

Written Response for 'Methods of Investigation'
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"You must set about it more slowly, almost stupidly. Force yourself to write down what is of no interest, what is most obvious, most common, most colourless."(Georges Perec and Sturrock, 1997)

Reading 'The Street' from *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* by Georges Perec (1997) proved a novel and instructive experience. After systematically and meticulously defining the street within his own knowledge, he began re-observing it through multiple lenses, scrutinizing every detail as though encountering that street for the first time, with an almost foolish gaze. His prose shifts with attention, without a rigid sequence. For instance, from pages 50 to 52, his focus shifts to cafés, cars, number plates, what's written on the street, heels, and the number of operations performed by drivers. Then, he critically examines his own investigating process, noting:

"You still haven't looked at anything, you've merely picked out what you've long ago picked out." (Georges Perec and Sturrock, 1997)

This is both a statement to himself and to the reader. Consequently, in my own investigation, I employed a very similar approach to investigate the sounds I could hear on a path in Kensington Gardens. Georges used vision as his medium of observation; I used hearing.

At the very outset of my investigation, I measured the distance between benches with my footsteps and used this data to map the path, much like how Perec (1997) defined the streets in Chapter One through 'the parallel alignment of two series of buildings'. Yet, just as his self-knowledge shaped his definition of the street, this knowledge subtly influenced his mode of investigation. The significance of street continuity (evident in his note on the odd-even pattern of house numbers) was already foreshadowed by the term "series". In my investigation, the method I later employed—taking notes on six different benches—was conspicuously present in the data of bench distances.

“A clock without hands is my kind of thing.” (Varda, 2000)

Agnès Varda (2000)’s *The Gleaners and I* felt both fascinating and tedious; the tedium is descriptive, not pejorative. Shot informally, the film follows modern gleaners while doubling as a semi-autobiographical self-portrait. My favourite scene is Varda (2000) picking up a transparent plastic clock without hands—“her style.” I was also moved by other personal fragments woven throughout: she circled her hands toward every lorry on the motorway, collecting heart-shaped potatoes, forgetting to close the camera lens.

These moments revealed this work wasn't an objective documentary, inspiring me to infuse my own subjectivity and play throughout my investigation. In my notes, I wrote of how pigeons imparted pressure to me, how fallen leaves slipped into my bag as if asking to come home.

Yet what influenced me most was the form of my final presentation. I deliberately chose a tedious visual language detached from most graphic design conventions (PowerPoint and graphic notations). I played a recording of myself reading a monologue in Kensington Garden. The necessity of this audio format mirrored Varda (2000) 's description of herself as a director akin to a gleaner of images. By placing my own sound within the park, I summarised my discoveries towards the sound, embodying the principle where a work interprets itself through its medium.

A presentation without PowerPoint is my kind of thing.

References

Georges Perec and Sturrock, J. (1997). *Species of spaces and other pieces : Georges Perec*. London: Penguin, pp.46–56.

Varda, A. (2000) *The Gleaners and I*. [Streaming video]. The Criterion Channel. Available at: < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YN6mad94SmM> > (Accessed: 30 September 2025).