Investigating disorientation through the adoption of role-play in contemporary fine art practice.

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PhD submission

Edinburgh College of Art

2009

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ABSTRACT

Through my programme of practice-led research I have used role-play as a vehicle for the exploration of identity and politics in a series of art works encompassing video, drawing and photography. This research discusses the highly spatialised ways of describing cultural identity, covering aspects of: film, mapping, spatial practices and theory, performativity and translation, as well as a body of art works by the artist-researcher and other contemporary artists. I move through overlapping terrains of female geographers, cultural and visual theorists, filmmakers, architectural historians and theorists, sociologists, psychoanalysts, art writers and artists.

My primary focus is role-play and identity with relation to the experience of place and displacement – role-play for me is a strategy for the physical navigation and negotiation, translation and reconciliation within a given site. In my practice I make use of the characters of the Navigator and the Ambassadress to explore physical and linguistic aspects of the description and translation of space. I will discuss these roles, through the art works generated, firstly to explore the legacy of female explorers and the rise of spatial language and metaphor to examine the female experience of space, and secondly to interrogate the notion of disorientation and dislocation; of being out of place.

The written thesis is constructed around two main sections – mirroring the two roles in my practice: that of the Navigator and the Ambassadress. The submission consists of art works made during the doctoral research programme, employing these roles to produce separate bodies of drawing, photography and multi-screen video works that reflect my primary themes.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Thank you to the people who helped me embark on this journey: Dr Bashir Makhoul, Dr Tom Fisher, Professor Mike Press, Dr Louise Milne and Professor Pavel Büchler.

Thank you to the people who have helped me navigate my way: Dr D.Cooley, Dr A.Barbara, ‘Dr’ G.Maule.

Thank you to the AHRC for supporting this research project 2002-2007.

Thank you to the Sculpture Department at ECA for their support.

Thank you to Per Hüttner

Thank you to my supervisors: Dr Andrew Patrizio and Dr Louise Milne, and to Dr Sophia Lycouris of the Graduate Research School.

Lastly, but not least, thank you to my family and friends for their unfailing support, and to my collaborative colleagues in Brass Art for understanding.
For my family
especially my daughter Olive.

42°21' N 14°10' E
52°18' N 104°18' E
INTRODUCTION

My approach to this practice-led research has been that of a personal navigation. First, I interrogate aspects of my artistic practice, and second I look to the events that have influenced the construction of my own cultural identity, and subsequently, my art practice. Through this I re-interrogate the artworks I have made on my route through the PhD.

My programme of practice-led research uses role-play as a vehicle for the exploration of identity and politics in a series of art works encompassing video, drawing and photography. My primary focus is role-play and identity with relation to the experience of place and displacement – role-play for me is a strategy for the physical navigation and negotiation, translation and reconciliation within a given site. For my programme of research, I invented the characters of the Navigator and the Ambassadress as a strategy to explore physical and linguistic aspects of the description and translation of space. I will discuss these roles, and the art works they generated, to investigate the legacy of female explorers and the rise of spatial language and metaphor, to examine the female experience of space, and also to interrogate the notion of disorientation and dislocation; of being out of place. This personal and creative account of dislocation also echoes broader cultural accounts of dislocation as an effect of modernity.

The written thesis is constructed around two main sections, mirroring the two distinct roles of the Navigator and Ambassadress. The exhibition consists of art works made during the doctoral research programme, employing these roles to produce separate
bodies of drawing, photography and multi-screen video works that engage with this
dual focus of communication and navigation. Single screen video, Navigator#5, is
discussed in Chapter 2, along with video i denti del lupo which tested the
palindromic structure used in both works. Also in Chapter 2, I introduce the three-
screen video work Navigator#7, and the large drawing Legenda, which
contextualises the video work. In Chapter 3, the video works Gole and Testa expand
upon the role of the Ambassadress in video and photographic works.

As I began this research programme, Giuliana Bruno, Professor in Visual and
– a filmic and architectural mapping of the body in space. This atlas became a pivotal
work for me in my research, as it covered maps, filmic journeys, architectural spaces,
haptic environments, topographical itineraries and the voyage of the female traveller.
Initially this vast collection of linked interests, films and art works was
overwhelming – the field seemed so roundly excavated by Bruno. Ultimately though,
Bruno provided an additional lens through which to view and interrogate my practice
and its context. I also felt I could make an original contribution to Bruno’s themes,
specifically that of the female traveller and travel writer.

Like the Atlas of Emotion, (Bruno, 2002) my research covers aspects of film,
mapping, spatial practices and theory, performativity and translation, as well as a
body of art works by the artist-researcher and other contemporary artists, such as:
Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, João Penalva, Joachim Koester and Stan
Douglas. The processes of translating, mirroring, remembering and mapping are
pivotal to the thesis and the practice, and are also referred to through other works, in
the overlapping and complementary fields of art and film. I also refer to films by: Humphrey Jennings, Michelangelo Antonioni, Aleksandr Sokurov, Andrei Tarkovsky and Elem Klimov. This thesis therefore moves through overlapping terrains of female geographers, cultural and visual theorists, filmmakers, architectural historians and theorists, sociologists, psychoanalysts, art writers and artists – including: Giuliana Bruno, Jane Rendell, Miwon Kwon, Jeremy Millar, Michel deCerteau and Nikos Papastergiadis.

Because I am so visibly present in my work, and much of my research is around the notion of self-identity, I want to inscribe a personal voice in the written text as a way of exploring my experience of the space (of memory, etc) differently. The act of remembering the places the work was made – or the spaces it alludes to – is an interpretation: a translation and articulation of the space of memory. These writings on memory are collected around a series of co-ordinates – the position of latitude and longitude – at different points in time. The transformation of the research subject, in relation to its contextual surroundings and politics, is mirrored by the movement of the human subject, the migrant or exile, and it’s mutual transformation with environs and infrastructure.

Amongst these cartographic positions there is significant absence, that of Przywłuk: the focus of a perpetual search, and the active site of my writing around space and memory. Przywłuka is a variant name for a place of anecdotal myth and origin in my family history. For me it signifies the unknowable, the unverifiable subject, itself transformed by my research. The loss, or lack, of Przywłuk is explored through the possibility of substituted sites; those in which the art works are generated. These
substitutes expand the potential of Przewłok as an active site for my research, and mirror my attempts at orientation within an unknown and unknowable landscape — through language and gesture, and the graphic articulation of one site effectively haunting another.

I intend that this writing, and its elements of autobiography, can be read, in the words of Feminist philosopher bell hooks, as,

“Encouraging readers to see dreams and fantasies as part of the material we use to invent the self” (Kivland, Sanderson, 2002, p.18).

These dreams and fantasies, or reveries, function as an alternative 'travelogue' to the main text of the exegesis — a different authorial voice. The writer Italo Calvino articulates this theme of the author in the text,
“And in these operations the person “I”, whether explicit or implicit, splits into a number of different figures: into an “I” who is writing and an “I” who is written, into an empirical “I” who looks over the shoulder of the “I” who is writing and into a mythical “I” who serves as a model for the “I” who is written. The “I” of the author is dissolved in the writing. The so-called personality of the writer exists within the very act of writing: it is the product and the instrument of the writing process.”

(Kivland, Sanderson, 2002, p.24)

Seen from a multiplicity of positions, such biomythography engages in a fantastical articulation that constitutes a form of spatial writing. I am particularly interested in Jane Rendell’s discussion around ‘confessional constructions’. She describes these as pieces of writing where her own voice is juxtaposed with those of critical theorists, and reflects on her own life as subject matter for theoretical reflection. This reflection and analysis hinges on memory. Rendell cites Mieke Bal’s assertion that,

“memory is an act of ‘vision’ of the past, but as an act it is situated in the memory’s present. It is often a narrative act: loose elements come together and cohere into a story so that they can be remembered and eventually told.” (Kivland, Sanderson, 2002, p.17)

As an artist and third generation immigrant I can ask the questions of the first generation displaced/ immigrants that the second generation cannot easily ask, or hear. By placing pieces of autobiographical writings into the text I make space for deviations; detours into a more personal space of reverie. This approach is multi-modal – echoing the multiplicities inherent a practice-led PhD, in which the form suits the content. I have explicitly used different registers to engage readers in different ways to the thesis.

In Chapter 1, I site my practice and research autobiographically – drawing on personal genealogy, as well as constructing a ‘family tree’ of female explorers and travel writers. My work is set in an aesthetic context, and viewed as part of a trajectory of moving image works, referencing Vera Frenkel and Chantal Akerman.
set out the voyage of the female subject through pilgrimage and explorer, to the urban possibility of a *flaneuse* traversing space, and the female spectator ‘activated’ by the moving image to consume and desire space and travel.

In Chapter 2, the Navigator enters the text from the forbidden geographies of eastern European militarized zones, and attempts an orientation. Through Aleksandr Sokurov’s *Russian Ark* I look at the construction of memory and identity as recurrence and re-enactment. Artworks by Ori Gersht, Joachim Koester and Christian Phillip Müller are cited for their relevance to borders and liminal spaces. Humphrey Jennings’ *The Silent Village* provides a mirror to the processes of remembering and identifying, while conflating ‘local’ narratives around the production of the film and the Second World War itself.

In Chapter 3, I introduce the role of the Ambassadress in my practice – from her genesis as a socially constructed model of diplomacy to a figure in alien landscapes, employing her *phatic* gestures in an attempt to communicate ‘in space’. From her position as a locutor I look at the process of translation in the works of João Penalva’s *336PEK*, Janet Cardiff and George Büres Miller’s *Road Trip*, to Per Hüttner’s *Jogging in Exotic Cities*.

In the fourth and concluding chapter of my thesis, I reflect in more detail upon my practice as the key part of this research programme, examining the artworks made and how they develop my primary themes. I hope to have shown how these works, and the contextual analysis around them, make a creative, original and contemporary contribution to the themes of role-play, identity, the experience of place, and displacement.
PART 1:
AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND GENEALOGY OF ARTWORKS

My ancestry is Scots-Italian-Polish. I was born in Scotland, as were my parents, and consider myself to be third generation Italian and Polish, both on my father's side. To be a third generation immigrant is not a unique experience. However, the fact of carrying an 'unpronounceable' Polish surname in a northern Scottish city seems, on reflection, pivotal in the development of my art practice. Many post-Second World War immigrants changed their names when they substituted one homeland for another. My grandfather's brother changed his surname to Rogers, when he emigrated to Canada, but could not hide his thick accent. For most of my adult life I have been one of five people in the country with the surname Mojsiewicz – all immediate family.

It is also crucial in my work, that, despite my Polish name and grandfather, no Polish language is spoken in the family. My grandfather's death in 1968 meant a slow decline in correspondence with family in Warsaw and Kraków. The difficulties of getting a visa to the UK meant that until the collapse of Communism, in 1989, I only ever met one Polish relative. Neither my father nor his brothers remember any Polish – the language they grew up speaking in conjunction with Italian. In our family, Polish died with my grandfather, before I was born. Now it is possible to hear Polish everywhere on the streets in the U.K. It is an acute reminder to me that I cannot converse in that language and remain excluded from it.
The Italian colouring inherited from my Abruzzi grandmother, coupled with Slavic features and a Polish surname, frequently leads people to assume I am Jewish. To compound this, my surname has two etymological possibilities: it can be translated as 'son of Mojslaw' – literally 'son of my renown' – or, more commonly, as 'son of Moses'. My family soundly refute any Jewish connections, or religious conversions. If archive documents are correct (and definitely do refer to my branch of the family), then the name Mojsiewicz has been in use from the seventeenth century, or earlier. This predates the advent of enforced surnames on the Jewish population, and refers to a time when the name Moses was widely used by Christians and Jews alike.

Artworks made during and after my Masters degree, played with these assumptions of identity. Tunica herbu (1998) presented a knight's gipon: a heraldic tunic to be worn on top of armour. The work was installed in the window of an ecclesiastical tailor and outfitters, which also displayed heraldic crests. The 'shield' emblem was
drawn, stitched, unpicked and redrawn numerous times. It contains the symbols of star, crescent and cross, and references one version of a published\textsuperscript{8} heraldic crest for Mojsiewicz. The text was embroidered, and the tunic made to fit my own measurements. This work was echoed in the piece Moses (1998), using an existing jacket, bought specifically for the purpose of embroidering, I continue to use this as any other piece of clothing. It was not conceived of as a performance costume, but I was aware of the reactions I might encounter, when wearing it. There have been certain occasions when the political climate has made it a dangerous item to wear – ie. when orthodox Jews were attacked in the streets and on public transport in London. The work was intended to be curious rather than politically provocative, a female figure alluding to a patrilineal history. Both works were made in response to the (increasingly regular) phenomenon of being interrupted in conversation, with a lowered voice and a pat on the back of the hand, “but you are one of us, yes?”

I visited Poland numerous times, since its independence in 1989, and tried to uncover more family stories from my relatives there. I visited historic cities, the remains of magnate estates, tiny hamlets with mosques and synagogues. I started the search to uncover my genealogical past using online research groups. I considered this research as separate from my art practice, but grew increasingly aware that the historical and genealogical information I read was informing my practice and the focus of my work.

My interest in genealogy set my focus to the East, to the borderlands of the old Commonwealth Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, much of which is now Belarus. Mojsiewicz is also not a common name in Poland ‘proper’. The main clusters of the
name, in Poland, can be found on the coast line in the north of the country – Gdańsk, Kołobrzeg, Goleniów, Szczecin, and Słupsk, with few more in the Northern Central parts of Bydgoszcz, Olsztyn, and some further East in Białystok. The inhabitants of the borderlands / Belarus – the lucky ones – were deported from the regions around Nowogródek, and transported to the North of Poland. The unlucky ones were deported East to Siberia, if they survived the journey, or were shot. I do not know if the surname Mojsiewicz still occurs in these areas of the former borderlands – there is no direct way for me to check.

I have not visited these borderlands in Belarus – as a lone female traveller, I am advised against it. I do not speak either Belarusian or Russian. After the fall of Communism, Belarus declared its independence, like other former Soviet countries, in 1991. President Alexander Lukashenko has maintained a tight control of the country since 1994. The alleged oppression of ethnic minorities in Belarus makes it unwise to visit in search of sites or markers of its former Polish inhabitants. It is possible to visit with organised tour groups, on receipt of a state issued visa. However, the idea of a tour group, even a genealogical one, does not suit my slow itinerary. I want to cross a large region exploring a number of possible locations, as opposed to a tour of cities or shtetl sites.
VIDEO AS MEDIUM

My degree in Sculpture was shaped by an interest in Polish, ethnographic, wooden structures. More direct questioning of my family myths was investigated through photography and 8mm film. During my Masters studies in Fine Art at Manchester Metropolitan University (1995-1996), I began to interrogate my cultural identity, and its formative influences. For the first time, I used myself explicitly in artworks and began exploring the potential of video.

The first video work I produced, Extract (1996), questioned accepted family narratives, specifically about Jewish identity in the Second World War. I appeared in the work, filmed myself and edited myself. This piece led to a two-screen video work, Christina V's Dina\(^\text{10}\) (1996) that presented my paternal grandmother and me as two versions of the same person, with a fifty-year age gap between us. This work was based on a three-hour interview with Dina, and was the key work for my Masters exhibition. I interviewed Dina at length about her life in Italy, my grandfather, and the meeting with him that brought her, as a bride, to this country – alien for both of them. I interrupted her narration, repeated parts, questioned and anticipated her words from my separate screen and time 'frame'. The videos were
shown on separate monitors: each had a table, and a chair. The tables were cut and angled to the wall so the work on the monitors could be heard, but not seen, simultaneously.

When I first started working with video as a medium, it developed from photographic and text works. The possibilities afforded by the moving image allowed me to work more directly with narratives, in a semi-documentary style, and question these through interview-type structures. The video works I had viewed at this time were contemporary: Mona Hatoum’s (1952-) interior scope piece Corps Etranger (1994), Douglas Gordon’s (1966-) archive footage in Hysterical (1995). The film works of Tacita Dean (1965-), and, how these are contextualised and expanded with storyboard drawings, are germane to how I consider the interrelated parts of my practice – drawing, text, photography and video. My video practice has formal ties with the experiments of Man Ray (1890-1976). Ray reversed film, running it backwards and forwards; forming short loops within the body of the film, in works like La Retour A La Raison, dating from 1923.

I performed my first video work, Extract, alone to camera. This way of working continues to suit my practice. The element of performance is essential: I only make video work that performs to camera. I do not perform live to an audience. The work is the video or photograph, not the production of it. The production of the work, if divulged, may change or expand the reading of the work, however. The intimacy of this relationship to the camera; this close framing of my face, is acknowledged with an occasional direct look at the camera, and by extension, the viewer.
In 1996 I was aware of the diverse practice of Canadian artist, Vera Frenkel (1938-). I was immediately drawn to her video installation work, in particular ... From The Transit Bar (1992) shown at Documenta IX, in Kassel. This six-channel video installation takes the form of a functioning bar, with piano player, potted palms and newspapers. The video monitors present the Diasporic experiences of fourteen people, speaking in selected languages (not their own). The cacophony of voices and narratives each make a claim to be heard. The video voice-over for each narrative is in Polish or Yiddish, while the subtitles are in English, French and German.

In the space of the bar installation, viewers are invited to stay, drink, read the papers, chat and view and/or listen to the works. The selection of languages spoken, and those rendered as subtitles, means that nearly everyone in the space is out of place and between languages to varying extents, at some point in the narrative. That Frenkel renders the 'big' languages of English, French and German into subtitles, as opposed to the voice-overs in Yiddish and Polish (inexorably linked to a specific place and time; a lost time) can be seen as a political gesture. Possible narratives and misunderstandings multiply – stories of displacement and trauma are recounted, repeated and retold. Listening to the voices, the possibility of hearing or reading what is not said, what is repressed; is obfuscated by language barriers. The viewer instead reads every gesture and facial expression as integral to the re-telling of the
story, and the structure of memory. The cultural theorist, and writer on video art Dot Tuer, expands on Frenkel’s practice, suggesting:

“The viewer, straining to thread together the narrative fragments she or he hears, literally inhabits the space between image transmissions. From this location, the viewer experiences exile as an alienation of the self from history rather than from technology; she, or he, encounters the echoes of memories linking real bodies across time and space.” (Tuer, 1997)

It is this ‘space between’ that fascinates me – the forms of Frenkel’s practice shift and blur distinctions or boundaries. Her work migrates between media, museological exhibit, or navigated and interlinked web piece – the form, echoing the content, forces the viewer to move or navigate their way through in a particular way. In the Transit Bar, shots from train windows and images of bars and signs constantly remind the viewer they are between places and between languages. The frustration and incomprehension relayed in the separate videos is vocalised in the ‘minority’ languages of Frenkel’s grandparents, Polish and Yiddish. The critical theorist Irit Rogoff posits that in Frenkel’s video installation, one text can be read through another; that their specific historical boundaries and traumatic frame works do not isolate them, but allow a movement through. Rogoff proposes,

“Trauma then is a historical event viewed through its symptoms, and Vera Frenkel’s Transit Bar is a psychic space where the constant process of (re)viewing occurs. What is realized is not the place of departure and not the place of arrival but the space in which the trauma comes into being, into language and into representation through articulated memory.” (Frenkel 1994, p.34)
Frenkel was a formative influence on my video practice. I discovered the work of Chantal Akerman (1950-) later, when I had completed my Masters degree. I recognise her working concerns and the semi-formal structure of her video and film work. Akerman positions herself equally in these realms – she argues that the difference between the two differing media is “heroic”: making a film is a painful, conciliatory process, while working with video is not. She distinguishes between the processes of filming and editing video: suggesting the latter is a more self-reflexive process, “it’s between you and you”. (Akerman, Sultan, 2008)  

I think her video work is more consistently autobiographical in its subject matter and focus, on being between states or in geographical limbo. Akerman sees a temporal difference between the media, maintaining that in film it is possible to make the audience wait for as long as they can endure a durational shot. She indicates that, with video, the challenge is in giving the information quickly enough for the audience to read the work alone, or spatially as part of an installation. In her early work, with films such as Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975), Akerman explored the duration of the long shot. It was not filmed in ‘real time’, the lingering shots and focus on the detail of routines evokes the sense of watching things unfold ‘in life’, in the real time of the subject.
I am drawn to the autobiographical element of Akerman's work. In the double-screen video work To Walk Next to One's Shoelaces in an Empty Fridge (2004), Akerman uses the diary of her grandmother (who died in Auschwitz) to explore language and intimacy and distance. Akerman's mother reads the words of her own mother, in Polish—a language she must concentrate to remember, and convey through translation. The teenage words of the grandmother are read and discussed by Akerman and her mother, beginning with the claim, "I am a woman! That is why I cannot speak all my desires and thoughts out loud..." (Akerman, Sultan, 2008). The intimate act of reading the diary entries is balanced, visually, by each half of the split screen becoming progressively more blurred. Akerman calls this an 'intimate distance', where the camera is 'pulled back' to the distance required (by her) to deal with the emotional content of the diary. The blurred 'veiling' of the image prioritises the importance of the audio—Akerman's mother acting as translator, mediates between the hand-written Polish of her mother's diary, and the granddaughter she never met (Chantal). The divided screen acts as a visual fracture, the space where 'the trauma comes into being, into language and into representation through articulated memory'.

Akerman's camera is always in motion—even when its position is static she directs it in and out of focus. With Akerman's work there is the sense of never really moving anywhere; the viewer is occasionally transported from one place to another place, and then back again. Even in her expansive work D'Est/ From the East (1993), the locations in which she films become one large entity—a Europe without borders; an endless queue of faces—give nothing away of themselves. The sense of a fixed location is always arbitrary—the work takes place between places—there is no
arrival. In the video work of Ackerman, arriving (at meaning) is always deferred. Shelley Hornstein’s article on Frenkel and Akerman, Fugitive Places (2000) explores the excavation of the past, and the repeated trawling of material: a continual process of turning it over and re-examining it. Hornstein, a writer on Jewish topographies and visual culture, cites the attempts of Hélène Cixous (1937-) to ‘access the past’:

“There are three cities I would like to go to and I will never make it. Though I can do everything to try to get there, in reality I do not make it, I mean it’s impossible for me to find myself there in the flesh in the streets in the squares in the roads in the walls bridges towers cathedrals façades courtyards quays rivers and oceans, they are still well guarded. These are the cities I have the most meditated on, lay siege to frequented and run through in stories in guides I have studied them in dictionaries I have lived in them if not in this life then in another life. Promised Pragues. You dream of going. You cannot go. What would happen if you went?” (Hornstein 2000, p.46)

Reading Cixous’ words, returns me to my own search and my work; the places that stand in for other places, places that I cannot get to. Instead of ‘laying siege’ to cities, I have meditated on towns, villages, hamlets, regions covering lakes, forest and marsh. These are my fictions.

The fictional space of the Transit Bar, with its views from moving trains and bar signs, not only heightens the sense of being between languages, or meaning, but also suggests that the space the viewer occupies is necessarily fictional and destabilized. Frenkel’s installation, according to Rogoff, eliminates, “any residue of a determining relationship between place, language and identity” (1994, p.37). The re-casting, or re-forming of places, in memory or the imagination, is a process of continual excavation. Hornstein proposes that, the works of both Frenkel and Akerman emphasise,

“national and personal identities, informed by geographic place, are always fugitive and arbitrary.” (Hornstein 2000, p.47)
Hornstein continues that, the work of these artists is occupied with the *between* space, "with no point of departure or place of arrival" (Hornstein 2000, p.46). She posits that this lack of destination, or its redundancy in the meaning of the work, has been framed by travel itself as a method: "a means of viewing (and reviewing)" (Hornstein 2000, p.46).

The travelling camera-eye of Akerman’s video works shuttle endlessly back and forth in a liminal zone. Frenkel’s video installations of ‘fictional’ departure and arrival points situate her figures, and their narratives, in a similarly *between* space – between boundaries and meanings. These works that do not ‘arrive’ or provide narrative conclusion, clearly resonate with the roles in my practice: the Navigator temporarily inhabits, or moves through, unnamed places; the Ambassadress, in her role, similarly does not define her arena, although the spoken audio tracks in Italian (and the bonjour jacket) locate her in Western-Central Europe. My video works should be shown as an installation that prescribes a specific movement – a turning and returning to the site of the image.
I have not told the truth. Already an omission. I have set foot in Belarus – just once. I took an ill-advised train journey from Bialystok to Vilnius, travelling from North East Poland through the North West corner of Belarus to Southern Lithuania. I tried to buy a visa at the station for the brief Belarusian part of the journey, which we would enter at 5am. I was advised to buy it on the train. I boarded the train just before midnight in Bialystok and tried to sleep. I was woken numerous times for passport checks, ticket checks, then border checks, and eventually the transit visa was requested. I asked to buy one with my Polish zlotys. The response was deutschmarks or dollars. I had neither. We were no longer in Poland.

It was indicated to me that I would have to get off the train. It was still dark and we were surrounded by forest. I dressed and re-packed my rucksack. In the train corridor other passengers (all male) were smoking out of the windows. We were approaching the Belarusian town of Grodno. The train was scheduled to stop here for a change of guards, but no passengers were permitted to embark or disembark. I tried to ask the other passengers what would happen when the train stopped – they indicated I would have to return the route I had come; I could not continue on this train without a visa. The train stopped. All the signs were in Cyrillic. I recognised the spelling for Grodno. A guard came to escort me off the train. Using my limited Polish phrases, I understood from him that I should leave my bags, and that I could buy a visa inside the train station. At 6am, me and another passenger were bundled along the carriage, off the train, across the tracks, and through the corridors of the train station. We were led through many corridors, and upstairs to a room where a
smartly dressed and made-up woman addressed us in perfectly elocuted English. She too asked for deutschmarks or dollars. I showed her my Polish zlotys, and Thomas Cook Travellers Cheques in sterling. She shook her head. Neither would do. The other passenger, now fully awake, was also British. He agreed to pay my visa. I arranged to pay him back on arrival in Vilnius. When the visas had been completed and passports stamped, we were left to find our own way back out of the station. Through the corridor windows I could see our train, and felt the urgency of getting back to it. As we ran out of the building towards the tracks, the sound of the brakes easing was audible. I threw myself at the nearest carriage door – locked. We tried another. And another. I thought of my guidebook, “No passengers may leave or join the train in Belarus”. We hammered on the doors until a guard opened the window and questioned us in Russian. I couldn’t find my ticket. I had no idea what number my bunk was, or what carriage my rucksack was in. The guard didn’t speak Polish. The train was about to leave. From behind me, the other passenger suddenly answered the guard in Russian, vouching for both of us and brandishing our visas. We got back on the train just as it started moving. The men in our carriage cheered to see our victorious return. I got back inside my bunk, closed the door and started to shake violently.

A few days later, I met the other passenger, as arranged, to repay him. He lived in Vilnius with his partner. He told me his booking on that particular train had been unexpected – his flight to Vilnius had been cancelled, so he had flown to Poland and taken a train instead. He had entertained his office with the story of our rude awakening in Belarus, and scramble back to the train. One French colleague had, in
turn, told him that the same thing happened to her husband, only he was in pyjamas
when he got off the train to buy his visa, and when he returned to the tracks his train
had left for Vilnius without him. He had managed to call her to collect his bag from
the train at Vilnius station, but spent the whole day wandering around Grodno,
barefoot and in pyjamas, with only his train ticket and a twenty dollar note that no-
one dared accept or change for him.
PART 2
A 'TRAVELLING' FAMILY TREE

At the edge of one's interior and exterior is the picturing of the Self, and the Self has many parents. In order to contextualise the roles of 'women who wander', I decided to draw a second genealogy for myself – that of female travellers and travel writers.

Many travel-writing anthologies omit the female voice from the literary canon, suggesting (to paraphrase Charles Baudelaire) that women, "have no taste for the abyss" (Morris 2007, p.9). It may be that the voices of these travellers are less often heard, but women did travel for the same reasons, and in the same ways as men. Documented examples include Ann Johnson, who served as 'George Johnson' on the whaling vessel Christopher Mitchell in 1848, and Georgina Leonard as 'George Leonard' on the whaler America in 1863. (Polk 2001, p.24) Leonard was unmasked as she was about to be flogged, but Ann Johnson successfully passed as a member of the male crew for the entirety of her whaling adventure.

Before the Enlightenment, the most common kind of travel was the pilgrimage – it provided a structure for women both to travel (safely) and move towards a spiritual goal. Milbry Polk and Mary Tiegreen suggest,

"At least some medieval women were acutely aware of the multiple functions of pilgrimage: spiritual uplift, intellectual illumination, and social liberation." (2001, p.24)

The social liberation of the pilgrimage is evident in Geoffrey Chaucer's (c.1342-1400) Canterbury Tales, written between 1387-1400. The safeguarded pilgrim, travelled as a small unit, or part of a larger group, towards the same circumscribed purpose. The pilgrimage permitted a laxity of restrictions that would be enforced
under other circumstances. Modern literature is full of examples of shipwrecks; their pilgrims, stranded in unknown lands, and forced to adapt to survive – of which Daniel Defoe’s (c.1659-61-1731) Robinson Crusoe (1719) is the first told in novel form.

Shakespeare (c.1564-1616) also used this scenario to dramatise the overturning of hierarchies in the Tempest and Twelfth Night: a time that traditionally signifies the inversion of roles, presided over by the appointed ‘Lord of Misrule’. In Twelfth Night, the twins Viola and Sebastian independently survive a shipwreck, each believing the other dead. Viola recognises that to present herself at court to the ruling Duke Orsino, she would be safer in this unfamiliar kingdom of Illyria, to dress as a man. Abandoning her feminine costume in exchange for male attire, Viola physically mirrors her ‘dead’ brother, and presents herself as ‘Cesario’. Changing gender for Viola is a way to transform her perilous situation, and gain power over her own decisions. To end this comedy of mistaken identity, Viola must resolve her predicament: no-one knows her for who, or what, she is; she cannot admit that she is a woman, and as Cesario, she cannot confess her love to, or for, Orsino. Viola comes undone when confronted with her mirror-image and double. Dressed as a man, Sebastian is both her twin and doppelgänger.

The involuntary exploration of a shipwrecked passenger is, of course, different from the planned routes or itineraries of pilgrimage or scientific expedition. Passengers morph into seasoned travellers through circumstance and necessity: adapting to environments, their challenges and cultures. Referencing these ‘enforced explorations’, Polk and Tiegreen (2001, p.25) maintain that many indigenous women
were forced to act as guides or interpreters for explorers. Physically and mentally courageous women provided a hidden infrastructure that enabled discoveries and conquests by male travellers and explorers. They traversed the same routes as the men and acted as a bridge between cultures,

“...they faced the challenge of encountering an alien culture and attempting to not only understand it but make it comprehensible to their own people.” (Polk 2001, p.25)

One well-documented example is the Native American Sacagawea (c.1788-c.1812), mentioned in the expedition journals of Meriwether Lewis (1774-1809), and William Clark (1770-1838). In the journey to continue exploration of the North West Passage of America, Sacagawea was employed alongside her husband – a French-Canadian fur-trader, Toussaint Charbonneau – as translator. Sacagawea and Charbonneau met Lewis and Clark in 1804-5, when they took winter shelter. Sacagawea gave birth to her first child aged seventeen. Less than two months later, husband, wife and baby joined the expedition when it left on a 5,000-mile, sixteen-month, treacherous journey. While Sacagawea helped to supplement the diet of the expedition by finding and preparing wild vegetables and edible plants, she was not (as it has previously been suggested) in a position to lead the exhibition through ‘her’ landscape – most of it was as unknown to her as it was to the explorers. From journals it seems that her most important contribution was her presence. Initially brought along to broker the purchase of expedition horses from the Shoshone tribe, the sight of an Indian woman protected the party from hostile interruption,

“The wife of Shabono [sic] our interpreter we find reconciles [sic] all the Indians, as to our friendly intentions a woman with a party of men is a token of peace.” (Lewis, Clark)
It is possible too, to imagine that Sacagawea was equally curious to see what the landscape and exploration might hold for her. When they reach the spot where Sacagawea (a native of the Shoshone tribe) was abducted years earlier (by the Hidatsa tribe), Lewis remarks,

"I cannot discover that she shews any immotion or sorrow recollecting this event, or joy in being again restored to her native country; if she has enough to eat and a few trinkets to wear I believe she would be perfectly content anywhere."\(^{16}\) (Lewis, Clark)

Obviously opaque in her countenance and manner, to the minds of the explorers at least, one of the few glimpses of Sacagawea’s thoughts and desires was recorded. Clark wrote that she was impatient and agitated to be allowed to go with his scouting party to the ocean and see a beached whale there,

"She observed that She had travelled [sic] a long with us to See the great waters, and that now that monstrous fish was also to be Seen, she thought it very harrd that She Could not be permitted to See either (She had never yet been to the Ociian) [sic]"\(^{17}\) (Lewis, Clark)

The figure of Sacagawea, of whom no likeness or belongings are known to exist, was adopted by at least seven Indian tribes in their oral traditions. Rediscovered by the suffragists in the nineteenth century, she was re-written as the archetypal ‘good Indian’, and appropriated by causes ranging from the suffragists, to ecologists and patriots. This Native American traveller is a potent symbol for the current hopes of other tribes, including the Shoshone, to gain recognition, and the return of lands they were stripped of. Her prominence\(^{18}\), in the lore of Western Frontier-ism, may help safeguard ancient tribal reservations from future land development. Defining where Sacagawea was born and died, irrefutably inscribes her into the geographic, as well as the mythic, landscape.
As an opaque and enigmatic figure, Sacagawea is relevant to my role of the Ambassadress: she is unreadable and silent. The Ambassadress, like an interpreter, can be seen as between cultures: a reflective position. The figure of the Ambassadress may also suggest the female counterpart to a male ambassador, rather than a diplomat in her own right. The wife of the ambassador is essentially silent – she accompanies her husband and plays the diplomatic hostess. Whatever power she wields behind the scenes is masked in public, she is relevant simply by her presence. Sacagawea's importance was her presence as well as her translation with the Shoshone tribe, while further east, diplomat's wives translated their new surroundings and experiences of culture through the form of lengthy correspondence.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) produced a fascinating glimpse of her travels through her letters to family and distinguished friends, describing in detail: costumes, customs and subtleties of etiquette. Wife of the British ambassador to Turkey, Montagu created a scandal by travelling alone (though with a considerable entourage) to join her husband in Constantinople. Montagu changed her dress to Turkish robes, and was regularly invited to have a private audience with the most important women in the kingdom. Her letters vividly describe the female chambers and gardens hidden to the male gaze. She chastises her friends in England for their outrageous questions on customs and manners – assumptions based on the works of male travel writers who would not be permitted to access the domestic quarters and levels of society that Montagu herself was acquainted with. Her interest in Turkish customs led her to inoculate her two small children against smallpox through a process of 'engrafting', or 'variolation' – a traditional way of delivering a trace of the disease directly into the vein.
The short-lived British embassy in Turkey concluded in 1717, and Montagu returned to England in 1718, praying, “I may forget the enlivening sun of Constantinople” (Montagu 2007, p.119). Her time in Turkey was particularly enlightening, and she maintained, “Turkish women are the only free people in the empire.” (Morris 2007, p.15) Most surprisingly, she admired their perpetual, veiled masquerade that permits, “an entire liberty of following their inclinations without danger of discovery” (Montagu 2007, p.47). The process of masquerade was also employed by Montagu herself: while ‘eccentrically’ adopting local dress, she used masquerade as a way of retaining her Britishness – she did not disrobe in the Turkish baths – instead her apparel became an invisible cloak allowing her to observe and comment at an intimate distance. Montagu, of course, travelled as a woman of considerable means and status. She was not exposed to squalor, or the living conditions and socio-political status of the lower classes, but she did learn Arabic and accessed gendered Muslim spaces that no western female traveller had written of before.

At the time of Sacagawea’s journey to the Pacific, Lady Hester Stanhope (1776-1839) travelled from Britain to the East. Stanhope began her travels at the age of thirty four, after the death of her beloved uncle, Prime Minister William Pitt the younger (1759-1806). Travelling from Constantinople to Cairo, she was shipwrecked on the island of Rhodes, echoing Shakespeare’s opening scene in Twelfth Night. This event acted as a catalyst for her singular vision to do exactly as she pleased abroad. Stanhope and her party lost all their clothes and belongings and had to borrow ‘Turkish costume’. She, however, refused to wear a veil, and dressed from then on as a man,
"To collect clothes in this part of the world to dress as an Englishwoman would be next to impossible; at least, it would cost me two year's income. To dress as a Turkish woman would not do, because I must not be seen to speak to a man; therefore I have nothing left for it but to dress as a Turk..." (Powlett 1914, p.117)

Stanhope delighted in shocking her Society friends and acquaintances with tales of her daring and nerve, eventually shaving her head,

"I am dressed as a man; sometimes as Chief of Albanians, sometimes as a Syrian soldier, sometimes as a Bedouin Arab [...] and at other times like the son of a Pacha." [sic] (Powlett 1914, p.144)

However, her niece, and collator of her correspondences, Catherine Powlett, Duchess of Cleveland (1819-1901), attempts to modulate the impact of Stanhope's costume choice, remarking,

"To Western eyes, there was nothing particularly masculine about it, for the long and voluminous trousers simulated a petticoat about as well as the "divided skirt" advocated by our dress reformers." (Powlett 1914, p.120)

Stanhope never returned to England, living out her life in fantastic squalor. A person of fascination, initially respected, then shunned by the Grand Viziers and Pashas, Turks, Egyptians, Syrian and Lebanese, for her daring and demands of equality – the first white woman to enter the forbidden city of Palmyra was never going to settle back into the life of a society lady in nineteenth-century London. Stanhope had crossed over a boundary, transgressing so many societal strictures that she could not return. I see her decision to renounce her British citizenship in 1938, and eke out her days in Dar Djoun, as heroic in her refusal to be something other than exactly what she desired to be – an eccentric and aristocratic 'other'.

This chronological family tree of purposeful travellers, of 'wandering women', begins then with Lady Montagu in the seventeenth century, and in the eighteenth-century: Lady Stanhope, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), and Frances Trollope
These women contested the dominant rhetoric of male travel writers. The following generation of women travellers, in turn, corrected aspects of their observations and assumptions, especially on the 'mysterious Orient'. Julia Pardoe (1806–1862) suggested²² that Montagu had over-exoticised her descriptions of the customs of the female baths. Emmeline Lott²³, writing of her employment as governess to the son of the Pasha in the 1860s, believed that Montagu saw only a veneer of Harem life, and that a showy display had been enacted for her benefit. A new 'breed' and class of female travel writers like Lott, (as opposed to 'Lady travellers') used their writing as a 'respectable' way of travelling and earning money, while retaining their freedom to make decisions about their lives, and locations. They accentuated the 'simplicity' and first-hand experience, the lived experience of their observations, as authentic and contrasting to the male travel rhetoric. These women quietly asserted a riposte to the canon of conquest and exploration by men of the upper classes. Presenting themselves as socially and economically disenfranchised travellers, they emphasized travel as a need to see and know the world, rather than a need to be seen and known.

In the late nineteenth century, the proliferation of women travellers was such, that, by 1893, fifteen women had been elected fellows of the Royal Geographical Society. Isabella Bird (1831-1904) was the first of the women elected into the Society. The satirical magazine, Punch, marked the occasion²⁴,

"A Lady an explorer? A traveller in skirts?  
The notion's just a trifle too seraphic:  
Let them stay and mind the babies, or hem our ragged shirts;  
But they mustn't, can't and shan't be geographic." (Robinson 1994, p.1)
By the time Punch published the ditty, this phenomenon of the female traveller was increasingly familiar. Women of means and determination took advantage of trade routes and opportunities to travel. Many of these women travellers were titled and/or possessed of independent means to travel in style and comfort (if they wished), others travelled as free spirits with little money, relying on their wits and gritted endurance (e.g. Maud Parrish: 1878-1976). Some women, relegated to the role of spinsters, carers, companions or widows, suddenly found themselves free to follow a path of their choosing (e.g. Mary Kingsley: 1862-1900). Others followed a religious mission – such as the trio of Mildred Cable (1878-1952), Francesca French (1871-1960) and Evangeline French (1869-1960). These indomitable women crossed the Gobi desert five times, and travelled through China, New Zealand, Australia and India. Their last journey was to South America when they were aged between seventy two and eighty one.

There are travel journals of women who followed their desire and passions: Margaret Fountaine (1862-1940) searched for rare butterflies (which she gifted to museums) and pursued platonic and amorous relationships on journeys across the Americas,
Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. Women like Fountaine and Parrish, wrote clearly of their need for freedom from domestic ties and expectations. Parrish recorded, with great humour, her desire to be free and spontaneous,

"There wasn’t any liberty in San Francisco for ordinary women. But I found some. No jobs for girls in offices like there are now. You got married, were an old maid, or went to hell. Take your pick." (Morris 2007, p.107)

Getting passage on a boat to Alaska, Parrish found the thrill she had been looking for, "The lure of adventure pulled me aboard and the tied-down feeling stayed ashore." (Morris 2007, p.108) At the time of the Gold Rush (1897-1899), Parrish played the banjo and worked as a dancehall girl in Klondike, Dawson and Nome, all by the time she was seventeen. Her desire to be able to wander at will, meant that despite the exhilaration of Alaska, its prospectors and wild, lawless towns, she could not resist the urge; when the thaw came and the ice melted, she needed to move on,

"Wanderlust can be the most glorious thing in the world sometimes, but when it gnaws and pricks at your innards, especially in spring with your hands and feet tied, it’s awful. So I left. Without telling a soul." (Morris 2007, p.107)

In her memoirs, written in later life and collated from letters she had sent on her travels, Parrish claimed to have been round the world sixteen times; up and down continents and around exotic islands – at one point she ran a gambling house in Peking. Parrish died at the age of ninety eight, having lived through the passing of the old ‘Wild West’ into a more sanitized state.

Most of these women continued to travel throughout their lives. Many adapted to whatever conditions or deprivations were necessary, in order to continue to live as they wished. Kingsley worked as a trader in Africa as she collected botany specimens; Isabella Bird herded cattle in the Rockies. Some women, like Montagu, travelled with their husbands on business. Others adopted local dress and custom,
through curiosity or necessity. Women dressed as men to travel more freely, like Stanhope, and found they were more able to access the information, power-brokers or objects they searched for. Both Isabelle Eberhardt (1877-1904) and Sarah Hobson (1947-) conducted their travels as men. Eberhardt was in a relationship with a man, while in disguise. She found herself dangerously between cultures; ostracised from the expatriate non-Arab community for her conversion to Islam, and barred from speaking to women because she posed as a man. Hobson travelled by motorbike through Iran in 1970, in order to see the shrine at Qum, a place barred to women. Her disguise did not always convince everyone, but no-one gave her masquerade away, or jeopardised her progress (Morris 2007, pp.195-201).

PERFORMING WOMEN'S TRAVEL

In the Atlas of Emotion, Bruno explores the female experience of ‘fashioning one’s own space’ (2002, pp.110-129), unpicking the form of: travel lectures, travelling apparel, performance and mapping. Travel lectures were historically a form of virtual journeying for the spectator. For women denied this spatial wandering, the travel lecture could be seen a site for spectatorship in dual form – the ‘being there’ in the audience, and the transportation of ‘being there’ in a virtual ‘elsewhere’. Another exception to the male fraternity of explorers, Esther Lyons25 – allegedly ‘the first white woman to cross Chilkoot Pass’ – would enact scenes from her travels, ‘performing’ her role as an explorer. Lyons, (like her small cohort of other female travel lecturers) would fully employ props in order to transport her audience – crucially inhabiting a disguise of sorts – travelling garb, an authentic costume, an
androgynous masquerade. Some talks would be framed by a diorama, as the female explorer herself would appear through the portal of a fabricated log cabin doorway to commence the lecture – stepping from one world to another, and by extension, inviting her audience to journey too

It is a curious example of presenting a landscape, or an experience, for an audience to ‘consume’ – offering a visual spectacle with doorways or painted vistas through which they may travel. The re-telling of these experiences becomes a theatrical tableau for other (female) viewers to consume – as opposed to a macho conquest of land over adverse conditions – and set the scene for a journey ‘out of oneself’ and into an entirely new terrain; the journey beyond one’s (self-) knowledge.

Bruno comments on the particularity of the image that introduces the published travel writing of Esther Lyons. This self-portrait ‘captures’ Lyons’ reflection in a mirror – in full evening dress – applying make-up, presumably before one of her performance lectures. I think it raises the spectre of masquerade, and whether Lyons was compelled to ‘perform’ as a woman in the male-oriented world of travel.
writing — to unequivocally stage her credentials, or to prove that despite her experiences she had not ‘gone native’ and stepped outside of ‘civilisation’ permanently.

In my art practice, the female traveller or explorer, ‘necessarily inhabits role-play’, as part of her journeying, as suggested by Bruno. My performance apparel is very basic: a standard waterproof coat (reminiscent of a reversible French style in the 70s) with additional lettering, and pragmatic: an aviator suit (British), goggles (Russian military), leather cap (Russian military), leather map bag (Estonian), and found parachute casing (Estonian). These guises were suggested by (or found in) the locations I was in, and then sourced, and adapted, by me. They were the best disguise for the locale — a post-Communist Navigator for the airbase runway in Eastern Europe, and the Ambassadress-as-tourist in France / Europe.

In this scenario, apparel acts as a haptic self-image. As a mobile framing of the figure, it plays upon its surface. At the very edge of one’s interior and exterior is the picturing of the Self, in all its guises. Disguising the Self can permit a new and different view of both an exterior and interior landscape. Against the male travel writer rhetoric of possession, and the conquering of land and conditions, female writers and travellers struggled to ‘look differently’. The land was not to be possessed literally but figuratively, metaphorically as an extension of desire — for space, for spatial knowledge; an apprehension of space through movement and touch.
Some years ago, I was given a travel diary for my research 'journey'. It incorporated images related to the subject of travel and navigation – ‘Odysseys And Other Journeys’ (Gooding, Rothenstein, 2001). I opened the page at a startlingly apposite image: the photograph untitled, model and photographer unknown. The image shows a young woman, either in a ship’s cabin or in a bedroom. She seems to be in transit, but is perhaps newly arrived, or just about to embark upon a personal odyssey. She is wearing only briefs, suspenders, black stockings and shoes. The woman lies across an open map, on the bed, perfectly encapsulating the geography of desire, to borrow Bruno’s term “…on the very topography of the body” (2002, p.113).

Her style is early twentieth century, bobbed hair pinned in a side parting. Suitcases are stacked smartly behind her. Leaning on her elbows, head in hands, she gazes at the terrain she inhabits and the cartography to explore. Her journey does not appear to be that of a refugee or disenfranchised immigrant. Her semi-nakedness seems
synonymous with a desire for space, travel: mobility. The surveyed geography is written large across her own body – the mobile gaze of the female subject, at once consuming, and projecting onto, the terrain; her own cartography against that of the map. The touch of skin against the folds of the map anticipates the haptic perception of space – she is a voyageuse.

In this process of charting a landscape of desire and sight-seeing, Bruno asserts that, “the female explorer not only pictures a map of herself but charts a terrain for herself” (2002, p.113).

For me, this photograph questions the very nature of female travel – the ‘biographical Self’ is inextricably inscribed into the textual descriptions of travelling, through a landscape responsive to touch and movement and emotion. This is a navigation of the Self, regardless of whether she is a mere ‘travelling companion’, or a fresh explorer. It is no coincidence that this anonymous photographic image resembles a film still – the gaze of the viewer is directed at the woman viewing her own body on the landscape. There is a physical conflation of sight and site: the gaze and where it is situated: the body in sight, its cartographic siting, and the gaze of the woman onto the mapped terrain. This voyageuse is perhaps a pastiche of the female traveller; playing upon the notion that women too, travelled for ‘adventuring’ in the broadest, most amorous sense.

THE INTERNAL LANDSCAPE

Bruno maintains that sexuality had to be an invisible topic for these women who travelled and wrote, but that a strikingly different vantage point is reflected in their writing and perception of space. She ascertains that,
women wrote extensively about their travels and presented in their work all the complexities of race and gender representation" (Bruno 2002, p.116)

Reading the travel writing of such women, I contest this interpretation that sexuality was an invisible topic – much of the writing explicitly deals with hasty strategies deployed to scare off men; men who were drunk, or violent, or opportunists who ‘misunderstood’ the nature of their wandering. There are ‘weak’ women who prove their mettle, and of gold-diggers coming in with the rush and out with the thawing ice. In every book there is the explicit understanding that there is vulnerability in travelling as a woman; that sexuality must be negotiated and ‘overcome’ at every turn. Eliza Farnham (1815-1864) – a campaigner for better conditions for women – travelled alone to Illinois, facing the deprivation of food, sleep, doors that lock, or having a room to sleep in at all. Forced to share an absent stranger’s room, Farnham had to defend herself upon his return:

...“I have, beside my personal strength, the aid of two very heavy trunks, and a rifle, placed against the door at about the height of a man’s head. If you are not already acquainted with its contents, there is every chance you will become so, if you open this door by violence.” (Morris 2007, p.31)

The ‘complexities of representation’ that Bruno suggests, begins with the unpeeling and exposing of the autobiographical heart in the writing on landscape. In Mary Wollstonecraft’s travels through Scandinavia in 1795, the personal infuses the writing along with visions of ‘strange’ countries. The foreignness surrounding her gives way to an introspective reflection on being parted from her infant daughter, and a broader concern of the compromises to be made as a woman:

“I feel more than a mother’s fondness and anxiety when I reflect upon the dependent and oppressed state of her sex. I dread lest she should be forced to sacrifice her heart to her principles, or her principles to her heart.” (Morris 2007, p.19)
There is a discourse here between the inner and outer world; an expedition is not purely external in the writing of women travel writers. Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990) wrote of the celebrated travel writer, Freya Stark (1893-1993),

“A great traveller is a kind of introspective as she covers the ground outwardly, so she advances inwardly” (Morris 2007, p.9)

I return to Isabella Bird: and the 800 miles she rode through the Rockies, a proportion of which was spent in the company of a notorious desperado ‘Mountain Jim’. The deep mutual respect that grew between them; their shared passion for literature and poetry, and a love of the mountains, infused Bird’s writing metaphorically and literally, with tales of unexpected peaks and vistas, of icy challenges and self-sufficiency. The clarity of her writing, and quiet self-regard so engrosses the reader, that when she quits her small cabin, it is almost unbearable to read that she never returned to the place or the views she grew to love, and the knowledge that ‘Jim’ was killed a few weeks after her departure.

“I did not wish to realise that it was my last ride, and my last association with any of the men of the mountains whom I had learned to trust, and in some respects to admire. No more hunters’ tales told while the pine knots crack and blaze; no more thrilling narratives of adventures with Indians and bears; and never again shall I hear that strange talk of Nature and her doings which is the speech of those who live with her and her alone. Already the dismalness of a level land comes over me.” (Morris 2007, p.241)

Her recollections, in the form of letters to her sister, portray an internal dialogue of a woman discovering herself and her potential; her ability to ‘rub along’ with people she would not expect to; to trust and respect those living on the margins of ‘civilised’ society. The exterior landscape of the Rockies is mediated through the interior landscape of Miss Bird. As a woman who did not travel until the age of forty, Bird continued her surprising trajectory across continents, travelling for the next thirty
years. With Bird in mind, I am intrigued by a comment made by the Italian feminist, Paola Melchiori:

"Reading women’s travel writing, one notices an absence of the past. Women who leave are not nostalgic. They desire what they have not had, and they look for it in the future. The desire does not take shape as “return” but rather as “voyage”. Nostalgia is substituted by dislocation." (Bruno 2002, p.86)

The lack of nostalgia can be read in the voyages of Bird, Kingsley, Parrish, Montagu and Stanhope, to name a few. The dislocation that Melchiori implies signals a desire to disrupt, to move something out of place, or order. As travellers, these women were at a distance from their ‘previous’ lives, for however long, and able to take advantage of the opportunities (cultural, economic, intellectual, romantic) to be found there, if possible. I agree with Melchiori that in their writings these women did not dwell on nostalgia for their former lives, but were aware of the melancholy of moving from place to place. They travelled with the knowledge that, in all probability, they would not return to these sites, and that if they did, both they and the sites would be altered.

Reading in recent anthologies the variety of women’s travel writing, spanning the seventeenth to the twenty-first century, certain images have stayed in my head: Isabella Bird’s view of the Rockies from Estes Park, and her friendship with ‘Mountain Jim’, Mary Kingsley’s description of hellish swamps told with much humour, and Maud Parrish’s hilarious description of a courtroom brawl that finally seals her fate as an itinerant traveller. Amongst the writers of the twentieth century, a brief scene from the writing of Mary Lee Settle (1918-2005), evokes a strong sense of place, and connection with her mute, Turkish ‘guide’,

“There was no need for speech. He was an actor, an eloquent mime. I pointed to the atrium below and held my hands apart to show I didn’t know how to get down into it. He took my arm, and carefully, slowly, led me down a steep pile of rubble.” (Morris 2007, p.187)
This gentle, self-appointed custodian of the ruin, delights in showing Settle ‘his’ place and its history,

“...he rolled dough for bread, kneaded it in air, slapped it, and put it in the oven. Then he took it out, broke it, and shared it with me. I ate the air with him.” (Morris 2007, p.187)

The beauty of their ‘play acting’ brings the ruined Roman villa back to life – its every function, shown through gesture and action, becomes more poignant because of the silent bond between the two trespassers. Settle went in search of a villa for which she had found a written reference. After finding it, and the ‘guide’, her inability to later locate the villa on a map lends the whole experience an unreal quality.

For me, the most vivid image of all that embodies the desire for wanderlust is in an extract from Mary Morris’ (1947-) Wall to Wall (1991). She describes the costume her mother, a frustrated traveller, made to wear to a ‘Suppressed Desire’ Fancy Dress Ball,

“The night of the ball, she descended the stairs. On her head sat a tiny, silver rotating globe. Her skirts were the oceans, her body the land, and interlaced between all the layers of taffeta and fishnet were Paris, Tokyo, Istanbul, Tashkent. Instead of seeing the world, my mother became it.” (Robinson 2001, p.4)
PART 3
THE CHRONOLOGY OF WOMEN IN SPACE

In a funereal address to the women of Athens, 5th Century BC Pericles defined the notion that women lacked self-control and boundaries, and that these ‘physiological defects’ demanded ‘safe’ confinement indoors (Solnit 2001, pp.235-236). This disruption of boundaries also implied disrupting the boundaries of others, specifically men. Rebecca Solnit in her treatise on walking Wanderlust (2001), observes that this notion is unchanged (certainly in our use of language) stating that, “A woman who has violated sexual convention can be said to be strolling, roaming, wandering, straying – all terms that imply that women’s travel is inevitably sexual or that their sexuality is transgressive when it travels.” (2001, p.234)

In early sixteenth-century Renaissance Italy, strictures on dress were flanked by limitations on women’s movements in the towns and cities comprising temporal and spatial controls. The spatial movement and control of women was aided by the convents, who also dealt with the ‘surplus’ of women. The higher a woman’s social class the less freedom of movement she could expect – any exposure on the streets publicly labelled her as ‘a fallen woman’, comparable to a prostitute, and afforded none of the protection that her status could offer. This exposure, according to the architectural historian Diane Ghirardo, was attributable to, “the code of sexual behaviour according to public opinion, as expressed in the city’s streets and squares”, (Borden, Rendell, 2000 p.192)

As such, this could be misinterpreted. The contemporary commentary of Cesare Vecellio, as cited by Ghirardo, explores the strategies women employed in order to circumvent the laws governing prostitutes: ‘the meretrici’.
“most (prostitutes) wear a somewhat masculine outfit: silk or cloth waistcoats adorned with conspicuous fringes and padded like young men’s vests...they wear a man’s shirt...many wear men’s breeches” (Borden, Rendell, 2000 p.190)

The benefits of dressing like a man were numerous – foremost safety, access to prohibited places, and the permission to move freely. It was also quicker to undress and redress in breeches. However, the fear of sodomy, and its punishment by death, was pervasive. Ghirardo claims,

“Many northern and central Italian towns prohibited cross-dressing because of the dangerous gender confusion that could result.” (Borden, Rendell, 2000 p.188)

But the thrill of cross-dressing, and of masquerade, the possibility to present oneself as other, and assume newly discovered agency would surely have been an intensely charged act. Like the fictional Viola; dressing as a man overturns hierarchies and presents new possibilities, and potentially, status.

THE FLÂNEUSE

In his 1845 essay, The Painter of Modern Life, Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) instituted the study of experience of modern urban space by identifying the figure of the flâneur. Based on observation of contemporary Paris, the ‘capital of the nineteenth century’28, Baudelaire’s flâneur is a distanced collector of impressions and urban flavours, who turns his observations into ‘reports’ or sketches of the city. His vision of the flâneur suggests the fugitive, the provisional – one living above laws, habit, duty or politics. The German cultural critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), writing in 1938, positions the arcades; the favoured dwelling of the flâneur, as a cross between an interior and exterior space,

“The street becomes a dwelling for the flâneur; he is as much at home among the façades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls.”(1999, p.37)
The *flâneur* in his wanderings turns the exterior into an interior space. In Baudelaire’s interpretation, the *flâneur* is clearly not a man of the masses, he retains his individuality and detachment, and he is always male.

In order to discuss the female experience of space, or the perceived desire for space, I must investigate the possibility of a female *flâneur*. Theorists have struggled to discuss whether the female experience of space is fundamentally different, based on the binary positions of the active, masculine gaze and the passive, feminine subject. In Streetwalking the Metropolis (2000) Deborah Parsons cites Janet Wolff (1985) and Griselda Pollock (1988) among those who agree that the sexual divisions and bounded existence of women in the nineteenth century render a female *flâneuse* impossible (Parsons 2000, p.4). In the nineteenth and twentieth century the activity of ‘streetwalking’ was linked to the notion of prostitution, making it seemingly impossible for women to occupy public space, except by operating outwith the social boundaries and mores. Women involved with theatre or spectacle in any role, it is insinuated, were ‘unregulated’ and therefore perceived as threatening or dishonest, and forced to live on the margins of society. What this meant for ordinary women working as maids, or in factories, on shifts, is not discussed.

In 1830s France, bohemian writer George Sand described her difficulty in orienting herself on the wet network of streets,

"On the Paris pavement I was like a boat on ice. My delicate shoes cracked open in two days, my pattens sent me spilling, and I always forgot to lift my dress." (Solnit 2000, p.203)

Her recourse to dressing in men’s clothes as a practical measure for exploring the city, significantly altered her ability to navigate the pavements,
“I can’t convey how much my boots delighted me...With those steel-tipped heels I was solid on the side-walk at last. I dashed back and forth across Paris and felt I was going round the world.” (Solnit 2000, p.203)

The difficulty Sand had staying upright on the streets may be read in this context as a problem with identification in the city. On a base level, changing her gendered identity allowed Sand a different identification with Paris and its streets. No longer tilting and spilling, she was in control of her perambulations, and this new-won control is projected as producing a sensation of freedom large as the thrill of globetrotting the world.

Parsons argues that the concept of the flâneur contains gender ambiguities that suggest the figure to be a site for the contestation of male authority rather than the epitome of it:

"the flâneur is not only a historical figure but also a critical metaphor for the characteristic perspective of the modern artist". (2000, p.5)

Significantly, this should not exclude a female perspective. With this in mind, there are a few candidates for the role of the flâneuse:

In The Pursuit of Pleasure (2002), Jane Rendell proposes that the female character of the Cyprian has mobility comparable to the male rambler. Both the Cyprian and rambler predate the flâneur of the 1850s. The Cyprian ‘nymph of the pave’ was, like the rambler, defined by her peripatetic movement. But, while the rambler was celebrated in popular literature for his pursuit of pleasure, the Cyprian was (by the male authors of rambling literature e.g Pierce Egan) written out of any kind of self-determined agency. Instead she was presented as a woman whose movement through the city was only in response to male desire. This ceaseless economic movement, and urban exploration, of the Cyprian, was represented by these authors as “the cause of
The nicknames of birds ascribed to them, alluding to their light morals and flightiness, classified them as women who could not or would not be controlled. This recalls the classical Greek misogynist discourse, deeply rooted in classical and Christian letters of rhetoric. The ‘physiological defects’ and lack of boundaries meant that women needed ‘safe’ confinement indoors. This disruption of boundaries also implies a disruption of others, specifically men. Solnit observes that this notion is preserved in language:

“A woman who has violated sexual convention can be said to be strolling, roaming, wandering, straying – all terms that imply that women’s travel is inevitably sexual or that their sexuality is transgressive when it travels.” (2002, p.234)

The Cyprian or ‘La Passante’ (the passerby), as a woman traversing space under her own agency, was particularly threatening to the urban male ego. Any woman placing herself out with the normal societal roles assigned to her could be seen as conducting a transgressive act. In Serpentine Allurements Rendell insists:

“The Cyprian body was perceived as disorderly because as a moving female public body, it flouted patriarchal rules for women’s occupation of space.” (2000, p.255)

In the pornographic rambling tales, (such as those by Egan) spatial metaphors abound to describe the city as a female body, and the activity of the rambler as a penetration in particular, as argued by Rendell:

“The Cyprian body was perceived as an open body occupying the public realm. Punctured but not necessarily exposed, it created a treacherous topography, a trap one could fall into – ‘a serpentine allurement’.” (2000, p.46)

This ‘treacherous topography’ and blurring of the sense of public and private, architectural space and bodily space, interior and exterior generated a deeply gendered representation of the city. Rendell concedes that, locomotion (especially rambling) is connected with visual pleasure, with narcissism and voyeurism, with the desire to look –
representations of the male gaze are integral to the construction of urban masculinity. The rambler’s precedent, the London spy, is represented as a voyeur, and his successor, the Parisian flâneur, is associated with a “mobile, free, eroticized and avaricious gaze.” (2000, p.259)

However, she sees the gendering of space as choreography, real and ideal, material and metaphoric – ‘constructed and represented through social relations of looking and moving – exchanging, consuming and displaying’. Historian and architect Dolores Hayden acknowledges that this ‘bounded space’ helps us to “analyze the spatial dimensions” (Borden, Rendell, 1997, p.23) of female urban experience as a political territory and site of social reproduction.

Following Sigmund Freud’s (1856-1939) theories on the study of the Unconscious and repression (1899), Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) had argued the Unconscious was structured like a language (1966). The Surrealists were interested in Lacan’s early writings, which in turn were influenced by the visual allusions in Surrealist writing, poetry and art. Lacan’s notion of the ‘fragmented body’ was synchronous with Surrealist images of embodied and disembodied journeys. The constructed urban masculinity of the nineteenth century had reflected the widely held assumption that the mind itself was gendered – male. The female occupied the position of deviant – a transgressive, more porous state. The writer and art historian Louise Milne, views the Surrealists of the twentieth century through this framework, suggesting through their interpretation, the notion of female became a ‘portal’ to a different kind of existence.

A trio of Surrealist books from late 1920s: Louis Aragon’s Paysan de Paris (1926), André Breton’s Nadja (1928), and Philippe Soupault’s Last Nights of Paris (1928), exemplify the development of this metaphorical space of a gendered city. The notion of man liberated from his industrial shackles through the grace of Woman is central
to their works. The women of these texts are presented as possessing agency only when they are destined for madness or early death, (eg. Nadja36) Milne notes (2007).

Echoing the rambler’s trope of searching the city in pursuit of a woman, Soupault’s woman becomes the city, and by extension, his city (Paris) becomes a woman:

“That night, as we were pursuing, or more exactly tracking Georgette, I saw Paris for the first time. It was surely not the same city. It lifted itself above the mists, rotating like the earth on its axis, more feminine than usual. And Georgette herself became a city.” (Solnit 2002, p.208)

This visualisation of Paris with her architectural skirts gathered about her, open to exposure and concealment, serpentine allurements and treacherous topographies recall the writer, Restif de la Bretonne (1734-1806). Rediscovered and heralded by the Surrealists, de la Bretonne – a fantasist and fetishist – inscribed the city itself as a book. Solnit, describes his peregrinations,

“The Île Saint-Louis was his favourite haunt, and from 1779 to 1789 he chiselled onto its stone walls dates of great personal significance, along with a few evocative words. Thus Paris became both the source of his adventures and a book recording them, a tale to be both written and read by walking.” (2002, p.202)

The Situationist theorists of the 1950s owe a debt to Benjamin’s interpretation of the flâneur and the Surrealist writings of the 1920s (as well as the proto-locomotions of de la Bretonne). Guy Debord (1931-1994) and Raoul Vaneigem (1935-) were the principle proponents of the dérive: an aimless locomotion that references the movement of the flâneur. The difference between these actions is an investigation of the psychogeography of the city itself – a manner of seeking resonances in the cityscape “conducive to specific emotions” (Macey 2000, p.92). These evocative triggers could be harnessed, Debord believed, to subvert and ‘corrupt’ consumerist society. The Situationists attempted these subversions through détournements: a derailing of an idea or image, using, or mirroring, its original form to oppose its
message or meaning. This ‘detour’ of the image/idea strives to create something new from the resulting ‘turning’ – it turns away from one meaning towards a new possibility.

Fifty years after the Surrealists inscribed their pursuits of women (and ‘Woman’) onto the literary street map, women still employ a variety of strategies to assert their agency in the city. Bruno emphasises that the first collective action by Italian feminists was to subvert the *passeggiata* and ‘streetwalk’ together through the city at night (1993, p.50). In 1977, the first Reclaim the Night marches were held in Britain. These events encourage women to take to the streets *en masse* to highlight the dangers and sexual harassment encountered daily in the public and private spaces of the city. Reclaiming public space is a goal shared with Reclaim the Streets activists, agitating to overturn hierarchies of power and the hegemony of the car. Collectively their approach is for a less alienated experience of the city: a city explored by walking, and an empowered and embodied experience for women in the public space of the city.

**THE WOMAN AND THE CITY**

The city – represented as a woman, as a bedroom, and as palimpsest – crosses both private and public thresholds. The urban landscape is a veritable wilderness of signs, dangers and treachery to be crossed and endured, and ultimately conquered. However, the pursuer can also be female. Early silent films were quick to employ the figure of the femme fatale. With all of her visual allurements she was portrayed as an emblem of the dangerous ‘modern’ city, and vice versa.
In F.W. Murnau's Sunrise (1927) the female protagonist, referred to only as *The Woman from the City*, attempts to lure *The Man* to the metropolis. In a sleepy rural setting she provides the catalyst for *The Man* to drown *The Wife* and seek a new life with her in the city. Murnau presents the desired cityscape, hovering above the marshes where the lovers lie entwined, as an illusion of flashing lights and illuminated signs; *The Woman* visually projects her construct of the city as a space of desire and a desired destination – the end point of her fantasy. The city itself is represented visually as being as complex and duplicitous as the character of *The Woman*. Arriving from a rural locale, *The Man* and *The Wife* have to navigate their way through unfamiliar scenes, dangers and social mores.

Murnau presents them in all their naivety as two children who walk into an apparition of an Edenic idyll, while the traffic swerves around them. The city is fluid and seductive – hedonistic and sexual in its manners and modernity. This unnamed city plays a central fourth role in this morality tale. Against this urban backdrop, *The Man* has an epiphany, and finds a renewed devotion to *The Wife*. *The Woman* is foiled: husband and wife escape the city streets, as an incoming storm threatens the
carnivalesque state of the city, its entertainments and inhabitants. The rural couple scorn the Woman and ‘her’ city.

THE FEMALE SPECTATOR

Bruno clearly positions the advent of the female travel lecturer in conjunction with the expansion of early cinema. She cites the photographic portrait of Esther Lyons, applying make-up in a mirror, at the juncture of the travel lecture and cinema. Bruno suggests this photograph participates in an imaginary mapping of the subject, as well as the discourse on female masquerade. I agree it is a curious image for Lyon’s to preface her book with – immediately siting herself outside of the text as a ‘performer’. Lyons places herself at two frontiers of self-discovery: the wilderness and the mirror. The viewer sees Lyon’s gaze reflected in the mirror as the site of identification and self-exploration; the negotiation of Lyon’s self-identity takes place in a virtual space. This mapping of the body in an imaginary space makes way for cinematic space, Bruno proposes,

“Lyon’s portrait tells us that as an immobile spectator sitting before a mirror-screen, every woman in the film theatre is an ‘explorer’”. (2002, p.115)
Bruno suggests that our apprehension of space, including filmic space, occurs through an engagement with touch and movement – that sight and site are not just about looking – that our perception is bound up in a more haptic, transformative experience. She argues that,

"spectatorship is to be conceived as an embodied and kinetic affair, and that the anatomy of movement that early film engendered is particularly linked to notions of flânerie, urban ‘streetwalking’, and modern bodily architectures. As wandering was incorporated into the cinema, early film viewing became an imaginary form of flânerie, an activity that was – both historically and phantasmatically – fully open to women. By way of the cinema, new horizons opened up for female explorations.”

(2002 p.17)

The perception of the flâneur shifted in position from an observer on the street, attempting to reveal something of the ever-shifting phantasmagoria of faces and sights, sounds and events, to an observer occupying a site of ‘scopic authority’, commanding a totalizing view; the panoramic gaze. Consequently, the trajectory of film followed the flâneur, shifting planes and angles to show the city to its inhabitants from this privileged vantage point.

Bruno points to this as an intersection of painting and film, specifically the codified genre of vedutismo – an impossible view of the city where all landmarks are visible simultaneously. The codes of landscape painting and urban topography merge to produce, not a totalizing view, but a vantage point, attainable only virtually. This is comparable to a filmic traversing of the city – the camera is swept through impassable spaces, transecting the streets and squares that form the city, filming the arcades and, in a curious mise-en-abyme, invites an audience to watch it projected in the same arcades. The city itself becomes both subject and cinema: a telescoping of changing images, perspectives and perceptual shocks.
The re-presentation of the city and its topographies through film revealed the city anew to the spectator, specifically the female spectator (previously excluded from the viewpoint of the flâneur and his peripatetic gaze). Bruno articulates this through the moving image:

“As a means of travel-dwelling, cinema designs the (im)mobility of cultural voyages, traversals, and transitions. Its narrativized space offers tracking shots to traveling cultures and vehicles for psychospatial journeys. A frame for cultural mapping, film is modern cartography. It is a mobile map – a map of differences, a production of socio-sexual fragments and cross-cultural travel.” (2002, p.71)

The stage is then set for the peripatetic female traveller to begin wandering off the page of her observer’s journal. The feminist psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin, posits the association of desire with a space is experientially female. She proposes this is a cinematic process; that the sense of space and desire as projected through filmic narrative, maps the terrain of fantasy (Bruno 1993, p.52).
INTRODUCTION & CHAPTER 1 NOTES

2 cited by Jane Rendell in her essay Writing in place of listening (2002)
3 Calvino’s Cybernetics and Ghosts essay (1997)
4 Audre Lorde’s Zami: A New Spelling of My Name (1982)
5 a term used frequently by Jane Rendell regarding the position of the author in relation to the space of constructed meaning.
7 As part of exhibition ‘Albert Square’, curated by The Annual Programme, Manchester, 1998
8 Niesiecki’s Heraldry, Library of Slavic Studies, New York City Library
9 <http://www.moikrewni.pl/mapa/kompletny/mojsiejwicz.html> accessed 24/05/09
10 Dina’s mother was christened Cristina Rosica. When I was born, my family in Italy, translating my name from Kristin to Christina, assumed I was named after my great-grandmother Cristina.
11; See: Irit Rogoff on the intertextuality of trauma (Frenkel, 1994, p.30)
13 see Rogoff (1994)
14 ‘Corps of Discovery’ expedition began in St. Louis August 1803, ended there in September 1806. President Thomas Jefferson commissioned it to better understand the American North West, to the Pacific, the main waterways for commerce, and the full extent of the Rockies – as part of The Louisiana Purchase of land from the French. Expedition Journals published by Philadelphia, Bradford and Innskeep, 2 volumes, (1814) <http://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/archive/index.html> accessed 23/05/09
15 Lewis and Clark arrived at the Mandan villages towards the end of 1804. Sacagawea gave birth in February 1805 and the expedition set off in April 1805. They travelled together until August 1806.
16 Meriwether Lewis, July 28th 1805 (online archive)
17 Meriwether Lewis, January 6th 1806 (online archive)
18 Today there are reportedly more statues of Sacagawea than of any other American woman, in America. Most were erected in the nineteenth century. National Geographic Feb 2003. pp74-85. Searching for Sacagawea, by Margaret Talbot. Published by the National Geographic Society, Washington, DC.
19 Such as her sister Lady Mar, and writer Alexander Pope
20 She did this in 1813 and was crowned Queen of the Desert, according to Stanhope herself
21 sited at the foot of Mount Lebanon
22 in her book The City of the Sultan (1836)
23 The English Governess in Egypt (1866), Nights in the Harem (1867), The Grand Pacha’s Cruise on the Nile in the Viceroy of Egypt’s Yacht (1869)
24 To the Royal Geographic Society, Punch 10th June 1893
26 Interestingly in archives she is also referred to as “the actress Esther Lyons” <
27 re: masquerade: a particular type of intellectual women who puts on exaggerated feminine/flirty behaviour in order to dispel suggestion of manliness. See Joan Rivière’s essay (1929)
28 Benjamin described Paris as ‘the capital of the nineteenth century’ in his exploration of the city along with the development of early modernity
29 A wooden shoe, or wooden sole mounted on an iron ring to raise the shoe above the mud. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, Oxford (1972)
30 Cyprian derives from a native of Cyprus – though to be lewd and licentious because of their worship of Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love. Lewd women were also referred to as Cypriot. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, Oxford (1972)
31 author of Life in London; or, the day and night scenes of Jerry Hawthorn Esq., and his elegant friend Corinthian Tom, accompanied by Bob Logic, the Oxonian, in their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis (London; Sherwood, Neely & Jones, 1820-21)
32 also the title of a poem by Baudelaire in his 1857 collection Les Fleurs du Mal

54
33 The Finish to the Adventures of Tom, Jerry and Logic in their Pursuits through Life in and out of London (London; J.S.Virtue & Co., 1828)
34 André Breton (1896-1966), Louis Aragon (1897-1982), Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), Georges Bataille (1897-1962) are cited by Macey as the main protagonists of the Surrealist movement as a whole, however, Salvador Dali (1904-1989), Max Ernst (1891-1976) and René Magritte (1898-1967) were arguably the most known of the artists involved with Surrealism.
35 beginning with the publication of his doctoral thesis in 1932, which caught the attention of the founder of the Surrealists, André Breton (Macey 2000, p.354)
36 Milne notes that Nadja acts as a psycho-pomp for Breton to the underworld, or through a portal to another world, one more primitive and less tainted by industrialisation.
37 Etymologically, détour means to turn, or turn aside.
<http://www.etymonline.com>
38 In the U.S the marches are titled ‘Take Back the Night’
39 a fantastic series of illusory images
THE NAVIGATOR

In my practice, the role of the Navigator expresses attempts at orientation – physical navigation of space: relying on maps, windsocks, and topographical signs. My Navigator does not speak, she engages actively – running, exploring, investigating. She must orient herself in the landscape and, in doing so; plot a route out of her immediate surroundings. The figure of the Navigator has military overtones, which appear redundant in landscapes that seem structureless. The Navigator lacks the vital prop of an aircraft – though her attire refers to it, its absence is a deferred end point (or starting point) in the larger narrative.
The genesis of the Navigator was a direct response to a specific location and a site-based project in Estonia¹. In 1997 I co-ordinated and co-curated an international exhibition project in Haapsalu, western Estonia. It involved three artists from the U.K, two from Sweden and four from Estonia. We made site-specific work, and concurrently produced work for a show in a nearby gallery². Our project was based on an abandoned military airfield in the process of being reclaimed by the wildlife, the locals, and the fauna. This particular kind of landscape – the ‘forbidden geography’ of a military installation – suggests to a visitor, or interloper, that they have entered it by other means, through some sort of portal or back door. The art historian Joseph L. Koerner describes a similar space³,

“One has a sense, walking through there, of the natural world reconquering these cultural landscapes, and so it’s a sort of inverse of the myth of the first encounter”. (Miller, Dean, 2005, p.185)

The site was deeply evocative, and for me, cinematic. On first sight the strange juxtapositions of the natural (the ‘overgrown’ landscape), the cultural (the site of former Ungaru Manorial house and estate) and the military (site of abandoned Soviet airbase and military installation) formed a semi-legible palimpsest, with all its pages overlaid. All visible attempts at control – the landowner claiming his stake, building his ‘castle’, the occupying military force knocking it down and laying endless paths
of tarmac through the trees and juniper – were being erased by the landscape eradicating abandoned buildings, cracking the runway; re-conquering the contested site. The local population stripped the airbase of anything of possible use, willingly aiding this process. They returned now to forage for mushrooms, berries and herbs.

The Kiltsi site was potent in its futility as a functioning airfield, yet full of potential as a site for the figure of the Navigator to inhabit or haunt. I became fixated by this notion of a returning Navigator who would be left disoriented and alone when the landmarks had all been removed or overtaken by vegetation; that this vast space/landmark would become un-navigable. My first footage of the Navigator at the airfield, pacing the runway, was recorded on black and white 8mm film and black and white photography. Later footage⁴ depicted the Navigator on colour 8mm film. There was no sound recorded, and none seemed appropriate – the Navigator at this time operated in silence.

![Image of Navigator](image1.jpg)

The Navigator works have been ongoing, then, since 1997, but have evolved considerably from a direct response to a specific site, to recent ideas of substitution – of one landscape standing in for another. The footage for the exhibited PhD works was filmed over five years; some of it not digitally ‘captured’⁵ until years after its origination. This delay made for an interesting objectivity in watching almost
forgotten 'documents'. I find the Navigator role is best employed when I myself am 'out of place'. Usually this has been when I have been travelling abroad to exhibit work or participate in projects. Often the footage is left to 'settle' – until I have an opportunity to revisit it and look at it afresh. Often there is an intuitive sense about a place I would like to film in. Frequently I choose to postpone deciding how to edit the footage, until I see how I can represent this sense – this *rapprochement* – with the site.

**Navigator#5 (2007)**

The video is seemingly split and peeled apart (as if it were a reel of standard 8mm film) - two halves of the same mirror image are shown simultaneously. Action and audio move together, forwards in one half of the screen, and backwards in the other half, both in sync. The entire video is shown as a mirrored whole, yet it is not immediately clear which half is progressing forwards or backwards as the Navigator runs towards, and backwards from, the camera.

I conceived of this video work as a visual palindrome. The tree-lined avenue I filmed in is a landmark in the German city of Hanover. On my initial visit there, I saw the
long Herrenhäuser Allee – with four rows of lime trees, as laid out in 1726. This avenue runs straight for two kilometres, from Hanover city centre past the Welfenschloss Palace to the Grosser Garten – an impressive Baroque garden with a strict symmetry. I resolved to film the Navigator sited within these geometric proportions on my return. When I next visited, and arrived early in the morning with camera and Navigator suit, I was disappointed to find groups of joggers already there. Trying to film myself in the clear intervals between their circuits of the park, I realised that I would have to move at the same speed in order to film with a clear view. This involved simultaneously running and holding a camera at shoulder height, tightly framing my head and shoulders, and keeping them ‘in shot’.

At the beginning and the end of the video the image forms a (mirrored) whole, and at one point in the middle of the running sequence there is a ‘crystal image’: a literal two-way mirroring of the pastness of the recorded event and the presentness of viewing it. The philosopher Gilles Deleuze posits in Cinema 2: The Time-Image (1989), that time must be split up into the past and present of its individual moments, and through this division of past and concurrent present the notion of the ‘crystal image’ is derived. Deleuze does not conceive of the crystal image as a linear succession of images, however, as I conceive it in my work, the Navigator runs in opposing directions: simultaneously moving towards the future and the immediate past; thus the ‘crystal image’ of the past and present is formed. As Deleuze proposes, “the crystal always lives at the limit; it is itself the vanishing limit between the immediate past, which is already no longer, and the immediate future, which is not yet... (it is a) mobile mirror which endlessly reflects perception in recollection”. (1989, p.81)
This ‘virtual’ image is then of the past, remembered and subjective; while the actual image is of the present, perceived and objective. This notion of the crystal image is pertinent to my experience of making the video works – wherein an autonomous relationship to space and time unfolds – loops, slowed action, split screens, repetition of scenes; mirrored, played backwards. The passing of past and present / future is simultaneously ‘unspooled’.

Prior to editing *Navigator*#5, I investigated this notion of ‘unrolling’ footage and replaying it as a doubled image, with one half playing forwards and the other half in reverse, with the audio tracks mirroring this process. Exploring this idea could only be demonstrated through practice. The resulting video *i denti del lupo* (2007) presents an imperceptible palindrome of a seemingly still image. The title ‘the teeth of the wolf’ refers to an Italian saying that fate is “in the mouth of the wolf”, and to the geological formation of teeth-like structures – ‘dente’ – which are visible in the
landscape of the Abruzzi region. The image (a section of the reconstructed Abbey at Monte Cassino) – mirrored – forms a new, virtual, architectural structure. The incidental audio track was ignored at the time of filming – the insistent drone of a generator enabling the power washing of a memorial. Editing the footage, I realised that, out of its original context, the sound of the compressor motor shifted register and became an amplified projector. This returned the whole (original) scene of filming into a reconstruction of a virtual image of memory. The site of a memorial is presented simultaneously as perception and recollection. The generator / projector sound plays forwards and backwards concurrently, in accordance to its specified side of the image. A thin vertical seam separates the images – there is no perceivable difference between them.

I decided to further investigate this process of one image appearing to haunt another filmically, and how this might work with audio instead of the doubled, mirrored or split image. I used video footage of the figure of the Ambassadress in the mist to develop this idea, after the ‘internal audio’ of Gole (2005-6), and the mirrored and reversed footage of Navigator#5. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.
The sunken locomotive of Prince Mikhail Ivanovich Khilkov lies off Port Mysowa. This station at the edge of Baikal marked where the steamer met up with the railway (on crossing the south end of the lake) and went onwards, to the East, before the southern line was built. The station at Mysowa was also the birthplace of my grandfather. His birth certificate states this location – 25th April 1910. As a child I translated this fact to mean he was born by the tracks, amongst the luggage. His father, my great grandfather Andrzej, was a lawyer for the Trans Siberian railway. He was exiled from the former Grand Duchy, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (although for all his lifetime it had been under Partition) and was legally bound to remain in Siberia. According to my family lore, he had been sentenced to death for anti-Tsarist activities but had his sentenced reduced to exile, thanks to the influence of the Wereszczaka family. Through the Wereszczakas our family could claim a connection to the famous Polish writer and patriot Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855). They also claimed kinship through proximity to Mickiewicz’s family estate at Zaosie, near Nowogrodek. My great grandfather was born on a small family estate nearby, called Przywluk. His father died before he born, his mother not long after his birth. He was born after the insurrection of 1863-1864 in a country that did not exist “...Poland, that is to say Nowhere.”

On the 11th November 1918, after 123 years of Partitions, the Second Polish Republic was born. My great grandfather died not long afterwards, never having lived in a ‘living’ Poland. My grandfather and his siblings were taken on the Trans Siberian railway, through the Urals, to the newly established Poland, by my great
grandmother. Travelling through the famine-ravaged countryside for months, they eventually arrived at the border of their republic – a land that did not include within its boundaries any of the places that they themselves associated with a homeland.

My grandfather enjoyed the golden era of ‘Poland between the wars’, and in the early summer of 1939 took advantage of the thawing of relations between Poland and Lithuania to travel to Nowogródek (now in Lithuania) and visit Przywłuka. Normal diplomatic relations between the two countries had finally been achieved in 1938, when Poland issued an ultimatum and Lithuania accepted the proposed borderline, de facto. At Przywilka, my grandfather met the aged aunt who had raised his father, Andrzej. The only record I have of this trip is four, small photographs showing my grandfather Julian, with his brother Witold, and two different family groups – but none of the women look old enough to be this aunt. The third photograph shows a young woman from one of the family groups with Julian at a memorial of some sort, and the fourth photograph shows the memorial alone. There are no inscriptions or names jotted down in his slanted script, nothing to site the people, or the location. They could be anyone, and anywhere, except for the fact that one of the women bears a striking resemblance to photographs I have of my great grandfather. Looking directly at the camera, at my grandfather, she has the face of my father. And me.

Months, or weeks, after the photographs were taken the German Army marched into Poland and the Second World War unfolded. Poland was again under occupation, and Lithuania would follow. The family connections that had just been re-made were
lost again. For years I imagined finding the location of these photographs – matching the step of a house to a real dwór in the Nowogródek region. By finding their location, their fixed point, I could start to unravel their end point – where these inhabitants fled, or were forcibly deported to, just a few months or years later.

This year, I found the location of the memorial in the photograph, with the help of a Belarusian architect and his historian friend. I had always thought it held the key to the location of Przywłuka; that it would narrow down the possibilities I had already researched. This ‘siting’ of the photograph would definitively point the way to the point of origin – a marker for the beginning of the displacements.

When we finally located the memorial it was nowhere near where I thought it would be. After twenty years of searching I am still ‘nowhere’. Adrift on the maps of foreign topographies, lost in translation, I must make new meanings.
Set adrift on historical ‘fictions’, Russian Ark – The Hermitage Museum of Saint Petersburg – is the setting for Aleksandr Sokurov’s 2002 film meditation on history.

To situate Sokurov’s films, it seems almost unavoidable to take the ring road through Eisenstein’s retrospective illumination of the sequence from his own Potemkin (1925) known as the “Odessa Mist.” In the slow lifting of a dense haze in the port at dawn, the master of montage would remark, at twenty years’ remove, a “suite” of indistinct, imponderable landscapes relinquished to the fluidity of their internal form and, in their “matches,” to a dissolving, one into the other, all at the very surface of the screen... (Sedofsky, 2001)

This is Lauren Sedofsky’s introduction to her interview with Russian Director Aleksandr Sokurov (1951-), prior to the general release of Russian Ark. I cite it here for its pertinence to the difficulty of ‘situating’ his work. Sokurov made forty film and documentary works between 1978 and 2002. Some are fully fictional, some are pure documentary; others are historical re-imaginings of the inner lives of major political figures of the twentieth century: Lenin (Taurus, 2000), Hitler (Moloch, 1999) and the Japanese Emperor Hirohito (The Sun, 2004).

Russian Ark is one of his historical and fictional films, in that history itself takes centre stage. According to Dragan Kujundžić,10 in his article After ‘After’: The Arkive Fever of Alexander Sokurov (2003), the film takes place “after the catastrophe of history” (Kujundžić, 2003), that is to say in a post-modern, post-historical era. The Museum of the Hermitage is the veritable ark of the title; a repository for the cultural artifacts that make up and reflect the heritage of the Russian nation. It is also a floating vessel, unmoored and at sea. Sokurov begins his film in the dark with the sounds of wind, a foghorn and open water.
In Russian Ark, Sokurov presents the equivalent of a loop of film in a Fabergé egg. (Tuchinskaya, 2002) Saint Petersburg’s Hermitage Museum is both the Ark and the bejewelled objet d’art – the structure that floats the film and the glittering collection it contains. The film is an attempt to show, in one continuous (digital) take, the foremost elements of high Russian culture, as viewed in perpetual motion.

A self-confessed traditionalist and conservative filmmaker, Sokurov is very clear about his own position, both in the world of film and in geographical terms. He claims that, as a Saint Petersburg director and filmmaker,

“I myself experience history as a Eurasian; Russia occupies a separate place, being neither Europe nor Asia”. (Halligan, 2003)

Thus, before even viewing the film Russian Ark, the framing of the project and the film is mounted from this particular geopolitical perspective, and questions what it means to view history from a Russian standpoint. Maybe Russian film tends towards the sort of epic project that filming one continuous take in the Hermitage might entail, or, that the expanse of the former USSR lends itself to a filmic view that eclipses human struggle with the never-ending horizon line that crosses nine different time zones. A more complex interrogation of how Russia’s past and present are manifest filmically points towards processes of mythologizing and erasure. Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli argues that Sokurov’s film,

“…treats history not as fact but as a poetic construction that has drifted in and out of Europe via metaphor, illusion and myth.” (Ravetto-Biagioli, 2005)

I think the Hermitage is the perfect stage for Sokurov’s re-imaginings of characters, and events based on historical commentaries or myth. The mise en abyme of the ‘set pieces’ in the Russian Ark give weight to Ravetto-Biagioli’s argument. The flat plane of the screen he ‘tilts’, accentuates the dream-like quality of the imagery. This
flattening of the screen turns it too into a prop – a three dimensional construction. Sokurov himself suggests,

“The eventual image is in fact a canvas on which the filmmaker has accomplished his composition by means of colour and light. The sound, soundtrack – gives a new volume to breathing. The work of cinema art is not being shot – it is being composed”. (Tuchinskaya, 2002)

The only dramatic source of tension in Russian Ark is played out between a Narrator (Russia) and a Marquis (Europe). At its core their dialogue dissects how Russia's view of itself and its high culture as the 'land of illuminated inspiration' was built on an acceptance of the ideas of the West and simultaneously a rejection of these things Europe, exemplified by the Marquis, in his ambassadorial role, is the Other. He takes the view that Russia achieves her sense of national identity through a process of Othering. The Marquis himself enacts a process of Othering with the Narrator; Europe too, needs the Other – Russia. In Sokurov’s film, Ravetto-Biagioli speculates that Russia is represented by a live ‘enactment’ of history while Europe is represented by the static, ‘dead’ paintings (2005, p.23). The Marquis attempts to have a dialogue with the paintings and,

“...links this “live” performance of an untimely history to the haunting presence of those outside of time and geopolitical space.” (Ravetto-Biagioli 2005, p.23)

Sokurov himself claims,

“I see Time in its entirety – the present continuous tense. I have to be inside it, I have to be as integral as this artistic space, as this multiplex yet indivisible architectural ensemble. No close-ups – just one single panorama.” (Tuchinskaya, 2002)

Sokurov does not echo the documentary tradition of leaving the camera running until ‘a truth appears’, but his long camera takes suggest that he represents something beyond the ‘staged’, so much so that he never rehearses scenes of takes for fear of it appearing stale. Watching Russian Ark, however, involves much more focus on the
disorienting experience of trying to navigate and site oneself (and the narrators) in a specific, yet ever-shifting, time frame. For me, I was curious to see the film because I knew it was set inside the Hermitage Museum and that it might deal with the collapsing of a linear narrative. Also, I had seen Sokurov’s Mother and Son (1996), and become intrigued by his distortion of the flat cinematic frame, and how disorienting an experience that was in the dark of the cinema space.

The UNESCO\textsuperscript{11} protected city of Saint Petersburg with its painted facades and architectural treasures and relics, appears like just such a theatrical backdrop: composed, frozen in time – a veritable sugar-frosted city on the Neva. Built on a swamp, Saint Petersburg was envisioned as a European Enlightenment city. It is the site of Peter the Great’s ‘collection’ of European intellectuals, artists, objects and artisans – his great project to Westernize Russia. Against this (unseen) background Sokurov invites us to enter the Hermitage.

We enter unceremoniously, in the darkness of a back corridor, somewhere in the bowels of the building. No portal transports us to the interior. We are aware of the Narrator / eye-of-the-camera (Russian). Alongside this a European voice appears, introducing the figure of the Marquis, an emissary of the French Court. His position is also that of an outsider – he is a trope for the telling of tales and the translator of
unfolding events. His position is also historically accurate – the Marquis de Custine (1790–1857) visited Russia in 1839\textsuperscript{12}, spending most of his time in Saint Petersburg.

In this historical context, we meet the arrogant and somewhat pitiable figure of the oddly dressed Marquis – like a misplaced ‘Nosferatu’\textsuperscript{13}. Out of his own time, he finds himself speaking a language he did not previously know, or understand. His initial proclamation, “\textit{I do not remember anything}”, faintly echoes Dante’s monologue. The Marquis, ‘undead’ and in an unfamiliar ‘future’, is reawakened to a state and place beyond his own literal knowledge.

“\textit{What city is this?}”
“\textit{What language are we speaking?}”
“\textit{Russian? How strange! I never knew Russian before.}”
“\textit{What on earth am I doing here?}”

He is thus an unreliable translator, a witness – to what he does not know, or remember, yet. It is not entirely clear where he positions himself politically or socially, or where his loyalties lie; despite his criticisms he seems to harbour nostalgia for his time in Russia. The Narrator, although a native, is also ‘out of time’ – these are not his times. He asks rhetorically, “\textit{Is this a dream?}”

Kujundžić interrogates the notion that Russian Ark is about the staging and reproduction of history: its genealogy, commemoration and destruction. He
comments that the opening sequence dialogue between the Narrator and the Marquis, fixes the trajectory for the whole film,

"...the archive therefore opens on nothingness and the loss of memory, or the incapacity to commemorate, (I do not remember anything), it unfolds as its own mnemonic and visual erasure." (Kujundzic, 2003)

The implication of this is a repression of the identification, or commemoration. In Freudian terms, repression signifies a trauma and always a return of what has been repressed. The Hermitage 'mis-signifies' the site of the repression and its return. This, says Kujundzic, is a significant blind spot for Sokurov, and the source of the dramatic tension of the film –

"The Nation is both museum site and ground of oblivion...where repression and the return of the repressed take place simultaneously." (Kujundzic, 2003)

The Marquis jostled by actors, running past him to get on stage, asks rhetorically,

"Am I expected to play a role? What kind of play is this? Let's hope it's not a tragedy."

and later, "Could all this be theatre?"

The Marquis de Custine was, historically, a critic of Russia and mocked the Russian nobility, and especially Tsar Nicolas I (1796-1855), for 'hiding an Asiatic soul' with a European veneer. De Custine remarked that the Russians would be better to act on
their truest desires, claiming they were like, “trained bears who made you long for the real ones” (Kennan 1971, p.80). Most tellingly for Sokurov, de Custine derided, “I came here to see a country, but what I find is a theatre”. (Kennan 1971, p.80) The theatricality of Sokurov’s Marquis and his posturing, form a curious counterpoint, in the film, to the historical commentary of de Custine.

Sokurov makes use of his favoured disorienting technique – occasionally flattening the canvas of the image in space, so that the screen image seems to slip away on a different plane – a visible blurring of reality. This technique is visually un-grounding for the viewer. Additionally as viewers we are in continual motion, along with the anamorphic camera’s eye and the combined figure of the Narrator, through rooms and corridors and back stairs. Rushing behind figures, caught up in events, we seem to participate unknowingly, but quickly realise we are on the outside of this ‘theatre’ observing this situation (but still trapped on the inside of the metaphorical Fabergé egg).

The frequent bickering dialogue between the Marquis and the Narrator attempts to ground the film – to underpin the time-frame in which the events are happening, and to place them in an historical context. It also affirms their positions as ‘Europe’ and ‘Russia’ and dual narrators of the film. We can read this early indication of a split focus – a fundamental division – or divided vision: a di-vision. The split vision embodied in this Russian film (not European, not Asian) shows an identity that is divided at its optical core: at its point of seeing itself, and wrestling with its position, historically and geographically.
The Narrator-camera follows behind the figure of the Marquis, but occasionally skirts around him, in front of him, introduces him, warns him. On a few occasions the Marquis and the Narrator-camera argue, separate from each other, and we witness different events with the Narrator while sometimes spying the Marquis on the edge of the frame. On the last occasion the Narrator and Marquis split they become disembodied, and the camera appears to float through the space, released. Approaching the Marquis (Europe) for the last time, the Narrator (Russia) addresses him, "I lost you". He repeats poignantly, "Have I lost you?"

In this microcosm of turmoil and social upheaval, these roles are played out against a gilt-edged backdrop – a strangely dislocated hypnotic reverie. As we move from tableau to tableau, historic events, vignettes of everyday life, the court of Peter the Great, of Catherine the Great – the Marquis, echoing the historical slight made by the real emissary, de Custine, (and the Russian Narrator) concludes with the repetition that, "Russia is like a theatre". This continual ungrounding returns us to the question of whether a farce or tragedy is being played out. We are witnesses to the re-enactment / unfolding of three hundred years of Russian history, a lack of recognisable cuts, fades, or dissolves to signal the shift from one era or reality to another, is disorienting for the viewer. The living speak to the dead; the dead converse with each other. The overlapping of different historical realities or fictions further accentuates the fluidity of the filming – everything moves – the tableaux are not still, Sokurov's camera continues a relentless traversing of the space. The 'long shot' of the camera, elongated in the viewer's perception (and in anticipation of the technology), is made to pass through a longer time span – 300 years of history. Without the 'long shot', Russian Ark would comprise of a series of historical
vignettes. This digital eye is presented, by Kujundžić, as unblinking and infinite in its gaze, suggesting it,

"...opens itself to a relentless rupturing and ruination of the visible and the represented. It creates a structural dis-orientation of The Russian Ark, and sends the ship to some surprising and unintended destinations." (Kujundžić, 2003)

Without the cinematic conventions of interstices, we are not directed to make distinctions between scenes – we slip in and out of time, and out of focus – allowing ourselves to wander, perhaps to ‘unintended destinations’.

The Narrator warns the Marquis, “Do not betray our presence”. This clear acknowledgement of the fragile state of affairs; suggests their presence could alter the historical past – forever setting Russia on a new course. Something of this rupture is tacitly sensed by the Marquis: recognising his position as a witness, (and perhaps his own social downfall and demise) he states,

“Everyone can see the future but no-one remembers the past”
“One must not trust this world”.

The Narrator intones, “Farewell, Europe...It's over.” This articulates the beginning of the end – the following twenty minutes are a slowing of the digital gaze: in preparation to close the ‘aperture’ onto the re-enacted past. It also signals the melancholic emptiness that the film ends on – the many protagonists, witnesses, and us, are out of time. The historical ‘loss’ that follows these (re-enacted) events, is manifest as a psychological state. Emphasizing this curious collapsing of timeframes, hundreds of guests are seen taking part in a huge ball sequence, lasting ten minutes.

This is the last ball before the ensuing Revolution. The following ten minutes of film observe the dance guests taking their leave, and exiting the Hermitage en masse. The camera pulls away from the bourgeoisie, in contempt, or in pity – it is almost too
painful to look at them and contemplate their fate. Pouring out of the museum, in their coloured silks they resemble a trapped display, a preserved collection of relics. Instead, the camera turns and focuses on the dark, lapping waves of the Neva as the Narrator concludes, "We are destined to sail forever...to live forever". This slow tableau moves towards its national destiny, like an unstoppable iceberg. The vast landmass of Russia, with all of her indigenous peoples, her tundra, her colony lands and islands, seems to unfold, like an epic backdrop to the museified spectacle.

I see the figure of the Marquis in Russian Ark as performing a similar function to the Ambassadress – he operates at a diplomatic level, and is there to observe the political state of the host country. He knows the Hermitage and its collection intimately, he knows the language (which he did not know before), he has an understanding of the historical events, and has been present at some of them (or heard accounts of them); the Marquis must orient himself, politically, historically, linguistically and spatially. He has awoken in the presentness of the past to witnesses the re-enactment of history (and his past) in a future or parallel state that is foreign, or alien, to him. He must react to the characters of the living as well as the dead in this live historical tableau –
in this I suggest he acts as a conduit between the living, the dead and the ‘undead’ aspects of the film. The essentially ‘resurrected’ Marquis and Narrator seem to exist in a semi-liminal zone within the film – I propose this is only partial because of the discrepancies of when they are ‘seen’ by other characters – it is unclear whether their ‘inbetween’ state protects them from unfolding events in anyway. It seems not.

The most important aspect of Kujundzic’s article for me is the decentred subject and the divided vision he locates in Sokurov’s film. This divided vision of the Narrator and the Marquis is germane to my practice and leads me to question whether the Navigator and Ambassadress roles occupy invite a similar di-vision between East and West. I have realised in the course of structuring this exegesis that I explicitly associate the Navigator with the Eastern edges of Europe, and the Ambassadress with the Central and Western areas. I am surprised to confess that I cannot separate the figure of the Navigator from her militarized genesis; that I still see the Navigator as the product of a totalitarian system. If the Ambassadress, at a fundamental level, represents the West, and the Navigator the East of Europe, I must further interrogate what this division means, for my work, in terms of a ‘split’ or schizophrenic view of identity.
THE NO MAN’S LAND

Most recently I have been working with the idea of one landscape acting as a surrogate for another in my practice. I am interested in the possibility of one place taking on the characteristics of another – evoking a fugitive sense of identity. I wanted to convincingly represent a place that I had not been, by substituting one landscape for another.

I have read poetic and historical epics on the borderlands of Eastern Europe, watched grim documentary footage and contemporary filmic reconstructions of the area between Poland, Lithuania and Belarus – Come and See (Klimov, 1985), Pan Tadeusz (Wajda, 1999), and seminal TV series The World at War (1972). I read memoirs on vanished worlds, a way of life, battles, insurrections and catastrophes – Shtetl (Hoffman, 1998), The Bronski House (Marsden, 1996), Pan Tadeusz (Mickiewicz, 1992), and The Polish Way (Zamoyski, 1987). I travelled nearby and compare the colours of the trees in evening light with the painted ones in small historical dioramas. I was woken, before dawn, by the changing gauge of the railway track, and then relentlessly shuddered onwards through the no-man’s land bordering three (now distinct) countries. It is this area, this place; half-glimpsed on waking or sleeping; half-forgotten, that I want to evoke. What is a no-man’s land? It looks like anywhere else, except for the absence of people and buildings. It is bounded and patrolled at its margins and peripheries, but seemingly overgrown and wild at its core. At the core of this no-man’s land there is a splitting – the actual boundary is at the edges – but the centre is porous once the outer edges have been breached.
Geographically the area of my focus is mainly flat and prone to marshes. It is densely wooded. The numerous streams and rivers there have sandy beds. The Niemen River winds its way through creating a fluid border between different countries. This border, liable to flooding, swelling, over-spilling its self onto ‘foreign’ banks, is the point at which something ends, or beyond which it becomes something else. DeCerteau reminds us that the boundary is also a metaforai: a metaphor. (1988, p.129)

I am most interested in this point at which the border unfolds into something else – the no-man’s land is a rich seam for the unravelling of notions of identity and international relations. The work Green Zone (1993) of Swiss artist Christian Philipp Müller (1957-), for the Austrian pavilion at the 1993 Venice Biennale, is pertinent in this context.

“...Müller followed Austria’s green borders, exploring their function as barriers to the former Eastern-block countries of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia as well as to the western states of Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Germany. He sought out wooded border regions and here crossed national boundaries. [...] At each border crossing, Müller sent postcards to friends and art dealers inscribed with a sentence inspired by On Kawara18: “I crossed the border between X and Y and I AM STILL ALIVE.” (Müller, Meyer, 2006)

I have not represented his border crossings visually in this text, because the images his assistant took were documentary proof of the crossings and not seen by the artist as works in their own right. I think the act of making the crossings is more interesting. The artist, dressed a tourist hiker, describes the pervasive climate at the time,

“It is all about loss, everything I showed in the Austrian pavilion used to be Austria. Austria was not part of the European community yet. Austrians were very much concerned with losing their national identity, their border with the former Communist regimes was the most porous to enter the West. They were concerned with securing the borders both physically and mentally.” (Müller, Meyer, 2006)
The implication here is that the mental and physical construction of borders is paramount. Maintaining them, both psychologically and actually, means a constant patrolling of the border, its threats, and meanings. How do we interrogate the difference between border and boundary? The O.E.D describes a border as: the edge or boundary of anything – the line separating two political or geographical areas. These demarcated territories are also cultural, social and psychic; patrolled, defended and contested. They prohibit transgression, forbidding deviation or the errare of errant straying. However, the O.E.D also defines border as: to adjoin; come close to being – to approximate, resemble. This suggests a more dualistic process, describing both the separation, de-lineation of places and the fact of them being connected; it correlates with the Greek concept of border – the here and there, the Us and Them – as Martin Heidegger noted, “it brings us together and keeps us apart”. (Borden, Rendell, 2000, p.240)

For my purposes in this thesis it is more productive to be distinct about the difference between border and boundary: the border is acknowledged as a porous spatial construct, its borderlands maybe vague and indistinct in their edges. The boundary is a space of fixed limits – a Parish boundary line, a wall or barrier. To ‘come close to being’ or ‘to approximate, resemble’, leads us to the darkest fear of all – that the border ties us to the other, the stranger – our closest held enemy, defined as ‘that which we are not’. The concept of national identity is defined here, through Müller’s work, by the secure ‘mental borders’ of the (Austrian) population. It is not impossible to imagine a nation without borders – one that is held mentally as a tangible state, without current material form – it is the preserve of diasporic communities the world over to create miniature versions of their culture in exile (self
imposed, or enforced). The authority represented in the border enforces binary identity positions – the ‘Them’ and ‘Us’, ‘Mine’ and ‘Yours’. However, the border is also the site at which power structures and distinctions may be broken down and reconfigured, if it is considered more than just a marginal space. Transgressing such borders metaphorically can allow for a re-interpretation of subject-positions and definitions of self-identity. I am particularly struck by Gloria Anzaldúa’s description of the borderlands (in this case the Mexican/US border19) as a, “place created by the residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.” (Ball, 1996)

Psychologically the notion of a place created by ‘residue’, has overtly psychic connotations of a liminal space – a ‘between’ state that exists just outside the borders authority. To the inhabitants suggested by Anzaldúa, I would add the ‘fugitive’, as a concept of identities that are in a process of flux and transition dependent on location, and the inherent power structures.

THE WALL

The most physically obvious example of the boundary is the Wall – the concrete monolith splitting space in two and separating a community. The walls in Berlin and Israel are well-known symbols of political statements, and their strategies to divide and rule. There are others built to keep hordes out, protect citizens from barbarians, and many of these still endure, underlining the horizon line – and, it should not be forgotten, that the horizon itself is a product of a boundary edge. The approach to these walls must best be seen on foot: the wall confronts and interrogates the walker, acting as a mirror, deflecting all deviation with its immense physicality and border
controls. Any use of a wall clearly signals the desire to assert control; by keeping people in, as well as out. To take the example of the ghetto: Simon Schama describes it as, ‘a self-imploding void’, which inversely created a stronger sense of identity. The physical constraints of the ghetto meant the buildings were condemned to become more and more crowded; the space between them diminishing as the population increased. Schama calls this an ‘experience space’ – and that the inhabitants, “experienced place as a kind of resistance to what was facing them”, (Millar, Dean, 2005, p.187). This response to the physical experience of a space is directly linked to my practice, specifically the experience of making Gole, as discussed in Chapter 3.

In Wim Wenders’ film Wings of Desire (1987), Alekan’s Circus represents the margins of city life: a space of dreams, play, spectacle and illusion, the threshold of normal spatial experience; the flying trapeze. Literally at the edge of the city, it becomes its own no-man’s land, parallel to the one that Homer, the Storyteller, is slowly traversing, searching for the cafés of the Potsdamer Platz of his youth. Trapeze artist, Marion, surmises her experience of this no-man’s land at the margins of Berlin,

"Here I am a foreigner, yet it's all so familiar ... I can't get lost, you always end up at the Wall".

Although referring to the brutal, concrete division between the East and West of the city, Marion’s description suggests a different quality. The Wall, skirting the Spree: sometimes taut, sometimes meandering, may also present a space of reflection. The spatial navigation by Homer can be seen as ‘a turning back on the self’. The blank wall, or screen-like device, that prevents and rejects any movement through, may
instead throw a reflection back – a surveying of the self. Wenders’ storyteller, Homer, continues this theme,

"Are there any more borders left? More than ever! Each street has its border line, each plot is separated by a strip of no-man’s land...disguised as a hedge or a ditch."

Whilst on a macro scale this may suggest a rampant, urban territorialism, it also conjours, on a micro scale, vivid images of East German (and Eastern European) garden plots, where vegetables and flowers are grown, sheds and summer houses are built, fences are strictly maintained and plots jealously guarded. In a series of works, Canadian artist Stan Douglas (1960-) photographed **Potsdamer Schrebergärten** (1994) as sites of urban idyll. Essentially a preliminary study for future film work, Douglas presented the **Schrebergärten** as mute site, poignantly unpeopled, bearing witness to the monumental shifts in world order of the twentieth century – the beginning of the fall of Communism, and subsequent reunification of Germany. With political and social history firmly embedded, these sites become the basis for a psychological drama and narrative.

Returning to the plots for his film piece **Der Sandmann** (1995), Douglas reconstructed a **Schrebergärten** plot, one (in use) from the 1970s, and another plot from 1989 (now a construction site) in the film studios of Babelsberg. Using a 360 degree panning shot, the camera appears to do a full sweep of one era only for it to be superceded by an image of the same plot in a different era. This disorienting effect undermines the sense of location. The viewer is caught in the loop – one image wiping out the other in an endless cycle. Compounding this sense of disorientation, Douglas introduces a spoken narrative drawing on Freud’s essay *The Uncanny* (1919) and E.T.A Hoffman's tale *Der Sandmann* (1817). The voice of the actor, also
glimpsed in the camera’s revolutions, is out of synch for half of the film. In the
catalogue essay, Achim Borchardt-Hume describes this as,

"an acoustic disjunction that corresponds with the work’s most disturbing feature –
the vertical seam splitting the screen in two". (Douglas 2002, p.9)

It is this seam, or rupture, that sites the film in a psychological landscape – as one
revolution eradicates the other, turn about, it becomes clear that there are two time
scales to be compressed or two halves to be reconciled and integrated. The content of
the narrative text indicates a site of trauma – both a literal ‘sight’ of trauma as
Nathanael conflates the tale of the Sandman blinding children in the night, and
removing their eyes, and a childish misrecognition of an old man he saw at the
garden plots.

I also read this focus on sight and site, and the cyclical erasure of the film image, as
part of a discourse on divided vision (to return to Kujundzić’s theories on Russian
Ark). Taking the form of a letter between Nathanael and childhood friends, the
narrative centres on a misrecognition or lack of ‘intellectual knowing’. Douglas also
makes use of Freud’s consideration of trauma and the resistance to remember; how
this is manifest in the compulsion to repeat behaviour or action. Nathanael fears the
real being usurped by the imaginary. This re-emergence of the past in the present produces a rupture in perception of the visible, and in the fabric of the Unconscious. Douglas’ Der Sandmann operates consciously at this intersection of history, memory and erasure.

In my large drawing work Legenda (2009), I am primarily concerned with this juncture and the attempt to convey it through a cartographic format. Legenda utilises archival information and myth, side by side, with snippets of autobiographical experience. The drawing is predominantly text-based and demands detailed scrutiny of more than fifty circular panels (or ‘lenses’). These lenses, and the order in which they are read, or omitted, produce multiple readings of the work. There is no hierarchy of authority in the text. I liken this to the process defined as, ‘border writing: a strategy of translation rather than representation’, and suggest, that like physical borders, the territories of language, translation and meaning can also be transgressed (Ball 1996, p.5). The borderland cartography of Legenda, sited in myth and anecdote and projected family fantasy, relates back to the spatial writings of deCerteau, and most critically, the function and definition of the map legend, “Legenda: what is to be read, but also what can be read”, (1998, p.106). I will return to Legenda later in this chapter, after journeying through the liminal zones of temporal space, and negation of flows.
Architectural theorist Iain Borden (1962-) states that,

"boundaries present themselves to us as the edge of things, as the spatial and
temporal limit between the here and there, in and out, present and future". (Borden,
Rendell, 2000, p.221)

These spatial thresholds are not infinite, but, ‘zones of negotiation’. These ‘zones’,
although relating here to architecture, interest me as a liminal concept – they evoke a
sense of being able to pass through something: not a blank, concrete plane but a
navigable place. If in this place normative laws are suspended, and even time itself
slowed, or stopped, other factors must be negotiated in their place. This concept is
almost cinematic in its vision – a veritable no-man’s land suggestive of the Zones in
Andrei Tarkovsky’s (1932-1986) Stalker (1979) or Jean Cocteau’s (1889-1963)
Orphée (1949). In Cocteau’s film Orphée, Orpheus, the mythical Greek hero, has to
enter the underworld to retrieve his wife – prematurely killed by a jealous female
incarceration of Death. Mirrors act as a membrane between the world of Orpheus and
the underworld of Death. Beyond the mirror lies the Zone; a liminal space that must
be negotiated in order to reach the underworld proper. Huertebise tells Orpheus that
it is made up of, ‘memories and human habits’. In the Zone individuals may be
condemned to repeat their compulsions and habits – in death as in life. Orpheus
battles against an invisible current in the Zone whilst Huertebise glides smoothly.
Huertebise warns him, ‘far and near have no meaning here’. Orpheus is out of place
and time, outside of natural laws; suspended in a non-place where no-one is entirely
dead nor entirely alive – the limen. But as in any true epic tale, there is a refusal to
respect boundaries, a restless urge to travel, and through that sojourning, slip between the margins of realms and realities.

One of the visual devices Cocteau employs is to make use of simple film reversal – the footage runs backwards, he returns Orpheus, and order, to the world. Every action that was made in order to enter the underworld must be reversed in order to return fully, with no memory of (the) Death. Cocteau’s liminal zone is a porous border that can be breached (with difficulty, or sacrifice). Conversely, Iain Borden’s architectural concept of the post-modern boundary as a ‘thick edge’, seems more like a border in the sense that,

"the boundary emerges not as a plane but a zone, not physical but socio-spatial, not a division of things but a negation of flows". (Borden, Rendell, 2000, p.240)

I would posit that Andrei Tarkovsky’s filmic Zone is more complex than Cocteau’s – here the negotiation takes many forms – unexpected and unexplained – rituals must be followed, signs must be read and interpreted as favourable or not. This boundary demarcates a no-man’s land; unpopulated and cordoned off. The containment of the Zone incites a feverish desire to visit it – whether to dispel the myths or to search for answers. Introduction to the Zone asserts that it demands the respect of its navigators – it is a contradictory and ambiguous place (it is not clear where is ends or how far it reaches in any direction; in this respect it is unlike a boundary with fixed limits) and it is implied that any deviation may upset a fragile equilibrium. The Stalker of the title is a man consumed by the need to return and negotiate the Zone, despite the suggestion that his obsession has somehow led to his deformity of his daughter and to the nervous exhaustion of his long-suffering wife.
"Our moods, our thoughts, our emotions, our feelings can bring about change here. And we are in no condition to comprehend them. Old traps vanish, new ones take their place; the old safe places become impassable, and the route can either be plain and easy or impossibly confusing. That's how the Zone is. It may even seem capricious. But in fact, at any moment it is exactly as we devise it, in our consciousness...everything that happens here depends on us, not on the Zone."

The notion of flows, when viewed through the eyes of the Stalker, suggests that the negotiation of the Zone is a psychological exercise, different every time – that the Stalker himself is a conduit, a receptor who interprets signs, and acts accordingly, in that place. Or, to invert this: perhaps it is the Stalker who has the fragile equilibrium, which, in turn, affects the landscape – like Michelangelo Antonioni’s Giuliana in the red desert of Ravenna. This fragile balance of mind and landscape echoed in Antonioni’s Il Deserto Rosso (1964) is discussed further in Chapter 3.

THE RIVER

To return to the notion of the river as a fluid border – it can be seen as a haptic fringe to the land – a border that flows. It can be breached, although it may be treacherous to do so, and it may not be possible to retrace one’s steps. There is the sense that the river is a symbolic threshold – where superfluous extras may wash away, and where,
upon reaching the far bank, one will be altered through the crossing of a metaphorical frontier. The river may traverse lines of demarcation, moving from one cultural site to another (and the cross back across the border again), or become the line of demarcation itself. I find this prospect fascinating: that a river in full flood may become ‘unbounded’ and overspill its former edges, and in doing so it will change the geography of that territory.

The river, often seen as a neutral site between warring nations and armies (although its control is paramount), can even provide a site for the discussion of territorial expansion and the relinquishing of lands. The Treaty of Tilsit between Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I was signed on a raft in the middle of the river Nieman in 1807. Five years later Napoleon’s army marched across it to invade Russia, and on their return westwards, many of his men succumbed to its December temperatures and ice.

The river is always in flux; eroding its banks and channels, meandering and looping; freezing and swelling. As a border it is dynamic, fluid and errant – exploring trajectories of its own: tributaries, estuaries. As it splits countries and forms geographic islands or lakes, it traverses language and culture. I propose that a transformative process takes place on entering and negotiating the river-border, and that an unfolding of the self, of identity, takes place at this threshold. That conversely, at the border; the place where meaning and order are most tightly patrolled, there is an unravelling; an unwrapping of meaning and (socio-political) relations.

In Freudian psychoanalytic terms, the process of unfolding, unravelling is *Explicatio* – the furthest reaches of this unravelling (explication) are the furthest from desire.
Conversely, the more relations that are tied up in a condensed and complicated image, *Complicatio* – the stronger is the desire associated with it. This need to complicate and displace meaning obstructs the desire to unravel the construction of self identity. This constant process of folding and unfolding meaning, this fantasy or projection, is a constant negotiation that can never be resolved. It is always deferred elsewhere – a totality that can never be achieved – and is only ever in deference to something else, something other; something absent: a loss. The cultural theorist Homi Bhabha echoes this loss,

“The access to the image of identity is only ever possible in the *negation* of any sense of originality or plenitude; the process of displacement and differentiation (absence/presence, representation/repetition) renders it a liminal reality. The image is at once a metaphoric substitution, an illusion of presence, and by that same token a metonym, a sign of its absence and loss.” (1994, p.51)
THE SUBSTITUTE

Navigator#7 (2009)

This work, for PhD exhibition, has moved from being a single channel, or split-screen work, to a multi-screen installed piece, as reflected in the development of my video works through the research programme. From its original genesis of representing the borderland forests of the Polish/Lithuanian/Belarusian kresy, the work has expanded in conjunction with the exegesis to develop some of the key motifs: the river, the disorienting mists. The video now comprises three distinct elements that will be screened as interrelated but discrete parts of the work. The complex installation of the Navigator#7 work is difficult to represent on a single screen, or monitor. For the purposes of the examining process I have produced a version of the work that shows the three screens side by side, however, it is not intended to be viewed as a flat triptych. For the actual installation of the work prior to the Viva, I will show Navigator#7 on separate screens within a space.

Part 1: The Mist

1 min, colour with audio, single screen

The video begins in uncertain territory – a disorienting space of thick mist or blanket fog is framed but out of focus. A dark shape is positioned off centre, shifts back to centre and off again. The shape slowly becomes a figure, morphing from a negative hole in the screen to a positive visual marker in a blank landscape. Aurally there are no clues to ground this image – the sound of a strong wind can be heard
The video begins in the darkness with the sound of a strong wind. An abstract image in green/black and grey turns slowly. It appears that the camera lens strains to ‘catch’ the image in its focal range. As the wind buffets, the figure of the Navigator in a thick mist very slowly slides into focus. She adjusts her goggles, struggles to see. When she turns to look away once more from the camera, the lens seems to ‘flare’, and she immediately slips out of focus again. The Navigator takes off her map bag and looks into the mist for landmarks. Again the camera struggles to regain the image, and very slowly brings it back to a clear focus momentarily, only for it to be lost once more. The Navigator, and by extension the viewer, is unable to orientate – the very act of ‘seeing’ is denied both the viewer and the Navigator.

Like Testa, this video work sets the figure in an ‘absent’ landscape, without any clues to its whereabouts. The visual disruption of focal ‘flares’ shifts the experience of viewing the work. I am interested in portraying the camera as if it seems to pursue the subject, and struggle to capture or contain it. I intended the video to feel unstable – visually slipping out of reach – it appears to have no physical bounds in which to fix the figure (although she is clearly grounded on some unseen foundation).
Part 2: The Forest

6 min 30 sec, colour with audio, 3 screens

In this piece, three sites are alternately represented on three screens. The same figure of the Navigator is seen moving seamlessly between three wooded locations, disappearing from one screen and reappearing on another, or visible on all three concurrently. It is not clear whether the Navigator is in pursuit or being pursued, or whether she exists in a paranoid state.

These three wooded areas of The Forest are presented as separate sites – substitutes for the imagined borderlands that share a forest network, marshes and rivers. At times they mirror each other on screen, echoing forms; journeys around and through their spaces. The Navigator appears to follow ‘herself’, simultaneously visible on different screens, effectively ‘haunting’ her own progress. The actual camera movement projected on three screens creates a telescoping effect when two Navigators are in motion – either in opposite directions, or ‘pursuing’ one another. When the central screen shows the camera traversing space from the actual viewpoint of the Navigator, the mirrored landscape on either side acts as a frame.
holding this incorporeal scene in place. The 'flanking' screens change and show two Navigators, each on a course away from each other, and from the trajectory of the floating camera. I envisage that it becomes impossible to follow all these journeys simultaneously without stepping back from the screen. As the viewer retreats from this effect, the screens change again, one by one, and three Navigators concurrently occupy the same space – that of the forest and of the screen. These Navigators standing silently become like the trees surrounding them – swaying and rocking. Standing between them, the viewer is buffeted by the same winds, which resound three-fold in this small clearing.

Part 3: The River

4min 15sec, colour with audio, single screen

*The camera has returned to a single view, and the Navigator is in a different landscape. The Navigator traverses the river, negotiating its flow and testing its depths as she submerges herself.*
The river acts as a rupture – a border between the three locations of **The Forest**. These three sections of the borderland, which meet amongst the trees, are traversed or intersected by the river. In this single screen video part, the camera becomes animated with the flow of the water, and the motion of the Navigator. The camera view is closer, suspended as the Navigator begins to submerge in the water and released as she re-emerges. I see this intimacy signalling a change in pitch – the viewer is invited closer; to accompany the Navigator as she negotiates the current of water, and nears the other side of the riverbank. At ‘punctuation’ points in this piece, the Navigator cradles the camera, slowly moving along the riverbed of the border – in these short sections the audio becomes suspended – hushed, in an almost intimate gesture to the viewer.

From the point at which the Navigator first ‘goes under’ (the water) the pace changes: tangibly slowing image and audio in the lead up to the final immersion. This act of purification or absolution in the river is a form of erasure. Aurally this last section of **Navigator#7** links to the preceding two parts: the main track carries the integral audio recording, while Parts 2 and 3 alternate between low, almost muffled audio and strong wind noise, and ultimately the slowed sonic distortion of the submersions.
The Navigator in this role moves through the borderlands to the border itself. At the starting point, in *The Mist* the Navigator is elevated at a higher altitude. As she moves down *into* the earthy colours of the forest with its light and shade, alternately revealing or concealing the terrain, the tone of the visual image is warmer. *The River* footage also gets darker – passing cloud signalling a change in light and another gust of wind to unsettle the surface of the river.

I see this movement downwards, from the unseen mountain to submersion in the river, as part of a topology of the borderlands. Through the surrogacy of another landscape, the border can be *explicated* and *complicated*. The river acts as the symbolic border at which the unravelling of the self; of meaning, takes place.
"Legenda: what is to be read, but also what can be read". (deCerteau 1988, p.106)

The purpose of this large drawing – Legenda – was to contextualise Navigator#7. The drawing maps all that I know tacitly and implicitly informed the video work. However, it does not directly reference the video works, nor vice versa, rather they both remain distinct.

The drawing focuses on an area of land, a much-disputed territory, routinely claimed by all the bordering countries or occupying forces. In it, places are named and information obtained from a wide range of sources: some primary, most secondary; some questionable or tentative, lacking correlation or validation. These sources (and their bibliographic details) act as a legend for the ‘map’. The place names are real: some may no longer be found except on old maps, lost but for their co-ordinates; many will be known by other names, in other languages; some may be remembered because of historical events; others for murderous acts. These places form markers in my futile search for one small location – a point of origin.

There are possible sites for this point of origin, numerous geographic sites with variant names, that can all be located in the focal region. These sites have been set adrift in my drawing, floating on a river of black ink. The river does not follow the contour of any actual river in that area, but acts as an artery connecting these potential sites. It connects other landmarks from family myths and stretches to the furthest points of the map – the edges of my research. This black river partially mimics the Niemen, with all its loops and coils, connecting present day Belarus to
the Baltic Sea through the Courland Lagoon. In my map it unites with the sea further north, in a different country, at the Latvian port of Riga, birthplace of my great-grandmother.

The Niemen itself is the subject of other drawings I have made in anticipation of the video work. I realise, through this practice, that I have always been absorbed by maps and by graphic markings; of trying to convey the incomprehensible: vast marches across a huge terrain, swathes of people on the move, a swift pincer attack, a long, slow retreat.

This cartographic description by engineer Charles Joseph Minard (1781-1870), from 1869, portrays the huge losses of Napoleon’s Russian campaign of 1812-13. As a statistical graph it shows the diminishing army as the narrowing of a thick band as it snakes towards Moscow, and represents the initial total of 442,000 men. The original caption reads that the chart measures one millimetre for every 10,000 men. This thick flow of l’Armée Française has tributaries departing at different locations, vainly hoping to rejoin further downstream. Minard includes the rivers Berezina,
Dnieper and Markowa in his topographic view, but it is the Niemen that starts and finishes this campaign: barely 10,000 re-crossed its banks in December 1812. Minard crucially charts the dropping temperature at key points along the dark line of the retreat. The band of men narrows and diminishes as the map registers long stretches of temperatures between -9° and -24°, and a low of -30° at Molodeczno, following the battle of Mińsk. This figurative map fascinates me – a thick red wedge (in the original print) aiming for Moscow suddenly flips into a thin, black line that seems visibly to struggle back to its point of origin. The retreating line is a literal shadow of the red thrusting line of attack; ever diminishing and eventually splitting. It can be read in this graph that the flip from red to black; from attack to retreat, affects a psychological mode – one that signals a shift from pursuer to pursued. In Minard’s cartography I read the topos of the Niemen’s course (running South to North at this point) as a fluid screen for the decimated French Army – beyond this point (West across the Niemen) is outwith the scope of Minard’s commission – where Napoleon’s men disappear into the realm of another historical narrative, and into a country that was crucially at that point in time, ‘Nowhere’.24

It is deliberate that the graphic form depicted in Legenda appears to be an eye, all blood vessels, capillaries and lenses. It captures an attempt to see differently: all the knowledge I have garnered of this region and its history – how to see it anew. Like any well-used map, it has been trawled many times – it is a large drawing – half in pencil and half in ink. I am aware that, as I lean over, and lie on it, in order to complete it, I am slowly, accidentally, smudging it. Gradually this information, gathered and gained, will be lost – erased by me. In a similar vein, Minard’s lithographic red ink has faded to a pale brown – the positive, thrusting arrow of
Napoleon’s army may yet fade completely, leaving only the dark, slinking shadow of his retreat as a visual trace. The process of looking and preserving can also be a slow eradication; a fragile photograph or document brought to light accelerates its erasure.

This map ultimately is an amalgamation of the many maps I possess of this area – in Polish, Russian, Belarussian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and German. By possessing it cartographically I strive to know it intimately without the possibility to literally possess the site. The point of origin that I repeatedly search for is only ever one point in a longer lineage of locations. In my map it is only the last point that I know anything of certainty about – the name: a phonetic retelling, rendered in a ‘foreign’ array of consonants. Finding it may lead to other locations, going further back in time. There is no surety of finding it. There will be no definitive origin or ending in this search.

In charting the disparate pieces of information I have gathered in the form of a drawing, time frames have been collapsed and books, or films, or photographs of the region, stand in for a knowledge I do not and cannot have. Just as the places mapped oscillate between small estates of disenfranchised petty nobility and large cultural centres, so too crumpled documents sit alongside canonical cultural works, and
scholarly research alongside family anecdotes or war memoirs. My own limited forays into the physical edges of this region are represented, along with intellectual forays: personal correspondences with authors, historians, genealogists and archivists. The desire to represent this place, this region of borderlands and marshes and rivers, encouraged me to re-view many things I had read previously, family ‘interviews’ conducted, films watched, and journeys undertaken.

The process of re-finding and re-looking; of looking differently, has, in turn lead me to new information. This is a process that may be becoming increasingly familiar: at the end of the twentieth century there was a palpable rush to interview, capture and document stories from the two World Wars – a fifty year ‘blanket’ was lifted; questions were (re)asked and narratives (re)interrogated. The increasing weight of archives available online, from census documents to shipping passenger lists, archive films digitally uploaded, fragile maps scanned, and the increased speed in accessing this data, means more fragments are now available. Collecting fragments and trying to make sense of them has become a global pastime in the Western cultural landscape. It is easy to become absorbed in piecing together a history from images, bought or taken; identifying landmarks, blurred figures, surroundings; trying to
decipher handwritten notes on the back that authenticate and date and fix the images as part of a larger narrative. However, if the narrative cannot be ‘authenticated’ by further documentation, or verified by word of mouth, by family myth, how then do we make sense of them? Taking images or bits of oral family anecdotes as starting points, I work to contextualise these in a historical or geographical framework. Moving between fiction and non-fiction, web-groups, amateur and professional genealogists and historians, and the limits of my personal experience, I knit an environment – emotional, topographical, psychological or virtual – in which my work can exist.
In my family I have boxes of photos – images of relatives in different countries, earlier lives, earlier loves, pre-war, post-war. As a child I would trawl through my long-dead grandfather’s pre-war photos, his earlier childhood images lost to circumstance, upheaval and revolution. Recuperating in Teheran, many Polish soldiers obtained cameras and documented their release (from Soviet captivity) and their subsequent tour of duties through the Middle East and into Italy. Thousand of just such images sit in website archives looking for cross reference points, names and locations. My grandfather’s form one small box of tiny images – mosques, camels and pyramids – Polish soldiers out of place. His post-war images focus on all the signs of a new life – a wife, three sons, a transplanted Polish community and a burgeoning business as a commercial photographer.

Another box holds a collection of square, medium format photographs – these represent both his eventual return and final visit to Communist Poland in the 1960s. The black and white images he took are framed by a tourist – charting the reconstruction of cities – Warsaw, Krakow – monuments, public building programmes – walks in the Tatras – sailing out of Gdansk. There are few family photos – although recognisable figures appear incidentally as part of the landscape. Looking with a magnifying lens I can identify that there are less smiles here than in the war photos. Countless times I have extrapolated what the missing narratives might be in these sequences of images. My questions are unanswerable and my conclusions are necessarily provisional.
My grandmother was not Polish, and did not accompany him on what was to be his last trip 'home'. She was not able to make out physical features or figures in photographs, on account of poor eyesight, which gave way to progressive blindness. Her inherited macular condition involved the light-sensitive lining of the back of the eye degenerating and peeling away in patches, sending an incomplete image to the optic nerve. This interruption in the electric signal results in an image with blank spots where faces or features should be. When light enters the eye it passes through the cornea and the lens which bend the light so that it can form a clear focus on the retina at the back of the eye. The cornea focuses the light towards the retina, while the lens adjusts and fine-tunes the focus. My grandmother's eyes had to contend with these gaps in her vision - like an erased photograph, or a scratched out face - she would miss the vital details of an image, or a facial expression. The optometrist explained that her vision resembled a mosaic with missing pieces - the brain attempts to fill in the missing details but is fallible. The edges of her vision were clearer than the centre; conversely for her the periphery was in focus while the centre was a series of blind spots. Even more curiously, for her and the optometrist, she maintained that every morning when she woke she could see with some clarity, but that within an hour a misty veil would descend over her vision, and remain so for the rest of the day.

This visual defect never hindered her attempts to name the subjects or place them in an historical or familial context. She would rarely admit defeat. She was the conduit between my immediate past and my future. She was the one who would describe for me the forbidden geographies of the Polish-Lithuanian borderlands she had never seen.
THE FOREST

The Polish-Lithuanian Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz (also claimed ethnically by the Belarusians) imagined the forests of these borderlands as 'a shelter' in the largest sense of the word. Following waves of failed uprisings and subsequent Russian repressions, Mickiewicz visualised the forest as a place of origin; a fixing point that bound man to the land (although not the peasants - they were bound to the fields and the noble estates). The forest was a place where a Pole could be a Pole, despite the painful reality that Poland had effectively been wiped off the map. Mickiewicz saw the forest as a symbol of purity and strength - the perfect cradle for the resurrection of hope for a new Polish-Lithuanian kingdom. His Pan Tadeusz, or the Last Foray in Lithuania of 1834, attempted to create a mood of optimism for the immediate political future of the kingdom and reignite hope for the resurrection of the Commonwealth. Writing after Napoleon's failed march against Russia (and after the failed November Insurrection of 1830-1831) Mickiewicz re-imagines the campaign, with an as-yet-undecided outcome, full of liberating potential. The loss of political independence through the Partitions created a strong literary and artistic tradition of Polish Romanticism, formed under the intense pressures of occupation and disfranchisement. By focussing on the spiritual and moral values of 'true' Polish noblemen and their archaic society, Mickiewicz represented the (self) sacrifice of Poland as ' messianic'.

What is of particular interest to me is the duality of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (the former Grand Duchy) and their cultural identification through literature with each of these lands. While Poland was presented as the Catholic land
of reason and enlightenment, Lithuania was the spiritual partner – non-conformist, sylvan and mystical. Tomas Venclova (1937-) describes these mythologies,

“The lands of the former Grand Duchy provided a specific chronotope30— a symbolic space of forests and lakes permeated with spiritual fluids and, for all practical reasons, merging with the other world. Here was a universe of isolation and magic, of mystery and horror, of melancholy, suffering and anxiety – all the paradigmatic Romantic traits, corroborated, incidentally, by the actual situation of those backward regions, especially in the Belorussian31 half of the Grand Duchy.” (Venclova, 1998)

While the Polish language was seen as civilised and adaptive, able to lend itself easily to the poetic and literary imagination, the Lithuanian language was spoken mainly by the uneducated peasants and did not have a tradition of being recorded in the written form. This fluidity of an oral language was seen (by Mickiewicz) to be a portent of its eventual and inevitable disappearance. This fading historical past was depicted linguistically by Mickiewicz as a,

"hieroglyph, adorning moss-grown rocks, an inscription entwined with a meaning fallen asleep." (Venclova, 1998)

For all the perceived lack of linguistic sophistication and longevity, the myth of Lithuania was an important one in the partnership of the Grand Duchy, and one that produced the perfect cultural foil for Poland and, by extension, the West. Lithuania was the archetypal other: the ‘shadow’ part of the Polish union. This Romantic, wild and untamed, Pagan landscape of lakes and forests was geographically even more elusive and enigmatic, as Venclova notes,

“The scarcity of reliable knowledge about Lithuania and the vagueness of her spatio-temporal borders could not be but helpful for the Romantic imagination.” (Venclova, 1998)

A mythical Lithuania of fugitive borders is proposed here: a vague indeterminate boundary edge that demarcated the halves of a unified kingdom. It is almost unfixed in relation to Poland – it is a ghostly twin hovering on the margins, absent in
language but large in the collective imagination of the Other. United by Royal marriage, the countries were wed in a Romantic symbiosis. As a union it speaks loudly of the mirror-half of self identity, and how each of the countries represented itself culturally in relation, or opposition, to the other Other.

The land that bonded these two halves of the Grand Duchy is known as the kresy, or borderlands, further East, where the lands touch Russia, it is the okrainy (from the Russian for borderland) – these two sets of borderlands form a curious parenthesis to my research. The overlapping forests and marshes between these joint territories permeate both sides of a notional boundary. At best the nostalgic perception of its united Romantic discourse produced a widely-held tolerance, a –

“supra-ethnic identity, transcending the differences of language and denomination, included Jews, Tartars and vaguely perceived common folk, speaking either Belorussian or Lithuanian”. (Venclova, 1998)

For all the distance between the cultural imaginations of Poland and Lithuania, the Romantic sensibility still believed in the ancient bonds joining them and their supra-ethnic population – the twin principles of equality and unity. Multifarious origins were submerged in the political identity of the Commonwealth – the shadow side of Poland was ‘still Poland’ – the ‘shadow-other’ must remain integrated (or become subsumed). Venclova questions whether this mythical Lithuania was,

“substituted for the actual Lithuania in Polish political and cultural discourse, existing as a sort of parallel space which rarely if ever intersected with the real one.” (Venclova, 1998)

Venclova’s ‘parallel space’ maps directly onto the kresy borderlands – Mickiewicz represented them nostalgically as the purest form of Polish culture – undiluted by the Western influences at play in Warsaw. In Pan Tadeusz, he emphasized this further by accentuating their patriotism and strongly held traditions, while the real political
situation in Lithuania proper was steadily building resistance to the Union with Poland through a nationalist agenda. Mickiewicz's virtual homeland could only be conceived of in relation to what it was not. At its worst the Romantic Movement underrated the power and persistence of a linguistic nationalism that would decisively end the union once liberated from Russian Partition.

The Poles, Lithuanians and Belarusians were not the only ones to imagine these borderland forests as 'protectorates' of cultural purity. Within the Nazi ideology there was a strong urge to embed and locate the Teutonic soul in as many ancient myths and monuments as possible, as testament to their strength, purity, superiority and their legacy. In the 1930s, Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, saw the famous Białowieża forest as a lost Germanic landscape – an 'Ur-wald' dating from 8000BC and fit for restitution in the national consciousness (Miller, Dean, 2005, p.90). Distinct and impenetrable, this primeval forest is the last home of the European bison. Where it now marks the divide between central and Eastern Europe, forest like this would have covered much of lowland Europe. The mass of trees formed a literal double border, shadowing and traversing political and continental fissures.
The Dutch artist Joachim Koester photographed the Białowieża forest in 2001. This series is part of a larger body of photographs of ‘imagined’ places, including Arctic snowscapes. These images of the forest are very ‘straight’ photographs with even levels of light – no atmospheric shadows or morning mists. The forest is impenetrable and documented as texture, “an imaginary site paradoxically investigated through its material reality.” (Koester 2002, p.17)

Discussing Koester’s body of works in which he presents specific (almost mythic) spaces onto which human hopes and fears can be projected, Jeremy Millar makes the claim for Koester’s work that,

“Rather it is to acknowledge that identities, whether personal or national, are composed of conflicting desires, for alienation as much as belonging, longings which make it impossible to recreate a lost 'home' but allow, instead, its reimagination as something new, and slightly unfamiliar.” (Koester 2002, p.15)

Tacita Dean, with Millar in their joint book Place (2005), frames Koester’s work through the claim by Robert Smithson,

“that each landscape, no matter how calm and lovely conceals a substratum of disaster.” (Millar, Dean, p.90)

This is unequivocally true, above and below ground level. In this heavily forested geographical area the trees provide a natural (or man-made; planted) shelter that has been fully utilised to conceal and provide for ‘fugitive’ identities and fictions.
In Elem Klimov's *Come and See* (1985) – a war film full of the horrors of genocide – two scenes have haunted me: the first is in the forest as bombs are falling: trees are being uprooted, shattering and splintering; falling in mangled heaps. The earth and mud disrupted, exploded, unstable; there is nowhere to hide. Nothing is secure, the forest has been bombed like any city and it's inhabitants. It was important for Klimov that *Come and See* was filmed *in situ* on Belarussian soil, and used the Belarussian language (with English subtitles). It is very much a film that chronicles the wartime atrocities of this particular region and upon its peasant inhabitants. Positioned as an anti-war and anti-fascist film, *Come and See* is also a film about traumatic memory. Klimov based the film heavily on Ales Adamovich's book *The Khatyn Story*[^1] – which recorded his teenage experience as part of a Partisan unit during the Second World War in Belarus. Klimov's own wartime reflections however, also become part of this narrative 'fiction' – blurring the boundary between 'documented' memory and personal recollection to create a coherent fictive memory.

The camera view spends much of the film focussed on the traumatised face of the main character – the teenage Florya. Scenes are viewed as Florya witnesses them: seen through his eyes, none of the impact is lost as he tries to make sense of the visions before him. The camera becomes, by extension, his eyes. In the forest the rain falls blinkingly on the lens, and the gaze is briefly and emotionally cleansed. This is one of the few 'happy' moments in this filmic journey.

For me the second haunting scene is one that is glimpsed in motion. The camera-as-Florya travels past the front of a typical Belarusan peasant house, and spies at the back (where a woodpile should sit) a large pile of naked corpses. The camera and
Florya continue past without stopping. When Florya temporarily loses his hearing because of heavy shelling, the film shifts into a muffled audio register; disembodied, almost hallucinogenic. Viewing the relentless horrors of Klimov's film, is akin to a sustained assault on the senses – in these necessary gaps then, the camera becomes detached, floats – the scenes it witnesses seem to visually melt. Like Francis Ford Coppola’s Apocalypse Now (1979), there are questions around whether Klimov achieved the hallucinatory scenes by giving the actors drugs to alter their perceptions of, and reactions to, different stimulus. It has been suggested that the young (non) actor playing Florya was put under deep hypnosis before certain scenes were filmed. For me this makes an important connection with trauma and the return of repressed memory – while Klimov may have suggested hypnosis as a way of producing the effect of extreme disorientation, it may also have psychologically protected his young actor from the horror of what they were filming. The production of the film, the site of the film, becomes then a site for repression itself, and repression always signifies a return of the repressed trauma. In the same way, LSD influenced the veterans (and actors) of the Vietnam War – their memories and flashbacks were depicted in a similarly hallucinatory way in Apocalypse Now.

Klimov himself spoke of the specific colouration he wanted to achieve in the film – while (his) contemporary filmmakers were tied to the notion of the war only being represented in black and white film footage, Klimov saw post-war, German World War II footage in 'glorious' colour, and decided to use colour to shift and shape an aesthetic response to the unfolding events. Amongst the horrors of the forest, the camera-eye of Florya records abject beauty in thick colour and sunlight – flashes of innocence that become swamped with dark, putrid tones.
Contemporary Israeli artist Ori Gersht (1967-) executed a 16mm film work *The Forest* (2005) that echoes with this fear. The viewer becomes a witness to trees falling in a forest: some thundering, some landing noiselessly into the dense undergrowth. The movement of the video camera, and its affect, is described as,

“tracking and panning between the trunks, some so close that they loom unfocused, like bodies passing before the camera. A moving shadow preceding a falling trunk as it drops into the frame.” (Searle, 2005)

Here too in a metonymical sense, the bodies have become wood. Gersht’s forest lies in Ukraine, across the border from Koester’s or Klimov’s but it shares the same ‘substratum of disaster’. Gersht claims that while,

“Some of the trees are hundreds and hundreds of years old, they bear with them the memory of all previous events and at the same time keep a certain silence and are impenetrable.”

This links him to Sokurov’s use of landscapes in his films: “landscape as a witness of death, landscape as an absolute category” (Sedofsky, 2001). Gersht refers to the difficulty of bearing witness to traumatic events, and his photographic images *Liquidation* (2005), portray this through an erasure of the subject of the image itself – the bleached out images of trees share the same sense of hysterical blindness as his images from the train to Auschwitz, *White Noise* (1999). They are poetic in their refusal to see the horrors, except through half-shut eyes. Unlike Klimov who forces
us to keep our eyes open (though we may not want to), or Sokurov who proposes a constant, unblinking view, Gersht offers a more poetic, abstract response.

Gersht chose this particular forest because of a biographical link – he was lead there by the war journal of his father-in-law’s father – a Zionist activist – who was from a nearby village, and whose wife may have been one of those murdered in the first Nazi *Aktion* in the forest. Once aware of the historical and horrific details, these landscapes, of snowy woodland scenes and of dappled leafy glades, change indisputably.

52° 33' N 24° 27' E

On my map I locate the mass of the Białowieża Puszcza - the Białowieża forest – with its dark green contours and feathered edges. A primeval swamp giving way to streams, irrigated fields, agricultural land squeezed between rivers, lakes and more forests. My fingers strays east 30° and rests on a village or hamlet 'Mojsiewicze'.

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The fugitive

For me, one of the most memorable forest images is that of the child protagonist, Jakob Beer, emerging from his own (lost) past in Anne Michaels’ fictional work Fugitive Pieces (1997). In Michaels’ narrative, Jakob is the boy who comes clawing out of the mud, from the forest where he has been hiding, following the death of his sister and parents at the hands of Nazi soldiers. He stumbles into an excavation and into the path of a Greek geologist. The geologist smuggles Jakob under his own clothes, out of Poland and into Greece – both places under occupation.

The golem-like image of the boy made of mud and clay rising from the forest floor, unable to hear for the mud in his ears, is resonant of Klimov’s film, and, in some respects, the character of Florya in Come and See. Filming the footage for The River section of Navigator#7, I had a specific memory of both of these characters and their relation to sound in the forest. Where Florya goes temporarily deaf after an explosion, Jakob is disoriented by the silence and then re-emergence into sound of the forest river,

“I don’t stay under long. Not only because of the cold, but because with my ears under the surface, I can’t hear. This is more frightening to me than darkness, and when I can’t stand the silence any longer, I slip out of my wet skin, into sound.” (Michaels 1997, p.11)

My Navigator experiences the aural disorientation similar to both of these characters on submersion in the river. The slowed and distorted audio track echoes the waterlogged sense of having slipped between registers: no longer underwater but still half-hearing through a filter of cold water.
Jakob’s geologist saviour Athos conjures an escape of child-like simplicity. Hiding the boy under his clothes like a shadow, this child-like game takes on profound significance because of what is at stake. The symbolic excavation that brings Athos and Jakob together is echoed in the motifs of the writing: of buried Polish cities; of new cities constructed on unstable tectonic plates; prehistoric lakes, and the resurfacing of traumas.

Later, the adult Jakob, now living in Canada, becomes a translator; one who searches for meaning; like for like, employing the mimetic processes of replication and doubling. His occupation entails reading absence and loss between the lines of text; of original and translation haunting each other in the search for meaning. Michaels makes a pertinent distinction about her reason for writing as, “a way of holding experience; not holding onto, but holding”. Her work engages with these universal themes of loss, memory and identity, and critically she also states that, “You spend time when you are writing erasing yourself. The idea is to get out of the way of it.” (Crown, 2009, p.12)

I understand something of this, although on the surface my practice, and writing this thesis, puts me firmly in the text, the autobiographical is only one layer of this particular ‘fiction’. The process of making art works and writing novels perhaps coalesces at this point – that the work should have a broader appeal than a purely autobiographical reading of it. Unlike Rendell’s desire to inscribe herself into spaces with ‘confessional constructions’ as a way of revealing “the truth beneath” (Kivland, Sanderson, 2002, p.24), Michaels’ posits that the self should be removed from the writing, in order to permit a ‘purer’ reading of the text – free from autobiographical associations. This is in the full knowledge that a ‘pure’ reading is never possible; that
the Self can never be kept ‘out of the way of it’. How the Self / author is framed in relation to the text is paramount. Calvino explores where the writer is positioned in relation to the text –

“maybe the critical analysis I am looking for is one that does not aim directly at the ‘out-of-doors’ but, by exploring the ‘indoors’ of the text and going deeper and deeper in its centripetal movement, succeeds in opening up some unexpected glimpses of that ‘out-of-doors’ – a result that depends less on the method itself than on the way one uses the method.” (cited by Rendell in Kivland, Sanderson 2002, p.24)

In thinking about my practice, and the production of the works represented here, I recognise that in the making of the work, the Self is ‘withheld’ and it is only in the explication of the work that the Self in written back in. Or rather that the reflective self / artist / practitioner has to step in and out of the text and the practice. Sometimes this results in no longer recognising the work or the thought that drove it. Like many artists, I have had the experience of reading descriptions or interpretations of my work where I am unable to recognise the work, or myself, in it. In writing the text there is always something of the Self at stake.

THE MIRROR

In stark contrast to Klimov’s Come and See, I want to position another war film beside it, The Silent Village (Jennings, 1943). This black and white propaganda film was cited in a recent book on place (Millar, Dean, 2005, pp.128-132) and introduced the concept of ‘mirroring’ in such a monumental way, that I requested a screening of it at the British Film Institute. The film is almost worth reviewing for the fact alone that it has not been widely seen – and it is relevant here to look at the ways in which it employs direct substitution of one place for another. Also it is potent in the subtle
ways in which the real memories of a community have become conflated with the tragic (distant) events that linked them to another community – the Dead Village.

O glory of the mountain hours, now surely approaching.
O glorious moment of retreating night.
O glory of the dead village. (Fischl 1943, p.15)

Researching source material for a documentary on the fate of the Czech village Lidice, filmmaker David Vaughn was directed to a work of British propaganda made between 1942-1943. The Silent Village, directed by Humphrey Jennings, was based on a poem The Dead Village (1942), by Czech exile Viktor Fischl, and written immediately upon hearing of the massacre of the village by the Nazis. The film itself was shot just weeks after the actual events, when none of the shock of the atrocity had dulled. The vivid events in Lidice made it perfect propaganda material to garner support and empathy for the war in Europe, which seemed distant and unrelated to the British population. Jennings and Fischl wanted the people of Britain to identify with the fate of occupied Europe – to actually ‘live Lidice’. Vaughn describes the process,

“...a village takes onto its own shoulders the fate of another village a thousand miles away, not by pretending to be Czech but by taking the story onto itself.” (Millar, Dean, 2005, p.128)

In 2001 Vaughn met surviving villagers who took part in the filming, and whose lives have been characterised by it ever since. Many others, from repeated viewings of The Silent Village, could still recite some of the passages from memory – so ingrained is it in their specific and located cultural history.

The film follows the initial disruption, suppression, then resistance, and finally the erasure of a mining community: their language, their unions, their identity and their lives. Jennings introduces the oppressive Nazi regime through symbolic imagery of
power and harsh audio – dictats voiced through a megaphone. Three minor ‘Nazi’ soldiers are the only visible figures of power as the miners rebel against the ‘Greater German Reich’ and attempt the assassination of SS Heydrich – an act which brings cataclysmic consequences for the whole village. Refusing to capitulate and hand-over the would-be assassins, the village stands firmly united in the face of its own imminent destruction.

Film stills from the British Film Institute archive show the small village of Cwmgiedd (which stood in for Lidice) at the head of the Swansea valley, nestled in a dip surrounded by fields. Another shows all the men lined up, backs along the wall that skirts the churchyard; seemingly in the throes of singing, gravestones tall and silent behind them like some stony portent. Yet another image shows children leaving school, filing out neatly, hand-in-hand, guarded by a German soldier.

In the village of Lidice itself, the men were all lined up against a barn wall and shot, all the women and children were taken to concentration camps. Many of the women and most of the children died. Those who managed to return after the war found the village razed to the ground. It is difficult to imagine how another village might ‘take the story onto itself’ but Vaughn suggests that this experience of participating
en masse in Jennings’ film has left an indelible mark on the villagers, and the collective memory of their descendents. It is understandable that much of the unease of the inhabitants watching the film now is the disquiet of seeing their own villagers; own families, neighbours and friends, now dead themselves. There is an overlaying of identification – the population of one village ‘living’ the tragedy of another – and in that filmic document itself lies the uncanny experience of seeing the dead, one’s ‘own’ dead, brought to life again in a passion play about death.

The dead of one village becomes conflated with the dead of another – not just in an act of identification or empathy experienced, but in a rare filmic mirroring where one village essentially substitutes itself for another – by virtue of the collaboration and participation of the village in its entirety. The mining men of Lidice are brought to life (and then to their death, and then life again) by the miners of Cwmgiedd. The Welsh children marching through the school gates provide an unbearable moment denied to the children of Lidice – the possibility to stop the frame and reverse the film, sending them in another direction.

During his research interviewing the people of Cwmgiedd, Vaughn noted that,

“People talk of the fiction as if it were real. And this was precisely what Humphrey Jennings and Viktor Fischl intended.” (Vaughn, 2000)

In the 1993 drama-documentary Silent Village?, Director Ed Thomas presented interviews with the Welsh ‘survivors’ alongside fictional characters with lines of dialogue that seemed to embody a collective consensus. The narrator-as-a-boy asks,

“Did the Germans really come to Cwmgiedd?”

In this moment it is apparent how stories of trauma and war and loss are bound up together into a tangible whole. The boy continues,
"My sister told me my grandfather was in the film – it was the first time I had ever seen him. I saw my father in the film – he was the same age as me."

The character remembers a further revelation from seeing Silent Village on the screen; the memory that it,

"...made me feel like we must mean something – that we were part of the world. We were no longer invisible."

These are words that could come from the survivors of Lidice themselves. Cwymgiedd inhabitant and participant in the film, Ewart Alexander attempts to define the edges of this identification,

"...us, the survivors of the fiction and them the survivors of the reality" (Vaughn, 2000)

This neatly summarises the sense of loss for the villagers themselves when viewing The Silent Village – seeing long gone relatives, friends, colleagues and classmates preserved in celluloid must be an unsettling experience. Watching them as filmic ghosts acting out the part of the doomed villagers (some swiftly dispatched, the rest defiant and resolute facing a firing squad, or concentration camps) can be viewed as a double loss. I wonder whether this loss is magnified with each new screening, or documentary interview, with the participants. Rogoff suggests that we are all ‘steeped’ in historical trauma (Frenkel, 1994, p.33), however, this is not a straightforward and singular ‘shock’ trauma, but one deeply buried in the unconscious. She continues that, the associated stimuli with this trauma extends effect of the original trauma, but does not lead to a resolution or assimilation of it (Frenkel 1994, p.34). Back in Cwymgiedd, Alexander reveals,

"There is still an immense emotional link between myself and probably other people who were involved in the film, and that place, those people who are long dead, and also I think more poignantly and more significantly, any survivors. We are still one, in a specific way, because of the artifice of a filmmaker coming to Wales in the forties to make a propaganda story." (Vaughn, 2000)
It is compelling to hear how older inhabitants and participants talk about the film, making almost wilful misprisions about events. One elderly interviewee comments cheerfully on a photograph,

"Here are all the men in the village, all lined up by the chapel before they were shot...here's daddy!"

while another intones regretfully,

"That's when we thought we were going to be in it – the fighting I mean".

It is no longer clear whether they are discussing the film or the war – the shooting of the film, and the ‘playing at being shot’ have become conflated with the ‘adopted’ memory of those who were shot in Lidice. Watching the Silent Village? docu-drama makes me question whether the older inhabitants now only remember the war through the prism of the film, and, by extension, their part in it. This concern, interviewing people decades after an event, shows that it is impossible to control how their memories have been refined, changed or censored by the intervening years. Other tellings of the events: books, films or reconstructions, will all have influenced the ways in which the stories are remembered and filtered, and also the reception of its telling. With the inhabitants of Cwymgiedd, it almost suggests a false memory of ‘being there’ – being part of the tragedy, part of the war in occupied (Eastern) Europe. These layers, combined and conflated, have become part of a document of the Second World War. Rogoff suggests that,

"the specificity of who did what to whom historically is replaced by a focus on our own current desire to mourn, to commemorate, to narrate and to relive those disasters..." (Frenkel, 1994, p.35)
This observation is as pertinent now as it was when written. However, I would argue that little thinking is done collectively, “...on the political and ideological purposes that this work of remembering serves.” (Frenkel, 1994, p.35)

It is a complicated scenario to unpick, and these parallels between Wales and wartime Czechoslovakia are stretched further when a relative of one of the only two men from Lidice to survive (by virtue of being ‘out of place’ in the R.A.F in Britain at the time) visits the village of Cwymgiedd with Vaughn. Through the angles of documentary, radio plays and writing, Vaughn is invested in the exploration of this mirroring. In 2001 he invited Pavla Nesporova, great-niece of one the R.A.F airmen, to the filming of the Harvest Festival in the Cwymgiedd chapel, hoping for a vision of the two parallel locations connecting –

“The children sang and the parents looked down from the gallery, and for a moment Pavla did see a mirror to her own village. 'I imagined how it would have been in the old Lidice'.” (Millar, Dean, 2005, p.131)

There is a clear connection here with my interest in the mirroring of locations. In this instance one place substitutes itself for another, and its inhabitants, in a metaphorical sacrifice. However, this filmic surrogacy had the clear intention to elicit empathy and to encourage identification with the inhabitants of Lidice (the Czechs, and by association the other suppressed nations under the Nazi ‘protectorate’). The excavation of this film by playwrights, and other film and documentary makers is particularly striking, and I think significant. The over identification suggested by these documentaries, interviews and fictive scripts, points to an intersection where memory and identification are overlaid. At this juncture, meanings and memories become conflated and confused. The production of memory, and ‘false’ memories: of being in the fighting (on British soil), of the German Army being in Wales,
converges again with my research interests; of questioning the repetition and transformation of narratives; of reading one ‘text’ through another.

There is a perfect confluence in Vaughn's Radio Prague piece (2000) on The Silent Village: returning to the figure of Ewart Alexander, who participated in the filming as a boy, Vaughn states that, “He began to understand both the horrors of war and the art of film.” (Vaughn, 2000)

This implied relationship between film and war; the correspondence of two elements in accord, a synchronous relationship of horror and drama – is mediated through the lens to be a subject of fascination, or even awesome beauty. Alexander's formative experience of the moving image, was one of such power, (political propaganda) of such magnitude, (involving the whole community) and of such longevity, (still resonant in the collective memory of that community and its descendents) that it firmly contextualises this emotional experience when he talks of the ‘us, the survivors of the fiction'.
1. INTALINKA directed and curated by Gill Melling, Kristin Mojsiewicz, and Margaret Cahill. Including artists: Per Hüttnner (S), Arijana Kajfes (S), Elo Liv (E), Mari-Liis Tammi (E), Agur Kruusing (E), Margus Tõnnov (E), Vergo Vernik (E), Gill Melling (UK), Kristin Mojsiewicz (UK), Margaret Cahill (UK). Haapsalu, Estonia (1997)
3. Koerner was describing explorations in old East Germany by way of Lévi-Strauss’ Tristes Tropiques. “While I was travelling, and long afterwards, I heard rumours that permission had been required for internal travel in the GDR – even for its citizens. These rumours turned out to be false, part of a mythology of the old regime’s strangeness. But these focussed in me a feeling of moving about a forbidden geography”. Similarly, in Estonia I was told that taking boats to sea had been viewed as an escape attempt and forbidden. This was possibly false, but it was true that Estonian’s did not have contemporary maps of their western coastline until 1992, when the Soviets had gone.
4. Ich bin site-specific project in an old, Berlin checkpoint, Galerie 2YK, Kunstfabrik, Berlin (2001)
5. The process in video editing programmes of transferring footage from camera to hard drive
6. Polish War memorial at Monte Cassino (Italy) on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the battle (2004)
7. Also known as Port Mysowaya
8. Mickiewicz was famously in love with Maryla Wereszczaka, and wrote published verse to her.
10. Professor of Germanic and Slavic studies, also Film and Media Studies, University of Florida
11. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
12. Astolphe-Louis-Léonor, Marquis de Custine (1790-1857). His resulting book La Russie en 1839, went through six printings and was widely read in England, France, and Germany, but banned in Russia.
13. Nosferatu - vampiric film by F.W Murnau (1922)
15. A common theme in traditional songs – ‘these are not the hills of home’
16. released in France as ‘Pan Tadeusz - Quand Napoléon traversait le Niemen’
17. Made by Thames Television and originally broadcast on ITV, 31 October 1973 – 8 May 1974. Subsequently repeated on TV throughout 1980s, now on digital channels and available on DVD.
18. Japanese conceptual artist regularly sent a series of telegrams stating I AM STILL ALIVE to friends and colleagues since the 1960s.
19. cited by Anna Ball, postgraduate symposium / Glasgow University journal esharp
20. THE TIMES OF LONDON July 23, 1807: THE EIGHTY-FIFTH BULLETIN OF THE GRAND ARMY Tilsit, June 14. Tomorrow the two Emperors of FRANCE and RUSSIA are to have an interview. For this purpose, a pavilion has been erected in the middle of the Niemans, to which the two Monarchs will repair from each others banks. Few sights will be more interesting. <http://www.jeanlannes.com/friedland>
22. See additional large image of Minard’s map attached as appendix at end of thesis
23. According to Adam Zamowski The Polish Way (1987), 98,000 of these men were Polish. 72,000 of them did not return from the campaign.
24. see note 60 below re: Partitions, and note 14 above re: Ubu Roi.
25. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was ended by the Partitions of 1772, 1793 & 1795 by the Austrian, Prussian and Russian Empires. Completely absent from map between the years: 1795-1807, 1874-1918, 1939-1945. Poland did not regain autonomy until 1918, but lost its independence again to the Germans from 1939-1945, and to the Soviet Union from 1945-1989. Source: Neal Ascherson, The Struggles for Poland, (1987)
26. The old Commonwealth, had been called the Most Serene Commonwealth of the Two Nations, or ‘Serenissima Regpublica Poloniae’. The new Union was signed in 1569. The old union dated from the marriage of Jadwiga and Jagiello in 1386. Source: Neal Ascherson, The Struggles for Poland. (1987)
27. Set during the time frame of 1811-1812, written in exile in Russia 1824-29, published in Paris in 1834.
The main insurrections were in 1794, 1830-1831, 1863-1864. Also Galicia: 1864, Prussia: 1848.

Source: Neal Ascherson, The Struggles for Poland. (1987)

This representation of Poland is attributed to fellow poet Zygmunt Krasinski for his work Przedświt/Daybreak (1843), although it also echoes in Mickiewicz's work.

The Bakhtinian notion of time-space related to linguistic and narrative acts

Modern-day Belarus

The Western parts of the Belarus forest network (which included the Białowieża forest and the Nalibocki forest) famously hid the Bielski Brothers and their army of Jewish Partisans, and survivors/escapees from 1941-1944/45.

Adamovich also wrote the screenplay for Come and See

excerpt from conversation with Camilla Jackson, curator of Photographer's Gallery, London

<http://www.crsgallery.com/exhibitions/2005/ori-gersh/>}


Weeks after the film was made other accounts of the atrocity reached the UK of Nazis setting fire to the buildings of Lidice and strafing those trying to escape – a much messier scenario than Jennings' restrained scenes of the men, women and children being parted with quiet stoicism.
THE AMBASSADRESS

The genesis of my Ambassadress, and her ‘bonjour’ embroidered jacket – as worn in the videos and photographs – date from a solo exhibition at the Turnpike Gallery, Leigh, in 2001. The cultural heart in the town of Leigh is a small square that contains the library, town hall and the art gallery. The town (and its joint borough of Wigan) was twinned with the medieval city of Angers in the French Loire valley. I was struck by the practice of sending an ambassador from Angers, and one from Leigh or Wigan, to spend a year in each other’s environment – essentially promoting or, at the least, representing their home town. The reality was that these ambassadors tended to be young language students taking a year out during or after their studies.

In each place, the civic obligation of hosting an annual delegation, from France or North West England, appeared to be the biggest cultural event of their year. To develop trade and form mutually beneficial cultural associations are important civic markers for the two, or three if Wigan is included, distinct communities. Each side of the twinning partnership has a ‘cultural association’ that aims to foster these bonds. It was unclear to me whether they wanted to celebrate their differences or find common contemporary ground.
I was most interested in how the two locations (actually three - Leigh and Wigan are joined by the borough, but are distinct towns with defined, separate histories) might present themselves to each other, and each other’s inhabitants, and ultimately how this ‘touristic’ reflection mirrors back on their own inhabitants and citizens. The relationship between Wigan and Leigh is itself interesting – specifically how the tensions of their joint-borough status are suppressed in favour of the international twinning with Angers.

The Ambassadress is female, necessarily, because I began by photographing myself as ‘the artist’ in different locations. Researching the twinning links between Angers and Leigh (and Wigan), I met the current and previous French ambassadresses, and wondered at the incongruity of such a grandiose title combined with a less than salubrious residence in Wigan town centre. The whole concept of the ambassadress seemed out of place, in this place. Naturally this is the precedent for such a role – to provide a cultural presence in another country, but in this circumstance, where the ambassadress was so young, and with none of the trappings of sovereign investiture, it seemed a pitiful attempt at communication with an indifferent population. This then was the origin of my Ambassadresses role – she reflected and received communications – and her ‘bonjour’ stood for an international gesture of goodwill.

In my practice and research, I invented the role of the Ambassadress to dramatise the actions of reflection and communication in space. It is her duty to reflect the culture of the place where she has come from (projecting forwards from A to B) and to reflect the culture of her current location back to her original locale (projecting
backwards from B to A). In this strange process of mirroring, the first level of the
Ambassadress is to create a seemingly neutral conduit between A and B.

Historically an ambassador is a diplomat:

“... a public minister of the highest rank, accredited and sent by the head of a
sovereign state to a foreign court or country, with power to represent the person of
the sovereign by whom he sent, to negotiate with foreign government, and to which
over the interests of his own nation abroad.” (1902 encyclopedia³)

Like every other government, the British Foreign Office deploys ambassadors to
sovereign and non-sovereign territories. Ambassadors in a contemporary context
carry goodwill to raise consciousness about a wide range of issues - the title can also
cover unofficial representatives or symbols. Originally, ambassadors were only
exchanged between great monarchies, with lesser envoys sufficing for less powerful
states, then in 1815, the Congress of Vienna formally defined the levels and status of
the ambassador in relation to the lesser title of envoy or minister. From then on this
meant that the ambassador himself physically represented, or embodied the power of,
the monarch, and would be treated accordingly. These actions were part of an
attempt to instate the balance of power in Europe following the French Revolution
and Napoleon’s defeat. New treaties meant new boundaries and new diplomacies.
The ambassador thus became part of a delicate balancing act between countries and
their domains and vested (and/or contested⁴) interests⁵.
As I have defined it within my practice, the role of the Ambassadress is that of a socially constructed entity – ‘produced’ and identified through the frame of a particular culture – our own – with (at least one) partner mirrored internationally elsewhere.

For the first Ambassadress photo works – Bonjour (Angers), Bonjour (Wigan), Ambassadress (à Angers) and Ambassadress (à Wigan) all from 2001, I prepared a limited range of embroidered clothing. The yellow, waterproof jacket embroidered in blue with ‘bonjour’, was to be worn in Angers, while the pink jacket had a bonjour in red for the Wigan images. I also bought a heavily embroidered cardigan to which I added ‘Ambassadress’ on the back – for more formal occasions These works were produced for exhibition⁶ and included a split-screen video work Les Citoyennes/ The Citizens (2001), in which the Ambassadress circumnavigates the medieval Château d'Angers.

The ‘bonjour’ of the jacket, and series title, relates directly to the twinning of Wigan and Leigh with Angers as their French counterpart, but also alludes to French as the language of diplomacy. The simple ‘bonjour’ greeting parallels the ‘resistance to alienation’ of Lithuanian-French philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, in the post-
holocaust, twentieth century. Levinas defined the importance of immediacy and contact with others, and the ethical obligation to care for each other as ‘prephilosophical’, i.e. based on the Rabbinical interpretations of the Old Testament. His subjective, moral philosophy of responsibility can be read in the simple greeting of ‘bonjour’. Macey describes Levinas’ philosophy thus,

“He defines subjectivity itself as hospitality and as the welcome that must be given to the other.” (2000, p.229)

In my video and photography work I situate this figure of the Ambassadress within an environment and shape her role: as a figure she appears and disappears in mists, in undefined, unnamed landscapes of my choosing. The words we hear are not spoken by her, at least not out loud, but these words do come through her, or come to her. She stood in this piece as the receptor in the landscape and conduit for the voices held within in it, which may move through it or be brought into it. It is unclear to the viewer whether she is a channel for a collective memory or a specific one. She appears to tune into the landscape and read how to translate its spatial qualities – in this process she translates a spatial reading of the landscape. This process of the translating of space relies on the modalities of language and communication – even if this communication appears to fail.
The art historian Miwon Kwon suggests that the global ‘mobilization of the artist’ has consequences for the relationship between art work and site:

“the presence of the artist has become an absolute prerequisite for the execution/presentation of site-oriented projects”. (Kwon 2002, p.47)

Site-oriented projects (such as those by Mark Dion) engage with ‘the functional site’, James Meyer’s phrasing⁷ for overlapping bodies of information, text and representations that form temporary chains of (unfocussed) meaning. Kwon expands upon these implications for the art site,

“...the site is now structured (inter)textually rather than spatially, and its model is not a map but an itinerary, a fragmentary sequence of events and actions through spaces, that is, a nomadic narrative whose path is articulated by the passage of the artist.” (Kwon 2002, p.29)

Kwon warns against the constant globetrotting of the contemporary artist from ‘one place after another’, rendering all located experience indistinguishable from the preceding and following ones. Instead, we should remember Bhabha’s articulation of how uneven spatial experiences are,

“the globe shrinks for those who own it; for the displaced or the dispossessed, the migrant or refugee, no distance is more awesome than the few feet across borders of frontiers.” (Kwon 2002, p.166)

The difference between things, people, places, things are important: only comparable when they are side by side, next to each other, not sequentially one after another. I relate this back to my practice and the importance of things touching; of the palpable edge between projected video images; or the split-screen that divides the image, sending the footage in opposite directions, and of the seam where this visual friction occurs. I am interested in the artist who doesn’t travel to ‘perform’ the artwork at an opening or event; I am interested in the artist who substitutes one place for another.
Gole (2005-06)

A single screen monitor presents a disorienting experience of geographical and personal space. In a claustrophobic gorge, a figure revolves ‘as one’ with the camera as it attempts to read her face, and the impassive surface of the rock. It struggles to do so, resulting in a visual rupture – the gorge starts to look unreal; pixellated – an artificially imposed backdrop.

Situated in the Maiella Massif, a gorge of lime stone sedimentary rock was split in the Cretaceous Period, producing a vertiginous gulley. This, the Vallone di Fara, runs for 14 kilometres and drops from a height of 3,400 metres down to a village 1,000 metres above sea level. The gorge itself sits some height above the village and shares its name of San Martino. Local legend relates that St Martin split the rock, and the mountain in two, with the strength of his arms. Tectonic morphology formed the gorge and pushed basilica silt though it to create a smooth curved oesophagus. This stone throat – gole – must be passed through in order to reach an incongruous forest, then a dramatic plateau some kilometres above it. The appearance of the gole is formidable – a dark crack with no sightline through it. Only on entering, does it
reveal its form and nature, and what lies beyond it. In front of the entrance to the gole, lie the remains of a small monastery, little bigger than a hermitage. The phenomenon of karsification\(^9\) of the dolomite and limestone in this region has produced numerous grottoes and caves – historically used by shepherds and hermits alike. This daunting massif, believed to have been inhabited since the Bronze Age, has revealed archaeological remnants in nearby valleys. Like a medieval test of faith or ancient rite, the gole waits for pilgrims to attempt a passage through.

Inside the gole there is the sound of water running underneath, but nearby. The wind rises above it creating a quiet space, but as the fissure curves through the mountain, the wind is channelled back down into it in blasts. The footpath narrows until there is only room for one person. In front and behind the walls curve. It is not possible to see in or out of the gole – only to be held within it. It is here I chose to film myself – cradled in the grip of the rock – its pink dolomite crusts and milky lime striations forming the hard, smooth throat of the mountain. The undulating, uneven sides of the rock meant that with my arms fully extended I could just manage to turn 360 degrees without scraping my knuckles. Inside the gole was disorienting. When I closed my eyes the sound of the water gushing downwards, underground somewhere, and the blasts of wind punctuated by stillness were unnerving. I could not orient myself in any direction except by looking upwards where clouds were scudding towards an unseen peak. The gole, although formed by violent forces, was now seemingly fixed and unchangeable, but I felt my position there to be slippery. The steep escarpment on either end of the gole, forming the Vallone di Fara, skewed my sense of balance. I took mental notes of what I saw and felt and heard: describing to myself the route in
and out of the *gole*, the path rising up to it and landmarks on the way. I would remember the way by turning it into an itinerary.

This landscape, formed over millions of years, seemed beyond human time, although erosion and rock falls were evidence of it changing form, and recent geomorphic research suggests a stressed topography liable to re-enact previous large-scale tectonic collapse\textsuperscript{10}. The mountain range exists in still another temporality – geological ‘slow time’. The Appennine spine that runs the vertical length of Italy forms a schism between the East and West. This rift slowly pushes the Adriatic East coast further away from the Tyrrhenian West coast. Another fault line runs South of Rome and North of Naples, across to the East coast, passing through the environs of Cassino\textsuperscript{11} *en route*. Horizontally separating the North from the South, this fault line is clearly reflected (as a parallel psychological boundary) in the fundamental cultural and political identifications of the Italian population. Slowly the divide between North and South is increasing: cities, mountains and villages are shifting – imperceptibly or violently – physically changing co-ordinates\textsuperscript{12}. This undercurrent is naturally and geologically present in all countries – some are less stable than others, sited on main fault lines or converging tectonic crusts. While we slowly drift on different continental currents, others face dramatic geographic displacements. If we can view these landmasses as moving ‘out of place’, what are the implications for territorial identities\textsuperscript{13}?

I had travelled to this mountain in search of a spectacular backdrop for the Ambassadress – a large, open, alien space on the plateau – a place really to be ‘out of place’. Travel brochure images had shown it to resemble a Martian basin of pale
rock, almost capable of producing an acoustic echo. I had, in typical tourist fashion, underestimated the terrain. I situated myself in a narrow gorge and, with the camera focussed tightly on my face, tried to perform a simple, full revolution in an attempt to describe something immediate about the interiority of this intimately disorienting space.

An inner monologue is heard in Italian. The figure's lips do not move; she does not appear to speak, nor hear the words from an external source. Either these words are her own remembered itinerary being recounted, or they are spoken from another viewer/subject, not outwardly acknowledged by the Ambassadress. The Italian monologue gives directions to an elusive end point to which no translation is given. The camera pans through two full revolutions of 360 degrees, with its focus fixed on the Ambassadress, and the narration repeats again. The description of the journey through the gorge, through repetition, becomes a psychic projection of a place, as well as an onomatopoeic litany.

The itinerary I recited to myself was written up sometime later. I wrote from my recollections, using my brief notes from the journey as a prompt. Having produced a long text, I edited a shorter version, which I then had translated into Italian. The (native) translator spoke the text, and I recorded her for the audio track. I judged the length of this spoken text to closely match the edited video footage. The suggestive quality of the Italian translation was more indicative of the intrinsic nature of the gole than any subtitle could provide. An exchange between artists Diana Thater and Stan Douglas is germane here, to contextualise part of the process, or nature, of a moving-image based practice:
"So, repetition has become very much about the difference between what the repeated element was at the outset, and what it has become now that time has passed." "Yes (...) Even when you’re seeing the same film loop again and again your perception of it changes, because you have changed even though it has remained the same. It’s like listening to recorded polyphonic music: on a second listening you can hear things that you missed the first time around." (Douglas 1998, p.19)

I made the decision to run the video and the Italian audio twice - two revolutions of the same footage and sound - to allow the visual and audio elements equal time to be digested. I had observed that when I showed the work to practitioners and non-practitioners (all non-Italian speakers), the visual was prioritised over the audio, but when the work repeated for a second revolution, the visual had already been grasped and the audio could be listened to as a purely aural experience. In this way I hoped that the audio would open up a separate time within the work for further contemplation of the gole.
Sei all’ingresso.

La roccia qui è friabile, scivolosa.

Ben presto il passaggio sara’ abbastanza largo per una persona soltanto.

Devi procedere piano.

Sei all’interno della gola.

Il vento che prima soffiava sopra di te ora ti circonda.

Senti il rumore dell’acqua.

Ora puoi allungare le braccia senza distenderle, il muro e’ proprio li’.

Non e’ ne’ umido ne’ caldo.

Nulla rimane avvinghiato a questa superficie.

Fermati e alza lo sguardo.

Devi andare avanti.

Fa piu’ freddo.

Un angolo oscuro.

Poi silenzio.

Le pareti si aprono e poi svaniscono.

Sei su un pendio.

Da entrambi i lati le pareti sono scure, sovrastanti e rossastre, macchiate di nero e umide.

Non fermarti a riposare qui.

Sei quasi al muro.
You are at the mouth.
The rock here is soft, slippery.
Soon it will be wide enough only for one.
You must go slowly.
You are in the throat.

The wind that was above you is now around you.
You can hear water.
You can put your arms out now without extending them, the wall is there.
Not wet and not warm.
Nothing clings to this surface.

Stop and look up.
You must go forward.
It is colder.
A dark corner.
Then silence.

The walls give-way and vanish.
You are on a slope.
On either side the walls are dark, overhanging and reddish, stained black and dank.
Do not rest here.

You are nearly at the wall.
Testa (2007)

In this video piece the Ambassadress is again present in close-up. She has her back to the camera, making the 'bonjour' on her jacket clearly legible. The landscape around her is misty, indistinct – again the camera struggles to see – to fix the figure in a landscape. She does not appear to know where she is, or to be able to navigate her way away from this place. She slowly revolves and seems to peer down over an edge, looking for a landscape marker. There are no clues for her, or for the viewer, either in the landscape or in the audio tracks. There is only the sound of the wind. We hear a question repeated, in Italian, by two different women’s voices.

57°12' N 03°49' W

C'è qualcuno?
C'è qualcuno?
Non, c'è nessuno
Non vedo nessuno
Non sento niente

Is anyone there?
Is anyone there?
No, there's no-one
I don’t see anyone
I don’t hear anything
I use audio thus to heighten the notion of 'other spaces' within these video works. The use of sound and spoken text also serves as a tool to destabilise the viewer; spoken in another language, and clearly not voiced in real time by the figure on screen, the different narrators open up separate spaces outwith the location of the footage. While the image on screen exists in an external space, the additional audio tracks carry voices that possess an ambient quality consistent with indoor recording. In this way the work alludes to an elsewhere - a space of memory, or an interior, hidden dialogue with an unseen interlocutor. Again the dialogue is untranslated.

The dialogue here can be seen to query and echo the questions posed by the initial locutor. There is a repetition – as if the two voices do not hear each other – or are not in direct contact, one perhaps echoes the form of the other. I am interested in this notion of an interlocutor because it at its root it defines one who is engaged in conversation and dialogue and who relays messages, but does not express official opinions. This is a key area of investigation in all the works that feature the Ambassadress. The titles of these video works allude to language in a material form: Gole translates as 'throat' – the site of language; or at the very least, the site of the vocal chords. By extension, in the works these chords represent the 'mother tongue' – here produced by the Italian narrator (and symbolically heard or thought by the Ambassadress). The narrow crevice in the limestone is also a geological 'throat'. Testa translates directly as 'head' – the footage was filmed at a mountain summit, literally the head or peak. At the very point where there should be a vantage point to provide the scopic view over the landscape below, there is nothing visible to the eye but mist; the head is essentially blind. The Ambassadress herself is shown only as
head and shoulders; in this work – she is a literal figurehead – a nominal representative.

In my work, videos may play backwards and forwards in time, so we cannot distinguish which is which. Perception is altered, disoriented – the relationship to time is affected by the sequence in which things are replayed, repeated, mirrored, split, rejoined, in and out of sync. The languages spoken are left unheard¹⁵, or untranslated – so that disorientation is compounded. The expectation of narrative is thwarted, but perception may be heightened by this exclusion from the language. I expect the meaning to be read in the face and the landscape – in the minutiae of the surface. The cyclical nature of the video works makes them almost a closed circuit. In Gole, the end mirrors the beginning exactly; in Testa the figure returns to a similar position with her back to the camera. Often the figure of the artist fills the screen, face-on – and at some moment in the video – looks to the camera directly. In this moment the ‘knowing’ look becomes pivotal in addressing the viewer – signalling a shift in tone and engagement – an invitation or challenge to the viewer.

Essentially the video works reflect each other – they employ similar close-up shots of head and shoulders – figures filling the landscape, engaged in actions of repetition and recollection. These actions do not produce a result, in fact, no physical progress has been made; no distance travelled. Yet a journey and a conversation of sorts has taken place – between the figure, the voice(s), and the landscape. The Ambassadress attempts mediation with the site.
THE EXTERIOR

The framing of the figure in the landscape, borrows considerably from the Romantic tradition. Romanticism’s trajectory from painting to film is well known, and certain works have, in some way, shaped my research and practice. One of these is Michelangelo Antonioni’s Il Deserto Rosso (1964)\(^1\).

In it Monica Vitti plays ‘Giuliana’, a character out of balance. The film suggests that her over-association with the world around her causes a loss of physical and mental balance. She skirts along walls – interior and exterior – leaning for support, the shots of peeling paintwork and textures of distemper echoing her slide into despair. After an episode of adultery, she sees her reflection physically projected onto the fabric of the city, against the brickwork of the building opposite. This ‘erotic perception’ (Bruno 2002, p.97) is magnified in another scene where she views a map. The potential geographical journeys of her and her lover is represented almost as a literal *Carte de Tendre*\(^2\) – the camera ‘records’ the colours on the map as they change and shift before her, like a swelling of mood and emotion. The heightened colour permeating Antonioni’s landscape seems to make solid form become fluid and melt away. The ground itself is fluid; the landscape to be navigated – morally and emotionally – is deliquescent. Susceptible to the physical materiality of things around her – walls, audio, water – the viewer experiences Giuliana’s vertiginous attraction of one magnetized by her surroundings. Giuliana confesses,

“*I can’t look at the sea for long otherwise I lose interest in what happens on land*”. 

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\(^1\) Michelangelo Antonioni, Il Deserto Rosso (1964).

\(^2\) Bruno, 2002, p.97

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Antonioni visually isolates her in the mists, among the ships at the dockyard. She is lost in a post-industrial landscape, without navigational tools or emotional compass.

According to Bruno, Antonioni’s ‘geopsychic transformations’ are,

“...activated mostly by the haptic sense of his female characters, who wander constantly in their psychogeographic journeys.” (2002, p.96)

Antonioni’s lead female character in Il Deserto Rosso is inchoate, only partially formed (or unformed) in her apprehension of the external world. She is unable to structure or further develop her comprehension of her place in it. Her incoherent emotions are reflected in her actions and her movement - she appears restless, alienated. In fact, Giuliana searches for someone she knew at the asylum, her altered state suggests the distorted space of physical perception. I draw the connection here between Giuliana’s movement and disorientation with the motion of rambling – a precursory experience to that of the flâneur and the dérивist. She embodies similar tropes to the women of Surrealist writings – responding to male desire, without agency of her own, and destined for an unhappy ending because of her ‘threatening’ mobility. Rendell defines rambling as,

“to wander in discourse (spoken or written), to write or talk incoherently, or without natural sequence of ideas.” (Borden, Rendell, 2000, p.249)

Relentlessly mobile, Giuliana seems unable to root herself – she looks to be needed (by her child, by her lover) as a way of ‘fixing’ or locating herself emotionally and spatially. Without this to ground her she is adrift in a visually and aurally saturated landscape. Antonioni so overwhelms these senses representing the landscape of Ravenna, that it is little wonder Giuliana prioritises the sense of touch as a means of navigation (a hand to steady herself; a wall to lean on) – in this way the landscape she inhabits can be read as haptic emotional texture. There is a movement between
the interior and exterior of the subject (Giuliana/Ravenna) that is recreated through
the camera as mimetic. By extension of this, the borders of the physical body and the
landscape inhabited become porous, soluble. *In extremis* this gives way to
psychasthenia:

"...a disorder of personality in which the body is so tempted by space that it blurs the
distinction between itself and the environment and *becomes* the space around it." (Bruno 2002, p.40)

This pervasiveness of the exterior on the interior, in turn, permits a new spatiality, as
the interior realm of the body is writ large in space. It is unsurprising that Giuliana is
unbalanced – her changeable emotional state is shown, by Antonioni, to physically
manifests itself in her surroundings\(^{18}\) – her interiority has direct influence on her
exteriority; it figuratively and literally colours her world.

THE FOREIGN

In 2001, I made a video *The Polish Lesson*\(^{19}\) that had been in the planning stages for
some years. This work expressed my interest in language, mimicry and translation –
of being able to convincingly ‘pass’ as something, or someone, other. The video
work was based on an historic event, as recorded in fourteenth-century Poland, and took the form of linguistic duel.

"After yet another attempt by Bohemia to take Kraków with the connivance of some of the townspeople, the Polish troops which retook it in 1312 proceeded to round up all the citizens and to behead those who could not pronounce the Polish tongue-twisters they were made to repeat." (Zamoyski 1987, p.34)

I interpreted this nonsensical yet deadly challenge, as an act of translation; those who could not, or would not, pronounce or ‘perform’ their ‘Polishness’ adequately were killed – an extreme example of ‘territorial linguistics’. This video referenced and expanded upon this action of Polish soldiers returning to their home city of Kraków, who fell prey to a general state of paranoia following the Tartar invasions and German migrations into Poland.

For the video I chose three traditional Polish tongue-twisters, and together with a native Polish speaker demolished a bottle of vodka in front of the camera – making use of the cultural slight that ‘to talk like a Pole you must be drunk, like a Pole’. Each recitation was preceded by a shot of Żubrówka. We attempted to drink each other under the table but also to out-pace each other in our (increasingly limited but slippery) linguistic abilities. The camera was focussed on the tabletop, effectively decapitating both interlocutors, as they attempted the tongue twisters:

W Szczebrzeszynie chrząszcz brzmi w trzcinie i Szczebrzeszyn z tego słynie.

In Szczebrzeszyn a beetle buzzes in the reed, for which Szczebrzeszyn is famous.

Król Karol kupił królowej Karolinie korale koloru koralowego.

King Charles bought for Queen Charlotte coral-coloured corals.

Nie pieprz Pietrze wieprza pieprzem, bo przepieprzysz wieprza pieprzem.

Don’t pepper the hog, Peter! The ham will be better.
In attempting to perform ‘as a Pole’, I was not attempting a perfect linguistic articulation of the tongue twisters, but an imitation. This concept allows for integration into an alien culture, and can also be perceived as a dangerous attribute – if any one person is able to imitate convincingly the characteristics or skills of another then the threat to the social order is increased. In order to preserve the status quo where everyone has a place or function, the boundary lines that define society must remain intact. Somewhat perversely, it is only possible to understand something as an imitation if there is a distinguishable difference between it and the original.

Reviewed in the context of fourteenth-century Kraków – in the grip of a fear of an indistinguishable ethnic population (here the Germans) – distinction can only be achieved through what is part of a ‘maternal’ bond to the land; the mother tongue. In the twentieth century, in the same geographical location, a different section of the population – Poland’s Jews – experienced a psychological parallel. The French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut claimed that Genocide was not imposed, “in spite of their effort to assimilate, but in response to this very attempt.” (Karpf 1996, p.170). I think there is an echo of this movement from an exterior position to an interior one, and vice versa, in theorist Kaja Silverman’s assertion on psychoanalysis:

“There are two modes of identification: ‘heteropathic’ where the subject aims to go outside the self, to identify with something / someone / somewhere different, and ‘cannibalistic’ where the subject brings something other into the self to make it the same” (Blamey 2002, p.24)

When the (heteropathic) enemy-other is no longer identifiable and distinct, the fear grows that this enemy-other may have a range of influence that is infinite. In The Polish Lesson, I attempt heteropathic identification with the language. Despite the
drunkenness of the two speakers, it is still clear which is the native speaker and which is ‘performing’. In Lost in Translation (1989), writer Eva Hoffman writes that, “...perhaps it is in my misfittings that I fit. Perhaps a successful immigrant is an exaggerated version of the native.” (1989, p.164)

She suggests it is through consciousness of fragmentary identity that the immigrant remains ‘other’. The negative aspect of ‘misfitting’ thus becomes a positive identification. The cultural theorist Nikos Papastergiadis reminds us that, although stability and sense of self as an assimilated subject may be lost through displacement; that in this process of differentiation, “identity is never fully constituted nor ever utterly lost” (2006, p.92). It seems appropriate here to return to Bhabha and ‘the borderline moment of translation’ that he defines (via Walter Benjamin’s analysis),

“The ‘foreignness’ of language is the nucleus of the untranslatable that goes beyond the transferral of the subject matter between cultural texts or practices.” (Bhabha 1994, p.163)

THE TRANSLATOR

Having identified the process of translation as central to the development of my video work with the Ambassadress, I began to study it in more depth. The process of translation is an unstable and dynamic. An original piece of writing is entrusted to a translator. The writer must trust the translator to be truthful to his or her original meaning. The translator must try to read between the lines – to discover the specific form and meaning of the written word in the time-frame and context in which is was written. It is almost a mimetic procedure – to try to think like the originator. Translation studies is a complex field with many approaches. Here I will concentrate
on the gap between the author and the translator, and how one text effectively haunts the other.

Once translated, the writer/author must be prepared to find her/himself at a distance from the original – unable to recognise the words that have been transformed into ‘alien’ configurations. In addition, the writer/author may be unable to decipher her/his own intent behind the words, even if their foreignness can be overcome. The original has been corrupted by its ‘foreign’ twin. The art curator and writer, Francis McKee describes engaging with the process of translation, as “the possibility for the transformation of a narrative from one language to another”. (Penalva, McKee, 2000, p.48)

Despite the knowledge that ‘like-for-like’ can never be achieved. I find this approach interesting – it illuminates the potential in what is often seems a futile attempt – and conspires to make the attempt itself fertile and rich in its difference. McKee goes on to discuss the decidedly ‘foreign’ audio-visual work 336PEK, by the Portuguese artist, João Penalva. The title refers to the 336 tributaries of Lake Baikal – the ‘sacred sea of Siberia’, steeped in myth and geological wonders. Penalva alleges he chose Baikal as a focus only after meeting a Japanese man who was preparing to go and live there. In researching a place he had never heard of previously, Penalva claims he become fascinated by its history and layers of myth.

McKee writes of Penalva’s film,

“By placing the original text in the subtitles and ascribing the translation to the soundtrack, Penalva inverts cinematic hierarchies and exposes the gap in meaning that is at the heart of translation.” (Penalva, McKee, 2000, p.48)
The gap in meaning is surely a slippage between, as implied in the process of reading ‘between the lines’. McKee continues,

"[this gap] confronts us with the distance between experience and language. It tells us that we are never at home." (Penalva, McKee, 2000, p.48)

This is a particularly resonant point for Penalva’s ‘foreign’ film. His text serves to disorient the viewer: first by its relegation to subtitle, with the translation forming the main audio track (against a barely moving video image of a park, the audio assumes dominance), and second because of it provokes reflections on the issue of misreadings around the nature of memory and narrative. The subtitles (in English\textsuperscript{24}) are fleeting and temporal, while a languid Russian voice reads a translation of the subtitle (in Russian). The Russian voice is ‘read’ as the original, poetic authority. We immediately connect the language of Russian – the language of poetics – with an emotional intensity and ‘authenticity’. Penalva wrote the original text in English (as subtitles) and then made his own translation into Portuguese, hiring translators for the Russian and French versions. Penalva confesses, in correspondence with McKee, that his (multilingual) proof readers believed the English and Portuguese translations to be poor copies of the ‘original’ (i.e. Russian) text:

“…that neither conveyed the richness of the Russian text, that all of its poetic quality was absent, and that to them they were just simplified versions of a very good, very beautiful Russian text.” (Penalva, McKee, 2000, p.28)

The responsibilities of the translator and the subtitle translator are very similar – and equally complex. Both must seamlessly convey mood and tone and character. The work of the subtitle translator deals explicitly with the temporality of the words on screen – to make them fit the duration of the ‘action’, and to make their meaning legible – when the dialogues are lengthy or problematic this necessitates a
squeezing' of meaning – another translation and truncation of the words spoken, within the cinematic framing of time and space. Because the image on screen frustrates a search for meaning or narrative, instead the viewer is transported by the text, its translation and misprisions.

But I wonder if it is necessarily true that 'authentic' dialogue spoken in the language of the filmmaker is disadvantaged by the subtitled translation? Surely there is a rich potential for sending the audience on a new trajectory with audio and subtitle tracks which are clearly misaligned, or even on completely different trajectories. I wonder about experiencing the Other-ness of language in this way. Of course to view Penalva's 336PEK as a bilingual Russian and English speaker would be another matter – I imagine that one viewing would not be enough to digest fully all the audio and subtitles simultaneously.

In my video work Gole, it is this gap that I am most interested in – where the sound of the Italian sends the audience in conjunction with the video imagery. In Gole I employed narrative as itinerary. Having experimented briefly with subtitles, I chose not to use them with the audio and video – judging that in my video work the visual image was of more importance. I realised that I wanted the text to remain untranslated, though clearly linked to the Ambassadress.
In Penalva’s work, the slow pacing and somnolent delivery of the Russian narrator lulls the viewer into the false sense of security of a rich, comforting narrative, which Penalva then undermines with instances of erroneous memories and the relativity of ‘truth’,

“Had I been asked the same question
one minute, one second,
earlier or later,
I would have answered
With another image,
From another part of the film
Projected
in the secret cinema of my head.”25 (Penalva 1999, p.17)

This text plays with notions of memory and recall: the fallibility of our desire to remember or to re-tell. Penalva uses the myths of Lake Baikal as a loose framework. The folklore of Baikal holds together a slippery narrative of tales half-remembered by Penalva, which create associations with quasi-historical anecdotes. Ultimately, however, the focus of his film is about memory and translation. It is pertinent too that his events and myths mutate in their re-telling. The different versions, told in neighbouring valleys or continents, are framed by the particular culture of each. Relevant details, inscribed into the narrative, allow for a continuation of a cultural tradition. In this way, he can chart shifts in meaning through contemporaneous events and adjacent cultures of the artist and spectator.

In a temporal sense, the film slips between early Siberian Buryat mythology to late nineteenth-century expansionism, from the Russo-Japanese War to the present day.

Viewing 336PEK, perceptions of time are ‘unfixed’: strands of stories, autobiography and half-memories hang in the air – making a separate space alongside the spoken audio. The narrative begins midway through an account of a
conversation, then explicitly questions the nature of memory and recall, and ends with a recitation of all 336 river names. At this point, the heavily saturated and pixellated park image is suspended, giving way to a screen of pure colour. Yellow floods the screen (and the space of viewing) as the names of the rivers and streams are read out. This gives a distinct space in the film to ‘hear’ and alters the visual rhythm – time too seems suspended. The ‘screen’ of Baikal itself produces a space into which project psychically. Penalva writes,

“It was conceived as a film that could provoke four separate, simultaneous perceptions: of what you see; of what you hear; of what you read; of what you visualise. Each one has its own time.” (Penalva, McKee, 2000, p.24)

In the film, Penalva’s narrator ‘remembers’ the tale of Prince Mikhail Ivanovich Khilkov sending a locomotive across the ice on Baikal during the war between Russia and Japan, as told to him as a child, but wonders about the two different endings that he has been told independently. His teacher claims that a version whereby the train is raised and continues to work the line between Helsinki and Saint Petersburg must be true, because of the status of these important cities. His father, pessimistically, consents that the train fell through the melting ice, and lies there still, unsalvaged. The third suggestion comes from his mother,

“...sometimes there is no truth to these stories. Because as time passes people forget and become confused.” (Penalva 1999, p.79)

The narrator chooses to believe the version that his father has suggested – the train lies submerged at the bottom of Baikal, like a repressed memory that may resurface. Penalva conveys perfectly the ways in which narratives can mask or reveal something of self identity, its construction and fantasies. He presents a narrator (author of the subtitles) with an objective position on his own self-mythologizing.
The work reveals how we ‘give’, or transmit, something we know will be understood – by this I take it to mean visualized – and ‘stored’ (cinematically) by a fellow filmmaker. The narrator intones,

“We were two filmmakers
talking late at night.
I was performing to Piotr.
I gave him something I knew
he would understand as a filmmaker.

But I told Piotr
that I remembered many things
that had never happened.
That never happened to me.
Things that I remember
but that I know I “filmed”
so that I could remember them.” (Penalva 1999, p.21)

In ‘performing to Piotr’, the narrator is ‘feeding’ his fellow filmmaker something that he thinks he wants to hear: visual markers that he knows the other will understand, and be satisfied, or creatively ‘nourished’ by. Of course this exchange is only viewed through the frame of the narrator, and Piotr is similarly ‘performing’ a part. The narrative itself is a fiction of many layers.

The increasing lack of certainty about any of the narratives in 336PEK: its intended confusion; liberates its audience from viewing conventions. The ambiguity of the status of the narrator is further compounded by his seeming denial of authorship of the narrative text, as he claims,

“This is not my voice.
It’s the voice of Yuri Stepanov,
An actor
Who doesn’t have a Siberian accent.
But neither do I.
I lost mine long ago.” (Penalva 1999, pp.200-201)
Set adrift from the narrative with no fixed point to which we can anchor meaning, the viewer is carried along by the sonorous Russian voice, whose reading of the names of all 336 rivers of the film’s title becomes almost a liturgy for Baikal. This allows for a different perception of this imagined psychic space. Penalva himself affirms his intention that,

“...(reading) a list of 336 would create a time for itself inside the film, and consequently its own space.” (Penalva, McKee, 2000, p.12)

Lulled by the voice of ‘Yuri Stepanov’, the vast list of tributaries; their names, repetitions and subtle variations, begin to lap at the lake shore like a reverie.
In 1996 I decided to make a series of video works that spoke about displacement and nostalgia, of longing and belonging.

I would use 8mm film footage that I had shot in different locations and travels abroad over a number of years. Some of these followed films followed the path of rivers, as seen from a train; others crossed borders into no-man’s land — surreptitiously filming glimpses of forbidden locations. Others I cannot now recall.

I moved the films from my house to my studio for the purpose of digitally ‘saving’ them from an eventual degrading of quality. I would project them directly onto the wall and re-film the projection with a digital video camera — in this way I would have a copy — an insurance against damages, scratches or projector fires. An insurance also against their physical loss — I would preserve them, and with them, my memories of them, and that time, and those places.

The twenty films and projector were stolen from the studio. The memories I had been trying to visually preserve had been snatched from me. Only a few fragments had already been digitised — snippets of trains were saved, lakes and cornfields and borders had been lost. These few small clips, and the memories of the ones that had been taken, became my foundation for a short narration on their loss. Using inverted film clips so they showed only in negative, and heightening the saturation level of others to a ‘hyper-real’ quality, I tried to amplify the ‘inauthentic’ state of these fragments. I attempted to heighten the precariousness of the images with subtitles insisting on the fallibility of memory. ‘I remeber everything’...

Initially I felt the loss to be two-fold: the loss of the footage and the dissolution of my memory of the locations and journeys. Later I realised the loss was three-fold: it also signified the loss my sense of fixedness. I was ungrounded again.

I became plagued by dreams where tiny snippets, like a celluloid residue, would play over and over, but on waking became less sure how the sequence of events had unfolded...suspecting I had altered them in the moment of suture between dreaming and waking.
I am fascinated by the nature of this desire to save and capture and keep the experience of the past, and its relation to the moving image. Do memories represent a geographical longing, or a nostalgic impulse? Jeremy Millar suggests that the conflicting desires for belonging and alienation are reflected in the roots of nostalgia, "where longing is emphasised over place, where algia is put before nostos.” (Koester 2002, p.15)

This state of longing – whether geographical (la maladie du pays), or historical (mal du siecle) – demands a diagnosis. Simon Schama notes that, ‘nostalgia’ was interpreted as a clinical condition in the seventeenth century by the Swiss, who cured sufferers with, “opium leeches and trips back to the Alps” (Miller, Dean, 2005, p.191). I am enthralled by the historical fiction that in the eighteenth century, half a regiment of Russian soldiers were identified as suffering from nostalgia and, unable to fight, were sent home. The strength of the nostalgic impulse to render a person unable to function (out of place) is a fascinating concept. To me it is symptomatic of ‘embodied disorientation’; a physical manifestation of a malaise induced by being in the ‘wrong place’.

On the surprisingly productive site of melancholy and mourning, Freud defined the distinction whereby melancholia completely fills the unconscious ‘psychic apparatus’ with the sense of loss. Unable to displace or replace the loss, the mourner remains in thrall to the psychic state of melancholia. The grief that unites the melancholic and nostalgic drive is a place of conflicting desires. Millar makes an important point about this, through the example of nostalgia for ‘home’,
“Rather it is to acknowledge that identities, whether personal or national, are composed of conflicting desires, for alienation as much as belonging, longings which make it impossible to recreate a lost 'home' but allow, instead, its reimagination as something new, and slightly unfamiliar.” (Koester 2002, p.15)

This is the fertile ground – first made visible by Freud – the place where the re-imagination of fragments, or their possible narrative trajectories, grows new shoots. To me, the nostalgic impulse is closely tied to the idea of searching for something authentic or concrete – and yet being fully aware en route that the search, and the recreation of other possible myths, makes the active search and its broadest potential much more fertile. As Rendell suggests,

“...the very act of ‘telling’ the story may also be understood as a site where meaning is constructed.” (Kivland, Sanderson, 2002, p.17)

In my biomythography, I have wondered what claims of ‘authenticity’ mean. As a third generation immigrant I question what access I have to an authentic sense of being ‘out of place’. Being third generation is not unique in this country, a host to influx, waves of immigrants and invaders, but I think there is an interesting position here, by comparison with second-generation immigrants, which suggests a different perspective on identification and assimilation. Eva Hoffman answered my question about the position of the third generation28, asserting her belief that, as a generation they could ask the questions their parents could not. This suggested to me that being ‘at one remove’ (one generation removed) from the intimacy of trauma, carried the possibility for a more objective questioning of narratives. Through this questioning, or discussion (or perhaps just through the ‘airing’ of the subject, and the time lapse), this process in itself may be a healing one, where new connections or meaning is made.
Thinking about the double process of constructing of the Self (and its authenticity); its manipulation and articulation, and of ‘discovering’ the Self, Papastergiadis notes, “While the archaeologist would search to discover the missing self, the one that we knew was buried in the deep and not visible on the surface of everyday life, the cinematographer is driven to construct another identity based on the fragments that already exist.” (2006, p.77)

I wonder whether the artist is the archaeologist or the cinematographer in this scenario, or both, or situated somewhere between these two positions? I would add that the cinematographer (or more accurately video maker, in this case) is not confined to fragments that exist, but can also film substitutes, aspects of the self: one thing instead of another.

THE JOURNEY

Road Trip29 (2004), by the artists Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures Miller, is a collaborative slide lecture, attempting to piece together a journey undertaken by an absent subject/figure. It is perhaps a ‘quiet’ piece in their wider body of collaborative practice, and does not employ the same spectacular installation, or spatializing movement through space and audio as other works. For me this is a resonant and disquieting work on memory and the compunction to make narratives that make sense. In psychologically ‘projecting’ the decisions and their reasons, the routes followed and subsequent destinations, onto an “author” (the ‘grandfather’ of the narrative, and of Georges Bures Miller himself), the two artists inscribe themselves into the Great American Landscape of the slides, and accompanying audio track.
This is a visual and aural meandering from Canada through America, consuming the landscapes, the spectacles, and the stock photos of cultural events, scenes or tourist displays – the Indian Brave, the Great Wilderness etc. Mountains and lakes give way to flat expanses and finally the East coast. The audio track consists of the artists bickering over ordering, landmarks, film quality, composition and framing. A male voice is heard, “Stop”. The ordering doesn’t please George (the ‘grandson’ in this lineage). Reshuffle. White lights. The viewer must readjust, blinking, to this rupture. Lights off. Restart. George has now reordered the images to fit with his preconceived idea of the journey, and the story it would tell. For him, the travelogue must move sequentially and ‘authentically’. Creating this against the visual rupture of being ‘out of order’, the artists naturally create a visual rupture in the order. No matter, the lights come on and off again and quickly return the viewer to the deeply saturated hues of textbook 1950s Technicolor America.

This jerky and argumentative process is linked to the experience of every amateur slide show – triggering memories of slides sticking, or being removed and reinserted to project ‘the right way round and the right way up’. On the soundtrack the artists discuss how different film stocks created a strong orange-red patina through the intervening years. A sudden scene in blue-green seems to refresh the eyes again –
offering a commercially-bought and composed view of the landscape – before plunging back into a rust-coloured, sometimes blurry, pæn to the Great American Outdoors and the quintessential format of the road trip. It almost becomes a legible convention that the subjective images of the author/grandfather are pinky-orange in hue – unreal – while the newer, bought images are clear, objective, ‘regular’.

The viewer is invited to consider the fallibility of second-guessing, re-ordering the events that followed, or perhaps precipitated, the journey itself. The artists discuss the footage as if they are seeing it fresh for the first time, but later conversely comment on the process of how they conceived of the finished Road Trip piece working. As the slides rotate, slip in and out, it is easy to become lost momentarily in the opening vistas: sudden wilderness, peaks, forests and lakes. George has to reassess the memory of the figure on the screen, with the narrative that happened off screen, in the years that followed. The grandfather, the viewer learns, made this mammoth road trip with his family in order to (discreetly) visit a cancer specialist in New York. These images thus represent a last journey – a chance to travel through an epic landscape – a personal odyssey.

The transition of the images is paralleled by the transition through generations: from the dying ‘grandfather’ to the absent ‘father’. As the family myth regarding the
'grandfather' unfolds, it brings with it unwanted memories of the 'father' who appears briefly in the slide show as a baby. He is presented and discussed in the voice-over as a 'collector' of images himself: hungrily capturing images of his own children through a lens before he leaves them behind for another woman and a new family. It is also worth noting that it is the male voice (George) that demands the work be ordered to his preconceived notion of the trip and the direction it would take. The female voice (Janet), not directly related to the family, and therefore not invested in the story in the same way, argues for a less linear route through the images, and by extension through the narrative, and landscape of memory. I suggest this contributes to the discourse on female travel writers, and their contestation of the male travel writer's rhetoric – an argument for looking 'differently': at the landscape, at family biography, and at a linear historical perspective.

The artists assert the desire to transport the audience elsewhere. For me, the overriding feeling from the work was the desire (particularly of Miller) to root one's self – a search for authenticity: Where did he go? What did he do? There is an implicit desire in the work to have a nostalgic experience (of 1950s America, of a more stable family), however vicariously that was reached. Road Trip is framed first by the actual views 'captured', secondly by the cultural context of the era, then by the artists. Cardiff and Miller take it in turns to frame the journey for each other (and by extension the audience) – in non-linear and linear terms.

This is a process that may be familiar – piecing together a history from images, bought or taken; identifying landmarks, blurred figures, surroundings; trying to decipher handwritten notes on the back that authenticate and date and fix the images
as part of a larger narrative. If the narrative cannot be ‘authenticated’ by further documentation, or verified by word of mouth, by family myth, how then do we make sense of it?

The slide show itself is a nostalgic spectacle, transporting the viewer to an elsewhere, in another time. It is framed as a communal experience, in thrall to the projected image and the desire or nostalgia it provokes.
In my family, slide shows were a regular occurrence – revisiting holidays, diving trips and special events, but also as an educational diversion - my father would frequently set up and run through sequences of underwater slides for talks he would give. I would be transfixed by the slow dissolve from anemone to urchin, spiny lobster to cuckoo wrasse – feather bright colours and luminescence, filigree fronds and delicate barbules. This slow transportation from image to image suggested a natural state of slowness – a dense, liquid zone of heightened perception and colour; the dark, murky northern waters cloaking a circus of bright masquerade and camouflage. Before my eyes an octopus would change from brown to pink to sand, gliding thickly from surface to surface to activate this instant spectrum.

This world, this suspended state, was withheld from me, from most of the audiences – farmers, women’s guilds and the ilk. My premature immersion in it, at a young age, was a cold slap of kelp and a mouthful of salt and sand. Better to watch. Captivated by the images, I would wander the seabed imagining the touch of dead man’s fingers or sea slugs. The carefully chosen words that accompanied these images were lost on me or rather I was lost in them. The complementary audio tracks serve as a mnemonic trigger now – conveying me to the cold North Sea, or occasional forays to warmer waters.

Later when I travelled abroad I would return with slides arranged in wooden boxes and re-enact these scenes, recognising for myself how the choice of image would prompt the re-telling of a particular tale, and of how, on repetition these tales would change, imperceptibly at first, but slowly, quietly, the tale would morph into something other through its re-telling. Years later, when occasion calls for the slides to be presented again, these remembered tales are stoutly expected – the telling of the tale is integral to the image, to the succession of images. The image itself triggers an itinerary: an operation of movements through a place.

The rise of dust captured by the projector light and the snap of the free-standing screen act as directives – to sit and wait silently; to prepare mentally for a virtual journey. I allow my mind to wander.
These words too are a translation – a re-ordering of myth (familial, cultural) – a reading between the lines of past events. Re-assembling the fragments of a journey from another time (social, political) becomes part of the fantasy of re-ordering, an emotional re-mapping – a cartography of one’s own past. This telling of places, and the well-worn narratives linking them, re-inscribes the landscape of memory. In my work I am interested in the ways in which new layers of narrative may unpick or add new depth to a story, or an image, or bring a new significance into focus. The difference between these versions lies in the telling.

THE SYNTAX

The importance of narrative, location and the construction of identity are closely intertwined. In our everyday lives and locations, we traverse space and negotiate language in an almost unconscious way: repetition of actions, gestures, routes and habits lead us into habitual patterns of behaviour. The sociologist and philosopher Michel deCerteau sees the city and its inhabitants as equating movement to a form of narrative. The figurative body, walking the city and its streets, writes an ‘urban text’. Unable to see or read these texts in practice, the walker produces them by adherence to, or deviation from, grids of street and civic planning – obeying her own, innate logic and personal agency as she moves through space. In turn, these narrative ‘text’ structures are equated with spatial syntax, thus describing the ordering and joining of places as spatial trajectories. DeCerteau claims that, whether large or small, these narratives,

“simultaneously producing geographies of actions [they] do not merely constitute a ‘supplement’ to pedestrian enunciations and rhetorics”. (1988, p.116)
In my art practice, this has a resonance: that the body in space is producing a text as they move and navigate their way through the city, and that this text is legible only through walking it. Like a contemporary dérivist, the artist in the city is an errant, drifting subject: to stray from accepted routes or standards, whether to wander or in search of adventure, is to be errant. The O.E.D states the Latin iterare, ‘to travel or journey’, comes from the same root and is influenced by the verb errare – ‘to err’. The etymological foundation of errare suggests a departure from (common) principles – from erren: ‘to stray’. Bruno describes the deviation from a route or defined path as errare – ‘an error’:

“an act of navigation on a devious course. It implies rambling, roaming, and even going astray” (2002, p.15)

This imagery of deviation can be taken as a metaphor for the marginal position of one who operates outside of normative behaviours and laws. The deviant is one who departs from a prescribed course. To depart from an intended or prescribed path can have two purposes: an errare or a journey. In landscape architecture and planning terms a deviation from a designed route or pathway is described as a ‘line of desire’. Visible in every park, campus and plot of waste ground, these ‘desire lines’ suggest a way of walking that is at odds with the planners’ vision. They signify an ideology that doesn’t work, and a collective physical transgression that has been enacted out with the established boundaries. Outside of these boundaries: out of step, out of touch, or in the wrong location, is a political statement – a ‘position taking’.

DeCerteau argues that a series of acts (in time and multiple places) become ‘narrated adventures’. The act of walking produces the journey in real time, while rooting it in language. Notations corresponding to walks undertaken, or events unfolding in
particular places, are re-inscribed onto the locations themselves. These ‘pedestrian enunciations’ clearly echo the Situationists of the mid twentieth century, the Surrealist writers in the early twentieth century, and in the restless physical and mental wanderings of de la Bretonne in the eighteenth century. DeCerteau suggests that these wandering ‘geographies of actions’ are clearly spatial in execution:

“At the most elementary level, it has a triple enunciative function: it is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian; it is a spatial acting-out of the place; and it implies *relations* among different positions, that is, among pragmatic contracts in the form of movements”. (1988, p.97)

Locomotion in time and space thus appears as ‘a practiced place’. In their essay *Location Envy* (2002), Barry Curtis and Clare Pajaczkowska suggest that,

“‘Location’ is a primary determinant of status, a staging of presence, a desire to visit and enjoy vantages and participate in exercises of othering”. (Blamey 2002, p.24)

I felt that this ‘spatial acting-out’ could be translated, through the medium of art, as a series of physical gestures in response to a place – repetitive actions, loops – attempting a *rapprochement* with the place or site.

THE DETOUR

Here I want to take a detour through the Swedish artist Per Hüttner’s work. He participates in and interrogates these ‘exercises in othering’. Miwon Kwon, suggests,

“We are out of place all too often. Or, perhaps more accurately, the distinction between home and elsewhere, between “right” and “wrong” places, seems less and less relevant in the constitution of the self”. (Kwon 2000, p.157)

Hüttner might be described by Kwon as an artist who is always ‘out of place’: a frequent traveller / artist-in-residence / visiting lecturer / artist-curator, he takes the opportunity in his practice to make new work in new locations. Hüttner (and by
extension, his work) is in an almost constant state of transit. He can be viewed as a successful artist because of this networking, producing, curating, and constant swapping of locations. Each new place he visits generates another opportunity in another country. His ongoing project Jogging in Exotic Cities (1997-), has been played out over Europe, Asia and South America. A vast web of mutually networked, international acquaintances proposed ‘local’ photographers and artists to provide this documentary evidence of Hüttner jogging

Each photo in the series sets up the same premise – do the city inhabitants pay attention to the white runner in their midst or not? Often the joy of the photo is to search out a turned head, a foot caught mid-step – something that ‘fixes’ him to that particular cityscape: the recognition that his presence has been registered by an individual while being documented by the photographer, from a (hidden) vantage point. Hüttner describes the process of these ‘travel-cum-residency’ experiences,

“...I normally run for an hour in the morning each day for a week. I run in busy commercial parts of the cities and avoid parks and other places where you normally find joggers. I return later in the day with the camera to take pictures with my assistant.” (Hüttner 2004, p.13)

Hüttner started running when he turned thirty. This coincided with the INTALINKA project in Estonia I invited him to participate in, at an abandoned Soviet airbase near Haapsalu in 1997. Hüttner’s response, to the vast tracts of concrete lanes and paths leading off to bunkers and hangars and woods, was to pit himself against the scale of the site. Our month-long stay at the airbase, and the seemingly endless pathways and runways, predicated a disciplined approach to making work there. For Hüttner this involved the installation of perfunctory post boxes marking out a route. Every day he
jogged a route between these post boxes and timed himself between each one. The timings were logged on a chart and deposited back into the boxes.

Hüttner’s appearance is something of a visual rupture from the Swedish norm – he is small and blonde with dreadlocks. For the jogging series and in more recent works, he is always dressed in white. This makes him an obvious cipher in these exotic locations, running through busy/ decrepit/ industrial areas. His white ‘uniform’ infers a collapsing of difference between the locales; both he and they could be anywhere.

But of course they are where they are, and Hüttner, by comparison, seems to float, suspended. He could be digitally interposed, but for the glance of a passer-by. The curator Niclas Östlind comments,

“When one regards Jogging in Exotic Cities it is easy to lose oneself in the teeming and detailed depiction of the everyday life…” (Östlind, 2004)

It is the everyday life of the images that makes them so compelling – highly faceted snapshots of life elsewhere. Placing himself centrally in these social sites, Hüttner navigates his way through the crowded environs. His attempt at ‘moving carelessly’ may be compared to drifting – not in the political sense of the Situationists, nor that of the alienated, dispassionate flâneur – but a ‘wandering beyond’, as suggested by his recent exhibition title, xiao yao you to discover new connections and relations to the world around him. This ‘philosophy’ suggests the possibility for spontaneous
and unfixed behaviour – a new set of relations and position taking. What interests me is that this wandering, or drifting, does not just occur in a horizontal frame but also on the vertical plane. He moves from the micro vision to the expansive macro, where formerly important distinctions lose their significance. From this topographical viewpoint, it may be possible to see the structure and boundaries of city life. But this position can only be attained once familiar thresholds have been passed. While Hüttner may posit that his presence is part of a philosophical search, the essential alienation of his white jogger is clearly pointed: he is always ‘out of place’. Kwon muses,

"Is being in the wrong place is the same as being out of place? [...] What are the effects of such mis/displacements for art, subjectivity, and locational identities?" (Kwon 2000, p.33)

Is it necessary to be out of place in order to fully formulate a sense of identity? I interrogate my own practice in these terms, and in relation to Hüttner’s ethics. He attempts to position himself culturally, claiming -

“Travel started out as being something I did to make shows, but more and more it has become a tool for making art. [...] It is a way for me to understand myself and my Swedishness and why I have always had a feeling of not being part of my own culture. Or is it the other way around? That I have always been different and I have been trying to negotiate a space for myself?” (Hüttner 2004, p.13)

This sense of ‘trying to negotiate a space’ is pertinent for me. It seems the roles of the Ambassadress and the Navigator work best when I am ‘out of place’, and attempting to orient myself. As the pressures of success continue to be equated with mobility and globalism, Kwon argues that,

"It is now the performative aspect of an artist’s characteristic mode of operation (even when working in collaboration) that is repeated and circulated as a new art commodity, with the artist him/herself functioning as the primary vehicle for its verification, repetition, and circulation.” (Kwon 2002, p.47)
I agree with Kwon that this is a regular mode of operation and circulation of their work for many artists, but argue that it is perhaps only one aspect of their practice. There is also a question about whether being ‘liberated’ from a habitual place (a ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ place) is a release from behavioural patterns, or whether it forms a new pattern – that of consistently being out of place. Kwon links the effect of being in the wrong place to a psychological trauma34 (pp.160-164), that the ‘wrongness’ of being out of place brings into sharp focus the alienation of subject. For me this could be an epilogue to the ‘talking head’ subjects of Frenkel’s Transit Bar: through their experiences of being out of place, displaced, they are linked to many other historical ruptures. Psychologically this may be a liberation, but also the ‘undoing’ of a coherent sense of Self in the world: the ‘wrongness’ defines the existing lack, but may also question which place is the wrong place?

THE PHATIC

In The Practice of Everyday Life (1988), deCerteau posited direct links between the act of speech and the action of walking in the city, suggesting that the pedestrian appropriates the topographical system through a spatial acting-out of the place. The act of walking, “affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects etc., the trajectories it speaks” (deCerteau 1988, p.99). Emphasising the direct correlation between linguistic enunciations and physical actions, de Certeau uses the term phatic to describe a gestural utterance in order to, “maintain, initiate or interrupt contact” (1988, p.99) when walking (in the city).
The Phatic function refers to a highly influential model of linguistic communication (Macey, 2000). The model shows that any form of linguistic communication relies on six elements: sender, receiver, message, code, contact and context.

“These elements correspond to the six linguistic functions involved and the nature of the message will vary as one or another function is stressed. The functions are described as expressive (stress on sender), vocative (stress on receiver), metalingual (stress on code), phatic (stress on the process of communication), referential (stress on context) and poetic (stress on the message itself).” (Macey, p.64)

The Phatic function then is an implicit part of any conversation or communication – it is the “Hello! / Can you hear me? / Are you still there?” of our everyday conversations. This element of simply establishing social contact and expressing sociability, rather than intimating a specific meaning, can be subversive. The Phatic gesture itself has the potential to cut across boundaries of class, politics, and ethnicity. It could be viewed in these terms as interdisciplinary.

In 1994 I made some experimental photographs of the Ambassadress sited in both public and private spaces in different cities. In them, the Ambassadress stands apart from the crowds, viewing the structures and architecture. For me these images did not work as well as the photographs taken in unpopulated scenes. The ‘bonjour’ of her greeting got lost in the detail of city life – the Phatic gesture was better suited to an environment where the communication could visually ‘echo’.

The images are different from the original Ambassadress series in Angers, Wigan and Leigh: in this setting the figure of the Ambassadress does not have a foil; no ‘other’ to reflect back towards; no visible ‘partner mirrored internationally elsewhere’. Interrogating these newer images based on the six elements of linguistic
communication, I conclude that they are: expressive (stress on the figure of the Ambassadress), phatic (the process of communication), referential (the context is important) and poetic, in that the phatic message of ‘hello’ is ultimately futile and unreturned. Framed in the foreground of the tourist-friendly views, this small series of photographs of the Ambassadress grounds her firmly within particular, unnamed places.
Bonjour (alla gola), (2004) at the throat

She surveys the exterior of a gorge (the interior of which is seen in the video work Gole) – looking down into its striations and foreboding darkness. She does not approach it or seem to engage with it except at a distance. This is not her place, it seems.

Bonjour (alla valle), (2004) at the valley

She looks upwards into the mountains from the gorge – there is no view yet – there is another large mass to navigate before the reward of any vista or plateau.


**Bonjour (alla piana), (2004) at the plain**

She encounters a completely different kind of geological environment – a low plateau, once lake and marsh, long-since drained for agriculture – now planted with telecommunications antennae and dishes. Encircled by the mountains, these white plates and receivers bounce and transmit information – collecting data and multiple communications. In the face of these technological giants, the gesture of the Ambassadress is a tiny, redundant hello (more akin to deCerteau touching the brim of his hat in the street).

**Bonjour (al mare), (2004) at the sea**

She stands looking out to sea, looking towards a barely visible landmass on the horizon line. Her shadow grounds her on the beach, pointing towards this ‘other place’ across the water.
"the map...presupposes the idea of narration, it is conceived as an itinerary. It is an Odyssey." Italo Calvino (Bruno 2002, p.234)

deCerteau expands upon the relationship between,

"the itinerary (a discursive series of operations) and the map (a plane projection totalising observations), that is, between two symbolic and anthropological languages of space. Two poles of experience". (1988, p.119)

This movement from an itinerary – a landscape or journey full of more than can be tacitly acknowledged – to a grid map of data and co-ordinates, encompasses the dominant modes of description: acting and seeing. Between acting and seeing there is also the liberation of walking as a method of reading a place. This does not preclude the idea of reading between the lines of a place. DeCerteau himself suggests that,

"travel (like walking) is a substitute for the legends that used to open up space to something different. What does travel ultimately produce if it is not, by a sort of reversal, "an exploration of the deserted places of my memory," the return to nearby exoticism by way of a detour through distant places, and the "discovery" of relics and legends..." (1988, p.106)

Legends or myths themselves act as trajectories from which to delve into a psychic past, providing routes in and out of habitable spaces. The physicality of walking or travel allows for a space to be opened up in the reading of a place: a literal act of emancipation. The liberation of the ‘text’ of a place is entwined with the emotional itinerary of that landscape.

Solnit draws on the connection between the physical and the emotional topography of a place, linked with the freeing act of walking, specifically for women in late eighteenth century/ early nineteenth century Britain. She cites the example of (non-conformist) Elizabeth Bennett in Pride and Prejudice, as drafted by Jane Austen in
1799. After walking for hours with her newly betrothed love, Elizabeth comments that she has wandered, "beyond her knowledge". Solnit suggests that,"Consciousness and landscape have merged, so that Elizabeth has literally gone "beyond her knowledge" into new possibilities.” (2002, p.101)

I view this as an example of the spatial configuration of narrative (like film) mapped, in order to chart a movement through (from one state to another), rather than, to cite Bruno, “reproduce the ordering principle of analytic knowledge” (2002, p.245). In this description, Bruno refutes deCerteau’s definition between ‘maps’ and ‘tours’, countering that film, like emotional cartography, synthesises the movement of ‘seeing’ and ‘going’; that filmically, the camera moves to combine these cartographic distinctions (2002, p.245). While the camera is physically moved, it does not possess an internal agency. Bruno’s distinctions seem to rely on the camera moving with emotion – anamorphically moving place to place, moving people, and moving the viewer to emote.

I perceive the emotional possibilities mapped out in this travelling trajectory as synonymous with a carte de tendre; a tender mapping. This topography constitutes an emotional charting of the self. As defined by Madeleine de Scudéry’s (1607-1701) novel Clélie (1654) the Carte du pays de Tendre provides an emotional topography, as mapped by Bruno:

“...through narrative forms, cartography has redesigned the very space of the subject. By providing a design for her spatial imagination, it has fashioned forms of spatial inner-subjectivity and intersubjectivity.” (2002, p.235)

The space of the subject, written as an allegory in cartographic form, is seen here as a graphic form of the Self and its possible narrative trajectories, in a wider cultural landscape. Scudéry’s Carte itself bears some resemblance to an anatomical map of
the female ovaries, a literal representation of inner- and inter-subjectivity. In this it provides a graphic link to the female travellers and writers of my 'family tree'; it describes hopeful destinations as well as traps – of indifference, or pride. The route through the Carte de Tendre must be carefully navigated.

I think this form of particular subjectivities, laid out in the structure of a mapped interior, is deeply resonant for my practice. The navigation of (the) space (of the Unconscious), or of interior ‘place’, is projected psychically as an external landscape to be re-navigated. The description of these places emotionally maps the subject, through writing, speaking or action.

In the production of the text for Gole I was thinking particularly of medieval mapping and of itineraries relating to pilgrimage, and its definition as a ‘memorandum prescribing actions’. The actions describe the journey or tour to be made. While deCerteau claimed that description of space alternates between acting and seeing, in the context of the moving image this binary distinction can be contested. In acting, spatializing actions organise the movements: 'you enter and turn...'. Description through seeing entails the knowledge of an order of place and
presents it as a tableau - 'there are...' (deCerteau 1988, p.119). Whereas deCerteau asserts that *acting* is the dominant mode of spatial description, the Italian text in *Gole* attempts, without prioritising one over the other, to map the interior and exterior of the subject in space through the moving image.

Moving (with deCerteau) from the map to the trajectories of legend and myth, it should be noted that the collection of symbols on the map is still referred to as ‘the legend’ (1988, p.106). The legend also decodes the map, a translation that makes the landscape readable – by walking, or by other means.

The concept of a ‘legible landscape’ is represented by travel writer and explorer, Robert Macfarlane, in his book *Wild Places* (2007). He depicts the landscape of North West Alaska and the Koyukon people, describing their relationship to their environment as ‘sensate’. Macfarlane argues this is a dialogic process – that the Koyukon personify the landscape itself as ‘aware’ and ‘watchful’. Detailing the ways in which the Alaskan landscape of the Koyukon is invested with cultural meanings, Macfarlane claims that,

"Maps such as these, held in the mind, are alert to a landscape’s volatility as well as its fixtures. They tell of the inches and tints of things. They are born of a sophisticated literacy of a place, rather than aspiring solely to the neutral organisation of data. We cannot navigate and place ourselves only with maps that make the landscape dream-proof, impervious to the imagination.” (2007, p.145)

The sensate landscape provides the narrative for many travel writers, most notably Bruce Chatwin – himself an itinerant – writing on the aboriginal songlines of Australia, as Solnit comments,

"The songlines are tools of navigation across the deep desert, while the landscape is a mnemonic device for remembering the stories: in other words, the story is a map, the landscape is a narrative.” (2002, p.72)
Markers in the landscape act like notes in a musical score, by singing the notes, the landscape unfolds as legible to the singer – an aborigine – and a course, or itinerary, can be read.

I would posit that this site of departure: of journeying into the landscape, and reading its markers as potential trajectories to be followed, situates the body (as Friedberg claims for the cinematic viewer) as, "a fiction, a site for departure and return." (1994, p.38)
CHAPTER 3 NOTES:

1 Ambassadress solo show - Turnpike Gallery, Leigh, (2001)
2 The current Ambassadress was interested in participating with the exhibition in some way, and helped me set up and take some initial photographs around Wigan. The former Ambassadress met with me in France and showed me round Angers castle where I wanted to film. They were both very much 'in the role' of the Ambassadress, and helpful hosts.
3 Article by Henry Reeve, C.B. <http://www.1902encyclopedia.com>
4 The British Antarctic Territory includes all the lands and islands in a wedge extending from the South Pole to 60° S latitude between longitudes 20° W and 80° W. There are overlapping claims by Argentina and Chile.
5 There is evidence of this kind of diplomacy in practice as early as the 14th century BC in ancient Egypt. <http://www.britannica.com>
6 Ambassadress, Turnpike Gallery, Leigh (2001)
7 "[the functional site] is a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and discursive filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist's above all). It is an informational site, a locus of overlap of text, photographs and video recordings, physical places and things... It is a temporary thing; a movement; a chain of meanings devoid of a particular focus.” (Kwon 2002, p.29)
8 Information from Abruzzo Tourist Office website:
9 Karst landscapes are characterized by underground features such as caves, caverns, stalactites, and stalagmites. On the surface, clints, grikes, gorges, and swallow holes are common features.
10 At the time of writing a large earthquake has hit the northern section of the Apennine mountain range (of which the Maiella is a part) near Gran Sasso, destroying much of the historic city of L'Aquila. 06/04/09
12 Utilising satellite imagery the Italian Space Agency confirmed L’Aquila has moved 15cm from its original position/cartographic co-ordinates. Sunday Herald, 12/04/09
13 In the days and weeks since the Abruzzo earthquake I have received email messages from my family there, with quotes about the strength and forbearance of the 'Abruzzese' - in an earthquake prone region the importance of these traits provides a distinct advantage – the characteristics described are directly attributable to the landscape the inhabitants must endure.
14 My Italian translator was Roberta Valbusa
15 I suggest 'unheard' in that they meet with no response
16 The Red Desert (1964)
17 the carte de tendre is a map of relational space, charting an emotional journey through the tentative stages of love. It is a re-imagining of the emotional landscape of women, configured as an empowering journey, rather than a uneven path to (financially arranged) marriage.
18 I am linking this to the figure of the Stalker in Chapter 3
19 this work was made with the collaboration of Ania Witkowska
20 My italics
21 when McKee describes the work as foreign, I understand this to refer to “we are never at home” in, or with, this film (Penalva, McKee, 2000, p.48)
22 I make this distinction because Penalva's work accentuates the audio track as a way of opening up a visual space created in tandem with the subtitles, as opposed to the actual video image.
23 The number of tributaries is contested - some rivers are unnamed, others share variations of the same name. Penalva states that only 227 are named, but the official number of tributaries is now 460.
24 In the UK version
25 I have kept Penalva's original line breaks
26 I am relating this back to the quote, "in the secret cinema of my head".
27 Simon Schama suggests it was thought to be Typhus or TB
28 The discussion was about the Holocaust, but also about general survivors of war trauma, or of displacements. Book Reading, Edinburgh Book Festival 21/08/2004
29 Road Trip (2004) Dimensions: 6m x 7m room, Duration: 15 min. loop Materials: computer-controlled slide projector, and audio
30 On a longer ‘world tour’ 2000-2002, Fredrik Sweger took most of the photographs
31 Curator, Liljevalchs Konsthall, Stockholm
32 Hüttner’s exhibition Xiao Yao You Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China (2006)
33 The Daoist philosophy <http://www.iep.utm.edu/z/zhuangzi.htm>
34 citing Don DeLillo’s play Valparaiso (1999)
35 Phatic from the Greek phatos, ‘spoken’
36 Phatic Function as defined by Jakobson (1960), following Malinowski (1923) in Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory (Macey, 2000, p.297)
37 Bruce Chatwin, The Songlines (1987)
CONCLUSION

This research programme developed from a desire to explore my relationship to the notion of place, and of being disoriented – 'out of place' – which has underpinned my practice throughout. In order to reflect upon my own practice, I have attempted to articulate 'markers' along the path of this research journey, in the shape of contextual works made by other practitioners. I have also delineated a genealogy for myself in the tradition of women travellers and travel writers in to more fully understand being 'out of place', or between places and cultures. I have referenced films and literature that have shaped my approach to working with the moving image. My choices may seem diverse, but reflecting on my practice, and the genesis of my roles as Navigator or Ambassadress, I have been able to make fruitful connections between a wide variety of material sources.

My search for a specific location (Przywłuk) is one I recognise to be futile, but the act of searching for it unearths new information, or connections between anecdotal and historical events. As such, I perceive it as a fertile ground for my research: in trying to intimately know a distant place, I pursue the possibility of a substitute location to act as a mirror for the place that is unknowable, unfindable – and probably destroyed. Przywłuk is significant as an 'active site', to paraphrase Papastergiadis, (2006, p.202) and my writing around it and about it, I perceive as topographical. This relation to both topos and tropos (Papastergiadis 2006, p.202) signals both the place and the mode of perception, or method (of turning: words and action – a spatial orientation). Reflecting on my practice, I realise much of my work is about that action of turning: in many of the video works the figure physically
revolves within the frame (Gole, Testa, parts of Navigator#7) – and the spatial configuration of the Navigator#7 exhibition installation involves the physical orientation of the viewer, positioned and turning between the images.

In the course of the PhD I have, as a practitioner, been concerned with the form echoing or complementing the content of the thesis. I have been interested in the writing of the thesis as a practice in itself: when not writing, I have returned to the video works and reconfigured things; ‘played’ with footage, reviewed old clips, and tested new bits of technology. When progress with the video work seemed unsure, I bought a large roll of paper that took up the space of my living room floor for a summer. This too can be seen as a series of turns: turning from one medium to another, and returning to each in turn. The detailed search of topos alternates with the perception, or a series of turns – the tropos – I perceive as a physical orientation or disorientation. The practice of the artist researcher is mirrored in the topological practice of writing the thesis.

In this ‘joint’ practice then, I have explored the focus of ‘self identity’ as an expansive field, rather than a reductive or limiting arena. I have conceived of it as a framing of questions through the production of artworks. It is a search for possibilities as opposed to absolutes, a multiplicity of ‘subject positions’¹, emphasised by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, (Sarup 1995, p.56). The fluidity and mutability of identity construction predicates shift and change: in the course of the PhD research programme I have lost the last of my paternal grandparents and their generation in Poland. There are no more conversations to be had with them about the borderlands and its exiles, or the different ruptures and displacements.
The endless pursuit of fragments and fragile connections is mine to draw, and to \textit{redraw} in maps and text, in still image and moving image. I am free to make my own meanings.
1 Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau: "...social identities are structured 'like a language' in that they can be articulated into a range of contradictory positions from one discursive context to the next, since each element in ideology and consciousness has no necessary belonging in any one political code or representation." (Sarup 1995, p.56)
APPENDIX 1:

Statistical cartography by Charles Joseph Minard (1869)
Of Napoleon’s Russian campaign 1812-13-13
Carte Figurative des pertes successives en hommes de l'Armée Française dans la campagne de Russie 1812-1813.

Prévue par M. Minard, Inspetion Général des Ponts et Chaussées en exécution.

Paris, le 20 Novembre 1869.

Les nombres d'hommes présent sous représentés par les longueurs des zones colorées à raison d'une millimètre pour dix mille hommes ; ils sont de plus écris en teneurs des zones. Le rouge désigne les hommes qui ont combattu en Russie, le noir ceux qui en itinéraire. Les renouvellements qui ont été à devoir la carte ont été pris dans les ouvrages de M.M. Chieri, de Béguin, de Ferensac, de Chambray, et le journal intime de Sadi-Carnot, président de l'Armée depuis le 23 Octobre.

Pour mieux faire juger à l'œil la diminution de l'armée, j'ai supposé que le corps du Prince Napoléon et du Marshal Davout, qui avaient été détachés pour Moscou et l'Ukraine, ont rejoint le reste de l'Armée, avant toujours marché avec l'Armée.

TABLEAU CRAPHIQUE de la température en degrés du thermomètre de Réaumur au dessous de zéro.

Les points suivent au gelé gelé.
APPENDIX 2:

**Legenda (2008/9) detail**

Drawing: ink, graphite, watercolour, fabriano paper

Dimensions: 160cm x 260cm
CHAPTER 1:

p.9  i  Tunica herbu (1998) documentation
     ii  Moses (1998) documentation
p.12 i  Extract (1996) video still
     ii  Christina V’s Dina (1996) video still detail
p.14 i  Vera Frenkel ...From the Transit Bar (1992) video still
     ii  Vera Frenkel ...From the Transit Bar (1992) video still
p.15 i  Vera Frenkel ...From the Transit Bar (1992) video still
     ii  Vera Frenkel ...From the Transit Bar (1992) video still
p.16 i  Chantal Akerman To Walk Next to One’s Shoelaces in an Empty Fridge
         (2004) video installation detail
     ii  Chantal Akerman D’Est (1993) film still
p.31 i  Isabella Bird (1831-1904)
     ii  Mary Kingsley (1862-1900)

p.34 i  Lady Mary Wortley Montague in Turkish dress (1689-1762)
     ii  Esther Lyons portrait or self-portrait (1897)

p.36 i  anonymous flâneuse, unknown photographer
p.50 i  F.W. Murnau, Sunrise, (1927) film still
     ii  F.W. Murnau, Sunrise, (1927) film still
p.51 i  F.W. Murnau, Sunrise, (1927) film still

CHAPTER 2:

p.57 i  Navigator #1 (1997) photograph
p.58 i  Navigator #2 (1997) film still
     ii  Navigator #2 (1997) film still
p.59 i  Navigator #4 (2001) video still
     ii  Navigator #4 (2001) video still
p.60 i  Navigator #5 (2007) video still
p.62 i  Navigator #5 (2007) video still
p.63 i  i denti del lupo (2007) video still
p.70 i  Aleksandr Sokurov, Mother and Son (1996) film still
     ii  Aleksandr Sokurov, Mother and Son (1996) film still
p.71 i  Aleksandr Sokurov, Russian ark (2002) film still
     ii  Aleksandr Sokurov, Russian ark (2002) film still
p.72 i  Aleksandr Sokurov, Russian ark (2002) film still
     ii  Aleksandr Sokurov, Russian ark (2002) film still
p.76 i  Aleksandr Sokurov, Russian ark (2002) film still
p.84 i  Stan Douglas Der Sandmann (1995) film still
p.88 i  Andrei Tarkovsky, Stalker (1979) film still
     ii  Andrei Tarkovsky, Stalker (1979) film still
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS: continued

      iii Navigator #7 (2009) Part 2: The Forest
p.94  i  Navigator #7 (2009) Part 2: The Forest
      iii Navigator #7 (2009) Part 2: The Forest
p.95  i  Navigator #7 (2009) Part 3: The River
p.98  i  Minard’s flow map / statistical graph
p.100 i  Legenda (2009) detail
        ii Legenda (2009) detail
p.101 i  Legenda (2009) detail
        ii Legenda (2009) detail
p.102 i  Polish soldiers painting Warsaw and Baghdad in the desert
        ii Polish soldiers in Baghdad
p.108 i  Joachim Koester Białoiewa Forest #1, C-type print
        ii Joachim Koester Białoiewa Forest #2, C-type print
p.109 i  Joachim Koester Białoiewa Forest #3, C-type print
        ii Joachim Koester Białoiewa Forest #4, C-type print
p.112 i  Elem Klimov, Come and See (1985) film still
        ii Elem Klimov, Come and See (1985) film still
p.113 i  Ori Gersht Liquidation (2005) C-type print
        ii Ori Gersht White Noise (1999) C-type print
p.118 i  Humphrey Jennings The Silent Village (1943) film still
        ii Humphrey Jennings The Silent Village (1943) film still

CHAPTER 3:

p.127 i  Bonjour (Angers) (2001) C-type print
        ii Bonjour (Wigan) (2001) C-type print
p.129 i  Ambassadress (à Angers) (2001) C-type print
        ii Ambassadress (à Wigan) (2001) C-type print
p.130 i  Les Citoyennes (2001) video still
        ii Les Citoyennes (2001) video still
p.131 i  Les Citoyennes (2001) video still
        ii Les Citoyennes (2001) video still
p.133 i  Gole (2006) video still
        ii Gole (2006) video still
CHAPTER 1:

p.9  i  Tunica herbu (1998) documentation
        ii  Moses (1998) documentation
p.12  i  Extract (1996) video still
        ii  Christina V’s Dina (1996) video still detail
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p.51  i  F.W. Murnau, Sunrise, (1927) film still

CHAPTER 2:

p.57  i  Navigator #1 (1997) photograph
p.58  i  Navigator #2 (1997) film still
        ii  Navigator #2 (1997) film still
p.59  i  Navigator #4 (2001) video still
        ii  Navigator #4 (2001) video still
p.60  i  Navigator #5 (2007) video still
p.62  i  Navigator #5 (2007) video still

p.63  i  i denti del lupo (2007) video still
p.70  i  Aleksandr Sokurov, Mother and Son (1996) film still
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p.76  i  Aleksandr Sokurov, Russian ark (2002) film still
p.84  i  Stan Douglas Der Sandmann (1995) film still
p.88  i  Andrei Tarkovsky, Stalker (1979) film still
        ii  Andrei Tarkovsky, Stalker (1979) film still
ARTWORKS BY THE ARTIST:

NAVIGATOR ARTWORKS:

Navigator#7 (2009)
Part 1: The Mist
[single screen video, colour with audio]
Part 2: The Forest
[three screen video, colour with audio]
Part 3: The River
[single screen video, colour with audio]

Navigator#5 (2007)
[single screen video, colour with audio]

AMBASSADRESS ARTWORKS:

Testa (2007)
[single screen video, colour with audio]

Gole (2005-6)
[single screen video, colour with audio]

Bonjour (alla gola) (2004)
Bonjour (alla valle) (2004)
Bonjour (alla piana) (2004)
Bonjour (al mare) (2004)
[C-type photographic prints, colour]

OTHER ARTWORKS:

Legenda (2008-9)
[ink, pencil, watercolour on fabriano paper]

i denti del lupo (2007)
[single screen video, colour with audio]
ARTWORKS BY THE ARTIST: continued

REFERENCED WORKS:

The Polish Lesson (2004) *not illustrated*
[single screen video, colour with audio]

Navigator#4 (2001)
[8mm transfer to single screen video, colour, no audio]

Bonjour (Angers) (2001)
Bonjour (Wigan) (2001)
[C-type colour print]

Ambassadress (à Angers) (2001)
Ambassadress (à Wigan) (2001)
[C-type colour print]

Les Citoyennes (2001)
[split screen video, colour, no audio]

Moses (1998)
[artist’s embroidered jacket]

Tunica herbu (1998)
[artist’s embroidered and drawn heraldic tunic, with stand]

Navigator#2 (1997)
[8mm transfer to single screen video, black and white, no audio]

Navigator#1 (1997)
[black and white photograph, lifesize]

Film #2 (1996) *not illustrated*
[8mm transfer to single screen video, colour, no audio]

Film #1 (1996) *not illustrated*
[8mm transfer to single screen video, colour, no audio]

Christina V’s Dina (1996)
[two screen video, colour with audio, installed with chairs and tables]

Extract (1996)
[single screen video, colour with sound]
ARTWORKS: BY OTHER ARTISTS
In order of appearance in the text

Vera Frenkel
...From the Transit Bar (1992)
[six channel video installation, colour with audio and subtitles]

Chantal Akerman
To Walk Next to One’s Shoelaces in an Empty Fridge (2004)
[video installation, black and white, with audio]

Chantal Akerman
D’Est (1993)
[35mm film, colour, with audio]

Christian Philipp Müller not illustrated in text
Green Zone (1993)
[photographic documentation of cross-border, performative trespass]

Stan Douglas
Der Sandmann (1995)
[two track 16mm black and white synchronous film projection with stereo soundtrack]

Joachim Koester
Bialowieza Forest (2001)
[C-type prints]
101 cm x 126 cm x 88 cm
Series of 12 prints

Ori Gersht not illustrated in text
The Forest (2005)
[16mm film transferred to DVD]

Ori Gersht
Liquidation (2005)
[C-type print]
80 x 100 cm

Ori Gersht
White Noise (1999)
[C-type print]
80 x 100cm

João Penalva
336 PEK (2000)
[subtitle video work, with audio]
ARTWORKS: BY OTHER ARTISTS continued

Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller
Roadtrip (2004)
[computer controlled slide projector, and audio]

Per Hüttner
[framed c-print mounted on dibond]
108 x 36 cm
Carte Figurative des pertes successives en hommes de l'Armée Française dans la campagne de Russie 1812-1813.

Les nombres d'hommes représentés sont exprimés par les longueurs des segments de lignes, d'un millimètre pour dix mille hommes, la moitié plus étroits en toutes les zones. Le rouge indique les hommes qui restent en Russie, le noir ceux qui ont été évacués. Les conséquences qui ont cours à travers la carte sont les suivantes dans les campagnes de M. Tcirt de Farges et de Chambry et le journal intime de Solon, pharmacien de l'Armée jusqu'au 29 Octobre. Pour mieux faire juger à l'œil la diminution de l'armée, j'ai supposé que les corps du Prince Napoléon et du Maréchal Davout, qui avaient été détachés sur Minus en Moldavie et aux régions vers Ordza et Wielk, avaient toujours marché avec l'armée.

TABLEAU GRAPHIQUE de la température en degrés du thermomètre de Réaumur au dessous de zéro.

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The Silent Village. (1943) Directed by Humphrey Jennings. Wales, UK, Crown Film Unit, for the Ministry of Information; BFI [Film:35mm].

Come and See. (1985) Directed by Elem Klimov. Russia, Mosfilm; Belarusfilm [Film:35mm].

Sunrise. (1927) Directed by F. W. Murnau. USA, Twentieth Century Fox [video:DVD].


Mother and Son. (1996) Directed by Alexandr Sokurov. Russia, North Foundation, zero film, GOSKINO, icw Lenfilm [Film:35mm].


Stalker. (1979) Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky. UK, Gambaroff-Chemier Interallianz; Mosfilm; Artificial Eye [Video:DVD].


