# CASTING

hybrid approaches to understanding the dissolution of the body
into landscape and landscape into body



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# DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the candidate alone. The work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# ABSTRACT

*CASTING AND STRAYING: hybrid approaches to understanding the dissolution of the body into landscape and landscape into body*

This research project interrogates our understanding of the relationship between body and landscape through audiovisual art practice. It takes displacement as the framework for this exploration, while specifically drawing on audiovisual field research undertaken in Europe in 2011. Deploying practice-led research and its attendant approaches and methodologies, it culminates in Straying, an audiovisual installation that creates a space of expression that is beyond the seeable and sayable. The poetic and documentary impulse that drive the creation of the installation also help move beyond the representational, beyond each form, and towards a hybrid, 'haptic' space of experience. Casting, the exegetical component of the research, offers up various prisms through which to engage with the installation work. The work's nomadic theoretical terrain looks to the practice of poetry, documentary, the essay, translation, philosophy, intercultural film practice, and the phenomenology of the moving image as a means to frame and illuminate the project. This transdisciplinary, practice-based research examines unique ways of knowing and knowledge production that transcend habitual ontological and epistemological frameworks.

# INTRODUCTION

This doctoral project comprises two parts: *Straying*, an audiovisual installation; and *Casting*, the exegetical writing contained herein. The audiovisual component is a three-channel video and single-channel audio installation. The audio element is a voice-over that addresses the moving images that play on the three screens in the installation space. In "speaking" to them, the Voice attempts to re-constitute her body out of the pictures.[1] This might be seen another way: She speaks to the images so that she might achieve complete dissolution into them. Both of these motives express a desire towards a conciliation between image and voice; landscape and body. The pictures that play are of urban and natural environments, mostly absent of bodies. Statues frequent the image, they appear as possible 'homes' for the Voice; they remind us of her disembodied condition. Her absence from the image to which She reaches with her loving, desiring words underscores her dislocated status.

This exegesis, *Casting,* is composed of six parts following this introduction: Return, Aspect, Passage, Hinge, Space and Flesh; followed by a conclusion. The titles for the six sections are movements that have been articulated at various levels of the research project. They emerge at thematic, theoretical and processual levels across the research as a whole. These six parts are intended as provocations toward a different or deeper engagement with *Straying*.

Return evokes both a setting forth and a (re)casting into the past. This makes chronological sense: I will address the beginnings of the research project in this section; my first impulses and intentions. The research proceeded by re-

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[1] I use a capital V for Voice and a capital S for She when I am referring to the character that speaks in voice-over in the installation.

turning, re-doing, re-thinking, re-framing, re-appropriating, re-focusing, re-conciliating. I will address how the documentary film and the poem guided the fieldtrip that was taken in order to collect the footage for *Straying*; and how these approaches both complicated the experience and were complicated by the experience of the fieldtrip. I consider that this may partly have been precipitated by the intercultural space I was working in.[2] The act of return also has thematic resonances for *Straying* but that emerged much later in the process. I make mention of it here to begin to set up the way in which these sections not only make chronological sense, but rather, the themes and ideas re-emerge, re-constitute themselves in relation to other aspects of the research. *See Figure 1*.[3]

Aspect evokes a play of perspectives, to look for various positions from which to speak, from which to look, to see. The Voice in the installation speaks about the need to find the right perspective so that She might be able to see and to speak what She desires. The audience that moves through the installation is also always offered the opportunity to move around and find themselves physically in different positions in relation to the images in the room. Finding the right aspect has also been my task in writing this exegetical work. I have considered very seriously from which perspective to write, from which angle to tell the story (if telling a story is, after all, my task). The task of the exegesis is the subject I address directly in this section. I do this with the help of Hans Georg Gadamer's discussion of knowledge and the beautiful in art[4] and Walter Benjamin's study of translation.[5]

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[2] I use Laura U. Marks' theorisation of intercultural cinema to guide this discussion. Marks, Laura U. *The Skin of the Film*. London: Duke University Press, 2000.
[3] I have included figures throughout *Casting* which reference particular moments in *Straying* that I think might either be illustrative of an argument at that point, or offer another layer of complexity to the argument.
[4] Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*. Edited by Robert Bernasconi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
[5] Benjamin, Walter. "The Task of the Translator." In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Figure 1                          It was snowing when I first arrived. Not
                                  for the first time, less of an arrival, more
                                  of a return.

Passage takes us along the paths that were taken during this research project: the theoretical, formal and material processes and aspects of the installation. I will consider the "imperatives" that drove the fieldwork, and why improvisation was such an important part of how the research was conducted. I will briefly set up how both scholarship on place-making, and the treatment of the body-in-landscape in cinema, provided an initial foundation for the research, and ultimately oriented me away from a focus on these areas and towards other fields. I encountered Sergei Eisenstein's concept of Nonindifferent Nature, and similarly this concept was both fertile and ultimately irreconcilable with the various theoretical and practical layers that were forming in the conduct of the research. I started to move towards impossibilities and difficulties of expression, rather than ideal forms. This eventually took me towards an investigation of displacement in particular.

In Hinge I revisit in detail how a dialogue between the documentary and the poetic helped me deal with the audiovisual material and opened up a further space where I could accommodate the fractured nature of my findings. This is a space of multiplicity; it is the space of the essayistic. This is the path I explore in Space, which addresses how the space of the installation can be thought of as an essayistic space and why this was conducive to reconceptualising the work from a single-screen documentary to a multiple screen installation. I also address how this move complicated the relationship between the voice and the image. This complication presented a new set of questions around the ontological status of the image and what this implies about its role in helping to constitute a sense of place and a sense of self. This has implications for how the Voice addresses the image and what is represented in the image.

Flesh brings to the foreground the flesh of the body and the flesh of the world. This phenomenological turn focuses the body of the audience, visceral experiences and multiple subjectivities. There are a number of bodies to be found across this research including: the body of the audience; the absent body of the Voice; and the body of the installation. There are figures that I identify as

bodies represented in the moving image: the figure of the dead body of the statues, bodies of water, buildings as bodies. But the representative power of the images fails; we must come to another kind of knowing, a knowing through the body. To help us cross this terrain, I look to phenomenologies of perception.[6] Further to this, Anne Rutherford's notion of sympathetic vibration and the porousness between the perceiver and the perceived helps frame how *Straying* contributes knowledge in the form of experience of what is outside the seeable and sayable.[7]

These parts of the exegesis and their titles are broad. To a degree they work to organise the material, but the material contained in them is also in excess of their position within their specific section. I would like to think of them as speaking across the sections to one another, ideas chiming across the corpus in the way chiming occurs in poetry.[8] Lacks and excesses have marked this research project: the lack of a firm footing and the excess of memory and emotion for a place and a body that are absent. I work to preserve these qualities in this exegesis that argues on the side of a work that asserts one must experience displacement and dislocation; one cannot be merely shown it or told about it. And so I err on the side of offering up experience in this writing also.[9]

A taxonomic approach would not work here. There were too many mistakes and wrong turns that proved generative and which I fear would not find their place in an exegesis with a more linear trajectory. I want to stay close to the process taken and the discoveries made along the way. Staying close to the experience is open enough to imply that many approaches are possible here.

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[6] In particular I look at Sue Cataldi's use of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's and James J Gibson's phenomenologies in order to connect deep emotion with embodiment and space. Cataldi, Sue L. *Emotion, Depth, and Flesh*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

[7] Rutherford, Anne. *What Makes a Film Tick?* Bern: Peter Lang, 2011.

[8] 'Chiming means that tiny sounds chime with each other inside the line. It's a sort of interior rhyming. Most good poems have repeating sounds. But one can make chiming into a sort of principle. If the chiming sound returns three times, it becomes a tune. Then the whole stanza turns to music.' Bly, Robert. "The Art of Poetry: Interview with Robert Bly." By Francis Quinn, *Paris Review* no. 79 (2000).

[9] I do not think this stands in contradiction to the general tasks that an exegesis is required to perform. I broach this topic in greater detail in the Aspect part of this exegesis.

What I hope to do in this exegesis is to offer some possible entry points into the work, while implying that there are many others.

The six parts of this exegesis evolved like the making of a sculpture; each section is like a limb. The making of each limb happened in dialogue with various theoretical, formal, material and contextual (intercultural) terrains. We could think of these limbs, then, as parts of Osiris' body:[10] strewn across the landscape, his body scattered. Our task now is to traverse the landscape and look for the 'hidden resemblances' between parts in an attempt to re-constitute a body.[11] This same task of searching is also the one performed in the installation. It is how the installation, too, came into being – my own searching through a landscape, both literally and metaphorically. I will confess now that there is no single body to be found; we will not come to the end of our experience with either *Straying* or *Casting* and be able to constitute one single, identifiable body like a sculpture.[12]

I will make another confession: the point I was searching for in this investigation – the point at which the body and the landscape touch on one another, the point of their dissolution into each other – is not locatable and is not representable in ways that are seeable and sayable. But this impossibility gives rise to another experience: the search for this very point and its absence. This yearning is the condition of a body displaced. The paths I set out here and in the installation are paths towards a visceral and haptic experience of this yearning, of the re-peated, re-cast attempt at finding a unity which will always remain possible only in the realm of imagination. *See Figure 2*.

In the attempt to find unity, I have found multiplicity: multiple screens, multiple approaches, multiple possibilities and subjectivities. I will address all of

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[10] Plutarch, "Isis and Osiris," in Moralia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 23.
[11] This is a reference to Michel Foucault's notion of a time when language was in a kind of primordial condition in a 'profound kinship with the world.' This time is now lost to us, and Foucault suggests that it is the poet's task is to rediscover these kinships. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 2002), 47.
[12] Isis, Osiris' wife, did manage to piece together all of Osiris' body parts, minus the phallus, but nonetheless was impregnated by him and bore him a son (Plutarch, "Isis and Osiris," 49). Even though I claim we cannot achieve the task Isis did, I do contend that the process of piecing together disparate parts is generative in this work.

Figure 2







I can imagine us close, touching, I can
imagine so well it feels like memory.

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these aspects separately, later, but for now I would like to simply evoke the cubist artwork in order to think about the relationships and qualities of movement among the multiple elements that are to be found in *Straying* and *Casting*. Imagine Pablo Picasso's portraits[13] or Alexander Archipenko's sculptures;[14] the face struggles to be whole while also pulling away in different directions, making wholeness impossible. The tension in this movement both towards and away from the formation of a single and complete image (or self – in the case of the works depicting faces and bodies) depicts a complexity in the thing represented because it offers us multiple, irreconcilable perspectives on it.[15] The complexity is in the very impossibility of conflating all of the dimensions into one.

I would like to draw out a proposition that each of these separate parts are fragments that remain porous and are changed when brought into contact with another. How this manifests in *Straying* will become clear throughout this exegesis – it is a more literal manifestation because the elements that make up *Straying* are not stuck or set in a representation as they are in the paintings and sculptures I have referenced.[16] But my intention is that *Casting* is porous also, despite its more set form. My approach has been to position *Straying* and *Casting* in such a relation that they too, in their relationship, each reveal a complexity in the other.

I have already borrowed a number of images in aid of introducing this work. My reference points are cross-medial – one supplements another, or serves to re-orient the thinking, to help move through an impasse. To this end –

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[13] Consider for example Dora Maar Au Chat (1941), The Weeping Woman (1937)
[14] Consider for example Dancers (1912), Family Life (1912).
[15] Cubism itself was a challenge to traditional or realist representations and moved toward abstracted ways of seeing and representing; with the intention of showing something more "real".
[16] This is the nature, for example, of the relationship between sound and image in the installation. As they "touch" they change each other's meaning, constantly transforming through changing relationships. This movement never achieves either unity or total destruction, but a revelation of yet other dimensions and possibilities.

to continue re-framing, re-thinking and re-conceptualising – I will borrow other ideas and images throughout this writing. From Louise Glück I borrow poetry. From Maya Deren I borrow the poetic. From Laura U. Marks I borrow skin. From André Bazin I borrow the mummy. From Walter Benjamin I borrow pure language and the palimpsest. I borrow statues from Alphonso Lingis and Antony Gormley. From Hans Georg Gadamer I borrow the beautiful. From Maurice Merleau-Ponty I borrow the thinking body, I borrow flesh. From Michel de Montaigne I borrow the essay, the error.

Here, the end of a thought is not necessarily a conclusion to a thought. The end of a thought could be a trailing off or an arrival at an impasse. So then a leap might be required of us and we might have to follow Barthes' advice that we 'must allow the utterance' of the text 'to proceed in contradiction'.[17] We do not have to go forward, onwards, and complete each thought; we can go back, return, start again: it is about re-discovery, re-search. This is all part of my poetic intention: a form that can privilege ellipses, excesses, the things that cannot be named. It is not about definitions or taxonomies; it is about expansion, always pointing onwards, expanding its reach. Poetry allows us or invites us to listen differently.[18] I ask you in this instance, and always at least in the first instance, to listen with your poetic ear and by extension to see with your poetic eye.

I make this request because I offer up an experience in *Casting* that is intrinsically of the nature of *Straying* – its geography, its terrain. The transient nature of this terrain arose as one of the pivotal difficulties in this research. To name it transient sounds like a truism – of course both the body and the environment are always in a state of flux – but I do not mean it thus. I mean to say that my experience of trying to photograph my subject, to record it, to set it down, has been an impossible task. And this very impossibility yielded the continuance of the research. In *Casting* this unattainability takes on a slightly

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[17] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 20.
[18] 'People listen differently to poetry than to other forms of writing as if the very sound of poetic language signals a more intense iteration of something.' Kristine S Santilli, *Poetic Gesture* (New York: Routledge, 2002), xi.

different shape, but nonetheless a solid form sometimes escapes me. Or rather, I do not run after a form that is elegant in its solidity, closed and reassuring.

I will not enclose the reader either, but endeavour to give you room to perambulate, even here, as you may do in *Straying*. *Straying* is in a constant state of inconsistency because it is at the mercy of the spectator in relation to its coherency, but he/she is always departing, returning, recombining its constituent elements. The screens in *Straying* are literally transparent so that you may see yourselves walking around the installation space, inscribing it in your own way, almost literally with your own body. This is the moment I am most interested in, this part of its evolution. I will send you forth into the body of this work with Ludwig Wittgenstein as the last (or first) hum in your ear: 'A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably'.[19]

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[19] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 48.

# RETURN

In an attempt to fashion a story or to know a subject wholly, my impulse seems almost always to be to go back to the beginning.[20] Return in this research project, however, has not been a simple matter, or rather, finding the beginning has sometimes felt like an impossible task. Even so, the location of this point of origin exerts an imperative, an act of return which is insistent, obsessive: a return to ideas, concepts, first inspirations, a return to certain places and specific moments. The hope is that marking them with beginning will reveal a destined path, a path that I could recount for you, here, so you might understand this story. But each time we return, things are a little different; a different version is found, constructed. We can never return to the same place; never in the same way. The notion of beginnings and origins starts to take on mythical proportions.

The gesture of the obsessive return to an unattainable point of origin is that described by Benjamin in his study on German tragic drama – most specifically in his work on allegory, which he theorises not as a convention but as an impulse.[21] The allegorical impulse arises out of an intuition that the world is transient and passing out of being. This intuition inspires a gesture of gathering that which is passing to oneself in order to recuperate it for the present. This is often the impulse when we take a photograph or video: we record, we capture. We are already looking back as we gather. We pile up ceaselessly the fragments of history that are left in the hope of recuperating their meaning.[22] The fragments are images of what is already becoming the past.

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[20] I would proffer to say, though, that this is not only my impulse. Is this not the same impulse that drives origin myths?
[21] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2009), 159-233.
[22] Ibid., 178.

Craig Owens calls the 'paradigm' for the allegorical work the 'palimpsest'. In this obsessive act of piling up images on top of one another, we read one image through another.[23] The dynamic relationship between the various fragments in an allegorical work is dialectical: one fragment is read through another and, in so doing, meaning is composed. This relationship creates a multiplicity of meaning, meaning that is continually made and re-made. Each fragment remains porous and vulnerable to all of the other fragments. We might consider all of the elements in *Straying* and *Casting* in this vein: meaning is made in their dynamic relationship. There is no original or true meaning to recuperate; the meaning is always deferred and constituted anew through another image.

Allegory is a way of seeing, a mode of expression rather than a convention.[24] Allegory, according to Benjamin, is also an intuition, an intention.[25] Allegory is a process, a perspective; it is not a form or an object but a way of making, reading, experiencing. I could describe the impulses, intentions and the shape of the journey in the making of both *Straying* and *Casting* in just these terms: an impulse to return to and recuperate a point of origin and its meaning – and the impossibility of ever arriving at one definitive point. The point I was looking for was where the body and landscape touch one another. I wanted to make visible this point – how the two bleed into each other. To evoke Benjamin here is to point towards the impossibility of my intention. Benjamin brings to light that points are not necessarily available and neither are they necessarily the most significant or revealing element of an idea or experience. This turned my attention away from the notion of capture or perfect expression and towards desire, intention and testing out various modes of expression. *See Figure 3*.

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[23] Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," *October* 12, Spring (1980): 69.
[24] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama,* 116.
[25] Ibid., 162, 176.

Figure 3



My expression will always fall short of the way I thought you up in early morning.

Although I have argued that the beginning or the origin is constantly deferred, the return of the look must be re-enacted. For our immediate purposes here, I mean that I will tell a chronological story in this section about "what happened", specifically on the fieldtrip to Serbia, which was undertaken for the purpose of collecting the audiovisual material for the installation. I could also say of this work that it is about the search for a beginning or a way to begin. The installation is made of the material that documents this search. This point ought to become clear when I address how initial "failures" spawned new approaches. The return of the look also references the audience and the nature of their engagement with the installation, a point I will discuss in detail when I consider the role of the audience in the installation.

I also want to briefly address the problem of tense. Do I speak here in the past or in the present? Any number of tenses might suffice, but where do I place myself in order to turn us towards the most critical view? The present perfect would mark the difficulty of fixing exact points and timeframes, as in: I have written the following story so that you might get a sense of the journey of the research. At what point this writing took place along this journey remains unfixed, an approach I would deem appropriate because the writing has happened at all stages of this process. This construction, however, takes on a completeness and finality that I do not think are appropriate to this work. The present perfect continuous would describe how the past is having an ongoing effect on the present, as in: I have been returning to Serbia ever since I left, returning sometimes figuratively and sometimes actually. This implies a return that has happened and continues to happen; this continuance resounds more truthfully with the nature of the work and experience, where I do not want to imply that an end -point was reached or that this exegesis will take us to that end -point.

It ought to become apparent how this is one of the trials of the research: finding and losing stable or fixed points and forms; and therefore the problem of tense is worth indulging. The difficulty of tense poses a practical problem for the writing at this stage, but I also simply want to evoke the problem of tense in

general for its thematic resonance across the research. To think of tense evokes the subject of memory, of the past playing into our sense of the present, of desire and its relationship to the past and the future. This interplay between pasts and futures is enacted in *Straying* with the intention of undoing spatial boundaries with the dissolution of temporal ones. To approach the question of body and landscape is to interrogate spatio-temporal relationships that constitute our sense of self and our sense of landscape.

I will designate the beginning to be an investigation into the relationship between body and place. I was explicitly interested in what an audiovisual practice might contribute to that investigation. I desired to make an auditory and visible manifestation of this relationship. I wanted to make pictures and sounds, contain them in a frame. My early contentions were that these internal and external spaces of bodies and places together constitute our sense of place, our sense of self.[26]

Filmmaker Agnès Varda claims that 'if you really look into people, you find landscapes there too.'[27] Varda says if we opened her up we would find beaches. Varda uses 'landscape' to designate not only a spatial dimension, but also a temporal one; history and memory are often important aspects which make up Varda's 'landscapes'. For Varda it is about accessing feeling and emotion, accessing the past as opposed to, or only, accessing a place – it always includes a temporal dimension.[28] This term is similarly flexible in my usage, where "landscape" is not only a designation for the natural environment but also refers

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[26] A note on the usage of terms. While I recognise the importance of making a distinction between "place" and "space", and that this distinction has important philosophical and historical implications and trajectories (see Casey, Edward S. *The Fate of Place*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997.); I do not make a strong demarcation between the two in this work. I take it that "space" always has the potential to become "place" as the individual begins to inscribe it thus, i.e. to inscribe it with a specific relationship to it. I privilege the use of "body" over "self" because I wish to de-emphasise psychological or psychoanalytic approaches to the material. I equally want to emphasise that the "self", or our sense of "identity", constitutes itself through movement: as a body moving through space. This is to begin to connect the body to the environment in a way that implies a mutual constitution and begins to see the "self" and "place" as inexorably connected.
[27] Agnès Varda, "The Beaches of Agnès" 110mins. France, 2008.
[28] Certainly in the theory and philosophy of place the temporal is also always inextricably bound to the discussion of the spatial.

to built environments, urban landscapes.[29] I use "landscape" in terms of: landscapes of the body, of the environment, of our desires, dreams and nightmares. From this standpoint I can then speak about the body of landscapes, the body of the environment, the body of desires and dreams. In this usage, landscape and body are brought so close together that we begin to consider their complicity.

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[29] This is not a newfound flexibility for the term, I am instead taking advantage of the rich history of contention over what 'landscape' actually designates: a subjective, political, geographical and/or framed space? See Kenneth R. Olwig, "Recovering the Substantive Nature of Landscape", in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, no. 4 (1996): 630-653. I appreciate the difference between the terms place, space, and landscape, and use landscape here because it implies a space that is somewhat bordered. In this case by skin and/or by frame.

As mentioned earlier, the fieldtrip took place in Serbia. I was explicitly interested in how an audiovisual practice might offer expression of the dynamic between body and place, and less interested in explicitly interrogating how political, historical or geographic tensions mark this relationship in Serbia specifically. Of course, these aspects do mark the relationship, and particularly for the territories across ex-Yugoslavia, where the long history of contestation over territory and ethnicity has made the question of belonging to nation and place a prescient one for its peoples. My intention was to conduct my research in a place where these topics had currency, while not directly interrogating the histories that have given the topics such agency. In order to capitalise on this "currency" and in order to conduct what my idea of "proper research" was (the approach towards the discovery of something as yet unknown), I intended to conduct the research through making a documentary.[30]

According to poet Adrienne Rich: the body is the geography closest in.[31] One always departs from oneself. An idea catches because there is already something of it present inside you. A key factor in my choice to partly conduct this research in Serbia is that I was born there (I came to Australia as a child). Serbia was the place where I could most connect to the ideas around the relationship between the body and landscape. I had to start from the self, from what I already knew. But this was only a way to begin, a departure point. My intention was never to make my own history and experience the subject of the work. I did not want to make an explicitly autobiographical or personal work. I

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[30] I will discuss this idea of documentary in greater detail in the Hinge section of this exegesis. For now I simply want to detail in fairly broad-brush strokes "what happened", to establish a point of reference for later discussions.

[31] Adrienne Rich, "Notes Towards a Politics of Location," in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: a reader*, ed. Sara Mills and Reina Lewis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 30.

had attached the idea of autobiography to the idea of 'decanting' the self.[32] Maintaining that my personal connection to and history with Serbia would remain invisible, I wanted to approach the subject of the research from an observational documentary approach, which meant staying very close to the subject of the film, and as far as possible from the filmmaker herself.[33] I was interested in inner landscapes – but not my own, not as the subject of the research. I wanted to find ways I could access interiorities that I suspected communed in some way with exterior landscapes – a communion that was invisible, but that, with the help of audiovisual representations, I would reveal.

My intention was to find a way to approach these boundaries between the internal and the external so that I might gain access to that very boundary between self and place. I would use the poem as artefact in this aim. The use of poetry as a tool for achieving these ambitions was born of a double intention and assumption. My proposition was that to recite poetry that lived in the memory of the interview subject would reveal a certain intimate or "inner" dimension. Poetry would access these inner landscapes and coax them to the surface, making them available for capture by the camera.[34] This part was based on the second premise about the relationship between poetry and the moving image.

The assumption that poetry lives in some deep recesses of our being and hence can disclose our inner landscapes is one that I can pin to my own experience of growing up in the early 1980s in a small town near the capital of a country still called Yugoslavia. National festivals were celebrated with children and schools participating in all proceedings. Public recitation of poetry was

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[32] This is poet Louise Glück's phrase for the worst kind of recruitment of the self in autobiographical writing. Louise Glück, *Proofs and Theories* (New Jersey: Harper Collins, 1994), 35. I return to this question of autobiography in the Hinge part of the exegesis.
[33] I was taking my definition of observational documentary from Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz, *Observational Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. This choice was also based on an ethics of approach connected to the potentially sensitive nature of the topic given the site of the research. I elaborate this in the Hinge section.
[34] I was thinking here of Hedy Honigmann's film *Crazy* (1999). She records UN peacekeepers listening to music that they listened to during their missions. The music seems to trigger the experiences and memories and bring them to the surface of the interviewees' faces. The sequences are deeply moving, and appear revealing and honest because the interview subject themselves is so deeply moved by the music.

always part of my own contribution and even proud duty at these events.[35] I

learned and recited poetry from kindergarten through to primary school. I recited

poetry for radio, for school plays, for children's impromptu concerts prepared for

the children in the neighbourhood, alongside games of forty-forty or elastics. For

this reason, I had carried a belief that all people had poetry at least in some

reaches of their memory. Of course my own experience was unique in that I was

part of the last generation born in Yugoslavia. My parents were the last

generation of adults to go through that particular education system that stressed

the Serbo-Croatian literary tradition. We are also uniquely placed in that we left

the country in 1988, before the breakup of Yugoslavia, so that our experiences

and memories have remained within the customs. We did not evolve with the

new system, form new attitudes, forget old ones.[36]

Cinema and poetry have had a long association or, rather more

specifically, the concept of the 'poetic'. For Dziga Vertov this meant that, like

poetry, the kino-eye 'sees that which the eye does not see;'[37] both poetry and

cinema see with an eye that penetrates beyond what is otherwise visible, it

reveals the hidden. For Deren this "hidden" is the emotional register of a moment

or character. For Deren 'poetry (is) concerned, in a sense, not with what is

occurring but with what it feels like.'[38] Structure is at the centre of Deren's

conceptualisation of how poetry works in the cinema, which 'lends itself

particularly to the poetic statement, because it is essentially a montage and,

therefore, seems by its very nature to be a poetic medium.'[39] This, for Deren, is

essentially a question of time and the nature of its unfolding. Her designation for

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[35] A further investigation into the circumstances surrounding this practice (of poetry recitation at national festivals) which consequently had such a formative influence on the construction of my own ideas about this nation, its people and history – how poetry is connected to, or formative of, these ideas – would certainly yield interesting findings, but is unfortunately beyond the scope of this research.

[36] My notion of this nation was rooted to that particular time and experience (and influenced by my consequent distance from it).

[37] Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov* (California: University of California Press, 1984), 180.

[38] Maya Deren, "Poetry and the Film: a symposium," in *Film Culture*: An Anthology, ed. Sitney, P. Adams (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971), 174.

[39] Ibid., 179

a poetic structure is 'vertical time', and for linear narrative 'horizontal time'.[40] The 'vertical' structure of time, for Deren, is a particular 'approach to experience.'[41] The objective is to 'create visible or auditory forms for something that is invisible, which is the feeling, or the emotion, or the metaphysical content of the moment.'[42]

Filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky has also written extensively about poetic cinema, which for him is about 'examining life beneath the surface'[43] and approaching life's 'deep complexity and truth.'[44] Although Tarkovsky does use poems as literary artefacts in his cinema, he also claims that he does not speak of poetry as genre but as 'an awareness of the world, a particular way of relating to reality. So poetry becomes a philosophy.'[45] This philosophy and deep complexity in Tarkovsky's cinema often reveals itself to be about the connectedness between things: time-spaces, spiritual and physical worlds. Formally and thematically, these philosophies often manifest in Tarkovsky's films with a breakdown in boundaries between internal and external environments, and between the present and the past. Natural elements literally invade internal spaces of homes and memories violate the present.[46] In these sequences, what we gain access to is a deeply subjective emotional register; we come close to the internal state of characters, the hidden dimension.

Vertov was a documentarist, but also considered himself a poet. Writing in his diary in 1934, he says that he was a 'newsreel poet' during his early

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[40] This of course places poetry and narrative at somewhat opposite ends of a spectrum; I do not adopt this position. I think this may be a problem of Deren's nomenclature, rather than an expression of a separation she intends either. There is such a thing as the narrative poem, or non-fiction poetry, for example.
[41] Deren, "Poetry and the Film", 173. An example in Deren's films is the repetitive nature of her work. We visit and re-visit certain moments in her films, probing them further, interrogating their significance and their evolving relationships to other moments in the film.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 21.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid. Poetry as literary artefact that is recited does of course frequently appear in Tarkovsky's films, but this is not what designates a poetic cinema.
[46] For example in his film *Nostalghia* (1983), Domenico's house has been reclaimed by the earth, it is as a ruin – reclaimed by history, and memory.

filmmaking practice.[47] Deren was an experimental filmmaker and Tarkovsky is generally taken to be a fiction filmmaker. However, his film *Mirror* (1975), is based on his childhood memories, in which he inserts newsreel footage into his predominantly scripted and performed scenes, which include Tarkovsky's father, Arseny Tarkovsky, reading his own poetry.[48] I too was interested in the poetic and the documentary in documenting a revelation of the hidden, the emotional register of how my interview subjects related to the environments they inhabited. I did not want to explicitly plan a poetic structure; this to me seemed antithetical to the documentary approach. But by using the poetic literary artefact, I was hoping to discover a structure through the experience of making that would meet the documentary and poetic intentions.

My plan was to ask my interview subjects to recite the poetry that lived in their memory while I recorded them in their habitual dwelling places. I would pay attention to and record the quality of their movement through these places: their homes, their gardens, places they habitually occupied. I was looking for a certain quality that might be revealed in this attention to movement of the body. I was heeding Deren's advice: 'we are not so much concerned with who he is as with how he moves'[49]. I take Deren's meaning to be that 'who he is' is only cinematographically knowable through 'how he moves'. I wanted to pay attention to the movement of the body in the landscape so that the relationship between the visual and the audio fields might open up a passage between the internal and external landscapes. To this end, what is knowable and accessible of 'who he is' might be expanded through attention to the movement of thought and body.

I started the fieldtrip in Serbia in February 2011. I bought a car and set off on my own around the country. I drove without a strong sense of destination. I

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[47] Vertov, *Kino-Eye*, 45.
[48] Tarkovsky claims that the newsreel footage raises the film 'above the level of lyrical memoir'. Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 129.
[49] Deren, "Film in Progress," 111. Deren here is speaking about one of the dancers in her film *A Study in Choreography for Camera* (1945)

stopped on mere intuition, deciding to spend a night or two in this or that town or village. I conducted interviews with anyone who would give me their permission. The interviews happened on park benches, in people's homes, at restaurants, by the side of the road. I covered 5000 kilometres, driving on the opposite side of the road to that which I was used to, on very bad roads with holes like craters and a navigation instrument which had not been updated since 2007, while dragging heavy and expensive video recording equipment around. I speak Serbian, but it took time to feel comfortable in it after a long absence. I was producer, director, camera operator, sound recordist, interviewer, production manager. The fact that I was a woman travelling alone also marked what kind of access I had. I soon discovered that I was out of my depth. I had expected that it would be a challenge, but I had had no idea of its scale. I situate the experience for you in this way because the details of these realities, the logistical factors, determined how the fieldtrip unfolded and, therefore, the shape of the work. Not only have I explicitly and deliberately written some of these details into the work, but I think much of this remains inextricably scored into it. The unexpected influence these factors exerted partly caused the "autobiographical turn" the work underwent, which I will address a little later. *See Figure 4.*

Figure 4





I heard about an island in the middle of a wide span in the river.

I went out looking for it.

I must have followed the wrong one of the two sleeves.

When I broached the topic of poetry with my interview subjects, there was always an uncomfortable pause, a shrug, a shake of the head. People did not remember any poetry. It was at this point that I realised my entire proposal was based only on my own experience and memory of this place. I had to very quickly relinquish the notion that the recitation of poetry would provide me with any insight into 'who he or she is'. I modified my approach to the interviews and started asking the interview subjects to describe the places they lived, and their desires and dreams of past or future homes. People knew very well how to "behave" for the camera. I got "official" answers, stories told in a way that I imagine the interview subject would have expected to see and hear on the local television station: reportage on the history of the region, complete with folksy flute tunes and picture dissolves from the mountain range into the river. I was certainly not accessing the "subterranean" dimension of sentiment or experience and found myself recording only anecdotes, facts, information, what sat on the surface, what was already available.

What I present here as failures did also yield discoveries. I realised how anthropological my proposition was. The design of my approach pulled towards a social-scientific methodology that is about the collection of "data". Data was not what I was interested in, because the drawing up of conclusions was also not my goal. I was interested in qualities, in relationships and dynamics. But the relationship between my notion of documentary, or truth, and my formal, aesthetic and poetic interests did not find complicity. There are a number of reasons for this, some partly to do with my lack of experience in conducting interviews; other reasons were more practical, about the physical constraints I

was working under.[50] One of the things that this experience facilitated was a space where I could connect theoretical and practical experience and knowledge. I had not, previous to this experience, had that opportunity. Now that I look back on it, the failure was always destined to occur. The theoretical material I was reading always had to find an instance of practice on which to be exercised. This was that moment and no amount of theoretical preparation would have influenced a more "successful" experience. The real interaction between the theoretical and practical, where both illuminated aspects of the other, happed quite some time after the fieldtrip, and it was at that moment of engagement that this failed and fraught fieldtrip instigated the next phase of the research which led to further discovery. I will return to this in the Passage part of this exegesis.

To go back to Serbia: the interviews did not yield "confessions" or unmediated responses. The poem was not a simple gateway into the private, most personal and emotional world of the interviewee. And the image was not incontestable evidence of the nature of how this body related to the place it inhabited. The documentary and the poem failed: I had mistaken documentary for the visible or for evidence, I had mistaken the interview for the confession and hence the "truth".[51] *See Figure 5.*

I continued shooting interviews and watching them back each night, hoping to learn from them, looking for a moment that would propel me onwards

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[50] I can now recognise the difficulty of playing all the roles of interviewer, sound recordist, videographer, production manager, director, and first-time guest and stranger in people's homes. The kind of project I had in mind would require that I establish a relationship with the interview subject before filming, and before any meaningful exchange could happen. But my idea of documentary then, was "immediacy". This partly stemmed from my dedication to the observational mode of recording (I elaborate on this in Passage). At the time, I took the observational mode as one that promotes an immediacy in the approach to recording.

[51] See Elizabeth Cowie on the development of the idea of seeing as knowledge, in "The Spectacle of Actuality," in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, ed. Jane M Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 19-45. Also see Michael Renov on how 'truth is co-implicated with speech' in *Theorizing Documentary* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 7. And see Michel Foucault on how 'the confession became one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing "truth" in *History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 60.

the following day. You might say I was looking for the work in the work: shooting, reviewing, shooting, reviewing. At this stage I was no longer certain of what I was looking for and remained open to the possibility that another subject for this investigation might simply emerge or that I might "stumble" across it.

Figure 5

If I knew what you would become, I would have paid you a different kind of attention.

I was concurrently having another kind of experience that I thought was unconnected to the PhD research project. I explored every new town I arrived in by wandering in the early mornings and taking footage of the empty streets, just getting to know the place. I did not interrogate this practice or these impulses. It was like I was having a double experience, the "official" one and the private one; I did not see a relationship between them. These new or other obsessions were empty spaces, statues, non-human faces, single figures in the landscape. I was drawn to filming "empty" or depopulated places where one might expect bodies to be. The basketball courts and football fields I was filming had a sense of the absent body. I liked filming facades, with the expectation that someone might come to the window and close it or draw the curtain. I was interested in things that had the potential to move and expected to see this happen.

Eventually these snippets of footage of unrelated objects seemed to me to start to exchange their "values". I was watching facades as if they were trees or bodies. The human body became potently absent from the frame or rather, I framed the human figure out. There was a strong feeling of emptiness and absence, of desertion of unfulfilled possibility. But what I seemed to actually be searching, or yearning, for was body, flesh, movement, breath. The exchange seemed to be one of desire and refusal: I persistently had the experience of alienation, the refusal of the landscape to be colonised by a well-composed frame.[52] I felt I was skimming the surface of the moment and of the place. Rather than thematising this difficulty, I saw it as a limitation to the work which I was trying to overcome. I continued to collect stories and footage, and continued to move across the country although I no longer knew to what end. I was not certain that I was staying close to my initial questions. I did not know what it was exactly I was researching.

The fieldtrip to Serbia lasted four and half months. I returned to Melbourne with a bagful of footage to start the editing process. But I was unsure

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[52] Brad Prager says of Werner Herzog's depictions of landscapes: he 'wants his landscapes to talk back to us and to the figures that populate them, yet from his point of view they have nothing to express but their wholesale indifference.' *The Cinema of Werner Herzog: aesthetic ecstasy and truth* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007),14.

what exactly I was editing. I did not have an image of what this artefact might look like or even be "about". I did not feel I was coming back with a project but simply with fragments testifying to my failures. I mean that I felt as if I had not captured any particular knowledge or insights on camera, in the frame. I did not feel I had answered any of my initial questions around the conciliation of the body and landscape. I had not seen any internal or external landscapes "touching". I cut together the interviews I had conducted but these did not achieve the kind of poetic expression I had worked towards, one that was revealing of "deeper truths", an expression that inspired thinking beyond conclusions, beyond facts or information.

I had branded as a failure my own inability to capture the quality of relationship between body and place. I was looking for representations that were clear and ordered, that spoke eloquently and made sense. I did not find this in the footage I had collected. My engagement with Marks' study on intercultural cinema helped me see the positive value in this apparent inadequacy of my footage.[53] My experience started to speak to me of displacement and dislocation as opposed to the more idealised perspective I was searching for about the co-constitution of body and place. It was at this point that the fact of having conducted this fieldtrip in Serbia started to take on a significance I recognised. My practice as an artist/researcher had taken place in an intercultural space. This shift in focus brought with it problems for which I had to find formal resolutions.

Marks identifies the genre as one that necessarily must reach towards expression of that which is outside the 'seeable and sayable'. Marks adopts this expression from Foucault,[54] and Deleuze after him,[55] to articulate the way in which the representation of experience is always bound by discursive practices of the seeable and sayable. The two cannot be reduced into one and the same but rather confront each other as 'two incommensurable forms of truth'.[56] Marks identifies the gap between the two truths as the space of the intercultural film, where 'to read/hear the image, then, is to look/listen not for what is there but for the gaps … to look for what might be in the face of what is not'.[57] The diasporic experience hinges on 'violent disjunctions in space and time' where places, memories and people are unavailable for representation.[58] Intercultural films have

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[53] Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film*. London: Duke University Press, 2000.
[54] See Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things*. London: Routledge, 2005.
[55] See Deleuze, Gilles. *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988.
[56] Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, 30.
[57] Ibid., 31.

[58] Ibid., 1.

to go beyond what can be shown in clear images or spoken directly and find a new language. This new language, according to Marks, exists in the other sensual registers and it is towards these registers that the intercultural films appeal. In particular, Marks is interested in the sense of touch and how diasporic films turn to a 'haptic visuality,'[59] a seeing close to touching, in order to find expression. We must turn to sensory experiences of place because they are otherwise not available, they are silent and absent, because to the diaspora they exist only in the realm of memory. We must turn to the 'knowledges of the body'[60] in order to find expression of them in an audiovisual mode. To express these 'silent registers',[61] Marks claims, the projection screen starts to become like skin. The audience is moved to touch the image with their eyes: it evokes a physical, sensory response.

Marks identifies some formal features common in intercultural films. These include images that are hard to read and are faded or grainy; the films are often 'marked by silence, absence, and hesitation'.[62] Reflecting now, I can see that these formal features are what I initially saw as limitations in my own work. But to approach these limitations, to show them as such, is exactly the work of the intercultural film: to show the limit of what is representable in the audiovisual work, to make an appeal 'to the limits of naming and the limits of understanding.'[63] In order to interrogate how these ideas related to the footage I had taken, and to my experience of the fieldtrip, I used some of these elements to form the narrative frame, so that I could interrogate these notions in the actual work.

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[59] Ibid., 2. Marks describes haptic visuality as a 'caressing gaze', Ibid., 6. For a detailed history on the use of the term 'haptic' in relation to vision – from art historian Alois Riegl's use at the turn of the twentieth century, to Noel Burch's use in the first instance in relation to cinema – see Laura U Marks, *Touch: sensuous theory and multisensory media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 4-8.
[60] Ibid., 5.
[61] Ibid., 5.
[62] Ibid., 21.
[63] Ibid., 21.

Marks' phenomenological approach (way of making, writing and thinking, not just theorising) helped me make the shift away from questions of representation, towards not only a phenomenological but also an ontological approach to the image. I will address both of these aspects in greater detail in Space and Flesh. *See Figure 6.*

Figure 6



If I could reach out, touch this screen, I think it would feel like touching my own skin.

# ASPECT

Having offered a preliminary outline of the trajectory of the first part of the research – the fieldtrip – I would now like to address my approach to this exegetical writing. This is a subject worth addressing because I have intended to create a dynamic between *Straying* and *Casting* that works to access dimensions of each that would otherwise be inaccessible or remain obscured. This course works to offer various levels of embeddedness, various orientations or entry points into the research. To introduce this, I would like to dwell a while on the word aspect. Aspect can relate to a feature, a direction, the appearance of something or someone, or to time in grammar.[64] All of these applications for the word aspect illuminate a quality appropriate to the dynamics to be found within this exegesis and in its relationship to *Straying*.

To think of aspect in terms of a "feature" is to consider a particular characteristic of an object or an idea. To say that this exegesis offers some possible aspects to consider is to say that I will highlight some features of *Straying* so that we can interrogate them in greater detail in order to clarify an idea or underscore a conceptual point. The second usage of the word is in relation to direction. This can either be in terms of the direction a building or a window faces[65] or the view from that building, its outlook.[66]

We might think of this in terms of exposure, which can designate both the way it is exposed to its environment or what view is exposed from that vantage point. This has literal, abstract and metaphoric significance not only for how the exegesis and artwork relate to one another, but also for some of the narrative themes to be found in *Straying*. *See Figure 7.*

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[64] *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 8th ed., "Aspect."
[65] *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2nd ed., "Aspect."
[66] *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 8th ed., "Aspect."

With the exegesis I aim to offer up various aspects from which you might view the installation. I will also position the installation in relation to various theoretical material, so that what we see, and how we see it, may change. This usage implies not features, but rather ways of looking and standing in relation to the work that might enable seeing various angles.

We say an aspect is the appearance of a thing: the look of it, its air, its condition or quality, maybe its expression or countenance, its demeanour. This is used especially 'as represented to the mind of the viewer.'[67] We come to a privileging of the subjective experience of the appearance of things, what the viewer sees. As my definition of "aspect" here evolves, an appropriate affinity is drawn between buildings, windows and faces; their expressions, outlooks and perspectives. The resonance of this will become clearer in my discussion of the subject matter in the moving images. For now, I simply want to draw on the importance of the subjective experience.

Grammatical aspect qualifies the temporal dimensions of verbs: whether an action is complete or continuous.[68] It tells us not when in time something happened (which is the task of tense) but rather how it happened and what relation it has to the flow of time; it tells us whether the action is completed or still has bearing on the present moment. This dynamic plays out across the

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[67] Tom McArthur and Thomas Burns, *Concise Oxford Companion to English Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 76.
[68] The "aspect" can be perfect or imperfect (also called progressive, continuous or durative). The perfect designates an action that started and finished in the past, the imperfect designates an action that started in the past and continues into the present. Pam Peters, *The Cambridge Guide to English Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 50.

Figure 7





It's a matter of perspective.

And distance.

exegesis as I move back and forth through different stages of the research, and as I connect various processes and what bearing they had on both *Straying* and in the writing of *Casting*. The actions and processes I detail are complete in one temporal sense, however: their impact continues as I re-visit these processes in the present writing.

Aspect is a productive word to call to mind because relationality is one of the features it describes: action in relation of the flow of time, perspective in relation to the object observed or the relation between two gazes. These relationships are articulated not only in terms of the exegesis and artwork; but also in terms of the relationship between the image and the voice in *Straying* and between the audience/reader of *Casting* and *Straying.* The audience in the installation forms and un-forms physical, conceptual and metaphoric aspects in relation to the work.

Aspect can address both temporal and spatial relationships and to this end, it articulates how the audience might experience time and place due to aspectual disturbances. Where in the room an audience member finds themselves (particularly in terms of the relationships they form physically in relation to the screens and other people in the room) might be disturbed or transformed by the temporal shifts that the Voice articulates in voice-over. This in turn may shift their perspective, the way they look at the image, or the relationship they (re)form to the temporal space that the Voice (re)creates. These shifts and transformations in time and in space may lead to a feeling of dislocation, a loss of bearings.

The experience of being in the installation may lead to a transformed sense of time and space for the audience. This "transformation" might engender something like Barthes' "pregnant moment".[69] For Barthes, the pregnant

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[69] The expression first appeared in relation to the static arts and their ability to capture the moment before a climax or completion of an action that it depicts. For Lessing this gives the spectator room for the 'free play of the imagination', it offers up the experience with the work of art to be had and re-had, the spectator always adding to the artwork, 'completing' the moment. G. E. Lessing, *Laocoön* (Letchworth: J. M. Dent and Sons 1970), 14.

moment has implications for the flow of time.[70] It is a moment when the present, past, and future find expression in a single moment: 'the pregnant moment is just this presence of all the absences (memories, lessons, promises)'.[71] A hiatus or suspension in the flow of time breaks its linear progression. In this hiatus our experience of space is transfigured by the 'presence of all the absences'. Gyorgy Ligeti's comment may also be germane here: 'music which seems to stand still and yet flows on'[72]. This certainly is an offering of a very different kind of aspect both temporally and spatially. This is like a spatial opening into a single moment of time. This is something like the way Deren conceives 'vertical time' in her poetic structure: stopping the linear flow of time so that we may dwell more deeply on one moment. Stopping the flow of time and dwelling in it implies that a dwelling space is enabled.

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[70] Barthes' study connects 'the tableaux' to the cinema of Eisenstein and the way it is made up of tableaux where 'all the burden of meaning bears on each scene, not on the whole … there is no final meaning.' Ilse Lafer, ed., *Behind the Fourth Wall* (Wien: Generali Foundation, 2010), 141.
[71] Ibid., 142.
[72] Bálint András Varga, *Three Questions for Sixty-Five Composers* (University of Rochester Press, 2011), 156.

I have already spoken about the way in which the images and words failed me in my initial attempts to make the documentary I set out to complete. I have also used Marks' reading of intercultural cinema to re-think this and re-conceive it as an expression of the unseeable and unsayable experience of displacement; of occupying an intercultural space. This begs the question: if *Casting* is to address *Straying*, a work that I claim is about the unsayable and unseeable, a work that is about the limits of naming, then how do I approach speaking and writing about it? If the installation offers up various aspects to the viewer, how might the exegesis reflect upon this material? What theoretical tools might I need to employ to speak about this structure of multiplicity that is not fixed but always evolving and offering up another perspective? The relationship between exegesis and artwork ought to be generative, as opposed to simply explicatory or illustrative. I think of both works as organisms that are open to change, to various ways of reading and experiencing. I want to maintain this "aliveness" rather than reduce it. To help us through this terrain, I will consider some of the features that this writing employs.

The question regarding these two aspects of a practice-based research project begs the question: where is the contribution to knowledge located? Is it in the artwork, or in the exegesis, or in their very relationship? What implications does this have for the form the exegesis ought to take? I will consider Gadamer's perspective on knowledge and art[73] and I will also consider how Benjamin's study of the task of the translator might help us think about the relationship between artwork and exegetical writing so that it might be generative.[74]

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[73] Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*
[74] Benjamin, *The Task of the Translator*

Firstly I will consider the image Barthes offers us for such a text that can work in this space of the indeterminate, the difficult to say or classify.[75] He calls this kind of text one of pleasure where there is always 'a margin of indecision … the paradigm will falter, the meaning will be precarious, revocable, reversible, the discourse incomplete'.[76] This kind of text 'brings to a crisis (a) relation with language'.[77] This is the very site of pleasure for Barthes, this very space of the in-between where speaking is difficult:

> is not the most erotic portion of the body where the garment gapes? … the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing … between two edges … it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance.[78]

I use Barthes to summon an energy to propel you forwards into the work, with an encouragement to take pleasure in the things that are difficult or impossible to translate. Barthes' image of Babel confirms that 'the confusion of the tongues is no longer a punishment, the subject gains access to bliss by the cohabitation of languages working side by side'.[79] And though this research is not only about a deliberate staging of the 'flash', a continual encounter with the 'gape' has been my experience of this research and herein must be found its pleasure.

This kind of text includes digressions; it invites the reader to 'drift' and to stray.[80] These features can be found in *Casting*. This is not a cosmetic appendage or an afterthought; this is what was discovered in the process of writing, in the process of attempting to find the right way to speak. I write in order to say the things that the words will always fail in saying fully or completely truly to experience and potentiality.

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[75] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*
[76] Ibid., 4.
[77] Ibid., 14.
[78] Ibid., 10.
[79] Ibid., 3-4.
[80] Ibid.

I have taken the approach that I must follow the path of thought and practice rather than the path of logic or a particular or singular framework (either contextual or theoretical). This has led to the inclusion of the personal, the theoretical, the quotidian and the abstract. The reason for this is that the research processes that were undertaken were emerging as explicitly connected to the discoveries that were being made and that to adopt a self-reflexive voice was my way of being able to include all of these processes and link them to the forms that have manifested.[81]

As is already evident, I have also used footnotes extensively. We can also borrow Barthes' image of the 'seam' here, the footnote that splinters the text and creates the cut.[82] He says 'the best pleasure' is the one that 'manages to make itself heard indirectly; if, reading it, I am led to look up often, to listen to something else'. [83] This implies that there is pleasure in getting a little lost, in the text encouraging a thinking beyond itself, a text that points off into multiple directions, away from itself. This diversion, this pointing to elsewhere, is precisely what the footnotes "perform". The figures are also used to both cut and connect – to divert your attention from one to the other (the text proper to the figure that stands in for a moment in *Straying*) so that you might come back and re-engage more deeply.

The footnotes and figures also serve something like Jacques Derrida's notion of 'the supplement.'[84] The supplement and the footnote simultaneously add and subtract. They point onwards beyond themselves to yet other images, thoughts and concepts, and they relate to the text proper by enriching it. They take us away from the text and embed us more deeply into it.

This 'act' or image means more to this work, however, than just how it relates to the footnotes. It encourages a pleasure in this double movement, a

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[81] I interrogate this in further in the Space section of this exegesis.
[82] The cut is the creation of the seam, or the gape that stages appearance-as-disappearance.
[83] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 24.

[84] See Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Delhi: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

work which simultaneously exposes lacks and aporias, and vouches for its completeness. I have worked to preserve these features in *Casting* because they articulate the shape of my experience throughout this research. The experience is indicative of the subject matter itself: the relationship of body and place is perhaps to be found somewhere in that 'gape'.

If I cannot articulate the experience exactly, then I might be able to offer up the experience to be had by the audience/reader. This is true of both of *Straying* and *Casting*. I will expand on this point throughout the following sections. For now: I intend to allow you plenty of space, dark corners for you to inhabit, to stray, to wander. *See Figure 8*.

Figure 8



I need the dark, for a while, please. Pure darkness, because the dark sits so close to the skin.

Gadamer's work on 'the relevance of the beautiful' in a work of art, where the
beautiful means knowledge,[85] helped me frame my own position on how we
think about the nature of the knowledge that is to be found in an artwork and, in
turn, how this relates to the exegetical writing. I will argue that the exegesis can
help illuminate some paths to be taken in the production of knowledge which
happens in the experience of *Straying*. What I mean when I say the *production* of
knowledge is that the knowledge is *made* in the contact between audience and
artwork.

I offer up no *object* of knowledge in either *Straying* or *Casting*. If I am not
offering up objects of knowledge, available as complete, like a statue able to be
held in the hand, every surface available for interrogation, every line followed to
its natural conclusion, then what form does my contribution take? At this point,
knowledge becomes not object but experience. The idea of knowledge as
experience evokes Beaumegarten's notion of 'sensuous knowledge',[86] of
Hegel's notion of art as the 'sensuous showing of the idea'.[87] The 'beautiful', in
Gadamer's definition, must be experienced. That experience brings us to a kind
of knowing, a knowing through the senses, a knowing that happens via the
body. How do we speak about this experience? How do we articulate the
knowledge that we have produced from contact with the artwork?

Gadamer would claim that we cannot. The beautiful is that which
belongs to the artwork alone and that which cannot be known in any way other
than in contact with the work itself.  The significance of the work of art cannot be

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[85] Gadamer's preference for the term 'beautiful' stems from the Greek roots where what
was beautiful was truth. After Hegel and Kant, Gadamer argues for the beautiful as
something that is not simply subjective. It is what Kant expresses with his 'I demand
everyone's agreement', whilst not being able to convince by argument. I return to this
idea and elaborate, shortly. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, 18.
[86] Ibid., 16.

appropriated 'for knowledge and understanding in all its meaning', the work of art is not a 'bearer of a message'.[88] The work is not a vessel for a particular idea, 'it resists pure conceptualisation'.[89] I would consider a 'pure' conceptualisation one that is divested of its sensuous dimensions, which would mean also that it was atemporal and aspatial. Temporality, spatiality and sensuality, then, are instrumental in accessing meaning in the artwork.

To further explicate this notion that meaning exists in the artwork alone, Gadamer uses the idea of 'play'. Art and play, he claims, are both 'self-representing'.[90] In play, the movement 'is not tied down to any goal';[91] as in a 'play of light' where there is nothing outside the beauty of that phenomenon, its beauty is not connected to anything outside of itself, it is not beautiful because it represents another thing. What constitutes play or what constitutes an artwork exists within the form itself, where the 'play is thus the self-representation of its own movement'.[92]

Play requires participants. The observer can be called participant, where they need to project themselves into the play so they can be part of 'playing along with'.[93] No meaning or intention exists outside of the work; the work is created at the moment that the audience member engages with, or projects themselves into, the artwork. Gadamer claims that in full participation play has the potential to transform its players. As the audience projects themselves into the artwork, they move beyond themselves, which opens up the potential for the audience to be transformed. The work of art moves the viewer towards new knowledge.

It is important to mark that, for Gadamer both the individual participant and the artwork must meet one another in the creation of this new experience or

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[87] Ibid., 33. My treatment of these ideas is cursory, at best, but I point to them here if only to demonstrate that the "knowledge as experience" reaches back to eighteenth-century western philosophy. I will return to this idea in a more meaningful way with the study of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in the Flesh part of this exegesis.
[88] Ibid., 33.
[89] Ibid., 37.
[90] Ibid., 22.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 23.

knowledge: 'we both elicit the image from things and imaginatively project the image into things in one and the same process'.[94] Our projections into the artwork are elicited by that artwork; we do not project any image whatsoever into it: it is rather 'only in the presence of the particular individual work that concepts 'come to reverberate'.[95]

This might suggest that our own projections can surprise us, might be images that have been dormant, outside our awareness or consciousness. This idea is developed after Kant, who instructively phrases this in terms of creativity: 'the concept functions as a kind of sounding board capable of articulating the free play of the imagination'.[96] This space of play and imagination is a foreign space inasmuch as it is a projection beyond oneself into another. Out there we might experience a loss of words, we may not have the language with which to speak about what we encounter or the transformation we experience. This is an experience 'for which we have to seek new words.'[97] This exegesis is part of the search for 'new words', a way of speaking "about" or "through" or "nearby" the artwork[98] in order to offer a deeper projection into it, to achieve a deeper or more nuanced embeddedness which results in a more visceral and a more vivid dialogue with it.

The task of the exegesis, then, cannot be to interpret the artwork and therefore to 'recuperate it in intellectual terms'.[99] It might, however, be able to

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 17-8.

[95] Ibid., 21.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., 83.

[98] I am referencing Trinh T. Min-ha here and her film *Reassemblage* (1982). In the film the voice-over says she will speak 'nearby' her subject. Trinh is negotiating the dynamic between filmmaker and subject and in particular the dynamic between coloniser and colonised. My "ethics of approach" was about negotiating this kind of power dynamic. The question is: whose voice is being heard when you speak "about" the other, as opposed to "nearby" the other? My role as researcher requires that I do not "colonise" the artwork by speaking about it. I would like to preserve the "voice" of the artwork whilst at the same time acknowledging that to speak of it is to change it or mediate it in some way. This concern manifested materially in *Straying* in the way I re-tell my interview subjects' stories, in the attempt to bring my voice and their voice close together, while never conflating them. I elaborate on how and why this came about in the Space part of this exegesis.

[99] Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, 37.

inspire a set of images – not only the artwork, but also the exegesis can be part of the creation of new images that are projected by the viewer onto the artwork. My task here then is not necessarily to present indisputable facts or to make sense of the work or to find the most convincing shape for the argument or experience. It is to provide a critical engagement with the work that aims to inspire images in the reader, which in turn will offer up further entry points into *Straying*. Part of my approach to this is to preserve in this exegesis the nature of the process of this research and the structure of *Straying*. The fractured nature of *Straying* and its multiplicity give rise to both absences and excesses. I have worked to preserve these features in *Casting* because fractures and excesses are inextricably part of the work and its significance.

I have intended with this discussion to orient us towards the notion of experience as knowledge/knowledge as experience. I have worked to create the conditions for engagement and experience in *Straying. Casting* works as part of this provocation. I would like to consider how this provocation might be something like the act of translation. To this end I would like to call on Benjamin's study of translation in order to consider that this is not always a reductive or literal process. The question what is the task of the exegesis? might be answered by way of answering another question: what is the task of the translator?

There are important distinctions to be made between Benjamin's study of translation, where he is referring specifically to translation of one linguistic text into another linguistic text, and my own question regarding the exegesis and the artwork. One of these distinctions is that in linguistic translation there is a first and a consequent text: the 'original' and the 'translation'. This pair, first and consequent, original and other, is unlike the relationship between exegesis and installation; the making of both has been an ongoing and simultaneous process. I ask us to suspend this difference for now to see what we might gain from the translation analogy.

For Benjamin, a translation that attempts to impart all of the information of the 'original' is sure to miss what is 'in addition to' the information.[100] What is 'in addition to' is unique to the 'original' language; it is what is 'unfathomable, the mysterious, the 'poetic'.[101] This 'mysteriousness' is the significance of the text. How then do I write about 'the significant' in the audiovisual installation in this other 'language' of the exegesis? Imparting the information is, in the end, meaningless or only part of the meaning; certainly, for Benjamin, it is not the 'poetic' dimension.[102]

What might be the use of translating or transposing or retelling? Benjamin claims that 'no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original.'[103] The second text needs to be its own text, as opposed to only imitating faithfully the original version. This is not to say that there should be no correspondence between the two texts. Benjamin calls the translation the 'afterlife' of the original text.[104] Again, 'afterlife' implies too much a linear

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[100] Benjamin, *The Task of the Translator*, 70.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Again we have Benjamin here referring to the 'poetic' dimension as the dimension that is profound and difficult to access.
[103] Ibid., 73.

[104] Ibid.

consequence, but it is nonetheless fruitful to think about the exegesis as a continuance – it is not the same as, it is not a replica, it is another life, another text, which has issued from elsewhere. The 'afterlife' implies a transformation, a change or 'renewal', and in this renewed form it is both connected to and separate from the 'other', first or original life. In any case the translation stands as a work in itself, with its own significance.

In Benjamin's construction, the idea of the first and consequent becomes decentralised too, because translation 'ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages', their 'kinship'.[105] We might then consider that the contribution a creative practice PhD offers is precisely the 'reciprocal relationship' between the artwork and the exegesis: the very fact of having two parts in different forms and finding a relationship between them. The 'renewal' happens to each language, or work, and is ongoing in its perpetual attempt at finding what Benjamin calls 'pure language'.[106]

'Pure language' for Benjamin is not achievable by any language alone, although it is the thing each language strives for in itself. In translation, two languages 'supplement' each other and approach 'pure language' together. There is a significance that remains hidden in every utterance. A complete, full or perfect expression is impossible in any language alone. However, in bringing an utterance into a relation with its translation, with another language, the two move together towards 'pure language'. We get a glimpse of what was previously hidden, not a full revelation, but in any case we might see something in excess of what either language could speak on its own. Languages supplement one another in a way that makes them more full, a little more complete, moving toward that which is mysterious in each. What I describe here, after Benjamin, is

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[105] Ibid., 72. Recall Foucault's notion of 'kinship' between language and the world, a primordial condition now lost to us. See note 11 above.

[106] 'All supra historical kinship of languages rests in the intention underlying each language as a whole – an intention, however, which no single language can attain by itself but which is realised only by the totality of their intentions supplementing each other: pure language.' Ibid., 74.

an idealised state, not a permanent or complete or entirely achievable position. It articulates an intention, it 'points the way to this region',[107] the passage towards the hidden.

We might think of the exegesis and the installation elevating each other towards this idealised expression, supplementing one another, allowing each to speak more fully than they are able to on their own. It is precisely their relation, their shared intention, that allows this approach (although perhaps never truly fulfilled) towards complete or pure expression. This space is 'beyond transmittal of subject matter. This nucleus is best defined as the element that does not lend itself to translation'[108] or you might call this the untranslatable, or the impossible.

If we think of translation as a mode of its own, as Benjamin does, then the task of the translator is different to the task of the poet. For Benjamin, because the translation comes second, the translator's task is to find the echo of the original in their own work. The poet stands inside the 'language forest' and attends to the detail of 'specific linguistic contextual aspects'[109] whereas the translator stands outside this forest and tries to find the echo of the original in their own text, in a kind of 'totality'.[110] The practitioner/researcher in a practice-based PhD is at some times a poet and other times a translator; echoes are to be found across both texts. The practitioner/researcher stands inside the 'language forest', and at its edge the call is made into it and from within it. The movement from one to the other might be elucidating, just as the movement from attention to the specific, to the spontaneous and to the ideational.[111] I might suggest that in this scenario the practitioner/researcher might have to listen to the echo with their poetic ear both inside and outside the 'forest'. I would call the echo a chime then.[112]

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[107] Ibid., 75
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid., 76
[110] 'The intention of the poet is spontaneous, primary, graphic; that of the translator is derivative, ultimate, ideational'. Ibid.
[111] This is in reference to note 110 above.
[112] Recall Robert Bly on chiming in poetry. See note 8 above.

Benjamin recalls Mallarme's thesis on the multiplicity of languages, which speaks of the impossibility of any single truth or its utterance:

the imperfection of languages consists in their plurality … the diversity of idioms on earth prevents everybody from uttering the words which otherwise, at one single stroke, would materialise as truth.[113]

Mallarme is saying that 'truth' evades because of the 'imperfection' that yields multiplicity and a multiplicity that yields an imperfection.[114] Benjamin says that 'in all language and linguistic creations there remains in addition to what can be conveyed something that cannot be communicated'.[115] If I continue the parallel between translation and the present research project, I would claim that 'imperfection' is true of both the exegesis and installation. I claim that there is something outside of what can be communicated in each, that neither approaches "truth" and so together they create a multiplicity of possibilities. But think of it in a more positive light: there is no single truth or version to communicate; somewhere between the multiple versions, somewhere between the multiple voices and utterances, is where this 'excess' falls. The space of the excess is the space that the reader/audience occupies.

Benjamin says it is the task of the translator not only to illuminate what is dormant in the original but also to 'break through the decayed barriers of his own language' to illuminate a little more of what has remained hidden.[116] This is surely the task of the practitioner/researcher also: to break through established boundaries within which we practice, how we speak about the practice. This happens precisely when we allow one form to influence the other. The practitioner/researcher must allow their practice to be 'powerfully affected' by their exegetical writing, and the writing must 'expand and deepen' the

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[113] Benjamin, *The Task of the Translator*, 77.
[114] I like to also think of it the other way: that multiplicity reveals an imperfection that resonates on a more "true" level.
[115] Benjamin, *The Task of the Translator*, 79.
[116] Ibid.

practice.[117] This is a 'transformation', a movement towards making visible what was previously invisible.

What I have been describing here is the quality and nature of the relation between two texts. For this particular research project, this also places the audience/reader in the role of translator. The audience/reader negotiates this relationship, not only between the exegesis and the installation but within the installation itself. The audience member listens for the echo between one image and another, between one utterance and an image. For the audience, in this kind of set up, the translation is somewhat enacted, the body of the audience dictates the relations as it perambulates around the space. Translation, then, becomes like a dance, through movement accessing deeper meaning, deeper knowledge. It is towards this region that we stray. *See Figure 9.*

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[117] Ibid., 81.

Figure 9







I have strayed from the text.

# PASSAGE

We come now to the formal construction of *Straying* and the theoretical concerns that guided this making. What brings together the various parts of this section is a sense of movement, of what I can literally and metaphorically call geographies, landscapes and transitive states. This movement through geographies of the body, landscapes of sound and image, is an expression of longing for transformation, a transitive state for the body, and possibly place.

This section will look at the range of paths – literal, theoretical and metaphorical – that were dreamt -up, found, formed and taken. This research project has been indelibly marked by the passages that opened up and the ones that led to dead-ends; both were transformative. An unplanned trajectory was an intention that I formed very early in this process. What this means exactly, how much exactly one can leave unplanned and how much one needs to confirm the paths they will travel, has been an area of discovery for me and my practice during this research. How much can one really commit to straying when outcomes and conclusions necessarily have to take some form at some determined end, or at least what will have to be chosen to stand in for an end?

Alienation from certain paths, from memories and landscapes, are equally our subject. For this reason, I will look at theoretical material that is significant because it was abandoned and likewise at plans for the project that were discarded or that failed. I will make room for fields that are mostly absent from *Straying* but mark it nonetheless: scholarship on place-making; the treatment of the body-in-landscape in cinema; and Eisenstein's concept of nonindifferent nature. These fields were equally as formative as the theoretical material that became so plaited into the fabric of the research that it forms both the narrative arc and its theoretical underpinning. This is to say that I worked

through some theoretical concerns by plaiting them into the narrative and thereby working to resolve or understand them in practice.

Chronologically, we are going back to the very beginning in this section – the point at which I was readying myself for the fieldtrip to Serbia to collect footage for what was, at the time, conceived as a single-screen documentary work.

The movements made and generated in the production of this work might be considered 'non-goal oriented'.[118] This project is both practice-led research and research-led practice:[119] the research and the practice led this work simultaneously, the two evolving conterminously. There are names and models for research that generally takes this course. One model could be what Terence Rosenberg calls 'poetic research'.[120] I might call it 'process-driven research' where there is no particular starting point in mind and no preconceived end.[121] Such an approach can be directed towards emergence, that is, the generation of ideas which were unforeseen at the beginning of the project.[122]

The methodologies which I have named, above, and there are many others, are attempts at finding alternatives to the more traditional social-scientific methodologies that are not always conducive to research that includes creative practice. Generally speaking, these alternatives to goal-oriented approaches focus on process-driven research. I would venture to say that every research project includes aspects of both goal-oriented and process-driven approaches at different stages, but may favour one more than the other.

It would not be inaccurate to speak of this research in the image of any of these models and yet I resist choosing one over another. These models, if at

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[118] Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 23.
[119] This distinction is made by Linda Candy, *Practice-based Research: A Guide, Creativity and Cognition Studios Report* 1006-V1.0, Sydney Creativity and Cognition Studios, University of Technology. This is a useful distinction to make, however, it is not a distinction I could vouch for in this work where both practices are fundamental to it.
[120] Rosenberg's term attempts to give validity to the 'imaginative hunch' in the process of researching, which, according to him, is often 'considered in subjugation to rigorous method'. He calls the 'movement' of this research 'centrifugal', the 'movement is counter to the process of grounding', the 'impulse is not towards certainty but to escape from it. It pulls out in different directions … the centrifugal is relational.' Terence Rosenberg, "The Reservoir Towards a Poetic Model of Research in Design" (working papers in art and design 1, 2000).
[121] Smith and Dean, *Practice-Led Research*, *Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts* 23.

[122] Ibid.

all useful, are only useful in hindsight, in as much as they are a short -hand for the type of research done or perhaps only in so much as they might validate the process. But I am not in the business of constructing taxonomies or making equivalencies. I am in the business of offering up what I think is most true to the philosophy of the approach, most evocative of the experience, more generative of further investigations outside of what I can set down in these pages.

Rather than thinking in terms of already defined methodologies, I thought in terms of following "imperatives". These emerged as a result of a number of other convictions to do with what "research" meant, with an ethics of approach and an ambition to avoid pushing 'thought along well-worn grooves.'[123]

In aid of this, one of the central tenets of the research was to proceed in order to lose your way. I was most optimistic when I took this advice to heart and assumed that to proceed in this way would necessarily lead me to encounter previously unfamiliar places. This in turn, I thought, must be an encounter and contribution to new knowledge. I had not considered the possibility of simply losing my way and not encountering anything very interesting or novel about which I could "report back".

This imperative was served by another: think your way into things by making. This refers to a desire to stay connected to the material and formal affordances of the predominantly audiovisual medium(s) I was working in. I did not want to compose a perfect idea and then simply execute it. I wanted to develop the idea through execution. I wanted the research and the new knowledge to "happen" in that process of making, where the interviewee would lead me to previously unimagined places. This approach would connect the discoveries directly to the mode of discovery, i.e. the knowledge would be intimately connected to the medium and the use of the moving image. This approach was also connected to an ethics around working with interview subjects from Serbia and speaking to them on the topic of place, knowing that this was potentially a sensitive topic. For this reason, I wanted to arrive at the

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[123] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 206.

interview without preconceived aesthetic ideas, which would be tantamount to pre-determined agendas. I wanted to proceed without these, but rather, arrive with a sensitivity towards the interview subject that would not speak *for* them, but enable them to speak.

This leads to another imperative: proceed in order to find your way through the other. I constructed this imperative in order to stay focused on what is outside the self and to work towards establishing a dialogic relationship with this "other", making oneself in the image of another in order to understand it. It is a generative relationship that has the power to influence both shapes, a transformative power where one object is read through another.[124]

These imperatives determined  an improvisatory way of working. Specific elements of Keith Johnston's theorisation of improvisation for actors can be helpful in informing improvisatory approaches to other art practices.[125] The notion of 'marking time' is a very valuable starting point – it is about allowing a situation to develop, being comfortable with the passing of time, being patient, not discarding anything because it seems 'uninteresting.' [126] The thinking here is not turned towards the pressure of being funny or clever or exciting. Attaining this comfort can lead to a state where one can follow one's first impulses. The spontaneous move is often the most interesting, but often initially rejected as insignificant. It is about saying 'yes' to everything that arises: it is about yielding to rather than blocking an idea.[127] Johnston's claim is that we usually go to block the idea that is the most dangerous.[128]

These dictums fail as any kind of "road-map" since they become a prescriptive, and thereby proscriptive, map superimposed on the landscape I was literally and metaphorically traversing. I was looking to lose my way, after all.

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[124] Again, we have Benjamin's image of the palimpsest, where one image is read through another, and in this act a third meaning released.
[125] Johnstone, Keith. *Impro: improvisation and the theatre*. New York: Taylor and Francis, 1992.
[126] Ibid., 33.
[127] Ibid., 92.
[128] Ibid., 97.

And to this end, I think I was well-served. This process has led me down unimagined and, at the time, unimaginable paths.

I advanced in the same way when considering how the theoretical research might illuminate, connect to or disturb the creative practice and vice-versa. If a true disruption is to occur, if a truly novel connection between theory and practice is to be made, and therefore previously proven connections challenged, then I had to work in such a way that I was not applying theory to practice or illustrating practice with theory. I drew no equivalencies between them, but rather wanted the working method to enable each to inform the other. I was wary of bending one into the shape of the other simply so that they could act as alibis for already determined ideas. This process, where I make direct connections between theory and the creative work, is one of reading the work in hindsight, following the trail. This very writing of the exegesis has been a means towards discovering the details of how one (the exegesis) is implicated in the other (the project).

This is not a blind kind of exercise where I had no foundations whatsoever upon which my theoretical and practice journeys found their trajectories. But certainly for much of the research, I listened with my poetic ear and looked for resemblances and chimes and for complications. I discarded conclusion in the face of evidence and sought to continually find openings.[129]

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[129] This is a reference to Louise Glück's conception of a poet's responsibility. I will return to this idea shortly.

My initial vision for this work was a single-screen documentary that depicted interviews to camera and recitations of poetry. *Straying* is now a three-channel video and single-channel audio installation. It is a work that depicts no bodies, a work with only one Voice heard (mine) and this Voice does not recite any poetry. Three screens hang in the middle of the installation space. They are white and semi-transparent. A voice-over is heard, it fills the space. The audience can move about the space, can catch different angles and associate the Voice with different images. The moving images on the screens depict external built and natural environments: statues, buildings, rivers, fields, basketball courts and football fields, playgrounds. Bodies only skirt the edges of the frame, if at all. *See Figure 10.*

From this summary description, this installation may sound like a poetry film without poetry, a documentary with no subjects, a dance film without dancers or an autobiography that keeps the self invisible. The work is indeed about a lot of things you do not see. It is about the body, about sensuality, about poetry, and none of these things are visually or aurally present. It is not like the work of Claire Denis,[130] Andrei Tarkovsky[131] or Agnès Varda,[132] each of whom explicitly find form for some very similar preoccupations. And yet all of these films have served to orient this research, to refine its questions, even if the formal or aesthetic choices remain very different. The installation is marked by absences, the evocation or suggestion of the body, the poem, the personal and the public

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[130] For example in the film *Beau Travail* (1999) the movement of the body and the movement of the camera play out a fine dance together that elevates the mundane to the status of the poetic.

[131] Nature figures as one of Tarkovsky's most emblematic features. Water seeps into houses (*Solaris* [1972], *Mirror* [1975], *Nostalghia* [1983]); bodies bury themselves in earth (Stalker [1979], *Ivan's Childhood* [1962]), and buildings are often ruins being reclaimed by nature (*Mirror, Nostalghia*).

[132] In the film *The Gleaners and I* (2000), for example, Varda literally films her self, her own body. She also often voices her own documentaries and uses herself as subject.

Figure 10





I went to street corners, and fields, at-
tended to flowers, and rivers, with such
attention, I learnt all their rhythms by
heart.

story; it hopes to achieve this through associations, metaphors and its structure, which makes room for multiple iterations or attempts.

This exegesis might be marked by some absences too. For example, there might be fields of knowledge that one might expect to find in such a work as this, but does not. Most obviously, you might expect to find a section that deals with the critical literature on "place" and "place-making" or a more sustained engagement with cinematic representations of landscape and the body. These are two of the most direct correlates to what I was investigating and these fields served well as a foundation and to help orient me towards the subject. The direction in which I then proceeded did not speak directly back to these fields. Nevertheless, I would like to briefly acknowledge some of the most influential material.

*PLACE*

Edward S. Casey's idea of 'implacement', which is concerned with the 'experience of being in (a) place … becoming part of (a) place',[133] provoked me to think about the body's relationship to place in terms of levels of embeddedness. This conjures for me the idea that the space we occupy has a density.[134] Movement through space then has a particular quality and effort which are unique to that body and that space. To think of the level at which a person is embedded in a place is also to affect how we consider time. If we return to the earlier notion of hiatus and the pregnant moment, a moment that is

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[133] Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 33.
[134] For Casey this has to do with an entire complex of cultural, social and historical factors. My focus is on the part of the term that articulates the physical space around the body. I think of this space as having density, and within that density there are levels of embeddedness and feelings of implacement, or being in place. It is not a matter only of being or not being in place, but the quality of implacement.

not governed by the linear flow of time, then we might be able to think of space opening up and allowing the body to embed itself deeper into it.

This is my idealised construction. I respond to Doreen Massey's unromanticised perspective on place which is not 'constructed out of an introverted, inward-looking history based on delving into the past for internalized Origins'.[135] She argues that the 'specificity of place is continually reproduced' and that 'what is special about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity [but] throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating the here and now'.[136] While I agree with Massey in terms of her political and social argument, I also find validity in the things that she claims place is not – the desire for something, even if it is not "true" or "real", is interesting *as* desire, and potentially revealing. The reach inwards and towards origins is a real impulse, even if it is not the complete and whole story of what constitutes our sense of place.

The imagination as an important dimension in our conceptualisation and experience of place is a focus in Tim Ingold's work on the perception of landscapes:

> to imagine … is not so much to conjure up images of a reality "out there", whether virtual or actual, true or false, as to participate from within, through perception and action, in the very becoming of things.[137]

Ingold's work focuses on the sensing, moving body and its relationship to the environment.[138] This is central to my own approach: what happens when the body is displaced and is not occupying the environment in order to enact or participate in this 'becoming'? The Voice in *Straying* must turn towards

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[135] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 254.
[136] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 140.
[137] See in particular Monica Janowski and Tim Ingold, ed., *Imagining landscapes: Past, present and future* (Ashgate, Surrey, 2012), 3.
[138] See Ingold, Tim. *The Perception of the Environment*. London: Routledge, 2000.

imagination and memory, an inward and an outward looking, in an attempt to (re)constitute a sense of place.[139]

Henri Lefebvre privileges the body in his study on rhythms and place-making. In *Rhythmanalysis,* Lefebvre reads place through the study of rhythms that are made by the interacting rhythms of human and non-human forms. From this perspective, place becomes a kind of pulsating rhythmic body.[140] This is an image that I carried into this research where I could consider place as body and the space of the installation as a body also.

This proposition focused my attention on the rhythms that played out in the frame and where I took rhythm to be not only a temporal measure of movement but a graphic one. For example, several shots in the installation depict building facades, with an arrangement of windows and airconditioning units. I started reading these images of buildings in terms of the rhythms made by the graphic shapes. This kind of reading of or approach to the images helped me begin to look away from questions of representation and towards a more visceral, rhythmic engagement with the image.[141]

The common thread between the literature I have covered is that place is made; it is a process rather than a point; place is lived, an extension of our bodies rather than a container that houses bodies; it is multi-dimensional, part of a collective making and remembering, playing a part in constituting, preserving and erasing memory. Place is one with action and thought, with history and culture. My own research, however, had to move beyond the attempt to define "place". This was, after all, not research into place alone: my research interest was triadic. I wanted to understand how the moving image specifically complicated or resolved some of the ways we thought about, and found expression for, the relationship between body and place.

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[139] See Schama, Simon. *Landscape and Memory*. London: Haper Collins, 1995.
[140] Lefebvre, Henri. *Rhythmanalysis*. London: Continuum, 2004.
[141] This is part of the phenomenological turn that I address in the final section of this exegesis.

*LANDSCAPE AND CINEMA*

My video-making practice evolved out of a formal background in film theory, creative writing and performance. My previous video work was produced for single-screen projection (as opposed to exhibition in an installation setting). For this reason, the community of practice I first looked to was cinematic representations of landscape and the treatment of the human figure in that landscape.[142] This starting point eventually oriented me away from a preoccupation with representations of these subjects in cinema and their aesthetic values. However, this engagement did help me refine my questions and approach, and for this reason I will briefly trace the cinematic influences on this research project.

The formal ways in which landscape is represented in cinema became less important than what the fact of framing nature, and hence turning it into a landscape, says about the relationship between the person that frames and that environment. Scott MacDonald draws a direct trajectory from nineteenth-century depictions of landscapes in painting to the depiction of landscape in cinema[143]. That the landscape in pictorial art is a human construction is clear. That it produces a certain kind of gaze upon the world and that framing it places limits and hence a philosophical world view on that landscape is also a typical approach to reading the practice of landscape in painting, photography and

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[142] For example I was looking at Tarkovksy's work, which deals explicitly with the converging layers of memory, landscape, nostalgia and faith. Often these themes culminate in the physical relationship a character has to their environment. Tarkovsky depicts a very sensuous relationship between them, often we see bodies sinking into earth or enfolded by the landscape in which they stand. See for example the opening scene of *Solaris* (1972), opening to *Nostalghia* (1983), opening to *Ivan's Childhood* (1962).

[143] MacDonald, Scott. *The Garden in the Machine*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. Of course in cinema there is the element of movement within the frame which opens up a space for another kind of interaction between spectator and landscape. That there can be a sequence of frames rather than one static depiction is a significant contribution that the moving image makes to the depiction of landscapes; it offers a more complex discursive field. It is beyond the scope of this exegesis to interrogate this further. I propose this only as an introduction to my indebtedness to cinema in the journey of this research.

cinema.[144] This approach assumes that the depiction of a landscape is revealing of how the human (both the filmmaker and spectator) constitutes their relationship to it – the revelation is historically and contextually specific.

Part of MacDonald's study focuses on early American "landscape films", where MacDonald makes a distinction between films that depict 'landscapes themselves' and films that are focused on a movement into the landscape. Tom Gunning takes this as a provocation that seems to suggest that 'a true landscape … maintains a certain distance from the viewer'.[145] The contrast here is between 'contemplative beauty' which is achieved through distance and the penetration of that 'invisible barrier' into the landscape. This provocation does not form the central argument either for MacDonald nor Gunning; however, it instigated my focus towards the drive to construct a relationship with the environment through framing it, and away from how I might frame the landscape in order to project a certain meaning (a question of representation and formal aesthetic).

The narrative frame in *Straying* is that the Voice is attempting to constitute a relationship to this place by photographing it.[146] She desires to capture it and, in capturing it, know it, own it, colonise it, have it signify something in particular in relation to her own self. She cannot know/own herself until She knows/owns the place. However, simply framing the environment and capturing it does not yield the kind of intimacy and 'knowing' that the Voice desires of it. The place escapes clear or unambiguous signification; it is not available for colonisation. The Voice cannot find the right distance and neither can She penetrate it. *See Figure 11.*

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[144] See MacDonald, *The Garden*, 2001. Or consider Rayner and Harper's comparison of the landscape to a map: 'the cinematic landscape is the imposition of order on the elements of landscape, collapsing the distinction between the found and the constructed.' Jonathan Rayner and Graeme Harper, ed., *Cinema and Landscape* (Bristol: Intellect, 2010), 16.
[145] Tom Gunning, "Landscape and the Fantasy of Moving Pictures," in *Cinema and Landscape*, ed., Jonathan Rayner and Graeme Harper (Bristol: Intellect, 2010), 36.
[146] It is unclear whether the Voice took the images or another hand made the recordings, this ambiguity is important to the work as a whole, as I will discuss later, however, for the purposes of this argument, it is not important whether it is the Voice or another person.

Another way to look at this dynamic is not in terms of power or colonisation, but in terms of Eisenstein's conception of nonindifferent nature, which expresses a kind of idealised relationship between the body and landscape.

*NONINDIFFERENT NATURE*

Eisenstein's theorisation of nonindifferent nature (in which he seeks to depict the human as nonindifferent to nature) is perhaps the most explicit example of the treatment of landscape and the body in cinema. Eisenstein was interested in 'total' experiences, ones which involved a unity between mind, body and landscape.[147] Eisenstein's interest in finding an expression of this relationship on screen culminated during his experience in Mexico in the early 1930s, shooting the film that would never be completed by the director himself: *Que Viva Mexico!*[148] He wrote extensively while he was there, trying to express in words what he would attempt to represent on screen:

> in those moments at dawn or sunset, when the air is so transparent that it seems as if someone had stolen it, and distant slopes reddish mountains hang with blinding distinctness in the airless space between the ultramarine sky and the violet shadow of its own foothills – and suddenly you feel clearly that our eye cannot see, but feels and senses objects just as a blind man does with his hands.[149]

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[147] Robert Robertson, *Eisenstein on the Audiovisual* (London: I B Tauris, 2011), 120.
[148] Upton Sinclair financed the film, but when the cost of the project blew out Sinclair ceased the financing and the film was never finished. In 1979 Grigori Alexandrov cut the film together based on Eisenstein's detailed notes.
[149] Eisenstein, *Nonindifferent Nature*, 380-381.

Figure 11



It's a distance I create in order to cross.
It's a game.

I too wrote extensively during my fieldtrip in Serbia:

It was twilight, and I stood with masses of other people on the side of a busy city street, waiting for a bus. The wait is unpleasant, the street is narrow, this street is on every bus line route. The buses are old; many of them are buses that were in German or Japanese junkyards and donated to Serbia after the wars, welcome gifts but old. It was summer, the dust and fumes raised by the buses sticking to sweaty skin. The buses are always bursting full and, as I waited for my number, I watched more and more people flocking to the stop.

Looking for distraction, I cast my eyes away from the street and up the sides of the neoclassic building facades. They were grand and beautiful once, but now grey from exhaust smoke and dust like our skins. Their balconies jut out, many crammed with pots of red and pink and white carnations.

This very ordinary moment, lived many times before, in an instant became extraordinary. The way the pink sky peered over the heads of the buildings, the way the light fell onto the pavement, the falling temperature with the receding sun, the sounds and smells, swelled into a kind of opening up, where the light, and the sounds of engines and casual conversation, the smell of burning coming off the road, all of this in its unique play with one another, was suddenly something very beautiful. It was not any one of these putrid things in particular, it was the way they each fell together in that instant, fell together and included me in this play, in that moment of coalescence, of a being together. And as soon as it had formed, it started to dissipate, like smoke, forever forming and separating, rising and disappearing, absorbed into the air.

Like Eisenstein, I too take on a reverent tone, intoxicated by this apparent and perfect confluence of time, place and body, as expressed through colour, light, texture, rhythm, and sound. Eisenstein's project was to find formal ways to create this feeling of unity and nonindifference between the human and the landscape on screen. Eisenstein achieved this intention visually on screen in *Que Viva Mexico!* by creating a "flat" image where all elements in the frame are on the same plane.[150]

According to Eisenstein 'total experience' is an ecstatic state. Eisenstein was particularly influenced by the tradition of the dance of the dervish as a conduit towards transformation, where repetition brought you outside of the self and into an ecstatic state.[151] In this ecstatic state, according to Eisenstein, 'consciousness opens out and blends … with the surrounding landscape'.[152] While Eisenstein's focus was on offering up this kind of experience of unity for the audience and finding visual representation for it, my focus in *Straying* was about the desire for unity between mind, body and landscape and its ultimate impossibility.

The elements in *Straying* have been taken apart, pulled and peeled away from one another: the screens are multiple and separate, the voice is not diegetic to any of the images. Time and space do not align here. This story is about the attempt at unity between mind, body and place; it is a laying bare of the process of reaching towards it. The moment of nonindifferent nature, such as the one I experienced on the Belgrade street, becomes a moment that continually ebbs away out of grasp. It is a moment that is not representable, a moment that is always disappearing. This is a moment that feels only available as part of a receding memory, receding so far back that it becomes a mythology.

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[150] Eisenstein was inspired by Diego Riviera's paintings which he says have an 'all-over texture' where nature and human become 'dynamically united into one.' Eisenstein quoted in Robertson, *Eisenstein*, 134-135. He also formally attempted to achieve this by using patterns and shades of black and white to suggest the unity between the Mexican people, their history and their landscape.
[151] Eisenstein, *Nonindifferent Nature*, 35.
[152] Robert Robertson, *Eisenstein on the audiovisual*, 124.

The yearning and attempt at achieving an ecstatic transformation where mind, body and place find unity is written into the narrative of *Straying*. The Voice desires this unity; her entire project is to achieve what She calls a "dissolution" into the image. She recounts various conduits towards this transformation: darkness, repetition, ritual, incantation, loss of self, commingling. These conduits manifest formally and materially: the Voice repeats certain phrases, certain images repeat on the screens. Repetition through dance, however, is not possible for the Voice because She has no body, She cannot gesture towards unity; She only has access to words. But Voice too can serve as a conduit, as in poetry, mantra and prayer. The work itself is on a loop; it repeats itself over and over. It is an incantation.[153] The possibility of transformation finds form, recedes, comes back again.

In *Straying* the relationship between body and landscape is not simply organic, natural and complicit.[154] To this displaced Voice, trying to get back into place, the landscape is impenetrable. This landscape does not remember her, it is resistant, it has forgotten this body, it has erased it. The landscape has even been resistant to being framed and photographed; the images do not yield and represent what the Voice wants to see in them. This landscape is not idealised or uncomplicated. *See Figure 12.*

Eisenstein was scripting *Que Viva Mexico!* as he was filming. He was taking his inspiration from travelling around the country and engaging with its people and places. He used non-actors in his scenes. You might say that he followed a documentary and improvisational approach. These two approaches were instrumental in how I proceeded with my own fieldtrip. This is the subject of the next section.

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[153] Barthes too cites repetition as a conduit for bliss: 'to repeat excessively is to enter into loss, into the zero of the signified.' The important connection here is between bliss and loss. *The Pleasure of the Text*, 41.

[154] Eisenstein claims this kind of organic and complicit relationship between landscape and body. However, he does ultimately shift his focus to emphasise that 'above all (it is) all within ourselves: It is not the nature around us that is particularly nonindifferent, but our own nature,' Eisenstein, Nonindifferent, 396.

Figure 12



I thought about going down to the field, poised with the camera, ready to take my evidence I'm haunting these places like an unwanted ghost.

# HINGE

Poet Anne Carson says 'hinge' describes the work that poetry does. It exists between life and death: 'mortality and immortality continue side by side … hinged by a strange arrangement of grace. A poet is also a sort of hinge.'[155] The hinge is like a conduit between worlds, between orders of reality. Poet Susan Howe says that a documentary makes 'an attempt to recapture someone something somewhere looking back. Looking back, Orpheus was the first known documentarist'.[156] Orpheus' famous passage from Hades appears in *Straying* or rather the Voice references it obliquely, questioning the passage he took from the underworld – and his subsequent turning back.

In one version of this myth, Eurydice was never really there, standing behind Orpheus in the underworld and following him. She was only an apparition.[157] What sense then in Orpheus' turning back to see his love and his consequent and eternal loss? Is it because he needed evidence that he looked? To document his perceived sense of her being there? Does this make him a good or a bad documentarist? This very impulse to turn, to see and to take evidence is interrogated in this section.

The passage from documentary to poetry is drawn in this section also. Orpheus was also a poet. Does this change anything about his impulse as documetarist and poet? Which was the impulse that had him turn and consequently lose Eurydice forever? His poetic or his documentary one?

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[155] The economy of poetry in Ancient Greece was such that poets were paid by their patrons to write poems about them: 'the Skopads sustain Simonides on earth, he sustains them in memory. An exchange of life for life. Of mortal for immortal continuance.' Anne Carson, *Economy of the Unlost* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 39.

[156] Susan Howe, *Sorting Facts; or Nineteen Ways of Looking at Marker* (New York: New Directions Books, 2013), 50.

[157] Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9, trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925)

In the following section I will look at how poetry as artefact slipped away as a concern in the research, but how a poetic structure helped organise the material I collected in Serbia. I will interrogate how the meeting of the poetic and the documentary created the hinge, which is to say, access to another aspect to this research. *See Figure 13*.

Figure 13



At some point we must acknowledge
that these are all apparitions.
If there are repercussions for seeing, are
there repercussions for listening?

My idea of documentary as an approach was synonymous with "doing research": to move towards that which is unknown, to uncover something about/of/in the world through/with the medium of moving image and sound. The claims that the documentary makes on 'the real', on 'truth', on 'actuality', 'evidence' and 'authenticity' were part of my pursuit.

I also worked from the position that the nature of this 'truth' is always intimately connected to the medium itself, which is to say, its formal and aesthetic properties. This relationship has been at the centre of the debate around ethics of representation, which I was also conscious of addressing in my choice of method and approach. I took into consideration that I was working within a highly discursive mode of representation and wanted to temper that with an approach that I felt was ethically sound.[158]

The observational documentary approach as defined by Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz gave me a framework with which to begin.[159] I use Grimshaw and Ravetz's particular definition of observational cinema because they eschew the common connection that is made with this mode and to cinéma vérité and the 'fly-on-the-wall' style of production.[160] Grimshaw and Ravetz provide a broader definition that focuses on privileging the subject of the documentary over the filmmaker's agenda or intentions. To this end, the

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[158] Catherine Russell encourages us to think of the relationship between aesthetics and authenticity (and specifically cultural representation) by considering the experimental film and the ethnographic film together rather than separately. Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), xi. This has been Trinh's project in both her films and critical writing. See for example *Surname Viet Given name Nam* (1989), Trinh T. Min-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red* (London: Routledge, 1991). More contemporary examples can be found in the work of Ben Rivers and Ben Russell. Both of these filmmakers take the history of ethnographic film, avant-garde, documentary practice and installation art practice (in the case of Ben Rivers), and make hybrid works that create a self-reflexive dialogue between these practices. See for example Rivers' *Slow Action* (2009); and Russell's *Let Each One Go Where He May* (2009).
[159] Grimshaw and Ravetz, *Observational Cinema*
[160] They deny for observational cinema that it is 'neutral' to the situation that is being recorded; as has been claimed for the latter two modes.

aesthetic of the film is found in contact with the subject, where the filmmaker works to allow the subject to guide the encounter. This way of working is not about adhering 'to fixed principles and prescribed methods,'[161] but is rather focused on highlighting the 'ad hoc and improvisatory' ways of working: 'observation [means] a particular kind of alertness for the unexpected.'[162]

Clearly the focus here is on what is outside the filmmaker. Also, the aesthetic is not determined prior to the moment that this unexpected arises, therefore it is found with the subject itself. Presumably a new aesthetic might be 'found' by way of the subject. This is a very neat formulation, as is Grimshaw and Ravetz's idea of observation as simply 'being there', recording a 'process of unfolding relationships in which small clues like gestures, facial expression, body posture [has] revelatory potential.'[163] While this framing was initially helpful in encouraging me to be mindful of the quality of my attention in observation, I must also acknowledge that I was not entirely free of any expectation or vision or intention. I had a very specific intention indeed: to find out about the relationship between the body and place. Simply 'being there' was too loose and naïve an approach to a question that was as specific as mine.

Grimshaw and Ravetz's 'being there' does not promote the proposition that the camera records a situation 'as it is', but supports the notion that the camera being there is clearly part of the situation being recorded. Ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch makes this claim for his experience filming a possession dance in Niger: 'the shooting itself was what unlatched and sped up the possession process'.[164] Deeper states of 'possession' are unlatched at the meeting of the camera and subject (this can include nature and inanimate objects). The camera and the subject, in their mutual interaction and experience,

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[161] Ibid., xv.
[162] Ibid., 29.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Jean Rouch, "On the Vicissitudes of the Self," in *Reverse Angle, Cinema and Anthropology*, ed. Andy Davies and Nuria Rodriguez (Madrid: La Casa Encendida, 2007), 46.

reveal something otherwise 'hidden' or unavailable.[165] There is an assumption here that simply by placing the camera into a room, a process will be set in motion at the level of 'possession'. Of course this is not so. But this conception begins to articulate the perspective that what is being recorded is what is between the filmmaker and the subject, and that this situation is unique to their meeting at the moment of filming.

In my experience, the meeting with the subject, the simply being there, proved to be less than fruitful. I did not precipitate any 'possessions' or 'revelations'. However, the actual process of filming (as opposed to what I recorded), left indelible marks on what would end up being *Straying*. The 'unlatching' in my process started to happen on my return to Melbourne, when I started working with the footage in the editing room. At this point I started to interrogate my relationship to the subject, the footage and the experience of taking it. What I had recorded was not literally and only the dialogue between filmmaker and interview subject. I had also recorded things that were never intended to 'make the cut', for example my early morning meanderings through empty town squares. I could say that these recordings were of my own dialogue with the work and process itself.

This brought a highly subjective dimension into my process, which I had initially worked to eschew. The idea of allowing this subjectivity to dominate the work seemed to me to be taking it away from the documentary and into the fictional (or worse, according to me, the autobiographical)[166] domain. However, the notion that subjectivity and fictionality are separate from, or even oppositional to, the documentary and the non-fiction is an assumption which was eventually dismantled through my continuing theoretical investigations into the documentary mode of filmmaking practice. This, in turn, opened up avenues to the completion of the project.

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[165] Rouch calls this process a 'shared anthropology' and 'participatory ethnography'. See Jean Rouch, *Cine-Ethnography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
[166] I interrogate my aversion and consequent reassessment to the autobiographical, in relation to this work, in Passage and Hinge.

Michael Renov theorises documentary by highlighting the role of fiction in non-fiction, arguing that they 'inhabit' one another.[167] He does not exclude either as completely separate modes, but rather considers the two genres/practices as sharing 'key conceptual and discursive characteristics'.[168] It is not only fictional forms that might 'appeal to the viewer's Imaginary, that psychic domain of idealised forms, fantasy, identification, reversible time, and alternative logics'.[169] The documentary too can mobilise these aesthetic, affective and structural approaches and remain on the side of the 'true'. The 'problem' might be in this binary distinction fiction/non-fiction. Can there be a form that is not determined by these designations?[170]

I aimed to stay on this side of the 'true' by using an old documentary trope: the interview. But the interview subject must not be mistaken for the confessing subject that unproblematically imparts knowledge. As Julia Kristeva warns, the speaking subject does not necessarily have an uncomplicated relation to the real or to truth:

> The speaking subject is presumed to have known an object, a
> relationship, an experience that it is henceforth incapable of
> reconstituting accurately. Why? Because the knowing subject is also a
> desiring subject, and the paths of desire ensnarl the paths of
> knowledge… We normally assume the opposite of delirium to be an
> objective reality, objectively perceptible and objectively knowable, as if
> the speaking subject were only a simple knowing subject … perceptual

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[167] Michael Renov, ed., *Theorizing Documentary* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3.
[168] Ibid., 2.
[169] Ibid., 3.
[170] Phillip Lopate denies the need to insert fiction into non-fiction as a kind of 'tarting up' of the non-fiction genre: 'Why can't nonfiction be nonfiction? His argument is somewhat different to the one I am making here, but I do think it is worthwhile considering that the boundaries of non-fiction can be simply more flexible and not defined by the fictional. This is not an argument I have the pleasure of pursuing here in detail, however, this question does come up in the Hinge section when I address the documentary mode of filmmaking, and my consideration of the poetic in the documentary. ' Lopate, Phillip "An Interview With Creative Nonfiction Writer Phillip Lopate" by Lania Knight, *Poets and Writers*

and knowing apprehension of the original object is only a theoretical, albeit undoubtedly indispensable, hypothesis.[171]

If we use the latter part of Kristeva's argument to think through its relevance to the documentary, then we might conclude that it is an impossible task to reach the object of truth – with or without the help of fiction or delirium. We might conclude the same about Errol Morris' notion of documentary, which also does not exclude fiction, the subjective or personal from the documentary. For Morris, truth cannot be guaranteed by any set of 'rules' or 'approaches', including the 'absence' or 'invisibility' of the filmmaker:

> There's no reason why documentaries can't be as personal as fiction filmmaking and bear the imprint of those who made them. Truth isn't guaranteed by style or expression. It isn't guaranteed by anything.[172]

If truth is not guaranteed by anything at all, how do we draw any parameters around the genre/mode/intention of documentary? And why is it so important that we do so? Why do we keep going after this phantom?

I will proceed by considering Stella Bruzzi's question that she claims we should be asking of the documentary: 'how is actuality treated in order to sanction the documentary's claims to be telling the truth?'[173] This question refocuses the debate not around whether or not it is possible, whether or not the claims are valid, but rather, what have been the processes taken in the making of the documentary and what is the interplay between these processes, its formal elements and the subject matter? This question became central to my understanding of how to proceed with the 'failed' project I came back with from

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[171] Julia Kristeva, "Psychoanallysis and the Polis," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed., Toril Moi, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1986), 307.
[172] Errol Morris, "Truth Not Guaranteed: an interview with Errol Morris," *Cineaste* 17, (1989): 16-17, in Michael Renov, ed. *Theorizing Documentary* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 127.
[173] Louise Spence and Vinicius Navarro, *Crafting Truth* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 2.

the fieldtrip. Writing this exegesis has also been instrumental in working through the connection between these elements and elucidating just how mutually constitutive they are.

For Bruzzi, this connection between process, filmmaker and subject leads her to call the documentary 'performative'; it happens right at the 'juncture between reality and filmmaker'.[174] Documentaries are 'performative acts' because their truth 'comes into being only at the moment of filming'.[175] The most pivotal influence Bruzzi exerted on my (re)conception of the work is that 'the text itself reveals the tensions between the documentary pursuit of the most authentic mode of factual representation and the impossibility of this aim'.[176] What I mean by "influence" is that it started to articulate the experience I had in making *Straying*. This, in turn, gave me impetus to find other avenues for a project which I thought had simply not worked. While Bruzzi's theorisation implies that this performance "happens" in the moment of filming, for me this work happened much later – at the editing stage, the writing stage, and it continually happens in *Straying* itself. This is one of the reasons the form went through such a major transformation: from the initial single-screen documentary to the three-screen installation. I will elaborate on this point further in the following section.

Absence and impossibility are also part of Linda Williams' argument for the documentary; for her 'there can be no a priori truth of the referent to which the image refers'; the 'originary object', as Kristeva puts it, is unavailable. What documentary can hope to achieve is not the apprehension of this event but to 'move audiences to a new appreciation of previously unknown truth.'[177] William's particular focus is on the relationship between a subject recounting memory and its interplay with already established histories around that subject or past. Past events, for Williams, are fractured and not entirely apprehensible: 'they are

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[174] Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000), 6.
[175] Ibid., 7.
[176] Ibid., 4.
[177] Linda Williams, "Mirror without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1993): 10.

fragments, pieces of the past invoked by memory, not unitary representable truths'.[178] Here we have an acceptance of a multivocal truth or history and one which is always transforming because of the ongoing dialogues that the documentary conditions. Williams' concept for the documentary hinges on Mary Ann Doane's analysis of Freud's concept of memory as a palimpsest, a 'sum total of … rewritings through time.'[179] Williams urges that truth is to be found not in any single event, but the 'reverberations' between. Another way to consider this is to think back on Benjamin's palimpsest and on the way each image, as it piles up on top of another, changes the meaning of the others. In either metaphor, we are creating a relationality between experiences, truths, memories, contexts and histories, and it is this relationality that brings forth an elucidation of what was previously unknown, unseen or unheard.

Williams' construction, and particularly her inclusion of memory and subjectivity as layers in the palimpsest, might disturb the notion that the production of knowledge has an intimate relation to evidence and truth and hence what can be designated as documentary. But as Trinh claims: 'what is presented as evidence remains evidence, whether the observing eye qualifies itself as being subjective or objective'.[180] We might consider that the relation to the profilmic event, or capturing evidence, complicates rather than defines or stands in for 'truth'; it is only another layer in the palimpsest which we create in our search and desire for knowledge about the world. Kristeva's theory on delirium further undoes these boundaries with a focus on the subjective:

> delirium masks reality or spares itself from a reality while at the same time
> saying a truth about it. More true? Less true? Does delirium know a truth

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[178] Ibid., 15.
[179] Ibid. See also Mary Ann Doane, "Remembering Women: Psychical and Historical Construction in Film Theory," *The Australian Journal of Media and Culture* 1, no. 2 (1988): 3-4.
[180] Trinh, *When the Moon Waxes Red*, 35. Again, the films of Ben Rivers and Ben Russell are important examples to cite, where they often frame their work within the ethnographic paradigm, while using formal tools to create dialectic between (and not in opposition to) the 'evidentiary', fantastical, spiritual and performative dimensions of a situation. See for example Russell's *River Rites* (2011).

which is true in a different way than objective reality because it speaks a certain subjective truth, instead of a presumed objective truth? Because it presents the state of the subject's desire? This "mad truth".[181]

Kristeva begins to add levels of complexity to our notion of 'truth' which is synonymous with how J. L. Austin writes about hallucination: the subject experiences the hallucination as real, therefore, it can be said to be so.[182] We could say the same perhaps of dream, imagination and desire.

Finally, we might think of the techniques of documentary in light of James M Moran's proposition that considers documentary in terms of Foucault's 'regimes of truth.'[183] The documentarist's intention is not to create 'an image of truth itself,'[184] but rather to use strategies to create compositions which might highlight or put into question the particular mechanisms and discourses which function as 'truths' at various levels of history, memory, desire, evidence.

I gave space for experimentation with this idea in *Straying* by moving into the installation setting with three screens and a voice-over. This is the space of fragmented history and memory. The audience is the key player in constructing the palimpsest and working through these questions about how we construct the self and place out of fragments of histories, memories and desires; what stands in for the authentic self or the 'real' or 'true' place? The audience is left to look for the reverberations between the elements, as an ongoing, performative act. And even in this context, it still holds true that 'some form of truth is the always the receding goal of documentary film.'[185]

I am not claiming a generalised theory of documentary here. I am highlighting that during my experience with this particular project, in attempting to answer its particular questions, I discovered that these sets of ideas about the

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[181] Kristeva, *Psychoanalysis*, 308.
[182] J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 69.
[183] James M Moran, "A Bone of Contention: documenting the prehistoric subject," in *Collecting Visible Evidence*. Edited by Jane Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 269.
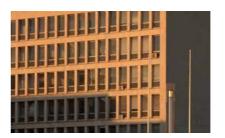[184] Ibid.
[185] Williams, *Mirrors Without Memories*, 20.

documentary have been fruitful and generative. These perspectives helped me complete this particular work, which continually either escaped me or was something other than what I had hoped for or expected. I reached a highly self-reflexive and subjective space. I came once again to the image of the palimpsest, which is somewhat coincidental and at the same time its relevance indisputable, therefore it might be said it is fortuitous. *See Figure 14.*

The palimpsest is an image that works on conceptual, theoretical, thematic and concrete levels in this research. Reverberations between images and voices arise. These are not the most authentic or accurate versions of an experience because they are unique to the audience member that heard them. In *Straying* we enact the multiplicity that Bruzzi and Williams privilege. In the installation setting, because the audience is physically involved in the creation of the palimpsest, they are also involved in listening for and hearing the reverberations they themselves create. The audience member is moved towards the previously unencountered.

The documentary impulse drove this research from the beginning to the end, even while my idea of what constituted 'documentary' changed significantly. Something similar can be said of the poetic impulse that sat beside the documentary one. It was the poetic artefact, the poem as literary object, which was going to feature in the documentary. During the process of making *Straying* the poem as artefact slipped away as my key concern and the poetic emerged as fundamental to the structure of the work.

Figure 14







No one has ever loved this place as I love it. No one has ever made such a loving record of its squares and monuments.

That's a lie.

The poem as literary artefact, and the poetic as an adjective, both relate to a kind of 'access' that is privileged by the form. This is access to something that sits below the surface of things, aspects of experience that rely on relationality if they are to rise to the surface or find expression. At the same time, for this research project, this access has been continually denied or deferred. So perhaps I should say it is about the promise of access; or after Barthes, again, a 'staging of appearance as disappearance'.[186] The poem is also about permission, that is, a yielding that multiple possibilities may be counted as 'true'.[187] Note the words: access, denial, deferment, permission, yielding, possibility, disappearance. A word that is missing from this list might be: subterranean, whose synonyms are: private, secret, underfoot, sunken, buried. I like that there is an evocation of earth and water in this list. Fathomless and yawning, as in a yawning abyss, could also be added to our list of words about the poem. Many of these words summon imagery related to landscape, to a physical manifestation, an opening, a thickness.[188]

The purpose of this word play is to gesture towards the expansive field which we might call the 'poetic' and how features of this field chime with some of the central preoccupations of the research project: landscape, absence, possibility, documentary. These are all words and concepts we have thus far encountered on our journey to understand the relationship between place and the dis-placed body.

Nomad-like, I traversed a country that I knew a little but like a stranger. I looked for poetry and looked to capture it with my camera. Poet Paul Celan places the poem in the landscape and calls it: nomadic, migratory; it is always

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[186] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 10.
[187] This feels like a return to the documentary discussion.
[188] I mean this in Merleau-Ponty's sense of the word, where the world is made up of 'folds' that bring together various times and spaces. See Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1968.

on the way, in the making.[189] Writer and philosopher Maurice Blanchot claims that the poem is entirely absent, outside of the world.[190] Blanchot claims there is no moment of poetic existence. Does this mean I was destined to always be a little lost, a step behind, steeping in absences as if absence is made of a substance, catching like a virus. As Tarkovsky would say, the poem is a 'hint and intimation (of) something that cannot be set forth;'[191] running after that which 'remains in our thoughts and hearts as unrealised suggestion.'[192] Displaced and drifting, I looked for this other nomad's tracks, finding my way towards the subterranean, a way towards that hidden point between the body and the landscape. Celan saw the poem in the landscape, and I saw the poem in the body, or rather, I suspected the poem was a hinge between the internal space of the body and the external space of the landscape, articulating the kinship between places we inhabit and places that inhabit us.[193]

Poetry found itself in many guises in this work: as the inspiration, a guide, a provocation, a working model.[194] Poetry helped me to come to the underside of a moment. We might even start to see *Straying* as a poem. In this guise, poetry is that which is 'on that side of language which belongs to 'flesh and breath',[195] it is 'what knowledge looks like in the form of unmediated experience.'[196] With this we return to the idea of poetry as a means of gaining access. *See Figure 15*.

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[189] On insight into language and movement in Celan, see Jacques Derrida, "Shibboleth," in *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan.* Edited by Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005. Also see Paul Celan, "The Meridian" in Derrida, *Sovereignties in Question*, 173-185.

[190] I use these citations as provocations; of course neither Celan nor Blanchot intended these literally.

[191] Scholar and poet Vyacheslav Ivanov quoted in Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 47

[192] Ibid., 22.

[193] I have previously cited Carson on her concept of the poet as hinge, but also poetry as the hinge between life and death.

[194] I started to re-write the interviews into pieces that would be said in voice-over. I made decisions about what aspects of the experience of the interview and the story itself I would re-tell.

[195] Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: A Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hokins University Press, 1997), xiv.

[196] Ibid., xvi.

Figure 15

I want the quality of that light to fill all my words, as if they were vessels and the light was a solid.

For George Steiner poetic language is about difficulty.[197] This does not exclude access; in fact, it is by way of difficulty, according to Steiner, that we gain access to hidden layers of meaning (of the poem and of life). For Steiner, the difficulty or richness of a poem is the degree to which it points to these other layers that refer to things outside itself. These layers are like strata of rock, dense with meaning, rich with history. He claims that because a poem is:

> ontologically economical – the language of the poem implicates a surrounding and highly active context, a corpus, possibly an entire world of supporting, echoing, validating, or qualifying material whose compass underwrites its own concision.[198]

The poem is both compact and expansive. It expands as it reaches to things outside its self. This expansiveness, the ability to allude to various 'strata' of history and experience, is achieved through formal means:

> An energised field of association and connotation, of overtones and undertones, of rebus and homophone … multiplicity of meaning, "enclosedness", are the rule rather than the exception. We are meant to hear both solid and sullied, both toil and coil in the famous Shakespearean cruces.[199]

Steiner here is writing about simultaneous and opposite meanings that work to expand a concept. *Straying* is made up of associations, echoes and chiming between word (what we hear in the voice-over) and image (what we see playing on the screens). This play between words and images takes on temporal significance; we recall an image or word that has since passed, we connect that

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[197] George Steiner, "On Difficulty," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 36, no. 3 (1978): 263-76.
[198] Ibid., 265.
[199] Ibid., 264.

moment to the present one, we experience the present differently in light of this remembrance. These reverberations create an elastic experience of time: binding together history, memory, dream and desire.

Steiner calls this interplay 'a tight-meshed skein of abstract and imaged meanings.'[200] For *Straying* this has implications for how we read the moving images. In the installation we have literal projections of images on the screens, all of "concrete" objects. We also have another kind of 'projection' which is inspired by the voice-over, the images She conjures for us. A third kind of image can arise out of the interplay between these images: the three literal ones on screen and the images that the Voice conjures. Here we may have the appearance of the abstract within the concrete, as one image is read through another. Values are transformed, concrete images become doubtful, a little less 'real', something less stable. Each image tests the others' veracity or claim to truth or abstraction. These simultaneous and potentially contradictory meanings are what Steiner calls a 'rich undecidibility.'[201] In this rich undecidibilty there is a knowing and a not knowing at the same time, a certainty and an uncertainty, which can be achieved by the poet through grammatical or syntactic instabilities: an instability of form. He says it 'energises' the 'inertias' otherwise found in language and hence, presumably, extends the scope of its reach. This expansiveness, however, comes to the limits of our understanding. At this level of difficulty we do not only

> stand poised between alternatives of signification. At certain levels, we
> are not meant to understand at all, and our interpretation, indeed our
> reading itself, is an intrusion.[202]

How do we contend with this paradox? And what is the use of this level of difficulty if it seems to alienate the reader? Steiner assures us that the reader

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[200] Ibid., 266.
[201] Ibid., 273.
[202] Ibid., 275.

knows this is not a 'planned obfuscation', that these are 'profoundly moving statement(s), though we cannot say confidently or periphrastically "of what".[203] It is about being moved to a place where language cannot articulate fully. We might think of Gadamer, for whom it is impossible to recuperate the full meaning of an artwork in any other terms than the ones it offers, and particularly so when the meaning is multiple or nomadic. We might also think of Marks and the silences that fill the diasporic experience when it reaches the limits of the sayable. Steiner's, Gadamer's and Marks' evocations all bring to mind a sense of both excess and incompleteness. The poetic artefact is incomplete because it cannot articulate its subject fully; but it is not lacking, it is in fact in excess of what can be named.

Silence is not about a deliberate withholding of information. Silence for me is not a stubbornness but an inability to speak. The entire problem is one of expression. This is true of the voice-over in *Straying*. It is elliptical because the Voice goes so far into the abyss that She does not know how to articulate out there. There may also be too many possibilities – that to choose one would be false knowledge, a reduction of a moment, of the truth, a false conclusion.

According to poet Louise Glück silence is 'analogous to the unseen … such works inevitably allude to larger contexts; they haunt because they are not whole'.[204] The Voice in *Straying* evokes "half-images" that we do not actually see in the moving image. By 'half-image' I mean there is often a sense that something has been left out – we do not get a clear or full picture of the thing the voice-over describes.

We have a sense of being 'back in time, back in the middle of something'·[205] In *Straying* the sense is that we are not moving onwards in a linear trajectory but deeper into a single moment, a single obsession, to achieve completeness and unity between self and place. We never arrive at this point; this moment is continually deferred, but the interplay between the images (some

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[203] Ibid., 276
[204] Glück, *Proofs and Theories*, 173.
[205] This is the impact that incompleteness in a poem has on Glück.

of them playing on screens, some of them "half-images" conjured by the voice-over) takes us towards the abyss that promises access to the hidden, to what is difficult to say. *See Figure 16.*


*THE LYRIC I*


In thinking about *Straying* as a poem, my intention has been to show how the silences and absences, multiplicities and relationalities, that play out in the installation bring us towards that yawning abyss where we are 'moved' to knowledge that is difficult or impossible to speak. This is achieved to a large extent in the interplay between the moving images and the voice-over. In order to interrogate this relationship further, it will be instructive to look at the voice specifically in terms of the lyric address which asks the questions: who is speaking the poem and to whom? And where is the reader in relation to this dialogue?

A primary question for the voice (and for me while attempting to take account of the footage and work out what it spoke of) is: how do I speak to this image so that I can apprehend its ontological significance? This might lead me to understanding the story I had to tell, the story I had inadvertently recorded, lived, while in Serbia. To answer these questions in consonance with the image is to understand what the moving image specifically brought to the discovery, knowledge and expression of this story.

The voice-over in *Straying* speaks in a tone that seems somewhat detached from the content of her speech. This poses a series of questions: Who is speaking? Whose words are these? Is the Voice only reciting someone else's words that have already been written down? Whatever the answer to these questions,[206] another remains:  who is being addressed and by whom? The
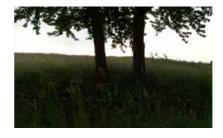
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[206] There are no certain answers. This ambiguity attempts to displace the origin, or the "owner" of the story. It is also a creation of another absence, of another half-presence. The body to which the Voice belongs remains obscured, absent, and so too perhaps the person behind the words.

Figure 16



When I'm in the forest I think of the
sounds of the ocean.

answers to these questions guide the relationship between the Voice, the moving image and the audience in the installation space.

Some of these same questions are pertinent to a discussion of the lyric address. J. S. Mill famously defined the lyric address as predominantly a self-communion.[207] In T. S. Eliot's definition too, the reader overhears the poem and the poem turns away from its reader 'the better to bring a distinctively lyric "self" into focus'[208]. In Mill's and Eliot's definition the reader is somewhat excluded from the experience being uttered in the poem. Helen Vendler, however, disagrees.[209] She says the lyric poem is 'meant to be spoken by the reader as if the reader were the one uttering the words.'[210] This notion of the reader speaking the text leads Jane Hedley to describe the lyric poem as a script for performance.[211] My goal here is not to define the lyric address, but rather to frame a conversation about the range of addresses that occur in the installation through the use of various pronouns and to point to how this enables various subjectivities for the audience to occupy.

The Voice addresses a 'you'. She speaks of a 'him' and a 'her'. This would imply that She speaks to more than one other person. This does not exclude the possibility that She also speaks to herself. While the Voice is somewhat removed, there is also an intimacy here that could feel like a speaking to the self. In any case a relationship between the Voice and an 'other' comes in and out of focus. The feeling is that we are thrust into the middle of something, a conversation that is taking – or has taken – place, that is being repeated,

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[207] Paul De Mann, Jonathan Culler, and Barbara Johnson, concur. Jane Hedley, "Lyric Utterance and the Reader," *Literature Compass* 2 (2005): 1.
[208] Ibid., 2.
[209] This disagreement is also shared with W. R. Johnson and William Waters: 'the lyric speaker and his hypothetical reader are always more or less explicitly in dialogue'. What Eliot et al describe was, according them, an aberration in the Romantic 'meditative' lyric, and not representative of the much older and bigger tradition of the lyric genre. Ibid.
[210] Helen Vendler, *Poems, Poets, Poetry: an introduction and anthology.* Boston: St. Martin's, 1997. Quoted in Hedley, *Lyric Utterance*, 2.
[211] Vendler has since been accused of misconstruing J. S. Mill and Eliot, and Jackson, Altieri and Kenitson's readings that the 'reader is drawn into the poem by its speaker's supposed unconsciousness of having an audience'. Jane Hedley, "Reader-Address in Louise Glück's Ararat Sequence." *Literature Compass* 2 (2005), n. 1.

remembered, excavated.[212] She says: *Stand still, let me admire you. To think of it now: you never looked at me.* Whether the Voice addresses this other or the audience directly is sometimes unclear. She says: *Why don't you think of the beginning?* The boundary between 'other' and audience becomes ambiguous. The speaking Voice too becomes ambiguous in this shifting address.

Sometimes the Voice acknowledges that there is a listener that we are not overhearing, that we are implicated as active participants who can intervene. She says: *We watch this image for the tenth time now.* Sometimes She seems to speak to herself, as if She is alone in the room. She speaks to herself because She is trying to make sense of her self, as if She is not one but two. She says: *What are you afraid of? Everyone is afraid of losing something.* We not only have a fractured 'self' in the Voice, but also a fractured landscape, fractured by the stories She tells that are not hers, re-telling other people's stories in other contexts, from other times and places. Again, the audience is left to find a relation to the stories, the Voice and the images.

To help us understand these shifts in address further, we might consider Vendler's assertion that the lyric poem is about an 'inward, not an outward, quarrel'.[213] The reader of this kind of poem, then, overhears the quarrel the Voice is having with herself. In *Straying*, as the address shifts, the quarrel also shifts from an inward to outward mode. The 'figures' in the work become various and mercurial; again, the Voice becomes an unstable identity. She says: *I feel I ought to speak differently of different things.* Whom do we trust? Who is telling this story? How do we begin to piece these fragments together when there is no anchorage? The quarrel in *Straying* is inward and outward; it is shifting, crossing boundaries, entering new spaces.

All of these shifting modes of address have an impact on space. Nick Halpern argues that the question of address in the lyric poem is not a question of

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[212] 'I am attracted to ellipsis, to the unsaid, to suggestion, to eloquent, deliberate silence … It is analogous to the unseen; for example, to the power of ruins … they haunt because they are not whole, though wholeness is implied: another time.' Glück, *Proofs and Theories*, 73.
[213] Helen Vendler, *Poems, Poets, Poetry*, 179. Quoted in Hedley, *Lyric Utterance*, 2.

overhearing or being invited to listen, but being invited to inhabit the 'space' that the speaker in the poem inhabits.[214] Halpern argues that this inhabitation happens by way of language, where the language seduces the reader to speak the words themselves, as if they had written them.[215] The notion of inhabitation points toward seeing and experiencing *Straying* as a poem. Fletcher and Halpern's arguments are made literal in *Straying*.

This Voice does not only make a simple call for inhabitation – the audience is obviously inhabiting the installation on the most basic and literal level. She also appeals to the audience to inhabit the myriad different spaces that the She conjures. This call is also repealed, however, because there are other competing narratives: in the multiple stories that she re-tells, that are not hers, and also the images which call the audience away from the voice and toward the screen. In this double movement we feel a haunting, a half-presence – this is not the unbroken and available environment that Fletcher and Halpern both speak of. The environments in the installation are fragmented, multiple, incomplete.

The shifting address of the voice-over makes and unmakes space: both space that She 'occupies' and also spaces for the audience to occupy. In this way the audience is given space to occupy various subjectivities. Boundaries between spaces are made and unmade; a stable sense of space, and of self, is difficult to establish. The audience is witnessing a quarrel taking place, but they are also taking part in this quarrel, standing in the middle of an intimacy that is shared between the voice and the image. However, they are also standing in the abyss that keeps them apart. The audience is neither here nor there; they are shuttled between spaces and subjectivities. Perhaps this gives rise to the feeling of being unmoored, of dislocation.

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[214] Halpern is extending Angus Fletcher's provocation in *A New Theory for American Poetry* (2006), that it is possible for the poem to create a kind of 'verbal construct' in which we can dwell, an environment that surrounds us. Nick Halpern, "Louise Glück's "I"." *Literature Compass* 2 (2005): 3.
[215] He evokes Barthes' notion of 'self-presence' where, in the act of uttering another's words we feel not a sense of self, but a sense of 'self-presence'. Halpern's claim is that poetry offers language which the reader desires to speak because the words are almost more 'perfect' than ones they could have ever uttered; 'there is a more intense relation to other people's speech.' Ibid., 2

The moving images play an important role in this fragmentation, in the paradoxical pull towards inhabitation and then away to the side of witnessing. I say 'witnessing' here because it is not only a matter of language. We are not only hearing, overhearing or uttering words; we are also engaging with pictures. The images displace the Voice. The images unground the anchors that the Voice finds, loses, searches for again. In relation to the image, the Voice herself plays witness and it is as if her entire project is to move towards inhabitation of the screen. The Voice uses language to reach towards her beloved, just as the reader might move toward inhabiting and uttering 'the poet's' speech.

We find here, again, some parallels between poetry and the kind of cinema that I would call poetic. It is this element of pointing beyond itself, creating the sense of a large compass, that refers to multiple times, spaces and histories.[216] Often, in cinema, this is a question of how one might treat time and duration. For example, in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to Matthew* (1964) there are many instances of close-ups on a face whose narrative function is to communicate that this character is observing a particular event taking place within the diegetic space but just outside the frame. The long duration of these shots begins to exceed this basic narrative function: it opens up a space of contemplation that reaches beyond, outside this singular moment, and towards other times, places and people. We are thrust into a kind of silence, the pregnant moment of suspension that disrupts the flow of narrative time and reaches towards other spiritual and abstract dimensions.

The relationship between poetry and documentary cinema has been the specific focus throughout the research. On the side of the poem we have: what it feels like. On the side of the documentary we have: evidence. We have established that poetic and documentary impulses are not so far apart: each is interested in gaining access to and expressing something about the 'truth' of experience.

The evidentiary or documentary status of the moving image in *Straying* is significant, and it is significant in its relationship to the Voice. The images are 'documentary' in so far as they are all of public, external spaces. They are simple set-ups that record, it would seem, 'nothing in particular'. As I mentioned earlier, this footage happened 'on the side' of the 'official' recording of interviews. I was recording this 'unofficial' footage but not knowing what I was looking for. My intention was not to create poetic images, but simply to 'make records' of 'being

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[216] Recall Williams' documentary palimpsest.

there'. I recorded simply so that something might reveal itself to me as 'significant'.

It is difficult to point to the very moment that this work developed its 'poetic' capacity. Remember Tarkovsky's attitude that the poetic is a philosophy, how one looks at the world. For this reason I call it a poetic attention. The use of the voice-over, however, concretised and formalised this aspect by literally playing out the search for the correct, or poetic, aspect – how to look at the images so that they might reveal a deeper, more profound, more telling inner quality. She speaks to the images in an attempt to access something more than what appears as only evidence. The Voice uses her 'poetic intelligence': that which

> lacks … such focused investment in conclusion, being naturally wary of its own assumptions. It derives its energy from a willingness to discard conclusion in the face of evidence, its willingness, in fact, to discard anything.[217]

Evidence is not the end -point, it does not imply conclusion. The poetic Voice serves to see beyond the apparently evidentiary in the documentary image, to move beyond the surface of fact and to ask more of it. The Voice insistently interrogates the images; She does not read their evidentiary status as 'closed' in terms of meaning or referentiality, but digs like an archaeologist to find what other histories these images touch on.

But the documentary status of the images is important. To discard conclusion in the face of evidence, as Glück would have us do, is not to diminish the importance of the significance of the footage *as* evidence. The documentary images bring the qualities of tenuousness and unexpectedness into the work. We do not know and we cannot predict what might happen: a window might close, a bird might take flight. Not only the audience, but the Voice as well, has

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[217] Glück, *Proofs and Theories*, 95.

this 'tenuous' relationship to the image. When the Voice speaks to the images with uncertainty, it confirms her as genuine. Or rather, it confirms the distance between the images and the Voice/filmmaker/me as a 'real' distance. [218] This is important because I want the audience to trust the Voice and her legitimate search for understanding in these images, these places and hence herself. I also want the audience to trust the Voice in her re-telling of other people's stories. Their documentary status is critical; this is the very creation of the palimpsest. I want the audience to know that these are indeed conversations this Voice, this filmmaker, had with people along this journey. However, I deliberately question the importance of these being 'true stories'. I place the seed of this doubt when the Voice says: this is a true story. Such a forthright declaration might suddenly seem disingenuous due to her insistence. Or at least the question of 'what is a true story' might be raised. Is such a designation important in how we engage with this work?

These images are documentary, these places are 'real'. The Voice is genuine. But their interaction is not unambiguous. In their relation they take on some poetic qualities; together, in their dissonance, they point beyond what each, on its own, is able to express. They do not come to any conclusions but point towards yet other histories and experiences.

The poetic structure of *Straying* is partly mobilised by its fragmented setup. The elements (images, voice) are splintered, but in that splintering I have been able to put them in such an arrangement that they begin a dialogue across the space. This space opens up for the excesses that are beyond the simply evidentiary. In the relation between the various elements in the installation we can witness the transformation of the object/image into poetic artefact, from concrete to abstract, from the banal to the extraordinary. As the Voice speaks to the building facades (although of course She may not be speaking to them

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[218] In this example the distinction between the Voice, the hand that took the images (within the narrative of the work) and my self as the filmmaker/researcher, is one that I deliberately do not make here because in this particular instance I think these ideas do operate at all of these levels and precisely because they are all part of the one 'persona'. I discuss this shortly in relation to Vivian Gornick's conception of the voice in non-fiction.

directly; whether the Voice sees what is playing on the screens is not certain), they take on various meanings, they stand -in for a number of other objects or times or places. As one word chimes with an image, we begin to see faces where we previously saw only windows.

This is the shape of my experience with the footage, consequently written into the work itself. This play between the poetic and the evidentiary found its realisation most explicitly when I started to speak to this footage which was silent, which did not give itself over to easy interpretation or unproblematic, unambiguous signification. The following section will address how and why this eventually became not only part of a method to dislodge the inertia I had reached with the project, but also a critical aspect of the installation and research as a whole.

*THE I-FILM*

I started to investigate the 'unofficial' footage, the footage of empty streets and rivers, footage that spoke to me of absence, of implied movement – or the potential for movement – but not the thing itself. The footage, while being of 'nothing in particular', still did not have the kind of unambiguous historical status that we sometimes wish of documentary footage.[219] This was evidence, but evidence of what? I tried to alleviate the ambiguity and silence by replaying the footage over and over in the hope of 'stabilising meaning'. I was still working within the old documentary assumption that reality can be 'held and reviewable for analysis … a world of evidence confirmed through observation'.[220] I willed the footage to 'speak', but it would not do so clearly or lucidly. The consequence of this constant return and review was not that meaning was stabilised or simply revealed itself, but that new questions started to arise in relation to my subject.

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[219] Renov, *Theorizing Documentary*, 8.
[220] Elizabeth Cowie, "The Spectacle of Actuality," in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, ed. Gaines and Renov, 19.

The question was essentially: why am I left with these images as a result of asking the question about the relationship between body and landscape? Why is it that I made these recordings in response to this question? What do these images then tell me about this question?

I started to use language to create a dialogue with the images in order to explore these questions. I thought that in speaking to the clips, they might speak back, the language might mine the image for significance.[221] I wrote various dialogues addressing the images directly, as in a conversation. At first, this was only a way towards finding new perspectives I had not considered, a new way to 'begin'. Through the process of writing and speaking, my own memory, imagination and desire arose as subject matter. Rather than simply offering a new perspective on how to read the images – and hence proceed by knowing how to edit them together into a cohesive story– this process revealed how my own experience of taking the footage was integrated into the work and how one single cohesive story was not one that I could tell.

This process showed me that the compass of the story was much larger than I had anticipated and that there were further layers to discover, much beyond the images that had been taken. This work was not only about putting images together. The images were only one step in a much larger process. To think back to Rouch, the unlatching of an event does not only happen at the meeting of the filmmaker and subject at the moment of recording. To work with the moving image is not only about using the camera to precipitate something in

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[221] The commentary in documentary films is an oft-employed trope. The quality and address of this commentary works variously across what is a large and various genre. From the Griersonian tradition, for example the 'Voice of God' in *March of Time*. Bill Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1983): 17-30. To 'illustrated radio' mode. This is what Channan calls the voice-overs that 'do not let the picture breathe.' Michael Chanan, "The Role of History in the Individual," in *The Cinema of Me*, ed., Alisa Lebow (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 18. To direct-address, omniscient narrator, to self-reflexive voice of the filmmaker (often found in the essay film). But these are not always relegated to one mode. For example, as Nichols identifies, as early as 1936 *Night Mail* 'employed a supposedly authoritative yet often presumptuous off-screen narration. In many cases this narration effectively dominated the visuals' (though this did not exclude the poetic or evocative, as in *Night Mail* and *Listen to Britain*). Nichols, *The Voice of Documentary*, 17. In *Straying* I work to establish an exchange between the image and the voice so that they are each suffocated and liberated by the other at different moments.

the profilmic event and then simply record it for presentation. The footage, once taken, can serve further to guide a deeper investigation. In this work, the footage posed more questions, it demanded a deeper engagement and investigation. The images demanded a voice-over. The relationship that was established between the voice and the image started to undo the borders that may have existed between process, theory, reality and imagination. The work found itself at the intersection between the theoretical and philosophical aspects of the research and the experience of gathering the material for the creative part of the research. In this, I am clearly implicated in the subject and theme of the work. The very moment when I abandoned a strict dedication to the 'documentary' was the moment that I started to engage with the documentary in the terms that Bruzzi describes: 'the text itself reveals the tensions between the documentary pursuit of the most authentic mode of factual representation and the impossibility of this aim'.[222]

The impossibilities, failures and deep disappointments of the work revealed themselves as part of the question I was asking about the relationship between the body and place. My inability to achieve audiovisually what I had set out to do became the subject of the work. This also helped me realise how heavily the proposition was built on my own experiences and memories relating to the place where this research was being enacted. This started to chime with the subject matter that I was drawn to in the footage: moments of hiatus, of suspension, of expectation; the moment before, rather than its actualisation; emptiness, stagnation, lack of anchorage, especially to bodies in the frame. This work was now quite explicitly becoming about searching, about mourning, about attempts at articulation that end in ellipses and are never quite fulfilled or expressed. These elements were part of my experience, both as a migrant and as an expat in Serbia attempting to make a documentary about the conciliation between body and landscape, about how one constitutes oneself in relation to the place one inhabits.

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[222] Bruzzi, *New Documentary*, 7.

I did not welcome this shift to an autobiographical tone; I thought of the autobiography, as Glück might put it, as a 'decanting of personality'.[223] This was certainly not my original intention or interest in relation to the project. However, Glück makes a distinction between this and an inward listening and attentiveness. In defence of Keats' use of the autobiographical, Glück says:

> His own life … afforded greatest access to the materials of greatest interest. That it was his hardly concerned him. It was a life, and therefore likely, in its large shapes and major struggles, to stand as a paradigm.[224]

Marcel Proust makes a similar claim when he says that a writer's introspection works to encourage the audience's introspection, giving them access to themselves.[225] Such an approach definitely informs this project.[226] I replaced the interview subject with empty squares. I wrote my own Voice in, but I also preserved the other voices that were part of the making of this work: I re-told the stories told to me in the interviews I conducted. I became the speaking/desiring subject that searches to make a confession: about the places she has inhabited, loved and lost. She continually returns to dreams and fantasies. These are confessions also. *See Figure 17.*

Legitimising this subjectivity is one feature of the first-person film, or I-film as designated by Linda Dittmar. The problem (or affordance) of this subjectivity is well articulated by Michael Renov: 'the subject of the documentary is the subject in the documentary, a space of 'complication' and 'co-implication.'[227] And

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[223] Glück, *Proofs and Theories*, 35
[224] Ibid., 36
[225] Ibid.
[226] Vivian Gornick, writes about the creation of a non-fiction persona that is and is not the writer: to use oneself in order to make larger sense of things. Vivian Gornick, "A Narrator Leaps Past Journalism," *New York Times* 6 may 2002 (2002).
[227] Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 2004), xxvi.

Figure 17





I repeat these stories, these other peo-
ple's words as an abstraction.

although I do not declare myself as a 'subject' in the work itself,[228] this interplay and 'complication' were a definitive turn in my approach and consequently formed the narrative frame for the voice-over.

I could not proceed with the project until I confronted this co-implication. This is pertinent to filmmaker Andreas Di Tella claiming that the 'I' in a documentary is an 'act of responsibility' where 'I assume responsibility for this story. I answer for it with my life. I answer for my ideas about film and art (and life) with my own life.'[229] The project is not about me, but I use my voice in order to vouch for its integrity, in order to take responsibility for the intentions of the work and to take responsibility in using other people's voices and words and stories in the work. This validates my claim that: this is a true story. I take responsibility for the contribution this work makes towards a reverberation that speaks of the body's desire for intimate knowledge of place.

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[228] According to Laura Rascaroli, an 'I-film' must declare itself so in order to earn the designation. Laura Rascaroli, "The Self-Portrait Film: Michaelangelo's Last Gaze," in *The Cinema of Me*, ed., Alisa Lebow (New York: Columbia University press, 2012), 62.
[229] Andreas Di Tella, "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime," in *The Cinema of Me*, Alisa Lebow, ed., (New York: Columbia University press, 2012), 35.

# SPACE

Along this road between documentary and poetry, I found the essay and the making of the essayistic self. In this section, I come to the point in the research when I needed space, I needed room and I needed to fill the room with bodies. "Bodies" here mean the screens that hang in the space and the body of the audience. This was not one of my imperatives, but rather emerged as a fundamental character of the work, which seemed to continually seek its subject.[230] There needed to be space so that we had room to think. There needed to be space so that we had room to move. There needed to be space so that the making and unmaking of the self could be enacted and witnessed, not simply shown or presented.

Marking transitive states is important in this section. One of these transitions is the move from one to another position in terms of the ontology of the image. The Voice makes this move and the audience along with her. Here we have a working –through of the question of why we are dealing with the moving image at all in relation to this question about the relationship between body and place.

In order to proceed, I would like to take on György Lukács's advice, even if only metaphorically: that 'the title of every essay is receded in invisible letters, by the words 'thoughts occasioned by'.[231]

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[230] Or rather, it knew its subject, but continually searched for a way to represent it, to hold onto it, hold it up and review it in the hand.
[231] György Lukács, *Soul and Form* (London: Merlin Press, 1974),15.

A form that can accommodate writing, that does not have one single and holistic meaning to impart – a writing that can capture a multiplicity of meaning – is the essay. Most importantly for this project, the essay can also capture the search for meaning (the kind of dialogue I have been drawing your attention to between the image and the voice, between the subject in and of the documentary). It was in an essayistic manner that this writing happened and so I work to preserve this passage in the way I offer it to the reader. Various theoretical ideas, formal discoveries and experiences needed to find their place and exert their influence in this exegesis. The essay helps to find coherence among fragments and contradictions; it finds this coherence in the very act of writing. I propose that the coherence is found through the creation of a field which we can traverse. I say field and not landscape because I deliberately do not want to imply that there are boundaries, but at the same time there is a sense that things are somewhat loosely held together because they coexist. To evoke the image of the field suggests that the eye can throw its gaze quite far, it can see all around, in all directions. As Nora Alter puts it: it is 'a form of cognitive perambulation.'[232]

Michel de Montaigne first defined this mode of writing with his *Essais* (1580), framing the short works as letters to his deceased friend.[233] This conceit speaks of the in-between, indeterminate spaces that Montaigne traverses in his writing: both personal and philosophical; intimate and formal. Montaigne is testing out various philosophical ideas as they might relate to everyday life in sixteenth-century France and, in so doing, crafting his own attitudes in regard to his subjects.[234] In this the process of thinking, crafting and following a certain idea or thought is made visible. And so too are the aporias and the fissures one

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[232] Nora M Alter, "Translating the Essay into Film and Installation," *Journal of Visual Culture* 6, (2007): 45.
[233] Michel de Montaigne, *The essays of Michel Eyquem de Montaigne* (Chicago : Encyclopaedia Britannica ,1952).
[234] *Essai* in French translates as 'attempt', 'try' or 'test'.

might encounter along the way. The form is flexible enough to work through these fissures by reaching towards other genres, other histories, other perspectives.

The essay form is about making sense of things, which implies a kind of flexible, ever-changing, malleable state – a playful trajectory. Max Bense describes this playfulness toward 'the object':

> He writes essayistically who writes while experimenting, who turns his object this way and that, who questions it, feels it, tests it, thoroughly reflects on it, attacks it from different angles, and in his mind's eye collects what he sees, and puts into words what the object allows to be seen under the conditions established in the course of writing.[235]

The last part of this rendering is particularly elucidating: 'under the conditions established in the course of writing'. The process establishes both form and content. This articulates its self-reflexive nature, where 'at every moment (it) must reflect on itself'.[236] Adorno asserts that it is 'without apology [that] the essay draws on itself the reproach that it does not know beyond a doubt just what is to be understood as the real content of concepts'.[237] This means that the concepts remain open and liable to change and contradiction, and it makes this condition explicit 'in the course of writing'.

This is not, however, a completely aimless writing, a writing where subjects are arbitrarily connected, but rather that the essayist 'thinks in fragments just as reality is fragmented and gains its unity only by moving through the fissures'.[238] This movement creates what Adorno calls a 'forcefield', allowing the fragments to 'crystallise into a configuration.'[239] Unity and structure are found from within.

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[235] Max Bense, "Über den Essay und seine Prosa," *Merkur* 1:3 (1947), 418 quoted in T. W. Adorno, "The Essay as Form", *New German Critique*, 32 (Spring-Summer, 1984), 164.
[236] Adorno, *The Essay as Form*, 170.
[237] Ibid., 160.
[238] Ibid., 164.
[239] Ibid., 161.

This forcefield brings theory and experience together. The essay 'absorbs concepts and experiences, so it absorbs theories.'[240] The very movement through fissures creates coherence. This to me implies that one must listen with one's poetic ear. Movement through fissures creates chiming among concepts. Chiming concepts are like skimming rocks on water, like the way the Voice brushes up against the screens in *Straying*. It happens and then it is gone.

But the essay form is not about a deliberate elusiveness. It argues against 'indisputable certainty' because it deems it impossible, a fallacy. For Adorno, being 'exposed to error' in this way connects it to the notion of 'learning':

> it must pay for its affinity with open intellectual experience by the lack of security, a lack which the norm of established thought fears like death. It is not so much that the essay ignores indisputable certainty, as that it abrogates the idea… [241] (This kind of thinking) does not advance in a single direction, rather the aspects of the argument interweave as in a carpet. The fruitfulness of the thoughts depends on the density of this texture.[242]

Again I will turn to my use of density to bring the notion of 'thinking' into the realm of the physical as opposed to only the abstract: 'the thinker does not think, but rather transforms himself into an arena of intellectual experience'.[243] Experience is crucial to Lukács, too: the essay helps express 'intellectuality, conceptuality as sensed experience, as immediate reality'.[244] So what is abstract becomes concrete, becomes available to the senses, which is to say: to the body. Through the process of thinking through these relationships, the self forms and undoes itself. Timothy Corrigan describes this very feature appearing in

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[240] Ibid., 166.
[241] Ibid., 161.
[242] Ibid., 160.
[243] Ibid., 160-1.
[244] Lukács, *Soul and Form*, 7.

Montaigne's work: 'movement from a self-expression undoing itself in the process of thinking through the dynamics of the world'.[245]

In this research project, it is not only the path of thought that we trace, but also the literal paths I trod. The 'process' here is not only one of thinking, but also of doing. My essayistic -self was 'constructed' by way of travelling around Serbia and taking moving images of it. It was further constructed by putting the images together, writing a voice-over and consequently offering this work up for yet another (re)constitution that the audience would enact: making and unmaking the work and the self in relation to that work.

STRAYING *AS ESSAY*

Timothy Corrigan and Nora Alter, cited in the above section, were not only writing about the essay as literary form, but drawing a direct lineage to the essay film. This lineage has been thoroughly addressed by Corrigan, Alter, and especially Laura Rascaroli.[246] I will not redo that work here. But I will look at how the essay film can be conceptualised as an 'approach', an 'intention' toward a subject, and how this absorbs the other modes and approaches used in the conduct of this research (specifically documentary and poetry). I will also examine why the subject matter itself is very well suited to this approach. Why the approach 'solved' some of the 'problems' I encountered. *See Figure 18.*
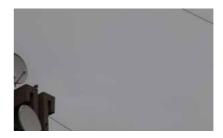
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[245] Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17.
[246] Rascaroli, Laura. "The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments." *Framework* 49.2 (2008): 24-47.

Figure 18





If I knew what I was looking for I might know what I have lost.

Once an audience is present in the installation the space becomes a site of public and private experience. In this sense, we might see the installation as an essayistic work. We have also previously considered this work a poem. Lukács calls the literary essay an 'intellectual poem', and Alexandre Astruc calls the essay film 'filmed philosophy'.[247] In *Straying*, the audience can 'perform' what the essayists achieve in the form of literature or film. This is made possible by virtue of the composition of the installation space.

As a discourse of 'loosening', 'fragmentation', 'digression' and 'excursion,'[248] the essay lends itself to redefining 'representational assumptions'[249] and forms, which make the essay so 'productively inventive'.[250] For this reason Rascaroli warns us against 'crystallising it into a genre.'[251] For Reda Bensmaia, the essay does not have a determinate genre because it is 'essentially plural', the 'matrix of all generic possibilities'.[252] These 'possibilities' suggest a way to work through aporia and to make this very 'work' visible. Montaigne's experience still resonates: 'I cannot keep my subject still … I do not portray being, I portray passing … If my mind could gain a firm footing, I would not make essays'.[253] To make this search visible is of particular use to this research project because it not only illuminates the attempt and act of making relationships between self and place, which is our subject, but also because it facilitates the exploration of 'the conditions of enunciation', which is a documentary concern.[254]

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[247] Alexandre Astruc, *The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Stylo* cited in Alter, *Translating*, 51.
[248] Roland Barthes, "Inaugural Lecture, College de France," in *A Barthes Reader*, Susan Sontag, ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 476.
[249] Corrigan, *The Essay Film*, 4.
[250] For this reason Nora Alter says it is the perfect mode to move into installation and other media settings. Alter, *Translating the Essay*, 44.
[251] Rascaroli, *Essay Film*,10. Renov calls it an 'anti-genre'. Michael Renov, "History and/as Autobiogrpahy; the Essayistic in Film and Video," *Framework* 2, no. 3 (1989),12.
[252] Reda, Bensmaia, *The Barthes Effect: The Essay as Reflective Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987), 90-91. This may imply a very loose and therefore all-inclusive genre. However, some works simply are not essays, and Rascaroli makes a good argument for what we might exclude. See Rascaroli, *The Essay Film*, 42-43.
[253] Renov, *History and/as Autobiography*, 11.
[254] Ibid., 7.

This leads Renov to claim that 'the essayistic is always research, the discovery of self and object (of object through self) as an active, critical process'.[255] The essay is turned outwards and inwards, a

> subjection of an instrumental or expressive self to a public domain as a form of experience that continually tests and undoes the limits and capacities of that self through that experience … demands both loss of self and the rethinking and remaking of the self.[256]

This resonates as a mode of research and expressivity for a work that is expressly about the relationship of the self to place, their mutual constitution. This 'constitution', however, is not a fixed or identifiable object; it is always in the making. So what the essayistic offers is the expression of a continual and changing dialogue between the self and the world, a searching for a form that will not find its end. All of these articulations refer specifically to the narrative theme. The Voice attempts quite literally to lose herself, and rethink and remake herself, through, with, from, the image.

But it also refers to the experience I as researcher had in conducting the research. I was thrust into a relationship with the world I was recording, thrust into a relation with the people I was interviewing, challenging my own status, challenging my own history across this region, my experiences, memories and assumptions, my decisions for conducting the research there. This experience troubled my subjectivity in relation to the material. In the end, I documented a public and a private history, mine and that of others. For Renov

> there is no contradiction between the elemental documentary impulse … and the exploration of subjectivity; indeed, it is their obsessive convergence that marks the essayistic work.[257]

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[255] Ibid., 11.
[256] Corrigan, *The Essay Film*, 17.
[257] Renov, *The Subject of Documentary*, 81.

But as he also claims, 'essays tend willingly, and often aggressively, to undermine or disperse that very subjectivity as it becomes subsumed in the world it explores'.[258] This is a condition that seems particularly suited to the exploration of displacement where fracture is one of the strong conditions of the experience and where there is difficulty in constituting the self in relation to place. The essay form gave me room to thematise these ideas.

The installation setting makes the realisation of this work a physical, concrete entity rather than just a conceptual or narrative form – the screens do indeed fracture the space. As previously discussed, the multiple screens offer a range of possibilities where the Voice makes and unmakes herself in relation to the image. I have also discussed how this space borders the public and the private and that, given its configuration, the audience themselves become part of the work. But more than that, the audience is implicated in the act of making and unmaking: they become accountable as individuals to the public (the other audience members). Corrigan's claim that 'essays describe and provoke an activity of public thought' which 'highlights and even exaggerates the participations of their audience'[259] is made literal in the installation setting. The individual audience member has a private experience in public, in the presence of others.[260] How one moves about, the distances one keeps, become visible and open to interrogation by other people in the room. They also become part of the making of the 'public', where the dialogue is not only between the viewer and the artwork but also among the viewers in the room.

In this case we are not speaking of audience as a collective, but in terms of the individuality of each audience member. The nature of the address of the Voice-over then is an 'I' that 'always clearly and strongly implicates a "you".[261] This is of foremost importance in the essay. The essayistic voice does not speak to a collective audience; the text must remain open enough so that it establishes

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[258] Renov, *History and/as Autobiography*, 19.
[259] Corrigan, *The Essay Film*, 55.
[260] This conjures the images of statues – their private and public status.
[261] Lebow, Alisa, ed. *The Cinema of Me* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 7.

a dialogue with each spectator where the dialogue is unique. This is the quality of the relationship Glück calls for when she says she likes to be needed by the poem as a reader. This means the poet asks genuine questions to which answers are sought. The other kind of poem expresses ideas that are already formed, a work that does not include the mistakes made along the way. An essayistic work is one in which 'readers must feel included in a true conversation, allowed to follow through mental processes of contradiction and digression'.[262]

In Spanish the term for "essay" has particular etymological significance where *ensayo* also appears in the expression for 'trial and error':  *ensayo y error*. In English, too, essay is etymologically connected to 'doing', to 'trying out', which implies the possibility of failure. For filmmaker Andreas Di Tella, 'if there is no trial and error all we hear is the Voice of authority'.[263] Di Tella had a similar journey to my own in the making of his film *Fotografias* (2007), where he made a journey from Argentina to his ancestral home of India.[264] He too felt he was not capturing with his camera the things he thought he might. His trip also felt like a failure, a feeling and reality he had to address upon his return to Argentina for editing. He sifted through his fragments of footage looking for something that might speak of his experience. What he found most revealing was that there was no such footage to be found. Di Tella too looked to 'the essay' form to express most accurately the process he went through in making the work.

Failure itself can also be revealing: 'the failure of a project, or the mistake of an idea crashing against reality, can express the truth of that idea or the meaning of that project'.[265] This is precisely the experience I have been documenting for you here. It is also the movement that is enacted in the installation space (the audience goes through a process of trial and error in piecing the work together). The essayistic audiovisual installation accommodates

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[262] Phillip Lopate, "In Search of the Centaur: The Essay-Film" *The Threepenny Review*, no. 48, Winter (1992): 19.
[263] Rascaroli, *The Essay Film*, 40.
[264] Di Tella, *The Curious Incident of a Dog in the Nighttime*
[265] Ibid., 40.

various levels of experience and discovery (including the failures), those of the researcher, the audience and the interview subjects' stories. It yields a work that simultaneously interrogates its own mode as a tool towards these discoveries, because of the self-reflexive address that the essayistic favours.

What is to follow is a discussion of how the move from the cinema into the gallery created a hybrid work that capitalises on the affordances of each medium in order to challenge and extend the ideas presented so far in this exegesis. Marks claims for 'hybrid cinema' that its strength is its ability to 'forgo any transparent relationship to the reality it represents, and to make evident the knowledge claims on which it is based'.[266] This is performed in *Straying* and further problematized in the installation setting by virtue of 'activating' the lived time-space of the audience in that setting. Questions of representation are reconfigured in this context and the question of expression and experience in relation to the images arise as critical in furthering the conversation about how a body meets space.

Historically, the rise of the gallery film was seen as responding to the 'dark space' of the cinema auditorium by working against cinema's apparent focus on immersion; rather, the gallery film happened in the 'white cube' of the gallery space where the apparatus is 'revealed'.[267] The early argument made in favour of this shift was that the gallery film offered a more critical space, one that nurtured self-reflexivity in a manner unavailable in the dark immersive spaces of the cinema. In recent years, a number of scholarly works have sought to show how the two practices are not marked by such distinct differences; there are works in

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[266] Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, 8.
[267] See Trodd, Tamara Jane, ed. *Screen/Space : The Projected Image in Contemporary Art*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011.

both the gallery and the cinema that demonstrate the use of material and conceptual tools to create immersive, affective *and* critical spaces.[268]

Although the installation has its roots in contemporary art practice, this is not to exclude the influence of cinema. In fact, their marriage leads Chris Dercon to pose an irreverent question: where is cinema? According to him: it is everywhere; in the contemporary world, the cinema has moved into the gallery space and started its 'next phase'.[269] Catherine Fowler suggests that a dialogue between film theory and the gallery film is an important one to establish, as the gallery film's ambition is 'often to explore and expand our understanding of what cinema is and could be'.[270]

The installation as an art practice is a hybrid one, working across disciplines but always inclusive of the space of its 'happening'.[271] I say 'happening' because the exhibition space in an installation is part of the experience of the work; it includes the real space and time of the audience and sets up a direct dialogue between the space they occupy and any other dimensions of time and space as articulated in the artwork (for example, depicted in the moving image). The space of the installation is a performative space, where the audience and the artwork perform their interaction. Each member of the audience has their own 'dialogue' (expressed in the way they move through the space, the way they sit, how long they stay) and this affects every other audience member in the room who is having their own dialogue with

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[268] This distinction seems to have been more a problem in the critical debates which were marked by historical factors, as opposed to a divergence or difference in the practices. See in particular Trodd, ed., *Screen/Space*. Expanded cinema, avant-garde cinema and video art have shared critical, aesthetic and formal interests. See for example Iles, Chrissie. *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977*. New York: Whitney Museum, 2001. See also Rush, Michael. Video Art. London: Thames & Hudson, 2007. See also Comer, Stuart. ed., *Film and Video Art*. London: Tate, 2009. For this reason I think it is valid and not amiss to have excluded an in-depth discussion of the community of practice in contemporary video art. However, I have also already addressed this in terms of my own background having been in cinema rather than visual art practice. In light of the lack of distinction that I am arguing for, however, this would make the present caveat unnecessary.

[269] Chris Dercon, "Gleaning the Future from the Gallery Floor," *Senses of Cinema* 28 (2003): 2.

[270] Catherine Fowler, "Room for experiment: Gallery Films and Vertical Time from Maya Deren to Eijaliisa Ahtila," *Screen* 54:4 (2004): 327.

[271] Nicolas De Oliveira, *Installation Art* (London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 7.

the work and affecting those of others.[272] This is not unique to *Straying*. Julie Reiss defines the 'essence' of installation art to be a participatory role on the side of the spectator.[273] The installation as an art form regards the spectator 'in some way … as integral to the completion of the work', where 'the meaning evolves from the interaction between the two.'[274] Not only is the work in dialogue with the audience; we can say that the space too is in dialogue with the audience, and the interaction of the three make up the work.[275] Positioning the audience in direct and active relation to the audiovisual material and setting up multiple times and spaces in direct dialogue with one another are critical aspects of this research. What this multiplicity and relationality enable is the kind of three-dimensional space of the essay, a kind of 'language of architecture' which is a social space where a dialogue between public, private and communal is established.[276]

Fowler's discussion proceeds by way of Deren's concept of a film's 'poetic structure' in order to illuminate how the gallery film can directly enact, or spatialise, the notion of 'vertical time'. To briefly revisit Deren's concept: her intentions are to suspend linear time in order to explore a single moment more fully. It 'probes the ramifications of the moment, and is concerned with its qualities and its depth'.[277] In Deren's single-screen -cinema works, she makes 'space' (depth) through time (duration); by suspending linear time, she "dwells" on a single moment.[278] As effectively pointed out by Fowler, the linearity that

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[272] The installation space is a collection of rhythms, where we individually and collectively make rhythms through movement. We might say then, after Lefebvre, that we are making place in this very room and that part of the experience of *Straying* is listening to the rhythms being made and 'hearing' the place with our bodies.
[273] Julie Reiss, *From Margin to Centre: The Space of Installation Art* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), xiii.
[274] Ibid.
[275] This is one of the first definitions of installation art, offered by Rose Lee Goldberg in *'Space as Praxis'*: space in active dialogue with the things and people it contains' in Nicolas De Oliveira, *Installation Art*, 8.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Maya Deren, *Poetry and the Film*, 175. See Fowler's discussion on how Deren achieves this in her films in *Room for Experiment*, 328.
[278] See Fowler for example. Ibid.

binds cinema is immediately 'resolved' in the installation setting – which is to say it is not bound by a linear imperative.[279]

The spatialisation of vertical time is critical to *Straying*. What I have been calling "the pregnant moment" becomes a "place" in which the audience can dwell. Multiple times, histories and experiences are literally and physically hanging around the audience in the room, by virtue of the multiple screens. These 'times' do not move forward; they come into contact with one another 'interrupting the flow and allowing … pensiveness'.[280] Space for pensiveness in *Straying* is important to the quality of engagement with the subject matter. I want to give the audience time and space to find their own images and 'project' them into the space. I want to occasion the making of a palimpsest, where the audience begins to have their own connection to the material. This is a process that might give rise to the creation of a density that becomes palpable to the audience member as they move through it.

There is no single or linear progression through the space either, in terms of how one might navigate one's way around the room or the order in which one might engage with the screens. The time each audience member spends with any one of the three screens is also undetermined, 'where beginning and end are not conditioned or conditional, but merely random'.[281] Another escape from

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[279] Ibid., 329. I do note that an audience may often search for a linear 'story', and will potentially be able to construct one. The images and the voice do indeed deliberately coincide at times in order to give the audience this kind of 'satisfaction' in unity. The work also simultaneously works to deny the audience this 'pleasure in completeness' through its fragmentary nature. This tension and release is an articulation of losing and finding.
[280] Ibid., 338.
[281] Chris Dercon, "Gleaning the Future", 2. I would assume to give the audience a more engaged agency than one that is 'merely random'.

linear time is the fact that the work plays on a loop.[282] This raises the question of editing and 'what it means to juxtapose images not simply in time but also in space'.[283] In *Straying*, each audience member effectively becomes an editor in their autonomy to choose which screen to look at when and for what length of time.[284] As Fowler says of Shirin Neshat's double-screen works, this process offers 'the possibility both of something being gained and something being lost through the combination of the two'.[285] This connects to the overall subject of this research and the inability to (re)constitute one complete version of the self, or of a place, and the need to continually make and re-make versions of the self in relation to these places as they play out on the screens. There is a sense that there is always something else happening some place else, which we cannot take into our experience of the work and the version we are presently engaging in.

The arrangement of the screens in *Straying*, the positioning of the screens in the middle of the space, transforms them from simply projection surfaces into 'sculptural objects' where the frame of the screen becomes an

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[282] Malcolm LeGrice makes an argument for why multiscreen installation work does not offer a space of deep engagement and contemplation: 'I have largely rejected this form (multi screen installation) because of the transience of the viewers' engagement and consequent lack of depth in time-based art in gallery. This lack of sustained attention and duration veers work towards concept and idea rather than engaged experience'. "Improvising time and image"*, in *Filmwaves*, 14, (2001): 15-19, quoted in Fowler, *Room for Experiment*, 330. I largely concur with LeGrice's sentiments, and for this reason I think the work must have an element of seduction, to invite the audience to stay and engage in a sustained way. This is connected to the notion of needing your reader/viewer, making room for them. I do this with the quality of address by the Voice, which is an appeal. Disengagement, however, is also an experience, it also tells us something, and to this end, disengagement, or indeed any kind of response in *Straying* has revelatory potential.
[283] Fowler, *Room for Experiment*, 337.
[284] Of course I edited each of the three tracks, and I worked to both "synchronise" and counterpoint the three tracks in relation to the Voice. But as editor in this process I am bound by linear progression. My intentions in editing were to create chimes, associations and counterpoints between each of the elements at each point in the work. This was the loose approach which often spawned happy coincidences that revealed an otherwise hidden depth and association amongst the various elements in the work. Each clip I used is the actual duration of the clip, i.e. not edited by me to achieve a certain rhythm in any one sequence. This choice was made on the side of the documentary, on the side of wanting chance and fortune to play their part. But this editing process is only one part of how the work might be viewed.
[285] Fowler, *Room for Experiment*, 337.

important boundary between off-frame and off-screen space.[286] We must confront the significance of the frame that makes the boundary between the diegetic world of the moving image, projected within its boundaries and the space outside the frame/screen, which is the space of the gallery. It makes of the frame an 'axiomatic point of tension'[287] between the 'off-frame' space (material space around the frame, that is, the space of the gallery, the installation space), the 'off-screen' space (the imaginary or fictional field suggested or evoked by elements in the work) and the actual space on the screen, the moving image space.[288]

*Straying* is a public and a private space, where public and private acts are performed.[289] It is a liminal space that we occupy, constituting both an outside and inside perspective. The Voice shares the same aural space as the audience, her voice resonates into a shared, public space. But you might also see the Voice vibrating inside the installation space as a voice vibrates inside the body – the geography closest in, the most intimate and private of spaces. Her address, however, her obsessive reach towards many different times and places and people's stories, also splinters any sense of unity. You might say that She splinters the body.

In some sense the audience can be seen as rupturing the space between the Voice and the image. The re-constitution of the self through the image is fraught, tenuous. The audience is placed quite literally right into the middle of this relationship. But their role is not only to rupture, they are also the only ones that are able to suture this splintered self.

The liminal space of the installation, or its simultaneously outside and inside status, is partly facilitated by the materiality of the screen objects. The screens are deliberately sheer, light, ethereal. They hang suspended from the

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[286] Fowler, *Into the Light*, 253.
[287] Ibid., 255.
[288] 'Off-frame' and 'Off-screen' as defined by Pascal Bonitzer (1971), see Fowler Ibid., 256.
[289] This would not hold true if each audience member had a personal headphone, and hence there was no resonant sound in the room.

roof and are of a size that does not overwhelm the audience member. As audience members move around, their silhouettes are inscribed onto the screens and the images that play on them. These bodies are there and not there. Again it is an iteration of an in-between space, on its way from, and towards, some place else. Perhaps this is a space of easy transformation. Perhaps the audience finds this ease and finds easy transport from their own dream space, memory space or imagined space. *See Figure 19*.

Another 'fourth screen' on which the audience projects their imaginary world can be a shared screen on which the Voice too can project her own images. The Voice conjures images that do not play on the screens in the room, She evokes times and places not depicted, but together the Voice and the

Figure 19



Crisis of desire is crisis of the imagina-
tion. 'Crisis' meaning 'lack'.

It's all about distance.

audience constitute and occupy this 'elsewhere'.[290] The Voice and the audience can be said to share the space of the 'off-frame' and the 'off-screen'. None of these are stable or even guaranteed positions, they arise, subside. I have created the conditions for these possibilities – specifically enabled through the use of the screen as object and through the explicit use of the limits of the screen frame (while also still employing more traditional elements such as narrative).

The effect is that the audience can empathise with, and occupy, a range of subject positions. This is both an immersive and a self-reflexive environment. The audience can stand apart from the work as observers; they are also implicated in it. They can empathise with the Voice, they can identify with it. They can occupy an elsewhere with the Voice. They can project themselves into the image. At the same time, the Voice leads a dialogue with the image which takes on a more self-reflexive tone: considering the image as object, what it affirms or fractures in terms of how we constitute our relationship to place. The work as a whole, in the traversal between these various spaces, asks: how might these images alleviate feelings of displacement, loss and mourning?

This is a question the Voice in *Straying* wrestles with by trying out various relations to the image. She is testing out how the image might guide her towards a reconciliation with her self and with the place She desires to inhabit.[291] The question becomes one that hinges on the ontology of the moving image: what is the relationship between the image and the reality it depicts? This question can be framed in terms of temporality: on the one hand, the photograph depicts an object as it was in a past moment. In certain moments, the Voice sees the images thus: it seems She has taken these images in order to preserve the

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[290] Pierre Huyghe writes about an 'elsewhere' as that which 'refers to another time or another space', constituted together with viewer and artwork; an elsewhere occupied together. Catherine Fowler, "Remembering Cinema 'Elsewhere': From Retrospection to Introspection in the Gallery Film," *Cinema Journal* 51:2 (2012): 36.
Consider also Gadamer: 'we both elicit the image from things and imaginatively project the image into things.' *The Relevance*, 17. This relationship is bound by the work itself, what we project is not anything whatever, it is inspired by the work.
[291] Presumably this place is the place on screen. However, this is already complicated by the fact that there are three screens and, hence, potentially, (at least) three places.

places depicted in them. She has preserved them so She can keep returning to them in order to reconstitute her self in relation to the past that they represent. The pathos comes from the fact that, as André Bazin claims in his seminal work 'The ontology of the photographic image': 'we no longer believe in the ontological identity of model and image', a 'preservation of life by a representation of life.'[292] The Voice is reconstituting her self out of an impossibility, a passed reality. Even in recognition of the photograph as an artefact depicting a reality in the past, the image fails the Voice. She reviews the image in order to see her own traces of having been there. According to the Voice the images are not fulfilling their representational power; She cannot find her self depicted in them. She speaks to them to rescue them from passing out of being because perhaps on the second or third or fifth viewing she might just catch a glimpse of what she desires – but this is a futile practice.[293] *See Figure 20.*

On the other hand, we might consider Bazin's claim for the photograph as having a positive value, an agency in the present as something more than a depiction of a moment past. According to Bazin, a photograph 'affects us like a phenomenon in nature, like a flower or a snowflake'.[294] The photograph is an 'increase'; it does not serve the purpose of representing the subject depicted in it, but is rather a thing in itself, has the power of beauty as photograph, not as representation of the beauty depicted; 'photography actually contributes something to the order of natural creation instead of providing a substitute for it'.[295] This 'implies the possibility of forming relations to objects in photographs

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[292] André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," *Film Quarterly* 13:4 (1960): 5. Bazin here is referring to the 'mummy complex', which extends to consequent practices around statuary.
[293] This is the sense we might get from the repetition, the continual return to the same subject matter from different angles. Even though we see, we cannot make sense or meaning from what is represented.
[294] Bazin, *The Ontology of the Photographic Image*, 7.

[295] Ibid., 8.

Figure 20                    This is the fifth time we have seen this
                             very image. It comes back and I know
                             I've seen it before but each time it
                             comes back differently.

that are not possible with respect to objects in the world'.[296] If we consider the image as an 'increase in being', then the images might reveal what is otherwise unavailable to experience.[297] The Voice has taken these photographs because they may give her access to these places which She otherwise would not have. The images might act as a conduit towards the place the Voice desires to inhabit.

The Voice also speaks to the image as if it is of the present. The image as image, in its positive value, is not depicting something that has passed, but a place and event happening at the moment of its projection. The Voice sets up the real possibility of her being able to step into this image, into these places that play on the screen. But of course there will inevitably be a moment when we lapse back into understanding these images as having occurred, as being of a passed moment (this is the moment when we catch a glimpse of the frame of the screen). We lapse back when She speaks in the past tense. I intend a strong sense of loss in these moments. *See Figure 21*.

To take Bazin's concept of 'transferal', where some level of reality is transferred onto the image, then perhaps, as Remes suggests, it goes the other way too: the level of reality that is the 'increase' in a photograph can be transferred onto our physical reality. The implication is that, if the Voice can affect the image, then perhaps She can also affect her relationship to the place – the reality that the image depicts. But the images do not cooperate, they come, they go, they turn to black, they do not seem to 'hear' the Voice and her plea.

These shifts in perspective and consideration of the moving image and its relationship to reality are enabled by the installation setting, where the image is both a sculptural object and a space of immersion. We might consider that, in

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[296] Daniel Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics." *Critical Inquiry* 32 (2006): 452.
[297] 'Increase in being' is how Gadamer writes about art: 'here 'representation' does not imply that something merely stands in for something else as if it were a replacement or substitute that enjoyed a less authentic, more indirect kind of existence. On the contrary, what is represented is itself present in the only way available to it … the work of art does not simply refer to something, because what it refers to is actually there. We could say that the work of art signifies an increase in being.' *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, 35.

Figure 21





A stirring of the inner landscapes. I used to think there would be evidence, some-where, of this.

this making and unmaking of various relationships to the image and hence to reality, and if this new association to the image is also transferred to our reality, then the experience the audience has in the installation space, going on this same journey of making and unmaking relationships to the image, maybe changes their own relationship to reality: new knowledges, new awareness of place and how we constitute ourselves in terms of it. This movement between various orders of reality, between the ontological ambiguity of the moving image, is a productive difficulty. It precipitates questions around what orders of reality constitute our experience of place.

One other possibility we have not yet considered, is that these are the Voice's memory images. That the tension I have so often mentioned is actually the kind of internal struggle, or quarrel that Vendler claims for the lyric address. As the Voice speaks, the images recur on the screen of her memory. The audience is privy to this most intimate and subjective of experiences. The Voice in the installation herself could not answer these questions for us. At one moment she considers whether it is actually the images that are giving rise to her own Voice. As the images play, the light and the movement give rise to a voice that is buried either in the image or the places the image depicts. The voice rises like vapour, dead, but excavated by the play of light. The image and the soundtrack in this version are united after all, but dead, only fragments of the past, a ruin. *See Figure 22*.

Figure 22







The most frightening moment was the moment I wondered whether the voice can be an apparition, in the way images are apparitions.

Or the images performing an archaeology of the voice.

We have already been addressing the complicated relationship between image and voice. I would like to specifically address this topic in light of the discussion on space – how does space complicate this relationship between voice and image? The installation context enacts and extends Marks' ideas around how disjunction between sound and image is an interplay between the seeable and sayable, which approach 'each other asymptotically, showing each other to be false even as they require each other to be true'.[298] I want to highlight what Marks identifies as a dependency between image and sound, even while they displace one another. The Voice in the installation reaches toward the image, and the image toward the Voice. They both reach toward various times and places, toward multiple selves. Both look for one another, seek each other so that they might affirm memories, might fulfil or complete desires, bodies, selves. This evokes a crisis of image and language as each displaces certainty and truth in the other.

We can consider the space between sound and image as the physical space the audience occupies. For Marks, this third space is the space of touch. But she is writing figuratively; the third space is evoked as a subjective experience. The individual cannot dwell (ie be physically immersed) in this third space as it is theorised by Marks. The installation, however, sets up a space that is both concrete, a place where we dwell, and this other figurative space between sound and image. The audience is physically thrust into the unstable, unidentifiable place where meaning has to be continually made in the interstices of what can be articulated. It is the space of both unity and fragmentation, enmeshing and instability.

I will address how this relationship between sound and image in the installation problematises the relationship between body and place by first

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[298] Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, 30.

looking at how this trope, the disjunction between sound and image, is used in cinema. Filmmaker Marguerite Duras uses the disembodied voice in *India Song* (1975) to explore issues around fragmented identity and dislocation. The film opens with an image of a slowly descending sun and a 'beggar-woman' singing in a foreign tongue. Two other female voices speak; they conjure people and places from the past, they feed fragments of memories to one another. Do you remember? says one voice to the other: yes, I remember. These voices conjure other places outside those we see represented on screen; these are the places of nightmare, dream, desire and death. The use of off-screen sound in *India Song* creates a strong sense of displacement. Even when bodies eventually appear on screen, the voices we hear do and do not belong to these bodies. They sometimes tell stories about them, they sometimes speak as if the images we watch are from the past. But the voices always remain disembodied, at a distance from the image. The words in Duras' film skim the surface of the image: they do and do not confirm one another. They create a kind of echo. The voices haunt their own bodies. They lean towards the image and the impossibility of the desire for embodiment is palpable.

In *Straying,* the Voice is also disembodied. She also speaks to the images, but this Voice speaks with urgency, not to tell a story, but to piece her own body back together. Part of this reconstitution of the body is a search for a closeness to the places showing on the screens. The Voice wants to touch the screen, because the screen is like the skin of the landscape. If She can touch the screen, it might be like touching the landscape. But more than this, the Voice yearns to be enfolded into the screen; She is looking for a place she can embed herself. How should She speak? What should She say? What images does She need to conjure apart from those we see? What secrets must She share? But She is consigned to wandering the surface, like skin.[299]

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[299] This image comes from Michel Chion describing a voice that occupies a liminal space where it can neither occupy a body on screen, or the 'removed position of the image presenter'. *The Voice in Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 140.

The Voice not only addresses what is represented in the image, She also addresses the image as object. This level of self-reflexivity is certainly not impossible in cinema; however, the installation setting creates a context where this kind of self-reflexivity is enmeshed in the entire architectural structure of the installation. This works to maintain an easy exchange from one perspective, address, world or subjectivity into another; it is not a jarring shift. *See Figure 23.*

You might say there is a battle for origins here: where and with whom does this story begin? It is unclear whether the Voice gives rise to the images, or the images give rise to Voice. The Voice and image challenge the veracity of one another; they each displace a notion of truth onto the other and argue for primacy in the story. The dissonance in story becomes a dissonance in time and place, a difficulty in pinpointing any stable 'character', event or place.[300] The image persistently escapes the Voice; the Voice would colonise the image. The image does not cooperate on the level of representation. The images do not show what She speaks. Let us address, then, the subject matter in the frame.

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[300] This is also true because the Voice re-tells so many other people's stories, and addresses various others (using he, she, you, I)

Figure 23



I think I want to go back to that time
when we believed we could slip into
the shape of a lion, or a tree. And come
back again.

The moving image persistently returns to representations of statues. These statues are of human form and depicted from many perspectives. This depiction becomes an obsessive documentation of the figures in parks and public squares. Statues speak publicly and privately or occupy both public and private space. Often they are caught in some private moment of reflection or act. They stand in public squares, at the centre of towns. They are our public figures, the faces of our cities, histories and peoples. In *Straying,* the Voice sometimes addresses the statues directly, or so it seems. She addresses them both as statues and as actual figures embodying her object of desire. The statues' lifelessness in the form of lifelike bodies makes the absence of people more present. The Voice seems to coax the statues to life through her speech. As we watch these "bodies" on screen, we might feel the absent body of the Voice more acutely. Their static forms are pregnant with the potential to move, caught as they often are at the height of some significant action.[301]

The "birth" of the statue as it is told in Ancient Greek myth might help elucidate some narrative and thematic intentions for its dominance in the installation. This myth tells the story of how Athena accidentally kills her best friend Pallas.[302] In her mourning for her friend she builds a wooden statue in her likeness – the Palladium – dresses it in her own aegis and places it next to her own father. Athena sometimes comes to inhabit the Palladium, making its/her eyes burn and body perspire, bringing it/her to 'life'. The accident 'haunts Athena much the way she herself haunts the palladiums as an expression of her deep desire and sorrow'.[303] In this way the statue can be seen as a synecdoche, 'a part that bends or leans with desire toward wholeness or completion in a gesture of mourning for what is missing or lost'.[304] Athena can only be whole, or

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[301] Recall Lessing and *Laocoön*. See note 69 above.
[302] Kirstin S. Santilli, *Poetic Gesture* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 82.
[303] Ibid., 84.
[304] Ibid., 86.

complete, if she is reunited with Pallas; but the palladium is only a fragment that signifies the real Pallas. The Palladium then heralds the era of the lifeless statue: both a representation and a substitution.[305] The Palladium also played the role of protector of the city and marker of other significant sites: for example mileage on the road, and burial sites.[306] Statues immortalise the dead, but they also mark the site, they mark the dead body and the place where s/he was buried. The dead and the site are inseparable. The Voice speaks to the statues in the same way she speaks to the image. The Voice is like Athena, haunting these images like Athena haunted Pallas, so that she may bring her back to life.

In *Straying* it is not clear what bodies and places the statues mark; we might say they do not have a voice. The Voice is missing a body. They each bend towards each other: the image haunting the Voice, the Voice haunting these empty bodies and empty landscapes. She appeals to the statues on screen. She appeals to something She has lost, a dead or lost part of her self. Perhaps for a moment it may appear that the Voice articulates the stone bodies, completing their static movements. The camera seems to articulate them too as it probes them from various angles. In some moments you might be able to imagine them moving. These are gestures of mourning, gestures towards the past, towards memory that is fast disappearing.

For Alphonso Lingis, Antony Gormley's sculptural works reach toward these multiple directions of place, history and emotion:

> diagnostic instruments set up to reveal the city and the landscape to which its inhabitants belong. They are guideposts leading us into deeper layers of the geography of the town, marking intersections of ancient pilgrimage and trade routes that gave rise to the town … They mark sites where the emotions of its inhabitants make contact with this deep structure.[307]

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[305]  Ibid.

[306] George Steiner, "Cosmogony," Chapter 9, in *The Owl's Legacy*, written by Chris Marker (Film International Television Production and La Sept,1989).

[307] Alphonso Lingis, "Inner Space," *Mosaic-a Journal For The Interdisciplinary Study Of Literature* 43, no. 2 (2010): 42.

The statue has a revelatory power; it is not just a marker but a passage. You might say it is a passage towards the 'hidden resemblances' within this 'deep structure' that holds our connectedness to a place.[308]

Gormley turns towards a similar attitude in his own approach to sculpture. For Gormley, statues are 'something coming up from under the earth, becoming as we all are earth above ground, but retaining a feeling of having been hidden and then revealed'.[309] Gormley's description maintains an 'always already there' quality to the statue; emerging at some propitious moment. The disposition and focus on interconnectedness are resonant with Martin Heidegger's conception of 'dwelling', which might help us extend this conversation from statues to other kinds of built forms, and hence how we might think of not only the statues in the images but also other natural and built forms that are depicted.

For Heidegger, the interconnectedness that both Gormley and Lingis identify is a gathering together of what he calls the 'fourfold': earth, sky, divinities and mortals.[310] When we gather we build and we build so that we may dwell: 'Man is in so far as he dwells'.[311] We build bridges, buildings and statues to mark place, to make sites. It is about "making significant" rather than marking something already significant. For example, to build a bridge makes the bank: 'the bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream'.[312] When we build structures, we also bring meaning to the things around them.

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[308] This 'deep structure' recalls Steiner on poetry and the 'unnumbered furnishings of reality through which a poem incarnates', the 'highly active context, a corpus, possibly an entire world of supporting, echoing, validating, or qualifying material.' *On Difficulty*, 265. Note Steiner's use of 'corpus', a living body of associations, a deep structure of connectedness.

[309] Gormley, Antony. "Learning to Think." Quoted in Lingis, *Inner Space*, note 7, 44.

[310] Heidegger, Martin. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper Collins, 2001. I do not adopt Heidegger's conception in its totality, and particularly the central idea of the fourfold as a kind of unity, completeness, all-encompassing being. I am interested in fractures. However, the multiplicity of what is gathered, what is made room for, does resonate with this work.

[311] Ibid., 145.

[312] Ibid.,150.

Gathering is also about making space, not just about building, but also about making room for dwelling. This is a double movement, something like the cubist artwork that moves towards and away from itself, something like the idea of evolving and devolving simultaneously. This double movement accommodates Heidegger's notion of where the human fits in this relation to the 'fourfold':

> when we speak of man and space, it sounds as though man stood on one side, space on the other. Yet space is not something that faces man. It is neither an external object nor an inner experience.[313]

Heidegger dismantles this idea of the internal and external and focuses more on the process of 'making', of movement and flow from one into the other.

These are descriptions of ideal states. States such as these for a displaced, disembodied, dislocated person such as the Voice, are unavailable. But it is what She leans towards, what She desires, what She attempts to reconcile. The installation enacts this attempt: it has made room, it has gathered, it has erected screens as sculptures.[314] Images have been taken in an attempt to structure meaning around the site, but the Voice is not 'there', She cannot quite make her way back in order to dwell (in the room, in the image, on the screen).

All of the footage in the installation is of the exterior environment; there are no interior shots. We are always in some sense connected to the earth, the sky, the horizon. Buildings appear, bodies of water appear, fields and flowers and basketball courts appear. The buildings start to look like the statues; we might start to see them as faces. They are as equally impenetrable as the statues and they are as equally static but full of the promise of movement. Anyone at any moment might come to a window and open it, or draw a curtain.[315]

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[313] Ibid.,154.

[314] These screens are not so much arising out of the earth as suspended in the air, somewhat ethereal. They are marked with an ambiguous status, quite different to Gormley, for example: arising out of, and being of, the earth.

[315] This possibility engenders expectation, it encourages an engaged look. This is one of the functions of the documentary image, to look expectantly.

Here we have to acknowledge the specificity of site again. More than any other feature, the architecture betrays the geopolitical location; it betrays its socialist history. For this researcher, the architecture summons memories of prosperity, plenty, happiness and security. But these memories and impulses towards filming them were tempered by the empty or sometimes decayed buildings I was encountering. They were also countered by the stories that people were sharing with me about the mass exodus of populations from villages to towns, about the mass closure of factories and the ceasing of production.[316]

The images themselves are silent; there is no diegetic sound. This contributes to the feelings of absence, loss and distance. These feelings are themselves unsettled by the occasional small movements by the edge of the frame: someone might walk by on the edge of the court or a bird might take flight right across the screen. We latch onto these movements; a different kind of possibility is awakened. We thought we were alone, but there are movements that haunt the edges of the screen that tell us we are not. The movement of the camera is another trace of a body and of movements.

Another kind of urgency looms with the flowing bodies of water. The rhythm dislodges the inertia, bringing with it ideas of movement, travel and transport. Water can connect, like fascia in the body, holding everything together. The inevitable questions arise. Where does the river flow? Where is its source? Where is its mouth? Even rivers have beginnings and endings. But not in this frame. This image can tell you nothing of this. It is only a fragment. Bodies of water are of course also about the impossibility of crossing.

'Everything moves', according to Lefebvre, even a rock; we just need to know how to read its rhythm.[317] An image, of course, can be said to be ontologically static or moving. This has been one of the main arguments made

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[316] Yugoslavia was famous for the way in which it built the economy on having factories in small towns and making villages prosperous. Of course also for its sustainable production and economy, being a socialist country, and rich with natural resources.
[317] Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* (London: Continuum, 2004), 25.

for the ontology of the cinema, made on the basis of its movement.[318] But what we have not yet discussed in regard to the moving images in the installation is their duration. And, according to Justin Remes, this, in fact, comes closer to defining the ontology of cinema: not movement, but time.[319] Remes makes his argument by way of a discussion of the 'cinema of stasis', where there is little or no movement – but there is duration. This kind of cinema, he argues, makes room for contemplation, allows the audience to make connections and associations across the work and in relation to their own experience.

In *Straying,* movement duration and audience have direct bearing on one another and on the experience of the work. The relationship between stasis and movement is established within (and across) the frame(s). Given that the audience is free to move around the space, I am interested in how the different rhythms of movement and duration on screen affect the audience and the manner in which they move through, sit or stand still in the work.[320] What kind of movement on screen makes the audience move? What kind of movement or stasis inspires them to move closer or further away from the screen, towards or away from this or that image?

In my editing process, I have attempted to allow each shot to run to its full length. This is to do with my interest in indexicality and maintaining a certain closeness to the experience. The audience member in this case engages or disengages with any of the three screens at any point; it is they that individually ascribe duration to the images; they virtually "edit" the work. The shots are often long in themselves. During shooting I was responding to this question of how long I must sit there before something "happened"? How long is long enough before we will understand the significance of this shot? How many angles must I get of this statue before we will really *see* and understand its form?

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[318] For a comprehensive argument see Justin Remes, "Motion(Less) Pictures: The Cinema of Stasis," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 53, no. 3 (2012): 257-70.
[319] Chris Marker's film *La Jetée* (1962) is perhaps the most significant film that explores this explicitly.
[320] There are stools in the space as well, so presumably some audience members will also chose to sit and watch from one perspective at least some of the time.

My supposition is that the audience member has a more intimate relationship to the work because they have so much agency in creating it. My interest is in how this agency and intimacy play out in terms of the contemplative and the moving body in relation to the image and the passing of time. If duration opens up a space for contemplation, what does this mean for the body and how it moves? Where does the contemplative person find themselves in terms of their proximity to the image? Does the contemplative body move or stand still? What rhythms does it enact or does it eschew the contemplative potential of the work altogether? These questions begin to directly address the affective potential of *Straying*. In order to continue this discussion, we now must turn towards a more directly phenomenological perspective, which I will address in the following section.

# FLESH

Flesh is what holds everything together. Flesh is the world, according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Flesh is what comes to mind when the stony skin of the statue plays on the screen. The work appeals to the flesh of the audience, the moving, thinking, feeling, seeing flesh. To what degree the Voice in *Straying* has any sensation of flesh is questionable because She seems to not have a body. She does seem to have eyes, so perhaps She has some sense of touch. The uncertainty around her disembodied, dislocated status, questions around her belonging or alienation from the image, are the primary concerns in the narrative and theme of the installation.

This section looks at the phenomenology of perception in order to think through some of the motivations and narrative turns in *Straying*. It may help us re-think or re-structure the initial question or concern. It directly connects the seeing, moving body to its environment and considers how this dynamic influences a sense of self. The narrative and the physical set up of the screens bring together the image, place and body so that an explicit enactment of the phenomenological lines of thought from Heidegger to Husserl to Merleau-Ponty is manifested: 'we are in the world, we are the world and the world is us.'[321] By placing the audience's body and subjectivity at the centre of this (and alongside the subjectivity of the Voice), these dynamics are given room to be played out, tried out, imagined, re-formed.

In order to privilege thinking about the body, I would like to evoke the figure of the dancer. This figure is dancing toward the moment when She might speak. The work is perpetually at the edge of the moment when the dancer speaks or the actor dances. These moments arise when the figure reaches the

limit of their expression. They reach an uncrossable impasse and so they go through a transformation in order to 'speak differently'. Whether they speak well or speak at all is not certain or given. It is the moment of transformation, foot to tongue or tongue to hip, which is of interest.

The dancer's movement, as I see it here, does not have a clear trajectory. Its beauty lies in its unpredictability. The figure does not move to any strict choreography. She improvises and her movements are unpredictable to her own self. The body moves and is moved, tensions arising from within and pulling from without. This dance might be set to music. The dancer moves to rhythms that move in and out of the body and sometimes against the grain. This kind of movement might let the garment gape;[322] the music might seem to stand still and flow on;[323] the body follows, suspends, falls.

The dancer does not only move her body, She moves space. The point at which She moves her body and then moves space is difficult if not impossible to pinpoint. The figure becomes expressive beyond the boundaries of the skin, carrying her towards a state of ecstasy, transforming the body so that it achieves unity with what is outside the self, achieving a unity between self, time and space.

But what of the statue that is caught in a single moment, taken out of the dance and fixed to a single gesture? The static object depicted in a static frame in the moving image calls attention to the flow of time. It conjures the ruin and time's relationship to history, object and culture. The ruin stands in some place between the past and the now, standing some way between the natural and the human world, occupying this liminal space that is the hinge between life and death or the seam between what is seeable and what is sayable. The statue, in its human shape, teases with its obvious impossibility of movement. The image almost animates the statue's form as it moves around it, showing it from various

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[321] Jenny Chamarette, *Phenomenology and the Future of Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 13.
[322] Reference to Barthes. See note 78 above.
[323] Reference to Ligeti. See note 72 above.

angles. The Voice coaxes the statues to gesture by appealing directly to them with language imperatives.

Sculpture can awaken a sense of the inner space of our bodies, as Lingis claims of the work of Gormley. This inner space, according to Lingis, is 'not something that our minds grasp conceptually … it is only accessible through direct physical relationship'.[324] This direct relationship is and is not available in *Straying* – the audience has a direct physical relationship to the screen, to the image, and the image offers various aspects on the statue so we might know it from many sides. Still, the kind of accessibility Lingis speaks of is unavailable to us as pre-given, it isn't simply available. It may leave the audience with a yearning, a reach, which is ultimately never fulfilled.

The excursion I have led you on from the dancer to the statue, from the moving figure to the inner space of bodies, takes us to Gilles Deleuze's 'thinking body'. This is not a body that thinks, but a body that plunges us towards the 'unthought'.[325] This kind of body must move toward a new way of being, must move toward new knowledge which remains otherwise inaccessible. The body is our transport towards it, towards transformation. This is why the figure of the dancer is apt: a figure that is always moving, looking for and finding new spaces in which to find new ways of expression; new ways of experiencing those spaces by way of the moving body. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology says that everything we know, we know through the body. If the world is dislocated, this is because 'one's own body has ceased to be a knowing body.'[326] This begs the question. How might one reawaken a body that has ceased to produce meaning

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[324] Lingis, *Inner Space*, 40.
[325] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta (London: Continuum, 1989), 182.
[326] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 285, quoted in Santilli, *Poetic Gesture*, 61.
This notion is challenged in *Straying*. In my use of the moving image I can imply that the environment actually does have agency, it is a character in as much as the Voice is. It is not only a matter of the body "knowing", it is also about the image/ place yielding, coming to the conversation, allowing itself to be touched. The "environment" in this work allows and disallows a union with this body; it has a memory, it has its own desires. Both have subjective experiences of one another.

sensually in relation to its environment? This is one of the central questions in *Straying.*

The notion of the 'thinking body' appeared in Homer, where the conditions of this body are what we might now think of as mental states.[327] You will not find in Homer a thinking, deciding, knowing, remembering person.[328] Emotions and feelings manifest physically in the body. There are three main states of the body; they are: *thumos, psyche and noos. Thumos* is the conscious feeling or soul, *psyche* is life,[329] and *noos* is the seat of intelligence.[330] We can see this, for example, in the way emotions are expressed in terms of physical manifestation: 'the palpitating heart or panting breath or uttering cries'.[331] These are active bodies, not controlled by the mind as a separate organ that resides in the head.[332] As Padel demonstrates:

> the pre-Aristotelian Greeks did not make a strict distinction between literal and metaphorical usage … Pre-Socratic Greeks did not feel it necessary to state clearly whether noos was a vessel, an organ or a force … they had not adopted the now-familiar view of mind as the organ of belief, desire and intention.[333]

This is a view I privilege, even if only metaphorically, and if only to thrust the body rather than the psychology of the mind to the forefront of the investigation.[334]

There are a number of 'bodies' that I have identified in this research: the body of the audience, the 'absent' body of the Voice, the figure of the dead body

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[327] David R. Olson, *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 238.
[328] Ibid.
[329] Ibid., 239.
[330] Arthur Hilary Armstrong, *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 361.
[331] Olson, *The World*, 239.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1992), cited in Olson, The World, 241.
[334] As mentioned earlier, I do not completely eschew emotion and feeling and psychology. I do not completely adopt the Pre-Socratic ideas, either, but I privilege the idea over, for example, a psychoanalytic model.

of the statues, bodies of water, buildings as bodies and the body of the installation. In light of the pre-Socratic Greeks, can we think of these bodies as 'states', as 'thinking', moving towards the 'unthought'? The only 'real' body with such agency is the body of the audience. The other 'bodies' all evoke inertias and absences, but this is precisely what might focus the body of the audience as the primary 'organ' in the work. I intend to say, pay attention to how you move, your body is thinking, it is moving you toward the unthought. The statue and the Voice falter towards achieving a new way of thinking, experiencing, being. They do not have bodies where new thought can reside in the shape of a palpitating heart or uttering cry. The statue maybe once did. And the Voice is attempting to gather her body back to her self, but the passage is difficult to imagine or foresee. Nonetheless this is the desire that is articulated through the relationship between language and image.

Kristin Santilli, in her study on poetic gestures, traces the connection between the knowing, gesturing body and the linguistic impulse, so that the transformation from the gesturing body to speech is about speaking the body's experience.[335] This impulse manifests in poetry, the poem as body, 'undulating with the natural and characteristic gestures of an earthly human being'.[336] This brings us to the moment I evoked at the beginning of this section: the moment when the dancer speaks. However, for this work, it is the moment before, the movement towards speech, that we are most interested in,[337] if only because actual expression is impossible. There is, after all, an absence of the poetic artefact in the installation, but the reach towards a poetic structure is an attempt to communicate the body's experience through means other than speech. The attempt is to leave a trace of 'what it feels like'.

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[335] Santilli, *Poetic Gesture*, 66.
[336] Ibid.

[337] This is the same moment that Lessing is interested in, too, but in this instance, it is not only so that the viewer can have the pleasure of completing the movement. Here, expression beyond this point is impossible, or too frightening to even imagine. The audience is left at the edge of a precipice, at the yawning abyss.

Might we then think of the moving image in the terms Santilli sets up for the poem as body: that the moving image 'speaks the body's experience'? This would be to consider not only the screen as skin or body, but the image as a body sensually producing meaning. The 'problem' with the images/bodies in *Straying*, however, is that they too are only on the verge of speaking. This speaking cannot become manifest because there are fragmented and competing narratives (three irreconcilable screens).

The perspectives on the 'thinking body' which I share with you are all different; I do not wish to conflate their concepts or to ignore fundamental differences. But I rouse certain ways of seeing (through/with) the body that inspire a thinking about subjectivity and its explicit connection to movement, to thinking, to speaking.

I will offer up one more perspective which can only act as a provocation, Friedrich Nietzsche's conception of our phenomenal reality as discussed by Jenny Chamarette:

> When referring to our (mis)constructions of a phenomenal tangible reality, through our bodies, Nietzsche describes a practice of falsification and misinterpretation, which takes place via a misapprehension of the chaos of becoming: that a body is whole, present in its entirety. Because we misapprehend the flux of our bodies and replace it with the illusion of a phenomenal, whole, tangible reality, this forms the beginnings of a constantly misplaced subjective self-grasp, producing a vicious circle of misapprehension and falsification in order to support the notion of a cohesive self.[338]

In light of this view, we might say that the installation does not simply illuminate an impossibility of cohesion that a displaced person might experience, but that it may be bringing to light something like Nietzsche's 'practice of

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[338] Jenny, Chamarette, *Phenomenology and the Future of Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 204.

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misapprehension'. Cohesion is impossible in the first place, and anything experienced as whole is only an illusion. The displaced body, however, does not have the privilege of that illusion and is consigned to continually searching for 'completion'.

The phenomenological turn in this research happened quite by accident, or by necessity. When the representative power of the images did not "speak", my speaking to them became an act of excavation. This was the intention, but this is not what really happened. The image did not yield more rather, the image demanded a greater complexity of engagement of me, an engagement with my own sense of place. Because my own sense is full of breakages, errant experiences, lacks and excesses, finding a form that was representational of these things was an impossible task. I was like the dancer dancing to the limit of my expression. I needed another to complete the action. This other had to be the audience. I had to create a work with such conditions that the audience was empowered to take this next step. They had to be moved by the work.

I have already discussed Marks' work and her phenomenological approach to intercultural cinema which turns toward a 'haptic visuality' when the sayable and the seeable are unavailable. At the time of making *Straying*, I had not made an explicit connection between it, the phenomenology of perception and film spectatorship. However, I can now see that this approach can help identify the relationships that are encouraged to manifest between the work and the audience.

This is key to the kind of contribution the research makes in investigating the quality of displacement. *Straying* is an invitation to the audience to literally and figuratively perambulate around the work, to bring something of themselves to it: their own imaginings and memories. I will now look at how I make this invitation in light of Merleau-Ponty's and James J Gibson's phenomenologies of perception, as well as the phenomenology of the moving image. I will refer to Sue Cataldi's reading and application of Merleau-Ponty's and Gibson's phenomenologies in her study of 'sensitive space' and deep emotion. Cataldi's

work in particular is resonant with this research because the idea of movement and knowing is core to both of our contentions.[339]

Merleau-Ponty's and Gibson's phenomenologies re-inserted the 'perceiver' (as 'individual') into existing theories of perception, which were fundamentally scientific empiricist models. Phenomenological approaches to film and cinema studies also take this as an appropriate starting point, as it allows thinking through of the various subjectivities evident in the relationship between spectator and film and also enables thinking about an embodied and affective experience.[340] My own study here will necessarily be oversimplified, forgoing a sustained and deep reading. I can only highlight the most insistent aspects. The following subsections can be thought of as swatches with which, or through which, to read and experience the work.

For both Merleau-Ponty and Gibson, the concomitant relationship between the body and the environment plays a central role in how we perceive that environment; we perceive with the whole, moving body. In their theories of depth perception both Merleau-Ponty and Gibson begin by dismantling the otherwise established dichotomies between subject and object, subjectivity and objectivity, the external and the internal. This is a critical shift to how I initially conceived this work. There are four key concepts that might guide us through a discussion about how the world may be experienced as such.

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[339] Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth, and Flesh*. I will elaborate on this point at the conclusion of this section. I will just point here to a difference in my and Cataldi's focus. Cataldi is interested in deep emotion, I am interested in the body. For this reason I prefer the term 'affect' to Cataldi's term 'emotion'. I use affect after Spinoza and Deleuze after him, to imply that the body is moved to act without a cognitive, emotional, psychological response to the stimulus. Affect refers to those 'forces … other than conscious knowing … beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension.' Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, ed. *The Affect Theory Reader* (London: Duke University Press, 2010), 1.

[340] See Anne Rutherford on the distinction and nuance: 'subjectivity is not conterminous with embodied experience.' Anne Rutherford, *What Makes a Film Tick?* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 148.

*Reversibilities*

Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'reversibility', or in Gibson's study, 'reversible occlusions', is the notion that, through movement, what stands as hidden in space can become unhidden and what is unhidden can become hidden (hence the relationship between hidden and unhidden is 'reversible').[341] The 'occluding edge' separates what is hidden from the unhidden and in this way 'it both separates and connects the hidden and unhidden surface, both divides and unites them'.[342] This aspect of Gibson's theory leads him to say that the visible and invisible are continuous; 'to perceive the persistences of surfaces that are out of sight is also to perceive their coexistence with those that are in sight'.[343] Cataldi makes the point that Gibson does not mean that we can see the unseen;[344] however, I take this idea to its quasi-fantastical end and do entertain the notion of seeing the unseen, or at least that one might be able to touch the invisible. The installation is endowed with this kind of 'affordance'.

*Affordance*

This is another of Gibson's terms where 'the affordances of the environment are what it offers to the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill…It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment'.[345] An affordance points both to the environment and to the observer; it is both physical and psychical, phenomenal and a fact of the environment. In this construction we see the insufficiency of the subjective–objective dichotomy; we can see how a continuity between our sense of 'internal' and 'external' starts to point to a unity rather than separateness. We start to see here a blurring of the body–world

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[341] Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh*, 31
[342] James J Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986), 32, quoted in Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh,* 32.
[343] Gibson, *Ecological Approach*, 137, quoted in Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh,* 32.
[344] Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh,* 32.
[345] Gibson, *Ecological Approach*, 127, quoted in Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh*, 33.

boundary. Merleau-Ponty describes this as 'perceptible-percipience'; a hand that touches is also always simultaneously being touched.[346]

*Flesh*

Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh ontology' offers a concept with which to think about the 'fundamental unity permeating all interrelated, interwoven things.'[347] Flesh holds everything together; therefore it functions as a 'medium'[348] where we can experience a kind of 'distanced contact': the notion of being connected to something that you are not touching but seeing at a distance. Merleau-Ponty asks, 'where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh?'[349] Flesh is what connects the perceiving subject and the perceived object, one is not intelligible without the other, in fact, 'what happens in me can pass over into the other. Our being is contagious … our experience is not immanent but transitive'.[350] *See Figure 24*.

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[346] See Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge, 2002. 1958.

[347] Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh*, 60.

[348] Ibid.

[349] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1968), 138, quoted in Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh*, 189, note 19.

[350] Remigius C. Kwant, *From Phenomenology to Metaphysics*, (Pittsburg, Duquesne University Press, 1966), 68, quoted in Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh*, 71. I have been using the term "density" which Merleau-Ponty calls 'flesh'. I like Merleau-Ponty's use of 'flesh' because it brings the body and space into equanimity, both as alive and moving, as affecting one another. But I also like density because it designates that there is an effort that varies according to the body and the environment it moves through.

Figure 24







Conduits for transformation: darkness,
repetition, ritual, incantation, loss of self,
commingling.

*The right distance*

If our experience is transitive, then the dynamic between the perceiver and the perceived is a constantly changing one. However, maintenance of the right distance between self and world is crucial to our wellbeing.[351] Merleau-Ponty conceives of distance as intimate, a 'proximity through distance'. This has implications for our sense of 'self': 'phenomenologically our sense of "self" hinges on the simultaneity of being 'open to and closed off from others; simultaneously intermingled with and distanced from them.'[352] The 'normative' perspective is that 'our 'lived' experience of the world is that we belong to it, or are of it, but are not it.'[353]

*Disturbances*

We think of dislocation and displacement as a break between mind, body, time and place. This can be seen as a disturbance to our 'happy distance' from the environment. There are a number of disorders of the mind that hinge on this disturbance[354] and involve the individual's inability to control space or their relationship to it.[355] Roger Caillois and Eugene Minkowski investigate this disturbance between body and space, and highlight how this disturbance impinges on a person's sense of self, their sense of identity.[356] Identity and environment, then, are intimately connected.

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[351] Cataldi calls this the 'happy medium,' Ibid., 3.
[352] Ibid., 28. Note here that we start to speak not just about the individual and environment but anything outside the boundary of the skin of the individual (which encompasses other individuals).
[353] Ibid.
[354] These are not linked directly or specifically to how we would use the terms dislocation and displacement as they relate to a diasporic experience.
[355] Often this manifests in obsessive compulsive disorder, for example, where the sufferer attempts to control their environment through repetitive acts upon that environment.
[356] Caillois' study is on legendary psychesthenia. Roger Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychesthenia"*, in Claudine Frank ed. The Edge of Surrealism : A Roger Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. Minkowski's study is on how this disturbance is a feature of schizophrenia. Eugene Minkowski, *Lived Time*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

Caillois names legendary psychesthenia as a disorder where the sufferer experiences a 'veritable lure of space', where they wish to become 'assimilated into the environment'.[357] By assimilation, Caillois means mimicry by the organism of the environment. This causes a disturbance in the sufferer's feeling of their personality, which Caillois defines as 'an awareness of the distinction between organism and environment'.[358] In legendary psychesthenia this distinction fails, the distinction being specifically 'between the mind and a specific point in space'.[359] For Caillois, losing the self in relation to a coordinate outside the body is a schizophrenic experience which he describes in the following way: 'I know where I am, but I don't feel that I am where I am'.[360]

In the natural environment, some species achieve mimicry of their environment morphologically.[361] For a human being, this mimicry means they are suffering from a perceptual disorder where they feel that

> space … is a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them … The body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses … He feels himself becoming space, dark space into which things cannot be put.[362]

Caillois borrows this notion of 'dark space' from Minkowski and his study on schizophrenia.[363] Minkowski's notion of 'dark space' can be read as both a disorder and a space of desire. Dark space has no depth of the kind that can

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[357] Caillois, *Mimicry and Legendary Psychesthenia,* 99.
[358] Ibid., 100.
[359] Ibid.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Caillois points out that this, in some species, is not about its survival (as, for example, camouflage often is). There are species where the 'lure of space' is so strong, and the mimesis so successful, that members of a particular species mistake each other for leaves and cannibalise one another. He concludes that 'once we have established that mimicry cannot be a defence mechanism, then a disorder of spatial perception is the only thing it can be. Ibid., 99.
[362] Ibid., 100.
[363] Eugene Minkowski, *Lived Time.* Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

measure a distance 'from here', but it has a kind of 'pure depth',[364] a single depth without dimension. Dark space is a personal and intimate space because there is no distance that separates the self from objects. Minkowski's dark space has a positive value, just as the night is not only the absence of light but has its own materiality.[365] The dark of the night is penetrating and reaches into the very depths of our being. It is more 'mine' than the 'clear' space of light or visual space.[366] For Minkowsi, dark space is mysterious, but again a mystery which is positive, which is to say that you are in the presence of something hidden or unknown. In a review of Minkowski's *Lived Time*, Jacques Lacan calls Minkowski's dark space 'another space besides geometrical space, namely, the dark space of groping, hallucination and music, which is the opposite of clear space, the framework of objectivity'.[367] In this affective space, objects seem to touch us; they are no longer at a distance.

Caillois, Minkowski and Merleau-Ponty connect dark space with identity. And although Minkowski uses such descriptors as 'intimate' and 'positive', he also says it 'almost destroy(s) (his) personal identity'.[368] Dark space is so enveloping, so all-consuming that Merleau-Ponty says it is as if it is destroying him. Dark space for Merleau-Ponty is a very frightening place, it does not afford him the right distance from the world:

> what protects the sane man against delirium or hallucinations, is not his critical powers, but the structure of his space: objects remain before him, keeping their distance.[369]

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[364] This is Maurice Merleau-Ponty's term for a similar concept. Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh*, 48.
[365] Minkowski, *Lived Time*, 406.
[366] Ibid.
[367] Lacan's review appeared in *Recherches philosophiques 1935-1936*, quoted in Claudine Frank, ed., *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 90.
[368] Minkowski, *Lived Time*, 406.
[369] Maurice Merlau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 291, quoted in Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh*, 52.

If we compare this to the idea of the right distance, then both legendary psychesthenia and dark space present as disorders, an uncomfortable place for the body to occupy. In *Straying*, because the Voice experiences not an uncomfortable proximity to space but an uncomfortable distance from it, the intimacy of dark space becomes her desire. Her desire for the place from which She is dislocated turns into a desire to become it, to be so close to it that She no longer feels the boundary between it and her self. *See Figure 25*.

I present this impossible and even fantastical desire in *Straying* deliberately and I frame it as both a matter of perspective (as in the disorders outlined) and a matter of morphology (as in the case of Caillois' insects).[370] I do this in order to propose that morphology and perspective are not so far apart when we are speaking about the ways in which we experience place. The space changes us, we change in relation to the space and it is all just a matter of perspective.

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[370] See note 361 above.

Figure 25

I have tried and still failed to bend my voice in the shape of what is no longer my body.

*Movement and deep thought*

To move beyond the self, beyond one's current place or position in relation to a situation, is crucial if we are to come to a new way of thinking, being, feeling, about that situation. It is also what happens when we feel deep emotion – we are moved.[371] This theorization borders the literal and figurative. It takes into its compass a geography, a physical environment and an understanding of how the individual relates to that environment, and of course, it is also only a play on words, a metaphor – what it feels like. Movement has been an imperative necessity in the conduct of this research at both the literal and figurative level. I reached so many impasses – with my self, and the apparatus – that literal movement, a literal shift in position and perspective is what I continually enacted.[372] Movement is critical to the affective experience that is conditioned for the audience in *Straying*. This works also at both the literal and figurative levels. The Voice in *Straying* yearns for a body and for movement, foregrounding the absence of her body. The audience has a body, and they can move, they can literally take up various positions and perspectives throughout the work. Their moving bodies have agency, a presentness that is available for transformation. This is unlike the Voice who is caught in a continual cycle of iterations and echoes. She seems unable to move and find different positions in relation to the image.

But movement might be a misplaced ambition, or at least, it is not uncomplicated or always yielding of positive consequences. This experience might be said to be a dislocation, as one moves (or is moved) to a different place in relation to a situation: 'emotional experience cannot take place without some

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[371] This relates to Cataldi's central theory, which is an extension of Gabriel Marcel's *Mystery of Being*, and Glen Mazis' theory of e-motion in *Emotion and Embodiment*. See Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh*, 11, 44

[372] Evidence of this can be found in *Straying* with the range of different natural environments (there was obviously a lot of ground covered during recording), and the multiple perspectives offered of a single subject (this is mostly evident in the depiction of the statues).

such dis-orientation'.[373] This theorisation would imply that the feeling of displacement or disorientation is common to any profound experience. Profound experience manifests in the body's unmaking and making new boundaries between itself and the world. Dislocation is not only a traumatic experience of the diaspora.

It is also important to consider this spatio-temporal movement in contrast to spatio-temporal stasis, in relation to the moving image – whose lineaments are of time and space, of movement, duration, and stasis. I have, in an earlier discussion on stasis and movement, concurred with Remes that stasis is the space of deep thought in the cinema. This is not antithetical to Cataldi's argument, I only posit this as a possible *hinge* that provides access to a terrain otherwise unavailable outside of this particular audiovisual installation setting. The physical movement that an audience member can enact can also simultaneously be countered by the stasis, or long duration, of a particular shot playing on the screen.[374] I have worked to enable a space of contemplation and deep thought for the audience, through their engagement with the image. I have also conditioned the space so that the audience has a very direct and physical relationship with the screens, a very present connection, as if the screens too, are bodies. This very meeting facilitates the possibility of a shift in established boundaries between here, and there.

This is an important part of Cataldi's conceptualisation which says that when we are emotionally 'moved' we find ourselves somewhere in-between, 'de-bordered and re-bordering'.[375] We do not simply take up another position, we do not simply find another point at which to stand but rather, we are somewhere 'in-between'; in the process of finding stable ground, finding the seam between our body and place/image.

This feeling has a positive value that is about entering an in-between space where new experience is to be encountered. This is what Marks claims for

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[373] Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh*, 91.
[374] This is quite likely, as many of the shots in *Straying* are long, durational ones.
[375] Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh*, 91.

the intercultural film: new knowledge is to be found in the space between the seeable and the sayable. This in-between space where new language and new expression is sought: for as-yet unarticulated experience and knowledge. This is the experience and knowledge outside official histories and official knowledges.

I have facilitated a dynamic synthesised from a range of theoretical positions and formal decisions, which, as I interpret and perceive them together, have resulted in a landscape that is shifting; it moves, revealing a new terrain by which to navigate knowing. This knowing is simultaneously of the self and of the space through which the body moves. Movement, identity and place cannot be thought or experienced separately.[376]  This landscape accommodates stasis, and duration, a slow, imperceptible unfolding.

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[376] The entire conceit of *Straying* is this very impossibility. This is why the installation is splintered, fragmented, impossible.

The ideas engaged and encountered by this research can be seen as its (deliberate) limit and affordance. We might first look at how this plays out at the level of the image with the help of Anne Rutherford's study of the phenomenology of cinema spectatorship. Rutherford's theorisation is particularly pertinent to the present research for the cogent way in which she privileges the idea of mimeses in the conception of embodied affect.[377] Rutherford's aesthetics of embodiment rests on 'the relationship between vision and the body, the role of movement and tactility in that relationship, and the connection of this complex to affective experience.'[378] Mimesis is the 'critical link' in this complex and to cinema spectatorship. Rutherford takes her conception of mimesis from Michael Taussig, who describes the relationship between perceiver and perceived as a 'palpable sensuous connection between the very body of the perceiver and the perceived.'[379] This connection between the perceiver and perceived is 'a porousness between one's self, one's own body and the objects or images of the world'.[380]

This 'porousness', or 'haptic visuality', is a 'sympathetic vibration' with some part of the image that connects to a bodily understanding or knowledge of that quality in the image.[381] Rutherford describes this concept as the 'nitty-gritty', an identification, or rather 'visceral experience', 'a porousness between one's self, one's own body and the objects or images of the world.'[382] An identification with the weightlessness of a fish swimming in water might be an example.[383] The sympathetic vibration with the -ness of an aspect of the image is what gives

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[377] Rutherford, *What Makes a Film Tick?*
[378] Ibid., 151.
[379] Michael Taussig, Mimesis and Alterity: a particular history of the senses (New York: Routledge, 1993), 21, quoted in Rutherford, *What Makes a Film Tick?*,159.
[380] Ibid. We might be reminded of Caillois' take on mimesis as the 'veritable lure of space'.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Rutherford, *What Makes a Film Tick?*, 159.
[383] Ibid.

rise to an 'affective resonance', an embodied experience of the image, the feeling of being moved or touched by it.[384]

This composition could be applied across a number of levels of this research project: to me as researcher, to the audience and to the narrative as articulated by the Voice. But it is in the (re)iteration of these across all of these levels that is important to my research. The formal setup of the installation allows the interaction between these levels of experience, so that each of these 'scores'[385] (my experience as researcher, the audience's experience and the Voice's experience as set up in the narrative) both contributes to and problematises the themes in the work. The 'resonance' emerges from their interplay. The work is about making visible the search for vibration.

My experiences during the fieldtrip are written into the work, not only through the image, but also in the voice-over. The images document my search for place, my search for my self in that place and the emptiness that I encountered. They are testaments to my continual engagement with the moving image and the lack of any -ness, or identification, with what is represented in the image, and more a resonance with my disconnection from it.

The voice-over on one level articulates another kind of absence: the absence of the interviewees from the fieldtrip that are the sources of the stories that the Voice re-tells. On the other hand the Voice articulates my desire for identification with the image, and She too encounters images that do not "speak". *See Figure 26*.

Affective resonance is exactly what the Voice in the installation yearns for. The premise is that if the image and the self are porous, then through affective experience the Voice would 'vibrate' with the place that She is displaced from. She leans toward the image so that She may have the sensation of touch. Her 'leaning', however, can only be through language, through the vibration of her

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[384] Ibid. Ruthorford does not use '-ness' as a stand-alone term, however, I think it is a useful articulation of the concept.

[385] I mean 'score' here as a musical score, but also the way in which each of these experiences marks the work itself.

Figure 26







I wonder if that cry could release these statues from their stony forms?

own Voice in the room. This is one of the affordances of the audiovisual mode in approaching this subject.

But, the Voice does not have a body with which to feel resonance with the image. It is also the limitation, then. The implication might be that one cannot understand the images or place if one does not have a body, if one does not experience with the body. Sight (evidence) and tongue (language) alone will not do. This narrative frame privileges a phenomenological attitude to the moving image, and yet simultaneously it also seems to deny it. The image is also a *place*, the implication being that one cannot know place without a body that can access its -ness.

The disembodied Voice uses language in her attempt to find a sympathetic vibration with the –ness of it.[386] The Voice attempts to achieve legendary psychesthenia through words, so that She might remember who She is, and so that She might then reconstitute herself. With respect to Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Celeste Olalquiaga makes an almost opposite argument for Alice's experience: rather than achieving legendary psychesthenia through language, Alice alleviates it; by naming her reality and by speaking it, everything assumes its proper delineations.[387] Language helps Alice achieve the right distance from her world. In my version, the Voice uses language initially in the hope of its opposite effect; She hopes the words can loosen the boundaries and delineations, relax a little and make room for her. But both intentions reach towards finding that distinction between the mind and a point outside the body. In both versions, both characters are relying on language to be able to articulate exactly, an unproblematic language, perhaps Benjamin's impossible 'pure language'.

It works for Alice, but it does not work in the installation. The Voice cannot name her world exactly. There seems to be a dissonance between the images on the screens and the images She conjures with her words; they are different worlds. The images we see are inadequate and the images She

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[386] This is what I as researcher performed too.
[387] Celeste Olalquiga, *Megalopolis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 4.

attempts to conjure with words are absent. This act does not make the world and the objects in it more solid; it frays their edges, they bleed into other worlds, they transform, become memories or fantasies.

If the images are lacking the -ness that Rutherford identifies as critical to an embodied and affect experience of the moving image, then how have I created the conditions for an affective experience for the audience, as I have claimed I have? Physical movement and space are at the core of this elucidation. Rutherford points out that to be moved in affective experiences of the moving image does not mean it is a 'physical movement across a physical space', when speaking of the cinema:

> it is a movement of the entire embodied being towards a corporeal appropriation of or immersion in a space, an experience, a moment… groping towards a connection, a link-up with the carnality of the idea, the affect of the body.[388]

So how does this movement away from the self and towards the carnality of the idea manifest for the audience of *Straying*? It is in the very relationship between the Voice and the images that the disconnected-ness is evoked. This between-ness is actual, physical, in *Straying*. This is because we have created a density in the room, we have made a place of it with our moving bodies. It is given form, it is the space that the audience occupies. For this reason the movement in *Straying* is a physical movement, across physical space. The audience is afforded their body in this environment. By offering space to the audience I am saying, you must move if you are to know, you must walk into another space so that you might experience the mysterious, the hidden.

This is the in-between space of displacement and searching. I do not mean this only in the negative sense, the geographic sense, but in the sense of being moved deeply so you might come to a new position on things, a new

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[388] Rutherford, *What Makes a Film Tick?*, 158.

knowledge.[389] The resonance happens here. This is the space of co-implication and co-constitution, neither here nor there, but the space of distanced contact.

The screens in the room are also part of this resonance. The screens that hang in the room are like other bodies and the Voice refers to them as "skins". I call them 'bodies' in the sense that Gregory J. Seigworth defines a body in his rendering of affect; where affect is not only a sympathetic reverberation but also a disconnection and body is a kind of conduit towards affective experiences:

> affect accumulates across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness, becoming a palimpsest of force encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass between "bodies" (bodies defined not by an outer skin-envelope or other surface boundary but by their potential to reciprocate or co-participate in the passages of affect). Bindings and unbindings, becomings and un-becomings, jarring disorientations and rhythmic attunements. Affect marks a body's belonging to a world of encounters or a world's belonging to a body of encounters but also, in non-belonging.[390]

Seigworth's argument is compelling in relation to *Straying* because it articulates the very condition I intend to create with the use of the screens. Of course it is not the screens alone, but also how the Voice does and does not address them. The screens are a boundary that separates and unites, binding and unbinding, a border and a conduit. In this dual role, the notion of the internal and external is complicated; in this 'world of encounters', we are always making and unmaking boundaries. The screens in this kind of world are like windows opening onto an external world, but they are also like a boundary that keeps us on the outside of another interiority. In this perpetual movement, the internal and external are not stable entities; this is the space of co-mingling. The in-between state is how

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[389] Rutherford describes this as the cinematic experience of 'movement or displacement of the self.' Ibid.
[390] Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. *The Affect Theory Reader* (London: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

Jennifer M. Barker describes the point at which film and viewer meet: 'a liminal space in which film and viewer can emerge as co-constituted, individualised but related, embodied entities'.[391]

In *Straying*, the audience is immersed in this in-between space – between the voice and the image. This is the resonant space where the audience's own body becomes the work, making and unmaking relationships, looking for resonances and being surprised by them. The ground is unstable, shifting. There is a feeling of discomfort, loss, searching and yearning, 'relatedness and interruptions in relatedness'. But perhaps the vibration with the -ness of it also engenders a buoyancy which is a beauty in the making.

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[391] Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 12.

# CONCLUSION

Let us think back on the cubist artwork and consider how the fragmented image contributes to the feeling of its own incompleteness, but also how this incompleteness does not articulate a lack but an excess – all of the aspects of Dora Maar's face can never be consolidated into one.[392] The fragmented image also implies movement, and perhaps because of movement we also have a sense of incompleteness because a continual transformation seems to be occurring. *Straying* and *Casting* can both be considered in this image. Return, Aspect, Passage, Hinge, Space and Flesh are parts that contribute to these images, but they do not complete the picture. The experience should not come to an end even as these pages do. The intention has been to stir further thinking about the installation, to inspire a different or another kind of engagement with it.

The task for me has been to make room for you, the reader/audience.[393] My need for the audience arose out of my crisis with image and language: when I could not see or say what I wanted. I appealed to poetry and I appealed to the body. The poetic structure made room for the audience, made room for the possibility of an embodied experience. I cannot show you everything in pictures and I cannot speak everything with words. I can, however, make such a condition so you may know 'what it feels like' to enact the making and unmaking of boundaries between self and space, self and language, and self and image, and what it feels like to be displaced in this act, and hence to come to new knowledge. I have had to make this kind of room because I could not make a representation of the thing I desired, but rather, the instrument itself, the

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[392] This is a reference to Picasso and the discussion on Cubism in the Introduction. See note 13 above.

[393] This 'making room' is like Barthes and Glück. They both want to be needed and desired as readers.

apparatus (the camera, the moving image, sound) led me on the journey of making and unmaking my self in relationship to place. And this is the room I must offer to you so that the task is also yours.

The room that I made is not an empty space. The room – which refers now not only to the space of the installation, but to the room in the present exegesis – has been arranged and composed of experiences and particular theoretical concerns that support making space. We have looked at how poetry makes space with silence, how installation art practice understands the architecture of its residence to be foundational to the experience of it, how the cinema of stasis makes room for contemplation. These spaces are not empty because in making space we also gather: histories, experiences, memories.

Making space complicates how we conceive of, and experience, time and duration. Time and space, of course, are the lineaments of the moving image, hence why this mode afforded this particular exploration. Predominantly we have been interested in ways in which to stop the flow of linear time and access a single moment more fully. We have considered how this is enabled through Deren's poetic and vertical structure for the moving image, Remes' ontology of the moving image as duration, the idea of the pregnant moment and the suspension of time, and the double movement of evolving and devolving. Time moves in multiple directions, it creates a tear, a gape where we can embed more deeply, a dwelling through duration. It also encourages a look back. But not only a look – also a reach in this particular work.

I have given the audience their body, architectures in which to dwell, made of concrete, represented, imagined and conjured times and places. We have looked at theoretical material that approaches the connection between bodies, histories, and places as a process, and in the process a dissipation of any boundaries that mark internal and external states: the creation of the flow from one into the other. The conditions in *Straying* enable the experience of this flow for the audience. Flow, as in a river: no point in the river, no moment is ever exactly the same. But what of our being able to stop the 'flow' of time? There is a fissure between duration, flow, dwelling, hiatus, and it is through this fissure

that we move. A consideration of the ontological and phenomenological status of the moving image guides us through this oscillation between movement and stasis.

The installed moving image disturbs and challenges both its ontological and phenomenological status partly through its relationship to sound, and partly through the architectural and sculptural features that create a direct and concrete relationship with the bodies of the audience. This disturbs and challenges how the body and place respond to one another. The embodied experience of the audience is not only significant on a phenomenal level, it may manifest in such a way that their own bodies mark the space, contribute to its making, as they move or sit or stand, look at or retreat from the screens.

This is a transitive space, a space of transformation. We must move and be moved to a new way of being. We need the body to 'think' what is hidden. I offer this up as a provocation for the audience to consider with their bodies: the range of experiences that make up their interaction with their environment, to consider the co-implication and co-constitution of the self and the environment. The space of the installation is a space where they can try out possibilities – like the making of a perambulatory essay.

This space is one that accommodates hybrid expressions; the documentary, the poetic, and the essayistic find their form and limits. Their ability to document, to speak truthfully and articulately, to offer up experience, is challenged in this space where they coexist. It is more than a coexistence, though; it is an exchange which finds similarities in this installation, which makes room for what is in excess of each form. What holds them together is their intent and attention to the subject. I used all of these forms with the intention of staying close to experience and following the path of thought.

This kind of attention looks for reverberations, resonances and hidden resemblances. This is another commonality to be found in the documentary, the poem and the essay. It is a process, an event, not an object. The same could be said of the dynamic between place and body. It is a reverberation that offers a

resonance between history, memory, desire, the made and the unmade with the moving, thinking, body.

My contribution is an opening of a space that can be called a body, an essay, a poem, a documentary; but my preferred term is simply a field where I have created the conditions for the embodied experience of disembodiment, displacement and the re(making) of the self by piecing together fragments that reverberate with our own sense of completeness, wholeness and connectedness. It is a kind of space that encourages our attention to be turned towards what Nietzsche calls our (mis)constructions, misinterpretations and misapprehensions of the world and our body in it: the chaos of becoming.[394]

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[394] Chamarette, *Phenomenology and the Future of Film*, 204.

# APPENDIX

# STRAYING

*Voice over script for the audiovisual installation*

Everything has its place, in the end, he said.


She felt it all shifting, like tectonic plates.
The shifts are within, great masses moving.


I had to start by being somewhere else.


How many turns of the season has it been?


Where is the pain? Where in your body?
Where is the loss?


She had bled into it.
It was not in her, she was in it.


Perhaps that is the necessary beauty of it.


What if I try to articulate this in the way an arm articulates a gesture:
of pure pleasure
or of forgetfulness
or fatigue
or sudden remembrance
of her touch.


The dancer doesn't move his body, he moves space.


Autumn is lovely here also. That matters.


Everything is fascinating with a little bit of distance between here and there.
Like in a museum. A status not earned, simply granted.


Let us brush up against each other.
I'll close my eyes, turn my head.
I won't look at you.

Will you speak? You don't have to.

You might have some other place to be.


Leave something behind when you go.
Like you did last time.
They were notes you had discarded
but I call them gifts.
They had no addressee
but I kept them for my self.


A thought is either being born or dying.
Exposing, or sealing it off.
Watch the light refract.


What I would like, is for you to tell me everything you remember.
I want to know what it was like. You can say 'as if…'.
And I'll say 'what if…'


I want the colour of my voice to be the colour of the sky. I want the quality of that
light to fill all my words, as if they were vessels and the light was a solid. I want
everything in this moment to be in the way my sentence falls from my tongue. To
re-articulate you. To imitate you in tone. A re-iteration, a reconstitution.


Let me have a better view.
Let it come back differently.


No one ever comes back the way they first arrived.
I heard that in some science-fiction story.
I'll use this line, and say: no one ever comes back the way they first arrived.


Everything has its place, in the end, he said.


The tongue cannot articulate all the contours fully.

When I'm in the forest I think of the sounds of the ocean.
To hear, to think of, to be, to be in, to be made of: it's all the same.


Isn't identity everyone's problem?


I'm told that you can tell the lay of the land just from watching the dancers dance. Each troupe dances their own land. It's all in the feet, pounding and skimming across the floor. In mountainous areas they jump high, they are flamboyant. The dwellers below dance closer to the earth, their movements are small, measured. The women: they sing. About everyday things.

The story is the dance, the dance is the landscape, the landscape is the body.


When I'm in the forest I think of the sounds of the ocean.


This is a true story.


I used to see her gathering you back, returning to the banks like the attendant moon. If I were she and if you were lost to me, I would build a statue in your image to call you back to me.


Perhaps that is the necessary beauty of it.


Ideal shapes, dead, but life, preserved, decay, death, life, beauty, filth, obscurity of the bird shit on her shoulder, movement in the fall of her hand, her comfortableness, my voyeurism, my violation but her posing.


Private moments in public spaces.


What are you afraid of?
Everyone is afraid of losing something.


I am here at your feet. Enfold me.

The further north you go, the flatter the land gets. Until you reach the furthest point, right up near the border, where there are the flattest plains you will ever see. Even, calm. That's what life seemed like too: no great passions or disturbances. But here is where she fell in love. She has no record of this place or of this love, that man, his small child and their cat. She took no pictures here.

Mountains and forests are easier to describe. They have texture. But flatness is so non-descript. And yet, this is where she ate ice-cream by the side of the dirt road, with the old seamstress. And it's in the river behind the seamstress' house she imagined he and she would swim, next summer. It was among the flat fields of sunflowers they said goodbye. All the heads turning in the same direction, as if they were waiting to be absolved by the sun. But their faces are so perfect, there could never be need of that.

It was snowing when I first arrived. Not for the first time, less of an arrival, more of a return. It had snowed the previous three days, enough to cover everything over. It was starting  to melt when I first arrived. The black coming up through the white, the first week in March; a very unexpected snow-fall for that time of year.

I repeat these stories, these other people's words as an abstraction. I hear them like an echo, and I hear them only as words, as stories without context. And yet I repeat them so that I might find anchorage.

Your oblivion is not mine.
A change of form is not oblivion.

Your dream is not mine.
Even if it seemed that way once:
that I could see what you described.
I should have known then that the fact of having seen it, changed it.

My expression will always fall short of the way I thought you up in early morning. My body speaks much more gracefully when I imagine the dance, in that drowsy and innocent time of day. The indulgence of the imagination doesn't seem so hideous in the privacy of thought.

An image only half conjured.

If I knew what I was looking for I might know what I have lost.


Stop. Let me look at you. Stand still, let me admire you.
To think of it now: you never looked at me. I thought it might come
with time.


When I say look, I mean touch.


Look how she leans toward me.


Let me sit by your feet.


I heard about an island in the middle of a wide span in the river. The story was
flamboyant and grand, their paradise they called it. So I went out looking for it. I
followed the river, but the river split in 2 at some point, and I must have followed
the wrong one of the two sleeves. Just before dusk I made it to the barge and
crossed the river to a place called 'White Church'. It was just the right name for
it. All the white was blushing pink at that time of day.


These are all tragedies, these are all causes for exaltation.


Did you hear those birds? It sounded like a flock performing circles in the sky.
Gymnasts. Like a performance and we are its spectators. But of course it
happens whether we see it or not.


There is some satisfaction in traversing the skin,
but then inevitably you start to wonder what's behind.


I thought about going down to the field, to look for myself, to crouch poised with
the camera, ready to take my evidence, to make a lasting record of what I know
is already the past. I'm haunting these places like an unwanted ghost.

The most frightening moment was the moment I wondered whether the voice can be an apparition, in the way images are apparitions.

Or the images performing an archaeology of the voice.

In any case, things past.


I stopped on the side of the road to rest for a while. I had been driving since early morning and I still had a way to go. I couldn't tell you now where I was going, or where I ended up. But I tell you this because while I was stopped, a man from town happened to be passing. He stopped to tell me a story. It was about a town, that drowned in the river. All the streets, and street-lamps, all the houses, all the furniture in the houses, plates and spoons and vases, swimming the water. The people survived, but everything else sank to the bottom of the river. The residents were resettled, just up the hill a bit. New houses had been built for them, they had running water and paved footpaths. Soon after the resettlement, people started to die. Some old, some young. One by one they perished. A few of that generation still reside on that hill. They say it was the drowning that killed the rest. They missed too much their dirt streets and their water pumps in the garden. As the man got up to leave, he said: the one thing he missed most was being able to tell his grandson of his first love, and point to the tree where she and he had their first kiss.


All are tragedies, all are causes for exaltation.


If I knew what you would become, I would have paid you a different kind of attention.


I would have called out a name, but I didn't know which direction to call into.


As it happens, many people's stories unfold by the banks of rivers. Imagine walking along the edge, and finding all these bits of stories at every step, all these fragments, sinking into the mud, eroding into the water, and flowing away. It flows until someone notices a fragment they like, they gather it up and make a legend of it.


You feel so far in the past. But I've counted the days and you were not so long ago. Or so far away.
Crisis of desire is crisis of the imagination. 'Crisis' meaning 'lack'.

It's all about distance.
You need to be far away enough so desire has a space in which to be.
You have to be far away enough so you are mysterious to me.
It's a matter of perspective. And distance.
Distance is crucial to nurturing desire.

But the distance is imaginary. Spatially it's real, but not vast, not impossible.
It's a distance I create in order to cross. It's a game.

To invert this, you might say that you can cross vast and impossible distances
with imagination.

I can imagine us close, touching, I can imagine so well it feels like memory.

Staying connected with yourself in the presence of another. A movement both
into the self, and toward the other, but not exceeding the boundary of the skin.
Something like the hand that touches and is touched. Touch, of all the senses, is
the first to develop in the womb. That's just trivia, I don't know how it helps us to
understand desire. And longing. And absence. When the other is not in the
room.

How far or close do we need to be to our object of desire? What is the ultimate
distance? Or do I just need to think it to become it? Just to desire it is to be
changed. Changed but not in the image of the other. Changed but no closer to
the object.

If it's true desire it will never get its fill.

I want to defeat this corporeal body.


Don't speak for a while. Things evaporate when you speak endlessly.


I cannot follow this thought to any satisfactory end.


There's a fishing story I would like to tell. Or rather to re-tell.
It is not my story, it is the story of a man who always fished in the very same
spot since his youth. Up at dawn, on the train, and headed north. Then cross the
bridge, and find a spot on the bank of the river. Then the war started. He hadn't
been for some time. He missed his early morning trips, so he made an exception
this particular day. It was a misty morning, I think he said. You couldn't see two
meters in front of you. He was in the small dingy, on the water, when the fog
began to part. He saw two swans, flying a meter above the surface. As he tells
the story, the sight of the parting mist and the swans appears before him, his

eyes become moist with the vision. Then he tells me: some time later, while he eats his packed lunch, he hears gunshots, not far off. You do and you don't get used to this sound, he says. He stays on the water a few more hours, and then heads back over the bridge to the railway track. He gets to the other bank, and he sees white on the water. One swan circling the feathers. There seems to be more to the story, more he could tell me, but he can't go on. I'm not sure I understand the depth of his pain. But then, he was speaking from within the time of war.

All are tragedies, all are causes for exaltation.

What can I say that will move you?

How should I gesture, to call you back to me

A stirring of the inner landscapes. I used to think there would be evidence, somewhere, of this. Evidence of the kind you can hold onto. Evidence of the kind you can preserve.

It is an impossible perspective.

This is the fifth time we have seen this very image. It comes back and I know I've seen it before but each time it comes back differently.

I think of walking. Climbing over rocks to the stream.

Should I tell you about something I love? Stop me if I've told you already. I can't remember any more what I have said and what I have only thought. Maybe you hate hearing this sort of thing. Maybe it doesn't move you. But I'll say it anyway. It's about how I love the sensation of the air at a very particular time of year. Usually in late summer, when the days are still warm but the nights get cool. There is a particular time of day, when the sun is setting, or just set, and the air still a little warm in the centre, but the edges are cooling. And as you walk you feel the cool and then the warm of the air, as if walking through something solid. Or the way you feel the water change temperature as you walk from the shallows into the deep. I find the memory of this very moving. Is this what late summer is like everywhere, do you know?

Madness finds its way somewhere in there between landscape and the body.

I could take the view that psychosis is just a loss of perspective. But madness sometimes seems more real. The world is more honest with me when I am mad in it.

Conduits for transformation: the seasons.

I think of all the lives that haven't been through this building, that haven't appeared in these windows or on these balconies to smoke, to leave their lover on the bed, to open the window and beg for a breeze to come through the hot hotel room. The river is on the other side. Who would have guessed that one day there would be one lone man posing as a security guard in the lobby, all the rest of the rooms empty?

At one time this building spoke of so many great things, of such a huge hope. But the dreams that were had in those rooms, and the dreams that were had on this street looking up, what they admired in this façade, the future that these people saw, then, that they envisaged, that future never came. We never lived those days, never encountered those times. Not them and not us. And now, this monument is something totally other, not beautiful. A nuisance. No one has money to knock it down, no one has money to fix it up. So what is this man in the lobby doing down there?

I think about the final moments that happened in those rooms, before it was all shut up and condemned. She looks at the curtains and wonders who it was exactly who drew that curtain to that point, carelessly leaving it slightly ajar; the hand that shut the door for the last time? I wonder whether they were aware of the significance of the moment, or that the moment would gather significance over time until I would be here looking up and wondering, making pictures.

I went to street corners, and fields, attended to flowers, and rivers, with such attention, I learnt all their rhythms by heart.
No one has ever loved this place as I love it. No one has ever made such a loving record of its squares and monuments.
That's a lie. These records are only consequences.
At some point we must acknowledge that these are all apparitions.

Not just sight, but sound. If there are repercussions for seeing, which there are, are there repercussions for listening?

I would have called out a name, but I didn't know which direction to call into.

Speak. I can't tell it all on my own.

All are tragedies, all are causes for exaltation.

Perhaps that is the necessary beauty of it.

There are many moments I could go back to. They are like objects I can hold in the hand, spin around, and describe exactly what I see. But it means nothing to you for me to recount every object in the room, to spin it around, and describe its shape. You can't decant everything; you can't exactly describe your lover's skin or the taste of her thighs. We don't share these things with others, we don't re-tell these stories. For such beauty there is no need for words, or images. I will not evoke these things for you. It's like trying to retell a dream, it never makes sense to anyone else.

We are completely separate, you and I.

This is a very frightening place.

No one ever comes back the way they first arrived.

To think it is to become it, to desire it is to be changed.
What a farce. I am still here and you are still there. Distance between us.
Uncrossable. You remain impenetrable.

She asked to be buried in the earth from which she issued.

Yield a little. Give me a small piece of grass somewhere, or let me be under the tree I loved most in my grandfather's orchard? Is that not mine? Do I not own that tree and the soil where it is planted and the small house that sits at the top of the path? Do you need some kind of proof of my enduring devotion, my unfailing memory? I can describe the feel of the bark of that cherry tree. Sour cherry. My brother's favourite was the sweet cherry on the other side. I can show you it in pictures.

The skin is the boundary which needs to be crossed.

An image only half conjured.

There is a butterfly which has markings on the underside of its wings. When predators approach, the butterfly throws open the wings to reveal a monstrous face with two huge eyes. It resembles nothing in the environment, it is an imagined predator, collectively imagined, we all take this image to be a sign of warning. Humans too, they pin the butterfly to their doors, the monstrous face of its underside wards off evil spirits. It's all in the eyes.

Why don't you think of the beginning? That's often the way we proceed. Pretend that you can locate it. Past objects and passed moments are now endowed with significance, because we now call them: the beginning. It's satisfying to point and say 'there'. Something to do with destiny, as if it were planted in every moment.

Destiny, as in density. They are completely different. I prefer density. It is about the ability to enter this moment, as opposed to perpetually proceeding to the next.

I filled the silence with noble thoughts, making the silence between us profound. But at some point I had to acknowledge the void. A shell that has been left for dead.

I have strayed from the text. I could say it another way: at some point I had to say: I am not wanted.

Conduits for transformation:
darkness,
repetition,
ritual,
incantation,
loss of time,
loss of self,
commingling.

This is the eighth time we have seen this image.

If I visit another 2 towns, and make another six shots on six street corners, if I see another 5 statues, if I frame the woman bathing in the park from 6 perspectives… And now if I watch the sequence through 10 times, if it plays continuously for 20 hours, for 30 hours… And so on… I might know what I was looking for, I might know what I've lost.

I cannot follow this thought to any satisfactory end.

I remember walking. Climbing over rocks to the stream.

I am thinking about the story of the birds: they travel so far and so many die away, give up. A small number complete the journey to the river. It's so old you know it before you have heard it. And yet we repeat and repeat. The birds were searching for their king, and they heard he was by the banks. When the birds finally arrived, they looked in, and all they saw was a reflection of themselves in the water.

We laughed and ran and laughed so hard we could no longer keep up with each other. You were so far ahead, or behind, I couldn't see.

I would have called out a name, but I didn't know which direction to call into.

I think of apparitions again, of images, and voices, and I'm frightened again.

One early morning I made my way to the town square which was surrounded by mountains all around. I expected to be alone. Of course the strays were out, but they were my regular companions on these early mornings. No, there was something else. There were voices, there was singing, and strings. I found the group of teenagers sitting outside the youth centre. I think they had been drinking all through the night. They had one guitar between them and they were singing 1980s hits. This was some kind of passed-down nostalgia from their parents and grandparents. These kids never knew that golden time. When I asked them to sing again, they were suddenly shy and said they only had 4 strings left on the guitar and that just wouldn't do for making any kind of permanent record.

Come here. Let me touch this skin and find the weak spot that will yield.
Let me climb in.
I want to find the mark that says: I was here.
I want to find the trinkets I left behind so you could remember me.


I wasn't sure which way I should be reaching. Toward 'out there' or toward 'in here'? Do you begin inside the self or do you begin outside you and I? I wasn't sure which way it was supposed to flow. It's not like a river. My rudders were only memory images, images of desire. I kept telling my self that it doesn't take much to shift perspective.


It's about locating points: one on the inside, the other on the outside. It's about distinctions. It's about the right distance. But my desire flows too strongly towards your skin, and beyond that, all the way inside your image is where I want to lose my self. A metamorphosis, not a psychosis; a talent. But also you might say: a lure of space.


I need the dark, for a while, please. Pure darkness, because the dark sits so close to the skin. Dark space is not just an absence of light. It is charged with a haptic quality, it touches everything, I can feel it touching me, bleeding into me, or perhaps I bleed into it. A commingling.


We watch this image for the tenth time now, and we will keep watching it. Repetition turned to incantation. I imagine it as a whirling dervish.


The possibility of touch is more than touch itself.


No I don't believe this.


I believed I might transform it just by looking at it.


To glance
To take everything in, all at once


I paid such attention to how I was going to remember you.

I glanced so I could take all of you in at once, as in: to swallow you up.

Did you see me?
I didn't see me make an impression on you. I just assumed that that's what happened.


I think I want to go back to that time when we believed we could slip into the shape of a lion, or a tree. And come back again.


We need more space, not more time, to think our way into this. To speak, to dance, into the self.


We need a square of the kind that was built for Chinese emperors. A large expanse, for walking, and thinking. Now we stalk the surface, walk around the edges, we admire them, we don't walk and think.


Music makes space, too.


These spectres are still here, still playing. I've lost count how many times we have seen this image. Counting isn't easy, they seem to come back differently. Maybe you pay them a different kind of attention.


I heard a cry. I don't remember now if it was I who cried. I don't think I recognised the voice.


I feel I ought to speak differently of different things.


I have studied the subject and I have studied the movements. Sometimes I think I see me, you, in every tree, I appear in every window. Sometimes I think I see you crossing the court.

And yet, there is no point to point to and say 'there'.


If I could reach out, touch this screen, I think it would feel like touching my own skin.

For now, I only have this tongue. No body to offer up gestures. Not of longing, not of celebration, not of mourning. But someone is revelling out there, pounding the earth with their feet, and gesturing with their phantoms. But you won't let me see.

I have tried and still failed to bend my voice, my tongue, my word, in the shape of the image? Or in the shape of the memory of that place? In the shape of what is no longer my body.

Conduits for transformation: darkness, repetition, ritual, incantation, loss of self, commingling.

The correlate for a voice would simply be silence. Or sometimes a scream.

I remember walking. Climbing over rocks to the stream. Over the stream to the other bank. It was hot. I sat there for a while . A butterfly came and flapped in my ear. It hovered over my toes, my knees, my belly. I felt like a flower.

I've been told statues once marked mileage on a road. Not numbers, signs, names. But bodies. No one then would have used a figure of speech such as: in the middle of nowhere.

Statues marked burial sites. Marking the dead and the site.

I watch the unfolding of the 'here', in the way we watch the unfolding of the 'now'.

I wonder if that cry could release these statues from their stony forms?
It would be tantamount to a loss of place and a loss of body.

What about those statues that we are still excavating, that are missing a head, an arm; parts of them lost in the landscape. We've come to accept and know the classics without limbs. It would be strange to find these phantoms now and re-attach them.

What happens to the images if there is no witness?

I've strayed from the text.

I can't tell it all on my own.


Should I borrow another line and say: no one ever comes back the way they first arrived?
But that's just from a science fiction movie.

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