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**Montage and Ethnicity: Experimental Film
Practice and Editing in the Documentation of the
Gujarati Indian community in Wales.**

— Aparna Sharma
University of Glamorgan
2007

**Montage and Ethnicity: Experimental Film Practice and Editing in the
Documentation of the Gujarati Indian community in Wales.**

Aparna Sharma

**A submission presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of Glamorgan/ Prifysgol Morgannwg for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.**

2007

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Acknowledgements

I thank Professor Michael Punt for first encouraging me to consider undertaking doctoral research; engaging with my early research proposal; and later, inviting me to the Metatech Seminar series convened by himself. I am grateful for his persistent encouragement as editor of *Leonardo Digital Reviews* (MIT Press), where I have channelised some of the discourses and arguments arising from this research. I thank all members of staff and post-graduate students at the University of Glamorgan who have interacted with me, responded to my work and facilitated its development. I am particularly grateful to Professor John Beynon for his advice and support after reading a draft of my thesis this summer. I thank family and friends, near and far, for their loving support. Thank you to Jesse Schwenck and Martha Blassnigg — friends with whom I have shared intellectually provocative conversations and whose presence has more than made up for the absence of a *sangha* in Cardiff — and in my life generally. Thank you to Caroline Lomax Daniels for making with me *Crossings in a Beautiful Time* — our time together was full of a lot of catching up, but eventually we traversed the geographical & cultural distances as well as the temporal gaps that history so carelessly smatters in our worlds. Our conversations at the editing table I will always cherish — they have taken away from me any reason to complain about the intellectual frustrations I felt on numerous editing tables before. Lastly, but most importantly, I thank my supervisors — Clive Myer for his encouragement and support at every step; and Dr. Teri Brewer for her guidance and patience while I developed this work. Besides echoing in this thesis, her readings of my thought and our passionate intellectual conversations across numerous landscapes will remain with me as they have shaped my perceptions about the entwinings of culture/s, history/ies and film practice. Most of all I owe her thanks for her unflinching faith and confidence in my vision that as the hours piled up and physical resources depleted, became the essential provocateurs for me to write, call every cut and sustain the intellectual pleasure of this journey.

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Abstract

This research, *Montage and Ethnicity: Experimental Film Practice and Editing in the Documentation of the Gujarati Indian Community in Wales*, posits montage practice involving a polyphonic film structure as relevant for documentation of ethnic subjects; and it explicates the implication of cultural context in montage techniques such as juxtaposition, thus countering the socio-cultural indifference and universalism implied by definitions of montage as an editing technique, alternative to mainstream cinema conventions. The submission includes an experimental film surrounding an ethnic subject: the Gujarati Indian community in Cardiff, which has been developed by combining filmmaking with ethnographic methods. The thesis of this submission articulates the conversations between montage and ethnography that extend conventional understandings of both practices. Ethnography emphasises cultural context in film practice; and polyphonic montage stresses ethnographically informed documentation beyond cultural description, intervening by disassembling ethnic constructs as homogenous or unitary.

Deriving from the ethnographic imperative, the thesis includes revisitations of early montage practice, in particular the theorisations of Sergei M Eisenstein, alongside discussion of montage deployments in third world cultural practice to posit an intercultural claim in montage that gets obscured in discussions emphasising it as a modernist practice differing from the conventions and coda of cinematic realism. On this basis, it is argued that the move to equate the discourses of realism and modernism in the cinema with formal codes — a tendency that characterised classical film theory and later political modernism, is reductive. The intercultural claim evidenced in montage practice from the third world combines a critical stance against the categories of tradition and nation — derived from the thought of Rabindranath Tagore. The implication of this is that ethnicity gets reflected as a site of multiple and competing historico-cultural and social inscriptions. This complicates the binarisms of power accompanying historical movements such as colonialism. Montage practice in this submission emerges as an intellectual project that challenges binaries linked to the operations of hegemony and dominance pertaining to culture and cinema.

Since this submission includes film practice and a written thesis, it is advised that a viewing of the submitted film precedes reading of the thesis. For engagement with the practice and thesis, appendix 1 lists the sequence breakdown of the submitted film. Time-code references have been included in specific chapters.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Montage is not only the organization of cinematic material, it is the implication of meaning — of a meaning that can only be implied, since films, like dreams, have a syntax which functions chiefly by association and accumulation.

— **Michael Wood, in Levenson, M. 1999: 223**

This research, *Montage and Ethnicity: Experimental Film Practice and Editing in the Documentation of the Gujarati Indian Community in Wales*, arises from reflection upon my practice in television documentary and later independent filmmaking. It involves my interest in working with ethnic subjects through film. It contextualises concerns and criticisms towards my earlier work and utilises those to develop a film practice and dissertation that attend the issues raised by this research and its emergent implications.

This research includes an experimental documentary film surrounding the Gujarati community in Cardiff. It experiments with montage practice that facilitates attending the subject of ethnicity through a complex register. The montage developed in the submitted film raises issue with the implication of cultural context in montage techniques of juxtaposition. Film experimentation is combined with an additional focus on ethics and responsibility towards informants included in the film. The research process has spanned a trajectory comprising pragmatic concerns in encounters with ethnic subjects through film, as well as discursive issues pertaining to that encounter. These are elaborated in the

dissertation. Together the practice and dissertation formulate as a suggested intervention towards practice-based engagement with the subject of ethnicity.

1.1 Background and motivations

My interest in examining the scope of film practice with relation to ethnic subjects arises from critical reflection upon the approaches towards mainstream documentary filmmaking that I had been trained in while working as a broadcast media-person in India, during 1999-2001¹. This experience had stirred me to interrogate the conventions of television documentaries for perpetuating inadequate understandings of subject matter.

Bearing proximity to television news, television documentary content is often premised on individual and institutional confrontations and disputations, which I found were seldom probed within a wider socio-historical context. This aspect of television documentary can be contextualised in terms of its budgetary and broadcast scheduling constraints, as well as its situation within: ‘a set of quiet tight, if often implicit conventions concerning the ‘public interest’ and ‘due impartiality’, on behalf of broadcast institutions. (Corner 1996: 23)

At the heart of television documentary there is a preoccupation with facts that results in deployment of realist conventions for filmmaking. The documentary image partakes a

¹ During this period I worked as a freelance journalist and documentary researcher for broadcast networks and television documentary production houses such as Sneh Productions (documentaries broadcast on National Geographic, Discovery Channel, Channel 4 and Star World); Independent Media Private Ltd. (content providers for Star and Doordarshan news networks) and AIM TV (content providers for Zee TV network). I worked on varied documentaries whose subjects ranged from political events and socio-economic trends, to scientific discoveries and the obstacles in their introduction within a wider public discourse.

‘metonymic function’ derived from its indexical bond² between the source object in the world. (Kilborn & Izod 1997: 28) The filmmaker assumes the role of an objective observer, and the documentary’s eliciting discourse is articulated through the interplay of interviews and voiceover commentary.

Such an approach involving preoccupation with realism and visible evidence, in my experience, foreclosed deeper investigations into the complexities of content. The emphasis on constructing the documentary film through available verbal arguments limited interrogation of the socio-historical and cultural fashionings of subjects and the implicit discourses and world-views underpinning their testimonials. Television documentary’s occupation with objectivity led to limited consideration of the constructed³ and ambivalent nature of moving image, which has been the basis for avant-garde and modernist film occupations.

Further, its closeness to news and the constraints for its operation sidestep aspects of living experience that do not lend to a ready visual or aural register. There is primacy for subjects claiming news merit and worthiness. This limits engagement with subjects who make no necessary claims for attention. Ethnic subjects, situated at social, political or cultural peripheries are one such category. I have been drawn to issues of ethnicity since my first engagement with the militancy and ethnically conflict-ridden, north-east Indian state, Assam; where I had critiqued mainstream Indian print media⁴ for inadequately

² Kilborn and Izod derive from Charles Peirce’s discussion stating that the indexical bond refers to the fact that lens-based imagery is produced under such circumstances that it corresponds point by point with nature. (Kilborn & Izod 1997: 28)

³ Rudolf Arnheim asserted certain distinctions of the cinema. The first was cinema’s delimitation of the image through the frame that distinguishes cinema viewing from human vision. He added that in the cinema there was an absence of the space-time continuum as in real life. Lastly, he stated that the effect of a film is neither absolutely two-dimensional nor absolutely three-dimensional, that it is something in between. (1958: 8-34)

⁴ This work was my Bachelor’s dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of BA (Hons.) Journalism.

expressing this region's complex development crises. My research had pointed to the discursive tension arising from the bourgeoisie elitist stance of the English language media in India whose outlook equates ethnic minorities into the binarisms of 'us' and 'them.' In relation to this, Prasun Sonwalkar has observed that:

Below the normative discourses of democracy, multiculturalism and nationalism lies a discursive web of relations reified in the binary of 'us' and 'them.' It is based on material as well as psychological factors. The binary can be a key tool to explore and identify group perceptions and consciousness and, in turn, help unravel banal journalism and explain the coverage and non-coverage of a society's 'other.' Events and issues involving the minorities are likely to be considered newsworthy only if they are seen by journalists as affecting or being of interest to the 'we'... Usually, the life situations of the minorities may be reflected sporadically as event-centered reportage, but without political, historical and cultural contexts. The binary pervades inter-personal and professional discourse in news [-] rooms where the affairs of the dominant sections are routinely privileged. (Allan eds. 2005: 271)

This bias has provoked my interest around ethnic subjects through film practice. In my independent film practice I have developed engagements with ethnic communities such as British Indians and Kashmiri refugees.

Independent Practice and Modernism

I was better able to articulate my dissatisfaction with aspects of mainstream documentary practice when I academically studied cinema and developed my own independent film practice. Through these I was particularly drawn to the discourses of modernism. Modernist cinema forging 'imaginary narratives out of the life-worlds of everyday experience', and the film apparatus theory instilled consciousness towards the workings of dominant ideology in the cinema⁵. (Orr 1993: 10) Modernist cinema's

⁵ For a detailed discussion see, chapter 3, *Literature Review* where political modernism is discussed.

revelation of technology and the apparatus has ‘questioned and fostered illusions’, situating cinema as a critical and philosophical enterprise. (Wood, M *in* Levenson 1999: 217) Studying cinema in Britain within the context of the theory—practice interface, I was exposed to the socio-cultural imperatives embedded in the uses of cinema by audiences and filmmakers, alongside a wider vocabulary of filmmaking practices.

In my academically informed, early film practice, I derived particularly from the radical tenor towards film form and critique of mainstream cinema through the montage practice of the Soviet school. In its departure from conventional styles of film construction, montage offered a more dynamic and intellectual approach to film construction. However, reflecting on my early work, my experimentations with montage and film form appeared inconsistent due the absence of a reasoned linkage with film content and the context of the subject.

My early work was also problematic for its tangential exchange with the discourses of representation in Cultural and Media Studies. Inquiry into representation of cultures has been central in these disciplines that map approaches, both dominant and alternative/critical for representing minority cultures in cinema and mass media. An appreciation of the scholarship in these disciplines had influenced thinking for my early practice around ethnic subjects. There is discussion surrounding stereotyping⁶ in these

⁶ Stuart Hall defines stereotyping thus: ‘Stereotyping reduces people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by Nature... Stereotyping as a signifying practice is central to the representation of racial difference. But what is a stereotype? How does it actually work? In his essay on ‘Stereotyping’, Richard Dyer (1977) makes an important distinction between *typing* and *stereotyping*. He argues that, without the use of *types*, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to make sense of the world. We understand the world by referring individual objects, people or events in our heads to the general classificatory schemes into which — according to our culture — they fit... Richard Dyer argues that we are always ‘making sense’ of things in terms of some wider categories.’ (Hall 1980: 257) Robert Stam traces the scholarly critique of stereotypes as a response to ‘the powerlessness of historically marginalized groups to control their own representation.’ (Stam 2002: 662-3) He adds that a study of stereotypes involves depth analysis of the institutions from which representations arise and are distributed, alongside an examination of the nature of audiences receiving those representations. (Stam 2002: 662-3)

disciplines. Amelia Jones attributes such interest in stereotyping to a ‘semiotics inflected by Marxist and psychoanalytic theory.’ (2003: 02) Based on the analyses in these disciplines, counter representations of ethnicity have arisen in practice-based research contexts, where critical and alternative practice aims at the reversal and countering of stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream and dominant representations. While I appreciated the political implications for reversing and countering stereotypes, I also felt that by only working towards countering stereotypes my work was evading complexities and contradictions, thus compromising accuracy. The discourse and construction strategies of my early works surfaced as simplistic, limiting engagement with ethnicity within the binaristic framework of power equations between the dominant/ marginalised, oppressor/ oppressed, coloniser/ colonised, white/ coloured. In view of this, I felt the need to move beyond stereotypes towards developing formulations that are more complex in attending cultural difference and unfamiliar subcultures.

1.2 The Subject

For this research, I have focussed on and engaged with the Gujarati Indian community in Cardiff⁷. Besides a broader interest in ethnic subjects, my attention was first drawn to this community for its practice of Hindu religious traditions and customs. I was drawn to examine this community’s motivations for closely preserving religious practices from India and its particular lifestyles in Cardiff.

⁷ The Gujarati Indian community is referred as the subject community in the thesis

The Gujarati community in Cardiff is tightly-knit and concentrated around a Hindu temple of the Swaminarayan sect. There is a dense concentration of the community around the temple, in the riverside region of Cardiff. Some Gujarati families are scattered in other parts of Wales too, but these are isolated settlements arising primarily from necessities for work. Outside occupations of education and employment, much of the community members' religious and socio-cultural activities are around the Swaminarayan temple.

Communal activities and a sense of collectivity are emphasised by the community to assert its distinction from other ethnic minority communities. According to Roger Abrahams, the term ethnicity gained circulation within social science vocabulary since the 1950s through the: 'voices representing the party of toleration and assimilation when the spectre of genocide hovered over all discussions of stereotyping.' (2005: 177) Abrahams proposes four categories that suggest the contours of ethnicity, of which the 'urban ethnic minority' is the closest for approaching Cardiff's Gujarati community as it includes immigrants who are not 'demanding political independence or statehood' and are 'integrated into a capitalist system of production and consumption' of a European city. (Abrahams 2005: 179)

In recent years there has been increasing scholarly interest in the South-Asian diaspora. The Indian diaspora has particularly invited interest for its assertion of religious identity. The *Ethnic and Racial Studies Journal* devoted a special issue — 'Hindutva Movements in the West: Resurgent Hinduism and the Politics of Diaspora', in summer, 2000, exploring historical and empirical themes of Hindu religious consciousness among

Indian diaspora in the UK and USA. In an interview with the issue's editor, historian Romila Thapar commented that: 'In the diaspora, and especially the diaspora of the first world, the Hindu constitutes a minority, surrounded by societies which are not Hindu. He [sic] can develop the mentality of the ghetto and a minority consciousness, and see his identity in those terms.' (Mukta 2000: 607)

When I initially encountered this community, I experienced a strong contrast in its construction. Its ways of living emphasising religious practices and communal interactions were near to a traditional and feudal construct whose remnants one finds in the rural and hinterland pockets of India. This felt as a stark juxtaposition with the community's location and mobility in a first world, cosmopolitan city. These contrasts surfaced as instances for a montage construction in my imagination and motivated me to investigate community's members' experiences of living in Cardiff.

1.3 Approaches to filmmaking: Montage⁸

Excavating the origins of the subject community revealed a trail of migrations from rural Gujarat to East Africa, London, and culminating in Cardiff⁹. Each movement involves an interface with influences of modernity. The community's construction arises as including forces of tradition such as the Swaminarayan temple, and those of modernity such as members' occupations and relations with their host location, Cardiff. A distinct form of 'human ecology' is provoked in which the community's position in space and

⁸ See appendix 1 for sequence breakdown of *Crossings in a Beautiful Time*.

⁹ For a detailed discussion on the subject community's migrations and settlement in Cardiff see chapter 4, *Evocations: Mapping the Terrain in the Subject Community*.

time effects its institutions and behaviour¹⁰. (McKenzie 1968: 04) Its particular lifestyle deploys influences from the past and present; from locations left behind such as Gujarat and East Africa and those forged anew; London and Cardiff — all evoked in a medley of practices, visual and aural associations, imaginations and aspirations¹¹. The host location's ways of living derived through employment and education activities, as well as cultural influences including language, food, television and sport, have permeated in the community resulting in cultural combinations that are not purely from the home or the host location. As I filmed within this community more contrasts surfaced — including disparate voices, experiences and imaginations. These stressed my understanding of montage beyond conventional definitions in Film Studies and Film Theory and I questioned montage as a monolithic and universal practice.

Within cinema, montage has been employed for diverse purposes¹². Ordinarily, it is used for movement through vast spans of time and space, and to represent spatial and temporal discontinuities. On a more intellectual plane, as in the experiments of its early practitioners and avant-garde filmmakers across the world, montage has been used to create symbolisms and comparisons that provoke argument about reality.

Montage is based on the principles of 'combination, repetition and overlap.'

(Teitlebaum 1992: 07) It arose in response to the process of modernisation heralded by the arrival of an urban, industrial culture at the turn of the 20th century in Europe, and by

¹⁰ Roderick McKenzie, a key figure of the Chicago School, proposed and defined 'human ecology': 'as a study of the spatial and temporal relations of human beings as affected by selective, distributive and accommodative forces of the environment' (1968: 04) Amos Hawley has noted that the human ecology approach to anthropology; 'clearly overreached discipline boundaries and invited speculation concerning the unity of all life.' (McKenzie 1968: xii)

¹¹ Focussing on the subject community in this practice comprises a departure from my earlier practice (*Exhale...*, 2002) in which I worked around an ethnic subject. That work involved focus on an individual subject rather than a community. In this research the communitarian experience has surfaced as necessarily embedded in the subjects examined.

¹² See Appendix 2 for a genealogy of montage.

the late 1920s it was an established form of artistic and intellectual expression. Before cinema, it was evidenced in photography and theatre¹³. (Phillips in Teitlebaum 1992: 21 — 36) According to Lutz Becker, the montage filmmakers had identified in the moving image a ‘latent ambiguity’ — that individual shots lack inherent meaning. (Becker 2004: 11) Film montage uses this ambiguity, holding that individual shots respond to those preceding and succeeding them. (Becker 2004: 11) Becker summarises the understanding of the early montage filmmakers thus:

They utilized in the editing process the image’s capacity to retain meaning and respond to additional meaning. The cut from one shot to another stimulates the imagination as it marks the moment of definition, the creation or resolution of a conflict of opposites. (2004: 12)

Sergei Eisenstein, one of the key figures who experimented and theorised montage echoes a similar sentiment:

Everyone who has had in his hands a piece of film to edit knows by experience how neutral it remains, even though a part of a planned sequence, until it is joined with another piece, when it suddenly acquires and conveys a sharper and quite different meaning than that planned for it at the time of filming. (Eisenstein 1958: 10)

Juxtaposition is the basic principle for montage construction. It lends dynamism and provokes the viewer to decipher meaning from separate shots whose juxtaposition evokes distinct ideas. (Joyce in Nelmes 2003: 42) Through its ‘non-realistic’ handling of film time, montage injected in the cinema a new idiom that countered mainstream cinema conventions. (Phillips in Teitlebaum 1992: 31)

¹³ With respect to the origins of photomontage, Sally Stein notes, ‘In Europe and Soviet Union, photomontage figured as a supremely modern graphic form, valued for its dynamic capacity to connote urbanism, industrial acceleration, and the explosive potential for change – as well as reaction – in social and sexual relationships... In the United States, however, the same processes of social transformation were far less often depicted, either affirmatively or critically, by means of photomontage.’ (Teitlebaum 1992: 129) It is crucial to take into account this scope of photomontage in Europe and Soviet Union because film montage, which closely follows photomontage, develops on similar content.

The earliest experiments with film montage were conducted in the Soviet school¹⁴ that included Lev Kuleshov, Sergei M Eisenstein, V.I. Pudovkin and Dziga Vertov¹⁵. These filmmakers considered the mainstream cinema as ‘intoxicating the viewer’ (Michelson 1984: xix). Consequently they sought means to ‘engage the moviegoer’s “dormant” consciousness and foster an active mental participation both during and after the screening.’ (Petric 1993: 01) For Dziga Vertov the most urgent task was: ‘to replace bourgeois melodrama with revolutionary newsreels reflecting everyday life.’ (Petric 1993: 02) Sergei Eisenstein’s montage experiments were developed on the grounds that viewers: ‘respond to the invisible space that is created by images in conflict’¹⁶. (Hill & Gibson 2000: 15) He combined his understanding of the Marxist-Leninist dialectics and proposed montage as a dialectical mechanism. He stated that:

The shot is by no means an element of montage.

The shot is a montage cell (or molecule).

In this formulation the dualistic division of sub-title and shot [,] and shot and montage leaps forward in analysis to a dialectic consideration as three different phases of one homogenous task of expression...

Conflict within a thesis (an abstract idea) —formulates itself in the dialectics of the sub-title—forms itself spatially in the conflict within the shot—and explodes with increasing intensity in montage-conflict among the separate shots... (1958: 53)

¹⁴ For a comprehensive discussion of the Soviet School, see Mark Joyce in Nelmes, J. 2003 (3rd edn). *An Introduction to Film Studies*. London: Routledge.

¹⁵ The earliest experiments were by Lev Kuleshov. The most famous of these, also known as the ‘Kuleshov effect’, involved juxtaposing the same shot of an actor with diverse visual materials, such as a bowl of soup and a baby in a coffin. Each juxtaposition conveyed a differing emotion for the spectator: hunger, grief etc. (Stam 2002: 39). It was not the individual image, rather the juxtaposition of images that propelled spectatorial response.

¹⁶ Eisenstein’s criticism of the mainstream cinema can be gathered from his reflections upon the reception of his and other Soviet films: ‘NEW INTELLECTUAL content, new forms for the embodiment of this content, new methods of theoretical comprehension—these are what startled foreign audiences of the Soviet cinema. Though not always complete in their thematic solutions, nor perfected in their formal embodiment, and far from conclusive in theoretical knowledge and comprehension (all of which was critically perceived by ourselves), our films came as a revelation in the capitalist countries. What an unexpected intellectual shock came to America and Europe with the appearance of films in which social problems were suddenly presented with all the dots on all the “i’s”—to audiences that had heretofore seen only the rarest and vaguest hints of even an undotted “l” on their screens.’ (Eisenstein 1958: 179)

Montage's early practitioners derived from modern art movements. Montage has clear links with Constructivism and 'Cubo-Futurism' — a movement in Russia that derived influences from French Cubism and Italian Futurism. (Bordwell & Thompson 1994: 136-140) Montage bears modernism's¹⁷ reactionary imperative against the realist and romantic traditions. It critiques realism's 'seamless verisimilitude', and in doing that bears an occupation with form and self-reflexivity i.e. art referring to itself, revealing 'the process of meaning-construction in art.' (Hayward 2000: 232-238)

Within Film Studies montage has been emphasised as a film editing technique — 'an **alternative** to styles pervading mainstream cinema such as continuity editing.' (Nelmes 2003: 423, emphasis original) It is distinguished from other forms of editing given its use of juxtaposition:

Juxtaposing shots makes them collide or conflict and it is from the collision that meaning is produced... A first principle of montage editing, then, is a rapid alternation between sets of shots whose signification occurs at the point of their collision. (Hayward 2000: 96)

However, over successive decades montage has advanced as an intellectual and aesthetic project that does not involve one unitary conception of the practice¹⁸. While Eisenstein linked montage with the Marxist notion of dialectical conflict¹⁹, Dziga Vertov's understandings were underpinned by a wider deliberation around the cinematic apparatus

¹⁷ Modernism is understood as an art movement that begins at the end of the nineteenth century. Geeta Kapur distinguishes between modernisation and modernism. Modernisation is a social and economic process, while modernism is a 'cultural term strictly relating to the arts and situated at a particular point of western history...' (Kapur 2000: 276) Modernism traces its roots to the Enlightenment period of the 18th century when 'a theocratic (God-centered) interpretation of the world' in the western society declined, and the belief in the supremacy of human reason rose. (Hayward 2000: 232-238) Consequently this period got termed as the 'Age of Reason', wherein scientific thought ascended ushering in the industrial age of the 19th century. Susan Hayward adds that: 'Even during that period some philosophers expressed disquiet at the totalizing effect of this positivist philosophy of science.' This strain of discomfort was echoed in art. Andrea Huyssen adds that in its vanguardism and perception of itself as an adversary culture, modernism is 'relentless in its hostility to mass culture.' (Huyssen 1986: 241)

¹⁸ Filmmakers in the Soviet School and Russian formalists such as Boris Eikhenbaum, Victor Shklovsky, Boris Kazansky meditated upon the new medium of the cinema and montage in particular. They had loose conceptions of montage and they generally understood it as a technique for assembling images.

¹⁹ He elucidates upon the Hegelian 'formula' in his essay: *Film Form: New Problems*. (Eisenstein 1958: 127- 144)

that he asserted as providing a vision distinct from the human eye²⁰. Most recently, in their text, *The Montage Principle*, Jean Antoine Dunne and Paula Quigley term montage as a ‘principle.’ (2004) This marks a shift in the understanding of montage away from an editing technique, establishing it as a thought practice — ‘an organic and perceptual process’, underpinning film construction. (Dunne & Quigley 2004: xv)

The aims of the research

As indicated above, I critiqued my earlier work for, one: its excessive occupation with form undermining content, and two: sharing in an approach to alternative practice that aims to challenge stereotypes perpetuated by mass media. I also indicated that my encounter with the subject community provoked me to think about a construction that would emulate its cultural impetuses that in my view, posited sharp contrasts and therefore suited treatment through montage juxtaposition. The aim of this research is to develop a montage construction based on examination of how the socio-cultural specificity of the subject community contributes, either by coinciding with montage’s techniques or colliding with them, thus stressing their scope. For this, investigations surrounding the subject community have been combined with the methods of montage.

²⁰Vertov’s montage arises from his understanding of the camera as distinct from the human eye. He terms the camera as the *kino eye*, which commands the benefit of moving freely in space and time unlike the human eye ‘I am kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it. Now and forever, I free myself of human immobility, I am in constant motion, I draw near, then away from objects, I crawl under, I climb onto them. I move apace with the muzzle of a galloping horse, I plunge full speed into a crowd, I outstrip running soldiers, I fall on my back, I ascend with an airplane, I plunge and soar together with plunging and soaring bodies. Now I, a camera, fling myself along their resultant, manoeuvring in the chaos of movement, recording movement, starting with movements composed of the most complex combinations... Within the chaos of movements, running past, away, running into and colliding - the eye, all by itself, enters life.’ (Michelson 1984: 17) For Vertov a shot was effective when it best revealed an object and allowed a viewpoint the viewer was not accustomed to. (Michelson 1984: 99)

Ethnographic investment

Since the research involves practice around an ethnic community, I have combined filmmaking with ethnographic methods of research. Ethnography is a field of anthropological research: 'based on direct observation of and reporting on a people's way of life.' (Ashcroft et al 1998: 85) Ethnographic engagement including observation, interaction and interviews, has been used to interact with community members. Through this socio-cultural, historical and economic dynamics particular to the subject community have been identified and deployed as the basis for developing montage construction around the community. The purpose of such an approach involving ethnographic research is to examine how the socio-cultural and historical locations of subjects, percolate the uses of montage methods. This imperative can be contextualised first, within Eisenstein's assertion that montage techniques of juxtaposition function differently in relation to context. (Bordwell 2005: 266) This can be further contextualised within a wider critique of the 'social indifference' characterising modernism that stressed form as universal, unilinear and transhistorical²¹. (Gablik 2004: 30-45)

1.4 Documentary

For developing the film practice in this research I have worked with documentary to experiment and examine the stretches to which it can be stressed in pursuing alternative film constructions. Documentary filmmaking, in the widest sense of the term, is a

²¹ Also see introduction to Krauss, R. 1996. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths*. USA MIT Press: 1-6 In this introduction Krauss problematises structuralism and poststructuralist avant-garde's transhistorical methods that reject a historicist model for approaching how a work of art assumes meaning/s. This points towards a tendency in the avant-garde practices for an occupation with form and structure at the cost of socio-cultural and historical contexts in which art works are produced and received.

contested terrain of competing practices and modalities, spanning from realist exposition to expressive poetics. Bill Nichols states that documentary as a concept or practice ‘occupies no fixed territory’ or confirmed definition. (1991: 12) He proposes three grounds on which documentary can be defined — from the point of view of the filmmaker, the text and the viewer.

In terms of the maker, Nichols accords documentary an institutional status involving a community of practitioners who: ‘share a common, self-chosen mandate to represent the historical world rather than imaginary ones...’ (1991: 14)²² He qualifies the agreed perception that documentarists exercise less control over filmmaking than fiction filmmakers stating that the documentarist’s ‘lack of control’ does not pertain to technical aspects of film production, instead: ‘What the documentarist cannot fully control is his or her basic subject: history.’ (1991: 14)²³ While mapping the construction of the subject community, the influence of historical circumstance has been key to understanding the fashionings, experiences and world-views of community members. My interest is however, not the exposition or telling of history. Instead, the submitted practice examines how history percolates and informs the constitution of ordinary subjects; and it explores how the historical fashioning of experiences informs montage construction.

In recent discourse surrounding documentary film practice, the consideration of subjectivity as contamination has come under review. Increasingly documentary practitioners who have used the medium expressively have questioned its objectivist

²² Documentary filmmakers share in the criticism of fiction filmmaking. Nichols terms this response as a ‘vigorous dissociation’ from fiction film that can be traced to the earliest documentary filmmakers including Dziga Vertov, John Grierson, Paul Rotha, Humphrey Jennings and Basil Wright. (1991: 04)

²³ On this basis Nichols asserts that documentary film commands a discourse of its own and bears kinship with other non-fictional systems that together make up the ‘discourses of sobriety’; including science, economics, politics, foreign policy, education, religion, welfare. (1991:03)

claims, in particular the disparity between ‘observer’ and ‘observed.’ Michael Renov locates the imperative for the subjective in the rise of documentary poetics. He identifies four tendencies or functions of documentary. These are not exclusive.

At some moments and in the work of certain practitioners, one or another of these characteristics has frequently been over- or under-favored. I state the four tendencies in the active voice appropriate to their role in a “poesis,” an “active making”:

1. to record, reveal, or preserve
2. to persuade or promote
3. to analyze or interrogate
4. to express

(Renov 1993: 21)

Implicated in my use of montage is an imperative that collides with the norms of documentary realism. Montage as a critical practice elicits an argumentative dimension that does not foster the illusion of reality, but constitutes an analysis of it. (Wood *in* Levenson 1999: 218-220) In the submitted practice analysis of meanings and motivations shared by subjects; interrogation of the terms on which the community seeks to project itself, and engagement with invisible and intangible aspects such as memory have been favoured over recording of individual narratives or communal congregations in a gesture of describing the subject community as an unfamiliar culture, an ‘other’. In this measure the work departs from documentary conventions for objectivity towards expressive and experimental forms.

1.5 Injecting the self: Use of the First Person

Including practice and thesis, this submission attempts to articulate my position within the work intellectually and creatively. Since this submission involves film practice in

which my presence is evoked; and to accommodate discussion of my operations as filmmaker, it has been necessitated that the first person mode of address be employed in the thesis. The use of the first person in writing has been claimed within feminist scholarship. Patricia Hill Collins alludes to the use of her concrete experiences in academic writing as an attempt to embed herself in the group she is studying rather than distancing from it, without violating the basic epistemological framework. (Collins 1991: 202) Within Anthropology, Deborah Gordon observes the autobiographical element as complementing feminist experimental ethnographies and anthropologies that evoke multiple modes — a ‘rich texture of literary practices, epistemological dilemmas, and forms of self-reflexivity.’ (Behar & Gordon 1995: 432)²⁴

French writer and scholar Helene Cixous asserts the ‘I’ in writing as a response by the feminine subject to patriarchy. Susan Sellers locates Cixous’ emphasis on the first person stating that: ‘men’s and women’s collusion in the construction and maintenance of the patriarchal status quo confirms the need for individuation...’ (1996: 46)²⁵ The submitted film and this thesis involve rather than efface my responses to the subject community that formulates as a strategy of departure from mainstream conventions of documentary film and dominant ideologies encountered while making the work. The first person address in my writing acknowledges the individuation imperative that has arisen in my work.

²⁴ Deborah Gordon locates feminist anthropologists’ use of autobiographical revelation and personal testimony to third world revolutions. (Behar & Gordon 1995: 436)

²⁵ Sellers locates the stress on the ‘I’ in Cixous’ writing to her earlier text, *Inside*, in which the female subject experiences separation from the father at his death and through that distances from the mother too. Sellers states: ‘The father’s death coincides with separation from the mother... The Oedipal triangle of father, mother and self is imaged as: ‘three forces, three kinds of matter, three sorts of space’ (1996: 17) in which the self is the unknown: ‘in the center there was me and what I could see, I was alone, barely knowing myself’ (1996: 17-18) Division propels the ‘I’ into language and the ‘real’ of time and history (1996: 27)

1.6 Engagement with the thesis

This submission includes a film and thesis. The thesis is divided into 7 chapters. After this *Introduction* outlining the motivations for the research, the second chapter, *Research Methodology* discusses the methods used in this research — ethnography and film practice, alongside the particularities of my position as observer-participant. Chapter 3, *Literature Review* provides an overview of key literature with which I have engaged during the research spanning the disciplines of Ethnography and Visual Anthropology, Post-colonial Studies, Documentary and Film Theory. Chapter 4, *Evocations: Mapping the Terrain in the Subject Community* includes an in-depth discussion of the subject community, early provocations for the film practice, and the discursive departure in my practice during this research. In Chapter 5, *Articulations: Subjectivities attended through Montage*, instances when montage has been applied in the cinema of Bengali filmmaker, Ritwik Ghatak and Iranian video installation artist, Shirin Neshat are discussed as providing reformulations of montage practice embedded with an intercultural and anti-national stance that deemphasises colonial categories. Chapter 6, *Practice* is an in-depth discussion of the motivations that underpin the completed film's construction. In the last chapter, *Conclusion*, I share implications arising from this research and indicate territories for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Research Methodology

Modern ethnographies are often extremely complex stories of other lives, or stories of anthropological encounters in the field. They are often manifold constructions, juxtaposing indigenous texts with anthropological reflections and analysis.

— **David MacDougall (Taylor 1994: 31)**

In this chapter the methodologies adopted during this research are discussed. First, ethnography that was employed for studying the subject community is considered; followed by an overview of the filmmaking process including filming in Cardiff and India. Ethnographic methods of observation and interaction facilitated interpretation of the subject community's socio-cultural formations, which contributed towards initial thinking about the scope of the film practice. As the research advanced both methods got combined.

Filming within the community spanned one year and the submitted film was edited over nine months in which two cuts were developed. The first cut was screened as 'work in progress' at the Next Wave Festival of Youth Art in Melbourne, March 2006. This included material developed primarily in Cardiff. Narratives and issues contained in it find resonances and departures from living conditions in India. Consequently, a short filming schedule in India, spanning one week was undertaken in April 2006. In this, material was developed that plots parallels and contrasts with relation to the community's accounts documented in Cardiff. This material was included in the final stages of editing the submitted film.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first relates to ethnographic interactions with the subject community during this research. In the second section, the process of filmmaking and aspects of camerawork are outlined. In the concluding section, I introduce the implications of ethnography in terms of alerting consciousness towards subject positionalities in my practice. In particular, I draw attention to how the etic and emic categories got intermeshed in my position as filmmaker.

2.1 The Ethnographic investment

Ethnography involves participation on behalf of the ethnographer to observe, gain knowledge and analyse the subject under examination. During this research, ethnography provided the necessary theoretical and pragmatic tools comprising an inventory of activities through which the subject community was researched. I functioned in the capacity of an observer-participant — a position that favours ‘observation over participation.’ (Seale 1998: 222) My role as observer resulted from my familiarity and a sense of distance from the subject community. Sharing an ethnic and cultural proximity, I could access and understand the community closely. However, linguistic, religious, economic and educational disparities differentiated and distanced myself from it. This titled my engagements with the community more in favour of observation and analysis than participation for mapping its cultural practices through experience²⁶.

²⁶ In chapter 4, *Evocations: Mapping the Terrain with the Subject Community*, I further discuss this experience of familiarity and distance from the subject community by referring to the specific notion of ‘strange distance.’

It is pertinent here to distinguish between the ‘observer-participant’ and ‘participant-observer’ roles. The former, it is commonly considered, involves limited participation on behalf of the researcher in the cultural practices of the subject. According to David Walsh the risk in the position is superficiality; but its advantage is that it prevents the researcher from ‘going native.’ (Seale 1998: 222) Consequently there is possibility for analysis and critique of information transacted with the subject. The latter, i.e. ‘participant-observer’ position, arose as a research method in anthropology with the work of Bronislaw Malinowski. This role holds the researcher’s personal experiences of ‘participation and empathy’ as central sources for knowledge. It ratifies divergent styles of documentation and problematises ethnography’s impersonal and objectivist credentials. (Clifford & Marcus 1986: 13) Though, in this research I claim the observer-participant role, I have been aware and appreciative of the participant-observer role and do not stand strictly outside its rubric. Since my sense of distance from the community has served as a research resource that in many ways permeated and shaped the film practice, I stress my role more as observer than participant.

Introducing the project

Since this research is the first anthropological study pertaining to this community, primary sources have been used to examine the community’s origins, trace its movements and unpack its ways of living. Interaction with the community commenced in January 2004 through liaison with the President of the Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff, Mr. N. Patel. Mr. Patel has been the principal contact for all communication with the community during the research. Through a series of meetings with community representatives

between January — April 2004, the film project and its aims were introduced. These included mapping the community’s social and cultural formations, and its members’ experiences. In these meetings I gained insight into the community’s set-up and it became apparent that the temple and community centre are the loci for communal activities and gatherings through which the community professes its individuality and disparity.



The Swaminarayan temple



An in-depth interview was conducted with Mr. Patel in which he traced the origins, migrations and settlement of the community in Cardiff²⁷. This interview grounded my understanding of the community’s historical construction. The socio-economic profile of the community’s ancestors, prior to migration, which is revealed in this account enabled in contextualising the community’s formation and activities in Cardiff²⁸. I became appreciative of community members’ aspirations, engagements and world-views. Further, understandings gained from this account served as criteria for evaluating the significance and meanings of instances that interviewees included in the film share.

²⁷ See appendix 3 for transcript of interview with Mr. Patel.

²⁸ This interview is the basis for a historical account of the community shared in chapter 4; and some information from this has been included through Mr. Patel’s interview in the submitted film.

Early Conversations

Observing communal activities at the start of the research, led to informal conversations with a spread of members that were often conjured spontaneously at the temple complex. In these, members shared their accounts of migrations and ways of living including occupations and cultural engagements in Cardiff. These conversations facilitated developing a rapport with subjects so that when the camera was introduced for filming, community members did not feel intimidated by it, and were sufficiently aware of the goals of my project.

Initial conversations with members have maximum variation through which common living patterns were identified. In these conversations I probed what aspects of their lives would members prefer be shared through the film. This became a mechanism for eliciting their involvement in the film practice. This attempt to engage members with the work coincides with recent developments in Visual Anthropology and Ethnography. In these disciplines there has been departure from using visual media as recording apparatuses towards developing more expressive formulations in which the engagement dynamics between researcher and subject assume centrality over any objectivist descriptions. With reference to this shift, Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy state that the: ‘...focus of visual anthropology [now] includes both the properties of the anthropologist’s own representational systems... and the properties of those visual systems studied by the anthropologists in the field.’ (1997: 21)

Community members emphasised temple activities as the facets that would aid in reflecting the community's cultural specificity. They expressed interest in sharing festivities particular to the Swaminarayan community, rather than pan-Indian festivals celebrated by Indian communities across Great Britain. This was their means for differentiating their particular culture from other Indian communities: on grounds of their adherence of a particular Hindu sect — the Swaminarayan and also in terms of influences derived from Wales. I was invited to focus upon festivities pertaining to the life of Lord Krishna, the principal deity worshipped by the community and the annual discourses, *Patotsav*, delivered by saints of the Swaminarayan sect. There is no ritual significance to this event, but it is a crucial component on the community's calendar as the occasion that provides the sharpest differentiation of the Swaminarayan from other Hindu sects.



Community members praying at the temple

After I commenced filming in the community a survey questionnaire was randomly distributed during regular visits to the temple²⁹. In this members were requested to share lasting visual and aural impressions from their landscape. This was a means to further extend community members' participation in the film practice by evoking their associations and imaginations.

²⁹ See appendix 4 for survey questionnaire.

While observing the community in these initial months, I liaised with individual subjects with whom I developed more sustained conversations. Some of them are included in the completed film. During this time, temple officials expressed concern towards my functioning as a woman cameraperson. My operations within the temple complex had to be planned with officials in view of the temple's regulations and to acknowledge members' sentiments of sanctity towards the space. I was advised I would not be able to film the temple's sanctum, as women are restricted from approaching it. I would also not be allowed to film the section of the temple where men pray. I was required to place the camera in the women's section at all times³⁰. Towards the close of filming however, at events such as *Diwali* and *Tulsi Vivaha*, I was allowed to approach the temple sanctum, and even film the men's section by raising camera height in the women's section.

2.2 The Film Process

The film practice in this research can be situated in the context of practice-based research around documentary, ethnographic and experimental filmmaking within higher education institutions across the world. Precedents of such work can be found in the research engagements of practitioners such as David MacDougall in Australia, Lizzie Thynne and Felicia Hughes Freeland in Britain, Anjali Monteiro and KP Jayashankar in India, and Fadwa El Guindi, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Barbara Myerhoff and Andrei Singer in the USA who undertake practice-based research disseminated at specific public viewing contexts

³⁰ Mr. Patel had agreed that we would be in regular contact to discuss upcoming events and activities at the temple. In our discussions we evaluated the significance of particular communal gatherings and how filming would be pursued on those occasions at the temple. In these conversations Mr. Patel would inform me about restrictions on bodily movements and camera positioning as per the codes and regulations for different events.

such as film festivals, classroom education, and community-based research and historical archive projects. The eliciting discourse for the practice and the levels of experimentation differ in keeping with motivations, individual styles of functioning and the specifics of particular dissemination contexts; however the broader goals involve research into the engagement dynamics between the filmmaker and subject, and the implication of those dynamics in film construction. All practitioners cited above, bear a commitment outside the conventions of mass media and television documentary. This is not necessarily out of disinterest, but through this, the concerned practitioners challenge existing conventions for documentary practice.

Filming within the community commenced in January 2005 at the *Makkar* festival³¹. During this year I focussed on five annual festivals: *Makkar* — month-long morning rituals marking the education of Krishna (January); *Hindola* — ritual making and arrangement of swings, performed over forty days leading to Krishna's birth celebrations (July-August); *Janamashtami* — the birth of Krishna wherein communal dances are performed (August); *Patotsav* — the congregation of Swaminarayan sect heads and their annual discourse to the community (September); and *Tulsi Vivaha* — the marriage of Krishna (November). Apart from these, interviews with subjects and construction activities at the temple were other material recorded within the community. An experimental sequence comprising myself filming Baroque statuary in Cardiff was also filmed during this time.

³¹ For the completed film, Ms. Caroline Lomax Daniels, an independent filmmaker and graduate from the BA Media Production, University of Glamorgan, collaborated with me. She and I have shared in camerawork and editing.



Krishna's birthday: Janamashtami; & Krishna's wedding: Tulsi Vivaha

Since documentary filmmaking is a loosely constructed practice that mobilises: 'no finite inventory of techniques, addresses no set number of issues, and adopts no completely known taxonomy of forms, styles, or modes', the approach while filming aimed at a holistic coverage spanning the community's cultural activities and a spread of subjects and experiences from within it. (Nichols 1991: 12) Besides the ritual and religious significances of communal activities, their social and cultural meanings were examined through conversations with temple attendees, and by responding, through camerawork, to the atmosphere of spaces and my experiences of being in them.

My attempt was to cover events from varied perspectives. Besides rituals and prayer, I focussed on preparatory and other peripheral activities. On occasions when two cameras were used³², such as *Janamashtami*, *Tulsi Vivaha* and *Patotsav*, I navigated among members recording informal activities concurrent with ritual activities such as children playing, women exchanging conversations and youngsters recording video images. I did not want to limit filming on these occasions to traditional rituals only, and attempted to

³² When two cameras were used, the first was operated by myself and the second by my colleague. She would focus on the rituals activities, for which I would discuss the sequence of events, key moments and any possibilities for image composition with her prior to the event. I would then use the second camera to navigate in the temple space focussing on alternatives activities.

map the community's perceptions of these occasions through members' expressions, body gestures, exchanges and activities.

As filming proceeded, it also became apparent that social codes within the community were volatile and altered between occasions. For example, while on *Patotsav*³³ the gender segregation between men and women spills into all activities on the temple premises to honour the sect heads' vows of celibacy, during *Tulsi Vivaha*, members interact more casually among themselves. In the backdrop of the wedding, this festival serves more as a social gathering.



Focussing beyond the rituals

Filmed Interviews

In the filmmaking process I derived from techniques of *cinema verite*³⁴. Bill Nichols defines two motivations for *cinema verite*: observation and interaction. The former

³³ *Patotsav* is the annual congregation in which Swaminarayan sect heads deliver discourses to the community.

³⁴ The origins of *cinema verite* are in the Soviet documentary style that emerged after the revolution in the 1920s, exemplified in the work of Dziga Vertov. Vertov was the documentarist for the Soviet newspaper, *Pravda* (truth). The filmed edition of the paper, which Vertov developed was termed, *Kino-Pravda* (film-truth). Vertov characterised his cinema as one where; 'there were no actors, no decors, no script and no acting.' The style later influenced French cinema, particularly the cinema of Jean Luc Godard in the 1970s and ethnographic filmmaker, Jean Rouch. (Dixon 1997) Susan Hayward notes that Rouch initially termed his 'objective' style as 'cinema direct' where there was; 'no staging, no mise-en-scene and no editing.' In the 1960s he shifted away from this purist style towards 'a more sociological investigation' where he staged shots and edited his footage. This style he termed as *cinema verite*. 'Less objective, but no less real, *cinema verite* attempted to catch reality on film. Ordinary people testified to their experiences, answered questions put by Rouch or his colleagues.' (Hayward 2000: 58-59) The earliest and most poignant example of *cinema verite* is Rouch's *Chronique D'Un Été*. Dai Vaughan has pointed towards the detestation early *cinema verite* was met with in terms of its inundating the cinema medium with 'mere facticity.' (1999: 120) Later *cinema verite* addressed this problem and departed by acknowledging selection as embedded in the filmmaking process and thus became open to editorial intervention.

stresses the non-intervention of the filmmaker and the latter shifts textual authority: 'toward the social actors recruited: their comments and responses provide a central part of the film's argument.' (Nichols 1991: 38 & 45) As filming proceeded, there was a shift from a purely observational towards an interactive mode that manifests in members' references³⁵ to and on occasions performance before the camera. My navigations among the communal gatherings during festivities invited curiosity from members and evoked informality in our relations because my turning and pointing the camera away from the ritual activities got equated as non-abidance with the community's traditional hierarchies.



Community subjects referring to and performing before the camera.

The interactive mode developed furthest through interviews with subjects. Bill Nichols holds that though an 'overdetermined structure', the interview raises the dynamics of hierarchy and power in the exchange of information between social agents. (Nichols 1991: 50-51) David MacDougall adds that: 'Interviews in films not only convey spoken information but also unspoken information about the contexts in which they occur. They allow their speakers to describe their subjective experiences of past events, while

³⁵ In *Constructivism in Film*, Vlada Petric defines self-referentiality as people's responses to the act of shooting as well as their different reactions to being filmed. (1993: 81-82)

simultaneously we interpret the emotions and constraints of the moment.’ (Devereaux & Hillman 1995: 245)

Interviews were conducted towards the close of filming within the community by which time, members had deliberated upon particular aspects of their lives and culture to share in the film. All interviews are qualitative as they involve a ‘smaller sample’ of subjects and are ‘in-depth.’ (Miles & Huberman 1994: 27) Besides Mr. Patel’s interview that provides an overview of the community’s migrations and organisation in Cardiff; other interviews involve personal narratives and experiences. Pursuing the personal was a mechanism to contain domination of the film by one kind of voice, or authoritarian stance. With reference to filmmaking and interviewing in a communal construct, David MacDougall has pointed out that subjects who are most likely to interact with documentary filmmakers: ‘have agendas of their own. They may be unusually “enquiring of mind,” marginal to the community, or already in an intermediary position between community and explorers from outside, but in any case their agendas exceed and transform those of the filmmaker.’ (Taylor 1994: 32)



Mr. N. Patel and Karsan Vaghani



Mr. Patel and Ms. Varsani's interviews resulted from face-to-face contact at the temple. The interviews with other male subjects at the temple were conducted spontaneously while filming construction activities there. The interview with the widow subject is an 'opportunistic' instance that arose through following 'new leads and taking advantage of the unexpected.' (Miles and Huberman 1994: 28) I had been probing the segregation of widows in the temple hall given that they always sit at the back and unlike married women or young girls do not prostrate before the sanctum.

While responding to a survey questionnaire, a female subject³⁶ had entered a conversation about my impressions of the temple. In this conversation I queried why widows always sat at the back of the prayer hall. The subject explained that widows, under the Swaminarayan sect, adhere to particular codes of social conduct³⁷. I wanted to include the perspectives of a widow in the work. I approached some widows at the temple. Most were unwilling to share any experiences with me. I pursued the informant whether she would be able to aid me in accessing a widow subject from the community. A few weeks later she introduced myself to Ms. Shanta Halai, the widow subject included in the film³⁸.

Cinematography

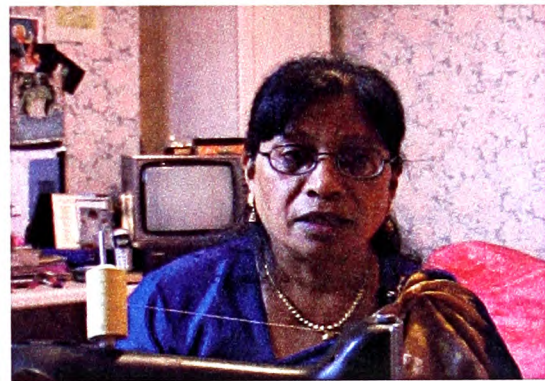
When I started filming, my intentions were to record material without any prior set-up. However, the practicalities of working at the temple complex and with community

³⁶ The concerned subject has requested anonymity.

³⁷ This subject shared that widows, according to the Swaminarayan sacred text: the *Shikshapatri*, cannot interact with men in the absence of another woman in the same space. They are required to sleep on the floor and eat only two meals a day. Their ornaments are taken away at widowhood, their heads are shaved, and they are required to dress in either a plain red or white sarce at all times.

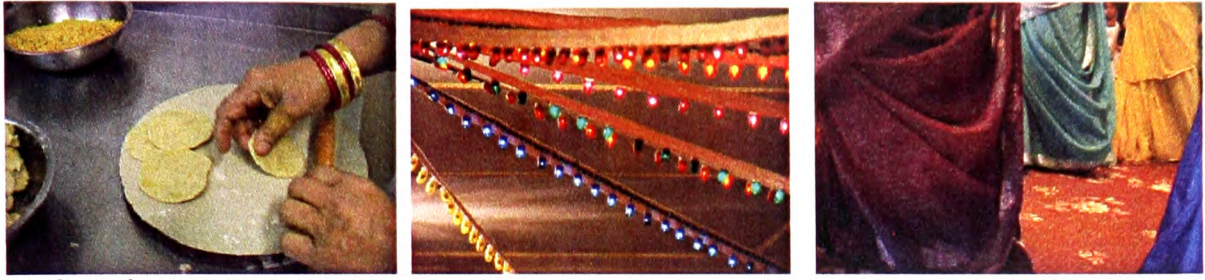
³⁸ Ms. Halai is henceforth referred to as the widow from Cardiff.

members necessitated that the camera be set-up to facilitate participation. At the first instance, this occurred at the temple where the camera had to be positioned in keeping with the temple regulations. Further, interviews with the women subjects necessitated a set-up. This involved discussions about the scope of the interviews and selection of locations for conducting them. Both women were interviewed at their residences, where the subjects felt most at ease. It was a spontaneous decision on the day of filming to record Ms. Varsani's interview as she was working in her kitchen. Unlike her, the widow, Ms. Halai wanted to be seated maintaining eye contact with me throughout the interview and had requested that no one accompany me.



Framing the women subjects in domestic spaces

While recording specific events, camerawork displayed a tendency for proximity — getting near subjects. This resulted in close-ups and tight close-ups that emphasise intricate details of rituals, objects and expressions. On some occasions the proximity of the camera formulated into slight camera movements that paralleled the rhythmic movements of subjects within the frame, for example hands rolling bread in the temple kitchen.



Tendency for camera proximity

As I reviewed the material it became apparent that close-ups were fragmentary, deterritorialising and abstracting subjects from any space or time coordinates. Further, their sustained proximity was straining for the eye in terms of a constantly maintained camera distance and image magnification. Consequently I developed long and medium shots to counter-balance the tendency for proximity³⁹. These explore specific themes such as temple proxemics, the communal collective and spatial dynamics⁴⁰.



The long shot for exploring the communal collective and spatial dynamics

Extending the film work

Throughout the duration of the research, I have shared the developed material through various channels amidst the community members, research seminars and conferences; as well as through an international forum such as the Next Wave Festival. Responses to the

³⁹ For a detailed discussion of the long shot in terms of its anthropological qualities of establishing relationships between and within space, see Collier and Collier. (1999) *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, pp: 18, 32.

⁴⁰ In chapter 6, *Practice*, I delve further into the problematics of proximate imagery and how I attended those during editing.

work have varied in keeping with the disparities between audiences — community members, academics and peers, artists and city folk. This has sensitised me to approaching the audience not as a homogenous body, but constitutive of varied cultural and social backgrounds — which has influenced the film process both during production and post-production.

Filming within the community was completed in November 2005. The first cut was developed between December 2005 — February 2006. This was exhibited as a video installation at the Next Wave Festival of Youth Art in Melbourne, March 2006, as ‘work in progress’⁴¹. After screening the film in Melbourne, some more footage was developed in India. This included instances of coincidence or conflict with the Cardiff interviewees’ narratives, developed on various locations of the satellite township, NOIDA⁴², on the outskirts of New Delhi. While screening the piece among peers in Delhi, I learned about the concentration of Hindu widows in Vrindavan — a village with refuge homes for Hindu widows abandoned by families from all across India. There surfaced an association with the widow subject in Cardiff. I visited Vrindavan in the coming days and developed some images at a home for old widows from Bengal and Gujarat. This material was included in the film during the final stages of editing the project.

2.3 Implications of Ethnography — confusing the etic and emic Positions

Ethnographic methods of observation, conversations and interviews facilitated approaching community members, accessing their perceptions of their culture and ways

⁴¹ The piece opened the Next Wave Festival of Youth Art whose theme was ‘Empire Games’, coinciding with the Commonwealth Games 2006. The film ran on a loop and was projected in a shipping container located in the newly renovated North bank near the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the main venue for the Commonwealth Games. It is estimated that the installation received an audience of around 20000 persons during the 8 days it was on display.

⁴² New Okhla Industrial Development Authority.

of living, and gaining insight into the community's internal dynamics. The film practice would not have commanded these insights if I had entered the community with a camera from the start of my interaction with it or concentrated filmmaking to a confined production schedule. The time spent observing the community drew my attention to questions of working around a cultural construct not within the conventions of interpreting its representations or texts. Rather, I developed alertness towards positionalities of subjects while engaging with them, including mine in socio-cultural and intellectual terms.

This aspect of reflection upon the researcher subject distinguishes ethnography from other research methods. Ethnography is embedded with 'a large constructional and reflexive character' because the 'researcher/observer is the primary research instrument.' (Seale 1998: 220-221) My role as observer-participant arose from my sense of nearness and distance from the community⁴³. Using anthropological linguist, Kenneth Pike's classification of the emic and etic perspectives for examining anthropological subjects, wherein the former is an 'internal view, with criteria chosen from within the system', and the latter, an external view arrived at with 'criteria external to the system'; it became apparent that my functioning within the community did not fit neatly into either classification as insider or outsider. (1957: 08) There was confusion between the etic and emic perspectives in my work, and I was more an observer than participant.

Clifford Geertz has suggested that the insider or near position and the outsider or distant positions are not contradictory or polar opposites — in fact the implication of the

⁴³ In chapters 6. *Practice* and 7. *Conclusion*, I develop discussion that links the dynamics of my position to the scopio regime developed through the submitted film.

two modalities usefully situates the researcher outside the subjects' mental horizons, without being 'deaf to the distinctive tonalities of their existence.' (1983: 57) The confusion of the etic and emic perspectives formulated on the one hand, into an insider command over the dynamics of the subject community and on the other, I used my distance from the community as a mode for critical analysis to interrogate the information being shared with me, including different members' criteria for promoting their images and representations through my work.

CHAPTER 3

Literature Review

The principal interrogation of this research pertains to the scope of montage practice in the context of ethnicity. For this, I have engaged with literatures from Visual Anthropology and Ethnography, Post-colonialism, Documentary and Film Theory. The literature engagement pertaining to Anthropology and Documentary maps methods and current debates within these fields that are of relevance to the practice of this research. In the section on Post-colonial Studies I draw attention to the origins of the field and the criticisms it has invited in terms of overemphasis on colonialism. This is of relevance to this research because in chapter 5, I posit montage practice in inter-cultural terms that challenges the binarisms and power equations associated with colonialism. The literature engagement with relation to Film Theory involves historical contextualisation and revisitation of the writings and practice of Sergei Eisenstein that problematise some pervasive understandings of montage. In this section I indicate Film Theory's tendency for equating the discourses of realism and modernism with film codes, and how this problematic percolates discussion of race and ethnicity in film through the approach of stereotype analysis of mainstream cinema.

3.1 Anthropology

John Collier and Malcolm Collier's *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*, has been a primary text for working with ethnography to develop film practice.

This text discusses photography and the moving image as anthropological research tools. Through case studies, the Colliers exposit how the complexities, pragmatics and intricacies of field-work can be combined with the possibilities of photography, film and video. They detail the scope of particular forms of visual construction, for example ‘long views’ as in panoramic photographs for establishing ‘relationships of ecology and community’ (1999: 18); photographic aerial reconnaissance imagery for a ‘bird’s eye view’, etc. (1999: 29-30) They add that in field-work surrounding a communal category, the researcher is likely to encounter its experiences as ‘fluid’, resulting in regroupings and alterations.

In any community we may be confronted with the problem of the ideal, as compared to the actual functioning of the community, the first with its roots in formalized history and tradition, and the second based on rapid change and opportunism within which pragmatic developments take place. (Collier & Collier 1999: 90)

Later in the text they relate fluidity in social experience with the nature of the moving image stating that ‘continuous recording with a stationery camera’ maybe useful in controlled circumstances, but may not be yielding as fluid activities of cultural processes unfold. (1999: 148) Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor in *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking* extend this contention. They assert that in the process of making ethnographic films, it is important a film style evolves from the encounter between the filmmaker and the subject. (1997: 04)

Privileging style that emanates from the research encounter reflects ethnography and anthropology’s imperatives for specificity. Besides stylistic specificity of texts, ethnography’s pursuit for ‘veracity’ stresses specificity of the subject under consideration (Russell 1999: 10). Michael Herzfeld terms the tendency for the specific as an imperative

towards 'individuation' whereby the 'Other', the subject, is not represented as 'homogenous.' He qualifies the problematic of homogenising stating that it:

... does not always concern only the colonialist view of geographically distant populations, since it may also be used of "peasants" and "the working class" closer to home, but as a form of representation, it seems universally to serve as both the instrument and expression of power. (2001: 18)

In recent times, Anthropology and Ethnography have witnessed discussions problematising conventional forms of textuality. Ashcroft *et al.* explain that ethnography has: '... experienced vigorous debates about its methodology; between the claims of "positivism" and "naturalism", for instance, and about the status of reflexivity, the extent to which the ethnographer is conscious of his or her own **subject** position.' (1998: 85-87, emphasis original)

Historically, film, video and photography have been used as 'recording' media that substantiate field research. (Banks & Morphy 1997: 06) However David MacDougall has stated that audiovisual media bring about:

... an important shift in the emphasis of anthropology, primarily to do with its content. It brings within reach a new anthropological understanding of social life-worlds and *a fortiori* the social experience of individuals. This includes much that we might put under the heading of "sensory" knowledge—that is, how people perceive their material environment and interact with it, in both its natural and cultural forms, including their interactions with others as physical beings. (2006: 269)

Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy in *Rethinking Visual Anthropology* draw attention to recent, experimental and expressive forms that involve a reworking around the uses of visual media. They identify that the anthropologist's relation to film and photography has shifted away from objective description towards expression of the interaction between the

subject and researcher. Reviewing the relationship between researcher and subject, experimental ethnographic filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-Ha has critiqued ethnographic film in terms of the: ‘division of the world into those “out there” (the subjects of ethnography) and those “in here” (in the theatre, looking at them), demanding a more poetic conception of ethnographic practice. (Russell 1999: 04) Disturbing the boundaries between the researcher and subject stresses reflexivity. In *Doing Visual Ethnography*, Sarah Pink emphasises a reflexive approach stating:

A reflexive approach recognizes the centrality of the subjectivity of the researcher to the production and representation of ethnographic knowledge... In relation to this, researchers should maintain an awareness of how different elements of their identities become significant during research... Ethnographers ought to be self-conscious about how their identities are constructed and understood by the people with whom they work. (2001: 20)

George Marcus and Michael J Fischer in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* discuss self-reflexivity arguing that anthropological research in describing ‘other’ cultures implicitly reflects the cultural positioning of the researcher. Marcus and Fischer call for a ‘modernist ethnography’ distinct from a realist one in which the ethnographer exercises control over the ethnographic narrative. They assert modernist ethnography as being: ‘constructed to highlight the eliciting discourse between ethnographer and subjects or involve the reader in the work of analysis.’ (1999: 67)⁴⁴

One of the strategies for modernist ethnography that Marcus and Fischer enlist is ‘defamiliarization’ — to ‘disrupt common sense’ and thus challenge anthropology’s objectivist, realist and evidentiary claims. (1999: 137) Defamiliarization parallels modern art’s stance for creating shock. Marcus and Fischer qualify that ‘defamiliarization’ within

⁴⁴ For a detailed discussion of dialogue between subject and ethnographer as an interpretive strategy see, Marcus, G. & Fischer, M. J. (1999) *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*. Chicago: Chicago University Press — pp 30-31.

ethnography: 'is more than an attention-grabber; it is a process that should entail a critical reflecting back on the means of defamiliarization itself...' (1999: 137). They suggest two techniques for defamiliarization:

- (a) *Defamiliarization by epistemological critique*: that involves bringing of insights from foreign or alternative cultures that have been studied.
- (b) *Defamiliarization by cross-cultural juxtaposition*: which is more empirical and less subtle, but entails 'equal ethnography between us and them'. (1999: 137)

George Marcus has elsewhere observed that the characteristics emerging through experimental ethnography namely: polyphony, fragmentation and reflexivity are modes closer to a critical intellectual montage in the cinema because montage: 'calls attention to the essentially oral conventions and techniques of other cultures, or to the different ways that literacy has established itself elsewhere as a protest against conventions of Western literacy and narrative.' (Devereaux & Hillman 1995: 46) Michael Fischer's observations about ethnicity lend necessary critical imperative to documentation strategies while engaging with ethnic subjects. He lists irony, fragmentation and dialogical modes as means to confront ethnicity as: 'something that is simply passed on from generation to generation, taught or learned.' Fischer calls for reflecting ethnicity as: 'something dynamic... not consciously taught... something that institutionalised teaching easily makes chauvinist, sterile, and superficial...' (Clifford & Marcus 1986: 194)

The ascendance of expressive and reflexive forms of ethnography that call up modernist strategies has propelled revisitation of the interactions between the disciplines

of anthropology and art. In the recently edited collection, *The Anthropology of Art*, editors, Howard Morphy and Morgan Perkins observe that:

Anthropology's articulation with modernism has been long-term, and it is only recently that anthropologists have become fully aware of the complexities of that relationship. The challenge of anthropology to the contemporary Euro-American art world, only now being explicitly articulated, is twofold: it gives agency to the artist and asserts that cultural context plays an important part in the appreciation of art. Thus it problematizes the universalistic assumption behind the modernist enterprise. In turn the challenge for anthropology has been to open up its own interpretative practice to the aesthetic and affective dimensions of objects. (2006: 11)⁴⁵

In view of this conversation between art and anthropology, conventions for construction of ethnographic films suggested by authors such as Lucien Taylor and Ilisa Barbash as well as the Colliers arise as problematic. While these practitioners echo modernist sentiments reflecting the possibilities of interaction between subject and researcher, their understandings of filmmaking coincide with conventional and dominant cinematic practices⁴⁶ that have been deconstructed and critiqued by radical and avant-garde filmmakers and film theorists. Though their emphasis on the conventions of realism is in keeping with ethnography's stress on context and specificity; expressive ethnographic formulations, such as Trinh T. Minh-ha's films are cinematically experimental towards composition and construction.

3.2 Post-colonialism

Post-colonialism was heralded by the seminal *Orientalism* of Edward Said (1978).

Homi Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak later made following contributions to post-

⁴⁵ Morphy and Perkins' identification of the universalist assumption underpinning modernism coincides with the problematic identified in chapter 1, *Introduction*, with relation to modernism's socio-cultural indifference.

⁴⁶ Approaching film with an appreciation for 'realism', these authors stress features such as spatial and temporal continuity; steady exposition commencing with establishing long shots that then lead into closer views. These conventions for film practice have been critiqued within counter-cinema and political modernism. See this chapter, section *May 1968: Film Theory and Counter-Cinema*.

colonialism. Post-colonialism draws attention towards the socio-cultural influences of colonialism, particularly with relation to formerly colonised peoples. It has increasingly come to be considered as a: 'field of interdisciplinary studies which encompasses a wide variety of types of analysis.' (Kennedy 2000: 111) Ashcroft *et al* observe that post-colonialism is:

... used in wide and diverse ways to include the study and analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialisms, the discursive operations of the empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects, and most importantly perhaps, the differing responses to such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre- and post-independence communities. (1998: 187)

Robert Young observes that post-colonialism is distinguished from orthodox European Marxism because it combines: 'its critique of objective material conditions with detailed analysis of their subjective effects.' (2001: 07) *Orientalism* examined the construction of the Orient as 'other' within Western discourse and textual construction that Said argued as representing 'the Western "will to power" over others.' (Kennedy 2000: 20) Said contended that:

In the first place, it would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was *essentially* an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality... But the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient (the East as career) despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a "real" Orient...

A second qualification is that ideas, cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied. To believe that the Orient was created—or as I call it, "Orientalized"—and to believe that such things happen simply as a necessity of the imagination, is to be disingenuous. The relationship between the Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony, and is quite accurately indicated in the title of K. M. Pannikar's classic *Asia and Western Dominance*. The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it *could be*—that is, submitted to being—*made* Oriental. (1985: 05-6)

Though influential *Orientalism* invited criticisms. George Marcus held that Said's strategy had been totalising. According to Marcus, Said had posed: 'no alternative form for the adequate representation of other voices or points of view across cultural boundaries'. (Marcus & Fischer 1999: 02) Responding to such criticisms in his later writings such as *Orientalism Revisited*, Said emphasised the subject of representation and sought alternatives and resistances from within the 'Orient'. (Kennedy 2000: 106)

In 1994, Homi Bhabha proposed the notion of 'cultural hybridity' in *The Location of Culture*. Cultural hybridity posits post-colonial subjectivity, as operating in an 'interstitial' space, marked by: '... the overlap and displacement of domains of difference.' (Bhabha 1994: 02) Hybridity asserts 'negotiation', the 'movement back and forth' between subject positions arising in moments of interaction across cultures. (Bhabha 1994: 02)

Social differences are not simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition; they are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project — at once a vision and a construction — that takes you 'beyond' yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction. (Bhabha 1994: 03)

Said employed 'hybridity' in his text *Culture and Imperialism*. However, unlike Bhabha, Said's use of the term asserts the, 'overlapping of colonized and colonizing cultures in all domains.' (Kennedy 2000: 122) While cultural hybridity facilitated understanding post-colonial subjectivities, like *Orientalism* it too has been criticised on the grounds of being metadiscursive, extracting and overemphasising colonial discourse.

A particular problematic, according to Aijaz Ahmad is that post-colonial discourse emphasises colonialism 'trans-historically' — 'evacuating the very meaning of the word

and dispersing that meaning so wide that we can no longer speak of determinate histories of determinate structures...' (Ahmad 1992: 09) He adds that the: 'expansions and consolidations' that get termed as post-colonial have: '... not occurred in some vacuum, ahistorically', and that an appreciation for these enterprises cannot be separated from the historical circumstances in which they arose. (Ahmad 1992: 75-76) Leela Gandhi argues that through post-colonialism, colonialism surfaces as a homogenous and all-inclusive category. Similar: '... to feminism, it [post-colonialism] fails to account for differences, in this case the culturally and historically variegated forms of both colonisation and anti-colonial struggles.' (1998: 168) Deriving from such criticisms there have been counter attempts to engage with those very territories as post-colonialism but without being determined by the problematics of metadiscourse that afflict post-colonial scholarship. For example Amartya Sen in *The Argumentative Indian*, delves into the subject of orientalism but departs from Said's strategy to specifically examine: 'contrasting and conflicting Western approaches' in the understanding of India⁴⁷. (2005: 141) The different approaches to India, Sen argues, reveal that the workings of the western imagination and colonialism in particular have not been uniform or consistent.

Art critic Geeta Kapur takes issue with the emphasis on radicalism and 'militancy' as underpinning post-colonial subjectivity. She links this tendency with the location of post-colonial writers and theorists in the western academy that according to her propels a 'hierarchical superiority' for the discourse around post-colonial peoples. She states that: 'It is true that there is a certain urgency in the task of the third world inside the first...

⁴⁷ Amartya Sen identifies three 19th century approaches towards India from the outside: the *exoticist*, the *magisterial* and the *curatorial*. (2005: 144-150)

Meanwhile we have to be aware of a third-worldist mentality as well... overdetermining the representations of radical issues for us.' (2000: 281)

Gayatri C. Spivak, a key post-colonial critic has attended this issue by pointing out the complexity in approaching the subaltern⁴⁸ subject. In her seminal essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Spivak is occupied with the feminist project and points out that in the act of attending the subaltern in historiography: 'the notion of what the work cannot say becomes important.' (Ashcroft et al. 1997: 28) She cautions that:

With no possibility of nostalgia for that lost origin [in the subaltern subject], the historian must suspend (as far as possible) the clamour of his or her own consciousness (or consciousness-effect, as operated by disciplinary training), so that the elaboration of the insurgency, packaged with an insurgent-consciousness, does not freeze into an 'object of investigation', or worse yet, a model for imitation. (Ashcroft et al 1997: 28)

Elsewhere Spivak argues that in the act of engaging with subaltern consciousness a degree of essentialism say in terms of gender or class is necessitated so that the historiographic intervention can be accessed outside the academy, and by the subaltern subject it surrounds. She terms this as 'strategic essentialism' qualified on the grounds that: 'you can look at essentialisms, not as descriptions of the way things are, but as something that one must adopt to produce a critique of anything.'⁴⁹ (Harasym 1990: 51)

⁴⁸ Subaltern literally means of 'inferior-rank.' Antonio Gramsci first used the term to refer to groups that are subjected to the hegemony of ruling classes. The term entered post-colonial discourse through the Subaltern Studies Group comprising South-Asian historians who according to Ashcroft et al. revisited South Asian history to, 'redress the imbalance created in academic work by a tendency to focus on elites and elite culture in South Asian historiography.' (1997: 216)

⁴⁹ The discussion of the problematics surrounding post-colonial scholarship assumed relevance in this research as I engaged more closely with the cultural imperatives underpinning montage thought of practitioners such as Sergei Eisenstein and German art historian and anthropologist, Aby Warburg, alongside later third world artists such as Ritwik Ghatak and Shirin Neshat. In chapter 5, I discuss these artists and argue that the cultural interactions that underpin their montage conceptions provide to us an alternative conception of history that de-emphasises colonialism, and posits inter-cultural interactions outside power equations such as those that accompany the colonial encounter. This is of relevance to the practice of this research because working outside the notion of ethnic subjects as situated in decidedly unequal power equations involves a discursive shift in approaching the ethnic subject through film practice, away from representing the subject as homogenous towards deriving a critical and polyphonic reflection from it. I allude to this discursive shift in the following chapter, and later in chapters 6 and 7. Also, in the conclusion, I refer to Spivak's notion of strategic essentialism for discussing certain occupations of the submitted practice.

3.3 Documentary

In common parlance, the term documentary conjures motivations for ‘reality’, ‘objectivity’, ‘truth’ — ‘fullness and completion, knowledge and fact, explanations of the social world and its motivating mechanisms.’ (Nichols 1994: 01-02) The television documentary claims itself as a ‘*genre* of programming, which as far as possible, is ‘factual’ or based on ‘real’ events’ — its closest equivalent being television news. (Casey et al. 2002: 67) The pursuit of ‘reality’, according to Casey et al fashions documentary production methods in favour of acquiring evidence with an overarching instructive function. (2002: 67-69)

Within Cinema Studies, the instructive function of documentary is linked to technological developments. Susan Hayward attributes the rise of *cinema verite* in France and the direct cinema in USA to the development of lightweight camera and sync sound equipment, stating that: ‘The lightweight camera made it possible to be unobtrusive and mobile and to catch reality on film.’⁵⁰ (Hayward 2000: 92) Derek Paget observes that documentary’s attempt to define itself as ‘separate’ from fiction films led to its claims for purity: ‘A purity unachievable technically was finessed into social purpose, and documentary films undoubtedly claimed a social use value.’ (Paget 1998: 123) Documentary is thus commonly perceived as imbued with a social purpose.

If, however, we engage with the history of documentary filmmaking, we encounter varied motivations for the enterprise beyond social utility. At the earliest instance, Erik

⁵⁰ Susan Hayward adds that synch sound technology in the 1970s and video technology of the 1980s led to the emergence of filmmaking collectives, independent filmmakers and workshops making ‘documentaries that challenge the establishment’, through pursuit of marginality issues such as gender or race and ethnicity. On this basis Hayward asserts the claim for the ‘democratization of the camera’ involving expression of ‘more voices from the margins.’ (Hayward 2000: 92)

Barnouw's *Documentary: A History of the Non-fiction Film* plots the evolution of documentary in terms of its: 'ability to open our eyes to worlds available to us but, for one reason or another, not perceived.' (Barnouw 1983: 03) In his depth narrative of the evolution of documentary, Barnouw proposes different categorisations of the documentary filmmaker ranging from explorer, advocate, reporter, to painter and poet⁵¹. More recently, John Corner has proposed a classification of documentary on the basis of how image and speech get mobilised in it. According to him, uses of the documentary image can be divided into four categories — 'reactive observationalism' involving minimal directorial intervention: 'proactive observationalism' involving an 'increased scopie mobility... a more discursive use of *mise-en-scene* and smoother time compressions': the 'illustrative mode' where visualisation is subordinate to verbal discourses as in current-affairs documentaries, and the 'associative mode' where visualisation serves in making 'second-order meanings.' (1996: 28-29) The uses of sound, according to him, range between overheard exchange, testimony and the classic exposition through voiceover narration. (1996: 28-29) Similarly Bill Nichols has identified five documentary modes: expository, observational, interactive, reflexive, and the performative. (Bruzzi 2000: 01-02) From these varied modalities it is certain that documentary is a terrain of contested claims and motivations. This facilitates in including creative, artistic and subjective pursuits alongside realist, expository and argumentative ones, not as a recent upcoming; but as an imperative manifest in documentary since its early days.

⁵¹ The following are some of the categories that Barnouw suggests — the documentarist as 'explorer' (Robert Flaherty, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack), 'reporter' (Dziga Vertov, Mikhail Kaufman and the *kinoks*), 'painter' (Fernand Leger, Dudley Murphy, Walter Ruttmann, Alberto Cavalcanti, Jean Vigo, Joris Ivens), 'advocate' (John Grierson, Basil Wright, Paul Rotha, Leni Riefenstahl, Pare Lorentz, Ralph Steiner, William Van Dyke), 'poet' (Arne Sucksdorff, Bert Haanstra), 'chronicler' (Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Vithalbai K. Jhaveri, Igor Bessarabov, Alexander Novogrudsky, Andrzej Brzozowski, Roman Karmen, Paul Zils, Fali Bilimoria), 'observer' (Georges Franju, Jan Lomnicki, Richard Leacock), 'catalyst' (Jean Rouch, Marcel Phuls), and the 'guerrilla' (Grigori Chukrai). (Barnouw 1983)

While the creative and expressive dimension of documentary has persisted, its motivations have varied in response to socio-historical, cultural and political contexts. At the earliest instance, Dadaist artist Hans Richter, had asserted that the documentary is an 'original art form' that: 'covers the rational side of our lives, from the scientific experiment to the poetic, landscape-study, but never moves away from the factual.' (Renov 1993: 94) John Grierson while responding to Robert Flaherty's *Moana* summarised that documentary is a 'creative treatment of actuality.' (1946: 112) Grierson was critical of documentary realism on the grounds that realism being about reality 'has to bother for ever not about being "beautiful" but about being right.' (1946: 188)

In the 1960s, Satyajit Ray questioned documentary's realist claims by problematising spot interviews in his article, *The Question of Reality*. He stated:

The Face to Face technique also presents problems. How can we ever be sure that an interviewee is making honest statements and not merely saying what he believes is the right thing to say? To me the really significant things that emerge from spot interviews are the details of people's behaviour and speech under scrutiny of the camera and the microphone. (Jacobs 1979: 382)

Like ethnography, in recent times, documentary practice too has increasingly questioned conventional claims of objective realism. Bill Nichols deriving from George Marcus attributes this to the rise of feminism and post-structuralism that have prompted 're-evaluation of nineteenth-century realism.' (1994: 71) According to Nichols, an epistemological shift has surfaced in documentary:

A shift of epistemological proportions has occurred. What counts as knowledge is not what it used to be. The coherent, controlling self that could make the world and others its objects of scrutiny is now fully one itself... History and memory intertwine, meaning and action, past and present, hinge on one another distinctively... Historical reality is under siege. Imperfect utopias and diverse affinities propose themselves as alternatives to the ordered lives constructed by

the master narratives of Platonic reason, Christian salvation, capitalist progress and Marxist Revolution... (1994: 1-2)

Nichols terms this as the rise of the 'performative documentary', which frees expressive elements of film construction 'from their subordination to a logic. Such documentaries can therefore be more iconic than indexical... Performative documentaries rely much less heavily on argument than suggestion; they do not explain or summarise so much as imply or intimate... (1994: 100) The interrogation of objectivity in documentary cannot be separated from the expressive turn of visual anthropology and ethnography. Experimental ethnographic filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha's assertion for confusing the space between observer and observed is of relevance here and according to Catherine Russell it can be contextualised thus:

She [Trinh T. Minh-ha] argues that the assumptions of documentary truth and veracity perpetuate a Cartesian duality between mind and matter in which the Other is objectified and the filmmaker and his or her audience are the subjects of perception. (1999: 04)⁵²

Similarly in *The Subject of Documentary*, Michael Renov attributes the effacement of the self, and disavowal of subjectivity in documentary to the scientific and objectivist imperatives that have come to be attached with documentary that he states has for long been tied to the 'question of science... because cinema has demonstrated a potential for the observation and investigation of people and of social/historical phenomena. (2004: 11, 171-172) Renov asserts that there is no contradiction: 'between the elemental documentary impulse, the will to preservation, and the exploration of subjectivity; indeed it is their obsessive convergence that marks the essayistic work.' (2004: 81) He qualifies that the imperative for subjectivity is in tune with documentary's overarching

⁵² Similarly while referring to his methods of documentary filmmaking in India, Anand Patwardhan who attempts to integrate the political strategies of Frantz Fanon and Mahatma Gandhi, emphasises that: '... the style or the structure' of a film is 'determined by the material rather than by pre-planning.' (Halberstadt 1997: 81) Patwardhan evokes the editing styles of Dziga Vertov, developing individual sequences out of filmed material that eventually result in a mosaic pattern: 'I edit different sequences, boiling it down to what was important, but not necessarily at that point connecting them all up.' (Halberstadt 1997: 81-83)

engagement with the historical world because recent work that has involved documentary and avant-garde practices: ‘regards history and subjectivity as mutually defining categories.’ (2004: 109)

3.4 Film Theory

Classical Film Theory

Classical film theory arose in the years succeeding the birth of cinema. It is understood as consisting of two approaches towards cinema of the early era — the creationists or formalists including Sergei Eisenstein, Rudolf Arnheim and Bela Balazs who in keeping with a modernist stance ‘defend cinema as an art form which goes beyond realism’; and the realists including Siegfried Kracauer and Andre Bazin, who emphasise in cinema the possibility for an exact representation of reality. (Hill & Gibson 2000: 50) The creationists refuted that film is a ‘mechanical reproduction of real life.’⁵³ (Arnheim 1958: 37) This distinction mobilises differences in approach towards two basic elements of film — the shot and the cut. Rudolf Arnheim stated that:

The first sensation provided by film in its early music-hall days was to depict everyday things in a life-like fashion on the screen... A film art developed only gradually when the movie makers began consciously or unconsciously to cultivate the peculiar possibilities of cinematographic technique and apply them toward the creation of artistic productions. (1958: 35)

Sergei Eisenstein whose writings are formulated into three key texts — *The Film Form*, *The Film Sense* and *The Nonindifferent Nature* (published posthumously), insisted on montage as a means for invigorating the cinema as an art form. For him ‘art is always

⁵³In *Film*, Arnheim stresses that the experience of sitting in a cinema differs from everyday experience of the world because the former involves sitting before a two dimensional screen and the latter is three-dimensional. He adds that cinema cannot reflect reality because it limits what we see to the frame. He was the first to codify the specific resources of the cinema through which he posited that cinema exceeds the replication of reality. (Hill & Gibson 2000: 50)

conflict' and it is this quest for the cinema as an art form that underpins his practice as well as theorisation⁵⁴. (Eisenstein 1958: 46) Deriving from a Marxist dialectical approach⁵⁵ Eisenstein emphasised conflict between shots for 'associational montage'⁵⁶, and 'audio-visual counterpoint'⁵⁷.

Conflict, a 'master-word' for Eisenstein, was a mechanism to create an attraction⁵⁸ that 'exemplifies the modernist notion of shock as an aesthetic and political strategy.' (Quigley & Dunne 2004: 16; *also see* Aumont 1987: 40) Eisenstein held that conflict or collision between disparate elements provoked 'synthesis, new concepts and emotions' for the viewer. (Eisenstein 1987: viii) Eisenstein's definitions emphasising conflict are the basis for much occupation with montage in film theory. Though vital for grasping the scope and methods enlisted by Eisenstein, which have influenced practitioners world-wide, understanding Eisenstein's montage in terms of conflict only is laden with inadequacies that I briefly turn towards.

The first inadequacy in conventional understandings of montage is that they evade Eisenstein's later work in which he revisits and complicates his earlier theorisations and

⁵⁴ See Eisenstein, S. M. 1958 (2nd edn.). *Film Form*. USA: Meridian Books. Here Eisenstein expositis conflict as the underlying principle of all art including montage. He lists conflict within a shot that can assume graphic, planar, temporal, volume, spatial and lighting dimensions. (1958: 38-57) Also see, *The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram*, and, *A Dialectic Approach to Film Form*. (Eisenstein 1958: 28-43, & 45-63)

⁵⁵ Aumont notes that there is no 'predetermined order' in Eisenstein's thought or reading, and that he always had a problem in 'truly assimilating Marxism.' (1987: 06) In the introductory chapter to *Montage Eisenstein*, which provides a biographical account, Aumont states that Eisenstein's commitment to revolution is 'basically a sentimental one. ... He was conscious of his bourgeoisie background and never felt that he had been called to the Marxist, socialist or revolutionary cause out of class alliance.' (1987: 21). For a detailed discussion of Eisenstein's understanding of dialectics, see Aumont, J. 1987 (2nd edn.) *Montage Eisenstein*. USA: Indiana University Press. (66-72.) Within Eisenstein's writings, dialectics appear repeatedly. The most comprehensive piece indicating his understanding of dialectics is the essay, *A Dialectical Approach to Film Form*, also see, Eisenstein, S. M. 1958 (2nd edn.) *Film Form*. USA: Meridian Books, pp: 45-63.

⁵⁶ From juxtaposed shots the spectator derives associations that are related to and point towards a theme. Eisenstein states that, '... each fragment [shot] is almost abstract. The more differentiated they [i.e. the fragments] are the more abstract they become, provoking no more than certain associations.' (Eisenstein 1958: 61)

⁵⁷ Holding montage as the 'chief means of effect' in the cinema, Eisenstein along with filmmaker V. I. Pudovkin and collaborator Alexandrov issued the *Statement on Sound* in 1929. In this statement they stated that if sound is used in cinema to ascribe realism then, '... every adhesion of sound to the visual montage piece increases its inertia as a montage piece, and increases the independence of its meaning — and this will undoubtedly be to the detriment of montage. ... Instead they called for the 'contrapuntal use of sound', wherein the image and sound do not serve for substantiation, rather as planes for montage juxtapositions. (Eisenstein 1958: 258)

⁵⁸ In the *Montage of Attractions*, Eisenstein defines attraction as: '... every aggressive moment... every element that can be verified and mathematically calculated to produce certain emotional shocks in a proper order within the totality...' (Eisenstein 1958: 231) For Eisenstein, shock is a means for countering naturalism. Jacques Aumont elaborates naturalism as Eisenstein's 'terror', a terror for 'theatrical illusion, Aristotelean verisimilitude...' as well as linearity in narrative. (1987: 42, 165)

experiments. The view towards Eisenstein's later writings, particularly in *The Nonindifferent Nature*, has been that they comprise a fundamental departure from his earlier approach in the 1920s when he directed the acclaimed *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *October* (1928). This notion of an 'epistemological break' was supported by David Bordwell in *Eisenstein's Epistemological Shift*; wherein a 'relapse into Romanticism' is observed — away from the modernist imperative for shock, which had materialised from Eisenstein's engagement with Marxist-Leninist dialectics⁵⁹. (Bordwell 1974/75: 29-46)

However, Jacques Aumont challenges this notion of an 'epistemological break' in Eisensteinian thought. According to Aumont there is an 'Eisensteinian system, constantly evolving' and raising issue with theoretical and philosophical concerns. (1987: 66-67) He asserts that the distinction between the early and late Eisenstein is akin to his evolution and does not comprise an epistemological disjuncture:

There is not a revolutionary Eisenstein, the Eisenstein of the twenties, who supposedly thought in terms of struggle of opposites (and their dialectical unity), and then another, idealistic Eisenstein, the Eisenstein of the thirties and forties, in pursuit of the chimerical "total and synthetic art". (1987: 67)

Further, from Aumont, we gather that there is no unitary concept for montage in Eisenstein that renders some of his typologies, particularly from his writings such as *Methods of Montage*, as not definitive, rather suggesting terms at which juxtaposition within film construction could be developed. Aumont holds that: '... what is at stake in Eisenstein's work is not the elaboration of methods of montage, nor the formulation of one single concept of montage, but a kind of ongoing and somewhat systematic study of the principle of montage.' (1987: 146)

⁵⁹ In *The Cinema of Eisenstein* Bordwell observes that in Eisenstein's earlier writings he, 'had sought to develop a conception of expression without committing the artist to feeling the expressive qualities before or during the making of the work... In his later work, Eisenstein accepts the more traditional view that art's expressivity is bound up with the experiences of the artist.' (2005: 191)

The second inadequacy that surrounds conventional understanding of Eisenstein pertains to a profound unawareness of the eclectic cultural influences he derived from. Most commentators have noticed from Eisenstein's early writings, the influence of the Kabuki theatre and Hindu rasa aesthetics. A survey of *The Non-indifferent Nature* reveals a myriad tapestry of artists, crafts and literatures Eisenstein derived from — the novels of Emile Zola and Charles Dickens, El Greco and Piranesi's art, disparate Chinese landscapes and scroll paintings, ancient Hindu temple architecture and Indian spiral painting, alongside the Kabuki theatre to name a few. These varied influences, Herbert Marshall, asserts were the basis for Eisenstein to claim montage as a 'polyphonic practice', rooted in the nature of the human mind and human behaviour⁶⁰. (Eisenstein 1987: xvii)

This notion of polyphony in Eisenstein's thought indicates an anthropological dimension, which has been mobilised in recent discussion of modernist ethnography⁶¹. Herbert Marshall qualifies that the anthropological dimension in Eisenstein does not amount to affection for exotica or primitivism that has been linked with modern art generally, rather through such Eisenstein's cultural 'excursions' served his contention that:

... artistic syntax is dependent on two instinctive principles that provide the foundation for human culture: plot as pursued (manifested early in culture as hunting) and interweaving (appearing in the construction of baskets). The hunt can easily be seen as the basis for adventure and mystery plots, but many other narratives retain the quest or riddle structure as well... The inclination to interweave, that is to say polyphonic structure, Eisenstein locates in diverse human activities, from the tying and untying of knots, to the magician Harry

⁶⁰ David Bordwell locates Eisenstein's occupation with polyphony as montage in terms of a 'musical analogy' (2005: 184) According to him, for Eisenstein the polyphonic montage involved 'contrapuntal sound', which he had committed to in his 1929 'Statement on Sound Film' drafted in conjunction with G. V. Alexandrov and V. I. Pudovkin. '... contrapuntal montage governs the interlacing of "voices" on the film's unrolling visual track.' (Bordwell 2005: 184) In the submitted practice for this research, I have attempted to work with voices to develop a polyphonic structure in which image and sound relations are not directly corresponding and involve asynchrony. See chapters 6 and 7 for further discussion.

⁶¹ See this chapter, discussion of modernist ethnography by George Marcus and Michael Fischer in the section on Anthropology.

Houdini's escapes, to the word weaving of poetry, to the plot complications of novels and plays...' (Eisenstein 1987: xvii)

While Eisenstein challenged the scientific materialist stance in his own early films through an occupation with *pathos* and *ecstasy*; in *The Nonindifferent Nature*, he maintained that 'attraction'⁶², the earliest tenet he worked with, which he derived from Meyerhold's theatre, was a basic principle for montage in terms of its effect on the viewer — thus furnishing the very continuity in his thought that Aumont asserts.

Now returning to the discussion of the imperatives of the creationists within classical film theory, it is pertinent to attend the interventions of Dziga Vertov, Eisenstein's contemporary, who too considered cinema as a medium of art. According to Vertov:

Kinochestvo (filmmaking) is the art of organizing the necessary movements of objects in space as a rhythmical artistic whole, in harmony with the properties of the material and the internal rhythm of each object. (Michelson 1984: 08)

His theory of montage emphasised the interval between images. Of the interval, Vertov said:

... the intervals are the material, the elements of the art of movement, and by no means the movements themselves. It is they (the intervals) which draw the movement to kinetic resolution.' (Michelson 1984: 08)⁶³

According to Vertov the interval is an active space where movement between individual images gets negotiated. In Vertov's cinema, graphic composition achieved through varying camera angles was combined with considerations of movement in terms of tempo, direction and meter. Montage was one of the key practices during the 1920s-30s

⁶² See Eisenstein, S. M. (trans. Herbert Marshall) 1987. *Nonindifferent Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press — pp. 298

⁶³ In his essay, *From kino-eye to radio-ear*, Vertov states: 'Movement between shots, the visual "interval", the visual correlation of shots, is according to kino-eye, a complex quantity. It consists of the sum of various correlations, of which the chief ones are: the correlation of planes. (close-up, long shot etc.); the correlation of foreshortenings; the correlation of movements within frame; the correlation of light and shadow; the correlation of recording speeds. Discussing composition through organization of "intervals" (the movement between frames and the proportions of these pieces as they relate to one another), Vertov takes into account relations of movements within the frame of each piece, relations of light and shade, and relations of speeds of recording (Michelson 1984: xxx)

through which cinema's claim as an art medium was asserted⁶⁴. Unlike the montage practitioners, realists such as Andre Bazin held that:

The objective nature of photography confers on it a quality of credibility absent from all other picture-making. In spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually *re-presented*, set before us, that is to say in time and space. Photography enjoys a certain advantage in virtue of this transference of reality from the thing to its reproduction. (Braudy & Cohen 2004: 13-14)

The realists suppressed the constructed nature of film in their discussions and privileged some filmic techniques over others. (Nelmes 2000: 445) Andre Bazin, was critical of montage⁶⁵ and instead of editing emphasised the long take and the deep focus aesthetic:

... depth of focus brings the spectator into a relation with the image closer to that which he enjoys with reality... it implies, consequently, both a more active mental attitude on the part of the spectator and a more positive contribution on his part to the action in progress. While analytical montage only calls for him to follow his guide, to let his attention follow along smoothly with that of the director who will choose what he should see, here he is called upon to exercise at least a minimum of personal choice. It is from his attention and his will that the meaning of the image in part derives. From the two preceding propositions, which belong to the realm of psychology, follows a third which may be described as metaphysical... montage by its very nature rules out ambiguity of expression... On the other hand, depth of focus reintroduced ambiguity into the structure of the image if not of necessity... at least as a possibility. (Braudy & Cohen 2004: 50)⁶⁶

Sigfried Kracauer, too held that film is 'uniquely equipped to record and reveal reality.' (Braudy & Cohen 2004: 144) However, unlike Bazin, he did not emphasise any formal

⁶⁴ Arthur McCullough states that along with Eisenstein, Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin; 'foresaw a revolutionary use of communications technology such that montage could be used to open things out to explicitly political purposes.' (Dunne & Quigley 2004: 51)

⁶⁵ Andre Bazin critiqued montage stating that it destroys the 'ambiguity of expression' in film. He identified three kinds of montage DW Griffith's parallel montage that depicted 'the simultaneity of two actions taking place at a geographical distance by alternating shots from each', accelerated montage of the kind developed by Abel Gance in *La Roue* wherein Gance created the, 'illusion of the steadily increasing speed of a locomotive without actually using any images of speed, simply by a multiplicity of shots of ever-decreasing length', and Eisenstein's montage of attractions that involved the 'creation of a sense or meaning not proper to the images themselves but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition' Bazin critiqued this stating that 'montage did not give us the event, it alluded to it.' (Braudy and Cohen 2004: 42) One of the most telling criticisms of Eisenstein is Polish filmmaker, Andrei Tarkovsky's, who states that; 'Eisenstein makes thought into a despot; it leaves no 'air', nothing of that unspoken elusiveness which is perhaps the most captivating quality of all art.' (Stam 2002: 41)

⁶⁶ Alan Williams has qualified that Bazin's objection to Eisenstein's montage was in relation to its aim for producing unity of concepts. According to Williams, Bazin likened this pursuit for unity to classical editing whose unity of meaning for Bazin amounted to 'spiritual dust and grime' because reality exceeds any attempt at unifying it. (Weis & Belton 1985: 341) This resituates Bazin's objection to Eisenstein not merely in terms of cinema codes and methods, but more philosophically towards the aims of cinema and its relation to reality.

technique, rather he distinguished between the realist and the formative tendencies in film — the former enhanced as film can ‘picture movement’ and the latter comprising those faculties that offer ‘opportunities far exceeding those offered the photographer.’ (Braudy & Cohen 2004: 150) Kracauer emphasised balance between both tendencies that he held could be achieved if the ‘latter does not try to overwhelm the former but eventually follows its lead.’ (Braudy & Cohen 2004: 152).

May 1968: Film Theory and Counter-Cinema

The distinction between realism and creationism/ modernism with relation to film form that pervaded classical film theory persisted in the era of ‘political modernism’ that arose following the events of May 1968⁶⁷. In the years immediately after 1968, cinema came under review and the political unrest of the time propelled a: ‘notion of the works of free imagination against the dead hand of an oppressive past and authoritarian society.’ (Harvey 1980: 07) The discourse of political modernism was founded on a ‘critique of illusionism’ of the mainstream film such as the Hollywood movie. (Rodowick 1994: xvii) It gathered ‘a diverse group of intellectuals and filmmakers drawn to a common concern — the relation between film and ideology.’ (Rodowick 1994: viii) Political modernism originated from Marxist film criticism of the French film journals *Cahiers du Cinema* and *Cinethique* that influenced Film Studies in Britain and USA. (Harvey 1980: 01)

⁶⁷ The events of May 1968 in France refer to the political upheavals comprising student’s unrest and a wave of massive strikes in the latter half of May, which is in common parlance termed as the *Movement of May*. It commenced with the ‘Movement of March 22’ at the University of Nanterre, a manifestation of the students’ opposition to the war in Vietnam, dissatisfaction with the ‘bureaucratic and authoritarian structures of the university; a critique of alienated and isolated character of student life, a suspicion of all organisation, all hierarchy, and of the traditional Left; and an at once powerful and confused equation of social and sexual repression.’ (Harvey 1980: 04) For more details see Harvey, S. 1980 (2nd edn.) *May ’68 and Film Culture*. London: BFI (pp. 04-40)

While political modernism comprised a 'range of arguments concerning representation and narrative in relation to film form' not all arguments were unified. One of the key writings of this time was Jean Louis Baudry's essay, *Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus* (1970). In this, Baudry posited that the movie camera unlike still photography recorded a series of images⁶⁸. He noted that the 'meaning effect' produced by the movie camera did not depend upon the content of the images alone, but included the 'material procedures' by which an illusion of continuity is achieved between successive images or 'discontinuous elements.'

These separate frames have between them differences that are indispensable for the creation of an illusion of continuity, of a continuous passage (movement, time). But only on one condition can these differences create this illusion: they must be effaced as differences... Thus one may presume that what was already at work as the originating basis of the perspective image [i.e. window on the world], namely the eye, the "subject", is put forth, liberated by the operation which transforms successive discrete images into continuity, movement, meaning. With continuity restored, both meaning and consciousness are restored. (Baudry & Cohen 2004: 358-360)

The repression of difference by the cinematic apparatus (camera, projector and screen) was understood as 'corresponding to the model defined by the dominant ideology' that seeks through narrative continuity to 'preserve synthetic unity of the locus where meaning originates', in the process concealing the functioning of the apparatus. (Baudry & Cohen 2004: 362-365) On this basis dominant, mainstream forms of narrative and film construction such as Hollywood's classic realist film were critiqued as being 'author-less'; 'the events of the narrative do not appear to proceed from anywhere in particular but simply unfold.' (Hollows et al 2000: 210) Baudry added that: 'in the history of

⁶⁸ Baudry argued that because of this difference the movie camera countered the 'unifying and "substantialising character of the single-perspective image...' It takes 'instants of times or slices from "reality" that is itself already "worked upon" having been selected. (Baudry & Cohen 2004: 360)

cinema: it is the perspective construction of the Renaissance, which originally served as a model.’⁶⁹ (Braudy & Cohen 2004: 357)

Sylvia Harvey linked this to Andre Bazin’s deep focus aesthetics holding that for him: ‘the proper goal of the film image, like that of Renaissance and post-Renaissance painting upto the time of the Cubists, is the production of the most perfect illusion of reality which is taken to be unproblematically given.’ (Harvey 1980: 107) A key intervention was Noel Burch’s categorisation of dominant cinema’s codes as the ‘Institutional Modes of Representation’⁷⁰ that implicitly constitute the spectator as voyeur.

The specific experience defined by the cinema institution involves... a ‘primal identification’ with *the gaze that sees, the gaze that is-there*, with the gaze of the camera ‘before’ the formation of the narrative meaning of any particular pro-filmic gaze... Through this constant identification with the camera’s viewpoint, the experience of the classical film interpellates us solely as *incorporeal individuals*. (Burch 1990: 250)

According to Burch deconstructing the IMR would be the basis of a radical praxis of the cinema⁷¹. He examined avant-garde practice in Europe and Japan and argued that film form: ‘simply cannot exist without some kind of underlying dialectic; the mere alternation of disparate images does not suffice to create a film.’ (Burch 1973: 73)

Self-reflexivity as first encountered in Dziga Vertov’s *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1929)⁷², got valued as a means for disrupting the illusion of continuity and smooth flow of time and space as in the mainstream narrative film. *Cinethique* argued

⁶⁹ Peter Wollen affirmed this stating that, ‘Traditional cinema is in the direct line of descent from the Renaissance discovery of perspective and reformulation of the art of painting, expressed most clearly by Alberti, as providing a window on the world. The camera, of course, is simply the technological means towards achieving a perfect perspective construction.’ (Baudry & Cohen 2004: 527)

⁷⁰ In *Life to those Shadows* (1990), Burch extensively discussed the socio-economic and socio-ideological determinations of the IMR within the context of the French, British and American cinemas particularly.

⁷¹ Though Burch argued that the constitution of the spectator as voyeur had a precedent in the primitive cinema, the distinction now in the mainstream cinema was that in the institutional mode, the voyeurism was ‘repressed’ — ‘the institutional spectator caught in the toils of shot-reverse-shot and other manifestations of ubiquity’ (1990: 269)

⁷² Self-reflexivity is motivated by the constructivist concept of ‘baring the device.’ (Petric 1993: 09)

that since: 'it is in the interests of the bourgeoisie to conceal the work involved in producing anything, including cinematic products', it was the task of the counter-cinema to reveal the work involved in the production of meaning in the cinema. It was asserted that:

If a film in/through its forms makes apparent its links with the economic/ideological then it is a revolutionary film because in unmasking a process of production based on the exploitation of labour it contributes to the subversion of this general process. (Harvey 1980: 95)

Political modernism emphasised the relationship between spectator and text echoing the Russian Futurists' and Formalists' problematisation of the notion of point of view in terms that the art object provides a single position from which to view the world. (Harvey 1980: 57) Sergei Eisenstein's work got endorsed as exemplifying how: 'to elaborate and apply a critical theory of the cinema, a specific method of apprehending rigorously defined objects, in direct reference to the method of dialectical materialism.'⁷³ (Commoli & Narboni 1971: 35)

Though Eisenstein's writings and films influenced the discourse of political modernism, his work was revisited too. Peter Wollen in *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema*, identified a 'scientific materialism' — the 'conviction of the scientific basis of art' as the limitation of Eisensteinian montage that: 'prevented him from pursuing the search for a symbolic language...', in the cinema. (Wollen 1979: 70) However, the critique of Eisenstein's practice as being underpinned by a scientism has been interrogated by Jacques Aumont who qualifies that the scientism in Eisenstein can be

⁷³ Eisenstein influenced the experimental filmmakers of the structuralist-materialist tradition in the co-op movement such as Peter Gidal who radically disavowed film content, stating 'form is content' and others such as Godard working within the modernist literary tradition. The structuralist-materialist filmmakers did not work with representation. They worked directly with the filmed image surfaces of celluloid as in Stan Brakhage, camera dynamics say in Michael Snow. Sylvia Harvey qualifies that Eisenstein himself 'is not interested in a complete "openness" or anarchy of meaning, but in "accurate concepts..." Moreover, the 'work' which he offers to the spectator is motivated by the desire to understand and to change the world and not by some puritanical belief in the value of work as such.' (Harvey 1980: 66)

appreciated not as an essentialism towards film form, but as a tendency towards ‘efficacy’ within montage construction⁷⁴.

Political modernism had reinvigorated the proximity between theory and practice that had been witnessed in practitioners such as Eisenstein and Vertov. A parallel, alternative or counter-cinema arose that sought an ‘oppositional practice at the level of both production and distribution.’ (Harvey 1980: 27)⁷⁵ It comprised counter-strategies departing from the narrative transitivity of mainstream films⁷⁶. In his seminal essay *The Two Avant Gardes* (1976) Peter Wollen argued that in Europe after 1968, two avant-gardes had emerged — the Co-op movement exemplifying one strand that was painterly, and the other, more literary, including filmmakers such as Godard, Straub and Huillet, Hanoun and Jancso⁷⁷.

These strands implied political modernism as countering realism. Consequently, the split between realism and modernism at the level of film code that had originated in classical film theory, one finds, persisted in political modernism and formulated into an emphasis on film code as the essential entity for analysis, critique and intervention — excluding any other dimensions related to the film experience⁷⁸. A problematic of the equation of realism and modernism with film code was that the respective discourses got

⁷⁴ Efficacy, according to Aumont, is ‘doubly determined’ by ‘politico-ideological consideration, shaped by the necessities of the present moment... and psychological considerations aiming at the spectator as subject.’ (1987: 48)

⁷⁵ Film-making groups such as the Dziga Vertov group convened by Godard and Morin sought to work outside all the existing structures for film production and distribution. (Harvey 1980: 27)

⁷⁶ Wollen considered Godard as a pioneering figure of the counter-cinema and listed the following as Godard’s counter-strategies: narrative intransitivity rather than narrative transitivity, estrangement rather than identification, foregrounding rather than transparency, multiple rather than single diegesis, aperture rather than closure, unpleasure rather than pleasure, reality rather than fiction. Wollen traces that this vocabulary got fully articulated with Godard’s *Vent D’est*. (Baudry & Cohen 2004: 567)

⁷⁷ This split in the avant-garde, Wollen traced had occurred in the 1920s too, between the ‘painterly’ cinema of Hans Richter, Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy and the montage-based ‘literary’ tradition of the Russian directors.

⁷⁸ Other dimensions include audience, cine-literacy, viewing cultures and wider filmmaking contexts involving socio-political and historical discourses that cinema is complexly linked with both in terms of reflection and intervention.

reduced into a question of formal categories — depth of field got equated with the realist aesthetic, while the metre of montage got emphasised as a modernist imperative.

Political modernism has been critiqued for perpetuating binary oppositions pertaining to code/ deconstruction, transparency/reflexivity, and illusionism or idealism/materialism. D N Rodowick observes that the dualisms political modernism perpetuated were portrayed as a ‘dialectic’ that ‘obscured the importance of theory in the study and critique of ideology by excluding all but formal relations.’ (Rodowick 1994: xvi) Paul Willemen in *Questions of Third Cinema* reminds that the counter-cinema theorists in the UK such as Peter Wollen and Claire Johnston had:

... never argued that the strategies and characteristics of counter-cinema should be canonised and frozen into a prescriptive aesthetics. They pointed to the importance of cinematic strategies designed to explore what dominant regimes of signification were unable to deal with. Theirs was a politics of deconstruction, not an aesthetics of deconstruction. (Pines & Willemen 1994: 07)

The emphasis on film code as a category for analysis and practice-based research continues problematically, seeping into the discussion of cinema in variegated contexts including issues of marginality such as gender, race and ethnicity through approaches of textual and stereotype analysis.

Context: Ethnicity and Film

As political modernism has come under criticism for its simplification of the theory-practice interface in terms of binary oppositions: there has been debate about the scope of a critical cinema practice within the contemporary context⁷⁹. With the ascendance of

⁷⁹ It is pertinent to bear in mind that this research commenced concurrent with the CILECT (Centre International de Liaison des Ecoles de Cinema et de Television), NAHEMI (National Association of Higher Education in the Moving Image) conference, *Beyond the*

disciplines such as Post-colonial and Cultural Studies occupation with non-dominant subject positions has emerged as one frontier for a critical and interventionist practice. Texts such as *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (Shohat, E. & Stam, R. 2000), *Fear of the Dark* (Young, L. 1996), along side a spread of scholarly articles in collections such as *The Film Studies Reader* (eds. Hollows, J. et al. 2000) are a reflection of this rising occupation.

D N Rodowick holds that due to proliferation of 'differences' in terms of gender, post-coloniality, racial and ethnic identifications and queer theory, contemplation around film is: 'disappearing into media and cultural studies.' (1994: ix) He critiques political modernism for perpetuating 'intransigent blindspots' towards questions of cultural identity. (1994: xiii-xv). In this vein, Noel Burch has asserted that the 'new forms of struggle' within film pertain to 'feminism, ecology, and eth[n]ic groups', stressing that these are the arenas for instituting critical film practice as an intervention into thinking about cinema⁸⁰. (Myer 2004: 74-76)

Robert Stam contextualises the rising interest towards race and ethnicity in film stating:

Film producers and receivers are not just individuals in the abstract; they are of a specific nationality, class, gender, and sexuality. Much of recent film theory/analysis has focussed on these axes of social identity and oppression, the diverse forms of stratification which mold both art and social life.⁸¹ (Stam 2002: 662)

Theory of Practice (November, 2003) hosted by the Film Academy, University of Glamorgan. The conference was motivated by discussion on what theory/ies should be taught to students of film practice in university today. It debated the 'nature of a theoretical practice' investigating possibilities deriving from yet extending beyond the developments surrounding the post-1968 avant-garde film context. Conference convenor, Clive Myer stated: 'There was a certain conjuncture in the 1970s where film and philosophy joined up, at least for a while. In the last 30 years there has been a huge dissipation between the two spaces... The main questions are very simple — what sort of theory do we teach our film practice students now and why has film practice gone in one direction, towards a mini-industrial process while theory has gone in a different direction, which is more-or-less to avoid practice altogether' (Myer 2004 71)

⁸⁰ In an unpublished transcript of the interview with Clive Myer, Noel Burch has stated that the kind of thinking that is associated with political modernism might be of value to cinema in the third world. (Myer 2003, unpublished transcript: 03)

⁸¹ Stam adds that, 'The very language which we use to address oppression, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl explains, comes to us from distinct discursive traditions: (1) the tradition of anti-colonialist and anti-racist writing; (2) postwar discussions of anti-Semitism and

Stam historically attends the subject of race in film stating that film theory for long: 'sustained a remarkable silence on the subject.'⁸² (2002: 663) He observes that in recent times 'important work' pertaining to ethnicity and race has been undertaken in Film Studies. Most effort pertains to the issue of racial and ethnic stereotyping, particularly within mainstream cinema, such as Hollywood. (Stam 2002: 663)

Stam is however, critical of the preoccupation with stereotypes. The stereotype approach necessarily formulates into occupation with positive and negative images leading: 'to a kind of *essentialism*, as less subtle critics reduce a complex variety of portrayals to a limited set of reified formulae'; this essentialism generates '*ahistoricism*', because analysis: 'tends to be static, not allowing for mutations, metamorphoses, changes of valence, altered function; it ignores the historical instability of the stereotype and even language.' (2002: 664-65) A further problematic of a textual and stereotypic analysis approach is that it lays emphasis on the individual character rather than larger 'social categories (race, class, gender, nation, sexual orientation).'⁸³ (Stam 2002: 665)

Nazism, and (3) the Women's Liberation movement. (Young-Bruehl, 1996: 23-5) We have to ask whether one of the axes of oppression is primordial, the root of all others. Is class the foundation of all oppressions, as canonical Marxism had suggested? Or is patriarchy more fundamental to social oppression than classicism and racism, as some versions of feminism might suggest? Or is race the overarching determinant?' (Stam 2002: 662)

⁸² Stam holds that for most of the last century film theory seems to have had 'the illusion of being "raceless"'. He points that there are few references to race in the writings of film theorists of the silent period, even though that period coincided with the colonialist project and; 'myriad colonialist films like *King of the Cannibals* and *La Musalman Rigolo...*' were produced at that time. (Stam 2000: 662)

⁸³ In the following chapter, I discuss the discursive shift in my practice away from an occupation with reversing the gaze in relation to the ethnic subject towards a nearness with the ethnic subject. This shift manifests a departure from the stereotype approach that I had previously appreciated to develop film practice around ethnic subjects. Chapters 6 and 7 include depth discussion of nearness to the ethnic subject in my practice.

CHAPTER 4

Evocations — Mapping the Terrain in the Subject Community

Confinement to experience-near concepts leaves an ethnographer awash with immediacies, as well as entangled in vernacular. Confinement to experience-distant ones leaves him stranded in abstractions and smothered in jargon. The real question, and the one Malinowski raised by demonstrating that, in the case of the "natives," you don't have to be one to know one, is what roles the two sorts of concepts play in anthropological analysis.
— Clifford Geertz 1983: 57

My meeting with the subject community had provoked both curiosity at encountering a differing culture and a sense of familiarity with it. The community's environs — the temple, community hall, streets where members reside — were foreign in their location, architectures and design; yet resonant to me of a close way in terms of their décor, fragrances, activities, iconic imagery and sounds. As I navigated spaces occupied by community members, some textures were known, others new to me.

I felt a 'strange distance' — a distance from which I could, at once, identify the community as 'other', yet near enough to analyse it. (Cool 2001: 01) In this chapter, I delve into the conversations between the community and myself that contributed to thinking about the scope of the film practice. First, I share an account of the community's migrations and settlement in Cardiff. Some portions of this account are included in the submitted film. I share it at length here because the background information about the community I gathered from this account, stressed my thoughts for the practice beyond my impulsive reactions as an artist. I identified specific socio-cultural dynamics, and could appreciate community members' aspirations. These I combined in the film with the

textures and juxtapositions, I perceived with relation to the community.

Excavating members' migrations, it surfaced that imaginations from the past are inscribed in their present. The community's landscape surfaced as an 'ethnoscape' — a term I prefer to address the community with, instead of 'diaspora' — the term most likely to be evoked given the community's migratory origins. (Appadurai 2000: 230-31) After discussing the community's origins and status as an ethnoscape, in the next section of this chapter, I list early visual and sound provocations for the film that I derived while observing the community, prior to filming. These provocations have transformed as the practice has evolved, but these are shared here to plot points of contact between field-work and film practice. The chapter concludes with a discussion of a critical stance towards certain sections of the community that arose while filming, and its implications for the film practice.

4.1 Migrations and settlement in Cardiff⁸⁴

Origins in India

The earliest trace of the community is around 300 years ago when ancestors of some members worked as manual labour on farmlands in a village, Halar, close to the Kutch district in Gujarat, west India. They lived in conditions of extreme poverty, exacerbated by heavy taxation under the colonial regime and frequent droughts that instigated famines. Compelled by the poverty in Halar, some persons migrated to the nearby region, Kutch. At that time, Kutch was an affluent princely state — its affluence testified by its

⁸⁴ This account has been derived through conversation with community members, identifying common patterns pertaining to their origins and styles of living. A key source of the information shared here is an interview with Mr. Patel, whose transcript is included in appendix 3.

ownership of a mint⁸⁵. In Kutch the profile of the community altered towards landownership, but its distresses persisted because of recurrent droughts.

Some members started to follow a Hindu sect — the Swaminarayan, which is estimated to have arrived in Gujarat around the mid-19th century, after originating in central India⁸⁶. The community's following towards this sect expanded promptly and some members even trained as preachers. Being close to the community these preachers discussed everyday life with members and encouraged them to improve their living conditions. Towards the end of the 19th century, they advised community members to migrate to Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, colonies where British colonial administrators were seeking labour to construct amenities such as railways and electricity.

Migration to East Africa

Migration to East Africa commenced in the early decades of the 20th century. Initially only men migrated. They joined ranks with other Indians serving as 'indentured workforce' under the colonial set up⁸⁷. (Castles and Miller 1993: 49; Cohen 1997: 57)

They were employed contractually as construction labour, masons, bricklayers and

⁸⁵ It was the only princely state in India at that time to own a mint.

⁸⁶ The Swaminarayan Sect was initiated by an enlightened master, Sahajanand Swami (1837-1886). The sect adheres to the Hindu religion. The teachings of Sahajanand Swami are contained in a scripture, the *Shikshapatra*, which Sahajanand Swami wrote in 1882. Sahajanand Swami shared his teachings with ascetics and followers. During his lifetime, numerous temples were built as centres for propagating his teachings. Key to his teachings are resolves that guide followers worldwide. These include *acharyas* (ascetics) and saints, who spread the teachings of the sect, temples, where followers gather, profess and practice their beliefs, and scriptures, that contain the teachings of the Master.

⁸⁷ Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller note that during the latter half of the 19th century indentured workers replaced slaves as 'the main source of plantation labour.' (Castles & Miller 1993: 49) Indenture involved large groups of workers, recruited, sometimes forcefully, and transported to other areas of work. It is estimated that from the Indian subcontinent British colonial authorities recruited over 30 million people. (Appleyard 1991: 11). 'Some were taken to Trinidad, Guyana and other Caribbean countries to replace the labour of the emancipated slaves in the sugar plantations. Others were employed in plantations, mines and railway construction in Malaya and East Africa... Family formation and permanent settlement took place in many areas.' (Castles & Miller 1993: 49-51)

carpenters. Their occupations brought sustained income and within the span of two decades their families joined them.

Much settlement was confined to rural pockets. Every evening after work members would gather and pray collectively. As the community expanded and prospered, it built Swaminarayan temples — the first in Nairobi, Kenya. Besides prayer, the temple complexes housed community centres for social gatherings and cultural activities. Here community elders would explain Hindu traditions and customs to the younger generation to foster and maintain their connections with India. Between the 1940s-60s, the community's profile altered as members of the succeeding generation who had gained education took employment in secondary and tertiary professions such as law and medicine⁸⁸. The Swaminarayan sect heads sustained contact with the community, advising them to maintain family life in keeping with social norms in India and securing children's education.

Cardiff

All members held British citizenship having migrated to Africa under the colonial regime. Though the exodus following Idi Amin's expulsion⁸⁹ of Ugandan Asians in 1972 is the landmark in the migration of East African Asians to the United Kingdom, some Gujaratis had already settled in Cardiff from the mid-1950s, coming directly from India. The expulsion of 1972 and the independence of East-African colonies led most Gujaratis

⁸⁸ By the 1940s-50s, Asians across Uganda and Kenya were no longer an insignificant minority. Educated Indians who migrated to East Africa upon India's independence in 1947 excelled in business and 'amassed impressive holdings.' In Uganda they became the 'acknowledged mainstay' of the economy. (Kuepper et al 1975: 03)

⁸⁹ In 1972, Ugandan President Idi Amin ordered the expulsion of all British Asians. Though his immediate motivations for the order are disputed, it is commonly regarded that the fear of Asians subjugating Africans, given their sizeable commercial holdings, prompted him to order the expulsion. He accused the Asians '... of not reinvesting in Uganda and of preventing African businessmen from learning Asians' skills.' (Kuepper et al 1975: 05)

to London by the mid-1970s. Not all Gujaratis owned equal resources, as under the crisis of expulsion some had been unable to gather their savings in Africa.

Some members were not educated and therefore could not secure employment in London. A high cost of living, shared accommodation and the use of public baths⁹⁰ made London unsuitable for long-term settlement. Further, since London was the first encounter with urban life, its contrast with earlier locations in Africa added to some members' anxieties. According to Mr. Patel a 'split' occurred among the Gujaratis generally. The educated settled in London readily. Others dispersed to smaller cities with thriving industries. Opportunities for employment, a comparatively low cost of living and the availability of council housing loans attracted some Gujaratis to Cardiff.

The community in Cardiff is composed of Gujaratis most of who trace their origins to Kutch, with ancestors who migrated and lived in Uganda or Kenya. Its population figures between 800-1000. Most adults, including women are employed. While the first generation in Cardiff is largely composed of self-employed persons including corner shops and tax consultancy owners, train and taxi drivers; the second and third generations born and educated in Cardiff are bilingual — speaking English and Gujarati, and include medical, information-technology, finance and legal professionals.

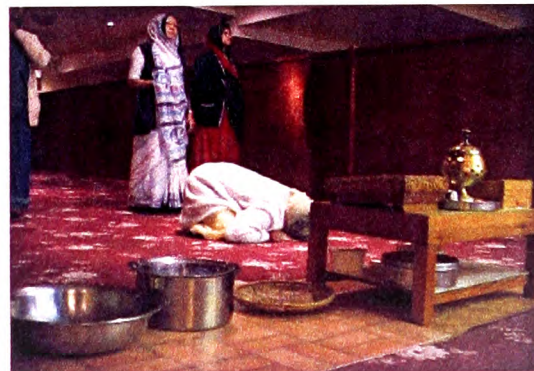
The Swaminarayan Temple

As Gujarati communities settled across the UK, temples got built, with London, Oldham and Bolton developing the first complexes for Swaminarayan worship. In 1978,

⁹⁰ Under the Swaminarayan sect it is required of each member to bathe daily in the morning. Accessing public baths during winter was difficult for some members and most women felt uncomfortable sharing the bathing space with other men.

the head of the Swaminarayan sect, Acharya Maharajshree Tejendraprasadji, visited Cardiff and urged the community to build its own temple. With a loan from the Swaminarayan temple London, and community members' individual donations an unused printing press warehouse was purchased, renovated and inaugurated in April 1979 as the Swaminarayan temple, Cardiff. Within a decade, the temple's activities and membership expanded necessitating a bigger complex. Consequently the present temple complex was developed.

While this complex has not been developed in keeping with the principles of Hindu temple architecture, the temple houses a miniature wooden replica of a traditional sanctum. The present construction project, images of which are included in the film, aims to redesign the temple on the basis of Hindu architecture principles. All festivities in the Indian lunar calendar are performed at the temple in accord with practices in Gujarat. This propels a curious equation where a specifically regional practice is maintained and performed using local materials and creative imperatives derived from another location, Cardiff⁹¹.



The wooden replica of the sanctum and women praying before it.

⁹¹ For example, at *Hindola* traditionally swings are made for the Lord with flowers and fruits that blossom as monsoons arrive in Gujarat. In Cardiff, community youth have replaced these with locally available materials such sea-shells, pebbles, seasonal fruits and vegetables.

A dedicated membership visits the temple regularly on a daily or weekly basis. On festivals, the temple draws huge gatherings including Indians of all backgrounds. The temple complex houses a community centre for cultural activities and social gatherings. It also supports charitable activities including collection of funds for natural calamities such as the tsunami in 2004. The temple is identified as a key symbol of Hinduism in Wales. It hosts cultural events such as local school trips, police training, and visits by prominent officials such as Welsh Assembly representatives.

The community's status

Though most community members have previous connections with East Africa, the community in Cardiff also includes Gujaratis coming directly from India and other parts of the UK. Their motivations for migration are distinct from those already residing here. Some arrive here through marriage arrangements, others seeking employment. Consequently this community's status is not necessarily diasporic. According to Hamid Naficy the term diaspora refers to any peoples who have 'undergone sustained dispersions.'⁹² (Naficy 2001:13) All members of the subject community have not experienced sustained dispersions, and their patterns of migration are not uniform.

In view of this, it is perhaps more useful to refer to the community in terms of having formulated an ethnoscape, a proposition formulated by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai

⁹² Naficy states that diaspora; 'originally... referred to the dispersion of the Greeks after the destruction of the city of Aegina, to the Jews after the Babylonian exile, and to the Armenians after the Persian and Turkish invasions and expulsion in the mid-sixteenth century.' (Naficy 2001: 13)

in a discussion of globalisation⁹³. According to Appadurai an ethnoscape is: ‘the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest[-]workers and other moving groups.’ (2000: 234) A more holistic category, this term deemphasises migration in an economically or politically motivated mass-movement or dispersion context, and allows inclusion of peoples who have moved with varying motivations and under differing circumstances. It extends understanding of a subject such as the community beyond references to migration only, drawing attention to how members interact with their locations formulating human ecologies there. The community’s ethnoscape includes spaces that members identify with such as the temple complex, its surrounding landscape including residences, natural surroundings, workplaces, leisure and iconic landmarks.

4.2 Provocations — intersections of the community history and film practice

During initial conversations, community members often shared experiences of displacement and emplacement. Alongside memories of having lived or travelled in India and East Africa previously, these spaces get often evoked through material culture including cultural artefacts, ritual practices and spatial associations. When members profess their preference for Wales, they often cite its resemblance to rural hillsides of Kenya and Uganda as a reason for their choice. The slow pace of life in Cardiff and the community’s concentration around the temple evokes for members a sense of community similar to rural Gujarat.

⁹³ ‘Ethnoscape’ is one of five categories classified by Appadurai to account for current global flows. The other four are: technoscapes, ideoscapes, mediascapes and financescapes. According to Appadurai; ‘... the current global flows occur in and through the growing disjunctures between ethnoscaples, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes.’ (2000: 234)

Memory in the experience of the community, surfaces as not a handmaiden of the past. The community's relationship to landscape involves determinants other than the socio-economic or political imperatives of migration. It is mediated through a register of imaginations that evoke the experience of space and time sensorily, where memory links 'here' with 'there', 'now' with 'then.' In the global context, it is increasingly considered that imaginations comprise as a 'social practice... central to all forms of agency.' (Naficy 2001: 08)

While imaginations are far from any tangible encounter that can be represented directly, such observations furthered the scope of the film practice beyond cultural description. My dialogues with community members enabled me in gauging meanings and associations embedded in their lifestyles, practices and expressions of distinctiveness. While filming, I looked for everyday living experiences and the implication of memories, imaginations, associations and the senses in them. Paul Stoller in *The Taste of Ethnographic Things* asserts that documentation from a: 'sensual tasteful vantage... investigates the *life stories* of the subjects under consideration as opposed to totalized investigations.' (1989: 29, emphasis mine) The practice moved away from a monophonic or authoritative textual mode to include varied visual and aural imperatives. The following are some early aural and visual provocations for the work.

1. Pastoral landscape: Most subjects regard the Welsh landscape including hillsides and the river Taff, which flows near the temple complex, as evoking pastoral associations that remind them of previously occupied locations. In the survey questionnaire, most members cited the Millennium Stadium as an enduring image

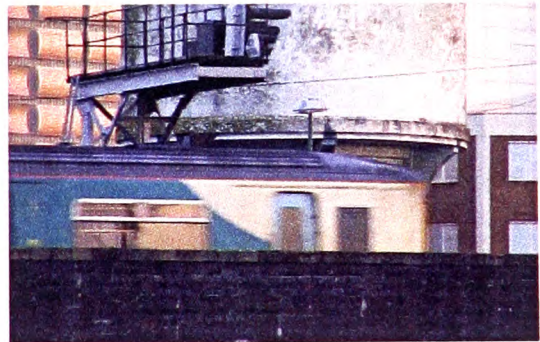
of Cardiff. Images of the river, the stadium and surrounding areas were developed at different times of day and night to evoke the pastoral aspect. Thinking further about the pastoral imperative, the sounds of women singing in a local dialect and ululating on different occasions in the temple repeatedly returned to me. The rustic tenor of these sounds evoked rural Gujarat and contrasted with the quietude of the cityscape that is only disrupted occasionally by urban sounds of traffic, railways and industry. Paul Stoller, asserts sound as a textural property through which, we gain 'entry into the world of intangibles.' (1989: 103) These singing sounds assumed significance for they comprise an indigenous textual mode that contributes to the practice by stressing it beyond a monophonic mode of address⁹⁴.

2. Train: The community's first migration from India was to develop railways in Africa. In Cardiff, the temple complex is located near the central railway station and community members commute regularly to destinations across the UK for purposes such as work and liaison with extended family. In Indian cinema, the train symbolises the onset of modernisation in paradoxical terms, comprising desire for urbanity and nostalgia for the loss of the rural past⁹⁵. From Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* (Song of the Little Road, 1955) and Ritwik Ghatak's *Meghey Dhaka Tara* (The Cloud-Capped Star, 1960), the train has been used: 'to cut up framed space and dislocate time, creating in the wake of its disappearance primitivist nostalgia, totemic fear, sheer anticipation.' (Kapur 2000: 216). The

⁹⁴ In chapter 6, I discuss how a folktale performed in a local dialect by community women and translated in English by a community youth, was constructed as an intermediary sequence marking the film's transition for increasing occupation with the women subjects

⁹⁵ Modernity was heralded in India under the colonial regime that brought rationalism, scientific and Enlightenment thought, which challenged an archaic and feudal societal set-up prevalent across India prior to colonisation. The British introduced railways in India. The railways along with other forces such as electricity and telecommunications are symbols of a modern industrial society.

train bears a specific relation to migrant subjects because their experiences are not situated in 'fixed transitional sites', but include 'mobile spaces' such as trains, sea and aircraft. (Naficy 2001: 257) For the subject community, successive migrations have amounted to an escalation in its socio-economic profile from village-based manual labour in India towards urban, secondary and tertiary occupations in Cardiff. Movement is thus a central modernising force for the community, and the image of the train is linked to it in a multiple register — physical transition in terms of movement; spatial coincidence in terms of the community's concentration around Cardiff's central station; and for symbolising escalation in its socio-economic mobility.



The train from 'Pathar Panchali' and 'Crossings in a Beautiful Time.'

3. The Cigar Factory: In Cardiff, women from the community have for the first time engaged in gainful employment. Most women from the first generation being sparsely educated and unable to converse in English work at a cigar factory near

the temple complex. The thinly peopled interiors of the factory contrast sharply with other social spaces where the community gathers collectively⁹⁶. The contrast between these spaces extends to the corporeal experiences of the female body within them. In the factory, women work amidst machinery; their bodies defined in uniform and function. Their hands make mechanical and repetitive movements.



The ethnic woman's body amidst modern machinery

In the temple complex community women supply a more variegated register of textures and movements varying in rhythm and speed. They conduct their bodies with more ease and authority — moving freely, and engaging in a spread of activities ranging from prayer and singing to cooking, informal conversations, reading and decorations. Their dress code displays a palette of colours and textures. While filming, a consistent focus was towards the numerous and contrasting activities of women's hands. Ludmilla Jordanova holds hands as anthropological indices that, '... are so bound up in everything else, they are so thoroughly conventionalized as instruments and indexes that they cannot be understood as fragments.' (Taylor 1994: 256-257) Tight close-ups of hands evoke

⁹⁶ This factory underwent a series of retrenchments when advanced machinery was introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Community women who have carried on working there recollect that in earlier times, the factory was thickly peopled and the tasks they performed were more physical. Now they function mostly as supervisors, monitoring machines as indicated by Ms. Varsani in her interview included in the submitted film.

texture, and enlist the women's bodies as implicated in the juxtaposition between the categories of tradition — evoked in their activities at the temple, and modernity implied through the mechanical and repetitive movements amidst machinery as at the cigar factory.



The women's hands occupied in traditional activities.

Bela Balazs, deriving from Henri Bergson's analysis of time and duration holds that the close-up extends the experience of film viewing into further dimensions. Though his discussion pertains to the face in close-up, it can be applied to close-ups generally⁹⁷. He says: 'Facing an isolated face takes us out of space, our consciousness out of space is cut out and we find ourselves in another dimension.' (Braudy & Cohen 2004: 316) The close-ups of hands, faces and feet fragment the bodies of the subjects and advance engagement towards a textural register.

4. The Barrier: In the temple a wooden barrier runs across the length of the prayer hall dividing the space into the male and female sections. Men and women do not exchange words or eye glances while in the prayer hall. This practice is particular to the Swaminarayan sect. According to Mr. Patel, the barrier ensures that members maintain purity of thought during prayers. This barrier has festered in my imagination since I first encountered it, and has provoked me to interrogate

⁹⁷ While Balazs concentrates on the face in close-up, Giles Deleuze has stated that the affect of a close-up need not be limited to the face only. 'And why would a part of the body, chin, stomach or chest be more partial, more spatio-temporal and less expressive than an intensive feature of faceicity or a reflexive whole face?' (1986: 97)

gender relations and dynamics within this community. It has also urged me to question why the community emphasises the temple and religious activities as central to its cultural experience. The community elders perceive traditional rituals and practices as a mechanism to maintain the community's affiliations with India and to instil consciousness towards Indian culture among the younger generations. In this assertion, I sensed pride towards 'traditional' Indian culture that motivated me to probe whether any cultural barriers persisted in the community.



The men and women's sections of the temple divided by a barrier.

4.3 Scope of the Practice: Beyond POV

The subject community's ethnoscape is multi-sited, embedded with imaginations and associations of previously and presently occupied spaces. Its valuations of tradition and the homeland, alongside its negotiations in Cardiff reveal its aspirations for performing its distinct cultural connections and pursuit of a materially advancing lifestyle. Though the motivations for the community's successive migrations have been, to some measure, political and economic; unpacking its spatial relations divulges emphasis on these

categories and facilitates in nearing this community through terms outside any grand or totalising narratives of movement and migration.

With such an understanding, I came to consider location within film not in terms of concrete or tangible cultural signifiers; but involving intangible experiences of space and the senses — terrains where past and present, memory and desire cannot be disentangled; and where everyday living is a complex mesh of influences derived through the interplay of movement, belief patterns and socio-economic occupations. According to Hamid Naficy, the experience of space is a central feature in films pertaining to movement and migration because the ‘dialectics of displacement and emplacement’ are enacted through space-time configurations. (2001: 152)

The community’s spatial dynamics revealed an interplay of the contrasting categories of tradition and modernity — the former exemplified through the temple for performance and preservation of Gujarati customs and conventions; the latter through its negotiation of external spaces for advancing socio-economic mobility. Tradition and modernity surfaced as the foundational terms for montage juxtaposition with respect to the community. This influenced my thought about montage juxtaposition as culture and context-specific and problematised as limited and inadequate definitions of montage purely in formal terms, as an editing technique, or by abstracting its modalities of ‘conflict’ and ‘collision’ from socio-cultural context.

While emphasising cultural and context-specificity for developing montage juxtapositions, I was aware that audiences outside the community, irrespective of their

geographical or cultural location, would not be fully conversant with the specifics of the community's culture. This necessitated exposition⁹⁸ of information such as the community's physical location, its migrations and settlement in Cardiff, and the significance of the Swaminarayan temple — terms through which the community's specific culture might be suggested. At the same time, exposition needed to be balanced and constructed so that it did not slip into mere description or replication. This imperative for defining without being descriptive, was necessitated in view of the community's host environment being increasingly termed 'multicultural'; wherein a descriptive or expository representation risks appropriation as celebrating cultural difference⁹⁹.

The discourse of 'multiculturalism' and 'cultural diversity' has invited reservation for approaching cultural formations and ethnic subjectivities in a limited, homogenising manner. According to Laura Marks multiculturalism: 'implies the perspective of white or other dominant people who have been able to assume that their society constitutes the overarching culture.' (2000: 07) Robert Stam and Ella Shohat note that what is missing from much discussion of multiculturalism is 'a notion of ethnic relationality and community answerability.' (2002: 47) Nira Yuval Davis states that the discourse of multiculturalism tends to project marginal subjects as: 'homogenous collectivities... replacing the mythical image of society as a "melting pot" with the mythical image of society as a "mixed salad."' (Stone & Dennis 2003: 163)

⁹⁸ Within documentary film exposition pertains to information that 'grounds' the audience into the film. This can be achieved variously. Sheila C Bernard lists some means including arguments between characters, visually through establishing shots of a place or action, or through printed material including graphics. (2004: 13-14)

⁹⁹ When I raise the issue of multiculturalism, I am not referring to Great Britain only. While developing the film, I have considered exhibition at film festivals in Europe and America where discussion of multiculturalism pervades public discourse.

Cultural specificity in the practice was perceived as a mechanism for confronting multiculturalism's totalising tendency that evades minutiae of cultural and historical distinctions between ethnic subjects. At the same time, my interactions with community members were alerting me to a sense of Indian or Hindu civilizational legacy and supremacy among the community. This was divisive, and the basis for regulating interaction with the host environment whose culture is perceived as incompatible with the community's. Temple president, Mr. Narayan Patel's comment in the film indicates this:

The pressure here is double fold. One is, we've got to keep our own generation, our own community; and the other is that when they [the younger generation] are outside, when they are in school, which is eight hours a day we've got to bring them back in there and we've only got half an hour to do that in a day. So it [temple] acts as a barrier for people who may think of drifting out. It's not that we don't want them to drift out. We want them to gain knowledge from outside, but get our own Hinduism knowledge first and then think whether the things are better or not, because there are quite a few good things in the western world. (00:03:28 — 00:03:59)

Community youth too corroborate this view asserting that the temple is a site where they forge cultural connections with their roots in India and perform traditions that distinguish them from other communities. A clear tendency for idealising the homeland surfaced that can be contextualised employing Amartya Sen's observations about Indian emigrants. Sen states that among Indian emigrants: 'there is a desire for national or cultural pride, but some uncertainty about what to take pride in.'¹⁰⁰ (2005: 74) He cautions against the risk of a summarily reductionist perception as, 'sectarian and fundamentalist ideas of different religions often do get enthusiastic support from emigrants, who aggressively play up the value of what they identify as their "own traditions."' (2005: 74) Hamid Naficy adds that collectivities, such as the community, whose identity resonates with a

¹⁰⁰ Sen elaborates: 'As is frequently the case with emigrants in general, the Indian diaspora is also keen on taking pride — some self-respect and dignity — in the culture and traditions of their original homeland. This frequently takes the form of some kind of "national" or "civilizational" appreciation of being Indian in origin. However, there is often lack of clarity on the appropriate grounds for dignity: what should the Indian diaspora be proud of? (2005: 73)

‘prior identity’ in a homeland, by virtue of ‘collective memory’ tend to idealise that homeland. (2001: 14).

On this basis, Bhikhu Parekh has problematised the notion of representing a culture by mobilising an insider’s view only¹⁰¹. Parekh states that judging a culture on its own terms is:

... deeply problematic. It rests on a positivist view of culture and assumes that the latter has a fixed body of values carrying a fixed set of meanings... A culture is not static and contains both residues of its largely dormant past beliefs and prefigurations of the newly-emergent ones. In short, every culture is too multi-stranded, fluid and open-ended to have ‘fixed terms’ in which to evaluate it. (2000: 174)

With respect to my film practice, though the community members’ emphasis on sharing festivities and communal practices had been a mechanism to evoke their engagement and exposit their specificity; with time it became problematic to be only working with those instances that are decidedly the idealised terms of reference — those on which dominant subjects seek to project the community. This risked compromising the practice’s critical and analytical imperative, reducing the practice to replication or duplication abstracting the community from wider contexts such as the western landscape where it has transacted the forces of modernity. In view of this, I probed personal experiences, characters and instances that would compete with the accounts pertaining to the community’s traditions and its formations as a unified whole being asserted by the authoritative voices from the temple.

¹⁰¹ Political scientist Bhiku Parekh states that: ‘Every culture develops over time, and since it has no coordinating authority, it remains a complex and unsystematised whole. It has what Raymond Williams (1980) calls residual strands of thought, that is, those that were once dominant and now survive either as historical memories or as undigested elements in a dominant culture.’ (2000: 144)

This process of interrogating the terms at which sections of the community sought to represent it also comprised a subtle departure from the modes I had adopted in my previous films around ethnic subjects. Earlier, I had deliberately worked with the possibility of a subjective camera formulated in the point of view (POV) technique that provides the point of view of a character. I had valued the POV as a mechanism to reverse viewing positions of ethnic subjects through my work — not looking at the ethnic subject, rather looking back from his/her position. Questioning the scope of this technique in light of the particularities of this project wherein I interrogated the terms at which community members were projecting themselves and their collectivity, indicated a discursive shift in my functioning away from the notion of reversing the gaze with respect to the ethnic subject, towards an interrogative stance that challenges ethnicity in terms of a unified or homogenous construct.

Discussing the impact of the POV shot, Jinhee Choi distinguishes between an ‘optical’, and ‘subjective’ POV. The former depicts the character’s vision objectively, the latter emulates the character’s subjective experience. According to Choi neither can assure viewer allegiance with the character unless the ‘viewer’s own personal memory similar to the experience portrayed’ is not triggered. (2005: 21) The onus of identification is consequently not on physical properties of the image, but a complex including narrative, characterisation, and significance of the character.

As I questioned the community’s terms of reference in its interactions with me, I sought alternative accounts within the community. This implied abandoning the POV strategy that surfaced as inadequate — no further than challenging the dynamics of

representation in terms of stereotype analysis the limitations of which I have already raised in chapters 1 and 3. In this project I was using my position in terms of closeness and distance from the community to map its complexity through instances that collide with any idealisations surrounding it¹⁰². My sense of 'strange distance' was, as Jenny Cool asserts a 'working model' that 'touches on a complex nexus of ideas— subjectivity, alienation, agency, false consciousness, domination, resistance, social critique' referring to the relation between ethnographers and subjects. (2001: 03) The work was not subscribing to binaries in terms of majority/ minority, white/coloured, coloniser/ colonised. There was consciousness towards relations being forged in and through my film work in terms of who speaks under what historical or institutional constraints through it. The practice was now engaged with disparate experiences, voices and world-views, to devise a mechanism for viewing the ethnic subject without slipping into the problematics of the gaze in terms of hegemony or binaristic power relations.

There was an emphasis on multiplicity within the community — viewing it not as a homogenous construct. This multiplicity however, does not arise from a belief in the perpetuating fragmentation of social cohesion characterising the post-modern condition. (Harbord 2002: 01) Instead this is a critical gesture to reflect complexity through competing world-views informed by variegated socio-cultural and historical

¹⁰² It is pertinent to qualify my subjective stance further as it influenced my engagement with the subject community. My background from an upwardly mobile, urban middle class family with origins in Punjab, India bears relevance to my practice. According to cultural critic, Pavan Varma, the dominant trait of India's steadily multiplying urban middle class is 'apathy' — an 'imperviousness to the external milieu except in matters that impinge on its own immediate interests' (1999: 130) With my privilege of an English medium education and later at university in Delhi, I have grappled with the urban middle class's apathetic attitude that I encounter most readily in my home environment. This is contradictory and problematic for me because apathy necessarily abstracts any concerns outside one's own material welfare that then conflicts with a privilege such as my education that could be mobilised for further purposes — say in response to social concern or for artistic, cultural and contemplative pursuits. Further my family's origins in the Punjab have made me experience a complex body encounter. In Punjab one encounters a curious development dilemma that manifests in a steadily rising material welfare index alongside the most profound anti-female bias, reflected in 'natality inequality, sex-specific abortions' and patriarchal world-views generally. (Sen 2005: 226) While economic affluence has spiralled in this part of India after independence, gender discrimination has not declined in complementary proportions. This has formulated for me into sensitivity towards issues of gender within the context of tradition.

conditionings that thereby challenge simplified notions of ethnic subjectivity as a unified and homogenous construct. This also raises the discursive positionality of the filmmaker — not an agent giving voice to subjects who are perceived as a homogenous collective. Instead it involves nearness with the ethnic subject that confronts its complexity through polyphony. George Marcus and James Clifford have asserted the value of polyvocality and polyphony — in the context of ethnographic documentation thus:

Polyvocality was restrained and orchestrated in traditional ethnographies by giving to one voice a pervasive authorial function and to others the role of sources, “informants”, to be quoted or paraphrased. Once dialogism and polyphony are recognised as modes of textual production, monophonic authority is questioned, revealed to be characteristic of a science that has claimed to represent cultures. The tendency to specify discourses — historically and intersubjectively — recasts this authority, and in the process alters the question we put to cultural descriptions. (1986: 15, 191- 192)

The implication of mapping disparate voices, experiences and associations from the community was that my practice defined its scope away from countering stereotypes. Through this it challenged the rhetoric of an ‘insider view’ or the filmmaker being a mouthpiece for the disadvantaged. I approached the ethnic subject not as a homogenous construct, but attempted a more holistic portrait pertaining to it.

CHAPTER 5

Articulations: Subjectivities attended through montage¹⁰³

... in the present age, with its facility of communication, geographical barriers have almost lost their reality, and the great federation of men, which is waiting either to find its true scope or to break asunder in a final catastrophe, is not a meeting of individuals, but of various human races. Now the problem before us is of one single country, which is the earth, where the races as individuals must find both their freedom of self-expression and their bond of federation... The first step towards realisation is to create opportunities for revealing different peoples to one another. This can never be done in those fields where the exploiting utilitarian spirit is supreme. We must find some meeting-ground, where there can be no question of conflicting interests. One of such places is the University...

— **Rabindranath Tagore, 1922.**

In this chapter instances from the works of two practitioners — filmmaker, Ritwik Ghatak and installation artist, Shirin Neshat, are discussed. The discussion examines the deployment of montage by these artists to attend political concerns within their specific socio-cultural and historical locations. First, Ritwik Ghatak's adaptation of Eisensteinian montage within the post-partition Bengali context is examined; followed by an unpacking of Shirin Neshat's montage effect through which she attends gender disparation in post-revolutionary Iranian society. Both artists reframe montage formulations in relation to particular socio-cultural, historical and aesthetic specifics. This widens our understanding of the scope of montage practice.

Though montage has influenced cinemas and artists across the world, the two artists discussed here are particularly relevant to this research because both use montage to critically attend the subject of gender within the context of the nation — a stance that

¹⁰³ The material in this chapter was first delivered as a paper at *Refresh: First International Media Art Histories Conference* (2005), at Banff New Media Institute, Canada.

finds resonance in my practice. Further, this discussion explicates how their transactions with montage amount to an intercultural claim wherein montage is not simply imitated. Instead, a distinct and radical montage formulation arises that first, takes up the socio-cultural formations it is attending as historical constructs rather than as hidden essences in the ‘national’ imagination, thus critiquing dominant nationalist discourses¹⁰⁴. Second, these works, through their formal innovativeness reconcile the twin claims for cultural specificity with intercultural conversation. This confronts any universalist or unilinear assumptions in the definitions of montage.

There are obvious distinctions between Ghatak and Neshat historically and aesthetically. Ritwik Ghatak was a crucial figure in India’s parallel cinema movement during the 1960s and 70s. Shirin Neshat is a contemporary video installation artist. During the research, I have questioned and departed from some of the strategies in both artists. Ghatak’s use of the Indian epic melodramatic tradition conflicts with my documentary occupations. More importantly, I have been inclined to hold Shirin Neshat’s works as simplifying rather than confronting the complexity embedded in the gender constructions she examines. However, engagement with the formal and discursive imperatives of these artists has informed my work and facilitated the situation of my practice historically.

Before examining each artist individually, this chapter commences with a detour mapping the disparities between two thinkers key in shaping modern thought in the

¹⁰⁴ Within nationalist discourses of the third world, the terms ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ posit an opposition (Nandy 1994: 01). As essential categories, these surface as pragmatic features for nation-building. When induced within the realm of cultural politics, they include a further imperative — enunciating identity.

Indian subcontinent.¹⁰⁵ The distinctions between the stances towards modernity and modernism in Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore are crucial for gauging the import of Ritwik Ghatak's intercultural claim. His use of montage sets-up interculturalism as a critical strategy that resists valorisation of the native subject or cultural category. This resistance is valuable both nationally for challenging ahistorical, mystical or civilisational assumptions towards identity in the dominant national imagination; as well as internationally intervening into contemporary discussion of ethnicity in terms of multiculturalism, whose problematics I have alluded to in the previous chapter.

5.1 Historical and aesthetic origins

Two figures have been key in shaping modern Indian thought — Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Gandhi steered India's freedom movement against British colonial rule. Rabindranath Tagore founded the Vishwa Bharati University in Santiniketan, West Bengal — a space that embodies a spirit for interculturalism¹⁰⁶ and pan-Asian revivalism (Kapur 2000: 204). Though proximate in their political stances, their worldviews differed significantly. (Nandy 1994: 02)

The central tenets of Gandhian thought are 'the negation of progress and European science.' (Chatterjea 1986: 85) Gandhi's worldview pertained to a holistic integration of human life with the environment and his political methods aimed at converting features

¹⁰⁵ I use the term subcontinent because Rabindranath Tagore's thought has not only influenced artists in Bengal, India, but also artists and filmmakers in Bangladesh and Pakistan that were partitioned from mainland India in 1904 and 1947 respectively — events towards which Tagore maintained his dissatisfaction throughout his lifetime.

¹⁰⁶ I use the term 'interculturalism' over 'cross-' or 'multiculturalism' as the prefix 'inter-' activates a zone of conversation between cultures. Paul Willems has argued that both; 'cross-cultural' and 'multicultural...' suggest the existence of discrete, bounded, cultural zones separated by border... (Devereaux 1995: 22) Similarly Lucy Lippard holds that the term 'intercultural' implying a back-and-forth movement is an; 'improvement over 'cross-cultural', which 'implies a certain finality — a cross-over or a one-way trip from margins to centre, from lower to middle class, rather than a flexible interchange.' (Frascina & Harris 2003: 168)

used by colonisers as sources for humiliation into counter-strategies against colonial oppression. (Kashyap 2005) Gandhi asserted indigenism as the alternative against colonialism, and the western industrial society in its entirety. Geeta Kapur summarises Gandhi's approach stating that his attitudes to environment and cultural indigenism were built into his social and political programme:

Pressing a spiritual (at times even seemingly fetishist) relationship to nature and land, he valorized rural life and made his unequivocal commitment to the peasants' and artisans' means of livelihood. It was through the symbolism of the charkha [cotton spinning wheel] that the economic and political aspirations of swadeshi [domestic production] and swaraj [self-rule] were posited. (2000: 107)¹⁰⁷

Though a strategy against colonial oppression, indigenism in Gandhian thought perpetuated a disparity — in rather fundamental terms, between the 'East' and the 'West' — the former defined in terms of spiritualism and eco-friendliness, the latter repudiated for its alienating mechanisation and materialism. (Nandy 1994: 03) The inadvertent¹⁰⁸ corollary of this disparity between the 'East' and 'West' is foreclosure of intercultural conversations between varied cultural and aesthetic traditions.

Unlike Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore held that: 'The East is waiting to be understood by the Western races, in order not only to be able to give what is true in her, but also to be confident of her own mission.' (2004: 48)¹⁰⁹ Tagore opposed colonialism but his criticism extended beyond Gandhi's, involving a denunciation of the nation as a

¹⁰⁷ Under colonial rule, cotton harvested in India was transported to England's textile factories. Cotton goods produced in England were exported back to India where Indians purchased them with heavy tax impositions at a price that paralleled that of other imported goods. Gandhi converted cotton spinning into an occupation commanding an iconic status for emancipation of colonised India. The national flag of independent India, deriving from Gandhi's emphasis on the cotton spinning wheel, includes a 24-spoke wheel, symbolising progress in indigenous terms.

¹⁰⁸ I say 'inadvertent' because Gandhi was himself conversant with a spread of modernist literature and art testified in his inspirations from Leo Tolstoy.

¹⁰⁹ Tagore closely appreciated social reformer Raja Ram Mohun Roy who had been key in introducing scientific rational thought in West Bengal, which had prior to colonialism been mired by irrational belief, superstition and fatalistic, discriminating practices against women. Within the Indian context the social reform movements that derived from western science and reason, are considered as the onset of modern thought marking the end of a feudal medieval order.

rapacious and illegitimate category¹¹⁰. (Nandy 1994: 02) Tagorean thought thus had two implications — first, it emphasised interculturalism, resuscitating conversations between cultures despite historical movements such as colonialism that bracketed them. Second, alongside interculturalism, Tagorean thought challenged the ‘nation’ as a perennial and essential category.

For Tagore art or the aesthetic experience motivates the *advaita* consciousness, or non-duality between artist, perceiver and art object¹¹¹. His conception of beauty is in keeping with the ancient Indian dictum *satyam-shivam-sundaram* (That which is true is good. Is beautiful). In his 1922 essay, he deliberates:

... truth reveals itself in beauty. For if beauty were mere accident, a rent in the eternal fabric of things, then it would hurt, would be defeated by the antagonism of facts. Beauty is no phantasy, it has the everlasting meaning of reality. The facts that cause despondence and gloom are mere mist, and when through the mist beauty gleams out through the momentary gleams, we realize that Peace is true and not conflict, Love is true and not hatred; and Truth is the One, not the disjointed multitude. (Tagore 2004: 11)

There is a poetic fervour in Tagore’s writing that should not be mistaken for romanticism as in the western classical traditions. In his earlier contemplations: *Sadhana: The Realization of Life* (1913), he presents an appreciation for the radical and reactionary spirit of modern art burgeoning in Europe. He says:

In the history of aesthetics there also comes an age of emancipation, when the recognition of beauty in things great and small become[s] easy and when we see it more in unassuming harmony of common objects than in things startling in

¹¹⁰ Towards the nation Tagore expressed the following sentiment, ‘The ideal of the social man is unselfishness, but the ideal of the Nation, like that of the professional man, is selfishness. This is why selfishness in the individual is condemned while in the nation it is extolled, which leads to hopeless moral blindness, confusing the religion of the people with the religion of the nation ... when this idea of the Nation, which has met with universal acceptance in the present day, tries to pass off the cult of collective selfishness as a moral duty, simply because the selfishness is gigantic in stature, it not only commits depredation, but attacks the very vitals of humanity. It unconsciously generates in people’s minds an attitude of defiance against moral laws.’ (Tagore 2004: 68-70)

¹¹¹ Tagore’s philosophical dispositions are not systematic and he evokes distinct schools of Indian thought. However, the spirit of cultural appreciation in Tagore can be located in the *advaita* school, founded by the south Indian ascetic philosopher, Sankara (circa 8 or 9 AD). *Advaita*, which literally translates from Sanskrit as ‘non-dual’, is a ‘theory of pure, undifferentiated, unchanging, eternal consciousness as the self which manifests in all things...’ — an experience in which disparities perceived within the subject are annihilated. (Gupta 2003: 03)

their singularity — so much so that we have to go through the stages of reaction when in the representation of beauty we try to avoid everything that is obviously pleasing and that has been crowned by the sanction of convention. We are then tempted in defiance to exaggerate the commonness of commonplace things, thereby making them aggressively uncommon. To restore harmony we create the discords that are a feature of all reactions. We already see in the present age the sign of this aesthetic reaction, which proves that man has at last come to know that it is only the narrowness of perception [,] which sharply divides the field of his aesthetic consciousness into ugliness and beauty. (2004: 110)

While it cannot be expected of this litterateur, painter and musician the rigour of an academically informed intellectual enterprise, it cannot however be denied that in this Tagore is suggesting modernism as furnishing beauty not in terms of pleasure or fantasy, rather as a reactionary category that revisits bourgeoisie aesthetic values.

Tagore's appreciation for modernism reflects his spirit of 'assimilative synthesis' that contrasts with Gandhi's repudiation of the 'West'. (Radhakrishnan 1918: 199) Tagore endorsed 'high culture' exemplified in India's Sanskritic systems, and held these as conversant with aspects of European Renaissance as well as later modernist thought. He lectured across the world — interacting with artists and philosophers such as Eisenstein¹¹² and Henri Bergson. He encouraged the Bengal revival — an art movement that emulated Japanese Bijuitsen painting techniques¹¹³. (Mittar 2001: 177-181) He was the first to organise a Bauhaus exhibition in India (1921), which some art historians consider as the decisive onset of modernism in India¹¹⁴. (Mittar 2001)

¹¹² I first came across this meeting between Tagore and Eisenstein in a text by BBC documentary producer, Norman Swallow. In this Swallow recollects developing a documentary on Eisenstein for BBC. In an early chapter he shares the research he came across. While sharing information about Eisenstein's travels he recounts his 1929 trip to Berlin. In this there is a mention of Tagore's meeting with Eisenstein. Swallow does not specify Tagore as being Rabindranath Tagore. In his index the term Tagore surfaces with the first name, Debendranath, who was Rabindranath Tagore's father. However, through other sources it has been confirmed that Rabindranath Tagore was in Berlin in 1929, though I have not encountered any more information pertaining to this meeting. My confirmation of Rabindranath as being the Tagore Eisenstein met is also furnished by the fact that Debendranath had died in the 1910s.

¹¹³ Also see Dasgupta, C. (1968). *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray*: pp. 03-05, in which Rajghatta traces how Tagore invited Count Okakura to visit Calcutta and from that visit think about the Bengal revival involving Japanese painting. Also see Rajghatta, pp. 12-13, where Tagore's views on the cinema as a new art are discussed. Tagore echoes Eisenstein and Vertov's motivations calling for an essence in the cinema in terms of a liberation from literature and theatre.

¹¹⁴ Geeta Kapur observes that modernism was already, from the 1920s, imbricated in the national and popular objectives of art in Bengal. At Santiniketan it was clearly manifest in Rabindranath Tagore's life-work. (2000: 111)

While Gandhi's critique of colonialism formulated into a thorough repudiation of the 'West', Tagore's interculturalism confronted colonialism by claiming cultures as outside divisive political equations of power. His conception of cultures as conversational categories — competing modes of thought, reason and aesthete; contests colonialism's inherent power equations. His refutation of the nation paved the way for containing valorisation of the native and instituted possibility for critiquing jingoistic nationalist sentiment concurrent during his time of anti-colonial struggle and later within the context of post-independence nation-building. Interculturalism as a critical strategy permeates the cinema of Ritwik Ghatak, who studied Tagore extensively. His use of montage is discussed next.

5.2 Tagorean synthesis in cinema

In the history of Indian cinema, modernity has commanded varied equations with traditional aesthetic forms such as the epic, folk and musical¹¹⁵. After India's independence in 1947, modernity in the cinema comprises a double register including the process of modernisation in socio-economic terms as well as modernism — a cultural term, relating to the arts¹¹⁶. Rabindranath Tagore's critique of the nation influenced the avant-garde cinema, particularly in Bengal.

Two strands involving the Tagorean synthesis surfaced — the liberal, exemplified in the realist cinema of Satyajit Ray who had been a close associate and student of Tagore's.

The Tagorean impetus in Ray materialised into an 'orientalist naturalism' — whose

¹¹⁵ At the first instance, early Indian cinema coinciding with the rising tide of nationalism, witnessed the resurgence of myths and legends, icons and symbols in a plethora of epic musicals, mythological and saintly films to affirmatively re-inscribed agents from the past towards advancing a native archetype within a nascent national history. (Niranjana et al 1993: 28)

¹¹⁶ According to Geeta Kapur, modernism manifests an ambivalence in Indian art. Modernist art discourse at once assumes an interrogative and approving stance towards native tradition/s (2000: 267). The intricate transactions between modernist impetuses and native traditions serve in articulating third world subjectivity amidst the disjunctures instituted by historical circumstance.

occupation is the disturbance rendered by the transition from a rural, feudal society towards urban and modern living, of which the *Apu Trilogy* is the most profound exemplar. (Kapur 2000: 207) The second is a radical stance formulated by Ritwik Ghatak.

Ritwik Ghatak presents a synthesis of Tagore's literary approach¹¹⁷ with Eisensteinian montage. Using Tagore's critical posture against the nation, Ghatak attempts cultural revival of the mythic pre-modern past. Anne Sheridan qualifies that this revival is not as 'ahistoric, essentialist mysticism.' (Dunne & Quigley 2004: 108). There is an anti-bourgeoisie impetus that involves an occupation with 'the people' — a posture that Ghatak derived from his early association with the Left wing's, Indian Peoples Theatre Association (IPTA)¹¹⁸.

Ghatak, raises the fragmentation and alienation wrought by modernisation but unlike the oriental-naturalist posture of Ray that creates nostalgia for the lost past; Ghatak's cinema is more complex — mapping the fissures and conflicts in identity rendered by historical movements such as India's independence. This occupation can be located in terms of his own displacement from East Bengal¹¹⁹, now Bangladesh, at India's partition that

¹¹⁷ Here, it is pertinent to point the distinction in Tagore's poetry and prose. The former commands a transcendental quality abiding with his philosophical stance in the *advaita* school. The themes of love, devotion and intimacy with the divine constitute its core and only occasionally does Tagore make reference to the surrounding social and political conditions in which he was operating. In his short stories, plays and novels there is a reversal as he attends the urgent climate of India during the freedom movement and weaves a spiritual strain in terms of its negation under pressing exigencies wrought by the coming of Enlightenment reason. Tagore displays both a transcendental and reformist consciousness through which he first, problematises dominant, tradition-bound role models, and second, denounces nationalism as an illegitimate category. (Chatterjea 1986 & Nandy 1994) Ritwik Ghatak worked with variegated impetuses: the epic, folk and musical traditions for film structure, design and performativity combined with inspirations from Bertolt Brecht's and Tagore's writings on theatre, Carl Jung's psychology and Eisensteinian montage. There is also an appreciation for Italian neo-realism, which surfaced after the second world war, two years before India's independence.

¹¹⁸ IPTA was the cultural front of the Indian Communist Party active since 1943 in several regions of India, including Bengal. IPTA sanctioned several forms including realism, Brechtian aesthetics and Bengal's folk and popular forms. (Kapur 2000: 185) The influence of IPTA steadily declined after India's independence.

¹¹⁹ Now Bangladesh, liberated from Pakistan in 1971.

provoked a deep sense of exile for Ghatak. Consequently Ghatak held an exilic, radical posture that contrasts with Ray's liberal stance¹²⁰.

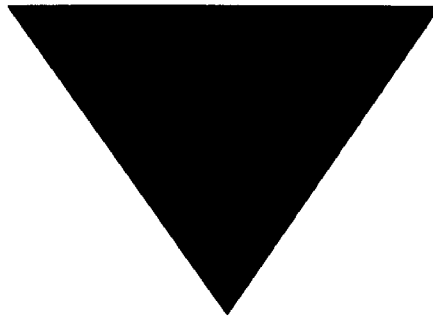
Using his exilic status as a critical distancing tool, Ghatak became sceptical of the nation-building process involving modernisation. He articulated this scepticism using Eisenstein's montage, in particular its notion of conflict. Ghatak's understanding exceeds montage as an editing technique. He uses montage to disassemble the category of tradition that is being called up in very essentialist and affirmative terms within the modern 'nationalist' discourse.

Meghey Dhaka Tara: The Cloud-Capped Star

Meghey Dhaka Tara (1960) revolves around a refugee family displaced by partition on the outskirts of Calcutta. The narrative of this film places its three female protagonists in equations of conflict. Neeta is the eldest daughter and sole bread-winner of the family. Geeta, her younger sister is a careless and sensuous presence. She deceptively marries Neeta's boyfriend, being encouraged by their mother who is resisting Neeta's marriage in order to ensure the family's sustenance.

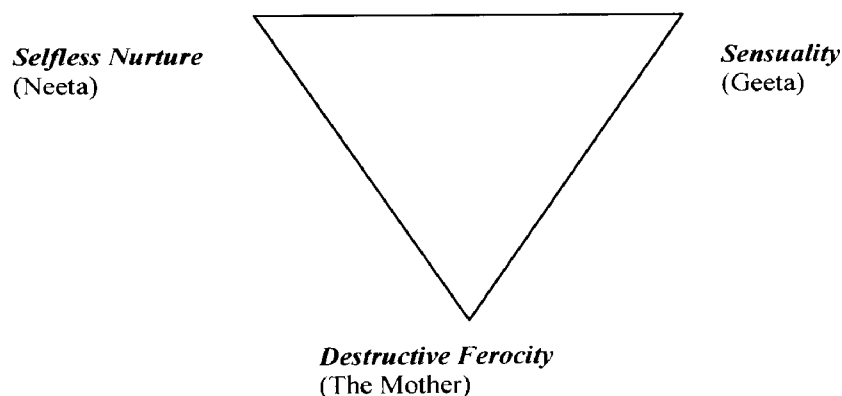
In the film, the tantric female icon — an inverted triangle is the design principle for the spatial configurations among the three women. Throughout the film, the women are presented in the courtyard of their home such that their spatial configurations always evoke the inverted triangular form.

¹²⁰ This difference without being contained is situated in the distinction between the backgrounds of both filmmakers. Ray belongs to the Bengali *bhadralok* — the elite colonial comprador class, while Ghatak's investment in his cinema is clearly reflexive, involving his exilic stance. (Armes 1987)



The Tantric feminine icon is an inverted triangle. It abstracts and symbolises the 'yoni', or the female vagina.

The inverted triangular form symbolises the feminine principle that has three attributes: selfless nurture, sensuality, destructive ferocity.



Mise-en-scene principle for spatial organisation of the three women characters in 'Meghey Dhaka Tara.'

The three women in the film incompletely symbolise the feminine principle's attributes. Neeta — evokes the selfless nurturing aspect as she sustains her family at the cost of her sensual pleasure and finally her health. Her younger sister symbolises the sensual aspect; and their mother, the ferocious, destructive aspect. Both these women lack the nurturing

ability that Neeta enjoys. Spatial design involving the tantric inverted triangle calls up a traditional aesthetic that ‘feminizes the space’ the three women in the film share.

(Shahani 1986: 23-24)

However, narrative conflict ruptures the unity of the feminine principle. Eisensteinian montage conflict is used to fragment a traditional icon in mise-en-scene. Each female character symbolises incompletely attributes of the feminine icon. According to Anne Sheridan, together they ‘make-up the complete unified feminine principle.’ (Dunne & Quigley 2004: 111) Ghatak’s mode is distinct, actually opposed to Eisenstein’s who emphasised conflict to achieve unity between opposing categories either in terms of interdependence or interpenetration. Ghatak uses conflict not to unify conflicting entities, but to rupture a unified principle — the feminine icon gets rendered as not homogenous, unitary or perennial.

Montage conflict is an intellectual impetus that articulates a critical discursive posture. Through its dominant traditional iconography being called up in the nationalist imagination gets fractured — this fracturing parallels the modernist reactionary spirit against established order. But unlike radical modernist possibilities as in Surrealism or Dadaism, which involve abstractions and ‘random decontextualisations’, the montage instance here is contextualised in relation to historical circumstance — partition, and socio-cultural context. (Jay 2001: 221)

5.3 The Dualisms of Gender

Shirin Neshat was born in Iran and migrated to the United States during the revolution, where she studied fine art. In the early 1990s she returned to Iran for the first time after the revolution. The distance of time and space made her see the profound post-revolution changes in Iranian society in more stark terms. Of her experience she states: ‘It was shocking. Everyone had gone through this major identity crisis. Before I left they were Iranian-Persians, and now they were strict Muslims. Visually everything was black and white, and women had to be in dark clothes.’ (Solomon 2001: 42)

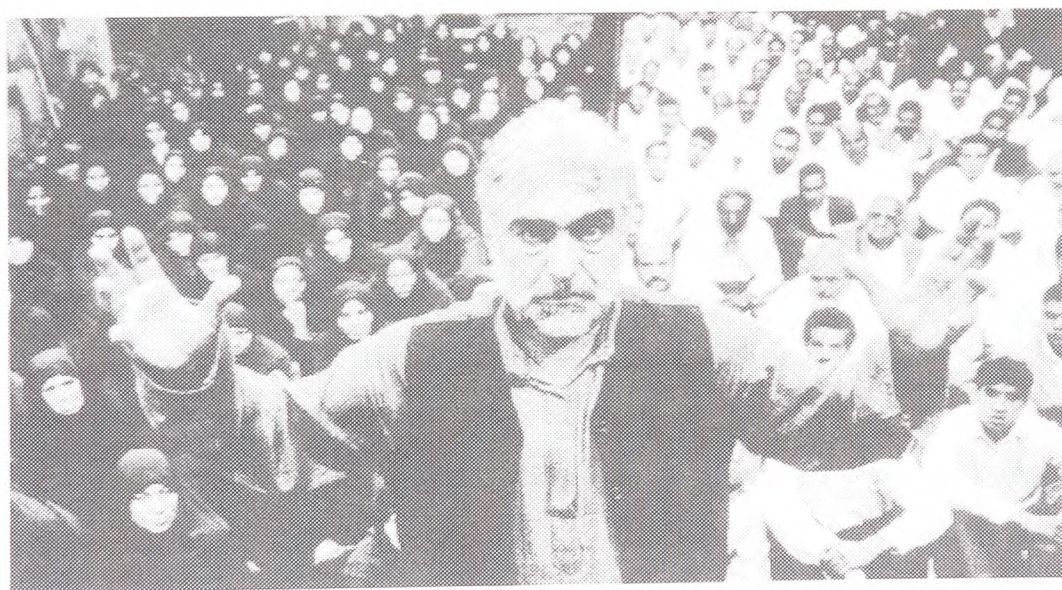
The segregations between men and women under Islamic law propelled an occupation with the subject of gender in her practice. She first developed two photographic series, *Unveiling* (1993) and *Women of Allah* (1994). In these her body is covered in the *chador*, and only her hands and face can be seen. These are inscribed with poetry written in *Farsi*. These are the only parts of a woman’s body allowed exposure under Islamic law. In *Women of Allah*, Neshat also used guns and armaments close to the woman’s body. The *Farsi* poetry and guns are a mechanism to shatter silence that necessarily accompanies an order such as the *chador*.

In 1997, Neshat began working with film and video installations. She developed a trilogy including *Turbulent*, *Rapture* and *Fervor* — each a short black-and-white film that through installation design confronts the viewer with the complexities of gender under Islamic law. Hamid Naficy terms Neshat’s style as ‘accented’; arising from her dislocation involving a liminal subjectivity, which makes for a critical reflection of the

society she examines. Naficy defines the ‘accented style’ stating that its practitioners (expatriates, diasporic and exilic subjects):

... are not marginal, for they move in the interstices of social formations and artistic approaches. As a result, they are in a position to critique the assumed values and practices both of their home and their host societies. This criticism accents their works in certain specific ways, which is why I have called their collective output as ‘accented.’ (2001: 43)

I first got interested in Shirin Neshat’s work on seeing *Fervor* (2000). Images from this film returned to me repeatedly because in them men and women are separated by a barrier — similar to the one I had encountered at the community temple. However, it was Neshat’s earlier piece, *Rapture* (1999) in which installation design attends and exaggerates gender separation that was relevant to thinking about my film practice.



Fervor 2000

Rapture includes two 12-minute videos projected simultaneously on opposite walls. On one wall are images pertaining to a group of about 100 men who are seen marching through town streets and an open-air fortress. They perform actions like clapping, ladder

raising, hand-washing and pushing each other in some rough sport. Critic John Ravenal in his essay on Neshat's work comments that these:

... activities mostly suggest adherence to tradition or release of aggressive tension. Dressed in uniforms of black pants and white shirts, they resemble a regiment of westernized bureaucrats, underscoring their group think mentality. The men are masters of their structure, but their ardent embrace of its boundaries ironically makes them appear to be its prisoners. (2002: 52-53)

The opposite wall is occupied by an image of a similar sized group of women. They are clad in the black *chador*. The women first emerge in a barren desert landscape and once they have assembled, they stare at the camera. This staring, Ravenall adds gives the impression that they are looking across the room at the men on the opposite wall. (2002: 52) Then they ululate. At this point the men on the opposite wall stop and look across, as if seeing the women. The women turn away and begin a journey back through the desert to the sea.



Rapture 1999

Placing the men and women on opposite walls parallels their segregation in Islamic society. This is an exaggerated gesture that polarises and ‘critically juxtaposes’¹²¹ men and women, thus commenting upon Islamic society. (Naficy 2001: 45) The segregation in the film is heightened because of the nature of the spaces the men and women occupy. Men are seen in an architectural space, which one gathers is of historic significance and exemplifies tradition. The women occupy barren desert lands and a group of 6-7 women later cart a boat going away into the sea.

Critics have noted that unlike cinema or theatre, *Rapture* reverses viewing positions by activating the space in-between the two screens facing each other. The viewers are caught in the cross fire of gazes between the men and women, and at no point do they command both images together. Hamid Naficy terms this as a ‘montage effect’ stating:

... a key problematic is the representation of parallel times and simultaneous spaces in a medium that is structured by linear time. Citing Sergei Eisenstein, George Marcus offered ‘montage’ as a method that not only encodes multiple times and sites, but also self-consciously critiques the realist representation of the world (which in cinema is the dominant style). In the ‘accented cinema’, as in the multi-sited ethnography that Marcus speaks about, montage is achieved by critical juxtaposition of parallel spaces, times, voices, narratives and foci (Marcus 1994). Neshat’s most radical strategy for achieving critical juxtaposition is to defy linear time by dispensing with a single screen or single channelled presentation of her films. (2000: 45)

Spatial design of the installation and mise-en-scene are the mechanisms for instituting montage. This montage departs from conventional understandings based on editing in terms of meter, tone or rhythm.

One aspect that remains contested with respect to *Rapture* is whether the work in reflecting and exaggerating the polarities of gender reinforces the divisions in Islamic

¹²¹ See *Literature Review*, pp: 40, where this term is defined in relation Marcus and Fischer’s propositions for defamiliarisation. While Marcus and Fischer assert defamiliarization in terms of cross-cultural juxtaposition, Hamid Naficy deriving from George Marcus uses the term as critical juxtaposition.

society. This exaggeration would not be possible for the subjects who transact society's codes on a daily basis wherein the polarisation is not visible as neatly or starkly. Ruth Noack holds the view that the exchange of gazes between the men and women on the opposite walls along with the sound track serve in creating a 'tension' within the piece that strategically prevents the work from offering a resolution towards gender disparity.

She says:

Eye contact is made repeatedly between women and men; sound emphasises this dialogic aspect. Yet for all that, the male group appears to be much less interested in a confrontation. The men seem half-curious, bored, practiced in their position as observers... Can the fact that the men stay behind while, at least, some of the women set out for distant shores be interpreted symbolically? Do the women free themselves from the shackles of patriarchal tradition in which their men, enjoying the privileges it affords, remain caught? If we are to believe this interpretation, we must ask ourselves why the men wave so amicably to the departing women. Male approval of the action taken by the women does not tally with the patriarchal order scenario. Nor, upon closer examination, does it correlate with the gender polarities shown in the video. It is the contradiction between the rigid narrative of gender polarities on the one hand, and the continuous fusing of the male and female positions on a formal level on the other, that lends *Rapture* its tension. (Naficy 2000: 38)

Hamid Naficy is less convinced and holds that the gaze in Neshat's films 'is not personal but social', contrary to traditions in Western cinema and film theory. (2000: 51) Since the gaze is social, individual subjects lose their individuality and the: 'male and female owners of the gaze become homogenised and hermetically sealed.' (2000: 51) This according to Naficy: 'reinforces a binarist and politically conservative view of the gendered worlds, undermining Neshat's own transgressive suggestions.' (2000: 51)

5.4 Conversations

In both practitioners, montage is evoked distinctly and there is departure from understandings that persist within Anglo-American cinema and film theory circles. Ritwik Ghatak mixes strategies including those that might be perceived as opposing

montage. First, constructivist compositions comprising dramatic foregrounds¹²² are combined with depth-of field, which remind of realist aesthetics as associated with Andre Bazin. Second, like the montagists, Ghatak does not frame images at chest height. Instead, he employs sharply angulated high and low angle imagery. These angulations are not underpinned by a discourse such as Dziga Vertov's pertaining to the *kino-eye* as being distinct from the human eye. Geeta Kapur has linked Ghatak's cinematic devices to his sense of exile:

...in almost every film Ghatak seeks to construct a subjectivity that stands midway between an archetypal category and a class formation, or rather a subjectivity that stands apart in a state of temporary and dynamic autonomy from the congealed embodiment of mythic consciousness: the icon. He seeks to construct what in one sense may be called a liminal figure, and the liminal figure implies a spatial disjunction. Consistent with that, Ghatak's cinematic devices — including camera angles, lighting, lensing and depth-of-field — give the figure in space that uneasy location, on the join as it were between reality and irreality. (2000: 191)

Lastly, unlike Eisenstein who places conflicting categories in successive images seeking their unity through editing, Ghatak places unified entities in the same image and through montage conflict ruptures their unity. This parallels the social contradictions and tensions reflected in the work. Shirin Neshat too displays formal strategies that are distinct from those usually associated with montage films. She relies on long and wide-angle shots that collide with montage's tendency for fragmentation¹²³. The long shot in Neshat's work is a mechanism to highlight her subjects as a social, communitarian construct. Through these practitioners, it is evident that the terms of reference for montage construction get reformulated in differing socio-historical, political and cultural contexts. Neither of the

¹²² In the preface to the exhibition catalogue, *Montage and Modern Life*, Matthew Teitlebaum describes 'dramatic foregrounding' as the device by which objects within an image: 'are enlarged in scale and placed in the foreground of the composition.' (Teitlebaum1992: 08)

¹²³ In chapter 6, I discuss the relevance of fragmentation in montage.

two artists is necessarily articulating a formal/visual vocabulary or montage aesthetic involving specific cinematic coda.

Montage in their practices operates as an intellectual and thinking principle, rather than a particular technique. Its implication is that orientalist constructions get confronted, and with respect to Ghatak the category of tradition is clearly dis-assembled as monolithic, antiquated, authentic or unruptured. As a critical practice, Ghatak and Neshat's use of montage coincides with Eisenstein's intellectual montage that operates at a conceptual level and provokes meaning associations.

In both artists, there is a double anthropological inscription — a mapping and preservation of socio-historical context and cultural specificity but not in a positivist sense valorising the native cultural category. Their works bear a critical and analytical stance that extends and complicates an insider claim beyond faithful representation or description. Ritwik Ghatak uses montage conflict and ruptures the feminine icon at the heart of Bengali culture to critique the dominant national, patriarchal discourse. Shirin Neshat polarises gender categories through installation design, critically exaggerating the segregation of men and women in Islamic society.

The reformulations of montage commensurate with the anthropological inscriptions in both artists extend our understandings beyond definitions of montage in Film and Cinema Studies that classify it as one among a spread of editing techniques¹²⁴,

¹²⁴ For example, Susan Hayward lists four kinds of film editing: chronological in which narrative develops through continuity; cross-cutting that involves links two sets of concurrent and interdependent actions; deep focus editing that involves less cutting stressed by Andre Bazin for 'objective realism' to limit manipulation of the spectator is less manipulated; and then montage editing... (Hayward 2000: 94-95)

distinguished by a set of formal traits¹²⁵. (Bordwell & Thompson 1994 142-48). This also renders futile Film Theory's equation of the discourses of modernism and realism in terms of opposing aesthetics and cinematic codes. Ritwik Ghatak's student and acclaimed filmmaker, Kumar Shahani, has commented that:

The theory that there exists a Cartesian polarity between arbitrary (aesthetic) signs and total realism necessarily led to quantitative conclusions and meaningless oppositions: the proliferation of detail against metaphysical truth (where quality cannot be seized), the fluidity of mise-en-scene as against the metre of montage, the existential tension of suspense (Hitchcock) as against the tragic release from pity and fear. The terms of reference were purely idealist: the human being unsocialised and nature untransformed. Or when socialised or transformed, superficially so. This attitude necessarily tended either to exclude syntax progressively (realism) or to impose it as totally arbitrary structures... (Shahani 1986: 72)

The modernist impetus that materialises as a transaction with montage in the practitioners I have discussed proximates Rabindranath Tagore's disposition towards cultural synthesis, which contrasts with Gandhi's indigenism and foreclosure of modernity. The position for cultural synthesis also coincides with the thought of montage's early practitioners. If we attend a genealogy of montage, it becomes apparent that in its early decades during the 1920s the practice involved free intercultural associations and borrowings. On the basis of these, early practitioners attempted experiments and also posited a cultural history of a different order.

Eisenstein's conceptions of montage derived from an eclectic palette of cultural influences as indicated in the literature review to this thesis. Similarly, German art

¹²⁵ David Bordwell and Kirstin Thompson in *Film History: An Introduction* qualify the imperatives of montage films in terms of a Marxist view of history: 'There are almost no supernatural events... moreover, many montage films downplay individual characters as central causal agents. Instead, drawing on a Marxist view of history, Montage films often make social forces the sources of causes and effects. Characters do act and react, but they do so less as psychologically distinct individuals than as members of different social classes.' (Bordwell & Thompson 1994: 142) They then list characteristics such as a greater number of shots; unconventional cinematography enhancing graphic contrasts and conflict at the level of spatial relationships and the use of non-diegetic inserts as particular to montage films. Conventional chest-height and straight-on framing are avoided. More dynamic angles, such as the low and high angles are explored. Decentered framings are employed to dynamise the image. Montage directors often also placed the horizontal line extremely low in the frame. (Bordwell & Thompson 1994: 147-48.)

historian Aby Warburg, who attempted a ‘knowledge-montage’ that would challenge the traditional epistemological framework of art-history, conceived montage on the basis of the snake ritual among the Hopi in New Mexico amongst who he had developed visual ethnographies. Phillip Michaud describes Warburg’s knowledge-montage stating that its aim was:

... to gain access to a world open to multiple relationships, dangerous even to consider: the nymph with the serpent (femininity, bestiality), painting with dance (represented movement, executed movement) Medici Florence with Native American New Mexico (historical past, present-day origins), and so on. This excess no less than an access contains something dangerous, something I would call *symptomatic*. It is dangerous for history itself, for its practice and for its temporal models: for the symptom diffracts history, *unsettling* it to some degree, since it is in itself a conjunction, a collision of heterogeneous temporalities... (2004: 12)

By the late 1920s, Black American actor Paul Robeson in collaboration with Kenneth MacPherson had taken to Eisenstein’s montage attempting in the avant-garde film, *Borderlines* (1930) a ‘clatter-montage’ that depicts psychological states in relationships involving race and sexuality.

The implication of the cultural synthesis and conversational claim unpacked in this discussion is that it deemphasises any notion of cultures as fixed or discrete categories, bound or contained within any static temporal or spatial terrains. Through such cultural conversations, it is possible to re-view the cultural and intellectual history of our times not in simple terms of grand civilizations that overpowered, threatened or dissipated local cultures, say through the coming of Enlightenment reason, the industrial revolution and its culmination in colonialism — rather it might be possible to argue that the cultural and intellectual history of the last century, as indeed earlier, involves lines of communications between cultures that are not viewed in any hierarchy, but as competing and

conversational modes. Montage practice of the 1920s in Europe and America, as also later in the 'third world' is a crucial instance corroborating that argument.

CHAPTER 6

Practice¹²⁶

There is no such thing as documentary — whether the term designates a category of material, a genre, an approach, or a set of techniques. This assertion — as old and as fundamental as the antagonism between the names and reality — needs incessantly to be restated despite the very visible existence of a documentary tradition... Truth and meanings are likely to be equated with one another. Yet, what is put forth as truth is often nothing more than a meaning.
— **Trinh T. Minh-ha, in Renov 1993: 90-92**

After following the community for a year, I was equipped with material to attend a first cut of the film. At this stage, the aim was to examine the material; and formulate a working structure that would further my thinking about the practice both practically and discursively. While reviewing the material and developing a first cut for the film, juxtaposition surfaced as a key mechanism for constructing the work. Hamid Naficy has identified juxtaposition as a characteristic of the ‘accented style’ of films by diasporic, exilic and expatriate filmmakers that deploy: ‘fragmented, multilingual, self-reflexive and critically juxtaposed narrative structure.’¹²⁷ (2001: 04)

My thought had been informed by montage juxtaposition since my early encounters with the subject community. While filming within the community, I started to rethink juxtaposition as specific to cultural and social contexts rather than as a formal or universal mechanism. The material I had developed amidst the community included

¹²⁶ Appendix 1 includes a sequence breakdown of the submitted film. This chapter includes time-code references from the film. Both of these will aid reading this chapter and engaging with the practice.

¹²⁷ Though Naficy specifies the ‘accented style’ for diasporic and exilic filmmakers, the characteristics he observes in the films he analyses can be applied to filmmakers situated outside their homelands generally. While not a diasporic or exilic subject myself, some of the characteristics of the accented style have arisen in my practice too, by virtue of the imperatives Naficy highlights. Of the accented style Naficy states: ‘If the dominant cinema is considered universal and without accent, the films that diasporic and exilic subjects make are accented... the accent emanates not so much from the accented speech of the diegetic characters as from the displacement of the filmmakers and their artisanal production modes.’ (2001: 04)

disparate experiences and voices. Besides members' disparate accounts, polyphony arose from a spread of imagery and sounds that during editing assumed an argumentative scope beyond rational description or unilinear progression. This reduced the claim for *representation* in favour of argument through direct counterpoint on some occasions, and evocation of fragmentary and suggestive instances on others.

In this chapter, I discuss the evolution of the practice during editing, to contextualise the use of juxtapositions for constructing the work. The intention in reflecting this process is to reveal how the intricacies of culture and world-views of subjects informed the decisions underpinning editing so as to corroborate the claim for cultural and context-specificity in the deployment of juxtaposition. The chapter commences with discussion of the problematics I had identified in the material as I started editing. Countering these problematics advanced the scope of juxtaposition, evoked at various levels in the work. These are listed in the following section of the chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion around the purpose and implications of extending the work beyond the subject community, the scope for attending oppositions in it and the purpose of framing the filmmaker as subject within the work.

6.1 Interrogations

Problematizing the festivities

As indicated in chapters 2 and 4, the camerawork displayed a tendency for closeness and proximity to subjects leading to close-ups and tight close-ups that fragment subjects and goad visuality into the realm of texture, outside any direct space-time coordinates. The problematic of such imagery was that it abstracted the community from spatio-

temporal contexts, away from its first world metropolitan location that has lent to it the influences of modernisation. The sustained close-up imagery of traditional categories was provoking primitivist connotations — reflecting the community’s culture in originary, puritanical and essentialist terms. This risked replicating the very idealisation of the native and traditional categories that I had interrogated by expanding the film’s focus — engaging with members’ lives outside the temple, and eliciting narratives that conflicted with the image of the community as a homogenous, tradition-bound, unified construct, communicated by dominant subjects from the temple.

While aware of its this risk, this material was valuable as it bore a haptic quality derived through proximity to subjects, actions and materials that reflects a sense of intimacy, nearness — an emic imperative in the material. Jacques Aumont discusses the haptic quality in terms of ‘psychic distance’ between image and spectator, relating to the organisation and perception of space¹²⁸. He traces an antecedent for ‘psychic distance’ in German art historian and sculptor Adolf Hildebrand’s theory of 1893 in which two forms of vision were differentiated:

... the *optical* pole of distant vision, in which perspective plays an important part and which corresponds to those arts that prioritise appearance (Hellenistic art for eg.); and, at the other extreme, the *haptic* (tactile) pole of close vision, in which the presence of objects is more strongly emphasised, their surface qualities more in evidence, and so on, in what becomes an increasingly stylised manner (such as in Egyptian art)... The division between optical vision and haptic vision (or visual touch) is found again in several more current authors, notably Henri Maldiney, Gilles Deleuze and Pascal Bonitzer. (1997: 77-78).

¹²⁸ Jacques Aumont notes that ‘psychic distance cannot be quantified.’ (1997: 77) He derives from Jean-Pierre Charpy (1976) stating: ‘... a given representation in an image is more accurately described, in psychological terms, as the organisation of “existential relations experienced with their instinctual force, with a predominantly affective sensorial register (tactile or visual) and a defensive intellectual organisation.” He adds that this ‘existential’ relation between the spectator and the image has a, ‘spatiality that is linked to spatial structures in general’ and also a temporality ‘linked to the events represented and the temporal structure that flows from these.’ These qualify the notion of ‘psychic distance’. Aumont then quotes from Pierre Francastel’s (1983) definition of *psychic distance*: ‘The typical imaginary distance that regulates the relation between, on the one hand, objects of representation and, on the other, the relation between the object of representation and the spectator.’ (1997: 77)



Nearness propelling haptic and tactile visuality

Laura Marks traces the earliest discussion of haptics in the cinema to Noel Burch's essay; 'Primitivism and the Avant-Gardes: A Dialectical Approach', wherein Burch uses the term to describe: 'the stylized, flat rendition of deep space' in early and experimental cinema. Marks asserts that haptic visuality in the cinema situates the viewer and the image in a relationship of: 'mutuality... When vision is like touch, the object's touch back maybe like a caress...' (2000: 171, 184) Deriving from Luce Irigaray that: 'woman takes pleasure more from touching than from looking', Marks holds that haptic visuality is 'a feminine kind of visuality.' (2000: 170)

As editing commenced, I was certain that completely excluding the close-ups of festivities from the film on account of the risk for idealisation, would be reductive — reducing the community's presence in the work and compromising the haptic nearness manifest in camerawork. The close-up imagery reflected my equations of nearness with the subjects. David MacDougall states of the close-up that it: 'creates a proximity to faces and bodies of others that we experience much less commonly in daily life. The conventions of social distance restrict proximity except in moments of intimacy.' (2006: 21) The nearness corroborated by close-up imagery is imperative for the scopic regime

arising from the work¹²⁹, which aims at mapping, not reducing complexities in the subject. In light of this, it was considered that foregrounding the minor and competing narratives from within the community as against the communal categories reflected in the festivities, would deplete the argumentative potential in the material reducing the film to an attack on dominant subjects and institutions; thus perpetuating simplistic, power-based oppositions. While varied voices from the community had been engaged with out of interrogation against the dominant subjects, the film's aim was further than the internal conflicts within the community.

Eliciting the women subjects

In view of the problematic afflicting the material pertaining to the festivities, besides contextual imagery through high and long angle shots, personal accounts and instances relating to the women subjects in particular assumed further significance during editing. Personal and intimate, these accounts bear wider socio-historical implications that get suggested and explicated through juxtaposition. The subject of the widow presents a complex stance that formulates as a critique of the community as well as the Indian national category.

The widow has left 'independent' India, not the British colony from which ancestors of most community members migrated. Her migration is motivated by sparse welfare support in India. Her account recontextualises the host space — first, as a site of transgression because here she has violated certain social codes relating to widows¹³⁰.

¹²⁹ In chapter 7, *Conclusion*. I discuss the scopic regime arising from this work in terms of nearness

¹³⁰ While the widow adheres to some codes of the Swaminarayan sect such as abstinence from marriage, she has questioned and contravened the irrational codes imposed upon her body thus departing from socially normative behaviour.

Vijay Mishra has linked transgression as a characteristic linked to foreign landscapes. Mishra's observations pertain to the use of diasporic spaces and foreign landscapes as sites for transgressing traditional values and social norms in Bollywood¹³¹. (Mishra 2002: 235) The widow's transgression is a mode of social agency mobilised outside the homeland and involving defiance of Swaminarayan social norms. Her account formulates the host location as a site of welfare wherein a marginalised subject of a former colony, pushed by conditions of impoverishment has gained in social and economic mobility, without compromising her dignity or integrity that were threatened in rural India. In this measure her migration raises issue with the national category.

At the level of the community, her inclusion in the film gestures towards dissidence. Her account renders the community as not a unified construct involving homogenous experiences because she formulates as antithetical to the terms at which the community seeks to represent itself. With respect to the nation, the significance of her narrative contracts marginally though she remains a dissident subject within that context too. This contraction can be contextualised through Benedict Anderson's discussion of the nation as an 'imagined community' wherein he states that:

... between narratives of person and nation there is a central difference of employment. In the secular story of the 'person' there is a beginning and an end. She emerges from parental genes and social circumstances onto a brief historical stage, there to play a role until her death. After that nothing but the penumbra of lingering fame or influence.... Nations however, have no clearly identifiable births, and their deaths, if they ever happen, are never natural. Because there is no Originator, the nation's biography cannot be written evangelically, 'down time', through a long procreative chain of begettings. (1994: 204-05)

During review of the filmed material, the other female subject, Ms. Varsani's account surfaced as interstitial — neither fully oppositional nor entirely coinciding with images

¹³¹For a detailed discussion see, Mishra, V. (2002) *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*. London: Routledge pp 235-269

on behalf of the temple. As a married woman implicated in the norms of the Swaminarayan familial framework, Ms. Varsani is in a more dominant position than the widow subject. She does not reflect any clear power dynamics as the men interviewees or the widow who occupy disparate ends of the power spectrum. Her interview is dotted with instances that assume significance when juxtaposed and contrasted with other interviews. Her account formulates into a necessary middle-ground of juxtapositions between herself and the community men first, and later between herself and the widow. This contained the film from setting up the men and women, through the widow subject, in totally oppositional binarisms.

6.2 Critical Juxtaposition

In *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, George Marcus and Michael J Fischer state that anthropological research in describing an ‘other’ — the subject, implicitly reflects upon the researcher, in terms of his/her cultural position. Marcus and Fischer, as discussed in the *Literature Review* to this thesis, call for a ‘modernist ethnography’ that reflects the dialogue between subject and researcher, ethnographic text and audience respectively. For this they propose the strategy of ‘defamiliarization’ through ‘cross-cultural juxtaposition.’¹³² (1999: 137) Marcus and Fischer’s propositions arise from their situation in the Western hemisphere. According to them, ethnography contributes as ‘cultural criticism’ by ‘locating alternatives’ to dominant western cultural regimes, pressing for cultural plurality and multiplicity. (1999: 137-138)

¹³² For a detailed discussion see *Literature Review*.

The scope of juxtaposition in my practice mobilises defamiliarization — disrupting common sense perceptions pertaining to the subject community; but its mechanisms are distinct from Marcus and Fischer’s propositions for juxtaposition as a means for suggesting cultural alternatives, plurality or multiplicity. The submitted practice juxtaposes voices, experiences, locales and material cultures, to suggest associations and arguments I have derived by analysing the community, and which cannot be directly mapped or recorded, only suggested and implied. Marcus and Fischer have themselves qualified that ‘juxtaposition of concepts or categories’ cannot be useful outside the particular social contexts in which they arise. (1999: 31) Hamid Naficy, drawing from their propositions has qualified that defamiliarization and juxtaposition as a critical practice in the ethnographies of accented filmmakers’ works arises from a distinct framework of cultural values, meanings and implications. He states:

Multiple sites, cultures, and time zones inform the feeling structures of exile and diaspora, and they pose the representation of simultaneity and multi-sitedness as challenges for the accented films. Citing Sergei M Eisenstein, George Marcus offered montage as a methodology that not only encodes multiple times and sites but also self-consciously problematizes the realist representation of the world. In the accented cinema, as in the multi-sited ethnography that Marcus describes, this is achieved by critical juxtapositions of multiple spaces, times, voices, narratives, and foci. (2001: 28)

Though I have used juxtaposition to structure and construct the practice, it does not involve the use of material through radical decontextualization to create shock as in some modernist art practices. Socio-cultural and historical formations and contexts are not subverted or abstracted; they are the basis for evaluating and deploying juxtapositions in the work.

The dramaturgy and structure for the film rely on fragments and incompleteness, forcing the viewer to receive and make connections. Fragmentation — selecting pertinent

elements rather than working with wholes, bears relevance within the context of montage practice as well as documenting ethnic subjectivities. With respect to the former, it was a key compositional method as emphasised by Eisenstein. Of the fragment he stated, it is a 'part representing the whole'¹³³, which activates the viewer into making connections. (Eisenstein 1958: 132) The notion of the part representing the whole is of significance to the experience of ethnicity that by its nature, and as revealed in the subject community, calls up disjunct spatialities and temporalities. According to Michael Fischer, 'transference', 'repetitions' and the 'return of the repressed in new forms' with distortions, are the 'mechanisms' through which ethnicity is necessarily generated. (Clifford & Marcus 1986: 207) Consequently mapping ethnic subjects, according to him involves a 'writing tactics of fragments', which invites the reader/viewer into deciphering meanings. (Clifford & Marcus 1986: 207)

A more poetic form of documentation arises that involves spatial and temporal complications experienced by the subject, and polyphony including multiple experiences. The subject's particular cultural practices, formations and activities are not explained by the documentarist as expert; and they are not constructed by extraction or decontextualization, or through native or ethnic valorisation of the subject as 'other' or 'alternative' — a tendency that characterises modern art with its primitivist occupations. Instead disparities and differences within the subject as also between the subject and the documentarist are preserved and deployed as analytical tools.

¹³³ Eisenstein derived the notion of fragmentation from modern literature including the works of Charles Dickens and James Joyce, as also through his study of haiku and Japanese painting. To explain fragmentation, he cites an example from *Potemkin*: 'The method consisted in substituting the whole (the surgeon) by a part (the pince-nez), which played his role, and it so happened, played it much more sensual-intensively than it could have been played even by the reappearance of the surgeon.' (Eisenstein 1958: 132)

Juxtaposition I — Voices in the community:

The aim for the first cut was to develop a structure for the film out of the material developed within the community. For this, sound-bytes from each interview were selected and edited into coherent, individual sequences. Viewing the interviews repeatedly, a multivocality surfaced that includes subtle linguistic, bodily and emotional gestures such as an intense emotional pause, members' broken English etc. V.N. Volosinov has asserted the value of multivocality thus:

Each speaker is multivocal, daily employing numerous intracultural "languages" of class, gender, occupation, religion. Further, this chorus of languages is not limited to the merely verbal, as verbal communication is "always accompanied by social acts of a nonverbal character (the performance of labour, the symbolic acts of a ritual, a ceremony, etc.)," and "is often only an accessory to these acts, merely carrying out an auxiliary role." (Grant & Sloniowski 1998: 95).

This multivocality, the implication of intricate social and cultural accents and gestures, lent a richness that complements the characters, and presses further their narratives. In the individual interview sequences, each character was emerging as a personal account — the historical and socio-cultural implications and meanings of their narratives still remained suppressed. To explore how these could be extrapolated and the voices from the community set up in dialogue with each other, it was decided to intercut and juxtapose the interviews.

The basis of intercutting was contrast in the content of the interviews. This facilitated a framework structure for the film¹³⁴. The film commences with exposition of information pertaining to the community and it steadily assumes occupation with

¹³⁴ In appendix 1, after the sequence breakdown, a listing of the sound-byte juxtapositions of the film is included. These juxtapositions are the basic framework structure of the film.

disparate voices. The film is steered by the voices of community members only. Interviews of three principal characters support the film's framework structure. As the film proceeds, there is a shift from the institutional to the marginal subjects, evoking power dynamics and world-views within the community. The film commences with the institutional voice of Mr. Patel who introduces the community, traces its migrations and locates the importance of the temple within it. In the sequence introducing the community Mr. Patel's sound-bytes are intercut with those of men folk who indicate the relevance of the temple¹³⁵. The community women's voices surface as the film proceeds. On occasions these are juxtaposed with Mr. Patel's voice, on occasions between themselves. Towards the end of the film the marginal widow subject is sustained. To mark the decisive shift towards the women subjects and the widow in particular, mid-way in the film is a brief sequence comprising communal women's singing of a folktale and its translation into English by a community youth. (00:12:15 — 00:13:41) The women's singing of a folktale contributes to the polyphonic structure as an indigenous mode of textuality. The community youth's parallel telling of the tale in English serves to translation and suggests the community's interstitial location involving traditional and modern, home- and host-land influences.



Community women sing a folk tale in a local dialect; a community youth translates it in English.

¹³⁵ In this sequence Mr. Patel's interview is intercut with brief sound bytes of men volunteering during construction activities at the temple. Mr. Patel's voice is distant and provides an overview of the community. It contrasts with the temple volunteers' interviews in which the subjects make personal references.

The middle section of the film involves exchange between Ms. Varsani's sound-bites that are first intercut with Mr. Patel's and then with the widow's¹³⁶.

Ms. Varsani's sound-bites function in contrast to those of other characters in the film. For example, her first sound-bite follows Mr. Patel's sharing how the community arrived from East Africa to Cardiff. This intercutting mobilises the contrast in the tones and modes of speech of the two characters: Mr. Patel's is an authoritative and distanced stance, Ms. Varsani's is a personal recollection, varying in delivery as she speaks more conversationally. Her next sound-bite recollecting a visit to the devastated temple site of Ayodhya, central India is in direct conflict with Mr. Patel's sound-bite. Ms. Varsani recounts marks of human blood on the temple walls in Ayodhya, which have witnessed violence and carnage after a spate of riotous conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in 1992. She remembers being 'frightened' in Ayodhya. This recollection is juxtaposed with Mr. Patel's sound-bite indicating how the Swaminarayan temple, Cardiff serves as a space of variegated socio-cultural activities that preserve Indian customs and aid members' assimilation into the host environment. Ms. Varsani's memory of Ayodhya contrasts and challenges the unified image of the ornate God at the temple in Cardiff. The Cardiff temple as a space of collectivity claimed by an institutional voice is contrasted with a personal testimonial surrounding another temple where the figure of 'God' is disputed¹³⁷. (00:06:58 — 00:08:59) The interaction between Ms. Varsani and the widow involves contrasting memories and experiences. The former's disclosures of her travels to

¹³⁶ In comparison with the widow, Ms. Varsani surfaces as occupying a less vulnerable position being married and financially more stable. However, being a woman whose existence revolves around work, maintaining her home and attending the temple, she occupies a relatively weaker position in comparison to Mr. Patel. She therefore occupies the middle-ground in the film.

¹³⁷ I have deliberately withheld identification of the space to which Ms. Varsani is referring because any disclosure would evoke immediate identification with the concerned place. Ayodhya pervades discussions around Hindu identity, particularly within the Hindu right-wing sections in India and abroad. It was considered that identification of the concerned place would have been determinist, depleting through localisation the intention of juxtaposition to reflect temples as spaces of both cultural practice as well as dispute and carnage.

India, aspirations for a home and fondness for shopping there, are juxtaposed with intimate recollections of the abject poverty and discrimination the widow encountered in rural Gujarat. This confronts the viewer with imaginations and experiences of India in terms of the present and the past¹³⁸.

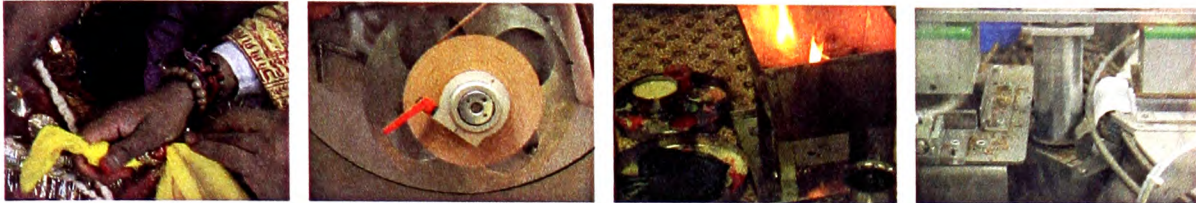
Juxtaposition II: Visual Design

Besides interviews, material filmed amidst the community included images of festivities, the cigar factory and Cardiff exteriors. Each event and location was first edited into a coherent sequence. Jump cuts and elliptical editing¹³⁹ were used to construct these sequences based on key moments. The submitted film progresses from set-up involving filmmaker and exposition pertaining to the community, and proceeds to the women's accounts culminating with the widow's narrative. Like the interviews, it was decided that visual sequences of different events and locations would be juxtaposed as well to create forceful and dramatic transitions that elicit contrasts between spaces and activities — the disparities the community negotiates. This would mobilise juxtaposition in terms of the meanings pertaining to the cultural context and experiences of the subject community. For instance, in the *Tulsi Vivaha* sequence, images from the cigar factory were injected as arresting precursors to the cigar factory sequence — the juxtaposition pertained to the

¹³⁸ This pertains specifically to the category of the Indian nation. For a detailed discussion surrounding the national category, wherein the 'present' is perceived in assertive terms competing with the past see, Chatterjea, P. 1986. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: a Derivative Discourse*. London: Zed for the United Nations University. In this Chatterjea plots the discourse of Indian nationalism identifying how aspects of the Indian history have been evoked in the modern era to construct an imagination pertaining to the Indian nation in affirmative terms. He discusses three moments within modern Indian history: the moderate phase of India's freedom struggle against the British during which Enlightenment reason and rationalism were stressed to challenge feudal and archaic thought patterns and social systems such as caste. The next moment is Mahatma Gandhi's resuscitation of ancient Indian and Hindu dictums for a non-violent struggle against the British. The third moment comprises Jawaharlal Nehru, independent India's first Prime Minister's, stress on modern technology for nation-building. Implicit in these three moments, according to Chatterjea, is a project for the building the nation in imaginary and affirmative terms.

¹³⁹ The former involves repetition of some or all of the action from the previous shot thus expanding the screen time for the action. The latter involves leaving out a portion of the action or event in the shot, thus reducing the time it would take in reality.

disparities between social practice (religion) and economic activity evoking the wider categories of tradition and modernity (00:09:01 — 00:10:51).



Intercutting between the imperatives of tradition and modernity

As editing advanced possibilities for juxtaposing image and sound, particularly with relation to the sound-bytes surfaced. These stressed the visual components of the film beyond their immediate references towards audio-visual montage that suggests meanings not directly available in the material. I have experimented with possibilities of contrapuntal and asynchronous sound emphasised by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov in their 1928 ‘Statement on Sound.’ Asynchronous sound as reflecting the ‘objective’ world has been employed to suggest perceptions and symbolic meanings¹⁴⁰.

The submitted film deploys three modalities for image and sound constructions.

1. Correspondence: This pertains largely to the early sequence of the film, introducing the community through voices of the men-folk. (00:01:57 — 00:04:03) Since this sequence exposit information pertaining to the community, juxtaposition is limited. It has been developed at the visual plane wherein images of prayer and communal gatherings at the temple are rhythmically juxtaposed with images of construction activities to metaphorically set the community up as a constructed category. Image and sound are in

¹⁴⁰ In a later article, elaborating asynchronism as a principle for film construction VI Pudovkin stated that; ‘It is possible for sound film to be made correspondent to the objective world and man’s perceptions of it together. The image may retain the tempo of the world, while the sound strip follows the changing rhythm of man’s perceptions. This is a simple and obvious form for counterpoint between sound and image.’ (Weis & Belton 1985: 88-89)

corresponding relations. Synch sound has been maintained in construction imagery while all other images are overlaid with corroborating sound-bytes. The synch-sound construction images provide moments of pause in the stream of information flowing through the sound-bytes. This sequence creates a visual register for the viewer to enter and gain identification with the temple space. The mode of correspondence persists later in the sequence about the history of the community in Cardiff. (00:05:23 — 00:06:57) Here images of communal cooking are used as metonymic stand-ins for the community's formation in Cardiff.



Images of correspondence

Other instances of direct correspondence between image and sound include some of the widow's and Ms. Varsani's sound-bytes. The first of these pertains to the widow attending the Jehovah's Witness church to 'study' the Bible in order to learn English. (00:13:42 — 00:14:56)



Frontal address accommodating varied emotions

This sound-byte involves no other visual input because the widow displays a spread of emotions, ranging from humour to a silent pause. The richness of this frontal address is the volatility of the widow's expressions. The frontality of address in this sound-byte assumes relevance in the context of 'prohibition' upon the private sphere and individuated characterisation within Indian popular cinema. (Vasudevan 2004: 4) Ravi Vasudevan deriving from Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Geeta Kapur's discussion of the frontal mode of address as constituting mythic iconicity states that: 'Frontal planes in cinematic composition are used to relay the work of iconic condensation and also to group characters and objects in the space of the tableau.' (2004: 4) My insistence on frontal address in the sound-bytes of the widow comprises a departure from popular uses of frontality as equated with mythic iconicity in popular Indian cinema. This departure operates at two levels — first, it counters the popular cinema's distancing of private spheres; and, second, in these instances the widow is farthest from any dominant or appropriated icon of the Indian mythic tradition. This amounts to a reformulation of the frontal mode of address in favour of the personal, emotional-volatile and transgressive as against the mythic that is utilised in favour of highlighting tradition.

2. Direct counterpoint: This pertains to sequences where images are in direct conflict and counterpoint to the content of the sound-bytes. The widow's account provided the maximum instances for counterpoint constructions. Her sound-byte narrating how her hair was shaved and ornaments taken away upon widowhood in India is combined with a visual sequence in which she is seen tying a sari, wearing gold jewellery and combing her hair. (00:15:28 — 00:17:58) The conflict here is between the social codes the widow shares through her voice and her violation of those codes seen through her actions

unfolding in the images. The widow's body is a central agent in this construction. Her voice communicates established social norm within the community and through that, the wider category of tradition. Her adornment of the body amounts to transgression of social norm and problematisation of tradition. The experience of the body in this sequence reflects a complex transaction whose implication can be appreciated using Deleuze's 'time image' as discussed by Laura Marks with relation to the films of diasporic, exilic and migrant subjects.

Within Deleuze's cinema philosophy there are two broad classifications of the image. The first, movement image, Deleuze relates to the classical Hollywood narrative in which the image involves causal action. Then there is the 'time image' that frees the depiction of time from causality¹⁴¹. (Marks 2000: 27) In *Cinema 2 — The Time-Image*, Deleuze elucidates that the time-image belongs to the post-war era, in the modernist cinema because there is no causal action in it. The time-image emphasises perception through: 'a stranded eyeball, powerless to draw upon resources of common sense.' (Marks 2000: 42) The transgressing body of the widow formulates a time image as it liberates perception from norm — the usual course of action; and confronts the viewer with a newness.

Not that the body thinks, but obstinate and stubborn, it forces us to think, and forces us to think what is concealed from thought, life. (Deleuze 1989: 189)

Another instance of counter-point with relation to the widow occurs in the sound-byte where she shares sexual propositions made towards her in return for favours such as feeding her family, upon widowhood in rural Gujarat. (00:20:31 — 00:21:19) This sequence involves images of people looking and gazing in different contexts, at locations

¹⁴¹ Deleuze relates the rise of the 'time image' after the Second World War because the link between the sensory-motor schema, at the heart of the action and movement images was broken-up. He states that after the war there has been a: 'rise of situations to which one can no longer react, of environments with which there are now only chance relations, of empty or disconnected any-space-whatevers replacing qualified extended space.' (1989: 261)

in India and at the temple in Cardiff. These images are followed by an image of the widow offering money to the idols of Gods after a communal ritual. This image arises at the instance in her sound-byte when she shares the sexual propositions made towards her. The counter-point here pertains to the abject poverty being shared in the sound-byte and her overcoming those conditions symbolically reflected in her action in the image.



Questioning looks and the widow offering money to the Gods at Tulsi Vivaha.

An earlier instance of counterpoint in the film occurs in the transition from the cigar factory to the widow's space. (00:10:52 — 00:12:13) Here two sound-bytes are juxtaposed. First, Mr. Patel comments that: '... the temple serves as a bridge that brings parents and children together...' A pause after Mr. Patel's remark is followed by the widow's sound-byte about her marriage as a child and her husband's departure to Dubai seeking employment. Mr. Patel's sound byte commences on the concluding shots of the cigar factory sequence and carries over onto an image of a girl child in the temple space. The widow's sound-byte commences on the concluding moments of the girl's image and leads into a sequence of images from a private space (the widow's) including photographs of family, and a woman's body working on a sewing machine.



Contextualising the girl child and entering the widow's space.

Mr. Patel's sound-byte over the image of the girl child in the temple space serves a corroborating function — the image is demonstrating the content of the sound-byte. Once the widow's sound-byte is injected over that image — sound and image are not in a directly corroborating relationship. The girl child in the image is roughly the same age as the widow when she was married, recollected on the soundtrack: 'I was thirteen years old when I got married...' As the widow shares her age of marriage there is awareness that the voice is sharing an experience of the past while the child is located near to the present. A temporal disjuncture occurs, through which the child, as a gendered subject, is contextualised in terms of the community's social norms. The detour through sound renders perception of the temple space exemplifying dialogue as asserted by Mr. Patel unstable. The verbal and visual divorce through the concealment of the widow in the following images distances her, preventing immediate identification between her body and her narration. This is a means to resist her account from being appropriated as a personal testimonial.

3. Thinness: While constructing the visual design surrounding the remainder sound-bytes, the possibilities of counterpoint between image and sound were not as direct as with the widow's sound-bytes discussed above. Reviewing the body of images, instances were identified when thin relations between image and sound could be developed. Thinness calls up Giles Deleuze's proposition of the 'time-image.' Thin images are characteristic

of the time-image cinema as they contrast with the movement-image cinema's use of cliché, commonsense images depicting causal actions. They do not provide easy or causal connections and provoke viewer engagement because they are: 'so thin and unclichéd that the viewer must bring his or her own resources of memory and imagination to complete them.' (Marks 2000: 163) Thin relations refer back to the surface quality of the image thereby instituting the experience of time as a pure quality. (1989: 260)

While working with the remainder material distant correspondences that would not serve direct corroboration — but associations of imagination, memories and comment were explored. These are not decontextualised or abstracted from the socio-cultural context of the subject community. Using thin relations between image and sound enabled in experimenting with material developed in defined contexts at the temple with relation to individual accounts — catapulting them beyond personal testimonials towards being matrices of socio-cultural and historical circumstance.

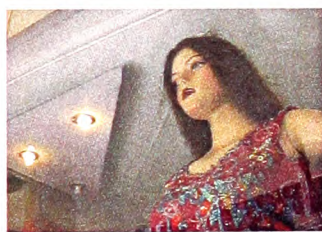
The juxtaposition of Mr. Patel's sound-byte about variegated socio-cultural activities at the temple with Ms. Varsani's recollection of her visit to the disputed temple site — Ayodhya, exterior images of Cardiff that build towards an occupation with football were used. (00:06:58 — 00:08:59) These images had been recorded after surveying members' responses in which they had identified football, the Millennium stadium, and the areas surrounding the river Taff and Cardiff Central station as enduring impressions of Cardiff. Evoking the community's impressions and associations, these exterior images constitute a distant association linked to the community, but that serves to subvert the temple institution without reinforcing it either in Mr. Patel's terms as a site for communal

support and activities, or in Ms. Varsani's terms involving memories of violence and bloodshed. Spatial identification is denied and the categories of religion and sport get confused.



Complicating the temple space through exterior associations.

While constructing the visual design for Ms. Varsani's sound-byte about her aspiration for a home in India, tight close-ups of Indian clothes and accessories were applied distantly indicating material aspirations. (00:17:59 — 00:19:32) These are a precursor to the following statement about her fondness for shopping in India.



Provoking a personal account to contextualise material aspirations underpinning it.

Similarly, while working with the widow's remaining sound-bytes, pertaining to the hardships she encountered when she came to live in Cardiff, the poverty in India and eventually the marriage settlements of her daughters (00:21:20 — 00:21:59), certain images distantly associated with her account are employed alongside directly corresponding and contrasting images. With respect to the first — hardships in Cardiff (00:04:04 — 00:05:22), the visual construct includes images of young girls from the Swaminarayan temple preparing decorations. The link here was their use of fine materials

and the delicacy in their bodily gestures that contrasts with the widow's account of tough physical work in metallurgical and glass factories, and at a laundry. At the second instance (00:19:33 — 00:20:30), images of pigeons at an exterior location outside the temple, a child playing with a toy in the crowded temple hall and a saint inhaling floral fragrances at a communal discourse are combined with the widow's recollections of the effects of abject poverty on her children in India; thus distantly evoking her experience — as symbol (the pigeons), as comment (the saint), and as memory (through the child).



Experiences of poverty evoked through images of contrast and desolation.

At the last instance (00:21:20 — 00:21:59), pertaining to the widow's sense of contentment upon settling her daughters in arrangements of marriage, two images of women walking and negotiating crowded spaces, the first in India and the second in Cardiff have been used — to imply a sense of resilience. These images and others including women subjects in varied locations imply the gender occupations of the practice. The purpose of this extension is to expose individual accounts as matrices of socio-historical construction outside the linearity and narrativity of subjects as individual agents.



Women subjects in varied locations standing-in and evoking the woman subject's accounts.

This method extends beyond occupation with variegated gendered subjects in the image to include spaces that through their desolation and implied temporality, parallel and metonymically standing in for subjective experiences.



Desolate spaces evoking the gendered subject.

Other moments in the film deploy images developed in varied contexts to evoke meanings that can only be felt or experienced, without bearing any direct correspondence with the film's narrative, in particular sound.



Instances without direct correspondence.

The design of the work including juxtaposition, asynchronous sound, and image-sound relations of correspondence, counterpoint and thinness, formulates the use of the camera in a 'constructive' function: interpreting its subject by breaking it down and reassembling it according to some external logic. (MacDougall 2006: 04) The external logic in the submitted practice is a critical stance towards the subject community, further than depiction of community life and more towards an intense distillation of specific instances from it. The critical stance arose in response to problematisation of the close-up and

fragmentary constructions that dominate the material for abstracting and subverting wider contexts of the community. While mobilising the sense of intimacy in those constructions, these constructions embedded the scope for cultural critique within the work to counter any likely, reductive nativist or primitivist connotations with respect to the subject community. This articulated my ‘strange distance’ of nearness and disparity — the former involving an interior command over the subject, and the latter provoking interrogation and critical analysis towards it.

6.3 Extending the work...

At the end of the first cut¹⁴², the eminent position of the widow and the tilt towards the two women subjects in the film, presented scope for furthering the argumentative occupations of the work beyond the precincts of the subject community. Pursuit of the subject community’s internal gender dynamics had been useful to gain a holistic and rounded portrait of the community and to further the work away from conventions of ethnographic documentation emphasising cultural representation and description. However, the film’s confinement to the community risked limitation of the work — it being read as an analytical ethnography about the subject community only. In my thought towards the work, I was now attempting to maintain the focus on the community and through that develop associations and critical juxtapositions that position engagement with the community as a wider intervention further than a positivist cultural mapping.

¹⁴² Screened at the Next Wave Festival of Youth Art, Melbourne, March 2006.

Upon screening the film as an installation in Melbourne I visited Delhi, where I learned about a site that is the village where Lord Krishna, the key deity worshipped by the subject community, is understood as having spent his childhood. Vrindavan is an ancient, holy destination on the banks of the river Yamuna, a tributary that feeds into the Ganga. Vrindavan invites, in huge numbers, Krishna devotees and new age spiritual followers from all across the world. Now a small-scale township, Vrindavan thrives on tourism. Apart from local residents who have links with the small scale economy of the area, Vrindavan houses *ashramas* and homes for the aged, orphans, and any other destitutes, including Hindu widows abandoned by their families from any part of India and the overseas Indian population.

The subject of the widows from Vrindavan ever so occasionally surfaces in television news media, to draw attention to these citizens who have been abandoned by family and have no welfare support from the state. The landscape of Vrindavan is dotted with *ashramas* for widows. Each morning and evening most widows gather on the banks of the Yamuna, singing and praying to Krishna collectively. Within the local community, a belief persists that since Krishna was married to 2500 wives, these widows find refuge in this — his home village.

I visited Vrindavan seeking correspondences and associations with the widow subject in Cardiff. I reached a small *ashrama* for widows from Bengal and Gujarat situated on the periphery of Vrindavan. Most widows at this *ashrama*, like the widow in Cardiff, had been conducted in the customs of child marriage, some having been widowed in childhood between the ages of 4-6 years. Some had been widowed in the massacre

following India's partition at independence. I received permission to film some images at this *ashrama*.



The widows of Vrindavan

As I approached the widows they stared at the camera. With some I developed eye contact. They gazed at me and at my actions. Some smiled. No one spoke to me. No words got exchanged. I was aware of the unlikelihood of any dialogue with these subjects because as I had navigated through this *ashrama*, I had gathered that the widows imbibe religio-spiritual discourses to comprehend and accept the workings of 'destiny'. A deeper engagement with them to extrapolate any socio-cultural fashionings that would allow in situating them as historically constructed subjects called for sustained contact that was not possible given the time-frame I was working within and further, that level of engagement was outside the scope of the present project.

It was clear that the images of the Vrindavan widows belonged near the sequence of the Cardiff widow sharing how her body was violated at widowhood. There was scope for juxtaposition and contrast. The principal disparity between the Cardiff widow and the Vrindavan widows is that in the former migration has served to gain mobility; the latter have not encountered that occasion. Their juxtaposition involves the contrast between voice and silence, transgression of norm through colour and an adherence to it through the uniformity of the Hindu widow's dress code — a white sari. After Vrindavan I also filmed on the outskirts of New Delhi. An engagement with space manifested strongly as I got drawn to crowded spaces and landscapes inscribed with markers of consumerist aspirations such as hoardings, consumer ware at markets etc. The sound-bytes of characters from the community, returned to me as I developed associations at local shops and farm lands¹⁴³.

As these images were injected into the edit, a subtle awareness emerged that they belong near to the present, while members' accounts in relation to which they are employed pertain to experiences situated in the past. Combining images from India rendered confusion within the work that is demanding on the viewer — as the momentary and fragmented detours to Indian landscapes do not always follow directly causal motivations. Further, the graphic quality and textures of images from both locations are disparate. Associations between past as recollections, and present as aspirations and imaginations; here and there, mobilise claims of the community's ethnoscape that involves fragments of memories and experiences belonging to multiple spatialities and temporalities. The viewer is stressed to decipher these through the montage construction.

¹⁴³ These images are haptic registers of the spaces through which the polarities of poverty and consumerist aspirations within the Indian context are suggested. For depth discussion of India's poverty spiral see, Frankel, F. R. 1978. *India's political Economy: 1947-1977*. New Delhi: OUP, & — 1989, *Dominance and State Power in India*. New Delhi: OUP)

6.4 Interventions:

a) Attending oppositions

During editing the motivations for the work decisively evolved towards a critical evocation of the community. The disparate voices and experiences I had pursued during filming, assumed a definitive position in the work. Juxtaposition was a principle strategy for constructing the film; it was mobilised as context-specific, involving analysis of the practices and experiences mapped during filming. Juxtaposing voices from within the community led to a primary structure for the film that is polyphonic — disassembling the ethnic category as a homogenous, discrete and bounded construct.

The polyphonic structure involving disparate voices in the film does not use different experiences and disparate world-views in clear and explicitly oppositional or conflicting relations. In this measure the work extends further than the strategies encountered in Shirin Neshat's practice that influenced by my early thoughts for the work. Shirin Neshat's exaggeration of gender distinctions nearly as binary oppositions has invited criticism for inadvertently perpetuating those very distinctions that it sets out to critique. Despite the uneven and asymmetrical equations, the experience of gender within the subject community is complex. My occupation with the internal dynamics of the subject community confronts complexities, rather than simplifies gender relations into oppositional equations. Neshat's artistic prerogative formulates as a reactionary spirit that informs visual design that is privileged over anthropological accuracy. The preoccupation of *Crossings in a Beautiful Time* has been with negotiations that are further than the

gender disparities within the community. Attending without reducing the disparities between men and women into oppositions bore an ethical imperative too. The work could not threaten the position of any subject from the community included in the work. Therefore all sections of the widow's interview in which she clearly indicts the Swaminarayan sect as discriminatory towards women, have been excluded from the film.

A further implication of the work's polyphonic structure is that film form surfaces as not prior but emergent from the ethnographic encounter between subject and researcher/filmmaker. Polyphony, according to Stephen Tyler: 'is a means of perspectival relativity and is not just an evasion of authorial responsibility or a guilty excess of democracy...' (Clifford & Marcus 1986: 127) Polyphony replaces monologic modes that privilege the observer as expert or the form of textuality as determinant, by dialogic modalities that involve the eliciting discourse between subject and researcher in the filmmaking context.

b) Framing the self

Conscious of the dynamics of my position, I had conceptualised including myself within the work. Evoking my presence in the work coincides with the increasing tendency in documentary for emphasising the body of the social actor that Bill Nichols holds as injecting: 'incompleteness, uncertainty, recollection and impression, images of personal worlds and their subjective construction.' (Renov 1993: 174) The subjective presence also evokes ethnography's emphasis on the process of representing knowledge about society, culture and individuals through the 'negotiations and intersubjectivities' of the ethnographic encounter. (Pink 2001: 18) Two sequences bracketing the film at the

start and end were devised for injecting the filmmaker-subject. These include images inspired and developed around Baroque statuary. The attempt had been to suggest the film's location through cultural implication of the filmmaker.

The material pertaining to Baroque assumed further significance as I engaged with the widow subject. Tracing her experiences in India, a parallel surfaced with my own expatriate status¹⁴⁴. While there is a necessary distinction between her and my subject positions in terms of class and socio-economic mobility; my status as expatriate intelligentsia critiquing dominant conventions of documentary practice I had been trained in, situate myself near to the widow as exemplifying a critical stance against established order¹⁴⁵. In both subjects, migration has been a means for gaining mobility and articulation unavailable in the context of the homeland.

Michael J Shapiro in his discussion of masculinity in the construction of the nation within cinema employs Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between smooth and striated spaces in relation to the state apparatus. According to Shapiro, the striated spaces: '...are heavily coded with normative boundaries such that movement within them always produces a tightly controlled ascription of identity to those who enter and traverse them.' (Shapiro 1999: 162) They prevent 'nomadism.' The 'smooth space', on the contrary: 'has no normative significance other than what is enacted by those who traverse it.' (Shapiro 1999: 162) The Baroque of the public architecture in Cardiff has festered in my imagination for its fluidity and transcendental quality. In the work, my access to a

¹⁴⁴I employ the term 'expatriate' because my migration to the UK is voluntary. To factor in the distinction between exile and expatriate status I employ Andrew Gurr's (1981) argument that exile, 'implies involuntary constraint', and expatriation, 'implies a voluntary act or state...' (Aschroft et al 1998: 92-94)

¹⁴⁵ The black sari in the opening and closing sequences of the film, within the Indian cultural context, indicates a sense of defiance. Black is a colour of protest within the Hindu tradition. Black outfits were worn by Marxist protestors and environmentalists protesting against India's nuclear tests in May 1998.

Baroque environment where I ‘pick up’ a camera as a gesture of voice, and my traversal of it rendered through superimposed close-ups of Baroque statuary comprises a nomadic and dionysic move away from striated spaces such as those occupied by myself in India prior to migration or those emphasised by the community from which the widow subject has digressed. Through editing a ‘smooth space’ in a tactile and sensual register is evoked that frames my occupations in the host location in inter-cultural terms¹⁴⁶. Laura Marks has observed that sensuality in an intercultural context comprises as a ‘reaction against patriarchy’ that necessarily dismisses sensuality. (Marks 2000: 118)



The Baroque frames the filmmakers' occupations in an intercultural, tactile and sensual register.

Though the Baroque sequences involve the thinnest link with the remainder of the film — this thinness stands in for my position of distance with relation to the community that has been the basis for dialogue with it involving our disparate world-views.

The ornate richness of the Baroque sequences reflects, ironically my subjectivity. I have been aware that these sequences provide sparse reflection of my socio-economic background. This was a deliberate decision for any direct definition of my subjectivity I

¹⁴⁶ Hamid Naficy holds that the experience of dislocation and journeying by its nature evokes tactility. ‘The exilic dislocation can be experienced simultaneously both at quotidian and profound and at corporeal and spiritual levels... some of the most poignant reminders of exile are non-visual and deeply rooted in everyday experiences, they tend to emphasize tactile sensibilities.’ He asserts that a ‘peripheral, distracted, tactile vision of the new location is replicated in the accented films’ ‘tactile optics’... Some filmmakers force the audience to experience the diegesis by means of texture of the film, video, and computer screens... Texture is suggested by emphasizing aromatic and sensual experiences...; by showing nature’s elemental forces...; or by inscribing extremely claustrophobic urban spaces... A thematic focus on journey, travelling, and nomadic wandering can also be a source of varying textures.’ (2001: 28-29)

considered would be determinist and incommensurate with my intellectual position that is not motivated solely by artistic expression, nor fully determined by social background.

The ideal of a “free-floating” intellectual above the fray was a formalistic illusion which should be discarded. At the same time, it would be equally wrong, to see the intellectual as entirely *verwurzelt*, rooted in his culture or class, as has *volkisch* and vulgar Marxist thinkers. Both extremes misconstrued subjectivity as either totally autonomous or totally contingent. Although definitely a part of his society, the researcher was not incapable of rising above it at time. (Jay 1973: 81).

The Baroque sequences echo an inter-cultural gesture, problematising my body by melding it with Western architecture and landscape that surfaces as a site for articulation and speech.

As I contemplated how the Baroque sequences might be better integrated in the film, both sequences got treated differently. The opening sequence locates my body as filmmaker in the Baroque environment. The closing sequence includes my body and other Cardiff exteriors. A pre-title image that precedes the Baroque sequences has been included at the start of the film to contain the risk of the Baroque sequences from being read as impulsive and purely subjective instances. This is an image of a woman subject at crossroads. It is the film’s first image and serves to suggest without determining the film’s occupations. (00:00:00 — 00:00:31)

Chapter 7

Conclusion

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

— **David MacDougall 2006: 06-07**

In this chapter, the implications arising from this research are discussed. These span three territories:

- (i) Conversations between Montage and Ethnography;
- (ii) Complication of rhetoric in the submitted practice; and,
- (iii) Problematisation of the notion of feminist aesthetics through the work.

By exploring these implications we can examine how the practice and the thesis eliciting its discourse augment understanding of montage practice and ethnicity.

In this research the understanding of montage practice has been extended on two grounds — first, montage emerges as a context-specific thought principle underpinning film construction rather than a form of editing with universally applicable techniques; and second, montage surfaces as an intercultural framework responsive to the specificities and particularities of socio-cultural and historical contexts. On these bases conventional definitions of montage and the universalism underpinning them is confronted. This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section includes a summary of the filmmaking process to remind the reader of how thinking has evolved during this research. The following three sections pertain each to the research implications indicated

above. The chapter concludes by outlining territories for future research that will utilise this work.

7.1 Summary

At the start of this research, the aim of the film practice was to emphasise the subject community's cultural specificity. This was perceived as a mechanism to confront the homogenising gesture overlooking socio-cultural disparities of ethnic subjectivities in the discourse of multiculturalism¹⁴⁷. My conversations with community members exploring associations and imaginations embedded in their ethnoscape, alongside valuations of their living styles were mechanisms to evoke the community's engagement in the film and indicate its distinction as an ethnic minority. Early visual and aural provocations brought me nearer to community members' experiences of migration and settlement in Cardiff. Displacement and emplacement, tradition and modernity surfaced as the terms of reference for montage construction. These furnished the montage technique of juxtaposition as specific with relation to cultural context.

As the work advanced my sense of closeness with the community got further formulated, and I interrogated its barriers — both physical as the one at the temple that segregates men and women; as well as a perceptual ones pertaining to world-views about the host location and its culture. The interrogations led the work beyond the dominant community members, i.e. male representatives and decision makers at the community temple. In the women subjects, Shanta Varsani and the widow, I encountered personal narratives and experiences that complicate the notion of the subject community as a

¹⁴⁷ See chapter 4, *Evocations: Mapping the Terrain in the Subject Community* for detailed critique of multiculturalism

unified and homogenous construct, as asserted by dominant community members.

Montage construction in my thought now involved juxtaposing voices and experiences from *within* the community. A polyphonic construct emerged that furthered the critique of multiculturalism in terms of its particular problematic that Anthony D Smith summarises in terms of the tendency for:

... reifying and essentialising cultures, ignore[ing] power differences between and within minorities, overemphasise[ing] the differences between cultures and privilege[ing] as 'authentic' the voices of the most unwesternised 'community representatives.' (Stone & Dennis 2003: 163)

Examining all the interviews from the community, the widow subject's account assumed particular relevance given her status within the community. In her account, a critique against the category of tradition as well as the nation, India, surfaced. This critique coincided with the works of Ritwik Ghatak and Shirin Neshat who both confront the nation by problematising tradition-bound, gender equations within their respective societies by employing montage practice. Their adaptations of montage practice advanced understanding of montage within a third world cultural context, further than the terms of reference in the Anglo-American scholarship on the practice. Montage emerged as a practice derived from and open to inter-cultural transactions — precedents of which can be traced in the thought of early figures such as Sergei Eisenstein and Aby Warburg, discussed in chapter 5.

During the editing of the submitted film, I balanced the needs for exposition and interrogation of the community. The former involved information about the community in terms of its history, location and formation to facilitate viewer engagement with the work. The interrogative stance was the basis for developing juxtapositions first, between

interviewed subjects, and then between visual and aural elements. This injected necessary complexity into understanding about the community. The research's outcome that montage is not a socially indifferent, purely formal practice; and that juxtaposition is context-specific, permeated the film's construction and formulated into approaches deployed while editing visual and aural elements. These in turn, parallel the complexity of the ethnic subject and advance understanding of it beyond notions of homogeneity and situation in simplistic power equations.

In the last stages of editing after all material pertaining to the subject community had been incorporated, some shots developed in India were included in the film. The images of the widows from Vrindavan made links with the work and extended the film's occupations outside the precincts of the community. The imagery from India constitutes momentary detours away from Cardiff provoking associations between spatialities and disjunct temporalities. In this way, the argumentative scope of the practice was furthered beyond the subject community; and engagement with it got extended beyond cultural representation towards an instance that reveals associations and correlations with categories for which the community serves as a register of similarities and disparities.

7.2 Research Implications

Montage and Ethnography — Conversations in documenting Culture

The work with montage in this research has involved integration of the ethnic subject's socio-cultural and historical dynamics with montage techniques, particularly juxtaposition. The submitted practice that deploys the implication of cultural imperatives in montage practice, alongside the visitations of montage in the thought of Eisenstein,

explicated at various instances in this thesis, disclose montage juxtaposition as context-specific rather than universal formalist. Montage emerges as anthropologically responsive, further than an editing or formalist technique — an aspect that is sparsely attended in pervasive scholarly understandings of the practice¹⁴⁸.

My engagement with montage during this research, practically and in scholarly terms mobilised ethnographic understandings that stress cultural specificity. With respect to the practice, ethnography structured my interactions with the subject community, and enabled gauging the meanings and significances embedded in members' occupations, imaginations and associations relating to their ethnoscape. It sensitised me to the internal dynamics of the community and my own position as evoked in the encounter with it. My position involving 'strange distance' from the community, formulated as the observer-participant role that confused the etic and emic perspectives. This influenced the resulting montage construction of the practice.

From my particular position I commanded necessary proximity for access to intricate aspects of community life including personal accounts; and a sense of distance alerting myself to the motivations behind variegated subjects participating in the practice. In the submitted practice this interplay of proximity and distance formulated into a polyphonic structure including instances of juxtaposition and association between disparate and contrasting accounts from the community. This polyphonic structure provides a distinct span of data that would not have been available through the inventory of conventional

¹⁴⁸ In this context, it is pertinent to remind that practitioners who have worked with montage emphasised it as an intervention into the perception of lived reality. Dziga Vertov pursued cine-truth within an anti-humanist context of the *kino-eye* being distinct from the human eye. Eisenstein's notions of conflict and attraction in montage emphasise the socio-historical context of the reality the filmmaker engages with. He states: '... Its [montage] value would depreciate when it uses arbitrarily chosen symbols applied to, rather than implied by the real.' (Aumont 1987: 149). This is significant because it situates Eisenstein's use of metaphors, visual puns and symbolisms, alongside the strategies of conflict and attraction as not arbitrary or decontextualised.

ethnographic or documentary filmmaking techniques for it includes occasions that coincide and collide with the ideal terms of representation asserted by dominant community members.

Combining both methods submits the discursive underpinnings of film practice away from a positivist stance towards extrapolation and articulation of possibilities for critique surrounding the subject. The montage construction of the submitted practice proximates Eisenstein's intellectual category in which conflict-juxtaposition is accompanied by 'intellectual affects' — generating viewer engagement through implied concepts and meanings. (Eisenstein 1958: 82) The submitted practice's montage departs from conventional appropriations say the rhythmic and metric categories that pervade mass media such as music videos and advertising wherein montage editing is a mechanism for visual stimulation. The intellectual imperative of the work through juxtaposition catapults documented accounts into a wider context wherein they emerge as matrices of socio-cultural and historical forces.

The interplay of dissenting and dominating positions from the community foregrounds conflicts, collisions and associations that comprise as complex instances wherein disparities are mobilised — not appropriated, reduced or undermined. The melange of voices in the practice serves a twin critical purpose — first, it confronts dominant world-views within the community. Nearing the complexities and negotiations of the ethnic subject further relates to montage's intercultural underpinnings. Through these montage calls up an alternative route to history in which cultures of the world are not bracketed as bounded or discrete categories in fixed power equations. Discussion around ethnicity is

advanced because the intercultural imperatives of montage that situate cultural categories outside power equations, imply them as historically constructed challenging notions of cultural innateness or essentialism. This critical imperative of montage coincides with ethnography's stress on culture 'not as an object-like reality'; rather constructed involving varied spatio-temporal impetuses. (Seale 1998: 219)

Second, the practice injects complexity into pervasive perceptions of ethnicity in a western landscape where a liberal pluralist discourse benevolently celebrates multiculturalism and difference, evasively reducing disparities in a homogenising gesture. Departing from causal spatio-temporal progression, the work ascribes agency to the ethnic subject, proximating its negotiations involving varied experiences, and the interplay of past and present, memory and desire, imaginations and associations as simultaneities. These rupture the notion of a homogenous and unitary experience of ethnic subjects.

The critical dimension of montage practice alluded to above bears implications within a third world arts discourse too. According to Geeta Kapur, modernism imposed on the colonised world through: 'selective modernization... transmits a specifically bourgeois ideology. With its more subtle hegemonic operations, it offers a universality while obviously imposing a eurocentric (imperialist) set of cultural criteria on the rest of the world.' (2000: 276) In light of this, third world arts practice tends instrumentalising and appropriating formal or abstraction modalities including native formulations not out of a reactionary mode against classicism or the established order as in the European modernist context, but to claim an internationalism, valorising and defending the native cultural

category. Montage practice on the other hand, claiming cultures as constructed immediately confronts and deconstructs the native cultural category. It counters ahistoricism and the evasion of social contradiction in the mobilisation of native/primitive or traditional categories thus critiquing dominant, third-worldist bourgeoisie ideology's assertion of tradition-bound civilizational supremacy in terms of innateness.

The scopic regime of nearness — resisting rhetoric

In order to contextualise the distinctions that characterise my use of montage, it is useful to extend discussion beyond the framework of conversations between montage and ethnography and attend my intellectual position informing the work. I have already suggested the implication of my particular position during filmmaking in terms of a 'strange distance.' This led to:

- (i) Polyphonic structure including disparate voices from the community.
- (ii) The film's design involving varied modalities for image and sound construction.
- (iii) Bracketing the film by sequences pertaining to the filmmaker.

Discursively, the work draws upon a crucial disparity between Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore's politics. Gandhi thoroughly indicted modernity, Tagore epitomised a spirit for intercultural synthesis. My appreciation for intercultural interaction qualifies my sense of distance from the community in terms of a disparity in world-views, further than any identity-based, spatial, cultural or linguistic distinctions.

This disparity does not lead to a valorisation of the ethnic subject. To claim this position, my presence in the work is composed as alternative to the community's in terms of its barriers towards western culture. It is formalised through the melding of my body with the Baroque¹⁴⁹. Intermeshed with this is a critical posture, denouncing the nation — that has been the basis for Ritwik Ghatak and Shirin Neshat's interventions. *Crossings in a Beautiful Time* corresponds with this stance as its polyphonic structure involves voices that challenge the categories of tradition and the nation. The epistemological implication of my work involves the framing of a scopic regime towards ethnic subjects. Its distinction can be accounted for in relation to the filmmaker/ intellectual's own dispositions that I now discuss. For this, I derive from Paul Willemen's commentary on interpretive strategies in 'framing relations with "other" socio-cultural networks.'¹⁵⁰ (Devereaux & Hillman 1995: 28) The strategies Willemen elaborates are derived from Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism, which Willemen revisits by excavating Bakhtin's lesser-known discussion of 'creative understanding.'

Using Bakhtin, Willemen proposes three possibilities — one, he terms 'projective identification' that involves projection of a: 'theoretical or interpretive framework elaborated for and within one cultural sphere onto the signifying practices of another cultural sphere.' (Devereaux & Hillman 1995: 28) Willemen cites the projection of early twentieth century Western novelistic criteria of psychological verisimilitude onto 1940s commercial Indian cinema as an example. The effort of such scholarship is to 'internationalise a restrictive regime of making sense.' (Devereaux & Hillman 1995: 28-

¹⁴⁹ Reflection of myself in the Baroque sequences involves a cultural implication, through dress code. Hamid Naficy has observed the subjective presence film/text-maker within the accented style is often in terms that exceed the film text. According to him injecting the author into the work, counters 'the prevalent postmodernist tendency, which either celebrates the death of the author or multiplies the authoring effect to the point of de-authoring the text.' (2001: 04)

¹⁵⁰ Though Willemen employs 'socio-cultural networks' in the broadest sense of the phrase, his own discussion relates to the intellectual modalities of Film Studies, pertaining specifically to questions of the nation within western and non-western countries

29) The second strategy, is ‘ventriloquist identification’ — the ‘obverse of projective identification.’ (Devereaux & Hillman 1995: 29)

In this the intellectual presents him/herself as the ‘mouthpiece for others’; ‘speaking from within that other social or cultural space.’ (Devereaux & Hillman 1995: 29)

Willemen states that there is a ‘fantasy play’ here on behalf of film scholars and filmmakers. This fantasy play, according to him, results from the ‘middle-class intellectual or entrepreneur’ feeling ‘traumatised by a privileged education and access to expensive communications technology’; feeling the compulsion to ‘abdicate from intellectual responsibilities and pretend to be a mere hollow vessel through whom the voice of the oppressed, the voice of the “other” people, resonates.’ (Devereaux & Hillman 1995: 29) This position finds parallel in the context of film-practice research around the representation of ethnicity that derives from Cultural and Media Studies’ criticisms of dominant and mainstream representations of ethnic subjects. On the basis of such critique filmmakers deploy strategies to confront ‘hegemonic’ representations of ethnic, or ‘other’ subjects that involve either deliberate reversal of stereotypes, or replacement by benevolently and rhetorically positive images of the ethnic subject. In such works, the maker is effaced and the subject surfaces as homogenous.

Willemen’s third category pertaining to Bakhtin’s notion of ‘creative understanding’ relates to my position in the work given its critical posture towards the subject community. The prime ingredient of this category is the deployment of distance and outsidership in documentation. To explicate the import of outsidership, Willemen quotes Bakhtin:

There exists a very strong, but one-sided and thus untrustworthy, idea that in order to better understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one's own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture [ventriloquist identification P. W.]... Of course... the possibility of seeing the world through its eyes is a necessary part of the process of understanding it; but if this were the only aspect... it would merely be duplication and would not entail anything new or enriching. *Creative understanding* does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture, and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important... to be *located outside* the object of creative understanding — in time, in space, in culture... In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding... We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones it did not raise for itself [this is worth stressing since it is almost always overlooked: film or video makers do not engage critically with, for instance, the community group they work with — P. W.]... Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and *open* totality, but they are mutually enriched. (Devereaux & Hillman 1995:30)

Distance and outsideness in my work resulted in interrogation and analysis manifesting as polyphony that disassembles the ethnic construct as homogenous or unified. The inclusion of disparate voices contrasts with the aims of reversing and countering stereotypes perpetuated by hegemonic representations. This contrast is not merely a difference in aims and approaches, but discourse. The basis of practice countering stereotypes is in effect a binarism between the hegemonic and the disadvantaged, or the oppressor/ oppressed. My work arises from an appreciation of interculturalism that holds cultures as constructed and conversational, outside equations of power. The intercultural and ethnographic imperatives in my work challenge the ethnic subject as unitarily afflicted by colonial oppression or hegemony.

Further, unlike the modalities of countering hegemonic representations through 'voicing the voiceless', pursuing perspectives/points-of-view of the lesser advantaged and promoting positive images through effacement of the text-maker; my work is bracketed by my presence in terms of an irreconcilable disparity in world-views contrasting with

those of the subject community¹⁵¹. The Baroque sequences that depict my body, are divorced from the remainder of the film pertaining to the community through their colour and compositional treatment.

I am not melded or fully embedded inside the community as its voice or mouthpiece, neither am I fully outside it. I cannot speak for or on behalf of the ethnic subject. I can speak from a position near the subject. My work attempts a holistic and rounded portrait mapping the disparities and complexities within the subject and those arising through the encounter with it. This is outside the rhetoric of marginality and closer to an intervention that brings near the experience of ethnicity, furthering thought and perceptions surrounding it. This nearness is not being insider or emulating the ethnic subject's point-of-view. It is strategising the interplay of proximity and distance that parallels the Deleuzian conception of the 'free indirect subjective', which Deleuze evokes in relation to Italian filmmaker, Pier Pao Pasolini's cinema.

For Deleuze Pasolini's camera: '... does not simply give us the vision of the character and of his world; it imposes another vision in which the first is transformed and reflected. This subdivision is what Pasolini calls free indirect subjective... it is a case of going beyond the subjective and the objective towards a Pure Form... It is a very special kind of cinema which has acquired a taste for 'making the camera felt.' (1986: 74) When Deleuze asserts 'Pure Form' it is not in the sense of formalism as in political modernism, or a radical negation of content. 'Pure Form' for Deleuze comprises a double articulation of subjectivities — that of the subjects within the frame and of those behind the lens. For

¹⁵¹ My presence in the work has been evoked elsewhere through references and gestures by community members towards the camera. Two images locating myself filming in the midst of the community are included in the film too.

this, he derives from Bakhtin's conceptions in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1973) stating that:

... there is not a simple combination of two fully-constituted subjects of enunciation, one of which would be reporter, the other reported. It is rather a case of an assemblage of enunciation, carrying out two inseparable acts of subjectivation simultaneously, one of which constitutes a character in the first person, and the other which is present at his birth and brings him to the scene. There is no mixture or average of two subjects... (1986: 73).

For Deleuze, double articulation involves a sense of 'being-with' that entails nearness.¹⁵²

Deleuze's notion of 'being-with' is derived from Jean Mitry's text, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma, II*. 'Being-with': ...it [the camera] no longer mingles with the character, nor is it outside: it is with him.' (1986: 72) This position of nearness finds parallel with Trinh T Minh-ha's anthropological films attempting complication of the disparity between 'observer' and 'observed'. It is indicated most succinctly in the opening to her 1982 film, *Reassemblage*, based on field research in Senegal. The voiceover to this film indicates the discourse of nearness thus:

Scarcely twenty years were enough to make two billion people define themselves as underdeveloped. I do not intend to speak about. Just speak near by. (Minh-ha 1992: 96)

While developing the film practice, I have not looked at subjects and events from a sustained distance. I have not attempted to reverse that position and visualise subjects' points of views. The position of the camera has involved nearness that allows scope for critical engagement with the subject community and extension beyond its precincts because nearness does not imply limitation within the bounds of a given subject. It deploys proximity to plot lines of association.

¹⁵² 'Being-with' is an attribute of Deleuze's 'perception-image.' As the term indicates, the perception image pertains to perception. Deleuze discusses the perception image as being distinct from the 'nominal definition of "subjective" and "objective"'. He holds the perception-image as being 'semi-subjective', in which camera-consciousness assumes a formal determination. (1986: 76)

The widow subject became the occasion for a spatial movement and a temporal complication that materialised through the injection of the Vrindavan widows. Tight close-ups of the Vrindavan widows intercut with the sequence in which the widow from the community shares the violations pertaining to her body, indicate the free indirect subjective in terms of associations in the work and serve to limit the account of the widow in Cardiff to a socio-historically relevant register. She surfaces as a subject in transgression, but her transgression is contained from celebration or glorification — a rhetoric of gendered oppositionality or marginality.



Containing the widow subject's transgression from glorification and rhetorical celebration.

As a mode of speech, rhetoric most centrally involves ‘persuasion.’ (Simons 1989: 02) Herbert Simons, while locating scholarly occupation with rhetoric in light of the rising ‘dissatisfaction with objectivist credos’ characterising contemporary human sciences, qualifies that ‘rhetoric is a pragmatic art’ that mobilises the ‘resources of ambiguity in language.’ (Simons 1989: 03) While montage using metaphors, visual puns and metonymies is often considered as a polemical practice, through the mode of thinness in the work, I have attempted containing any instances that may tilt the work to persuade some arguments rhetorically over others. At an immediate survey of the practice, engagement with the widow subject, privileging of women’s voices, and plucking and recontextualising material to suggest competing, axially opposing meanings constitutes a

‘violence’ against the established order within the community and may therefore act as reactionary-rhetorical. However, selecting and editing interviews to socially and historically relevant instances, as well as the visual and aural divorce for constructing sound-bytes and dramaturgy in the film, has been a mechanism for containing any accounts or aspects of community life from overdetermining the meanings arising from the work, suggesting arguments rather than deploying them for persuasion.

The work confronts rhetoric at the level of form too. It does not have one modality for image and sound construction, or a sustained commitment to contrast or counterpoint only for juxtaposition. As discussed in chapter 6, image and sound relations are broadly classified into three categories: correspondence, direct counterpoint and thinness. The effect of this is that neither form nor content assumes precedence or determination in the work. The context of the engagement with the community informs the deployment of formal strategies in the work. This implies resistance to essentialising montage in any formal terms. I have already alluded to the problematic of emphasising montage as a formalist practice equated with modernism in opposition to realism, in chapters 3 and 5. The will to science, instrumentalising discourse as form with internal coherence and adequacy is a simplistic and totalising stance overlooking the implication of socio-cultural and historical contexts in practice. Film form and content in this research emerge as contingent upon the context of the documentation encounter. My resistance to appropriating juxtaposition as a consistent and coherent aesthetic strategy implies resistance to appropriation of form as an aesthetic — thus countering the persuasiveness underpinning rhetoric of form.

Subjectivity

While the construction strategies deployed in the film attempt to contain its narratives from slipping into rhetoric, the weightage to the subject of gender in the work necessitates further deliberation to qualify the imperatives behind this occupation. In common parlance, representations of women conjure criticisms of objectification through the workings of dominant, patriarchal conventions such as the male gaze or the embodiment of female voice. In the backdrop of interventions by feminist scholars such as Laura Mulvey (1993), E. Ann Kaplan (1998) and Mary Ann Doane (1991, 1992), interest in questions of ethnic and minority women's representations has increasingly assumed significance in scholarly discussion.

Studying the black female spectator, Bell Hooks calls for an 'oppositional gaze' that involves: 'the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating "awareness" [that] politicizes "looking" relations.' (Jones 2003: 95) Hooks, like Stuart Hall, calls for a 'critical practice' that restores 'presence where it is negated', that is the stereotypically 'degrading and dehumanizing' representations of black peoples in dominant cinema. (Jones 2003: 95) Similarly Pratibha Parmar traces dominant racist ideologies prior to and after colonialism as informing representations of Asian women. She identifies two problematics in the representation of Asian women — sparse visibility and stereotyping. According to her, the Asian woman's femininity is: 'contradictorily constructed for all women: they are both mothers who service husbands and children, and also desirable sexual objects for men... on the one hand sexually erotic creatures, full of Eastern promise, and on the other completely dominated by their men, mute and

oppressed wives and mothers...' (Jones 2003: 290) To counter these tendencies, Parmar calls up for creative representations from within that involve images: 'that are based both in our material and social conditions and in our visions and imaginations.' (Jones 2003: 293) The emphases on an 'oppositional gaze' (Hooks) or assumption of control over one's own images (Parmar) are reminiscent of the reversal and counter-strategies within the overarching framework of black and minority ethnic representations in dominant and mainstream cinema that I have critiqued for their pre-determination of power equations.

My decision to work with ethnic minority subjects, as indicated in the introduction to this thesis, was rooted in my critique of mainstream media representations of ethnicity not for perpetuating stereotypes, but for evading the complexities embedded in the construction and experiences of ethnic subjects. This distinction percolates my filmmaking, distinguishing its aims and approaches. My engagement with the ethnic subject including gender categories is not within the framework of countering stereotypes. My motivation is within the context of engaging with subjects absented from the wider project of history and documentation: approaching them beyond a gesture for claiming visibility. It is in terms of reflecting and critically mapping the complexity embedded in ethnic subjectivities by reducing undue emphasis on them as being homogenously in equations of disadvantage, or in any ahistorical and essentialist terms.

In this sense the work assumes a modern political dimension as elucidated by Deleuze. Deleuze holds that: 'If there were a modern political cinema, it would be on this basis that the people no longer exist, or not yet.' (1989: 216) While pre-war political cinema, according to Deleuze, was formulated with a belief in the masses; in the post-war era that

confidence has faded and now the political imperative is in seeking those struggles and subjects whose 'existence is denied' in history. (Marks 2000: 55) Peripheral subjects such as community women and widows are absented not simply from media, but the wider project of history. Their abstention is not the outcome of the failings of one institution in terms of media biases or stereotypes, but it is within a wider context of the variegated institutions and discourses that permeate the fabric of everyday life provoking the impossibility of speech and declining the claims of those subjects, in whom the movements of history and transactions of cultures are performed.

Post-colonial critic, Gayatri Spivak in her seminal essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, questions the possibility of speech for a subaltern subject whose narrative is drafted not by him or herself. She derives from Subaltern Studies scholar, Ranajit Guha's assertion that: 'The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism — colonialist elitism and bourgeoisie-nationalist elitism...' (Ashcroft et al 1997: 25) In historiography around the subaltern this elitism manifests in the foregrounding of insurgent instances as an attempt for ascribing agency. *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, queries whether the 'elaborations of insurgency stand in for 'the utterance' of speech. (Ashcroft et al 1997: 27)

This problematic is at the heart of the Cardiff widow subject included in the film. As indicated in the earlier section, including the Vrindavan widows contains and complicates the Cardiff widow's claims of transgression and violation of social norm. Through this the work's occupation with women becomes a strategy that brings to focus the question gender that is nearly forbidden within the subject community, but not in ahistorically

essentialist, or politically urgent or insurgent terms. The transgressions and memories linked with the widow subject and the aspirations of Ms. Varsani, inscribe the movements between home and host-land as provoking their experiences and constructions — thus countering any claim of innateness to their subjectivities. The emphasis on gender, in keeping with Spivak's discussion, is not descriptive. Rather through fragmentation, selection and juxtaposition, which deplete realism in favour of argument in the construction; gender occupation of the work serves a critical function that complements the complexity of the subject community. The work does not place gender in oppositional terms only. The occupation with gender is first, not a reactionary feminist politics that overlooks gender disparation and contradiction by overplaying transgressive claims, and second, it does not involve aestheticisation of that occupation through cinematic coda.

The scopic regime of the work involving the practice of nearness proximates the women subjects' positions but does not posit them in the film to attack or react explicitly against any patriarchal institutions. The women's inclusion in the film is in terms of the disparities in their world-views. After the folk-take sequence, the film is steered through the sound-bytes of the two women subjects. These are posited through successive juxtapositions explicating contrast and suggesting a kind of dialogue between them. At first, the widow describes her association with the Jehovah's Witnesses to learn English. Then Ms. Varsani shares her aspiration for living in India. The contrast here pertains to the former subjects' desire for amalgamation within the host location and the latter subjects' aspirations for the homeland. This sound-byte is then juxtaposed with the montage about the violation of the widow's body that includes the Vrindavan widows.

The contrast is subtle here — Ms. Varsani gestures the advantage in her position as a secure married woman. The widow's position is more precarious. After the widow's montage we return to Ms. Varsani who shares aspects of her new home being built in India and her fondness for shopping there. This sound-byte gestures towards materialist occupations and is juxtaposed with the widow's recollection of abject poverty in Gujarat. This interplay between the two womens' voices deploys the contrasts between their position — the widow in a more marginalised position than Ms. Varsani. Through these disparities the women's experiences get suggested as not homogenous, or situated in equations of disadvantage or uniformly in reaction against patriarchy.

On instances when sound-bytes are in asynchronous relations with images, female voice is disembodied. Within the critique and attempt at a feminist aesthetics in the cinema, Debbie Ging has observed that: 'disembodying' the female voice serves as a means to: 'subvert the conventional sound/image relationship and thus restore the female voice as potent, authoritative and removed from the passive, voiceless and sexual function which it is assigned in classical cinema.' (Quigley & Dunne 2004: 82) However, there are instances in *Crossings in a Beautiful Time* when image and sound are in synchrony for the construction derives from the performative gestures of the subjects.

The work's varied composition strategies and sound/image equations resist a homogenous or consistent aesthetic, and concretisation of feminism in aesthetic terms, say the political modernist deconstructive strategies within sections of the British and American avant-garde that feminist filmmakers value for their reversal of dominant and

institutional modes of representation as a reactionary feminist project.¹⁵³ (Quigley & Dunne 2004: 74-77) My resistance to concretising a feminist aesthetic is because of the uneven implication of the women subjects I encountered with dominant, patriarchal discourses. This renders inconsistent the pursuit of a coherent aesthetic strategy relating to gender as a homogenous construct. What is richer for my purposes is that women subjects of the film are not homogenous and can themselves be positioned in juxtaposing equations. Secondly, the very instrumentalisation of a feminist discourse into an aesthetics is problematic, and to elucidate this I return to Paul Willemen's arguments pertaining to the deconstructive and counter-cinema strategies of political modernism shared in chapter 3. Willemen asserts that any critique of 'dominant forms of signification' is problematic when converted into a prescriptive aesthetics because:

The difference between the politics of deconstruction and the aesthetics of deconstruction is that the former insists on the need to oppose particular institutionally dominant regimes of making particular kinds of sense, excluding or marginalising others. The latter, an aesthetics of deconstruction proceeds from the traumatic discovery that language is not a homogenous, self-sufficient system. (Pines & Willemen 1994: 07)

Aestheticisation of a political imperative forecloses political confrontation by assuming the coherent aesthetic to stand in for politics. This is ineffectual not only because it overrides disparities but because it is not so much a consistent aesthetic that invigorates struggle, as much as a construction that confronts and sustains argument. In a forthcoming interview with the author, Kumar Shahani addresses this aspect of aestheticisation. Shahani refers to the spiritual imperative, but his argument can be applied to instrumentalisation of any motivation or impulse for art or the cinema. He states:

¹⁵³ See Noel Burch 1990: 270-273, for a detailed discussion.

So many of our films that are instrumentalised, mass communication, good-causes, moral films, especially those made by people with some background in advertising aesthetics, have tended to concretise the spiritual impulse. As if the spiritual is a thing, an event, and they do it in such a manner that there one also experiences some identification with that aspect. This is fetishism. I believe that all these commodified spiritual ideas are consumed and purged almost immediately.¹⁵⁴ (Sharma forthcoming)

Geraldine Finn's argument in *The Politics of Spirituality and the Spirituality of Politics* furthers Kumar's criticisms. Her address is directed towards the notion of an 'alternative' political practice that she critiques stating: 'radical politics tend towards the same kind of political positivities and 'final solutions' as the conservative regimes they purport to resist, transform, subvert or replace, with their categorical assertions of competing imperatives, identities and ends.' (Berry & Wernick 1992: 114) The question of gender that arose in my work responds to the context of the ethnographic engagement and pursuit of absented subjects through it. The negation of reaction as an aesthetic category relates to the question of subjective agency within the work — not in terms of asserting some agent positions in favour of others, rather preserving their disparities to further complexity and through that complicate any simplistic binarisms that can be appropriated politically either in terms of being favourable or reactionary.

7.3 Future Work

As this project concludes, I am interested in further pursuing film practice around ethnic communities to unpack their historical constructions, and through that evoking their complexities in public discourse. I am presently in discussion to develop practice based on my Bachelor's dissertation research about ethnic conflict in India's north-eastern state, Assam. For this project, I seek to engage with Assamese natives in the

¹⁵⁴ See appendix 6 for excerpts of forthcoming interview with Kumar Shahani.

hinterland areas of the region to map the exigencies of neglect, ethnic and cultural strife, and insurgency, intermeshed with their lives.

With respect to my scholarly writing, I am drawn to further my engagement with Deleuze's philosophy of the cinema that surfaces as particularly valuable in articulating the motivations and scope of minority filmmaking. Deleuze emphasises the role of memory in the constitution of ethnic and minority subjects, an aspect that arose crucially in the process of making *Crossings in a Beautiful Time*. Of memory Deleuze says it is: 'the strange faculty that puts to immediate contact the inside and the outside, the people's business and private business.' (1989: 221) Laura Marks deriving from Deleuze holds that the mobilisation of memory and, in effect experience, sets up confrontation between the 'public' and the 'private.' (2000: 50)

This confrontation is seldom pursued in documentations pertaining to minority cultures and subcultures particularly in the third world, as has already been alluded in subaltern scholarship and studies of third cinema. Memory and experience necessarily contrast with official versions of history that neatly package past for the present, emphasising national and civilizational legacies, and knowledges presumed as undermined by the colonial interface. The intervention of experience and memory in documentation ruptures the neatness of official, unilinear and causal historicisations. My future scholarly writing¹⁵⁵, pertaining particularly to my practice, will be engaged with such problematisations.

¹⁵⁵ See my forthcoming chapter, *The Line of Control through the Documentary lens*; in Bharat, M. & Kumar, N. 2006 *Filming the Line of Control: Representations of the Indo-Pak conflict in cinema*. Maryland: Lexington Press. In this I closely analyse an ethnographic documentary film, *My Brother. My Enemy* by using Deleuze's notion of 'being with' and 'nearness' to posit that the Indo-Pak strategic hostilities fizzle at a people-to-people level, especially in the generations after India's partition, such as mine.

Outside practice, I am drawn to pursue through research, how cinema problematises received and pervasive understandings of colonialism, particularly in cultural terms. A strain of this trajectory of engagement has already surfaced and included in this thesis through my discussion of montage practice in intercultural terms, calling up an alternative approach to intellectual and cultural history, wherein cultures stand as competing and conversational. In future work I seek to further research and extrapolate documentary cinema — archival and contemporary, to determine how colonial categorisations get complicated through cultural practice. My aim will be not to negate or undermine the complex socio-economic implications of colonialism, but to resuscitate understanding of a movement such as colonialism away from totalising and simplistic binary oppositions pertaining to power equations.

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Appendix 1: Sequence Breakdown of *Crossings in a Beautiful Time*

S.No.	SCENE	THEME	DURATION	COMMENT
I	Opening of the film.	Titles and poetic image of a woman on crossroads in urban Indian location, suggesting occupation with gender in the film.	00:00:00 — 00:00:31	Up-sound location synch sound on black — Graphic plate: ‘a film by aparna sharma’ — Slow motion poetic image suggesting the woman subject — Graphic plate: ‘crossings in a beautiful time’. As the poetic image of the woman subject fades to black up-sound: flute. See discussion about poetic image in chapter 6, pp: 133.
II	Baroque Statuary I.	Setting up the film through reflection on the filmmaker subjectively. She lifts camera as a gesture of voice and navigates a smooth space comprising Baroque statuary.	00:00:32 — 00:01:56	Filmmaker enters frame, lifts the camera as a gesture of voice and navigates a smooth space. This sequence develops through superimposition editing and utilises colour contrast in composition. As the Baroque sequence concludes the flute starts to fade and up-sound of drums from a communal event. See discussion in chapter 6, pp: 130-133.
III	Temple Introduction.	The community and the temple space are introduced through traditional/religious and construction activities. The sequence deploys the contrast of the temple in its ornate richness during festive occasions and during construction.	00:01:57 — 00:04:03	The community is introduced through a procession approaching the camera during <i>Tulsi Vivaha</i> . Flute fades out. After establishing images of the key Gods and the communal atmosphere, sounds of the drums fade to silence. Up-sound of construction images. Thereafter the sequence involves images establishing the temple space, intercut

IV	<p>Sequence introducing the first woman subject from the community through sound — the widow.</p>	<p>Woman subject from the community is introduced through sound. There is no direct visual exposition. This sequence contrasts with the earlier introducing the temple as it is steered by a woman's voice sharing a personal narrative.</p>	<p>00:04:04 — 00:05:22</p>	<p>with images of construction activities at the temple. This is to reflect the temple space holistically. The images establishing the temple space are from festivals and communal gatherings. These are edited in correspondence with the sound-bytes of three males subjects: Mr. Patel who introduces the temple and its relevance in the western world, and two youth who explain the importance of the temple for them and the activities performed there. The construction images are on synch sound to register the activity texturally. The sequence deploys the ornate richness of traditional activities and ritual objects in the temple that contrast with the limited colour tones, rawness and breakage of construction activities. See discussion of correspondence between image and sound in chapter 6, pp: 116-117.</p>
				<p>This sequence is the first time a woman subject is heard in the film. She shares aspects of a personal experience. Image and sound are in thin relations. A pan across an empty temple courtyard during construction opens the sequence, evoking the woman's voice in a desolate space. Images of girls preparing temple decorations with delicate materials</p>

				<p>follow, providing counterpoint to the widow's sound-byte where she shares lifting heavy pieces of glass while working in a glass factory. In this sequence two images of a farmer woman have been overlaid through slow fade-in and fade-out. This is to create a sense of reminiscence making association with the widow subject in terms of her status as a farm labour in India before migration. See discussion about thinness in chapter 6, pp: 123.</p>
V	Community History.	Background information about the origins of the Gujarati community in Cardiff.	00:05:23 — 00:06:57	<p>In this sequence background information of the community's origins and migration from East Africa to Cardiff is provided through Mr. Patel's sound-byte. The images employed include cooking activities in the temple kitchen and food displayed in the temple sanctum. All cooking images are handheld. The two display images are static. These images of cooking and making have been used metonymically to stand in the emergence and formation of the community in Cardiff. The two display images pertain to the community's attempt at displaying and exhibiting its cultural distinctions from other minority communities. The image and sound are in relationship of thinness. Mr. Patel's sound-byte and the cooking sequence are followed by the</p>

				<p>introduction of Ms. Varsani, seen preparing a pizza in her kitchen. In her sound-byte reveals how she came to live in Cardiff. The cut from Mr. Patel's sound-byte to Ms. Varsani's involves the contrast between a distant/ authoritative voice and a more personal one employing broken English. This sequence also marks transition from the temple to a domestic space. See discussion in chapter 6, pp: 116.</p>
VI	Disputing the temple space.	The image of the temple as a space of worship and socio-cultural activities is disputed by a recollection of a temple space marked by violence and carnage.	00:06:58 — 00:08:59	<p>The sound construction of this sequence involves juxtaposition of Mr. Patel's sound-byte with Ms. Varsani's. The former explains how the temple in Cardiff was developed and has formed as space for worship and socio-cultural activities such as sports, youth activities, religious education, women's classes, language classes etc. This is followed by Ms. Varsani's personal recollection of visiting a devastated temple site in India. This juxtaposition serves to dispute the institution of the temple as a place of worship only. The image and sound construction for this sequence involves thinness. All images are exterior and pertain to the themes of football at the Millennium stadium. They were developed in response to the survey questionnaire distributed among the</p>

				community seeking lasting visual impressions from Cardiff. These exterior images develop an occupation with football and through this the sequence critically suggests religion and sport as equated. See discussion in chapter 6, pp: 121-122.
IX	Wedding and factory montage.	The juxtaposition of tradition and modernity through female subjects: Goddess Tulsi and Ms. Varsani.	00:09:01 — 00:10:51	<i>Tulsi Vivaha</i> intercut with the cigar factory involving juxtaposition between the categories of tradition and modernity. The insertion of cigar factory images into the wedding also serves as a lead-in to Ms. Varsani's sound-byte pertaining to the necessity for working in a cigar factory despite its risks. Besides tradition and modernity, this sequence bears an occupation with the female subject — in the traditional category she is Goddess Tulsi being wedded to Krishna; and in the contemporary, modern category she is Ms. Varsani, working to earn a living. While editing Ms. Varsani's sound-byte, the image construction aimed at placing her body as surrounded by machinery. See discussion chapter 6, pp: 114—115.
X	Exit from the factory to the widow subject.	Juxtaposition between Mr. Patel and the widow's sound-byte to suggest the ideal and actual status of the woman subject. This sequence also serves to introduce the widow's narrative.	00:10:52 — 00:12:13	The sound juxtaposition in this sequence involves Mr. Patel's and the widow's sound-bytes. The former sets-up the temple as a space for dialogue between parents and children on the subject of religion. The latter involves recollection

of her implication in the institution of child marriage implying the status of women in Hindu religion. Mr. Patel's sound-byte commences on the concluding images of the cigar factory and spills into an image of a girl child in the temple space playing with a white doll. A pause after Mr. Patel's sound-byte on this image, the widow's sound-byte follows with reference to child marriage. Through this the girl child in the image is contextualised within the social construct of the community. There is awareness this image belongs to the present while the widow's sound-byte is referring to the past — this serves to suggest the implication of the past with the present. Thereafter images pertain to the widow's space including family photographs and her working on a sewing machine. Her body is not directly or fully confronted in these images as the sequence attempts to locate voice with relation to space. Once we enter the widow's space her sound-byte functions to introduce her personal narrative concluding about her husband's departure to Dubai seeking employment. This sequence includes two images from the footage of the Vrindavan widows. In one, two widows are seen, one pouring

				<p>water on the other's forehead. The second is an image of the hands of two widows stitching a piece of cloth. These images are poetic gestures to suggest fellowship among women. As the sequence concludes there is up-sound of the women singing in a local dialect. See discussion in chapter 6, pp: 119-120.</p>
XII	A folk tale.	A folk tale central to the community's belief patterns about a devoted wife's urge to God to bring her dead husband back to life. This sequence marks the transition of the film towards its occupation with personal accounts of the women subjects.	00:12:15 — 00:13:41	<p>Tight close-ups of community women signing in a local dialect intercut with a community youth reciting a folk tale about devoted wife who worshipped her husband and prayed to God to bring him back to life after his untimely death. This sequence involves an indigenous form of text through distinct modalities of delivery: communal singing in a local dialect and its translation in English. The sequence occurs in the middle of the film after which there is a decided tilt towards the women subjects. It serves an iconic function with respect to the woman subject as it refers to the feminine icon of the community and marks point of the film after which the two women characters, both symbolising aspects of the feminine, get situated in dialogue. Ms. Varsani evokes the notion of the ideal married householder. The widow evokes the feminine icon's aspect of resilience. A male subject volunteered to</p>

				<p>translate this tale in English. It was considered that including his voice would complement the complexity of the film that attempts not to reduce gender relations within the community into an oppositional equation only. The sequence closes with two images of sites under construction — their desolateness parallels the accounts of the women subject, particularly the widow. See discussion in chapter 6: 113</p>
XIII	Jehovah's Witness	Complicating the widow subject.	00:13:42 — 00:14:56	<p>In a frontal address to camera the widow narrates how she first went to a local school to study English. She then narrates how she had to abandon education in view of the necessities for supporting her family. Now she is retired and attends the Jehovah's Witness church to study the Bible as a means to learn English. Even though the widow qualifies that her engagement with the Jehovah's Witnesses is to learn English, this sound-byte gestures towards how institutional Hindu religion's ostracisation of lower caste and women subjects has compelled religious conversion, through Indian history: Islam in the medieval era, and Christianity in modern times. This is the only sound-byte of the widow that has been used without the intervention of any other images. She displays a volatility of</p>

				emotion ranging from quietude on recollecting her past and amusement at developing a friendly rapport with the Jehovah's witness volunteer who teaches her English. See discussion in chapter 6, pp: 116-117.
XV	Ms. Varsani's aspirations for living in India.	Imaginations and aspirations for the homeland.	00:14:57 — 00:15:27	Ms. Varsani shares her aspirations for living in India and developing an arrangement whereby she will spend six months there and six months in Cardiff. This sound-byte presents the oscillatory dynamic involving negotiation between and desire for the home and host-lands — the constant moving back and forth. See discussion in chapter 6, pp: 121-125.
XVI	Montage about violation of the widow's body.	Juxtaposition between image and sound to reflect transgression. Intercutting with Vrindavan widows to contain transgression from slipping into rhetoric of gender oppositionality.	00:15:28 — 00:17:58	Direct counterpoint between image and sound — the widow recollects how her body was violated (hair shaved, jewellery removed) upon widowhood. In the visual cut we see tight close-ups of the widow's body as she dresses up. The images depict the violation of those codes that the widow is sharing in her sound-byte. The sequence also involves intercutting between the widow in Cardiff and the Vrindavan widows who adhere to the codes the widow is sharing. This intercutting attempts that the audience will decipher associations between host and homeland. The purpose of injecting the Vrindavan widows into the film was

				<p>to contain the Cardiff widow's account from being appropriated on account of transgression. This sequence also serves as juxtaposition to Ms. Varsani's earlier sound-byte in which she is sharing aspirations for living in India, with the juxtaposition pertaining to future and past, imagination and lived experience, and material prosperity alongside social ostracisation. See discussion 6, pp: 118-119.</p>
<p>XVII</p>	<p>Material aspirations</p>	<p>Ms. Varsani's sound-bytes about building a home in India and her keenness to shop in Indian markets.</p>	<p>00:17:59 — 00:19:32</p>	<p>Ms. Varsani's sound-byte commences on closing images of the sequence with the Vrindavan widows seen in long shots. Ms. Varsani's sound-byte pertains to building a home in India. There is direct counter-point between the property she describes and the home for the widows we see in the images — the binarisms of wealth and poverty in the Indian context. The sound-byte continues on tight close-ups of shopping fare in Indian markets. This is a thin construction that gestures towards material desires and pre-empt's Mr. Varsani's following sound-byte of experiences shopping in India. This sound-byte contrasts with the previous sequence of Hindu widows' ostracisation — reflecting the disparity between the status of a married Hindu woman and a Hindu widow. It also juxtaposes with the</p>

				<p>following sound-byte of the widow where she shares conditions of abject poverty in rural Gujarat. This intercutting between the two women subjects serves to situate them in dialogue and render the gender subject as not homogenous. See discussion in chapters 6, pp: 121-125.</p>
XVIII	Abject poverty in rural India.	Juxtaposition between wealth and abject poverty.	00:19:33 — 00:20:30	<p>In this sound-byte the widow provides insight into the conditions of poverty she confronted in rural Gujarat as a widow. The sound-byte concludes with her sharing the lack of provisions for education in India. Image and sound construction involves thinness. Thereafter, frontal address in the interview that is included to depict her emotions. See discussion in chapter 6, pp: 121-125.</p>
XIX	Social questioning of the widow's character.	Widow shares how villagers questioned her character as a single woman after widowhood.	00:20:31 — 00:21:19	<p>As the widow shares how she was questioningly looked upon and received sexual propositions from village folk, images of persons gazing on the streets in India and at the temple are used. Their gazes make associations with the widow's recollections. As the widow shares her refusal to buy food from a shop where a sexual proposition had been made towards her in exchange of food for her children, an image of her offering money to the Gods at the temple is used as direct counterpoint. The counterpoint</p>

				<p>involving her inability and near exploitation due to poverty in India that now contrasts with her socio-economic mobility in Cardiff. As she concludes stating how difficult it is for her to share her hardships, festive images from the temple are used as an ironical comment. See discussion in chapter 6, pp: 119.</p>
<p>The Hindu spiritual stance reflecting contentment.</p>		<p>The widow's sound-byte reflecting her sense of contentment.</p>	<p>00:21:20 — 00:21:59</p>	<p>In this sound-byte the widow shares that her daughters are happily married and settled. She is content with her life, and grateful to God. On this sound-byte two images of women subjects in public spaces have been used. The first is shot of a low caste Gujarati woman seen at a traffic crossing. The second involves an old white woman on a pavement in Cardiff. Both subjects are framed such that they are principles in the frame. The ordinariness of their movements poetically complements the spiritual stance and resilience implied by the widow's sound-byte. The sequence closes with an image of a plant in an interior space with a translucent white background. This is a poetic image carrying forth the theme of singleness and the female subject. This image stands-in for the silence after the widow's sound-byte concludes. See discussion in chapter 6, pp: 121-125.</p>

XX	Closing montage: transition from community to Baroque 2	Spectacular images from the community.	00:22:00 — 00:24:43	This montage marks exit from the community. It includes spectacular images of the community first edited to the sound of drums at a communal gathering. In the middle there is a sound transition from the drums to an Indo- classical raga. The female vocalist in a melancholy note calls out 'Radha', a synonym for the community's key female deity, Tulsi. As the raga fades-in we see slow motion images of community women dancing ritually. These are followed by an image locating the filmmaker filming at the temple. The temple door shuts. Overlaid exterior images of Cardiff follow, which conclude with the filmmaker descending steps and exiting frame. This sequence brackets and closes the film. The Indo-classical raga formulates the mood of the film that is neither totally celebratory nor melancholy. See discussion in chapter 6, pp: 130-133.
XXI	Closing Titles		00:24:44 — 00:25:35	Closing credits

Framework structure of the film developed through juxtaposition of sound-bytes:

1. Introductory sequence of the community with sound-bytes of men-folk, juxtaposed with widow's sound-byte about hardships while working in Cardiff.
2. Community history narrated by Mr. Patel, juxtaposed with Ms. Varsani's sound-byte of her arrival to Cardiff. (Juxtaposition between modes of address)
3. Sequence disputing the temple: Mr. Patel's sound byte juxtaposed with Ms. Varsani's.
4. Mr. Patel's sound-byte about temple serving as a space for dialogue between generations, juxtaposed with widow's sound-byte about her child marriage and the migrations of her husband.
5. Folktale sequence
6. Widow's sound-byte about the Jehovah's Witnesses.
7. Ms. Varsani's sound-byte about aspirations for living in India, juxtaposed with widow montage about violation of social codes pertaining to Hindu widows.
8. Ms. Varsani's sound-byte about a home and shopping interests in India reflecting material aspirations, juxtaposed with widow's recollections of poverty in India.
9. Widow's concluding sound-bytes.

Appendix 2: A Genealogy of Montage

S.No.	Work	Comments
1.	Montage Origins	Christopher Phillips traces the origins of montage to British caricature practices in the 1840s, particularly the practice of comic mismatching of heads and bodies from billboard posters. (Teitlebaum et al 1992: 22) By the 1850s-60s composite photographic practices emerged in private, artistic and commercial spheres. Combined with 'combination printing', i.e. making a single print from different negatives into one tightly packed image, photomontage was born. Christopher Phillips adds that photomontage became popular between the 1880s and the early decades of the 20 th century, particularly in the field of advertising. (Teitlebaum et al 1992: 26) During the first world war, it was widely employed for developing postcards in Europe and America. As a modernist visual idiom, photomontage finds precedence in Cubist and Futurist techniques of collage. The technique also invoked interest among the Dadaists. In its early forms photomontage served as a vocabulary for an emergent mass media culture.
2.	Kuleshov Effect	The earliest cinema montage experiments were by conducted by Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov. The most famous of these, also known as the 'Kuleshov effect', involved juxtaposing the same shot of an actor with different and unrelated shots, such as a bowl of soup and a baby in a coffin. Each juxtaposition conveyed a differing emotion for the spectator: hunger, grief respectively. (Stam. 2002: 39). It was not the individual image, rather the juxtaposition of images that propelled spectatorial response.
3.	Sergei Eisenstein	Sergei Eisenstein first encountered montage in the theatre of Vsevolod E. Meyerhold, the acknowledged master of the Left Theatre. Eisenstein observed two qualities of the cinema: its use of 'photo-fragments', and their combination in various ways ranging from naturalism to 'complete alterations, arrangements unforeseen by nature, and even to abstract formalism, with remnants of reality.' (Eisenstein 1958: 04) On this understanding, Eisenstein formulated his early theories of montage wherein editing was emphasised for creating moments of dramatic and aggressive arrest or attractions. Eisenstein developed his theories on the basis of Marxist dialectics.
4.	Walter Benjamin	Walter Benjamin formulated the <i>Arcades Project</i> that attends nineteenth century industrial culture in Paris and the shaping of that city. The <i>Arcades Project</i> was aimed as book, but Benjamin never completed it. For this project he had envisioned a 'literary montage' in which visual and literary material would be juxtaposed to create a text that would bring the experience of the past into the present.
5.	Dziga Vertov	Dziga Vertov's films reflect the dynamics of class struggle. (Tsivian 2004: 38) Annette Michelson terms his work as 'revelatory', an unpacking of life as a 'social text... a communist decoding'. Of Vertov's early montage experiments in the <i>Kino Pravda</i> series, Yuri Tsivian notes the dialectic of thesis-

		<p>antithesis-synthesis, pertaining to the living conditions of the proletariat during the years of the revolution. (2004: 38) Vertov envisioned montage as achieving the pure properties of movement. Vertov's cinema gets termed 'anti-humanist', as the infallibility of the human spirit is rendered vain in comparison to the <i>kino-eye</i>'s possibilities that are further than those of the human eye¹. (Teitlebaum et al 1992: 72) Underpinned by anti-humanism his work extends beyond the precincts of documentary representation. Russian formalists such as Victor Shklovsky and Boris Eikhenbaum have observed that Vertov's use of factual imagery; 'did not in itself make his films factual. Having rejected the fictional structures of the novel and drama, he had effectively fallen into those of poetry, lyric and the epic.' (Hill and Gibson 2000: 59) For Vertov a shot was effective when it best revealed an object and allowed a viewpoint the viewer was not accustomed to. (Michelson 1984: 99) In his early writings, he announced his motivation for cinema as the 'poetry of movement'. This appreciation for movement can be traced to his fascination with mechanization, shared with the Constructivists and Cubists of the early twentieth century. Vertov, very often used the phrases 'the poetry of movement' and 'the poetry of machines' almost interchangeably. In the controlled rhythms and repetitions of the machine, he saw a grace that was 'intimate', 'intelligible' and organic; and which made him discount the human subject seeking a <i>new man</i>, constructed by cinema: 'The <u>new man</u>, free of unwieldiness and clumsiness, will have the light, precise movements of machines, and he will be the gratifying subject of our films.' (Michelson 1984: 08) In his cinema, graphic composition achieved through varying camera angles was combined with considerations of movement in terms of tempo, direction and meter. For Vertov, juxtaposition evokes the interval in which movements between successive images get relativised, i.e. the cultivation of movements into an emergent sense of movement, which is not simply the sum of movements of individual images².</p>
6.	Aby Warburg	<p>German art historian, Aby Warburg who specialised in Renaissance painting, attempted to invent a 'knowledge-montage' that would make the discipline of art history exceed its traditional epistemological framework. Aby Warburg had an interest in anthropology and used photography as an ethnographic research tool. He developed a catalogue of images from his journeys in the American southwest engaging with native Indian peoples there. Bendetta C. Guidi has identified an 'aesthetic unconventionality', a sense of immediacy in his photographs that seek 'matter-of-fact details' rather than abstracting the subjects he engages with from their landscape and socio-economic conditions of living. (1998: 51-52) He derived from Sergei Eisenstein's thinking about montage in terms of creating associations. This was the basis for his knowledge-montage formulated into the <i>Mnemosyne Atlas</i>.</p>

¹ See Michelson 1984: 17.

² Discussing composition through organization of "intervals" (the movement between frames and the proportions of these pieces as they relate to one another), Vertov takes into account relations of movements within the frame of each piece, relations of light and shade, and relations of speeds of recording. (Michelson. 1984, pp.xxx) Also see, Petric, V. (1993) *Constructivism and Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp: 1217-185, for discussion of movement-based phi effect in *The Man with the Movie Camera*.

		Phillip Michaud observes that; 'Each panel of <i>Mnemosyne</i> is the cartographic relief of an area of art history imagined simultaneously as an objective sequence and as a chain of thought in which the network of the intervals indicate the fault-lines that distribute or organise the representations into archipelagos or, in other words, as Werner Hoffman has put it, 'constellations.' (2004: 253) Consequently we gather two implications from Warburg's use of montage — a pursuit of cultural and landscape authenticity i.e. the anthropological claim in his work, and knowledge-montage that seeks to challenge traditional art historical discourse by placing cultural artefacts and traditions he was exposed to from a spread of cultures in free associative relations.
7.	Borderlines (1930): Dir — Kenneth Macpherson	An avant-garde film on the subjects of race and sexuality in which black American actor, singer and political activist, Paul Robeson and his wife Eslanda Robeson performed. Macpherson and Robeson were deeply interested in the aesthetics of Eisensteinian montage. This film attempts to depict the extreme psychological states of its characters who are situated in a narrative involving a love triangle. Jamie Sexton, in his synopsis of the film states that the inner states of the film's characters were developed through the use of a particular montage technique that the filmmaker and Robeson had termed as 'clatter-montage' — 'rapid montage combinations that create an effect of superimposition.' Though the technique of clatter-montage is inspired by Eisenstein, according to Sexton the probing of the psychological dimension is 'more directly inspired by the German filmmaker, G. W. Pabst. (http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/443504/index.html)
8.	Pina Bausch	Within dance, montage particularly influenced the work of Pina Bausch. Her dance work was political and she combined the notion of free association in montage with the traditions of vaudeville, music hall and revue. According to Servos, her montage 'acquires its reality in individual incidents and situations, in the process disregarding any conventional dramaturgy of plot. Instead of every detail being absolutely interpretable, the dominant features of the pieces are a multidimensionality and complex simultaneity of actions that offer a wide panorama of phenomena.' (Servos 1984: 40) A radicalism underpins her constructions that Susan Kozel has linked with Luce Irigaray's notion of poetics. Paralleling Irigaray's call for a; 'reconsideration of the whole problematic of space and time', Kozel observes that 'Bausch situates her mimetic portrayal of fear, despair, desire, and exploitation in a context where time and space are constantly challenged'; through the device of montage that 'transforms theatrical space into swirling layers of movement and emotion.' (Kozel 1997: 103)
9.	Citizen Kane	By the late 1920s montage had clearly entered mainstream cinema practice. It was a popular technique for traversing vast spaces of time. The breakfast table montage sequence from <i>Citizen Kane</i> (1941) is an example of this in which within the span of a few minutes Kane's first marriage deteriorates.
10.	Peter Roehr	German multimedia artist, Peter Roehr (1944-1968) developed three montage films, <i>Film Montage I-III</i> . He experimented with repetition of shots and light patterns. He summarized his artistic intentions thus: 'I change material by repeating it unchanged. The message is the behaviour of the material in response to the

		frequency of repetition.’ http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/filmmontage/ Peter Roehr worked specifically with the principles of rhythm and serial montage repetition both in film and for photographic montages.
11.	Birgit Hein and Wilhelm Hein	Experimental filmmakers Birgit Hein and Wilhelm Hein worked with the surface texture and materiality of film. Using 16mm and 8mm formats their early film, <i>Raw Film</i> , is a black-and-white montage with short sequences in which the film image is ‘disrupted’ in different ways: including perforated holes, frame lines, dirt, image freezes and melts, combination of negative and positive images — all selected and edited randomly. They avoided narrative and editing patterns were developed using rhythmic montage.
12.	Ghatak	Ritwik Ghatak uses Eisensteinian montage to rupture traditional iconography and through that critique dominant nationalist discourse. (See detailed discussion in chapter 5.)
13.	Touki Bouki	Hailed as the pioneer of African avant-garde film, Djibril Mambety’s <i>Touki Bouki</i> (1973) utilises cyclical and rhythmic montage. In this film about the desire for mimesis in the post-colonial subject, Mambety is problematising the binarisms pertaining to third world societies — between the forces of tradition and modernity. He uses iconic and surreal imagery pertaining to folk symbolisms juxtaposed with instances from the narrative that parallel the action of traditional icons, but they are distinguished as they are performed in differing spatio-temporal context that sets up past and present into dialogue.
14.	Shirin Neshat	Commenting on the gender separation under Islamic law, Shirin Neshat develops video installations attending gender disparities between men and women in Iranian society. Installation design reverses viewing positions such that the viewer negotiates between screens and through that between gender categories. The positioning of the screens propels a ‘montage effect’ for the viewer. (See detailed discussion in chapter 5.)
15.	Galina Evtushenko	Soviet filmmaker, Galina Evtushenko in 1991 developed <i>Eisenstein and Meyerhold</i> , a film employing associational montage and archival imagery to explore the relationship between the two artists, particularly during the Stalinist years.
16.	Mrinal Sen	<i>Montage: Life, Politics, Cinema/ Mrinal Sen</i> : an experiment in faction publication that emulates the spirit of veteran Indian avant-garde filmmaker, Mrinal Sen. The text juxtaposes original writings — memoirs, letters, musings on politics, literature, theatre and cinema; critical essays by Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Charles Chaplin and other international film-makers, intensive interviews with scholars, critics and filmmakers such as Samik Banerjee, Swapan Mullic and Reinhard Hauff, and intimate photographs and Sen’s movie stills to formulate a published montage whose thematic occupation is a rendering of the influences and experiences of the filmmaker. This mapping formulates an unusual creative landscape providing insights into Sen’s cinema that involves political motivations and critique. The text combines montage-based fragmentation through tight close-ups in images with randomly juxtaposed texts excerpts.
17.	Amos Gitai	Acclaimed Israeli filmmaker derives from montage and

		architecture to traverse complex spatio-temporal relations that insist audiences to make associations and derive meanings. In his work authorial voice is neither authoritarian nor effaced. (Willemen 1993: 8, 14)
18.	Marikki Hakola	Finnish multimedia and experimental moving image artist, Marikki Hakola has developed the 'Hypermontage' for constructing interactive possibilities of the moving image in a multimedia context. Hakola has a philosophical and pragmatic approach towards developing an interactive moving image aesthetic in which montage is not predetermined but arises from interaction, particularly through the viewer interface. Working within the theory-practice context, she is also theorising the scope of interactive moving image.
19.	Montage @ Google	Montage-a-google is an online application to generate large-gridded and graphic montages based on keywords entered by users and using google's image search engine. Its uses range from artistic montages and collages, desktop graphic design to net surfing.
20.	Fashion TV	Fashion TV coverage of fashion worldwide employs montage principles of fragmentation and juxtaposition. This influences cinematography that includes a two camera operation — one assuming a centered long shot position from which tilt-ups and downs are executed, and the second working with camera angulations and close-ups, mostly operated hand-held. The editing focuses on three aspects, a long view establishing a model within the context of the ramp, a close survey of the fashionware through tilt-ups and downs and a cross zoom to maintain pace with the moving model, intercut with tight close-ups of any accessories and camera angulations that work on the principle of alternation between extreme long and tight close views for visual dynamism in the construction.
21.	Qatsi trilogy	Using associational, rhythmic and musical montage editing, Godfrey Reggio developed the <i>Qatsi trilogy</i> comprising <i>Koyaaniswatsi</i> (1983), <i>Powaqatsi</i> (1988) and <i>Naqoyqatsi</i> (2002). The trilogy comments on the human condition in the context of modernisation and has been shot on locations across the world.

Appendix 3: Interview with Mr. N Patel. President, Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff, 21.02.04

AS: Has there been any research on this community before?

NP: No academic or anthropological study has been conducted on the community. There has been one researcher from the University of Leicester who studied the community 3 years ago as part of a larger research pertaining to Asians in Britain. He was researching some statistical data: community strength, age-groups, male-female ratio, etc. A student from Cardiff was trying to develop a film and had interviewed some members of this community about two years ago. But I have no contact for him.

AS: Would you share the history of the Swaminarayan temple, Cardiff?

NP: At the Swaminarayan temple Lord Swaminarayan and Lord Krishna are worshipped. There is another temple for the Gujarati community near Coleg Glan Hafren in Cardiff. In this temple, all deities including Shiva and the Mother Divine are worshipped (their idols are established here). It only opens on the weekends. Our Swaminarayan temple opens everyday and welcomes members from all communities. Its primary membership consists of members adhering to the Swaminarayan sect, and hailing from Kutch district in Gujarat. They are responsible for the organisation and day-to-day functioning of the temple.

AS: Would you share the origins of this community? Do all community members come from the same part of Gujarat?

NP: The community's origins can be traced back to the village of Halar in Gujarat, where about 300 years ago, its ancestors lived. They were either manual farm labour or small farmers. They lived in conditions of extreme poverty. Under the British Raj, they had encountered famines and heavy taxation. The region itself suffered numerous droughts that affected farm production.

About 300 years ago, they migrated from Halar to Kutch. In Kutch they started to work as slave labour. Kutch was a princely state then and the only one in India that had its own mint. Here they were able to raise funds to purchase and invest in land. From manual labour the community's profile altered to landownership. However, here too, they experienced droughts and so the conditions of poverty could not be eradicated.

The Swaminarayan sect had been established in Bhuj, some 300 years ago. Some community members from Kutch became followers of the sect in Bhuj, which is about 150 km away. In die course, some community members also became ascetics of the Swaminarayan sect. They advised the community to elevate its status. They encouraged members of the community to migrate to Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, where the British required labour to construct railways.

AS: So the Swaminarayan sect heads encouraged migration? Has anyone older to you shared any memories of migration?

NP: Yes. In the 1930s, community members started to migrate to East Africa. They would travel in ships called 'Dhows'. It would take at least 3-4 months for the journey. Some ships were lost to the sea and we have no trace of those lost with them. Initially only male members migrated to see what prospects there were. As the community settled in East Africa, family members were called to join the men. The ships that had earlier carried 10-15 people now carried more people. The families usually were called once the male members had secured sufficient funds.

AS: How would you describe living in East Africa?

NP: As those members left India, they had been advised by the Swaminarayan sect heads to adhere to a certain code of conduct in the foreign land. They were required to obey the rules of being good human beings. Wherever the community went in East Africa, members would gather each evening and pray as a community. As the community got more affluent, it started to invest money in building Swaminarayan temples. The first temple was built in Nairobi. It celebrated its golden jubilee last year. To maintain the link with the sect in India, the community constructed community centres. Through this it was aimed that even those people who are not religious would be maintained within the community's fold. The idea was that no matter who you look to for salvation, the ties with God should be maintained and nurtured. The community centre also served in maintaining links with elders. All over the world Swaminarayan temples are run voluntarily by community members. As the community got amalgamated and imbibed western influences, the sect heads in India advised that family life and bonds be maintained and children's education be prioritised. In Africa, very slowly, by the second and third generations, the profile of the community altered from manual labour. Shopkeepers, doctors and masonry became chosen professions.

In 1962, Kenya attained independence. It adopted a policy for indigenising all jobs in the country — that is giving priority to black people. All jobs they said would be Africanized. The blacks feared that well-to-do, rich Indians from Ahmedabad and Baroda; in fact the entire Hindu community in East Africa was going to monopolise the economy of Kenya. They felt that the Indians and the Pakistanis were getting increasingly powerful in that country. So Idi Amin announced that all Asians should leave the country.

AS: Did members of the community not contemplate returning to India?

NP: Most people turned to the UK because it was felt that one could make more money here and besides since all Indians had migrated under the British Raj, they held British passports even though India had gained independence. In our minds there was no question of returning to India. The business of corner shops was ideal. It yielded money and at the same time ensured safety and security. Self-employment of this kind ensured one was not encountering racial tensions either.

If you worked in a factory or any other service with other people and were competing with them, then you would be promptly subjected to racial discrimination. This did not happen with self-employment.

The choice to settle in Cardiff was largely determined by the fact that the living conditions in a city like London were not very conducive for our community. One would not find the perfect job over there easily because people from our community were not as educated as other Gujaratis and so they felt immobile in London. The pace of living was so fast there, and you have to bear in mind that London was for most community members the first encounter with urban life. There was more racism there. Living conditions in London of the 1960s were poor. We had small accommodations when we migrated. We had to share public toilets and baths and that became a very big problem for us, especially the women because under the Swaminarayan sect all members have to bathe first thing in the morning. All this together made living in London very difficult. There was generally a split among the Gujaratis. Those who were educated and had been able to gather their savings in East Africa readily took to life in London. A certain arrogance had crept into among some rich Gujaratis as soon as they arrived in London. It stemmed from their affluence. Communities like ours consisted of members who were not so mobile, some had not even been able to gather their savings when they left Africa. So such members started dispersing to other cities like Bolton, Oldham — places where there were flourishing industries and employment was readily available.

Cardiff was conducive because there was industry here that meant access to work. It was a cheaper place to live in, much cheaper than London. Council loans for housing were more readily available here. More importantly, it was felt that the quality of life was better here. London, like I said, had been the first city a generation of community members like myself had encountered. It was too fast for us and we just felt out of place. In Kenya also some of us had not been to cities like Nairobi. I personally had lived all my life in the tiny village called Nkuru. So we were used to the slow pace of rural life. London was a sharp and disturbing contrast. Cardiff and Wales generally has the hillsides that resemble East Africa; life is slow here and the city is compact — one can have some social activities after working all day.

The movement out of London was slow and the community migrated in small groups. Here life is comfortable and more accessible. You can meet friends and family in 5-10 minutes because everybody lives close-by. You don't have to make appointments like one would in London. Here, in a place like Cardiff, we all know each other. The community ties are very strong here and it easy to maintain a sense of community, a sense of togetherness.

We could buy shops more easily here and that meant employment was taken care off. We could invest in property more easily. We could all buy our own houses, and that meant we did not have to share accommodation as in London. Cardiff is a quiet, nice and tidy city and most importantly, the Welsh are a very accommodating people. They are friendly and racist encounters have been very low here.

AS: How did the Swaminarayan temple Cardiff get developed?

NP: Wherever Swaminarayan communities settle we build temples for worship. In 1978, our sect head, Acharya Maharjashree Tejendraprasadji had visited us in Cardiff and encouraged that since there was a substantial Swaminarayan presence in the Cardiff, a temple be built here. We got some funding from the Swaminarayan temple in London and members of the community in Cardiff made generous donations. With this money the community leased some space in a nearby synagogue, and refurbished it to serve as a temple. This was inaugurated in April 1979 as the Swaminarayan temple, Cardiff. The temple's activities and membership soon multiplied and the size of this complex became a limitation. We started to look out for a bigger complex. Then we found the present complex. This was an unused printing press warehouse. We purchased it through the community's funds, renovated it and the present temple complex got developed. We have steadily increased our facilities and activities. A community center was developed later on. Now there is a dedicated youth wing, we conduct English language classes for elders, religious classes for all members, and classical Indian music classes for the youth etc. So all these different activities take place in this complex and the temple serves as a hub for not only the religious but socio-cultural activities too. This is also because we are such a small community so this complex is just very convenient for all kinds of events. The temple could not be built in accordance with the tenets of Hindu temple architecture. So we imported a miniature wooden replica of a traditional Hindu temple sanctum from India. In this we have installed images and figures of our key deities including Lord Swaminarayan. At this temple all Hindu festivities in keeping with the lunar calendar are performed. Twice a year we host Swaminarayan saints from Gujarat who give discourses to the community.

AS: What role does the temple play within the wider community of Cardiff?

NP: The temple has increasingly come to be identified as a symbol of Hinduism in Wales. Though we are the Swaminarayan temple, we open doors to Hindus and visitors of all backgrounds whether or not they are Swaminarayan practitioners. In our community center we undertake social and community work like collecting funds for natural calamities like the Bhuj earthquake. We host local school learning trips, police training, and visits by prominent officials such as Welsh Assembly representatives. We are also a place where non-Gujarati Hindus come to celebrate annual Indian festivals like Diwali, Holi, Janamashtami and Rakshabandhan.

AS: Thankyou.

Appendix 4: *Sample of Film Practice research survey questionnaire distributed among the subject community. This appendix includes two examples of completed questionnaires. All completed questionnaires are deposited with the filmmaker in the production folder for 'Crossings in a Beautiful Time.'*

Research Questionnaire I: for ethnological film research in the Gujarati community in Cardiff

Name:

Surname:

Age (optional)

Sex:

Male/ Female

Address:

Occupation:

-
1. When did you first move to Cardiff?

 2. Have you ever lived in any other part of the UK? If so, please list other places you have lived in and length of stay:

 3. Why did you choose to live in Cardiff now?

 4. Did you have relatives, friends or acquaintances in Cardiff before coming here to live?

-
5. What sounds, images/ sights and smells do you associate most closely with Cardiff or the neighbourhood you live in?

Sights or images:

Sounds:

Smells:

6. What types of leisure and cultural activities do you engage in Cardiff?

7. How much of your leisure and cultural activity is conducted within the Indian or Asian community in Cardiff (tick one)

- All
 - Most
 - About half
 - Some
 - None
-

8. Have you ever travelled to India?

How often?

Give month and year of departure and length of stay for your last trip to India.

9. Where did you visit on this trip?

10. If you have not travelled to India in the past 5 years comment on why not?

Appendix 5: *The following is a sample of the interview consent statement signed by all interviewees included in the film. This appendix also includes two copies of consent forms signed by interviewees as examples. All consent forms are deposited in the production research folder for 'Crossings in a Beautiful Time', managed by the filmmaker.*

PhD Film on the Gujarati Community, Cardiff

School of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Glamorgan

Researcher: Aparna Sharma
07789556573

I, _____ hereby authorize _____
to record my voice and image or take photographs on private premises owned, managed or occupied by me in conjunction with a photography project documenting the Gujarati Community in Cardiff undertaken for doctoral research at the University of Glamorgan. It is my understanding that copies of photographs, tapes or video taken during the project will be deposited in a project archive to be managed by Aparna Sharma.

I authorize the duplication and broadcast of these materials *for non-profit educational purposes only*. This includes film festivals and broadcast media where fully developed film or recordings might be exhibited *for non profit purposes*. I understand that images, recordings and notes will be accessible to scholars and researchers who visit these archives unless otherwise arranged.

I authorize other parties selected and approved by Aparna Sharma to exercise the permission granted above. Any use of images or recordings not in accordance with the above will require my expressed written consent.

I understand that I have full access to these materials for my own use and that if I have any questions I can contact the collections manager Aparna Sharma at the phone number above or by e-mail at Aparna31S@netscape.net

Signature _____ Date _____

Address _____

Signature of Interviewer/ Photographer _____

Restrictions:

Appendix 6: Excerpts of interview with Kumar Shahani.

Interview conducted on 05/04/06, University of Delhi Campus (North), New Delhi, India.

AS: Let me start with reference to some of our previous discussions. We have earlier talked about self-reflexivity in avant-garde cinema and anthropological film where particularly the problematic of the extents of confronting oneself arises. I don't think this happens so starkly in avant-garde cinema. How do you respond to the notion of self-reflexivity?

KS: It's connected both with one's personal history and the kind of situation in which one found oneself at different points. For me the first move towards self-reflection was the time that I came over from Sindh, Pakistan to India at partition. My entire family came to Bombay in 1947. Everyday virtually I, or some member of my family, was asked; 'Who are you?' It was quite a strange atmosphere in India at that time, and in Bombay in particular. They [Bombay residents] didn't quite know how to deal with this influx of people who are so much alike as them and at the same time so different. It was not as if they had not met Sindhis before or anything of that kind. Sindhis were very much established in India and the world, and have been that way since a long time in Indian history. It used to flummox me quite a bit because I was just a child and very often they would ask; 'Are you a Muslim?' And I would say; 'I don't know...'

Anyways, all that I knew was that we were supposed to be hounded out of Sindh because I was not a Muslim, and we were here and being asked; 'Are you a Muslim?' again and again. This really disturbed myself, and my whole family. The older members of the family suffered a lot because they were displaced. My family had no feelings against Muslims at all. So self-reflexivity of some kind started for me there itself, because everybody asked; 'Who are you?'

This has persisted in some form or the other. Sometimes it has been very painful because the Indian democracy is constructed on constituencies that are ethnically or linguistically determined. National awards to artists are given out on that basis. People take interest in your work because ethnically you are from a particular community. I deliberately have avoided any claims to being of just any single community whether by way of caste, religion, language... Sometimes it has been wonderful because there is a whole global community which also wishes to live without being determined by any divisive factors like nation, underdevelopment, overdevelopment, gender, sexuality... There are a lot of people now who think this way; but it has taken nearly a century for that to become a voice. There is an idea of *being*, of a self-reflexivity that implies you respect a bird as much as you respect say, Jean Paul Sartre, Mahatma Gandhi, or Mao, or Duras, or Begum Akhtar. This sense of respect I don't think we have had in the centuries of 'Progress' or 'Enlightenment', in inverted commas.

In saying this I don't mean I associate myself with subaltern thinking, because I find a lot that was wrong with subaltern thinking. There was no need to undo the enlightenment. Similarly, with post-modernism, which has come through as a result of

the different pressures of people meeting together in differing contexts. I think a lot of the first world post-modernist artists have not even acknowledged what all the independence movements have done in the world to bring to notice that there are whole systems of thought which are present in very small communities, which have been erased in different nations. It is true that post-modernism has taken from that and then juxtaposed it with Enlightenment thinking. And perhaps the first post-modernist artist was a modernist, which is Picasso. He took things from Africa, which was revolutionary in terms of perspective. And so for me, the question of the self and its reflection in art is not something that could easily be resolved through a formula or technique... the self is confronted in numerous circumstances, in varying conditions... How you mix that your art is where the work really begins.

AS: How do you understand post-modernism? When you say competing systems of thought, we can then claim a whole history of inter-cultural conversations that goes far back... say Alexander in 300 BC whose contact with India led to the birth of the Gandhara school of Indo-Greek sculpture. It is very unfortunate the fate that some of the architecture and sculpture of that era has met with. How then do we attend and qualify post-modernism?

KS: I think the great thing that post-modernism has done is that it has been able to devise a mode of address where it doesn't swear by anything, which is great. If one could go back and trace the histories of that in every culture, post-modernism will then become self-reflexive. If, for instance they recognise the Sufis' call to Allah — the Sufis call out to Allah, but they don't believe in Allah. It is just wonderful. They believe in the call, in the enunciation. Similarly in Panini, the great grammarian, there is such an emphasis on enunciation. Panini has also shown that enunciation is both a gesture and speech. I believe he said that it was revealed to him by Shiva while dancing, perhaps the *tandava*. It's not very different from Descartes saying in his essay that the *Dialectic of Pure Reason* was revealed to him. But the nature of revelation in both cases is actually itself in a sense blasphemous. It's wonderful. Coming from here — that is not from the modernist paradigm that insisted on a unilinear universality — one knows that there are several universalities that were not unilinear. But they were nevertheless kinds of universalities because I think every time we need to enunciate we laid out certain axiomatic, universal ground for people to engage with, and be able to say something, or allow for some kind of interpretation.

I think in both the person who interprets and the person who says something, there is always an agreement that some kind of meaning is being made. For that some ground needs to be laid and for that moment it becomes the absolute. In Sindh for example there is this cloth that is wrapped around by all people, used as a *chador*. It is called 'ajrak'. It is derived from Arabic word for blue. It is the root word for 'azure' in English. It is called so because they try to get a particular blue which is azure, which is like that of the sky, and which is reflected in the water. There are multiple lines of connections here. *Ajrak* includes patterns of different kinds. That is called the absolute or 'asal', or what we call in Hindi — 'asali.' The patterns of *ajrak* suggest that if you place yourself at any centre, divinity begins to spread itself from that centre. There is no one centre. There are many such centres on that cloth. It is a masterpiece of design in the sense that it takes on a certain metaphysics with such a great kind of joy in it. Within the Judeo-Christian-Islamic paradigm it allows for a completely pagan idea to

occur. I am sure this must also have evolved through Sufism and Bhakti because that module of irradiating with divinity also takes place in our dance forms, the Hindu temple and Indian erotics.

A traditional belief in the Indian tradition is to experience oneself as the divine. To do this they sometimes say you should whirl on your own axis, which is what the Dervishes also do. This is the base of Kudiyattam [the world's oldest drama form certified by the UN] in Kerala. I had learned about this spinning and used it as the basis for my second film, *Tarang*. The entire mise-en-scene was based on that principle, not on the geometry of Euclid. So returning to your question post-modernism has very particular mode of address and I think that will challenge understanding of time and history as causal or unilinear. Within the arts, I think it claims for the lines of communication that are already existent.

AS: That raises very clearly the question of the spiritual in cinema. The whole notion of rotating on an axis is so cinematic, because the camera does it perhaps in a more nuanced fashion than the human body or the meditative/contemplative mind. Vertov would perhaps say that not only with reference to camera angulation and movement, but the interval, which we have discussed before, and editing in terms of his use of the phi-effect. I have experimented with camera movement myself. For me the question is what is the possibility of the spiritual in film as a practitioner? I, as a filmmaker, encounter a contradiction here. The spiritual, as we have just discussed, involves the dissolution of positionality — at any point if one rotates on one's axis, one transcends and experiences divinity. Politics, on the other hand, demands taking a position and working with it almost essentially. The camera is implicated in this too. The act of opening the lens-cap and focussing on a principal immediately constitutes the dynamics of positionality. So there is the spiritual that is hypnotic, movement-based, transcendental, whirling and Dionysian to use Nietzsche. And there is then the political that involves a certain abidance and fixity to positionality. If you read Gayatri C Spivak, she calls for a 'strategic essentialism' — using essentialism as definition or identity as a strategy against whatever ideology or institution one might be confronting. She sets this discussion in the context of Mahasweta Devi's literature. Your own work is at once political because it problematizes the nation, rubbishes the industry and as in 'Kasba' through the character of Tejo, points at the impossibility of speech for the female subaltern, which Gayatri Spivak has raised in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* And at the same time, we see your body of work particularly 'Bhavantarana' and 'The Bamboo Flute', in which very curvaceously and complexly the Indian spiritual tradition is imbricated. How do you work with politics and spirituality? And are the two contradictory or antithetical for you, or is that just so perhaps in my thought?

KS: Of course through history all kinds of people have opposed the spiritual to the political. When I started thinking about making films that was the position taken by just about everyone I knew. When one would pose that as an opposition they were very happy. On a popular level this binary between the political and the spiritual was exaggerated beyond redemption. So Marx would be often quoted speaking about the poverty of philosophy. But then they forgot Marx had written essays on art. Of course some of it was not very mature. But some of it was very advanced. He saw the problematic, so did Engels and so did Lenin. People chose for one reason or another

to ignore it. There were some very intelligent people who only looked at Marx for how he spoke about the poverty of philosophy and of course *Capital*...

AS: Can I interrupt you... I think within the arts particularly there is a very clear divergence away, in fact a kind of ignorance towards early Marx. By the time we come to *Capital*, the project is much advanced and focussed, very poetic but very clearly pertaining to economics. And that has become the basis, at least with some academics of the West who I have been associated with, to critique Marxism for its economic determinism. Aijaz Ahmad has discussed and contextualised this tendency very succinctly in light of the post-1968 scenario in Europe. But if you read *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx is almost certainly alluding to the spiritual dimension. In fact, I think, Eisenstein was very close in his thinking about the spiritual with relation to dialectics and film form. It intrigues me why the spiritual aspect of Marx's thought is so inadequately addressed. And this problem arises also with respect to modernism where one finds the reactionary and critical spirit is almost always emphasised, but the spiritual is hardly ever acknowledged, let alone discussed.

KS: In our own little environment here for instance, most of the people who speak in the philosophical tradition of *Advaita* make what I think is a very big mistake. It's as if social contradiction doesn't have anything to do with the spiritual — that the two are divorced, polar opposites. They want to exclude social contradiction from spiritualism. These exclusions are really evasions. Those who have taken this or the other position are evasive. They deny that the very being who is stating or taking a position is a material being always seeking spiritual freedom. Within pre-religious thought or paganism, spiritual freedom is recognised as an aspiration. In our own context this is clearly the pursuit of *mukti* or *moksha*. The body is not denied. Society is not denied. Contradiction is not denied. Mahabharata and Krishna's discourse of the Srimad Bhagvad Gita is based on this — how the material conflict is entwined with the spiritual quest. See any of our epics, or for that matter Homer. The first Sanskrit dramas always acknowledge social contradiction and spiritual pursuit. I always hope that Marxists would recognise this, because Marx himself did — the fundamental contradiction of capitalism that it will end up paying the one who binds the book more than the poet. Marx said this so clearly and indisputably. To me there is no contradiction between the spiritual and the political. Art is obviously spiritual. And it impulse you can barely name or say it is out there. It is not an objective thing. The objective thing is perhaps only the lens. But what it is that makes art cannot be instrumentalised. Any instrumentalised art or mass communication object will boomerang. I have a firm conviction of that. With all that Leni Reifenstahl might have done, she was the greatest mass communicator that I know off, but eventually Fascism and Nazism did not survive. As for me, I must acknowledge I had some wonderful teachers. I am not totally modest in that. I chose my teachers. Ritwik Ghatak is my guru. In France, I deliberately decided that I did not want to work with nouvelle vague or the avant-garde who were doing very important work, particularly Godard. I only wanted to work with Robert Bresson. When I approached Bresson, it was a very contradictory situation because ideologically Bresson was so conservative. He goes back to St. Augustine. What happened however, to my delight — and this was 1968 and I had been in Paris through all the action of May'68. Godard went to Bresson to resolve his own spiritual-political problems post-1968. Bresson is very

conservative ideologically, but it is perhaps this that makes for such a delicate balance of contradictions in his work, which I have particularly derived from.

AS: This brings me to the next issue. We are in agreement as to where we stand with relation to Bollywood or any industry for that matter. But to me, it is deeply problematic how the institutional modes of representation, and here I use IMR very deliberately because I am gesturing towards Bollywood, get deployed to actualise the spiritual imperative in cinema. This has been particularly the case in India since the rise of the right-wing. Mainstream cinema actualises and solves the spiritual quest so smoothly, but its ideology is so limited and patriarchal. I find this very problematic as a practitioner, because one never makes work in isolation. One fires on a history, from the shoulders of those one identifies with, as also operating in response to the context or situation one is located in. For me, I have just felt an impossibility to enunciate any spiritual dimension... it is like a futility, an impossibility... And then there is another trouble of appropriation...

KS: Well, there are so many things that reinforce the concretisation of an event in say Bollywood or for that matter any mainstream cinema, because I don't want to pick only on Bollywood. Hollywood does it. So many of our films that are instrumentalised, mass communication, good-causes, moral films, especially those made by people with some background in advertising aesthetics, have tended to concretise the spiritual impulse. As if the spiritual is a thing, an event; and they do it in such a manner that there one also experiences some identification with that aspect. This is fetishism. I believe that all these commodified spiritual ideas are consumed and purged almost immediately. People excrete it as soon as they take it in. Eventually it is something that boomerangs. In the meanwhile it creates a lot of problems. It stops people like me from making films and more importantly it stops the audience from thinking through anything. If you concretise messages, audiences don't have to think or decipher ideas or meanings. They get habituated to this relationship in which the moving image feeds them with defined messages. I am reminded of my documentary *The Bamboo Flute*. In this, I worked with the Srimad Bhagwad Gita's text. My friend, Shyam Goswami, a scholar and philosopher read in the Indian and western philosophical traditions had introduced to me Krishna's aphorism in the Bhagwad that 'the flute is the call of the divine.' Now how can one ever concretise this, this notion that there is divinity within you... that calls you up as a human being. This gives significance to even an act like sweeping the floor. It is so liberating. But mere words or description in a film for the purpose of communication is hardly enough for such depth. And in this history is so crucial, in the sense that you might have to do actions that historically you are implicated in. That is the summary of the Bhagwad Gita. But what is important is that it frees you of any false morality that might arise when we venerate spiritualism or tradition through concretisation. Eventually that which provokes thought is interventionist. Anything that commodifies or instrumentalises will change just as the seasons come and go — it is like fashion whose nature is to change. But intervention is problematisation and thought and cinema as an art cannot resolve, but only pose thoughts, experiences and states of being...

AS: Thankyou for that!