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Alberto Cavalcanti: Experimental Realism in Coal Face

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Abstract

The examination of Brazilian filmmaker Alberto Cavalcanti's contribution to documentary history will be undertaken here through a close analysis of his early film "Coal Face" (1935), which depicts the lives of coal workers in England. This film will be juxtaposed with two other significant documentaries from the same period. The first is "Industrial Britain" (Robert Flaherty, 1931/1933), and the second is "Housing Problems" (Arthur Elton and Edgar Anstey, 1935). This article delves into a discussion that, despite being produced during the same period, these films exhibit notable disparities in their aesthetical approaches to portraying reality.

Introduction

This article focuses on the work of the Brazilian Alberto Cavalcanti (1897 - 1982), whose life in Europe made him an important member of both the French Avant-garde film movement and the British General Post Office (GPO) Film Unit. In the latter, he worked as a sound engineer, producer, and director along with important names in the history of film documentary, like John Grierson.

Subsequently, to these analyses, this paper will discuss some interfaces between reality and experimentation in Cavalcanti's work. Based on that, one goal of this research is to provide some contributions to the discussion about documentaries that have attempted to merge "real" and "experimental". Even though this research project is based on documentaries from the 1930s, it attempts to touch on contemporary aesthetic debates, especially by considering the valuable contributions of past filmmaking experiences to the non-linear development of cinema.

Despite his extensive filmography and active participation in important film movements of the twentieth century, Alberto Cavalcanti remains a relatively neglected name in much of the historiography of cinema. His diverse and prolific works have been marked by a symptomatic lack of interest, or even by complete silence, when compared with most of his contemporary colleagues.

For example, Cavalcanti's book, *Filme e Realidade* (Film and Reality, 1977), has never been translated from Portuguese to English¹. As a result, to most of the English-speaking world, film historians have often played a decisive role in presenting and interpreting Cavalcanti's ideas, while the author's personal and unmediated views remain basically

confined to the universe of Portuguese readers. And yet, it is important to note that this relative lack of information about Cavalcanti's contributions to the history of cinema is also common in many Brazilian academic publications, where his name appears normally only in brief notes or without major highlights.

Although he had directed more than a hundred films and produced at least the same number, he has only one book completely dedicated to him in English. It is *Alberto Cavalcanti: Realism, Surrealism, and National Cinema*, written by Ian Aitken.

The same scarcity of books affects Brazilian and Portuguese-speaking readers. In this case, apart from his own book, *Film and Reality*, there is only one other Portuguese work translated from Italian called *Alberto Cavalcanti: Pontos sobre o Brasil*, by Lorenzo Pellizzari and Claudio M. Valentinetti (eds), published in conjunction with the 4th Locarno International Film Festival (1988).

Even though this research attempts to study only one of Cavalcanti's films, it hopes to also raise public interest about his work and its contributions to the documentary language.

Cavalcanti: An Absent Name

It is difficult to explain the exact reasons for the relative nonappearance of Cavalcanti's name in many books about the history of British documentary², as well as in some films from the GPO movement like *Coal Face*, in which he was directly responsible for the visual and aural montage but not acknowledged.

Aitken raised a polemic discussion³ about authorship in *Coal Face*, especially because the film did not have Cavalcanti's name in the original credits and it was, like many other films from the GPO, assumed to be teamwork. However, nowadays, it is generally agreed that the main responsibility for the montage, sound, and image treatment was Cavalcanti's.

There is a controversial version of a story that Cavalcanti asked Grierson⁴ not to put his name on the credits because of the film's high level of experimentation. Cavalcanti would have argued that appearing in the credits could damage his credibility inside the English cinema industry. There are reasons to doubt this. In reality, this version was never confirmed by Cavalcanti⁵, but he also stated that he opted to change from French fictional films to English documentaries exactly because he wanted to experiment in sound.

"I made a series of French comedies, which were awful, not only because they were talkies but because they were a sort of "boulevard talkies" in which people went from bed to table to supper and then back to bed. I was sick and tired. I had done four or five of these comedies and had signed for one more, then I didn't have the courage to go on. So I did what I have done many times in my long life. I said I was sick and I came to London to recover."

(Cavalcanti in Martin J. 1987, pg.31 in Winters 1972, pg. 36)

It is well known that Cavalcanti and Grierson had different perspectives about their work. The first point of divergence was related to the exhibition venues. Grierson⁶ argued that documentaries should not be screened in commercial spaces. Cavalcanti, on the other hand, supported the idea that all films, despite their genre, should be screened in any cinema.

Another fundamental difference between them concerned the use of the term “documentary.” Cavalcanti suggested, before the Italian film movement, that the term Neo-realism⁷ could be used to denominate what they were doing at that time, but Grierson defended that, in order to please the film’s main sponsor, the British State, they needed a more appropriate word, for which “document” seemed to him a perfect solution. Based on these two divergent points, it could be argued that Grierson had a tendency to separate documentary from fictional films, whereas Cavalcanti did not agree with this genre division.

From this point of view, it is important to note that when Cavalcanti arrived in England, he was already an experienced filmmaker. It was probably from his time in France that, influenced by some of the Avant-garde artists, he disagreed with the use of the word “documentary.” Along with others, André Sauvage⁸, for example, criticized this term, calling it vulgar and clamoring for a better expression when referring to this kind of “cinéma pur.” Sauvage argued that a film like *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty, 1922), which had an important impact on their film movement because it showed real images distant from the theatrical and pictorial language, would be better classified as “poetic realism” because of its powerful and beautiful images. Another similarity between Cavalcanti and Sauvage is that both defended that there is no reason to separate documentary from the other kinds of films.

Cavalcanti in France (1923 - 1934)

It was in the early twenties that Alberto Cavalcanti began his period of work in the French film movement. There he started to work as a scenographer for L’Hebrier films, first learning just as an observer in *Marchand de plaisirs*⁹ (The Merchant of Pleasures, 1923), and then finally working on the unaccomplished *Résurrection* (1923) and *Feu Mathias Pascal* (The Late Mathias Pascal, 1925). In this last one, he was given the opportunity of being a director for the first time in his life during a short period of three days in occasion of L’Hebrier’s absence¹⁰.

One year after this experience, Cavalcanti finally directed his own film, *Le Train sans yeux* (The Train Without Eyes, 1926 - 1928). However, because of economic problems involving the production company, this film had its release postponed. This disappointment did not discourage Cavalcanti; on the contrary, he did the best with this extension. In this middle time, with an improvised crew and a very modest budget, he acquired the opportunity to direct *Rien que les heures* (Nothing But the Hours, 1926), a remarkable short film about a day in Parisian life. Its innovative style and theme reached good critics in France and England¹¹. This film establishes Cavalcanti’s importance to the French Avant-garde¹², even though it is difficult to compare it with other French films of the same period. *Nothing but the hours* is a particularly unique film even in relation to Cavalcanti’s other works. As Aitken¹³ observes, in terms of the modernist experimental style, it can be compared only with *Coal Face*, a film that is later analysed here inside the British film movement.

The list of films directed by Cavalcanti in his French period is not small¹⁴. Only to mention some of the most successful

works, it is possible to refer to *En Rade* (Stranded, 1927), which, with more conventional narration, had a quite high budget and considerable commercial distribution. Also from the same year, *Yvette*, which was a considerably more commercial film and criticised by some of the Avant-garde filmmakers; and *Le P'tite Lilie* (1927), which was made in between *Yvette*'s shooting in relatively improvised circumstances but had critical and commercial accomplishment. Cavalcanti's divergences with the French Avant-garde only increased after some criticism of the presence of popular culture in *Le P'tite Lilie*.¹⁵ However, it seems that Cavalcanti wasn't worried about theoretical issues about cinema but more concerned about its production.

It is from this time that his association with Jean Renoir began, and in these circumstances, he directed *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* (Little Red Riding Hood, 1929). In this film, Cavalcanti had Renoir as a set designer, but this partnership would end in just a few years, and after that, they remained separated. Nevertheless, it is by reason of this exact film that Cavalcanti had his first experience with sound.¹⁶ From this time, his passion for sound only increased, and consequently, by reason of his knowledge in that area, he made a great number of films and became a reference as a sound engineer.

It is from this period in France that he directed the first spoken sound film in the Portuguese language, *A Canção do Berço* (Song of the Cradle, 1931), actually a version of a French film using almost everything from it, like the same scenery and costumes, only changing the cast¹⁷.

Although Cavalcanti was an enthusiast of sound films, the repetition of the French industry, based only on talkies stories, most of them boulevard comedies, without creative challenges, made Cavalcanti uninterested and exhausted by his work there. Even though he was receiving a considerable wage, he preferred to search for new experiences. He decided to end his period of French films and travel to England.

From his time in France, Cavalcanti brought to England not only his knowledge about the sound and commercial film industry, but also his curiosity about the sound possibilities, his experience in different styles such as impressionism and surrealism, and, more important than everything, his incontestable desire for experimentation.

GPO before Cavalcanti

Tools and Machines

Although *Industrial Britain* is well known as Flaherty's romantic portrayal of British industry, it is important to note that he was responsible for the original script and images, but not for the final version. Actually, it was Edgar Anstey, one of the directors of the Housing Problem, who would assume the definite editing of the film, along with John Grierson's supervision and commentary directions.

Industrial Britain is a twenty-minute film dedicated mainly to the theme of the working class. Even when it tries to concentrate on the development of the industry itself, it is all about the man behind the machines. Without them, using and fixing each tool, there is no development. The industry needs their labour.

Authors like Hood (1983, pg 107) and Higson (?) point to the similarities between *Industrial Britain* and *Coal Face* in the way that they idealize the workers as heroes,

*“Working class as ‘victim’ is less prominent in documentary film than working class as working hero. In films such as **Industrial Britain** and **Coalface[sic]** the concentration on men's work is a cause and effect of the determination to see ‘the working man... as a heroic figure’”.*

But from Cavalcanti's¹⁸ perspective, the best achievement of the documentary film movement was to change the way that workers were represented: “In England, since Shakespeare, the working classes were considered as comic relief in theatre and films, and little by little documentary imposed the workers as dignified human beings.”

On the other hand, Corner (1966, pg 62) makes a division between Flaherty's “romantic” and Cavalcanti's “modern” forms of viewing British modern industry:

*There is none of that lyricisation of the industrial which can be seen in earlier films, such as Flaherty's **Industrial Britain** (1931), where an attempt is made to 'see' modern industry in terms which have continuity with a calmer, rural national past. In that sense, **Coalface[sic]** is much closer to its influences in Soviet film, where the excitement of modernity is accompanied by a sense of dislocation, dissonance, and the sheer power of the machine.” (Corner, 1966, pg 62)*

Cavalcanti in the GPO (1934 - 1939)

It was in 1934 that Cavalcanti started his English film period. There he was invited by Grierson to stay for a while and teach about sound techniques to the young members of the GPO teamwork. However, Cavalcanti's presence became so important there that he stayed for almost seven years, even substituting Grierson¹⁹ and working as the head of the production of the Film Unit from 1936 until 1939. By the time the war began and he was pressured to become an English citizen, he preferred to leave the GPO and restart, this time working at Ealing Studios.

The experimental Coal Face

Coal Face is an eleven-minute short film that was one of the most important films produced by the GPO. Seen through the eyes of today, it can still surprise for the extensive experiments in sound, the modernist influence on visual montage, and, above all, the way in which it plays around with different styles of documentary. Coal Face surprises in the way that it utilises aspects from the most traditional use of the voice over until the desynchronised dialogue or the abstract perspective of the machines, giving them animated life.

Unfortunately, while the film's images remain in good preservation and can be seen in quite good quality to this day, the

same cannot be heard from the film's soundtrack. Ironically, nowadays, it is the imperative voiceover that remains in the best quality, and not the poetic soundtrack that had all the prides because of its level of experimentation. Within the possible, this analysis attempts to accomplish the impact of this film as a complete masterpiece, slighting these technical restrictions.

Miles and Smith²⁰ state that *Coal Face* is much stronger for its aesthetic aspects than for its political point of view: "After Cavalcanti's arrival, the Movement split, broadly speaking, into two wings, one concentrating on the aesthetics of documentary and the other on the politics of realism."

The script, marked by the contrasts of images and sounds, is essentially based on the portrayal of two parallel worlds. One explains the importance of coal for the British Empire's economy, and the other represents the struggle of those who work in the mines. This short film seems to have been strongly influenced by the Soviet film movement of the period. Evidence of how Soviet cinematography inspired Cavalcanti is the way in which *Coal Face* produces meanings through the use of aural and visual expressive aspects. Because of this narrative strategy, this research project will be focused on a separate analysis of this film's sound and sight. Here it is valuable to say that the editing is an important aspect of this film and that this division into visual and aural aspects does not disregard the final effect of the montage when all those elements are orchestrated together.

Three aural elements: music, noises, and words²¹

Especially concerning the use of sounds, *Coal Face* seems to have been strongly influenced by Soviet directors such as V. Pudovkin²², who noted that sounds should be added to an image to increase its expression, in order to deepen it, and not make it more realist. That is exactly what happens in terms of the aural montage in *Coal Face*. Even though this research project will analyse the three aural elements in *Coal Face* (music, noises, and words) separately, it is important to note that they are organically linked during the whole film. This had been perceived as early as the film was released, and it can be attested by the Film Society programme²³ comments at the time: "The usual method of speaking a commentary to a background of music was avoided, and commentary and music were composed together."

The use of noises from the tools and the machines has a dramatic intention, one that aims to extrapolate a naturalistic portrayal. Ellis and McLane²⁴ consider that, equivalent to the participation of Cavalcanti and Grierson, the work of the composer Benjamin Britten was fundamental to the film. Merging piano and percussive drums, this composer created a modern music approach, which seems to serve as an expressionist ambience sound.

On the same theme, Corner²⁵ points out, "There is no actuality sound at all - all machines' noises are produced by an orchestra, with a consequent distortion in both tone and volume." Full of intentions and meaning, the soundtrack assumes an important narrative role. This aligns with Pudovkin's²⁶ affirmation about music in films: "Music, I maintain, must in a sound film never be the accompaniment. It must retain its own line."

In the very beginning of the film, the sung chorus announces the main characters of the film: "There is the mine. There

are the miners.” With this simple sentence, the film not only opens by clearly stating the relationship between the miners and the mine, but also by anticipating the social tensions and contradictions which will mark the whole plot. Even though each of these worlds needs the other one to survive, they are connected through a relation of intrinsic fight.

The female choral recites and sings Auden's poetry²⁷, which dramatically contrasts with the image of the male miners. The female voice is singing exactly at the moment when the men go out of the mines and go home. When they are “emerging” from the underground world, the female voices seem to be waiting for them. It seems that their singing relates to family and house issues, while all the other sounds of the film relate to their work. The choral also contrasts with the objective meaning coming from the voice-over commentaries, pushing to a more dramatic interpretation of their life conditions. This contrast of sounds produces a strong effect of humanist drama. As Miles and Smith²⁸ point out, “Experiments with sound, such as the specifically written poetry or music for *Coalface* and *Nightmail[sic]*, were a long way from what we would expect to classify as ‘documentary’.

Regarding the film's narration, it can be argued that it not only plays a basically didactic role, but that it is also provocative. Even though it relies on the classic style of a voiceover giving information, its accelerated rhythm and the unusual tone merges with the other sound components. The commentary, thus, can be interpreted as part of the music and vice versa²⁹.

The first and the last voiceover repeat the same sentence: “Coal mining is the basic industry of Britain.” It is maybe an attempt to cause different reactions based on the same information, before and after the film. Another voice-over describes a mathematical relationship between the number of men and tunnels in different spots, showing the proportional importance of the workers to the productivity of the industry.

Minutes later, another narration says: “Every working day four miners are killed, and over 450 injured and maimed. Every year in Great Britain one in every five miners is injured”. (Coal Face, 05min.40sec) One more time, this can be understood as very didactic information if it weren't for the fact that there is a contrast between the cruelty of these facts and the objectivity with which the data is displayed. The narration seems to suggest that the mining industry is not only based on finding coal but also on transforming workers into daily victims of this industry. Through this mathematical observation, the exploitation by the industry is reported, accentuating that there is no limit to coal mining and that even the lives of those workers may be lost during their workday. The image at this same timeframe shows part of the miners' ceiling falling and an unbolted rail being repaired by a worker. Again, the provocation seems to alert how powerful this industry is, that it can replace the workers as if they were loose screws.

To conclude, it is important to add that even though Corner argues that the absence of direct sound in *Coal Face* was probably caused by technician limits, it is possible to think that Cavalcanti was more concerned about creating an expressive soundtrack than simply adding naturalistic dialogues from the miners. This interpretation of Cavalcanti might be supported by Pudovkin's³⁰ ideas about sound: “It would be entirely false to consider sound merely as a mechanical device enabling us to enhance the naturalness of the image.” Through this perspective, it can be argued that all sounds of machines and tools aim to provoke attention and not necessarily to synch with what is shown on the screen.

The visual elements

The images of the miners are shown in a quite distant way. There are no particular characters, only the images of a group of general “miners,” with no individualities or idiosyncrasies. They are never presented by their family names or their subjective differences, only by their similarities. They are all miners, and they live in the same situation. A common job defines their connection. However, this job is represented as much more than one segment of their lives. It is the definition of their identities since *Coal Face* is not a film about individuals in the coal industry but about workers who, contradictorily, can survive but even die by reason of this activity.

According to Corner, due to Cavalcanti's emphasis on the opposition between the mine and the miners, the workers are depicted essentially as an internal “Other.” “At many points, the depiction of the miners in *Coalface* [sic] is anthropological in its “otherness” and distance.” (pg. 61). He highlights this point by referring to the miners as “the fascinatingly strange” (pg. 62) and by noting how they are depicted as if they are ethnographical objects: “almost as if they become a hardy, subterranean race, locked into a daily, heroic battle for coal against natural forces and dangers.” (pg. 62).

Other authors such as Dodd K. and Dodd P.³¹ point to the celebration of the male body throughout different moments of the film, noting how Cavalcanti's recurrent use of the image of their naked chests and close-ups on their muscles. (‘Male narcissism’?) Similarly, Higson³² (1995, pg 197) explains, “This point of view can solicit the admiration of the spectator as the workers and their workplaces are aestheticized into heroic things of beauty.”

Although the aesthetic use of the miners' bodies can be considered as a truthful analysis, there is another important element through the film that deserves considerable attention: the machines. In different moments of the film, they assume a main role, covering the whole frame and having masterful proportions because of the shooting perspective. The machines seem to be living gear.

It is valuable to point out that this is another clear influence from Soviet cinema, particularly the relationship between people and machines presented in *Coal Face* and in Soviet Modernism in general, and also in specific works by Dziga Vertov. As Campbell³³ suggests, “Vertov was intoxicated by machinery; less excitable, the British, however, also regarded documentary as an appropriate aesthetic response to the industrial age.”

When the miners arrived in the external world, there was also some tension between naturalism and industrialism, represented in long shots of a tree against the wind and chimney stacks which, along with the wind, only spread more and more smoke.

An important element for this examination is the editing format and the visual effects. Corner³⁴ suggests that *the* most significant contribution of *Coal Face* is the fact that it situates filming as a work of art. As a consequence of this, Corner deduces that *Coal Face*'s main focus is not the direct information explicit in the narrative, but the aesthetic experiment conducted throughout the whole film.

Montage versus Testimony

Housing Problems is a twenty-minute short film directed by Elton and Anstey in 1935. The Gas Industry sponsored this documentary, which is mainly concerned with the conditions of people who live in the slums and in showing how better housing projects would improve their social conditions. This documentary is analysed here in relation to *Coal Face*.

Armes³⁵ in his chapter “Sound Documentary” says that *Housing Problems* was a sort of response to the experimental style of *Coal Face* and *Night Mail*. Through the direct sound, “the film-makers allowed ordinary people to communicate through the camera.” Because of this, he says that the film brought a realistic spontaneity that was lost with the experimental use of sound in the other two films.

Both films were made in the same year and they also have a main subject in common, the working class:

Without Vertov's revolutionary convictions, the British documentarians nevertheless shared his belief in a cinema centered on ordinary working people in their daily lives, and his abhorrence for fictional narrative and studio sets.”
(CAMPBELL, 1982, pg. 15)

Although linked by these similarities, the way both deal with image and sound is remarkably different in these films. This opinion is shared by Swann³⁶, who says that *Coal Face* was so distanced from the GPO Film Unit that it had to be “released as a pseudonymous ‘Empo’ production”.

John Corner has called *Coal Face* “an exercise in experimentalist realism”³⁷. In this same study, he also compares Cavalcanti's film with *Housing Problems*. Corner points to two basic differences between these two films: the first one is their distinct aesthetic compositions; the second is the social discourses that inform each one of these works.

He indicates that *Housing Problems* is not a film about facts but about “ordinary people”. Different from other documentaries made during this time, it was based on the testimonies of slum residents. In this respect, Corner³⁸ adds that: “*Housing Problems* develops a reportorial naturalism which has been widely seen to make it, at least in part, a precursor of the contemporary television documentary”.

In addition to the above differences, Corner affirms that, in contrast to the way *Housing Problems* is predominantly based on individual testimony, *Coal Face* is constructed without the use of direct sound or the use of interviews. Due to this option, Cavalcanti's film minimises any subjectivity from “the miners,” who are never portrayed as singular individuals, but only as a homogenous “mass” which shares general things in common.

An important example of this is the representation of the miners' pit, the place from which all of them get the scarce resources to support their families and to maintain their homes. Although their daily journey to the mine is a quest for guaranteeing the necessities of life, the industry that employs them is the biggest in the country.

Ironically, Corner points out that *Housing Problem* could have been called “Housing Solutions,” notably because of the way the film is dedicated to offering solutions to the problems of slum residents. Different from *Coal Face*, in which the

miners' perspectives and their own understandings of the problems that they face are not examined, Corner explains that the use of interviews in *Housing Problems* transfers to the spectator the slum residents' point of view and their opinions on the objective situation they are facing.

The testimonies in the film, despite being more formal than those employed in contemporary interviewing, can be seen in analogy to some of today's TV documentary styles. Corner concludes by suggesting that while *Coal Face* can be seen as a legacy and an early inspiration for art filming, *Housing Problem* probably helped to influence television style.

It is important to say that Corner himself refers to other authors who have different appreciations of *Housing Problem*. Higson(?), for example, suggests that the film's use of a narration in voice over promotes a distancing of the spectator. Rotha³⁹ (Antesy in Sussex, 1975, pg 62), on the other hand, criticizes the lack of interventions from the directors during the film. Regarding this aspect, Anstey defends his director's position by saying that he and co-director Elton left the camera "dead on, because it wasn't our film." The contradiction that can be drawn from Anstey's position is that the interviewed people are only present in front of the camera at this first moment and did not have any role throughout the script or the editing process.

Other authors, such as Dodd and Dodd (1996), indicate that the film's camera not only inhibits audiences from feeling close enough to the real people represented, but also that it insists on presenting them always in the place of victims who need permanent assistance. Even more rigorous in this opinion is Joris Ivens⁴⁰, who comments on how the film points to a deliberate fascination of the filmmakers with the dirtiness, and also to its lack of a political point of view, especially since it was sponsored by a company and not made through social organizations.

Even though *Housing Problems* is mainly based on interviews, Miles and Smith⁴¹ affirm, "*Housing Problems* clearly is not the slum-dwellers' film." The problem is that, similar to other documentaries based on the testimony of everyday people, the montage alternates between their popular voices and the authoritative discourses coming from professional committees and experts who have the final words about how to solve their housing problems. In this sense, Miles and Smith go even farther by suggesting that:

"The role of the slum-dwellers' appearances is simply anecdotal, to confirm the need for the changes already taking place, without actually challenging either the scope of those changes or the form that they are taking."
(1987, pg. 193)

Consequently, these authors also affirm that this documentary, despite approaching the complex theme of life in the slums, already comes with a set of answers, and that the interviews are only used to confirm the social problems that are already implicit in the film's plot. Implied in this is also the idea that the solution to the slums' problems comes, not from those who actually live there, but from external agents, such as engineers and architects: "The emphasis, in fact, is on the social engineering role that the intelligent elite is already performing in contemporary society."

Conclusion

It is not difficult to agree that both *Housing Problems* and *Coal Face* were documentaries made by the same privileged economic class. Even though they had good intentions and accurate criticism about the workers' living conditions, none of them was directly involved in social movements or organizations, and it is incorrect to say in any case that those films represented the economic low-class perspective at that moment. That can be said because both films actually were not made with low-class participation but about their situation. In other words, the poverty wasn't the subject but the object of these documentaries as they were not, in any case, part of the crew but the cast, standing only in front of the camera.

However, a great distinction between these two realizations is the fact that *Coal Face* is explicitly a manipulated film in terms of sound and image, full of editing intervention and none of showing the reality itself. The main objective of the form in *Coal Face* is to provoke a reflexive interpretation about it. On the other hand, *Housing Problems* had another kind of ambition, concerned with giving voice to people from the slums and showing their difficult condition almost without any interference; its attempts can easily be dropped in inevitable contradictions regarding that from the script until the editing, a film is immersed in intervention.

Footnotes

¹ Aitken I. *The Documentary Film Movement - An Anthology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998. Print.

² Cavalcanti's name was the only one absent from the Grierson's group in the chapter about the British Documentary Movement in the *Encyclopedie du Cinema* (Roger Boussinot, Editions Bordas, Paris, 1966). Sussex. E. "Cavalcanti in England". *Sight and Sound* vol. 44, no. 4, Autumn, 1975. pg 205. Print.

³ Aitken I. Alberto Cavalcanti : realism, surrealism and national cinemas. Trowbridge, Wiltshire : Flicks Books, 2000, pg 79

⁴ Rotha P. *Documentary diary; an informal history of the British documentary film, 1928-1939*. London, Secker & Warburg, 1973. Print pg?

⁵ Sussex E. "Cavalcanti in England". *Sight and Sound* vol. 44, no. 4, Autumn, 1975, 205-211. Print.

⁶ Sussex idem 4 pg?

⁷ Monegal, Emir Rodriguez. "Alberto Cavalcanti". *The Quarterly of Film Radio and Television*, Vol. 9, N. 4 (Summer, 1955), pgs Accessed 08/06/2010. <www.jstor.org/stable/1209855>.

⁸ Aitken Pg15

⁹ Aitken pg 7

¹⁰ Canosa. F. *Conversa com Alberto Cavalcanti*. 1972. Pellizzari and Valentinetti, pg. 288

¹¹ Aitken pg 78

¹² Aitken pg 21

¹³ Aitken pg21 and 81

¹⁴ See complete list in Aitken pg 246

¹⁵ Aitken 25 - 26

¹⁶ Pellizzari and Valentinetti, pg26

¹⁷ Pellizzari and Valentinetti, pg 28

¹⁸ Sussex, 1975, pg 194

¹⁹ Aitken pg . 44, 50

²⁰ Miles, P. and Smith, M. Cinema, literature & society: elite and mass culture in interwar Britain. London; New York : Croom Helm, 1987. Pg 189. Print

²¹ Cavalcanti in interview 1972 "For me, sound consists of three main elements: music, noise, and words."

²² Pudovkin, V. *Film Technique and Film Acting*. New York: Grove Press, 1960. Print.

²³ Rotha P. Documentary diary; an informal history of the British documentary film, 1928-1939. London, Secker & Warburg, 1973. Print, pg 131.

²⁴ Ellis J. and McLane A. A new history of documentary film. New York : Continuum, c2005. Print

²⁵ Corner, J. The art of record: a critical introduction to documentary. New York: Manchester University Press, 1966. Print, pg 57

²⁶ Pudovkin's ,1960, pg 190

²⁷ Ellis J. and McLane A.

²⁸ Miles and Smith ,1987, p.189

²⁹ Aitken, 2000, pg 80

³⁰ Pudovikin (1960, pg 183)

³¹ Dodd K. and Dodd P. in Higson, A. Engendering the Nation: British Documentary Film 1930-1939. Dissolving Views: key writing on British cinema. London; New York, NY : Cassell, 1996.

³² Higson A. Waving the flag. Constructing a National Cinema in Britain. Oxford : Clarendon Press ; New York : Oxford

University Press, 1995

³³ Campbell R. Cinema strikes back: radical filmmaking in the United States, 1930-1942. Ann Arbor, Mich. UMI Research Press, 1982. Print, pg. 15

³⁴ Corner, 1966

³⁵ Arnes R. Film and Reality: an historical survey. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974, pg 46

³⁶ Swann. P. The British documentary film movement, 1926-1946. Cambridge [England] ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1989, pg 90

³⁷ Corner, 1966, pg.56)

³⁸ Corner, 1966, pg.56

³⁹ Sussex E.

⁴⁰ In Rotha P. (In Rotha, 1973, pg 157)

⁴¹ Miles and Smith, 1987, pg 193