post-colonial and diasporic spaces, as well as addressing urban transformation and decay. Thus, I noted that these spatial investigations express thinking by privileging the function of the interstice as the gap between the image (the spaces traversed) and voice-over. Therefore, the focus on the literary discursive function of the essay film as the expression of the subjectivity of the filmmaker located in a disembodied voice-over, in other words the dominance of the literary understanding of the essay form, also controls its spatial thinking. Moreover, I also emphasized a series of essay films that utilise archive material and textual layers and thus address the mobility of the cinematic world and express thinking through the journeying between different types of filmic space.

I concluded the research moving away from the notion of the travel essay and the city film by arguing that filmic space can operate in the thinking modality of the essay film as a location of thought when it is opened up to movement and when it is treated as open, relational, heterogeneous and always under construction. Thus, I proposed a framework for the function of filmic space in the thinking operations of the essay film and outlined how this is expressed in the spatial structure of the essay film *My Pink City*. I demonstrated how spatial thinking operates as an interstice between different discursive logics, diverse spatial functions and as the spacing between various auditory and visual sources. By creating an essay film (*My Pink City*), which functions as an interstice between the relatively invisible space of Yerevan and the topography of filmic space and by stressing the importance of space in the

thinking operations of the moving image, I reasserted the critical potential of cinematic consciousness and of the spatial imagination.

The research through the dialogue between the essay film *My Pink City* and the written thesis demonstrated how essayistic discourse could be liberated from the voice-over narration by opening up its thinking operations to include a variety of interstices, which function as gaps between images, sounds, aesthetic regimes and discursive logics. Thus, the constant reflection between theory and practice expanded the understanding of the essay film, conceived in the thesis as one modality of thinking in moving image practices. The research by examining the potential of space in the thinking operations of the moving image also unearthed the importance of movement in the construction of filmic space, which was defined as open, heterogeneous, relational and always under construction. This expanded understanding of filmic space shaped by the production of *My Pink City* facilitated the development of a theoretical framework for the function of filmic space in essayist thinking. *My Pink City* and the written thesis both highlighted a series of spatial strategies in essayistic discourse and established the significance of filmic space in its thinking operations. Thus, through the critical relationship between theory and practice, the research contributed to a renewed understanding of the thinking modality of the essay film and the importance of filmic space in its discursive operations. The research demonstrated how essay film not only has the potential to think about the complexities and the social production of space but it can also utilise filmic space as a location of thought.

My Pink City: Technical Information, Sources and Credits

Format:

DVD & BlueRay Disk, HD Video, 48 mins

Credits:

Camera

Aikaterini Gegisian

Steadicam & Additional Camera

Tamman Hamza

Assistants

David Nubaryan

Lilit Ghazaryan

Editing and Sound Design

Aikaterini Gegisian

Colour Grading

Aaron Kay

Voices

Helin Anahit

Marianna Hovhannisyan

Aikaterini Gegisian

Translations

Lilit Ghazaryan

Krikor Moskofian

Marianna Hovhannisyan

Tammam Hamza

Dolly

Gevorg Simonyan

Sipan Grigoryan

Driver

Hamzasp Zakharyan

Archive Material:

Courtesy of Armenian National Archives

A City in Pink / Vardaguyn kaghak

Documentary Film Studio of Yerevan, 1960

Directed by G. Balasanyan

Newsreels: No 10, 1963 & No 7, 1964

Meeting with the Homeland / Handipum hayreniki het

Documentary Film Studio of Yerevan, 1969

Directed by J. Zhamharyan

The Lenin Square / Lenini hraparake

Documentary Film Studio of Yerevan, 1970

Directed by A. Vahuni

Armenian Eyes / Haykakan achker

Documentary Film Studio of Armenia, 1980,

Directed by R. Gevorgyants

The Yerevan Underground / Yerevanyan metro

Documentary Film Studio of Armenia, 1981

Directed by R. Frangulyan

Yerevan Dreamers / Yerevanyan yerazoghner

Yerevan Studio, 1983

Directed by G. Melik-Avagyan

Other Sources:

The Female Novelist

Little Tales of Misogyny by Patricia Highsmith

First Published in Great Britain in 1977 by Heinemann

Yerevan: A Travel Guide

German Edition

Published in USSR in 1982 by Progress Reisefuhrer

Here's to you Ararat

Composition and Lyrics by Arto Tunçboyacıyan

Armenian Navy Band, 2008

TV Footage

Video Clip produced by Sharm Holding

Togh u gna

The Deenjes (Mika Vatinyan & Tamman Hamza), 2010

Based on a poem by Nairi Zaryan

Pardesi

An Indo-Soviet co-production, 1957

Mosfilm Studio & Naya Sansar International

Directed by Khwaja Ahmad Abbas & Vasili Pronin

Distribution by Samarth Video, New Delhi

Dido's Lament

Henri Purcell, Dido and Aeneas

Dido Koor & Combattimento Consort Amsterdam, 1996

Conductor: Jan Willem De Vriend

Soprano: Xenia Meijer

Made with financial support from

The University of Westminster

Thanks to:

Joram ten Brink

Uriel Orlow

Agapi & Ioanna Gegisian

Hovik Kassapian

Arsen & Rupen Kalfayan

Aykut Ozturk

Aaron Kay

David Kazanjian

David Nubaryan

Eray Cayli

Eleni Matzaridou

Fatma Ciftci

George Skianis

Georgia Korossi

Helin Anahit

Konca Aykan
Lilit Ghazaryan
Loukia Alavanou
Love Enqvist
Maria Tsantsanoglou
Marianna Hovhannisyan
Mary & Mkrtich Tonoyan
Meliqset Panossian
Neery Melkonian
Nikos Noutsos
Pippa Martin
Queering Yerevan (Shushan Avagyan, Lucine Talayan, Arpi Adamyan)
Radha Dayal
Rowan Geddis
Ruben Arevshatyan
Shoair Malvian
Sofia Dimitriadou
The Deenjees
Tom Nichols
Utopiana (Anna Barseghian, Nora Galfayan, Vahe Budumyan)
Vazken-Khatchig Hadjitavitian

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FILMOGRAPHY (Alphabetically by Director)

News From Home, (1977). Directed by Chantal Ackerman. Belgium/France

Los Angeles Plays Itself, (2003). Directed by Thom Andersen. USA

Performing the Border, (1999). Directed by Ursula Biemann. Switzerland

Remote Sensing, (2001). Directed by Ursula Biemann. Switzerland

The Man Who Couldn't Feel and Other Tales (1996). Directed by Joram ten Brink, UK

Rien que les heures au Paris?, (1926). Directed by Alberto Cavalcanti. France

Hi, it's me, (1965). Directed by Frunze Dovlatyan. USSR

Calendar, (1993). Directed by Atom Egoyan. Armenia, Germany, Canada

Scheme-Tady 1, (1972-3). Directed by Heinz Emigholz. Germany

Sullivan Banks, (2000). Directed by Heinz Emigholz. Germany

An Image, (1988). Directed by Harun Farocki. Germany

Images of the World and the Inscription of War, (1988). Directed by Harun Farocki. Germany

How to Live in the FRG, (1990). Directed by Harun Farocki. Germany

Videograms of a Revolution, (1990). Directed by Harun Farocki and Andrej Ujica. Germany

A walk through H: The Reincarnation of an Ornithologist,(1979). Directed by Peter Greenaway. UK

Letter to Jane, (1972). Directed by Jean-Luc Godard & Jean-Pierre Gorin. France

Fata Morgana, (1971). Directed by Werner Herzog. Germany

The Deep Blue Yonder, (2005). Directed by Werner Herzog. Germany

London, (1994). Directed by Patrick Keiller. UK

Robinson in Space, (1997). Directed by Patrick Keiller. UK

Robinson in Ruins, (2010). Directed by Patrick Keiller. UK

The Eye Above the Well, (1988). Directed by Johan van der Keuken. Holland

Letters from Siberia, (1957). Directed by Chris Marker. France

Sans Soleil, (1983). Directed by Chris Marker. France

The Last Bolshevik, (1993). Directed by Chris Marker. France

Europe from afar, (2001). Directed by Eva Meyer & Eran Schaerf. Germany

From Greece, (1965). Directed by Peter Nestler. Greece/Germany

Otolith 1, (2003). Directed by The Otolith Group. UK

Otolith 2, (2007). Directed by The Otolith Group. UK

Otolith 3, (2009). Directed by The Otolith Group. UK

We, (1969). Directed by Artavazd Peleshian. USSR

Slow Action, (2010). Directed by Ben Rivers. UK

Journey to Italy, (1954). Directed by Roberto Rossellini. Italy

Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis, (1927). Directed by Walter Ruttmann. Germany

Manhatta, (1921). Directed by Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand. USA

Wavelength, (1967). Directed by Michael Snow. Canada

La Region Central, (1971). Directed by Michael Snow. Canada

Back and Forth, (1969). Directed by Michael Snow. Canada

Elegy of a Voyage, (2001). Directed by Alexander Sokurov. Russia

The Empty Centre, (1998). Directed by Hito Steyerl. Germany

Machorka-Muff, (1963). Directed by Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet. France/Germany

Not Reconciled or Only Violence Helps where Violence Rules, (1965). Directed by Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet. France/Germany

The Perfumed Nightmares, (1977). Directed by Kidlat Tahimic. Philippines

Reassemblage, (1982). Directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha. USA

The Gleaners and I, (2000). Directed by Agnès Varda. France

The Man with a Movie Camera, (1929). Directed by Dziga Vertov. USSR