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**Art Cinema and The Arbor:
Analysing Tape Recorded Testimony, Film Art and Feminism**

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Abstract

In this article I discuss the award winning work of artist and filmmaker Clio Barnard, specifically focusing on her 2010 docu-fiction film *The Arbor*. Analysing the verbatim techniques so central to the film (techniques that originated in theatre), this article suggests that Barnard's visual arts background inspired and informed her textual mixing of verbatim, lip sync, re-enactment and digital imaging, the result of which is a radical and feminist art-film. Focusing on the site-specific location of *The Arbor* as well as the significance of emotional, textual and temporal layering, this article also suggests that while Barnard's work seeks, on the surface, to question the relationship between representation and the real in the genre of documentary, *The Arbor* also provokes and invites a radical reimagining of the hitherto male dominated legacy of British art cinema by bringing the voices and visions of women, past and present, into the contemporary frame.

Keywords

Art Cinema; *The Arbor*; British; Verbatim; Representation; Documentary; Andrea Dunbar; Class; Clio Barnard; Feminist filmmakers.

Art Cinema and The Arbor:

Analysing Tape Recorded Testimony, Film Art and Feminism

British art cinema exists in a strange space, one that has been and to an extent remains infirm, fractured and critically ill at ease. In many ways and for many years British art cinema was not 'at home in the world' but rather, in the 1950s and 60s, unfavourably compared to Hollywood cinema, for example, the work of John Ford and alternative European cinema such as the non-mainstream films of Italian Neo-Realism or La Nouvelle Vague. While Hollywood and European cinema seemed to garner respect and critical attention across the globe, British cinema was frequently disregarded. In 1962, French auteur Francois Truffaut reflected on its legacy: 'to put it quite bluntly, isn't there a certain incompatibility between the terms, "cinema" and "Britain"?' (Truffaut, 1986, 170) In so doing, Truffaut sought to ridicule the idea that in terms of economics and/or prestige British cinema could be identified as such via either its style or thematic foci. Essentially, for Truffaut, British cinema was non-existent, unwilling to experiment and devoid of identity. And yet the very fact that Truffaut could make this generalisation about British cinema at all underscores the contradiction inherent in his assessment. The problematic nature of Truffaut's claim and indeed the focus on contradiction between key terms can however be understood as a problem of art cinema more generally, a cinema often regarded as elitist, arcane and demanding. As Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover note: 'the sense of art cinema as elitist and conservative remains in force [and is] an attitude common in art cinema discourse' (2010: 5). But while Galt and Schoonover are rightly critical of this view of art cinema, their acknowledgement of its elitist reputation is relevant in helping us to understand its place outside of the mainstream. Writing

in the 1990s John Hill argued that the 'category of art cinema is not, of course, a precise one and [should be] used [...] in a relatively generous sense' (1997: 246). While the question of what art cinema is remains perennially elusive, it is perhaps more useful to consider, as Steve Neale suggested in his 1981 article 'Art Cinema as Institution', by whom a film is funded, directed and distributed, where it is exhibited, how it is received and what it aims to do. Other pertinent questions relate, for me at least, to the politics that a film or cinematic text imbues, the terrain that it inhabits, and the participatory practices that it invokes. In this article it is my intention to explore these questions in relation to the award-winning 'artist film'¹, *The Arbor* (2010).

Directed by visual artist and filmmaker Clio Barnard, *The Arbor* was first screened at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York in 2010, where Barnard won the prestigious title of 'Best New Documentary Filmmaker'. Later that year Barnard also won Best Newcomer and Sutherland Awards at the London Film Festival, the Douglas Hickox Award at the British Independent Film Awards, the Sheffield Documentary Film Festival Innovation Award, and the Jean Vigo Award for Best Direction. Utilising the techniques of 'verbatim theatre', *The Arbor* tells the stories, past and present, of late Bradfordian playwright, Andrea Dunbar, and her daughters, Lorraine and Lisa, based on the Buttershaw estate in Bradford, West Yorkshire. Will Hammond and Dan Steward argue that a 'verbatim' play can be understood as:

[a] play [that] acknowledges, and often draws attention to, its roots in real life. The term verbatim refers to the origins of the text spoken in the play. The words of real

¹ The 'artist film', as noted by Griselda Murray Brown (2015) has been defined as a genre of 'feature length films made by visual-artists.' Brown's article also has a definition from Jason Wood, new director of film at HOME in Manchester: "made by someone coming from a discipline which isn't filmmaking. It doesn't necessarily follow a traditional narrative arc, it's more free form and experimental." 'Artist Film: From Gallery to Cinema' in FT.COM <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/03836df8-f8b1-11e4-be00-00144feab7de.html>

people are recorded or transcribed by a dramatist during an interview or research process, or are appropriated from existing records such as the transcripts of an official enquiry. They are then edited, arranged or recontextualised to form a dramatic presentation, in which actors take on the characters of the real individuals whose words are being used. [...] In this sense, verbatim is not a form, it is a technique; it is a means rather than an end. (2008: 9)

Inspired by Andrea Dunbar's original play, *The Arbor* (1980), and Robin Soans' *A State of Affairs*, staged in Soho in 2000, Barnard's docu-fiction film sets out to question the nature of documentary truth by purposefully drawing attention to its own construction, and to the subjective nature of memory in informing stable accounts of the past. Illustrated by extracts from Dunbar's original play – extracts performed on the street 'Brafferton Arbor' from which Dunbar gave her play its name - the landscape of Buttershaw and its residents are made visible in Barnard's film, taking their place as important textures and layers of meaning. Challenging conventional filmmaking practices, Barnard uses the actual words of Lorraine and Lisa Dunbar but has screen actors (Manjinder Virk and Christine Bottomley respectively) lip sync to these documentary audio recordings, otherwise known as tape recorded testimony. Alienating and effective in equal measure, this delivery of Andrea Dunbar's story and legacy (as well as the stories of her daughters) via verbatim techniques exposes the separation or dislocation between sound and image, space and time, representation and the 'real'. Barnard's purposeful drawing of attention to the staging and story-telling techniques utilised in *The Arbor* forces a reminder that audiences are screening a constructed text. Akin perhaps to the radical lip syncing of Dennis Potter's characters in the 1978 television musical drama *Pennies from Heaven* (BBC One), Barnard revises the lip sync technique, situating her art film as a visual and sonic experiment that mines the importance of women's lives, visions and voices.

Classifying Clio Barnard: Artist, Filmmaker, Feminist

Where it exists, the history of British art cinema has been characterised by male auteurs such as Peter Greenaway, Derek Jarman, Ken Loach and Mike Leigh. While the work of Greenaway and Jarman can be considered broadly as 'high-art' in relation to their appropriation of expressionist and experimental aesthetics, the work of Loach and Leigh conveys, in opposition, a strong interest in social realism. As Andrew Higson has noted, filmmakers such as those noted above are 'treated as auteurs' (1998: 504) by a large number of critics, and have received a great deal of acclaim at international film festivals, 'where [a film's] status as 'Art' is confirmed and re-stated through the existence of prizes and awards' (Neale, 2002: 118). Within this male artistic heritage and amidst this problem of British 'art cinema' as an elite practice or classification, Clio Barnard offers an alternative position in that she is a trained artist and a filmmaker who has a desire to engage with social issues from an alternative, feminist perspective. Similar to Sally Potter, Barnard, having emerged from a visual art background, uses this to destabilise hitherto dominant paradigms of form and gender within the framework of British cinema, offering a feminist variation on the fine art-inspired work of Jarman and Greenaway.

Brought up in the town of Otley in West Yorkshire, Barnard's passion and flair for conceptual art was evidenced in her early choices to study at Leeds College of Art, to complete a Bachelors degree in art at Newcastle Polytechnic, and later to engage in postgraduate study in Electronic Imaging at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design in Dundee, Scotland. Indeed, this latter interest in electronic imaging or art technology can be understood (in hindsight at least) as fundamental to Barnard's approach to video and filmmaking, particularly her formal probing of the tensions between representation and reality. From her earliest work at post-graduate level, Barnard has been interested in utilising video and film texts to explore feminist politics. Her 1998 film short, *The Limits of*

Vision² –Part One: Still Life was constructed as a monologue, lasting four minutes, exploring the themes of feminism and labour. It was described by LUX (the international arts agency for the support and promotion of artists' moving image practice) as:

[A] humorous analysis of the banality of housework and a critique of the values and codes of the fine art world. Unravelling the train of thoughts of the female narrator, the tape discusses the merits of housework [...] and also the world of the artist and 'his' vision, wit and deadpan earnestness.³

This explicit interest in the socio-political landscape of gender politics and art was continued in *The Limits of Vision – Part Two: Dirt and Science*, also released in 1998. The film (a meticulous, witty and obsessional dissection of a woman's household tasks narrated by Barnard), was six minutes long, and was selected by curator (as well as actor, producer, writer, performer and cultural activist) Tilda Swinton to tour internationally as part of the 'Between Imagination and Reality' exhibition run by the Institute of Contemporary Arts Biennial of Independent Film and Video. Swinton's own artistic and transgressive heritage as, most notably, a gender-bending or androgynous performer of and in British art cinema and film (for example, her long-standing working relationship with Derek Jarman, and later with Sally Potter and John Maybury), is also noteworthy here. Swinton can be understood as part of a group of alternative and artistic political and feminist activists that recognised the cultural value of Barnard's work and whose feminist legacy Barnard chose to build on.

While Barnard's screen works (including her 1997 short female-centred home horror movie, *Headcase* (Arts Council England / Channel 4), her 2002 TV short *Random Acts of Intimacy* (BFI/Channel 4), her 2005 looping gallery documentary *Road Race* (Film London), and her

² Both of Barnard's *The Limits of Vision – Part One* and *Part Two* were inspired by the novel 'The Limits of Vision' by author Robert Irwin, (Dedalus 1986)

³ Description available at: <http://lux.org.uk/collection/works/the-limits-of-vision---part-one-still-life>

2008 site specific performance work including film, *Plotlands* (Whitstable Biennale), have been shown in art galleries in the UK and abroad for example, in the Tate Modern, London and MoMA, New York, Barnard herself has identified the importance of seeing and hearing other British female art-film voices and visions on screen, noting in an interview with Leigh Singer (2013) that: ‘it’s exciting that more female voices are being heard [...] I think it is significant.’ Amongst the inspirational contemporary British female filmmakers Barnard names are Lynne Ramsey (writer and director of *Ratcatcher* (1999), *Morvern Callar* (2002) and *We Need To Talk About Kevin* (2011), Andrea Arnold (writer and director of award winning features *Red Road* [2006], *Fish Tank* [2009] and *Wuthering Heights* [2011]), Carol Morley (writer and director of *The Alcohol Years* [2000], *Dreams of A Life* [2011] and *The Falling* [2014]), Joanna Hogg (writer and director of *Unrelated* [2007], *Archipelago* [2010] and *Exhibition* [2013]) and Penny Woolcock (director of *Tina Goes Shopping* [1999], *1 Day* [2009], *On The Streets* [2010] and *One Mile Away* [2012]). While Barnard’s approach to filmmaking (in particular her focus on non-naturalism, oral testimony, digital technology, re-enactment and verbatim practices) is of course different from these contemporary women writers and directors, Woolcock in particular is an interesting point of reference in that she founded a radical theatre company, frequently works in the genre of documentary to explore inequality and, like Barnard, invokes participatory practices in her film work (for example, *Shopping With Tina* was filmed with the participation of communities on the deprived council estate of Gipton, in Leeds). Yet, while Woolcock’s work tends to use the genre of documentary in a relatively conventional fashion – to make visible the ‘truth’ of inequality and to try and bring about positive social change - Barnard’s work and in particular *The Arbor*, works to radically unsettle notions of filmic truth. Speaking to Alfred Hickling of the *Guardian* in 2010 Barnard noted: ‘[In *The Arbor*] I wanted to maintain a sense of people speaking at one remove. Hopefully, it will remind the viewer that, however truthful a

documentary attempts to be, it is always subject to the editorial decisions of the film-maker.’ This highlighting of the politics of representation is linked then, for Barnard, to issues of genre, form, structure and style.

History, Form and the Politics of Representation

Barnard’s *The Arbor* is a film interested and invested in the past and the present, particularly in relation to its deceased and yet key female figure, Bradfordian playwright, Andrea Dunbar. The title itself, directly referencing the original name of the first of Dunbar’s plays, written when she was fifteen years old and based on her life in Brafferton Arbor (part of the socially deprived Buttershaw Estate in Bradford), is haunted by Dunbar’s absence. As noted by Alison Peirse (2015, forthcoming) in *Speaking for Herself: Andrea Dunbar and Bradford on Film*, the first act of Dunbar’s play was produced as part of her CSE English Project, an ‘autobiographical piece, about getting pregnant at fifteen, being in a car crash, and having a stillborn baby at six months.’ Arguably, the loss of Dunbar’s first child haunts the play as the loss of Dunbar herself in 1990, at the age of just 29, haunted Barnard. Ten years after Dunbar’s death, Max Stafford-Clark, artistic director of the Royal Court Theatre (who had staged Dunbar’s original play when it won the Young Writer’s Festival in 1980 and later moved it to the main stage), went back to Buttershaw with Robin Soans to create a new piece of theatre in order to honour Dunbar’s memory and continue her legacy. Interviewing the residents, the testimonies were edited and conflated by Soans, resulting in a piece of verbatim theatre work called *A State Affair*. Dominated by fragmented monologues about the heroin epidemic that had swept the estate, the piece had both political intent and meaning. As noted by Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt:

The ‘fantastically damaging effect’ of heroin, unemployment and lack of community structures are recorded in *A State Affair* through a dramaturgical shift from Dunbar’s

style of realism (the play had no act or scene arrangements) to a continuous, multi-vocal, multi-narrativizing of individual lives from the Buttershaw Estate which, threaded together, tell an overarching tale of abuse, domestic violence, drugs and crime. (2001: 288)

While the shift away from realism that Aston and Reinelt note is intrinsically important in re-staging and reassessing the life of the estate and its residents, as Phil Daoust (2000) suggested reviewing *A State Affair*'s showing at the Soho Theatre in 2000, it was perhaps in the final and haunting words of Dunbar's daughter, Lorraine, that audiences would 'recognise the mix of despair and humour as the real thing.' Her words, prophetic and tragic were: 'It was horrible before, but there was a sense of community... If my mum wrote the play now, Rita and Sue would be smackheads and working the red-light district. Bob would probably be injecting heroin and taking loads of tablets too.' This pointing by Daoust toward the 'real thing' is interesting and problematic because it is the politics of the 'real' or the emotionally authentic that Barnard's own work seeks to both draw on and cut through. It was Barnard's idea to mine or probe the politics of representation and the 'real' through film using verbatim techniques and lip syncing that led Mike Morris (2013), co-director of the commissioning body Artangel, to provide financial backing for the project, including, for Barnard, an intense period of on-site research. Through this research Barnard discovered that while Dunbar's legacy was, to an extent, still present in her local area via the archiving of some of her work at the Bradford Central Library, her familial and regional legacy, specifically the reflections of her daughters and her broader community, had not been revisited since Soans' production. The Artangel commission allowed Barnard to spend two years in Buttershaw interviewing the remaining Dunbar family, Andrea's old friends, foes and residents. While Dunbar's death and Lorraine's words had first inspired Barnard's intrigue and will to return to Dunbar's story and Brafferton Arbor, what she discovered was a haunted cycle of tragedy involving Dunbar's

eldest daughter (who grew up in and out of care after Dunbar's death before falling into prostitution and heroin addiction), Lorraine's own teenage addiction, and the recent death of her child, two year old Harris Dunbar, who overdosed on his mother's methadone. This destructive pattern of addiction was clearly linked not only to the heart of the struggles of these troubled women but also, and more specifically perhaps, to the site-specific reasons for it, connected directly to the spaces and places of social exclusion that had such a direct impact on their lives.

As Peirse has noted in her discussion of *The Arbor*, the city of Bradford on film can be understood in part at least, as broken, a place that has a limited yet working-class legacy through Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top* (1959) and John Schlesinger's *Billy Liar* (1963). Importantly though, Peirse argues, this legacy is, following its social-realist underpinnings, also gendered,⁴ situated as male, with seemingly little room for alternative voices, until the 1980s and Dunbar. Interestingly for me, whereas Clayton and Schlesinger's films do not feature explicit references to Bradford, *The Arbor* does. The place of Bradford, for Dunbar (and for Barnard), is important, specific and integral. For Dunbar, Bradford was not a backdrop to her story, it was her story. As a supposedly non-working northern woman and mother, Dunbar's writing was both radical and alternative, allowing Dunbar to 'speak for herself' in a different kind of voice, with a distinct vernacular, about surprising and often female-centred subjects. And yet, in highlighting via her dramatic presence the male dominance of the past, Dunbar's work arguably suggests that women themselves, particularly women of Bradford, can be understood as sites of social exclusion.⁵ This political rendering of women as 'problem subjects' can be linked to the themes of Dunbar and Barnard's work,

⁴ *Taste of Honey*, directed by Tony Richardson in 1962 (adapted from the play originally written by Shelagh Delaney in 1960), offers a counter-example to the male dominance of British social realist cinema in this decade.

⁵ The TV series *Band of Gold* (ITV, 1995-1997) focusing on the lives of working girls in Bradford's red-light district (written by Kay Mellor) stands as another example of Bradford women envisaged as sites of exclusion.

particularly in relation to gender, geography and what Sukhdev Sandhu (2010) has called ‘genealogies of social exclusion’. Indeed, Dunbar’s two later plays, *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1982) (developed into a film, directed by Alan Clarke for which Dunbar wrote the screenplay) and *Shirley* (1986) also mined the subject of women and social exclusion. As Lyn Gardner (1998) wrote in her article ‘Born to Write and Die’:

Andrea Dunbar wrote about what she knew. What she knew was the Buttershaw estate in Bradford. Buttershaw is a Saxon name, a pretty name. When the Buttershaw estate was built in the late forties the people of Bradford used to take bus rides up the hill to wonder at its glories. By the time Andrea moved there with her seven brothers and sisters in 1971, it had become a dumping ground for problem families. Brafferton Arbor, the road where the family settled, and after which Andrea named her first play, was obviously christened by an idealist. By 1971 it was a sick joke. The wasteland around the houses was strewn with abandoned cars. Packs of dogs and toddlers roamed the estate. Neighbours slugged it out among the rubbish.

While Gardner’s view of the estate is an external one and as such can be viewed as potentially problematic, Dunbar’s own explicit linking of the estate and the problems of the people who lived on it point to legitimacy in Gardner’s claims. Indeed, the status of the council estate more generally has its own difficult and painful legacy, one that Lynsey Hanley (2007: xi) has nominated as a ‘sort of psycho-social bruise [...] It makes us think of dead ends (in terms of lives as well as roads), stereotypes, the absence of escape routes.’ While this is undoubtedly true, and despite the deaths of Andrea and Harris, certain texts think and imagine beyond those stereotypes, bringing out through character, style and/or form the rich, internal landscapes of the places that appear drab and uninteresting or unpleasant from or on the outside. Dunbar herself was one of these alternative thinkers and as Sandhu (2010) argues, her three plays ‘in their bareknuckle social settings, caustic intelligence, and

grimy vitality, were the link between Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* (1958) and Paul Abbott's TV series *Shameless*.' This reference by Sandhu to television as well as film is fitting here in that *The Arbor* was as Barnard noted in an interview with Andrew Pulver in 2011, a project originally meant for television, only moving to a theatrical release due to the funding involvement of the UK Film Council. In addition, the importance of television is also keyed out through the *mise-en-scène* of the film as the trigger for characters'/participants' memories of Andrea, with the (television) documentary intertext acting as an official, mediatized history of Andrea which they often resist.

Verbatim, Re-enactment, Style and Casting

Barnard utilises the technique of verbatim as a means to explore ideas of documentary truth, taking it out of the theatre and putting it into a piece of art film. This radical re-appropriation of verbatim from one medium to another is prescient as it changes the politics and effects of the technique. As Robin Soans (2014: 24) argues: 'when the bricks and mortar of a play are real conversations, people use such idiosyncratic and bizarre language that it is immediately recognisable as lacking in artifice.' In theatre then, verbatim is utilised to point to the authentic. This link between verbatim theatre techniques and the authentic is not without critics however and it is important to recognise that, as Gardner (2007) suggests, the 'process is fraught with concerns about the veracity of statements and the way that material is edited.' Barnard, in re-appropriating verbatim techniques for film, has a differing intent. While on the one hand she wants to draw attention to the real-life roots of Dunbar and her story, she also, simultaneously and purposefully uses the technique to question the authenticity of the filmic genre of documentary or, more specifically, the indexicality of the image as truth in documentary film. Akin to the work of Errol Morris, Barnard draws attention to the constructedness of her text, to her editorial choices, and asks the audience to acknowledge and engage with the politics of truth-making. Speaking to Pulver in 2011 she noted that: 'part

of the rationale was to show how truth is unstable, that true documentary will always fail. It's always shaped in some way.' For Barnard, the technique of lip sync was essential in making visible the gap between representation and the real. The slight yet undeniable disjuncture between the sound and image is created, as noted above, through actors lip syncing to the original testimonies of Lorraine and Lisa Dunbar. Lip sync is, as Peirse has cogently argued, a 'formal distancing technique' and can be understood as both an artistic texture and a layer of meaning. Following the work of Peirse, the technique can also be understood to invoke and uncover feminist politics, as it draws attention to the inherent importance of 'authentic female voices, allowing them to speak for themselves.' This focus on the talk of the text again has political resonance in both gender and class terms, allowing voices that would not usually be heard to speak. The space or gap between the original testimonies and the lip sync of the actors could also point to a further omission. While Barnard's *mise-en-scène* draws attention to the partial regeneration of the estate, the testimonies of Lorraine and Lisa tell stories of intergenerational neglect and yet, what is not spoken is the active role that successive governments have played in creating the edgelands upon which and in which such neglect has been able to thrive. This unspoken tragedy and the multiple generations and temporalities invoked via Barnard's mix of on-site verbatim theatre, lip sync, clips from Alan Clarke's *Rita, Sue and Bob Too!* (1987), archive footage of Andrea Dunbar from the BBC *Arena* documentary, plus old interview footage of her mother and father on the doorstep of their Brafferton house from *Look North*, add yet more textures, more layers of meaning and political and emotional shape to Barnard's film.

In addition to the mixing of formal methods Barnard's film is, as noted by Alexis Brown (2014), 'hyperstylized, transformed into an elegy.' This spectral stylization (achieved through hyper-immaculate photography shot on the digital Red One camera) works to reinforce the haunted origins of the text noted earlier in this article and yet, simultaneously, the temporal

mixing and, at times, fantastic, specious and illusory rendering of events (such as Lorraine talking about a house-fire in which she and her sisters were caught as children, envisaged with actress Virk, lip syncing to Lorraine's testimony in a bedroom on Brafferton Arbor with a fire superimposed onto the mattress in the background), also seeks to unsettle notions of truth, particularly documentary truth as accessed via memory. The recollections of Lorraine who notes that the fire was the outcome of neglect, (of her trying to keep herself and her siblings warm after they were locked in their cold bedroom by a drunken Andrea), are almost immediately positioned in conflict with the memories of her sister, Lisa, (who states instead that the fire was started because Lorraine was messing about with matches in the bedroom), work then not only to create aural fracture and dissonance, but also via a visual vocabulary arguably intended to showcase the complexity and quixotic natures of image making, documentary and memory itself. Interestingly, as suggested by Stella Bruzzi (2014), the technique of re-enactment (found both in lip syncing plus the re-enactment of Dunbar's original play on Brafferton Arbor), is also employed by Barnard for this very purpose. Bruzzi states: 'Just as reiterations are the repeated performances of an action or statement, so re-enactments are potentially one stage again further removed from the original act. All re-enactments are therefore implicit acknowledgements of the fragmentary natures of truth and history.' Indeed, in the multiple processes of re-enactment the radical potential of drama to function as a type of echo or trace is unearthed. The reverberation of voices, ideas, memories and actions are interwoven, written into the structure and form of Barnard's multi-layered art film. The careful casting of actors in these re-tellings also provides a prescient connective-tissue between past and present. In Barnard's al-fresco re-staging of Dunbar's play on the estate, the main character (known as 'The Girl') was selected after Barnard held auditions at a Buttershaw school, choosing Bradford born Natalie Gavin – a young actress who bears a very strong resemblance to the young Dunbar - to play the role. In addition, other actors were

chosen both for their performance skills and for their ability to amplify the textual and temporal layering of the story. As Hickling (2010) notes:

The words of Pamela [Andrea's sister] are lip-synched by Kathryn Pogson, who played the unnamed, autobiographical character of "the Girl" in the original Royal Court production of 'The Arbor'. The part of Dunbar's partner Jimmy "the Wig" is played by George Costigan, who was Bob in the filmed version of *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*.

Indeed, this careful and astute casting underscores a concern about the politics and poetics of representation that goes far beyond the surface of style and is instead, embedded deeply within the textual and emotional history of 'The Arbor', the multiple voices it brings to bear and the socio-political and geographically specific landscapes of Buttershaw.

Conclusion

Resistant to mainstream tendencies to represent or reflect reality in a 'straightforward way', Barnard's work can, I have argued here, be understood as radical on two levels: firstly in artistic terms (particularly in relation to her technological, aesthetic and narrative techniques); and secondly in feminist terms, as work that draws attention (by purposefully playing around with vision and voice out of sync) to the previously frequent omission of the female voice in the realms of art and film. Barnard's layering of stories of exclusion, of loss, of legacy, of haunting, are written into the form and style of her work, evoked through tape recorded testimony, enactments, re-enactments and multiple temporalities and registers. The undeniable success of *The Arbor* on the art film circuit is also important to acknowledge here as evidence of the film's (and director-writer's) continuing accomplishment and yet, this success is not necessarily likely to be commercial, nor is it desired to be so. As David Forrest notes (2009: 135), art films need to be understood amidst 'a complex, dramatic and artistic

framework which utilises both its themes and its forms to engage its audience in a wholly different manner to mainstream cultural products.’ In terms of Barnard’s *The Arbor*, in revisiting and re-staging the past she not only extends Dunbar’s feminist legacy, but she also creates her own. The radical potential of *The Arbor* not only lays then in its artistic, emotional and geographical composition, but in its ability to encourage audiences to re-think the past, and to re-imagine a world where female voices can really be heard.

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