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***The Three Ecologies: Writing experimental, site based,
responsive narrative for the screen***

Ecology, 97 mins, 2007; Perestroika, 118 mins, 2009/10; Public House, 96 mins, 2015/16

Sarah Turner

Word count: 21,190

Abstract

The genesis for all three of my feature films, *Ecology*, *Perestroika* and *Public House*, was the challenge of an experimental writing project, which in each case sought to map new connections, within genre and innovate through structural interdependencies that fuse form and content. All three films evolved through responsive writing processes, which were, crucially, responsive to place, and all were further enabled by a responsive and reflexive use of digital technologies. In this thesis I will map some of the broad interwoven areas of concern and some of the frameworks of reference and enquiry, before discussing each film in detail.

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Introduction

The fundamental search for cinematic forms which do not conform to a linear narrative structure and resolution is the main characteristic which differentiates experimental film from mainstream cinema and is ultimately its major claim to radical intervention at all levels – aesthetic, ideological and political.¹

My three long-form films, *Ecology*, *Perestroika* and *Public House* are a trilogy forming a web of concerns that are broadly linked through ideas of ecologies – psychic, environmental and social.² In all three films, explorations of technologies, experimental approaches to writing and an engagement with narrative instability are used to create an experience, which is immersive, reflexive and affective.

The challenge of an experimental writing project that refused the paradigm of screenplay was the genesis of each work, hence, I will frame this discussion around how my writing approaches developed through a form of vertical thinking that fuses form and content.

In terms of writing approach:

- *Ecology* is formed of three interdependent stream of consciousness monologues that use the first, second and third person
- *Perestroika* is a prose poem where the writing moves from recorded testament to hallucinatory poetry
- *Public House* approaches writing as a form of musical composition. The narrative movement is carried by a soundscape, which interweaves a participatory memory work composed of verbatim voice, with an acoustic ecologies approach to acousmatic composition.³ Designed as a word sound poem,⁴ key moments of the soundscape layer individual testaments into harmonics, creating a choral refrain through the collective voice.

In order to discuss how these writing approaches developed through an understanding of the interdependency between form and content, that is, the verticality of my methodology, a brief background is necessary. I am an artist who works exclusively in the moving image, trained through the artisanal system of the art school in 16mm film.⁵ This foundational artisanal training was inherently committed to experimentation, but also to craft and preparation, partly due to the economics of 16mm which necessitates a particular skills base, and partly due to a multi skilled art school approach that simultaneously refused industry hierarchies while empowering artists with the knowledge base to be in control of every contributing element of the work. I write, direct, often photograph, produce, edit and sound design my own work, hence, the value of that artisanal training is in this synergistic approach to working, a multi skilling which facilitates a structurally and conceptually interconnected approach to all the elements. Experiences of collaboration are also facilitated through a conceptually interconnected approach to project design.

¹ Malcolm Le Grice. A non-linear tradition: experimental film and digital cinema. in *Experimental Cinema in the*

² My title is also a reflexive play on Guattari's *The Three Ecologies*. Here Guattari develops "ecosophy", which links the three interacting and interdependent ecologies of mind, society, and environment. Felix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*. Trans by Ian Pindar & Paul Simon. London, Continuum. 2008

³ Acoustic Ecology evolved from the World Soundscape Project initiated at Simon Fraser University in the late 60's. The underlying idea is the proposition that we hear our acoustic environment as a musical composition. The key proponents were R Murray Schafer, Barry Truax and Hildegard Westerkamp.

⁴ Also referred to as word text poetry, text-sound composition or sound poetry, this genre is a vital art form that straddles sound, poetry and music. See, for example, Cathy Lane, (ed), *Playing with Words*, London, CRISAP, 2008.

⁵ BA: Fine Art: Film, Video and photography: Central/St. Martins School of Art 1989. MA: Fine Art: Lens Based Media Film: Slade School of Fine Art: UCL 1991

In an interview with Sophie Mayer for Sight and Sound on the occasion of *Perestroika's* cinema release, I stated: 'Visceral, experiential, affectual: these are the words I'm interested in for cinema.'⁶ These ideas and indeed my body of work are indebted to the legacy of the feminist film avant gardes and their formal, political and affectual strategies. A full discussion of my influences exceeds the demands of this thesis, however, it is helpful to outline a few of them. From 1986 to 1991 I was involved in Circles, a feminist film distributor whose culturally diverse catalogue was largely comprised of experimental work.⁷ This early immersion in a moving image of otherness both in terms of form and content was equally influential due to that work's insistence on the specificity of where it is speaking from, as well as who it is speaking to: that is, the centrality of difference. This insistence was radically opposed to the predominantly male, structural materialists whose formalist approach was largely indifferent to the kind of emotional engagement with audiences that within feminism resonated from a politically engaged awareness of subject position. At St Martin's, I was tutored by Tina Keane whose innovative installation and performance work often used an embodied camera to actively stage subject positionings, hence situating an intersubjective experience as central to the construction of meaning within the work.⁸ Both Tina's, and my Slade tutor, Lis Rhodes's work, also explored a form of porousness between inner and external realities and this tension has remained a central preoccupation in all my work.

Meaning is not in things but in between.⁹

Ideas of in-betweenness are also central to the literature of Marguerite Duras, both in the tone of her writing and her compulsion with border zones. Her body of work was equally formative as I share this compulsion with in-between or intermediate spaces that in Duras's writing manifests in all forms of margins: geographic, racial, social, sexual and psychic¹⁰.

My engagement with a cinema of otherness is equally indebted to the work of the black, British, film collectives, Sankofa and Black Audio Film Collective. Isaac Julien/Sankofa's *Looking for Langston*, 1989, is particularly notable for its multilayered narrative exploration of memory and queer desire. If I was to summarise how this and other works that I've cited have informed me, it would be through an awareness of how form stages or performs content through complex interdependencies which situate narrative and storytelling with an awareness of audience, through affect and emotion, which in turn, is located within the works' politics and thematics. Crucially, the form, content, politics, thematics, and the affectual strategies of these works' are structurally located in difference.

My work is situated in the area that the critic and curator, Ed Halter,¹¹ refers to as the 'third space' of experimental film. This 'third space' engages both the languages of cinema and dialogues of art, but insists on a time-bound collective experience of event where the immersive context of theatrical

⁶ Turner, S. (2010), 'The tracks of time: Sarah Turner's "Perestroika"'. Interview by Sophie Mayer for Sight and Sound [Online] Available from: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/interviews/tracks-time-sarah-turner-s-perestroika>

⁷ Circles merged with Cinema of Women to form Cinenova in 1991. At that point filmmakers who had films with the distributor were forced to resign from the board as the company structure changed from a membership organization due to the demands of funders.

⁸ See for example, Tina Keane, Playpen, Performance, 1979, 1981, UK. Here, a camera is situated in a child's play pen offering a child's eye view of the world.

⁹ Lis Rhodes, Pictures on Pink Paper. 1982, UK. See Also, Faded Wallpaper, 1988, Tina Keane, UK

¹⁰ See, for example: Leslie Hill, *Marguerite Duras and the limits of fiction. FICTION WRITING – THEORY AND PRACTICE. Vol 12, No.1*. Edinburgh University Press, 1989

¹¹ Founder and director of Light Industry, a venue for film and electronic art in Brooklyn, New York. His writing has appeared in *Artforum*, *The Believer*, *Bookforum*, *Cinema Scope*, *frieze*, *Little Joe*, *Mousse*, *Rhizome*, *Triple Canopy*, the *Village Voice* and elsewhere

exhibition is integral to the affective power of the work. This ambiguous positioning at the intersection of the film world and the art world is a space that I have dedicated my practice to through a strong conviction in its social and aesthetic potential. Social and aesthetic potential here means *an insistence* on that time-bound collective experience of event where the immersive context of theatrical exhibition is integral to the affective power of the work. As that time-bound collective experience is where we, the audience, experience our difference in response to a text – together. We are empowered to fall asleep, experience boredom (a productive emotion), walk out, rage, be moved to tears or tears of joy, experience our lateral and embodied connections within our own reveries – together – differently; from our positions of difference: social, racial, sexual, etc.

At the Edinburgh Film Festival Regrouping Session, 2016,¹² I was invited to reflect on Peter Wollen's provocative 1970's essay, *The Two Avant Gardes*.¹³ In this discussion, I suggested that a contemporary definition of *The Two Avant Gardes* is this area of artists/independent film, which operates in this third space: a cinema engaged with both politics and aesthetics, which is committed to the durational experience, versus the moving image within a gallery, which is now the dominant modality of 'artists film'.¹⁴

In terms of the broader frameworks that have informed my work, within the long-form films I've consistently drawn on Maya Deren's ideas of a 'pyramid' or 'vertical' reading, of which the experience of duration is crucial. In a discussion of her film, *Meshes of the Afternoon*, 1943, Malcolm Le Grice cites Deren's contribution to the 1953 Symposium, *Poetry and Film*, where Deren introduced the concept of 'verticality'

At each repetition, small changes expand the spectator's imaginary construction of the symbolic space rather like a spiral through a matrix of action images. The spectator's passage through the film requires each previous "version" of the action to be reviewed by the next - not replacing it by a more definitive version but deepening the experiential reference in a cumulative transformation.¹⁵

And here is Deren's discussion of her proposition:

The distinction of poetry is its construction and the poetic construct arises from the fact, if you will, that it is a 'vertical' investigation of a situation, in that it probes the ramifications of the moment and is concerned with its qualities and its depth, so that you have poetry concerned, in a sense, not with what is occurring but with what it feels like or what it means [...] it may also include actions, but its attack is what I would call the vertical attack [...] in contrast to the horizontal attack of drama. In what is called a horizontal development the logic is a logic of actions. In a vertical development it is a logic of a central emotion or idea that attracts to itself even disparate images, which contain the central core, which they have in common.¹⁶

¹² Edinburgh International Film Festival: Regrouping Discussions: Lizzie Borden, Laura Mulvey, William Raban, Laura Guy, Isla Leaver-Yap and Sarah Turner. 24th June 2016

¹³ Studio International. November/December, 1975

¹⁴ Gallery work versus single screen work broadly breaks down into the space versus time debate. Summarised as: absorbed film viewing versus distracted gallery viewing. Or, alternatively: 'passive immersion' versus 'embodied criticality' - you are 'trapped' in the duration of a film or empowered by a critical embodiment that allows you to decide when to enter/ exit, and negotiate how you will spatially 'suture' meaning. See, for example: Laura U Marks, *Immersed in the single channel*, MFJ no 55 Spring, 2012

¹⁵ Malcolm Le Grice, *Digital Cinema and Experimental film – Continuities and Discontinuities*. Available at: [http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/digital_cinema\(1\).html](http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/digital_cinema(1).html) [Accessed: 1 July 2017]

¹⁶ Maya Deren: Speaking at *Poetry and Film: A Symposium* (1953). Quoted in Catherine Fowler, 'Room for Experiment: Gallery Films and Vertical Time from Maya Deren to Eija Liisa Ahtila', *Screen* 45:4, 2004, p 327

Deren was writing on form in the 40s and 50s. Film phenomenological theory of the 80s and beyond has developed new understandings of the durational film experience, summarised here by Laura Marks, who contributed much to this thinking:

Immersion in the single channel allows the virtual to traverse us in all directions: from the movie, from our memories, from our bodies, from our physical surroundings, in experiences that can be unbearably intense as certain virtualities become actual while others teem inchoately in our knees, in our stomachs, behind our eyeballs, behind the eyeballs of the film.

[] spectators are not just dupes who need to be empowered but people who respond not only individually but subculturally, engage sensuously, and perform the film into being.¹⁷

If the interrelationships of film form and theme are developed in the work by building, both formally and in narrative terms on Deren's ideas of a 'pyramid' or 'vertical' reading, and an understanding of Mark's embodied viewing where the play of memory and difference, interacts vertically in a form of active immersion, I would also add to these understandings an engagement with psychoanalytic frameworks. The work of R. D. Laing and Jean Laplanche has informed and extended a key concern of the work, particularly in *Ecology* and *Perestroika*, which both explore ideas of, and challenges to, narrative causality. Laplanche and Laing offer different understandings of psychic circuitries, which I have drawn on in the work to effect ideas of circularity: Laplanche's work speaks of the 'other within', or the internalised other as a code we don't have access to. Equally, all of R. D. Laing's work is concerned with ideas of relationality, how we are the others' experience of us, or, how our experience of ourselves is the experience of the other experiencing us.

I'll elucidate how these broad frameworks – ideas of verticality, compounded with understandings from film phenomenology and psychoanalysis – have informed site based, responsive writing approaches in order to produce new approaches within film production and innovative formal/genre fusions, within a detailed discussion of each work. Firstly, I'll characterize the fusions, innovation and movement within each film in order to map the scope and development of interconnections across all the works.

1: *Ecology* fuses a relational staging of psychic circuitries with modernist literary grammars in order to effect an avant garde psychodynamic melodrama.

2: *Perestroika* fuses psychoanalytic ideas of relationality, *Nachträglichkeit* or afterwardsness, with neuroscientific understandings of amnesia within the epistolary, autobiographical essay form in order to effect an environmental allegory that conflates individual memory loss/trauma with a wider cultural amnesia.

3: *Public House* fuses an acoustic ecologies' approach to sound - an experimental writing project, composed of the polyphonic voice, which approaches writing as an act of listening¹⁸ - with understandings of memory as storied fantasy which is both relational and projective, and site, as a

¹⁷ Laura U Marks, *Immersed in the single channel*. MFJ no 55 Spring 2012, p. 20

¹⁸ I am indebted to Pauline Oliveros's approach to 'deep listening': 'I differentiate 'to hear' and 'to listen'. To hear is the physical means that enables perception. To listen is to give attention to what is perceived both acoustically and psychologically.' Pauline Oliveros, *Deep listening. A composer's Sound Practice*. Lincoln, NE, IUniverse. 2005, pxxii

continuously remade and contested space of multiple forms of storying, in order to effect a polyphonic ethnography which moves from document to a performance of social re-imagining.

Each film has internalized processes and affects from those that preceded it, however, a series of core questions and concerns have framed my enquiry. These include:

How to re-think narrative space in fiction film in relation to questions of narrative causality, temporality, character

How to develop multi-voice stories that demand the spectator makes connections that in conventional filmmaking are signposted for us

How to use site-specific filming (a) involving participants' bodily engaging with their environment (b) 'giving voice' to the environment as itself a participant, a 'character' in the film through both sound and image

How to engage the spectator with the ambiguity/unknownness of what Laplanche termed, 'the other within'.

Finally, I would also add that whilst the immersive, reflexive and affective experience of the work is accumulatively dependent on duration, I am aware that the duration of these films places particular demands on a viewer. However, these demands are not without pleasure. Whilst a narrative contract offers a particular form of engagement or pattern recognition, mine is a pattern recognition that involves abstraction, the patterning is hugely dependent on the use of sound, approached as a form of musical composition, and the resolution of that pattern recognition offers a very demanding, if not cathartic pleasure *because* of its abstraction. As Walter Murch noted in his dialogue with Annabelle Pangborn at the School of Sound: 'Every film is its own language. It is the job of the first ten minutes to situate and provide the tools of that language.'¹⁹

In my work the tools of the film's language are not provided within the first ten minutes, pattern recognition or resolution, might not coincide with semantic recognition or resolution, and the affective and semantic experience of the work might continue to work on a viewer long after they have left the cinema. In the case of *Ecology*, the deferral or revisiting of meaning and feeling is structured into the film's formal and thematic design.

¹⁹ Spoken presentation at the School of Sound, London, April 2017

ECOLOGY, 2007 (97 minutes)²⁰

Ecology takes the short story form as a starting point. The work is formed of three stories, which equate to three separate sequences, which together comprise a long form film. Set within a family unit of mother, daughter and son, each sequence takes the form of a self contained unit that is narrated as a stream of consciousness monologue. The mother is written in third person, the daughter in second, the son in first.

The work draws on R. D. Laing's ideas of inter-experience and social phenomenology in order to invert conventional expectations of environmental ecologies. It is set on an eco retreat but its primary concern is an exploration of the ethics of emotional relations, or the psychic ecology, within a family. The film foregrounds ideas of psychic recycling, the debris we pass between each other, which cannot be effectively *metabolized*. Here, psychic 'recycling' is staged multiply. First, in the narration through the repetition and circuitry of key images - both symbolic, 'actual' and linguistic - which occur in each family members sequence. And then the circuitry is further complicated and staged in the way that the three separate yet interdependent sequences are mastered on DVD and authored to run on autoflow: sequences can be screened in any order and exhibitors determine the sequence progression. Thus, the instability and circularity of the film's themes is played out at every screening. In this sense, *Ecology's* form embodies its theme; as sequences can be screened in any order a conventional narrative reading would suggest either flashbacks or flash forwards, but what is happening here is the enactment of a more complex thematic. Different sequence permutations offer different readings, privileging one character's experience over the other, offering a different sense of how events were determined or over-determined. Meaning is constantly deferred, only in the totality is there a possible reading. At the heart of it, there is only the experience. The viewer is left with both the illogicality of causality and the gaps/circuits of relationality. R. D. Laing's formulations of inter-subjectivity informed the framework of imaginings here:

What is the texture of the actual lived experience of family life? How is the texture of this experience related to dramatic structure, the social product of the interweaving of many lives over many generations? Questions difficult to answer, since this dramatic structure, while a product of behaviour and experience, is as a rule unknown to the very people who generate and perpetuate it.²¹

I see you, and you see me. I experience you, and you experience me. I see your behaviour. You see my behaviour. But I do not and never have and never will see your experience of me. Just as you cannot 'see' my experience of you....

I do not experience your experience. But I experience you as experiencing. I experience myself as experienced by you. And I experience you as experiencing yourself as experienced by me. And so on.²²

A central question that has informed all of the work is how to reinvent language in the long form film and move beyond the over determined and over determining paradigm of the screenplay. And, implicitly, how can language/narration itself effect 'small changes (that) expand the spectator's

²⁰ *Ecology*: Arts Council of England: Visual Arts Production Award: May 2006

²¹ R. D. Laing, *The Politics of the Family, and Other Essays*. London, Vintage Books. 1972. p 67

²² R. D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise*, London, Penguin. 1967. p 15

construction of the symbolic space rather like a spiral through a matrix of action images.’ And how can language itself impact on ‘each version of the action ... (which) ‘is reviewed by the next – not replacing it by a more definitive version but deepening the experiential references in a cumulative transformation.’ That is, how can I put qualities that belong to poetry – verticality, rhythm, and the play of semantic content with the spoken and written word - into play for the screen.

At the time of *Ecology's* making my primary preoccupation was to make a long form film that could be improvised from a set of poetic constraints that offered a different framework of parameters to a conventional screenplay. Screenplay form dictates that tone, style, and rhythm are subordinate to narrative events. These events are structured in a screenplay as present tense action descriptions supplemented with dialogue. The dominant trends in film-making, national policy and the educational and publishing framework *then* (and to a certain extent now) all emphasised the three act structure, or new narrative variations on it, as the origin and prime source of production²³. Such a narrow conceptualization of filmmaking curtails the potential of film to articulate conflictual, challenging and perhaps most importantly experiential cinema. I had worked within this paradigm writing screenplays for the BFI and Film 4 and an understanding of those constraints prompted my approach: film as a primarily aural and image-based culture, rich in its potential to explore repetition and variation, rhythm, musicality, and, above all, abstraction, felt lost to a prescriptive system of script development and the reproduction of a known formula that allowed only for that formula or variations on it as a conceivable framework of imagining from for long-form work.

The British avant-garde offered significant alternative precedents in the substantial body of work produced through an engagement with space and place. I include in this the poetic documentaries of Andrew Kotting, William Raban, Lis Rhodes, John Smith, Alia Syed and Margaret Tait, although this work largely refused an engagement with character and narrative. Equally, wider film critical debate, particularly pronounced in work on East Asian cinema, emphasised the texture and tone of the cinematic image, the ability of film to convey states such as melancholia through aural and visual means, rather than dialogue. In texts such as *Movie Mutations*, BFI, 2003, discussion is broadly focused on two aspects: the sensibility of the individual in a state of cultural/emotional/social dislocation, and second, the movement away from script-based filmmaking to a cinema of aural and visual affect. Wong Kar Wai's collaboration with cinematographer, Chris Doyle and the production designer/editor, William Chang, has been compared to jazz improvisation, (*Happy Together*, 1998) Furthermore, digital technology revitalised questions about what the film image may be capable of - whether in terms of artifice or verisimilitude (Manovich, 2000) - productively requiring a rethinking of the ‘look’ of cinema, and also challenging our understanding of the production process. With forms of micro-media (lighter cameras etc) and new economies of shooting, the process of film production was open to new possibilities and experimentation. Shots of an extended duration were famously exploited in *Timecode*, (2000) where Mike Figgis orchestrated four simultaneous (and interacting), ninety minute, continuous narrative improvisations. Figgis, a jazz musician, composed the ‘script’ on musical paper in order to explore the parallel stranding of different photographic and performative elements.

In *Ecology* I used stream of consciousness narration in three interdependent short stories (which are all set in the same location, although not at the same time) as a framework from which to improvise. The poetics of this written form are inherently non linear, fragmented and structurally digressive; language – and therefore the potential for image - works to disrupt syntax and rupture causality. Furthermore, whilst stream of consciousness narration is historically associated with the rarified worlds of the Bloomsbury set – and cinema, equally, has contributed to the perception of the form as having strong bourgeois, cultural connotations - exciting work in contemporary literature by Ali Smith and James

²³ See, for example, Linda Aronson, *Scriptwriting Updated*, AFTRS: St Leonards, N. S. W: Allen & Urwin, 2000

Kelman, etc, was giving voice to a working class voice²⁴. To hear the vicissitudes, textures, and intonation of voice within the poetics of stream of the consciousness form, that is, to hear that form differently *voiced* in cinema was one of the key objectives of the work. This was also the genesis of the work and where ideas of site-based, responsive writing come into play.

In 2004 I participated in a writers workshop in an Eco retreat in Andratx, Majorca, in order to workshop a tandem narrative screenplay that I had been developing with Zephyr Films. That screenplay – *All Tomorrow's Parties* – took the form of a new narrative variation on the three act structure, with events ‘structured as present tense action descriptions supplemented with dialogue’. I felt a level of paralysis with the form and that paralysis was reinforced by the total rigidity and lack of agency that a writer/director has in industry structures: the extent of financing that has to be in place that overwhelms creative experimentation, the continual reiteration of formula. For example, I have heard the words ‘more jeopardy’ far too many times from a chorus of script editors with an equally conflicting chorus of what ‘more jeopardy’ might actually mean. I assume it to mean a clichéd understanding of tension created through a rising action line. In my work tension exists through other approaches to psychic complexity and formal interplay.

However, the writer’s retreat was epiphanic due to a complex layering of feelings that I experienced in response to *place*: identification, physical liberation and physical difficulty, compulsion, repulsion. The Eco retreat had been owned by artists since the eighties. Sprawled across the top of a mountain, the only electricity is supplied by ineffective and way out of date solar panels that despite the sun drenched landscape are drained if a light bulb is left on or a tap drips, and the only water is supplied by rain, with bottled water for drinking. This meant that toilets could not be flushed for anything as routine as peeing; all water was necessarily recycled and channelled, peeing outside was compulsory, as was a focus on exactly where that ‘waste water’ was channelled. What goes around comes around... The parallels with psychic life were viscerally palpable: what exactly do we pass on or place inside others?

As someone who was raised by post-war working class parents – the generation that grew their own vegetables and mended their own clothes because they could not afford new ones, recycled everything because waste was an intolerable and un-indulgable excess, and a lightbulb left on was literally unaffordable, I had a structuring relationship to these values. However, in contemporary life, there is a perception that it is the middle classes that embrace environmental values such as home grown food and recycling, while the working classes eat ready meals and chuck everything out²⁵. Much of popular culture embodies these tensions, while a wider neo-liberal agenda increasingly defines the working class itself as an unproductive waste; an excessive drain on resources.

Ideas of waste are culturally defining: my own complex identifications prompted a set of narrative fantasies that were responsive to these embodied tensions. The challenge of how to give *voice* to this necessarily involved a process of writing from the inside; I returned to the location and abandoned screenplay form. If Sally Potter could explore east-west relations through a love story narrated in iambic pentameter (*Yes, 2004*) then why not explore the fantasy of transplanting a white working-class suburban family to an eco retreat in the Majorcan hills? Why not employ a high modernist literary form, so that both form and content are ‘matter out of place’, where cultural and familial – psychic and bodily – tensions are experienced through quotidian domestic rituals? The daily bodily realities of

²⁴ See, for example, James Kelman, *How Late it Was, How Late*, London: Vintage, 1994

Ali Smith, *Hotel World*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2001

²⁵ See, for example, the popular obsession with food programmes which ‘teach’ the working classes what and how to eat. Jamie’s School Dinners, Channel 4, 2005, UK, is an obvious example.

peeing, shitting and washing²⁶ viscerally stage the tensions of environmental politics and class as there is real ambivalence and ambiguity here. An older working-class woman would have a real problem with idealising not having hot water and peeing outside if she grew up in a space with no indoor toilet, no central heating and no hot water. Labour saving devices that we routinely take for granted are much harder to reject if you are structured through an experience of hardship that you are now – economically and technologically – liberated from. The otherness of that eco retreat to a suburban working class aesthetic was an opportunity to humanize some of these tensions, which were fermented – crucially – through ideas of *matter out of place* or a quite literal *Unheimlich*, ideas of a family viscerally *not at home* within *that* regime.

In the film, within each sequence, fairly anodyne rituals of showering, cooking, eating and cleaning are re-enacted and repeated. However, the dramatic locus is that the family's presence in the location is the result of a central event, which remains avoided and unspoken: a moment of alcohol-related violence, which has led to the son's detention. This repressed violence or violent repression erupts differently in each sequence – a glass is smashed, there is blood in the food. A glass is crushed; food is vomited out.

Ecology takes the three themes of the environment, familial psychic structures and technology as critical sites of crisis and change, and insists that we consider them together. The location of Majorca invokes the optimism of 'holiday', but of course the site is a drought zone where the sun is oppressive and water is a scarce and rare resource. The 'holiday' is a literal relocation, but one where the conventions of the everyday are overturned, the primal needs for survival mirroring the psychic needs struggled for with in the family. The inevitable recycling of water is conceptually mirrored in the recycling of emotional violence, requiring that we reconsider 'waste', 'need,' and 'survival', and suggesting that familial existence is as precarious an ecology as the environment.

We perceive in our waking life; we remember it; then forget it; we dream of something with different content but similar structure; we remember the dream but not the original perception. From this and other kinds of internalization, some patterns recur in our reveries, dreams, imagination and fantasy. Counter-patterns may be set up in imagination against those in fantasy. Scenarios of dramatic sequences of space-time relations between elements undergo transformation (eg towards wish fulfilling or catastrophic outcomes) as they recur in different modalities. We may try to act upon our wish or fear fulfilling imagination of which we become aware only by suffering the effects of such action.²⁷

The use of film technologies develops these themes. Shot on multiple formats including stills, Super 8, DV and mobile phones – technologies that live inside one another as they evolve – the imaging of the film is a set of pattern and counter-patterns, a struggle for stability and consistency²⁸. On location the form and content of the stories was used as a framing device in order to approach a series of extended improvisations with camera, scenario and composition - the grammars of the writing inflecting the grammar(s) of cinematography. For example, a pivotal moment of narrative tension in the daughter's sequence - one of the few moments played out in conventional dialogue - is *performed* in stills. This

²⁶ Again, there are numerous examples within avant garde film, eg 'The Eating Drinking Shitting Peeing film, Kurt Kren, Austria, 1967, but these examples refuse an engagement with character and narrative.

²⁷ R. D. Laing. *The politics of the family, and other essays*. London, Vintage Books. 1972. P 7

²⁸ Made on the cusp on standard definition moving over to high definition, when mobile phone footage was closer to the lo gauge instability of super 8 film, as opposed to now – where 2k mobile phones are regularly used to shoot feature films on – see Tangerine, Sean Baker, 2015, shot on the I phone 5) *Ecology* was photographed on over 20 different cameras using 10 distinct formats, including SD DVCAM video, Mini-DV, Micro-MV, Super 8 film stock, digital and 35mm stills cameras and mobile phones.

stages the dynamics of the family photograph - a performance of a moment that doesn't perform *the* moment; a framing of a moment that our desire wishes to frame, which, crucially, acts to reframe what is necessarily left out – as well as performing the rhythms of the writing: staccato, disruptive and digressive. Equally, the thematics and the affectual resonances are being developed here. The impossibility of being present in the present is further played out in the son's sequence where his endless retracing of the landscape – a physical re-enactment of trauma – is experienced as stills in a literal performance of ideas of screen memory.

Improvised 'sketches' were continuously extended through process based editing on location. Edited sequences were viewed by the collaborators, and responded to in subsequent improvisations. In this sense, the storytelling became the story; the performance of actors, sound, camera, rhythm, time, abstraction, and landscape, were all a telling, not a told which was re-performed.

Crucially, this use of improvisation and contingency was extended in the post production process as core uses of texture, grain, framings and formats evolved. As in the stories themselves, key patternings and counter-patternings are repeated, with variation, often in a process of continual re-photography, in each of the sequences. If we think of technology (grains and gauges) as a family of slightly different molecular structures, how can we describe or exploit their likeness or their difference? Psychic sequences and experiences are reconfigured and repeated as in DNA - in genetic code there is an equivalence to DATA and imagery; another technological and visual code. Furthermore, a real 'ecology' implies a recycling of imagery, not just of symbolic imagery - ie, the glass that's smashed, crushed, drained, and cycles of emotional repetition; a psychical recycling of emotional structures that are played out through repeating patterns of camera framing, grain and movement, - but a literal recycling. As in (literal) images from one story being recycled and reworked in another, revealing the multiple meanings of *any* image; narrative, causality and perspective is therefore reconfigured through a phenomenology of perception.

An experiential cinema which prioritises the affectual: in the overall - vertical - patterning and design of the film's formal framework, circularity, relationality, instability, and, hence, unreliability are foregrounded - the idea of a linear *authority* of voice is a psychic impossibility. In *Ecology*, circularity rather than linear progression characterizes an interdependent understanding of technology, psychic structures and the environment. We are the others experience of us, and the experience of the film is the experience of endlessly revisiting – and revising – the othering of experience and the experience of the other.²⁹

As we watch a film, the continuous act of recognition in which we are involved is like a strip of memory unrolling beneath the images of the film itself, to form the invisible underlayer of an implicit double exposure.³⁰

²⁹ See Appendix 1. The stories/script of *Ecology*.

³⁰ Deren (1960) *Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality*. In: Essential Deren (2005) Kingston, NY. McPherson & Company. p116

PERESTROIKA, 2009/10 (118 mins)³¹

I rarely think in terms of message. I think more in terms of processes of transformation. Every film that I make, for example, is a transformative process for me. I mean by that, that whenever I start a film, I may start with an idea, an image or an impression. By the time I finish the film, I am somewhere else altogether, even though I have not lost what I started out with. In the process of making the film your consciousness has changed considerably.³²

We are the others experience of us

Without memory there is no experience³³

Perestroika explores technologies of memory, temporality and loss. Or, the relation between time, photography and death. It explores ideas of what is 'truth', 'fact', 'evidence' and 'record', and in doing so, it plays with some of the 'facts' of my life. Therefore, it is a documentary, which is autobiographical, a fiction that is also an essay, but mostly it is a poem, which is an extended meditation on the nature of affect or the ability of the image to represent experience.

I will first discuss the wider research and *movement* of *Perestroika* (and *Perestroika:Reconstructed* as the two works were conceived as one) before discussing the *process and* writing approach in more detail.

Perestroika stages the relationship between time, photography and death, ideas crucial to thinking through 'technologies of memory'. The core premise involved repeating a journey to Siberia first taken twenty years ago in 1987/88, revisited both through the archive video footage from *then* and a re-enactment of both journey and process – filming continuously from the train window – *now* (2007/8). The writing - devised in response to that process – facilitates a performative movement between the index and the uncanny within the continuous modality of the documentary image. In that sense, *Perestroika is a documentary that deploys the truths of fiction* in order to explicitly discuss ideas of how experience is framed through memory: a set of stories we tell of ourselves and others. Equally, as our stories of ourselves are constructed through others experience of us, how we are therefore continuously framed through a relational narrative interplay. A central question that the project asked is: what happens to the story of self when our relational narratives break down? Through time - we forget – and, our experience of the past is always framed or determined by our experience of the present, or through the un-metabolisable rupture of death, of loss. *Who are we - then - when the other is not here to hold our stories - to frame our experience?*

³¹ *Perestroika*: LAFVA Award: Arts Council of England/Film Council/Film London: April 2008

³² Trinh T. Minh-ha. A Discussion with Trinh T. Minh-ha
<http://worldscinema.org/2015/07/t-minh-ha-trinh-reassemblage-1983/> [Accessed: 1 April 2017]

³³William Harvey, 1651, Quoted in *Memory: An Anthology* (2008) Eds: Harriet Harvey Wood and AS Byatt, London, Chatto & Windus, p 230

In film any discussion of the framing of stories implicitly discusses the framing of the image. Narrative itself is a framing perspective and *Perestroika* itself is a story of repetition and return explored through process and archive. In order to understand the past we return to the image – or our images of the past – to ideas of record or truth (of a moment) that is held by technology – that is – mediated memories: the vernacular record that assumes a ‘truth’ because of indexicality. However, we take for granted the idea that language is transparent, it is contingent on the narrative contract that frames it. What if an image is equally transparent, if our experience of the image is equally contingent on the narrative or affectual structure that frames it? Here is the possibility for the image to enter the realm of the uncanny, where the real becomes uncanny, or where the uncanny is the real.

A core challenge for *Perestroika* was to effect a movement between the index and the uncanny as the wider allegorical movement of the film required these two perceptual *contracts* to change places. From the image as external – truth, fact and record, which is grounded and set up in the form of a documentary – to an internal, narrative space. This is an affectual movement as the modality of the imagery does not change – it retains the form of document or actuality in that the register of photography is unchanging – what mutates is the registers of subjectivity, that is, the affectual framing. And this is done through narration: through the poetics of repetition and return, reincorporation & recycling, in order to effect: ‘small changes (that) expand the spectator’s construction of the symbolic space rather like a spiral through a matrix of action images [.....] each version of the action reviewed by the next – not replacing it by a more definitive version but deepening the experiential references in a cumulative transformation.’³⁴

Is film a process of remembering or forgetting?

I think of *Perestroika* as a ghost story, which exploits technologies of memory in order to explore *what* we forget and *how* we remember. The film works within a refusal of the opposition between storytelling and document, the binary between the fact of event and the fiction of memory (the dual legacy of film theory) in order to foreground the affectual; memory is a narrative response to affectual spaces: the *experience* of memory is always determined by the affectual filter of now as much as then. The film is part psycho geography, part allegory and part dream: it is structured around a very simple premise where I, ‘I’, both filmmaker and constructed character, repeat a journey to Siberia on the trans Siberian train that I took twenty years ago, aged twenty, with a number of friends – and significantly, amongst those friends were my two closest friends, both of whom, are now dead. On that initial Trans Siberian trip which spanned December 87 to January 88, I filmed the passing landscape from the train window (I was a second year student at St Martins School of Art and had access to a Hi 8 camera). Both of those dead friends voices – particularly Siân Thomas’s – dominate the soundscape of that ‘archive’ footage. The *haunting* of voice was critical to the act of repetition and return but critical to the construction of the character ‘Sarah Turner’ – was the fact that Siân, (my closest friend and mentor, who had facilitated that trip for me), was killed by a head injury caused by a cycling accident *in* Siberia. Siân was cycling from Peking to Paris on an ecological consciousness-raising trip through former sites of Soviet pollution: she was hit by a truck en route in Siberia, and killed instantly.

In the film, imagery from both journeys is limited to views of the passing landscape from the window of the Trans Siberian train (until we arrive at Lake Baikal). So I did not just repeat the journey, I repeated the mode, the idiom of image making, of framing. And in that process I realised that photography as an act, actually creates experiences rather than – or as well as – recording them. That

³⁴ Malcolm Le Grice discussing Maya Deren’s concept of ‘verticality’ in: *Digital Cinema and Experimental film – Continuities and Discontinuities*. Available at: [http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/digital_cinema\(1\).html](http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/digital_cinema(1).html) [Accessed: 1 February 2017]

realisation is summarised in the last movement of the prose/ the voice over, but this idea is also central to the construction of the character 'Sarah Turner'.

The conceit that I worked with is that I am, or the filmmaker herself/ the character of Sarah Turner, *is* the ghost: she is suffering from retrograde amnesia following a head injury caused by a cycling accident. She is repeating a journey to Siberia, which she took twenty years ago with her best friend, and also where her best friend subsequently died, following a head injury caused by a cycling accident. Of course this is an uncanny doubling which riffs on ideas of projection and introjection - the absorption of other personalities into the self, so that external events are reacted to as if they were internal, personal. It is also central to the idea of 'who are we if the other is not here to hold our stories.' There is an amnesia or forgetting which takes place if the other is no longer present to re-narrate our story with us, which returns us to the idea of how and if our stories are held. How is experience framed by storytelling, and how is that process mediated by technology? That is, technologies of memory – vernacular video – that assumes a reference to the real, a version of 'fact' or 'truth' because of indexicality. The re-enactment of both my real and fictional journey is a memory work, a re-enactment of the past in the present through the process of filming. And this process is continually mediated by a referencing of the archive sounds and imagery, which were shot on the original journey.

The journey in the present 2007-2008, (I returned at exactly the same time: the first time we were on the train on Christmas day, the second time on the train on New Year's day) is clearly structured in narrative terms as a quest: the idea that the return to trauma will precipitate memory, the re-enactment of the journey will precipitate another return, the return of memory through a re-enactment of trauma. However, this quest is 'derailed' by extreme insomnia, the claustrophobic heat of the train, and the process itself, which ultimately produces paranoia, delusion and a complete breakdown of relationality. This produces an altogether different trauma, where finally, the 'delusional' or 'visionary' character of 'Sarah Turner' experiences Lake Baikal to be on fire. This movement is, in part, facilitated by editing that privileges a visceral, embodied experience that is designed to become increasingly immersive, so that over time, the viewer effectively becomes the film's passenger, until landscape and mind, physical and psychic space are fused, and this fusion is intensely embodied by the end of the film. Crucially, the experience of the narrative movement is structured and effected through a framing narration performed as voice over, which moves through a number of different modalities, from coherence to incoherence, from external speech to performative poetry. The performance of this narration was inspired by all kinds of thinking about off screen narration (Chion, etc) but its texture can be located within the words of the psychoanalyst, Adam Phillips: John Ashbery said, "If you talk to other people, eventually they lose interest. But if you start talking to yourself, they want to listen in."³⁵

The voice over is initially staged as an act of recall, a log which narrates the event after the event as a 'memory work', but also as a literal play on the idea of 'afterwardsness'. The mode of the voice then shifts from 'external speech' - notes to self, narrating after an act of 'recording' - to an intimate confessional, a conversation with self, then to an act of surveillance of 'you', the other, which, documents, mediates and participates in the breakdown of relationality. The mode finally returns to a reworked positioning of the 'log', but there is now no separation between outside and inside, past and present. It is a non-sense, which makes sense through the internal logic of emotional continuum, affectual space or feeling. And this feeling is operating in between the space of language and image, in the failure of both to secure meaning, or the power of both to deceive. The voice over begins as a commentary on the present, which also retreats into the past through the 'archive' footage. Language then effects a movement, which fuses what is being seen, what has been seen and what is seen

³⁵ See Paul Chan: against the tyranny of use value: <http://contemporary-art-library.blogspot.co.uk/2007/05/paul-chan-against-tyranny-of-use-value.html> [Accessed: 1 April 2017]

internally. Although this is narratively staged as a confusion between sleeping and waking states it is also a reflexive discussion of the status of the image as the relationship here shifts between 'truth', 'fact' and 'record' to complete misrecognition, or, an experience of the uncanny.

What I was working with in the act of misrecognition, or, the experience of the uncanny, was an idea of *the real* as an act of disavowel: Embodied knowledge – *that which we cannot metabolise* – literally the knowledge of our own deaths – which I'm brought closer to through re-visiting the death of my friends, but also through the experience of time, the twenty year ellipsis of the young woman student with a camera, now an adult filmmaker, a palpably visceral experience of time travel. There is also a wider disavowel, which is 'real' - that I work through allegorically in the fine tradition of the delusional as visionary, the mad one as 'seer' of the 'truth' - and that is, the cultural disavowel of climate change.

In the last movement of the film, 'I' see/experience the lake on fire - that is Lake Baikal, the deepest and oldest lake in the world, which holds one fifth of the world's fresh water. This is contained within the narrative as an experience of overheating as external and internal, landscape and psychic space are now fused.

*I was burning up. Euphoria that you can open a window here. Euphoria that you can step on to the balcony. I stepped on to the balcony. My body was on fire. And so was the lake. I could see it. For a while I just watched it, taking in the heat. Then I needed to step in, move away from it, but there was no, absolutely no, no difference, no separation between outside and inside and then I knew what was happening. A light was going out. I've been here before. And I knew that I was watching it all over again, and I knew that I needed to feel it, I had to get down there. Because no one would believe me.*³⁶

The lake on fire is a surreal vision, which refers to the wider disavowel, a surreal situation: how could water burn? But equally, within the logic of the narrative: how could you watch your own death? The voice over at the beginning of the film – the time of the reconstruction - recalls 'my' accident (the doubling with my friend's death) which is finally twinned with this moment of 'vision':

As I knew I was going to hit that car door, long before he opened the door, but when I hit it - as I hit it - I knew as I somersaulted over it that I was already dead. Long before my head hit that lamp post. I could never explain how, even now, but I watched it happening, and I knew as it was happening that a light was going out, and, I was – also - strangely - grateful for it.

Can water burn? The IPCC, pre Copenhagen research, released in February 2009, told us that the Amazon Rain Forest will burn – possibly in our lifetimes. We are all – at one remove - 'watching our own deaths' - an act of deathly, cultural disavowel.

This framework of ideas was the emotional and political genesis of the work. The film engages with ideas of the social metaphorically and allegorically. Perestroika was a project of social and ideological re-construction, of capital certainly, but it was essentially an act of re-narration: a new framing or governing fiction for a culture. A culture re-historicised. Who are we when the other is not here to hold our stories, who are we when our stories are re-framed? The work is certainly based on the premise that memory is a narrative response to affectual spaces, the affectual filter of now as much as then. It is also an allegory of how our identities are constructed through others. When that relational foundation breaks down – we are driven to madness. The structure is a road movie or a train (of thought) movie, a psychodrama that becomes a psychological nightmare. All of the imagery is sourced from 'the real' and the modality of photography is pretty much unchanging. However, - the 'real' of the imagery, is

³⁶ *Perestroika* narration: Sarah Turner, 2009. See Appendix 2

the 'real' of the imaginary, of framing and of storytelling, as well as the 'real' of cultural disavowal, the uncanny amnesia of this historical moment, which is our social contract.³⁷ Through exploring these ideas – I reprised the desire of a very dear friend, - the environmental impetus of Siân's original journey - and the narrative doubling is somehow a tribute, or swan song to her...

These ideas outline the overall allegorical and intellectual movement in the film. I will now discuss in more detail how the process framed the research and determined the writing. I have already stated that the writing process for *Perestroika* was responsive to place, time and the experience of both place and time for the writer. While this is fundamental to many writing processes - space and place generate a kernel of an idea, an affectual or emotional framework that is then developed through further research and structuring - the writing here was responsive to both the affectual experience of space, place, and time, and literally the process of re enacting a journey. Crucially, the journey was both re enactment and re-mediation, that is, the process of mediating experience through video and photography. The writing was responsive to both process and content, and equally, content was generated through process. It is this interweaving that determined the narrative structure, movement and content of *Perestroika*, the bulk of which was conceived in response to the experience and the experience of the rushes. That is, the narrative frame was conceived retrospectively in response to the process. However, that process had some clear conceptual preoccupations that emanated from multiple layers of hauntings. Michael Renov writes persuasively on the public and autobiographical process of mourning in moving image work:

Death opens up a hole in the Real that will be filled by a 'swarm of images' having perhaps ritual or therapeutic value. Like psychosis, then, mourning can be understood in relation to negativity, to a void. Unlike psychosis, however, mourning is commonly resolved or worked through. That recovery, too little understood by Freud, is, according to Lacan, a function of language.

We now have a conceptual framework within which to approach the representation of death in relation to the work of mourning: the loss of a loved one produces a gap in the Real, that formless beyond of symbolization, a hole that sets the signifier in motion, filling the void, relieving the pain. We also have a better understanding of the grounds for claiming that the representation of death in some recent films and video tapes may constitute both a public and an autobiographical or intrapsychic activity.³⁸

Perestroika's premise involved a journey of re-enactment, which contained a twenty year ellipsis and multiple deaths, which spoke to both the loss of individual stories as well as governing cultural narratives. Death haunts the film in multiple ways: within the imagery in the 'archive' video, and also, crucially in the voices, resonating in our body *now* without the stable visual referent of *past*. This is sound as an image, eternally recurring in the present: a double haunting of the idea of an absent presence: Chion writes, 'The power of narration derives from the simple fact that the voice that's supposed to emit it has not *yet* been inscribed in the visual field.'³⁹

In addition, a key still image in my archive formed part of the film's emotional diegesis and indeed, the genesis of ideas around photography and death and the fiction of memory. In the video 'archive' there is a short sequence that shows Siân Thomas taking a photograph of whoever was behind the lens filming her. I had that photograph – of myself – framed on my wall, but I could not remember how I got it, who framed it, or when it was given to me, as well as, of course, filming that moment that was

³⁷ We can also think of the 'uncanny amnesia' of this historical moment as a form of willful forgetting.

³⁸ Michael Renov. *The Subject of Documentary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2004, p 125

³⁹ Michel Chion. *The Voice in Cinema*. Columbia University Press, 1999, p 23

now the register of multiply significant uncannys: Here is live action footage of the person who is now dead, Sïan, taking a photograph of a living person [myself], who is 'dead' in the photograph.

Roland Barthes' ideas of photography as death haunt the film extensively, as do Susan Sontag's ideas of the memento mori, photography as preservation against death. These frameworks partly informed my choice to shoot not only continuous video, but also continuous stills – to literally reanimate the multiple 'deaths' of cinema. The stills are animated through the passage of the train, the train's movement a shutter to the landscape. This is photography as a form of refusal, as well as an explicit meditation on - *time - passing* -. Laura Mulvey's writing on delayed cinema was helpful here and this long quotation resonates with much of my thinking:

Delayed cinema works on two levels: first of all it refers to the actual act of slowing down the flow of film. Secondly it refers to the delay in time during which some detail has lain dormant, as it were, waiting to be noticed. There is a loose parallel here with Freud's concept of deferred action (*Nachträglichkeit*), the way the unconscious preserves a specific experience, while its traumatic effect might only be realised by another, later but associated, event. Freud developed his thoughts on deferred action out of his analyses of the problem of sexuality in human development. A small child might well not understand the significance of this memory, forgotten and stored in the unconscious. The cinema (like photography) has a privileged relation to time, preserving the moment at which the image is registered, inscribing as unprecedented reality into its representation of the past. This, as it were, storage function may be compared to the memory left in the unconscious by an incident lost to consciousness. Both have the attributes of the indexical sign, the mark of trauma or the mark of light, and both need to be deciphered retrospectively across delayed time.⁴⁰

If this wider discussion of photography was both genesis and process, the re-animation and doubling was both narrative frame and content. *Perestroika* is a circular narrative, which broadly encompasses the key phases or movements of the three-act structure (set up, develop, conclude, or placement, displacement, replacement). The film is structured through a narrator, who narrates a fictional account of an actual journey, which is itself a re-enactment of an actual journey, undertaken by, we can assume, a group of non fictional or real characters, including the narrator, some twenty years previously.

The device of the journeying narrator, employs an 'I' – albeit an 'I' who reconstructs the journey retrospectively – therefore we are immediately in the territory of autobiography and authorship. Further, the 'I' is also recording her thoughts and responses to the process of the journey, ostensibly in the moment, for a 'you'. Therefore, we have an epistolary frame, which has the classic function of authored interpretative commentary within the documentary journey/ essay form. Here, however, the stability of authorship, autobiography and narration is immediately undermined through the trope of amnesia, and the trope of amnesia was devised through the *experience* of the process.

My original proposal for *Perestroika* stated that the re-enactment would involve two sequences, one a completely fictional response, the second emanating from the 'factual' experience, the tensions between the two would effect an exploration of the *process* of memory. The re-enactment involved a four-day train journey, an endless in-between, a liminal place, a threshold space, where at day you look out, at night you look in. For the fiction, I had intended to write a ghost story, my archive gave unique access to the 'traces of the haunting', but unlike in a flashback, we cannot see ourselves in our memories or our dreams and the archive became a performance of my delusion.

⁴⁰ Laura Mulvey. *Death 24 x a Second*. London, Reaktion Books, 2006, p8

Is film a process of remembering or forgetting?

*This is the same journey, at the same time. But there's no evidence of that. Everything is different and it all looks the same. I'd like to say that. Fix it. But everything is different and nothing looks the same. I see the frost on the window. But all I feel is the heat. All I see is the heat.*⁴¹

The views from the window were at once changed, as well as at once endlessly familiar and endlessly repeating. But, like *déjà vu*, you recognise the place but not the time, the time but not the place, the story that's been told, not the one you're telling, the tone of the telling but not what's told. That place that was so familiar *was* so very strange, stranger now than it was then as the structures of now replaced the structures of then. Is it *déjà vu* or *jamais vu*? I was not there on *that* train during *that* time: I was the ghost. I was the ghost as the 'traces of the haunting' took over and I was not – actually - present.

.. let's return to cinema's conditions of possibility, repetition and stoppage. What is repetition? There are four great thinkers of repetition in modernity: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Gilles Deleuze. All four have shown us that repetition is not the return of the identical; it is not the same as such that returns. The force and grace of repetition, the novelty it brings us, is the return as the possibility of what was. Repetition restores the possibility of what was, renders it possible anew; it's almost a paradox. To repeat something is to make it possible anew. Here lies the proximity of repetition and memory. Memory cannot give us back what was, as such: that would be hell. Instead, memory restores possibility to the past. This is the meaning of the theological experience that Benjamin saw in memory, when he said that memory makes the unfulfilled into the fulfilled, and the fulfilled into the unfulfilled. Memory is, so to speak, the organ of reality's modalization; it is that which can transform the real into the possible and the possible into the real. If you think about it, that's also the definition of cinema. Doesn't cinema always do just that, transform the real in to the possible and the possible into the real? One can define the already–seen as the fact of perceiving something present as though it had already been, and its converse as the fact of perceiving something present as though it has already been as present. Cinema takes place in this zone of indifference.⁴²

If the trope of amnesia was devised in response to the experience of the process, I further brought to that the relational theories of the psyche and identity that I have already begun to discuss. All of these concepts, however, are profoundly – vertically - interdependent. I will first discuss the development of the (amnesiac) unreliable narrator.

The unreliable narrator is a ubiquitous post modern literary device, which permeates the work of, amongst others, Paul Auster. One tenet of my research involved analysing Auster's entire body of writing in order to break down his narrational strategies as he often employs a doubling of author and character. Auster's meta-fictional worlds explore layers of reality and identity and in essence they conform to the same governing pattern. Auster's protagonist (often Paul Auster the novelist) sets out with complete agency: he, the novelist/ detective, - as it is both the detective's and novelist's quest to solve the puzzle of an imagined world - are at the centre, controlling events, plotting the clues, which lead, conjure and configure the plot. Therefore, they are writing the book and hunting the villain through evoking both worlds, but this is then – slowly and inevitably - completely reversed. So the book is in fact writing the writer, the writer is merely a character in a text, the detective is the hunted rather than the hunter, the world that they have been writing is in fact writing them. They have no

⁴¹ *Perestroika* narration: Sarah Turner, 2009. See Appendix 2

⁴² Giorgio Agamben : '*Difference and Repetition: on Guy Debord's film*' in ed. Tanya Leighton, *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, Tate Publishing, 2008 P. 330

agency whatsoever: They are mere characters in someone else's plot, and crucially, the illusion of agency in Auster is often governed by chance⁴³.

This premise - the author that sets out with complete agency only to realise that they're a character in someone else's story, is completely reversed in *Perestroika*. From the outset, the author/character of Sarah Turner has no agency whatsoever, as an amnesiac the only thing she knows of herself is the stories others have told her of her, which is where relational theories of identity come into play. Retrograde amnesia, which can occur as a result of a brain injury, the kind of brain injury that is fictionalised in *Perestroika*, entails a loss of autonegic awareness, that is, the understanding of the self in time. The neuro-scientific research I undertook into amnesia related to its structures, processes, diagnosis and potential for recovery.⁴⁴ These key frameworks thread through both the conceptual processes and the writing itself. For example, the diagnostic remember/know test, known as the R/K test, is premised on the ability to differentiate between episodic and semantic knowledge. That is experience and 'fact'. 'Without memory, there is no experience',⁴⁵ however, retrograde amnesiacs can relearn 'facts'. For example, what year did Princess Diana die? They can be told, and relearn the date of August 1997, the semantic knowledge. They can also be told what they were doing on that date in August 1997, say, driving to Dorset with your partner to visit your mother, you both heard the news on the radio. This is episodic knowledge - the understanding of self in time - which, the amnesiac can also relearn as a 'fact', but with the critical autobiographical rupture of 'knowing' the story/experience *as if they weren't there*. This then, relates to questions that are crucial to documentary practice, the actuality of which is grounded in the genre contract, which presupposes notions of truth, fact, evidence and record. I will develop this further shortly, first I want to sketch through other conceptual processes that evolved through the amnesia research.

A key process of memory disturbance is confabulation, where memories are fabricated, distorted, misinterpreted or misrecognised. Individuals may present blatantly false information, but that may also appear to be coherent and internally consistent, and may range from subtle associations to bizarre inventions that are often provoked in response to a cue. Confabulation occurs as the neurological process of encoding, storage, or retrieval of a memory can be led astray at any point. Therefore in the writing, I can effect a movement from documentary recording of 'facts' that are reworked through subtle re associations, ie, conflation, which is also a standard poetic device, fusing two or more images to produce a new meaning either literally or metaphorically, to 'bizarre invention'. Bizarre invention is developed in multiple layers in the film culminating in the epiphanic - uncanny - vision of the lake on fire.

I also drew - to a certain extent - on literary models of conflation and re-incorporation, such as the pantoum and villanelle, but I also drew on less prosaic frameworks for dealing with brain injury/ memory loss in order to structure the writing. Practical mechanisms included the memory log and another coping mechanism developed by care systems, colloquially referred to as 'downtime'. First, the memory log: This pragmatic tool to exercise the 'muscle of memory' was used in the film to develop the main epistolary device: a recorded memory log for the journey of recovery to be shared and 'reconstructed' with 'you'. This premise gives the core structuring device of the narration - the recordings function in the micro - as daily record: events recalled after the event as memory work - and in the macro 'quest' - undertaking the journey to reawaken latent trauma - as therapeutic memory

⁴³ See, for example, Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy: City of Glass. Ghosts. The Locked Room*. London, Penguin, 1990.

⁴⁴ See, for example, <http://www.jneurosci.org/content/18/10/3943>
<https://academic.oup.com/brain/article/125/10/2152/300456>
 [Accessed: 1 April 2017]

⁴⁵ William Harvey, 1651, Quoted in *Memory: An Anthology* (2008) Eds: Harriet Harvey Wood and AS Byatt, London, Chatto & Windus, p 230

work to recover from amnesia. Of course, this narrational structuring device is also staging a perceptual and affective experience of ‘afterwardsness’. ‘Downtime’ – the other more prosaic device that I borrowed from traumatic brain imagery care - was used structurally to effect narrative movement, but it is clinically understood as a mechanism for escaping from and managing the overwhelming demands of the other. The role of the other is key here. In his essay, *The Unfinished Copernican Revolution*, Laplanche lays out the fault lines of humanity’s psychic ruptures. The first rupture, the Copernican revolution, is the moment of understanding that this planet revolves around the sun. The second rupture, which came with Freud, is the understanding that wo/man does not have agency over her/his actions as s/he is unconsciously driven, and the third rupture, for Laplanche, is the understanding of the ‘enigmatic code’, that is, that the unconscious is relational. It is the other’s experience of us that shapes us, this shaping from the other outside is internalised, and, furthermore, the otherness within us is a code which we do not have access to. This is not so far from R. D Laing’s understanding of relationality.

Psychoanalysis, then, is telling us that we are constructed through the experience of the other’s experience of us. Memory is therefore relational and fictional, all memory is a set of past fictions/ future projections/ stories that are continually reconstructed relationally in that narrative process of self re-invention. However, through the death of the other/ time/ loss, you lose the ability to re narrate - the potential of self reinvention through others - and equally, self reinvention is cultural, that is, this is both an individual and social process: Storying is the canvas of cultural reinvention.

29th December 2007. I’ve had absolutely no sleep, but I’m supposed to be talking about last night – the 28th - arriving in Moscow. So, for the record: Some hands. An escalator. The boy with that very particular haircut... And then, the cake...

I can’t do this: I need to say this now - maybe I’ll understand it later: When I look at you I know this is a face I can trust. I know that I’ve always known this. What I no longer know is how I know this.

.....

.....

You’ve given me some very simple rules. All the stuff we agreed before leaving. I’m to leave a day or half a day between seeing and remembering, between photography and these voice recordings. Matthew will keep the media, log and digitise all imagery. I cannot review it and I cannot make notes. Your goal is some imaginary moment when I’ve recovered - and this film is somehow a tool of that process. For you it’s both time travel and a memory work; we’re going back to Siberia - the site of sian’s death - in the hope that if I can recover the horror of that I’ll recover all of it .. Or maybe some of it.....⁴⁶

The ‘I’ here – the character of Sarah Turner - literally only knows who ‘she’ is, through trusting ‘you’ to both hold, and tell her, her stories. The only thing she is sure of in herself is what the other can confirm. This emotional spine is established in the contract of the voice over as it begins. Trust. Trusting a lover with the story of your life: What ‘I’ know of ‘myself’, has literally been told back to ‘me’, by ‘you’. But the ‘you’ here, of course, invokes another literary contract: in lyric poetry ‘you’ is both lover and audience.

The journey that *we* are taken on, is a journey into consciousness, a journey that doubles *process* as recovery: Through repeating a process, of the character’s skills, and how she shaped the world through them, i.e, filmmaking, in tandem with the return journey to the site of the devastating death of

⁴⁶ *Perestroika* narration: Sarah Turner, 2009. See Appendix 2

a friend. Both journeys have the intention of reanimating a key trauma - loss- which in turn has the potential to reignite memory. The quest therefore, is for an embodied movement, which turns *fact into affect*.

A key affectual reference is the work of Chantal Akerman, in particular, *News From Home*, 1976. As many writers, including Maria Walsh,⁴⁷ have noted, *News From Home*, is a work that is structured around absence. In voice over, Akerman somewhat dispassionately recites her mother's letters: 'Dear Chantal, When are you coming home?' But there is emotion in Akerman's abstraction and the accumulative power of her use of repetition is amplified when stasis, the largely static shots of New York City, shifts to motion in the final movement away from the Island, on the ferry. In this cathartic distancing, we are brought closer to both the push and the pull of Akerman's affectual project. This is a palimpsestic patterning, summarized eloquently by Giuliana Bruno:

Akerman produces memory through oblivion. Meaning evolves out of a palimpsest, a layered text, which interrelates image with sounds and connects the physical present to the traces of memory. All of Akerman's films (..) are thus organised around the difference between a place and its image in one's memory; between the here and there; or, as Henri Lefebvre defined it in his study of space, between experienced physical space and imagined space.⁴⁸

However, a key intertextual reference that evolved in the writing was Chris Marker's 1957 film, *Letter from Siberia*. The larger narrative movement in *Perestroika*, the three-act structure I referred to earlier, is structured around the breakdown of trust, and it is storying itself and its mediation through technology that precipitates it. This returns this discussion to form, documentary practice and the essay film, the creative treatment of actuality, which is contractually premised in indexicality: truth, fact and record.

My intertextual dialogue with Marker evolved from the rushes, in the process of the doubling, the refusal of multiple deaths - stills animated into movement through the passage of the train alongside live action - which meant that at certain points key 'narrative events' were caught on multiple cameras. In the most famous sequence of *Letter from Siberia* the same footage of streets, a bus, and workers repairing a road is repeated verbatim three times, but each time with a different voice over. The first - Soviet Socialist Realism - 'features all honest happy workers and modernization, the second, is more like a Voice of America broadcast; the third could be characterized as a reasonable description of just what's going on', hence, observational.⁴⁹ Marker's very famous game is not just playing between the ideological poles of communism versus capitalism: it is questioning the naturalised authority of the narrating voice, the apparent assumption of documentary truth, which precisely poses - the fiction of document. The conversation here with Marker played out on a number of levels in the 'lady in the shawl moment', which we photographed - by chance - on three cameras. First, it is a direct quote, which riffs on three versions of the same image, i.e, the same event on three different cameras, each storied differently. Therefore, it is a reflexive nod to the histories of documentary practice and the now widely understood notion that documentary is only one version of a narrative truth, and, crucially, for the structural movement of the film, it is the first act turning point where truths that are asserted through the relational and narrative contract are called into question through technology. Hence, if a 'fact' (indexically speaking) can be re narrated then what does this mean for evidence, for record, which cannot necessarily be substantiated: the 'fact' might be present, but 'feeling' isn't. That is: can

⁴⁷ See, for example, Maria Walsh, *Intervals of inner flight: Chantal Akerman's News From Home*. Screen 45:3 Autumn 2004

⁴⁸ Giuliana Bruno, in, Chantal Akerman: *Too Far, Too Close*. Ludion, 2012

⁴⁹ Adrian Miles. 2002. *Letter From Siberia*. Senses of Cinema. <http://sensesofcinema.com/2002/cteq/siberia/> [Accessed: 1 April 2017]

you remember, or can you know? It is this first act question – and of course in the three-act paradigm, the question that is asked at the first act turning point is always resolved in the denouement – that the film addresses: *Who are we when the other is not here to hold our stories, who are we when our stories are re-framed?* Technology, that is, ‘evidence’ in this moment, precipitates the breakdown of ‘trust’, relationally and narratively: it is this moment that also sets up the allegorical shift between the index and the uncanny that affects the larger allegorical and conceptual movement of the film.

As I noted, the allegorical movement of *Perestroika* was initially conceived as two sequences, connected through echoes and correspondences as a further re-working of memory's mutations. Crucially, these two sequences were written at the same time, in response to the journey of re-enactment, but the complexity of ideas – resolved within the poetics of the editing within *Perestroika* – dictated that the two sequences necessarily became two separate films. The cinematic precedent was Apitchpong Weerasethakul's *Syndromes and a Century* (2006), a work also composed of two sequences, connected through echoes and correspondences, which explored not what we remember, but how we remember. While in *Syndromes and a Century*, the characters and dialogue in the second sequence are essentially the same as the first but the mise en scene and outcome of the stories are different, in *Perestroika: Reconstructed*, (178 mins, 2013)⁵⁰, which is comprised of both sequences of the film, the structure of the journey is once again repeated, albeit with differing pattern and variation, but this re enactment is framed through a completely different voice-over narrative that recounts a very different journey. Sequence one is *Perestroika*, the 2009/10, 118 mins, version of the film. In Sequence two the visual structure of the journey is repeated but this is framed through a voice over narration recounting a different journey, effectively one of ‘Sarah’s’ stories, as remembered and re-told to Sarah by her ‘partner’. The doubling and mirroring continues to echo here, the story could be ‘truth’ or ‘fiction’; the V/O is narrated as straightforward storytelling and it contains characters that are referenced in sequence one, as well as mirroring similar time frames and historical period: New Years Eve 1989/90, the beginning of perestroika itself.⁵¹

These ideas of doubling and disavowal are mirrored throughout the two sequences. Both sequence one and sequence two conclude at Lake Baikal: the first experience is of terror/apocalypse, the second, an experience of beauty and tranquility. Crucially, both experiences exist only in memory, they are the ‘real’ to which we no longer have access, but they mirror the social disavowal of climate change. In north east Europe we know climate change is happening but cannot feel it; or we feel climate change is happening but we cannot know it - as we are not (yet) affected. This is ultimately where the audience is left within the projective experience of cinema: our ‘re-experience’ of the lake is ‘contaminated’ by the affectual knowledge of our initial encounter. Reading across both sequences pulls into play what we both feel and know; an uncontaminated experience of landscape now literally and metaphorically only exists in memory.

⁵⁰ *Perestroika:Reconstructed*: Arts Council of England: Visual Arts Award: Nov 2011. See Appendix 3

⁵¹ The film becomes a juxtaposition of two modes of storytelling: the first sequence re constructs the re enactment of a journey as document, mixing time frames and historical period; the second sequence re enacts the re enactment for both audience and ‘filmmaker’ - mixing time frames and historical periods in order to pose the question: are we remembering what we have experienced or how it’s been framed? Do we remember the ‘fact’ of the image, or the framing of the story, i.e, what we feel in relation to fiction, or what we know in relation to document?

Public House, 2015/16, (96 mins)⁵²

Despite the proliferation of discursive sites and fictional selves, however, the phantom of a site as an actual place remains, and our psychic, habitual attachment to places regularly returns as it continues to inform our sense of identity. This persistent, perhaps secret adherence to the actuality of places (in memory, in longing) may not be a lack of theoretical sophistication but a means of survival. The resurgence of violence in defence of essentialised notions of national, racial, religious, and cultural identities in relation to geographical territories is readily characterised as extremist, retrograde and uncivilized. Yet the loosening of such relations, that is, the destabilization of subjectivity, identity, and spatiality (following the dictates of desire), can also be described as a compensatory fantasy in response to the intensification of fragmentation and alienation wrought by a mobilized market economy (following the dictates of capital.)⁵³

- *Storying is the canvas of cultural reinvention.*
- *Memory: a set of stories we tell of ourselves and others.*
- *Who are we, then, when the other is not here to hold our stories, to frame our experience?*

What if these ideas intersect within the meeting point of *place*? What if *place* is *the other who is not here (to hold our stories)*? How can the potential loss of place prompt an imaginative act of cultural re-narration?

I drew on three main areas of thinking for the overall conceptual mapping in the particular intersection that is *Public House*. However, the layers of history and memory here, which informed the films approach to form, involved, and responded to, a wider shifting of the frame: both narrative frames and social framings. The film is both an exploration and performance of the ethos (and ideas) of these shifted frames.

I will first sketch the three interdependent frameworks of reference on which I drew before discussing the background and overall movement of the film:

1. SPACE and site-specificity: both approaches within the visual arts, but also thinking that relates to acoustic ecologies' concerns of working with the sounds of the environment – engaging in how they impact on us and we on it;
2. PARTICIPATION: in relation to thinking about contemporary art practice as well as ethnography in documentary practice;
3. MEMORY: as the conceptual glue that held the whole thing together, particularly through a discussion of *Space* in geography that relates to memory and storying.

I have – somewhat hyperbolically – described *Public House* as a 'shape shifting genre hybrid that moves from observational document to minimalist opera' by which I mean a spoken word/ text/ musical. The film was activated in response to the community take-over of the Ivy House pub, London, SE15, and it most certainly fuses facts and fictions in a multi-layered exploration of memory, community, and social reinvention.

⁵² *Public House*: Film London Artists Moving Image/ Arts Council England Award, Oct 2014

Public House: Film London Artists Moving Image/ Arts Council England Development Award, July 2014

⁵³ Miwon Kwon. *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge, MIT. 2002, p 165

Before I explore the *operatic ambition* of *Public House*, I first need to lay out the contextual background of the film:

In April 2012, Enterprise Inns, the owners of the Ivy House pub gave the live-in landlord and the pub's staff five days notice of eviction and closure: the cherished Ivy House had been sold for conversion into flats. This wearingly familiar cultural narrative - the needs of gentrification and capital privileged and the needs of a community sidelined - has been significantly rewritten in the case of the Ivy House. The local community blocked the sale, listed the building, innovatively interpreted new legislation to register the pub as the first Asset of Community Value in the UK, then triumphantly bought it: the Ivy House Community Pub re-opened in August 2013 and in doing so has both rewritten London history and proposed the potential for an alternative social imaginary.

This 'event' is a historically specific instant in a historically specific moment, which, given the pace of change, the scale and scope of London's assetization and hence social cleansing, was at once a celebratory moment, and equally, and equally apparent at the time of the film's making, a moment of mourning. However, I understood the 'event' of the Ivy House takeover - nonetheless - as a shifting of the frame: a familiar story imagined differently, where the vision of this community altered the parameters – or re-choreographed the elements, of an over-determined narrative in order to effect a different social contract and imaginary. And that different social contract and imaginary was effected through a deep and intuitive understanding of social interdependencies.

Ideas of interdependencies have a renewed focus within wider culture, and this is evidenced both in the social sciences and the humanities. For example, in a recent Guardian review of Kate Raworth's new work: *Doughnut Economics: Seven ways to think like a 21st century Economist*, George Monbiot discusses how Raworth, of Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute, has 'changed the picture of what the economy is and how it works.'⁵⁴ The aim of economic activity, she argues, should be 'meeting the needs of all within the means of the planet'. Instead of economies that need to grow, whether or not they make us thrive, we need economies that 'make us thrive, whether or not they grow'.

To 'change the picture' Raworth redraws the image of mainstream economics standard circular flow diagram. Instead of merely depicting a closed flow of income cycling between households, businesses, banks, government and trade, Raworth 'embeds it in the Earth's systems and in society, showing how it depends on the flow of materials and energy, and reminding us that we are more than just workers, consumers and owners of capital.' Raworth literally zooms out, shifting the frame, widening its narrative, redefining and re-imaging the 'economic' elements of the human story. Her model is instructive and it is no coincidence that her graphic is a spiral as Raworth's shifted frame is a simple and elegantly graphic model of the interdependence of elements.⁵⁵

As ideas of structural interdependencies reverberate throughout the Ivy House story, they inherently, inflected the ethos of my production. At the time of the film's making I lived opposite the pub and was actively involved in the campaign to save it. My interest as participant/agent, artist/researcher,

⁵⁴ Monbiot (12.4.17) <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/12/doughnut-growth-economics-book-economic-model> [Accessed: 14 April 2017]

⁵⁵ 'with each repetition small changes expand the spectator's imaginary construction of the symbolic space rather like a spiral through a matrix of action images...'

neighbour/friend, is in how the Ivy House story stages these social interdependencies and is both the agent of, and a powerful metaphor for, narrative reinvention.

In the production, a strategy of ecologies – or interdependencies - runs throughout: from the community ecologies which provoked the Save the Ivy House campaign, to the participatory processes that draw on traditions that are vital to pub culture, to the acoustic ecologies which form the approach to listening and the process of the soundscape and the compositional ecologies which comprise the spoken word layering of the collective voice. Within this, the film effects a formal movement – its narrative and genre reinvention - from document/record/ memory to fantasy/rupture/ desire: or the unconscious of a community, which is an allegorical mirroring of the Ivy House takeover: A familiar story imagined differently, that is, where the vision of this community altered the parameters – or re-choreographed the elements - of an overdetermined narrative in order to effect a different social contract.

Central to this shifted narrative frame within an ethos of (vertical) interdependencies is thinking about space as a social not a private asset, as was evident to the Ivy House community. So, thinking about space as a sphere of possibility Doreen Massey asks; ‘What if we open up the imagination of the single narrative to give space (literally) for a multiplicity of trajectories?’ She unpacks this helpfully, and beautifully, in relation to both film – and pubs: ‘Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far.’⁵⁶

The most crucial anxieties of our age, what it means to be local, ideas of insider / outsider, community and participation, home and belonging, are crystallised in our relationship to public spaces such as pubs. Equally, crucial to Massey’s proposition of ‘a simultaneity of stories-so-far’, are the pivotal resonances of memory. During the time of making the film, I thought of the actual space, the building itself, as a projective canvas, a palimpsest of erasures and projections, the people in it both messengers and passengers, as simply, buildings are containers for both individual and social narratives and different forms of memory. These traces – both present and absent – are a form of polyphonic haunting, and in order for all these resonances to be felt, I had to find a form which did not so much tell the story, as embody it. I thought of the soundscape as a participative memory work in order to give form to the polyphonic voice and also to move from the I, to the WE, which in many ways is what the Ivy House story represents. In tandem with this movement from the I to the WE, the film also moves – formally – from document, to document which interweaves fantasy and imagination, to fantasy and imagination constructed through document, and it is this movement that I understand as the allegorical mirroring of the Ivy House takeover: ‘a familiar story imagined differently’, all the same elements re-choreographed to effect a different social contract and different social imaginary. In Elizabeth Cowie’s terms, the film is ‘a hybrid of the real and the non real, as an imagining of the actual.’⁵⁷

In order to discuss how the film’s movement was effected through the choreography and patterning of elements, which is both the responsive writing process and indeed my authorship, I will first sketch an overview of how these interdependent ideas intersect in the formal structure.

Nostalgic memories are histories of the future.⁵⁸

Memory, here, informed by Massey’s thinking on space, is both texture and social actant. Alongside the obvious social/ political rage/ ennui with London’s ongoing gentrification/ privatisation/ social

⁵⁶ Doreen Massey. *For Space*. London: Sage, 2005, P. 9

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Cowie. *Recording Reality, Desiring the Real*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011, p. 24

⁵⁸ Paulo Magagnoli. *Documents of Utopia: The Politics of Experimental Documentary*. London: Wallflower Press, 2015, p.1

cleansing, which prompts a particular form of activism, (which contributed to saving the pub), another more affectual drive is at play: memory, as actual, projective, identificatory, and of course, as structuring fantasy and imaginative possibility. And I am on the side of utopia when I think about nostalgia, as a form of projective fantasy and imagination, a way of imagining the present differently. These ideas immediately suggest a relation to time, as the experience of the past in the present is also an imagining of the future in the present.

Hence, *time*: time in the film is spiralling not linear. Structurally we move backwards and forwards in time, both in the micro and the macro (within stories, within a scene, within other textual elements and the overall narrative frame). Past, present and future are all co-existent possibilities. And this speaks to the interdependency and the mutability of elements: these are social elements as in people/humans; actions and events and the various choreographic and interchangeable possibilities of them; and the architecture/landscape, the visual locus, much of which is, crucially, the fabric of the pub, the building itself.

This spiralling structure (past, present and future as co-existent possibilities) returns to or raises the question that the mourning that was experienced for the loss of the building, which provoked a community to save the building, is the same /or part of a wider frame of mourning, which is present and underlying our larger inter-social reality, for the ongoing social cleansing/ complete privatization that London is experiencing, which is making the city uninhabitable and impossible to *imagine* (*possibilities for*) *living differently*.

I will discuss an example of the spiralling structure shortly, but I will first explore some of the (spiralling) thinking around participation and site specificity. My approach to writing was informed by approaches to listening: the overall design of the film as a word/text musical, is, of course, contained within a soundscape, significantly composed through participatory processes which by definition involved pub cultural forms: namely, storytelling, chat – pub blahing, and performance poetry⁵⁹. Song and dance enter later. ‘From the dance floor to the garden, listening softens the edges of individuality by dispersing oneself into a larger field of experience’⁶⁰

My ability to ‘listen’ was facilitated by what an ethnographic approach would describe as ‘deep immersion’, or, in my words, ‘having a drink with my friends and neighbours’. In terms of my authorial function, that is, the choreography of mutable elements, I had unique access to the community with which I was working as I lived within it. And, of course, these pub cultural forms - storytelling, chat – pub blahing, all involve processes of memory, which is narrative, relational, notoriously unreliable, perpetually reframed by the teller for the told to, the interlocutor, and like a good pub story, gathering its legs in the telling. But here, unlike Jean Rouch, I was not ‘other’ to the ‘subjects’ I filmed, I am both interlocutor, with my own relational and projective ‘fantasies’ of my particular and socially situated space and hence, also one of the subjects, one of the ‘mutable elements’ albeit in complex ways, of which listening is a part.

Theories of listening are often based on the notion of diffused subjectivity: through listening, an individual is extended beyond the boundaries of singularity and toward a broader space necessarily multiple, for ‘as soon as you begin to pay attention, the borders between things become less clear.’ Such a dynamic positions individuality as porous and volatile imbued with surrounding space and

⁵⁹ As I noted earlier, I am indebted to Pauline Oliveros’s approach to ‘deep listening’, which she equates to a form of meditation, hence, a dispersal or ‘de-tuning’ of self. Equally, I am drawing on both Acoustic Ecology’s proposition that we hear our acoustic environment as a musical composition and word text poetry/ text-sound composition in order to approach the entire soundscape as a synergistic form of pub cultural music composition.

⁶⁰ Brandon Labelle. *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*, Bloomsbury Publishing, USA, 2015. p 246

situated inside an ecology of acoustical events. Listening breaks apart the shell of the subject, eases the borders of identity, and initiates an interdependence whereby one is constituted by the whole environmental horizon. To listen attentively then is to become a part of things and to lessen the human agency of will, for listening is about receiving through an intense passivity all that is surrounding – the subtle sounds, the far and the near, the voices of persons and insects alike, the shifting wind. Thus, listening predisposes one to be attentive to the greater context, as a lateral becoming, rather than through linear determinations of one's own will.⁶¹

Listening is key to both acoustic ecologies and acousmatic compositions approach to soundscape. Barry Truax, one of the founders of the world soundscape movement, on the characteristics of soundscape composition's philosophic and aesthetic underpinnings; writes:

- (1) Listener recognisability of the source material is maintained, even if it subsequently undergoes transformation;
- (2) The listener's knowledge of the environmental and psychological context of the soundscape material is invoked and encouraged to complete the network of meanings ascribed to the music;
- (3) The composer's knowledge of the environmental and psychological context of the soundscape material is allowed to influence the shape of the composition at every level, and ultimately the composition is inseparable from some or all of those aspects of reality;
- (4) The work enhances our understanding of the world, and its influence carries over into everyday perceptual habits.⁶²

Writing through listening, that is, designing the structural and thematic movement of a film as soundscape, is both a staging and performance of form and content: we *hear* in the polyphonic voice, the vicissitudes, textures, and intonation of different voices, that is, the musicality of voice *performing* semantic content into being.

Drawing on acoustic ecologies approach to listening, as well as music concrète and approaches to acousmatic composition, the soundscape interweaves fragments of spoken word - that is, the multiple levels of voice, memory and performance - with ambient audio drawn from the immediate environment, and, in places, sonifies it, harmonically and tonally. In the film this builds through sound design/repetitive refrain and culminates in clear shifts where the fragments of voice resolve into (what I thought of) as fully formed libretti.

The 'librettos' are constructed from verbatim recordings of pub users, past and present, engaging in 'pub talk': memories of the space as well as their fears, dreams, desires. It is important to note that 'the vicissitudes, textures, and intonation of – different – voices' were key to the writing/listening/ composition process as this is where my approach differs from practices of verbatim writing. The musicality of voice and its differences, that is, the resonances of class, age, gender and ethnicities, were patterned to be *heard* within a soundscape, not performed by others, who are usually, in film and theatre, actors.

The verbatim recordings (structured into loose thematics from over fifty hours of material) effectively form a sonic ethnography of the unconscious of a community. In key moments within the soundscape, individual testaments are layered into harmonics, which creates a choral refrain through the collective

⁶¹ Ibid p. 245

⁶² Truax, 2000, quoted in John Drever: *Soundscape Composition: The Convergence of Ethnography and Acousmatic Music*, Cambridge University Press, 2002

voice. This spoken word/text/ musical which creates the meta frame of patterning, loosely stages the shape of sonata form within symphony structure: prologue, exposition, development and recapitulation, which brings in and reworks all that has come before, effecting a sense of transformation, concluding in an epilogue.

An example of this spiralling transformation and patterning begins with the film's opening image. The opening image is reconnected and developed throughout the movement of the work - as indeed are many other key images - and is returned to and developed within the film's final sequence. This sense of seeing, and seeing again differently which is key to the approach of 're-choreographing elements', as well as thinking about time, is foregrounded in the opening shot.

The film begins with a slow motion procession, in the present, of masses of people leaving the pub. This image lasts a few minutes. Played over that is a voice of the past, a description of the space, of the street, which then evolves into the polyphonic voice. This prologue is obviously concerned with older generations' memories of the space, an aural zoom into the street *then*, which then digresses into storytelling. This sets up an expectation of a conventional narrative /documentary contract, which is, identify – voice-over – speaker – develop narrative. Instead, the singular voice moves into the polyphonic voice, so, rather than an individual narrative, the mass of conflicting claims begins and we have a sense of Massey's multiple stories: layers of experience in space and time. Equally, if we think about an acoustic ecologies approach to listening, and we invoke the experience of sound in a pub, you struggle to hear a singular story, the experience is one of heterophonic 'noise', where, experientially you have to 'filter out' others in order to hear. In fact, you have to work quite hard to focus on your friend/partners' story. So one aspect of the textural approach here is foregrounding and setting up the experiential staging of a literal, polyphonic voice. To return to the spiral: the slow mo procession out of the pub - an *entrance* where people are *exiting*, a beginning which is also an ending - is returned to in the closing act of the film. This return completes the movement, when the energy and creativity of the Ivy House spills out of the pub and onto the streets, but here we understand the procession as both funeral march and carnivalesque celebration: the sequence concludes when the mass community assembly 're-imagines' William Blake's first vision of angels on nearby Peckham Rye. The soundscape here resolves into a full choral work, proposing an alternative vision of Blake's angelic presence, and this is staged through a fully layered recapitulation of the polyphonic voice (and while there is harmony here, I also thought of the sequence as a gentle example of diversity and dissent).

Choirs and the choral are very much part of the movement here. Earlier we have seen Dulwich Folk Choir, who use the pub as a performance and rehearsal space, in a documentary sequence, singing at their Christmas party. The choir's presence is also significantly developed in one of the 'choreographies'. In a moment when all appears to be lost (actually the first act turning point of the film) the choir put the pub's furniture away and carry the lit table candles out in a choral gesture which is both ritualistic invocation and an act of mourning. When this live choral moment is re-enacted as part of the transformational movement on Peckham Rye, it, of course, carries the affectual resonance of the earlier sequence, allowing for the co-existent presence of loss, within a moment of hope, even triumph. As in a further loop back to a more quotidian past – another one that exists within the film's temporal frame – *Public House* culminates with the entire pub community re enacting or re-choreographing some of the steps we have seen earlier from the documentary sequences of the pub's Sunday morning swing dance class. And while this final image is affectually staging the co-existent presence of loss and hope - the feeling of one dependent on the presence of the other, which is the wider frame of mourning for our present inter-social reality - it is also playfully referencing a kind of carnivalesque, occupy or reclaim the streets type activism, and, I have to say that within this movement the film is attempting something almost utopic. As the utopic is about the sense of imaginary possibility: interchangeable elements, i.e, human and creative potential re-choreographed through

environmental impact, which is – here - the environment/habitat/ the aura of the pub/place re-choreographing each of us: This suggests the potential for – the ecology/s of the environment impacting on us and re animating us - within a social locus.

The processes and problems of participation involved thinking through many forms of spiraling interdependencies and the mutability of elements, which, in this case, are social elements. Claire Bishop, one of the most useful contemporary thinkers in relation to participation in contemporary art, has written extensively on some of the pitfalls of participatory practice. Here are a few quotes that typify her provocative position:

Increased participation is either – ‘a heroic narrative of the increased activation and agency of the audience.’⁶³

Or:

The ever increasing voluntary subordination to the artist’s will, and of the commodification of human bodies in a service economy. Participatory art is frequently unpaid labour.⁶⁴

And:

Far from being oppositional to spectacle, participation has now entirely merged with it.

In this long quote that follows, Bishop summaries these tensions and proposes a challenge:

In using people as a medium, participatory art has always had a double ontological status: it is both an event in the world, and at one remove from it. As such, it has the capacity to communicate on two levels – to participants – and to spectators – the paradoxes that are repressed in everyday discourse, and to elicit perverse, disturbing and pleasurable experiences that enlarge our capacity to imagine the world and our relations anew. But to reach the second level requires a mediating third term – an object, image, story, film, even a spectacle – that permits this experience to have a purchase on the public imaginary. Participatory art is not a privileged political medium, nor a ready-made solution to a society of the spectacle, but is as uncertain and precarious as democracy itself; neither are legitimated in advance but need continually to be performed and tested in every specific context.⁶⁵

The word/text/musical soundscape was one part of my response to the challenge of Bishop (and Jacques Ranciere’s) mediating third term, within this specific context. In Bishop’s case the challenge of the ‘mediating third term’ is part of her wider call for a return to visibility, an aesthetics or artfulness, which is often sublimated to process within participatory art. The soundscape is a significant component of *Public House*’s aesthetic framing and it is the soundscape that carries the overall structural movement. To my knowledge, it is also the first time that this interweaving of word text poetry or text-sound composition has been used to structure a feature film soundscape. Whilst my approaches to acousmatic composition had developed through both *Ecology* and *Perestroika*, the use of word text poetry was central to the overall formal synergy through its resonance with the vital pub cultural form of spoken word performance, which forms another key aspect of the film’s participatory

⁶³ Claire Bishop. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London and New York: Verso, 2012, p 277

⁶⁴ Ibid p 277

⁶⁵ Op. cit. p 284

processes. As the work morphs from or spirals through a document of individual memories, into the pub's swing dance classes, to the central documentary moment of the community meeting where the five community leaders announce the purchase of the building, the spine of the film is the staged collective authorship that explores different forms of encounters through spoken word performance poetry.

The filmmaker and ethnographer, Jean Rouch, is one of the historic reference points of ideas of the filmmaker as catalyst, provocateur, as intervention. When I was making *Public House*, my colleague, Elizabeth Cowie, invoked Rouch in a private email:

In your film as with Rouch's work, you are making something happen that is both the film itself as a record, and the events, the experiences and actions of those participating – a fiction in Ranciere's sense; a utopia of possible community, possible art, and a heterotopia. I am thinking of the word/text/poetry construction of the soundtrack and the use of spoken word poetry, as some of your interventions.

In *Recording Reality, Desiring the Real*, Cowie writes of Rouch's work:

Thinking is an act of progressive imagining in relation to observed phenomena (the documentary, whether written or filmed) that is not simply and conventionally logical. It is a kind of thinking that is of the same order as poetry in making leaps of association.⁶⁶

Cowie cites Rouch's comment:

For me, as an ethnographer and filmmaker, there is almost no boundary between the documentary film and films of fiction. The cinema, the art of the double, is already the transition from the real world to the imaginary world, and ethnography, the science of the thought systems of others, is a permanent crossing point from one conceptual universe to another.⁶⁷

To this, Cowie adds a key observation:

It is this double move that Rouch's cinema upholds. What arises is a "seeing anew" in an estrangement through which the every day and the taken for granted is re-presented.⁶⁸

Much of my approach was developed from this observation as I took it as a starting point to push routine events, sourced initially as document, into forms of choreography or ritual, as I have suggested. I thought of this quite simply as: seeing and seeing again, seeing the same thing and then seeing it differently. While I understood this as a form defamiliarisation which implicitly reflects on ideas of 'community' as a construction:

The effect of habituation is to make us believe in the eternity of the present, to strengthen us in the feeling that the things and events amongst which we live are somehow 'natural' which is to say, permanent. It is to make you aware that objects and institutions you thought to be natural were really only historical, the result of change.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Cowie. *Recording Reality, Desiring the Real*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011, p140

⁶⁷ Op. cit. p 138

⁶⁸ Op. cit. p 141

⁶⁹ Tom MacDough quoted in Shannon Jackson. *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*, 2011, New York: Routledge P 82

I was also using these ideas of re-choreography more pragmatically. In the spiralling structure, the film moves formally from document to document which interweaves fantasy and imagination, to fantasy and imagination constructed through document: this is the synergy of the interchangeability of elements. Again, all these possibilities co exist and impact on each other. The idea of the mutability of elements and (social) choreographic possibilities is played out textually when participants literally begin re-choreographing the filmic elements – a space of document – moving into fantasy and restaging genre, too: *noir* restaged as a homoerotic space and swing, a very gendered dance with a male lead and female follower, is re-inscribed as a female homoerotic fantasy which reworks as a temporal slice – another aspect of the film’s verticality, reworking a thirties form (and values) in this thirties’ building.

These various re-choreographies – which speak to the mutability of elements – and within that, people as elements, for example, roles changing, roles reversing, the dance class as followers, ending as leaders, etc, is spiraling from the multiple roles people play in communities - father, football coach, guitarist in the band - and how these multiple roles are important to a sense of increased social agency. There is a fluidity. We are not fixed.

These images – actual, fictive and allegorical – are inspired by the increased sense of agency that people felt in that particular space: the Ivy House pub. This partly inspired the activism and longing that made the potential loss more potent. In the opening act of the film, the sequence moves from present day, movement out of the pub, discussing the past - an entrance which is also an exit, a beginning which is also an ending - into the first poetry reading, then back in time to the abandoned pub interior, insisting on the presence of ghosts, the flickering stage lights that once animated the presence of bands, of performance, and the competing claims of memories of the space, concluding with a time-lapsed exterior, where the sun sets on the community and everyone’s ‘gutted’. This layering of multiple voices recalling the moment that the pub’s closure was announced is the first movement into word-text ‘librettos’, a musical response to the sense of being ‘gutted’. But this sense also carries deeply felt multiple resonances, as over the abandoned pub interior we’ve heard people describing occasions when they’ve moved the pub furniture to wherever they wanted, lit the pub fire if they felt like it, brought in food to share with their neighbours from their ‘own kitchens’.

These stories, these memories, inspired a sense of agency and ownership, a negotiation which is not just a commodified exchange or a payment for the ‘coffee experience’ of costa coffee – or as someone else says in the soundscape – ‘fucking Starbucks’. This interdependence of elements – human actants – and our interdependency as social and environmental elements, is reduced when space is privatised.

If the film is broadly exploring the social function of pubs with the Ivy House story at the centre of it, the participatory processes, had to involve pub cultural forms: namely storytelling, chat – pub blahing, performance poetry, song and dance. Almost uniquely in contemporary life, pubs are social spaces that allow us to connect with others who are often quite different from us – if we think of intergenerational exchange, and very different classes coming together in a pub quiz - the encounter with a stranger is at the heart of pub culture, and also, possibly, why we value it. This idea of encounters was at the heart of one of my key choreographies or interventions and it is explored through the spoken word performances, which form the spine of the film. We brought together a group from within the wider pub community to share experience through writing spoken word poetry, a really vibrant pub cultural form, which takes place in pubs up and down the country. Some of the participants knew each other, many did not, and many had never written anything, let alone poetry. An established performance poet, Laurie Bolger, ran seven weeks of workshops within the pub. I was preoccupied with the idea of remembering an encounter with a stranger that was life changing/ transformative but in the process the poems expanded from that into a wider thematic of pub encounters/pub experiences. However,

empathy, connection, and the limits of understanding (what we learn and how we are changed by an other) was still a major part of this because participants had to work with, interpret and support the 'other's' experience.

In a sense the poets are ethnographers of their own community/selves, performing in their own fiction, which involved a projected self as performer. And this involved a real intimacy within the community, as their words are literally in the mouths of other people, their stories are held as they speak the other's story: when the poems were performed for the film and a live invited audience from the extended pub community, the poets were paired off and they performed the other's poem first. Yet they are not just speaking each other's personal poems – which is a huge responsibility in itself in that and any context – they are not just quoting, they are channelling, like mediums for each other, the feeling/ desire/ emotional content of each other's experience. So in a sense identities here are fluid or phantasmogoric. In the film both versions of the performance are intercut, largely moving from other to self. This produces some momentary uncanny translations – e.g, an older woman enacting the story of a much younger man - and is also key to codes of reading: who is inside and outside both the community and the film. This channelling of the other's poem, which involved transference and identification, was then a narrative revelation and experience of projection and translation for the assembled audience. This process of reading and performing – for both audiences and participants - develops some of the relational theories of storytelling that form my larger canvas. Equally, there is also a synergy in the experience of the pub and film audience: both are re-translating, projecting/ re-associating these stories, as we see the person that we suspect is the subject of one story of which we are holding the memory, narrating or performing another's. This also reintroduces that mediating third term: the active interpretation, translation and projection both of and onto the other works against – for both performer and audience - a crude performativity of self as ego exhibition within the tropes of the society of the spectacle, or reality TV, which is not only exposing of the other – both the point and critique of it – but also ethically exposing.

My approach to both the ethics and the ethnography, my participation as artist, neighbour and friend, was emotionally framed through living opposite the pub. Proximity and intimacy were crucial to questions of trust, but they also informed my thinking around ideas of insider/outsider, about who is inside or outside a community, or even an artwork: who has access to codes of reading? Some of these tensions are explored in the performance poetry and conclude in one of the key choral refrains of the soundscape, which plays out over the last choreography of the poets setting their stage. The last question which is asked here by one of the participants – 'will we still want to be local, when the only people that can afford to live here are investment bankers', is effectively the third act turning point of the film, the key question that the film asks but cannot answer (it is acknowledged through the affectual staging of the co-existent presence of loss and hope at the end) and, within the diegesis at that moment, it is the question that the poets are left contemplating.

Earlier I use the word hyperbolic when I described *Public House* as a 'shape shifting genre hybrid that moves from observational document to minimalist opera', as the film's narrative reinvention is effecting this formal movement from document/record/ memory to fantasy/rupture/ desire, which, I understood as an allegorical mirroring of the Ivy House takeover. But I see the allegory, the shifted frame, in precisely this movement: changing the parameters of a story, a familiar story, imagined differently, where all the same elements, are given a different form, re-choreographed, seen again, and seen again differently as imaginative possibility. And the word **choreography** is important, as a unique social choreography took place in the community take over of the Ivy House, when a dynamic and defiant community responded to the loss of a treasured public space. In the film documentary form morphs into the value of storytelling, the importance of the mythic, operatic even, which is the

quotidian exchange of sharing stories, and sharing stories with others – who are often quite different from us – and sharing stories differently - in pubs. As what other spaces allow us to explore our fictions, both the events of our lives, and the complex human emotions which are the staples of pub culture - lust, fear, desire and mourning – socially, in a public, as opposed to a private, house?

As I am nearing the end of this discussion, I will spiral back to the ‘re-imagining’ of Blake’s *Vision of Angels* and explore some of the resonances here by way of conclusion.

A tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars.⁷⁰

The sound and imagery in this sequence works on multiple levels. The imagery, in a development and conclusion of the opening image, takes the real stakeholders of the Ivy House out of the pub and onto Peckham Rye to perform a choreography, which reconnects and recycles imagery from within the film’s grammar and this is also a performance which responds to both film historical and art historical references. Arriving within the tree circle, the assembly participants begin to whisper to each other – lines that echo and reverberate that the film audience do not particularly have access to. This whispering – a well-kept secret – prompts a ritualistic slow circling with hand-mirrors reflecting the trees, en masse, in a gesture that re-creates the image of ‘*bespangling every bough like stars*’. This alchemical ritual which reprises the pub’s mirror ball – and the generations who have seen themselves in it – keeping it turning, the social body forming a – whole - image composed of individual fragments, references both Blake and Derek Jarman. Jarman - heavily influenced by Blake, alchemy and the English enlightenment, who also, like Blake, contested the dominant ideology of his time (in fact both of them are described as phenomenologists of liberation) used mirrors extensively in several films: ‘Mirrors played into the camera lens are a constant motif, held by the actors as they transit across the screen in dream motion.’⁷¹

However, Jarman’s use of mirrors was also drawing on punk – and punk’s much cited gesture that refused (individual) representation through holding a mirror up to cameras that wanted to (socially) position them. The choreography in the trees concludes with a collective re-enactment of this refusal, which returns the gaze of the camera, denying an individual performative gaze and instead creating a social pattern, which burns bright in defiance of the camera’s positioning lens.

The cues for this choreography are led by the choir who cue ‘community leaders’, and, furthermore, the majority of the assembly participants had no idea that the choir would burst into song. The choir’s ritual here, a component of the whole, is the conclusion of the invocation enacted earlier at the first act’s turning point when they put the pub’s furniture away and carry candles out. This alchemical ritual, which situates the candles within the trees, is also a collective response to Blake’s poetry. The choir are singing extracts of a poem written for *Public House* by Jane Yeh. Jane, a Next Generation poet, was asked to respond to Blake’s *vision on Peckham Rye*: its resonances/ correspondences/ permeations, for our present, as well as the resonances of Blake’s wider social vision. These lines that the choir perform are also the whispered *well kept secret* that the film audience do not have access to. The choral movement, composed by my colleague, Duncan Macleod, is simply and structurally honouring the heterophonic voice in a social body. The choir begins on a hum of a note that was in

⁷⁰ William Blake, quoted in Alexander Gilchrist. 1863, *Life of William Blake*. p 7

⁷¹ James Mackay produced Jarman’s Super 8 work and the Last of England trilogy. This quote from James Mackay: *Derek Jarman Super 8*. Thames and Hudson. London, 2014, p. 28

their comfort zone of pitch, and the hum was held for the length of each breath, which of course varied with age and experience. Then, the choir shifts into refrain and into Jane Yeh's lines. On the shift into refrain, the voices began to oscillate, moving between the chosen note and a minor third below like a football chant. Then, on a cue, whilst continuing to oscillate between two notes, the choir added an additional note, a tone above this point. And finally, it went back down to one note, whispering the text, and stopping where it felt natural.

This performance of the heterophonic voice is once again an example not of conformity, but a social choreography of difference, and equally, the sequence concludes with the (shambolic) re-enactment of some of the steps we have seen earlier from the documentary sequences of the swing dance class. This finally dissolves into chaotic dispersal as the film titles roll.

This dialogue with Blake's vision, which took place in *that place* several hundred years ago, is a mass response to an (art) historical image and also a metaphor for how our imaginary potential is engaged through an exchange with our past. Social spaces speak to us, both through the echoes of cultural memory, particularly resonant in sound, and act on us; we continually reinvent both the past and each other, through an active engagement with place. Crucially, in our contemporary landscape, public spaces, such as pubs, that incorporate our every day, connect us with our past, our fictions and our truths are increasingly being privatised. *Public House* is an allegory of how the resonances of individual and cultural memory has the potential to reinvent these spaces, and in so doing imagine a different social contract.

To conclude this discussion of *Public House*, I want to end with two quotes that have resonance, for this, and the other films.

The first is from Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters*:

'If haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the ghost is just the sign, or the empirical evidence if you like, that tells you a haunting is taking place. The ghost is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost for the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course. The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as transformative recognition.'⁷²

And the second is Derrida, speaking in the film *Ghost Dance*:

"A spectre is a trace that marks the present with its absence in advance. The spectral logic is de facto a deconstructive logic... Film plus psychoanalysis equals a science of ghosts... A trace that marks the present with its absence in advance."⁷³

⁷² Avery Gordon *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, University of Minnesota Press, 2008. P 8

⁷³ *Ghost Dance* (1983) Ken McMullen. UK

Conclusion

If *Ecology*, *Perestroika* and *Public House* are three chapters of a project that have each internalised processes and affects from each other, there are, nonetheless, enduring core concerns that resonate throughout the three films. All the films operate in a space of 'in-betweenness', a mode of thinking that embraces hybridities and intermediate spaces - geographic, social, sexual and psychic, as well as engaging more broadly across languages of cinema which are inflected by the wider dialogues of art.

The key strategy that distinguishes the work is an approach to writing that rejects the paradigm of screenplay in favor of a poetic play with language. As such, all the films are characterised by responsive, experimental writing processes and this responsiveness is further developed throughout the production through a distinctive approach to sound. In post-production layers of repetitive patterning 'voice' the environment, and as such, the film's sound tracks effectively operate as acousmatic compositions. This approach draws on the philosophy and strategies of acoustic ecologies, through the proposal that firstly, we hear the wider environment as a form of musical composition, and secondly, that sounds sourced from the 'real' are all a source of musical material, in that any sound that can be recorded is material for editing, treating and layering in a way that mirrors the films' poetic play with language. These processes culminate in *Public House*, where the writing itself is approached as a polyphonic word-text poem, hence all the semantic movement is structured, designed and carried through a form of musical composition.

This distinctive use of sound is crucial to the affective experience of the work as while all the films play with different forms of physicality and embodiment within them, the experience of duration is physically accumulative and the layers of sound patterning are experienced as dissonance resolving or dissonance sustained, as internal rhythm, timbre and texture are developed and held in suspension before resolving, once again. This patterning of sound removed from its 'real world' signifier and carrying and reattaching emotion is central to the vertical development of the work where an idea 'attracts to itself even disparate images, which contain the central core, which they have in common.'⁷⁴

All the films have been informed and affectually structured through feminism and various cinemas of otherness⁷⁵ that have created unique and new languages through centring as opposed to sublimating difference. Laura Marks describes this as a 'movement from excavation to fabulation, or from deconstructing dominant histories to creating new conditions for new stories'.⁷⁶ Crucially, this awareness of my own and others difference, and with that an awareness of different conditions for different stories, has demanded an awareness of how form responsively stages or performs content, through complex interdependencies which situate narrative and storytelling with an awareness of audience, through affect and emotion, which in turn, is located within the works' politics and thematics.

⁷⁴ Maya Deren: Speaking at *Poetry and Film: A Symposium* (1953). Quoted in Catherine Fowler, 'Room for Experiment: Gallery Films and Vertical Time from Maya Deren to Eija Liisa Ahtila', *Screen* 45:4, 2004, p 327

⁷⁵ From the oppositional cinema of Chantal Akerman and others that I have cited to the 'transnational, queer, affective' practitioners, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Tsai Ming Ling and Lucrecia Martel, that my work has been discussed alongside. See Sophie Mayer, *Dirty Pictures: Framing Pollution and Desire in New Queer Cinema*, in Guinevere Narraway, Anat Pick, (Eds) *Screening Nature: Beyond the Human*. Oxford: Berghahn, 2013

⁷⁶ Laura Marks. *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2000. P5

I conclude with a brief summary of how these interdependencies and their theoretical resonances operate in each film.

Repetition and re-enactment is crucial in all three films. In *Ecology*, repetition and re-enactment is performing the formal patterning and counter-patterning that stages psychic life as transmission and circulation. Laplanche's notion of 'the other within', is here foregrounded through ideas of psychic recycling, the debris we pass between each other, which cannot be effectively metabolised. Through the repetition and circuitry of key images, both symbolic, 'actual' and linguistic, as well as the possibility of the three interdependent sequences being screened in any order, audiences are unable to - finally - privilege one character's experience over the other. Within the performance of this more complex thematic, meaning is constantly deferred, only in the totality is there a possible reading. What you are left with is both the illogicality of causality and the gaps and circuitry of relationality.

Repetition and re-enactment is both the content and process of *Perestroika*. Here, 'the other within' is mapped onto neuro-scientific understandings of amnesia as well as the Freudian notion of *Nachträglichkeit* in order to effect a movement in the documentary contract, from the index to the uncanny. Is film a process of remembering or forgetting? Who are we if the other is not here to hold our stories? In *Perestroika* these questions are emotionally and affectually staged in an exploration of the wider allegorical thematic: the cultural disavowal of climate change. The audience is carried as the film's passengers to its uncanny, unsettling denouement. We know climate change is happening but cannot feel it; or we feel climate change is happening but we cannot know it - as we are not (yet) affected. This is ultimately where the audience is left within the projective experience of cinema: our 're-experience' of Lake Baikal – the train and film's destination - is 'contaminated' by the affectual knowledge of our initial encounter.

Repetition and re-enactment is deployed in increasingly complex levels in *Public House* as the film moves from document to document which interweaves fantasy and imagination, to fantasy and imagination constructed through document. The affectual resonances of hope and loss, grounded in the works' politics and thematics, are explored in every aspect of the films' participatory processes. The idea of the mutability of elements and (social) choreographic possibilities is played out textually when participants literally begin re-choreographing the filmic elements – a space of document – moving into fantasy. The final recreation of 'Blake's vision of angels' takes the real stakeholders of the Ivy House out of the pub and onto Peckham Rye to perform a choreography, which reconnects and recycles imagery from within the film's grammar in a performance, which also responds to both film historical and art historical references.

The film's narrative reinvention from document/record/ memory to fantasy/rupture/ desire, is an allegorical mirroring of the Ivy House takeover: a familiar story - the needs of gentrification and capital privileged and the needs of a community sidelined - imagined differently, where the vision of this community altered the parameters – or re-choreographed the elements - of an over determined narrative in order to effect a different social contract.

What if *place* is *the other who is not here (to hold our stories)*? How can the potential loss of place prompt an imaginative act of cultural re-narration?

Composed of the polyphonic voice, *Public House* fuses an acoustic ecologies' approach to sound - which approaches writing as an act of listening - with understandings of memory as storied fantasy which is both relational and projective, and site, as a continuously remade and contested space of multiple forms of storying, in order to effect a performance of the social imaginary, or, a re-imagining of our social (cultural and filmic) contracts.

Sarah Turner, November 2017

Thank you:

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 Blue (1993) Derek Jarman. BFI. UK
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 Chungking Express (1994) Wong Kar Wai. Jet Tone Production. Hong Kong
 D'Est (1993) Chantal Akerman. Lieurac Productions. Belgium/ France
 Dresden Dynamo (1971/2) Lis Rhodes. LUX. UK
 Eating Grass (2003) Alia Syed. LUX. UK
 Faded Wallpaper (1988) Tine Keane. LUX. UK
 Fatima's Letter (1992) Alia Syed. LUX. Pakistan/UK
 Gallivant (1997) Andrew Kotting. BFI. UK
 Gently Down the Stream (1981) Su Friedrich, USA
 Handsworth Songs (1986) John Akomfrah/ Black Audio Film Collective, UK
 Hiroshima Mon Amour (1959) Alain Resnais. Argos Films. France.
 India Song (1975) Marguerite Duras. Les Films Armorial. France.
 In the Mood for Love (2000) Wong Kar-Wai. Black 2 Pictures. Hong Kong/China
 Je, tu, il, elle (1968) Chantal Akerman. Paradise Films. Belgium.
 Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080, Bruxelles (1975) Chantal Akerman.
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 John Smith (2011) 3 DVD box set. LUX. UK
 Journeys from Berlin. (1971/1979) Yvonne Rainer. Beards Fund Inc. USA/UK/West Germany(
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 Letters Home (1986) Chantal Akerman. France
 Looking for Langston (1989) Isaac Julien, Sankofa, UK
 Man With a Movie Camera/Cheloveks kinoapparatom (1929) Dziga Vertov. USSR
 Margaret Tait: Selected Films 1952–1976. (2006) LUX/Scottish Screen DVD. UK
 Maya Deren: Experimental Films (1943-1955) Mystic Fire Video. US
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 Orlando (1992) Sally Potter. Adventure Pictures, Lenfilm Studio, Russia, UK
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 William Raban (2005) British Artists Film. BFI. UK
 Shadow of a Journey. (1980) Tina Keane. LUX. UK
 Still Life. (2006) Jia Zhangke. Xstream Pictures. China
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 Letter from Siberia (1957) Chris Marker. Argos Films. France
 The Garden (1990) Derek Jarman. BFI. UK
 The River (1997) Tsai Ming Ling. Taiwan Central Motion Picture Company. Taiwan
 Sari Red (1988) Pratibha Parmar, Circles/ Cinenova, UK
 Sink or Swim (1990) Su Friedrich, USA
 Sulphure (1973) Derek Jarman. UK
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Selected list of writings on the films

Elizabeth Cowie, The difference in figuring women now. *MIRAJ SPECIAL ISSUE: 'FEMINISMS: WOMEN ARTISTS AND THE MOVING IMAGE*, March 2016

Elizabeth Cowie, *The experience of Remembering*, LUX DVD publication, 2013

Sacha Craddock: http://flamin.filmlondon.org.uk/news/2010/august/on_perestroika

Stella Hockenfull: *British Women Film Directors in the New Millennium*, London: Macmillan, 2017

Stella Hockenfull: *Magnificent Disasters: Sublime Landscapes in Post-Millennial Cinema*, Contemporary Visual Culture and the Sublime, ed: Temenuga Trifonova, New York, Routledge, 2018

James Mackay: Derek Jarman Super 8, Thames and Hudson, 2014

Sophie Mayer, *The Tracks of Time*, LUX DVD publication, P1-5, 2013

Sophie Mayer: 'Dirty Pictures: Framing Pollution and Desire in New Queer Cinema', in Guinevere Narraway, Anat Pick, (Eds) *Screening Nature: Beyond the Human*. Oxford: Berghahn, 2013

Sophie Mayer: *Political Animals: The New Feminist Cinema: Water Rites: Ecocinema's New Earth Mothers*, London and New York: IB Tauris, 2016

Paul Newland, *Journeys and Disappearances in Perestroika*, LUX DVD, 2013

Kim Knowles, 'Better Viewed on the Wall of an Art Gallery: Institution, Aesthetics and Experimental Film', *Millenium Film Journal*, No 55, Spring 2012, p.40-44

Kim Knowles, *Boundary Crossings and Inter-subjective Imaginings: Sarah Turner's Perestroika*, in Hoyle, Newland, (Eds) *British Art Cinema*, Manchester University Press. 2018

Yvonne Salmon, <http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/blog/post/the-third-space-sarah-turners-empubli-house-em>

Cecilia Sayad, *Performing Authorship*, London: IB Taurus, 2013, ch. 2.

Sequence journal, Issue 3: Round table with Lucy Reynolds, Sarah Turner, Maxa Zoller, Helena Blaker and Karen Mirza

Selected Screenings

Public House, 2015, (re-master 2016) 96 mins

London Film Festival 2015, World premiere: Documentary competition: Picturehouse Central, Rich Mix, ICA: Oct 15
 Changing London : Institute of Contemporary Art: July 2016
 Tate Britain: July 2016: Co-op Dialogues
 Open Air Screening: Floating Cinema: **Another Country**. Hackney Wick: August 2016
 Cambridge Film Festival: New Artists Moving Image: October 2016

UK Tour: Roll out across Picture house Cinemas: Spring /summer/ Autumn 2017:

11 May: Picturehouse, FACT, Liverpool: Q&A with Nina Edge, Britt Jurgensen
 14th May: East Dulwich Picturehouse: Q&A with community participants
 16 May : Arts Picturehouse, Cambridge: Q&A with Dr Yvonne Salmon, CRASSH
 17th may: Crouch end Picturehouse: Q&A
 21 May: Harbour Lights, Picturehouse Southampton: Q&A with Shelley Cobb, Southampton (AHRC: Calling the Shots)
 22nd May: Komedia, Picturehouse Brighton: Q&A with Prof Clair Langhamer, Sussex
 1 June: Cinema City, Picturehouse Norwich: Q&A with Dr Emma Pett, UEA
 25th June: East Dulwich Picturehouse: Q&A with community participants
 5th Nov: Edinburgh, Cameo: **in association with the Collective Gallery's *The Last Hour!* Q&A with** Timothea Armour, Collective Gallery

And other cinemas:

2nd may : Curzon DocHouse: Q&A with Dr Regan Koch, Queen Mary
 12 June: Lexi Cinema, Kensal rise : Q&A with **Rosie Greateorex**: Programme Director
 20th June: The Thinking Cinema: Q&A with Dr Daniel Frampton/Film Philosophy
 31st August: The Cube, Bristol: Q&A with Dr Kim Knowles
 Sept : Peckhamplex: Closing night of Peckham and Nunhead free film fest: Q&A with community participants
 26 September: **Star & Shadow Cinema**, Newcastle: Studio is Sudden:
 2nd Dec: HOME, Manchester: Artist Film Weekender Q&A with Bren O Callaghan

And Galleries:

12th October 2017: **Nottingham Contemporary**: Screening and discussion:
 Loop screening (Thurs-Sat 10am-6pm; Sunday 11am-5pm): 13th -15th Oct
 Nov 2017: CCA, Glasgow. Q&A with Dr Laura Guy
25th November: Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art: housing study day:
<http://www.visitmima.com/whats-on/single/housing-study-day/>

Other Public Engagement

March 2018: **University of Gothenburg and Bio Capitol Theatre**: Gothenburg, Sweden
 April 17: **School of Sound** – The sound of Memory In Public House
 April 17: **Keynote**: Sound of Memory Symposium: Whitechapel
 September 2017: **Museum of London: City Now City Future: The London Salon**: Protest: An evening of discussion on power and protest, dissent and alternative strategies for living in the city.
<https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london/whats-on/london->

New Soundtrack Journal: Volume 7, Issue 2 (2017): The Sound of Memory in Public House
ISBN - Paperback: 9781474424387

Further Useful Links:

<http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/blog/post/the-third-space-sarah-turners-empubli-house-em>

<https://lux.org.uk/artist/sarah-turner>

Perestroika: Reconstructed, 2013, 178 mins

Carroll Fletcher Gallery, April/ May 2013

ICA, March 2014: launch screening for the LUX DVD/Blu-ray publication of *Perestroika* and *Perestroika: Reconstructed*.

LUX Publication: 2013:

2 Disc Dual Format DVD/Blu Ray release

DVD 9 PAL Region 0/ BD 50 Region 0

Perestroika, 2009, 118 mins

Perestroika: Reconstructed 2013, 178 mins

Essays by Elizabeth Cowie, Sophie Mayer, and Paul Newland

Perestroika, 2009/10 118 mins

UK Theatrical Release: Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 1-16 Sept 2010.

Tate Britain, Feb 2014: Assembly: A survey of recent artists' film and video in Britain 2008-2013

Festival Screenings include: Premiered: Experimenta: London Film Festival, Oct 2009, ICA/NFT;
Black Box & **Best of Fest** :Edinburgh International Film Festival, June 2010; Cambridge Film Festival, Sept 2010; Bloomsbury Film Festival, Oct 2010; Leeds Film Festival, Nov 2010; Cork Film Festival, Nov 2010; CPH:DOX, New Visions Competition, Nov 2010; Brit Spotting: Berlin Film Festival, Jan 2011; Irish Film Institute, Dublin, Dec 2012; Kommunales Kino. May, 2013

UK Tour: Curated by the Independent Cinema Office. Venues include: Broadway, Nottingham; Showroom, Sheffield, Gulbenkian, Canterbury. Plough Arts Centre, Stoke on Trent, Dundee Contemporary Arts; Glasgow Film Theatre, Stills Gallery, Edinburgh.

Ecology, 97 mins, 2007, Arts Council England

Premiered: Cambridge film festival, July 2007; Cineville, Brighton Nov 2007; Jarman Retrospective – Gate cinema / Serpentine Gallery, March 2008;

Birds Eye View: ICA, March 2008; Whitstable Biennial 2008: Transmission: Cambridge, July 2008; Cork, 2008; ICO: Touring Programme: Cornerhouse, 2009, Carroll/Fletcher online: 2015

Selected Press:

‘Public House re-imagines cinema as a truly public house, reminiscent of the street-side cameras of Mitchell and Kenyon acting as an invitation to their subjects to view themselves, communally.. ...While the film offers a toolbox for future campaigners, it’s also a participatory portrait, particularly in the poems that give the film its spine. It’s the community who are truly the asset, suggests the film in post-Occupy spirit. Its combination of the choreographic and choral offer a dazzlingly unique form in which to make the collective cinematic.’ Sophie Mayer
<http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/london-2015/experimenta>

‘Sarah Turner’s [Public House](#) (2015/16), newly re-edited, is in part a documentary about the rescue of a South London pub from the grasp of property developers and corporate chains, with a intricately constructed soundtrack of regulars and staff telling the story, retelling anecdotes, and reflecting on the question of what it is to be a ‘regular’ or a ‘local’. .. Henry K millar
<http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/cambridge-film-festival-2016-artists-archives>

BFI | Sight & Sound | Film of the month: Perestroika (2009):

“As physically immersive as anything you’re likely to see at a 3D multiplex, Perestroika sets its coolly minimalist structure against a visceral emotional tone to produce a work unlike any other in current British cinema.” Chris Darke

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/reviews-recommendations/film-month-perestroika>

‘A ruined hotel. A lake as big as a sea. And a death, never explained but by now as momentous to us, and as engulfing, as a black hole. What begins as a travelogue with philosophical trimmings turns into a puzzle picture worthy of Resnais or Antonioni.’

Nigel Andrews, Financial Times

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/aa68b7b2-b5e1-11df-a048-00144feabdc0.html>

‘Perestroika confronts that hallucinatory real, and makes crisis visible by layering personal and political griefs. It brings the viewer numbed by statistics and news footage back to life – and makes the heart race’ Sophie Mayer

- [BFI | Sight & Sound | The tracks of time: Sarah Turner's 'Perestroika'](#)

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/interviews/tracks-time-sarah-turner-s-perestroika>

“Films like Sarah Turner’s Perestroika don’t come along very often. It’s an elegy, a fictional documentary, an intimate travelogue through very difficult memories. Narrated from the point of view of a woman called ‘Sarah Turner’, a ghost, someone who is suffering from retrograde amnesia after a cycling accident, it follows her railway journey back to Siberia where, twenty years earlier, her best friend was killed.

There are many ghosts here, flickering and lighting up the darkened avenues of loss and mortality: the ghost of Derek Jarman’s *Blue* (1993); the ghost of Ulrike Ottinger’s *Johanna d’Arc of Mongolia* (1989); the ghosts of so many artist films that have striven to find a voice that could mesh personal with political concerns as troublingly and movingly as Turner does here. Elegantly photographed, sound-designed to precise and goose-bumping effect, this is a rare and haunting work of memory-gleaning.”

Sukdev Sandhu, The Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmreviews/7978145/Perestroika-review.html>

Peter Bradshaw's best films of 2010: Our film critic makes the nominations for his own personal Oscars in a widely underrated year for film

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/filmblog/2010/dec/01/peter-bradshaw-best-movies-2010>

‘Perestroika is the best artists’ film I have seen coming out of the UK in a long time. It is satisfying on both the artistic front and on the narrative front. Turner has managed to craft a film that is moving and profound, subtly linking the tragedy of personal experience to the human tragedies of social collapse, and environmental damage and our collective future.’

- **Sarah Turner** / Rosalind Nashashibi | Reviews | Interface | a-n: <http://www.a-n.co.uk/interface/reviews/single/576320>

Gillian Mciver, Interface a-n

‘The possibility of viewing the three stories in any order confirms the circularity that is at work here that denies causality to events or a hierarchy to the media. The stories, like the psyche, like media, incorporate others but also refer us on in an endless chain of suggestion. There is no conceivable resolution, rather we are part of an endless recurrence, a mode of transmission rather than comprehension... The viewing experience of *Ecology* is determined, to an extent, by the order in which we see the stories. Yet its power resides in the ability to pull us into each character’s internal world, to invite our complicity with each point of view. And then in moving on, to show us the error of our ways.’ Janet Harbord, *Vertigo* Volume 3 | Issue 6 | Summer 2007

https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/volume-3-issue-6-summer-2007/the-fragile-relations-of-ecology/

Selected Interviews

Culture Now: ICA: Sarah Turner in conversation with James Mackay: September 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XS11Sux2KA>

<http://www.anothergaze.com/in-conversation-with-sarah-turner/> Sept 2017

Public House: Picture House <https://spotlight.picturehouses.com/film/interview-sarah-turner-on-public-house/> May 2017

Public House Q&A | BFI London Film Festival <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Da8n4QU9d-8>

Public House : FILM LONDON ARTISTS MOVING IMAGE:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuVCGW9_7P4

Gary Thomas, *APEngine*:

<http://www.apengine.org/2009/10/sarah-turner-on-perestroika/>

Public House: 'A Vision on Peckham Rye': Radio 4: November 2016.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b082wwlm>

APPENDICES:

PROSE / SCREENPLAYS:

*ECOLOGY**PERESTROIKA**PERESTROIKA: RECONSTRUCTED*

ECOLOGY

Ecology is composed of three sequences that are designed to be screened in any order. There are six possible viewing permutations for the work. Exhibitors determine the sequence progression and all versions are available through the title menu of the dvd.

Version 1: **SHE /YOU/ I**

Version 2: **I/ SHE/ YOU**

Version 3: **YOU/ I / SHE**

Version 4: **SHE / I / YOU**

Version 5: **YOU/ SHE/ I**

Version 6. **I/ YOU/ SHE**

She (Mother)

She'd said she wanted to cook, was happy to cook, she just didn't fancy swimming. If she was someone else, maybe Miriam or more like Miriam (although obviously Miriam could) she'd have said actually she couldn't cook paella.

She'll probably start with the onion and garlic. That's got to be easy enough although it would be a lot easier if she could find a crusher. Maybe she'll have a glass of wine the others have already had cocktails, Pat had brought their glasses up for a refill At least she'd said do you want help, she hadn't said do you know what you're doing. She liked Pat, she knows Pat'd asked Miriam could she join them, could Cath come along Because. Would Pat have said?

Miriam was really getting on her nerves. She'd gone on and on about how she should make use of the pool more, how it wasn't often you had one in the garden, at the very least she should have a try of the outdoor shower, has she used it yet? she should. She'd carried on washing the squid, letting the tap run and that probably wasn't ok but she needed to pull those clear bits out the black stuff was going everywhere so how else was she going to clean it She knew Miriam was still standing there, watching, probably thinking that wasn't ok but that this was the second time she'd cooked and it's not easy in other people's kitchens it'll take a while for everyone to get their heads round this recycling thing she'd said it will take a while for everyone to get their heads round it but when she'd turned round to lay the squid on the clean chopping board (that she'd also run under clean clear water) Miriam was standing there, stirring her cocktail and saying; It's like, it's like, well ok it's like you're part of the mountains, the soul of the mountain, you shower out there in it's side and it's like the mountain's a great sleeping St. Bernard and you're there curled snug in its armpit. She'd actually said that and then she'd squeezed the squids arm, almost a little tender as if she's shaking it's hand before she waved goodbye to it.

She wasn't a fan of this home made wine that came in jugs not bottles, she wasn't really a fan of wine period. She'd often told Michael she thought that wine was bitter a little vinegary, but this one jeez she might as well drink the balsamic. There's no way you'd get St. Bernard's here it'd be too hot for them the humidity would finish them, it's finishing her, her hair's going curly, badly, but there's no point taking a cold shower and washing it if she's not supposed to use her hair dryer. She'd used it once after her first and only swim and that had cost her a look and a lecture. Ok so this place is exclusively solar powered except if it's really cloudy then there's a back up generator, obviously that's brilliant, obviously, so what's Miriam saying here? If she's saying that solar cannot power a hairdryer because everything (anything) must use more power than a hairdryer, an iron, she'd brought her bloody travel iron in case they went out in the evenings no chance, if Miriam's saying it can't power a hairdryer in Majorca where the sun's up at four and biting into the back of your neck all day till it sets, then how could it power a dishwasher, a dryer, the rest of your basics? Or is she saying what maybe pat was inferring, she'd got the place through a friend of her sister's, it must have been a favour as it's hardly costing anything so she's got it on the cheap and the electricity's metered. This stuff tastes a lot better once you're on your second she might have another now she's done the garlic she's done the onions she's done the pepper what else needs doing before it all goes in there was another thing and she'd better get it in before the other's are up from the pool as if this is going to go horribly wrong she doesn't want Tams or Miriam seeing it. Tomatoes. Shit the tomatoes. They'll need rinsing before she does the. Whatever it's called when you take the skins off them.

You just can't rinse things properly like this. That chopping board had needed a bloody good rinse it's not exactly clean is it washing in one bowl, rinsing in another all of it in the same bowl and not letting the tap run, if it's running it's running only into the rinsing bowl and that water's used on the garden. If anything's looking wilted something's got to get washed before you're allowed to give it a

She doesn't believe this, was she ok? just put the calamari in last, let the juice soak through, don't forget the saffron, Sorry?, oh the yellow stuff, it's in with the risotto rice and the juice of a lemon, just let it absorb, the trick is to keep the stock (you can add more hot water) in balance with the absorption, it's faster than you think, if you take your eye off it'll burn, don't forget the chorizo, are you Ok? looks fine, under control, we thought we'd just pop down to the sea, the wind's coming in and you want to soak in that breeze, give yourself a break from the heat along with a good sea soaking, Pat thought you'd want to get on with the dinner you're welcome to come did you want to? She knew Miriam had seen her running that tap. She was probably standing there for ages before she'd said anything.

- I should probably get on with the dinner.

- Ok. Are you Ok? Tams is driving. I finished her second.

- We don't want to eat too late do we.

- Absolutely. Help yourself to more wine. Obviously. We won't be long

You shouldn't be cooking, that's what Michael'd say, it was Michael who'd said she should get away, it's a difficult time she needs a break she was going to find it difficult, obviously. It's not exactly fair on Michael it's got to be difficult for him more difficult for him they're not his kids now he's there on his own dealing with it and she's here on her own dealing with If Michael was here he'd have driven to bloody Tesco's and got some ready meals in.

Half an hour to forty minutes. She's got the stock, she's got the What are you supposed to do with that? chop it, cube it? Right. Fine. That's already done, a little oil in the bottom of the pan, is this going to ignite or what? she'd seen Miriam do it. Matches. Another glass of wine. When that lots on it can look after itself. This really does taste better, it's like, what's it like? it's like cherries, maybe cherries. Almost chewy. What was she gonna chop the? on. Sod them. She's putting the squid on a plate and she's rinsing that. If water's so bloody precious how come they're all in and out of the pool, if it's really a drought zone why's Miriam on at her to use the outdoor

shower there's no way she's peeing outside she's going now and when she's done she's going to flush it.

She can't stand bathrooms without nets. If they drive up now they'll see her sitting there, you can see right in she's seen it, Miriam'll probably hear her flushing she'll have to make a joke about the smell no then they'll think she's what if she has, everyone does but then she'll have to endure the do you think it's alright to go in yets. At least there's a bath in here, if you're lying in that they'd have to come right up to the window to have a look in, Tam's might think it's funny that anyone walking on the path overhead could have a good look but there's no way she's using it, she's not standing behind a scrappy sheet of plastic that's pretending to be a shower curtain and there's no way she's standing in that bowl That's what you did if you didn't have a bathroom. Her mother had stood in one. You put it in the kitchen on a Sunday with the kettle permanently on the boil everyone's in and out of the same, it's not exactly clean is it. There. She's flushed it. A good butchers Tams had said she would wouldn't she, she'd had a good look but she'd stopped laughing when Miriam'd said we're all girls together what's there to look at. How big do you feel? Now she sounds like her daughter, Rosa'd use the outdoor shower, Rosa'd love it here. Mark'd. Would Pat have said anything?

Oh jesus, this is really Not funny, this is Really Not a Joke she's having another glass before she deals with it.

It is practically chewy. You can practically chew it.

If she just picks those bits out, it doesn't smell burnt, a bit more stock, put the what is this stuff? in, she was supposed to do a salad, screw the salad she can't do everything She'd only offered to cook because she felt bad about not going to the market, Miriam can go on about her unbreakable glasses even Pat had said she didn't know if she

was more pleased with the glasses or the fact she'd got the price down with her spanish. She wasn't going back everyone shouting at her in words she didn't understand, she didn't mind the fruit and veg but she couldn't stand the sight of those scrawny chickens wandering everywhere and fat rabbits in cages that already looked like they weren't breathing. Like Rosa's rabbit, she shouldn't have let her see it but she knew she'd end up feeding it, she'd said if you're going to have a pet you've got to take responsibility for it but Rosa'd insisted, of course she would feed it, course she'd love it more than anything and then she's out there it's stiff on it's back eyes shut all teeth Mark's laughing Rosa's in pieces There was nothing funny about

She knew it would smash the instant she'd released it. Her wrist had just snapped back as if it wasn't her really, but now it is b o u n c i n g u p, she can already see it, it's a l o n g and graceful curve that's slow easy even she can reach it

She is on her knees and she is picking up the pieces. There was some on her toes a lot under the cooker and the stem's peaking out from where the cloth covers the bin. You know how you said it was.. Did they say that exactly? The thing is I was just There's probably a chance you'll get your money back if they did. I had the squid on that board the other stuff on the plate you've got both hands full and if you're trying to get it all in

She shouldn't be doing this with her hands, there was a dustpan somewhere and now her thumb's bleeding. She is going to get this cleared up and she is not going to say anything. She's got the squid in the other stuff in the plates need getting out Jeez there's more under the fridge but this is really bleeding. And her face is wet, why's her face wet? it's not that hot, no she is She is not going to it's just a bloody dinner

And it's burning, it's really burning this time there's no chance she'll get away with just scraping the bits , it is ruined it is clearly ruined she should have just said she couldn't

she should have just said ok I'll turn it off it'll be nice to get a bit of breeze it doesn't matter if we eat late does it you can do what you want if you're on holiday There's glass in it Why's there glass in it?

There's glass everywhere. Most of it's in the dinner

You keep the pressure on and you keep it under a running tap sod it it's bleeding and she's got to clean it you don't want that in the rinsing bowl

- Smells delicious. Do you want help with the plates?

She is not. She is not anymore. She doesn't want Pat seeing it's not fair on Pat She likes Pat Pat wouldn't have said If she had they wouldn't have let her do the dinner.

- Miriam's parking. Tam's couldn't make the corner so she's guiding her in. She's completely sloshed. So's Miriam. I told them they had to slum it. Shower later. You alright Cath?

Everyone's been saying they liked her paella. Pat'd said it, Miriam'd said it and Tam's'll probably say something once she's stopped shoving it in. She's hardly eaten anything but you don't when you've cooked it do you, you never really feel like it.

She has made a little pattern with her nail in the top of the table. Everyone has. There's loads of them. It's covered in patterns that nail's have dug in. Hers is like, it's like a little house, except that bit, maybe that's a wind vane, it's a little house with a wind vane on

- D'you want another Cath your glass is empty?

Why's that the chef's prerogative? If Miriam's saying that because she's kept an eye on how many glasses she's been drinking she's beginning to feel. Actually she couldn't really care she's had enough of worrying about it. She might take some of this wine back for Michael, it's really not that bad

- What, Tams is offering to do something she's not being paid for? We'll have to put a poster up in the office won't we, shall we put it in reception with you eh Cath? Are you not having more, I'm having some, Pat's had some, we're not discussing how much Tams has had. You've hardly eaten any

- I don't really fancy it.

- You never do when you've cooked it

She's got to get him something and it's nice isn't it, nice to take back something local, something different, they're not likely to do any proper shopping and there's no way he'd believe it's chewy, it's one of those things you've got to try for yourself it's like the first time you have olives

- Save that last mouthful, hang on a bit, glasses everybody, we're toasting the chef

Did Tams actually say that? Did she? There is nothing Brilliant about Mark, no news and Mark is going to be Brilliant. She hasn't even rung Michael she knows she should want to but he'd said he'd ring if he had to, if anything. The point of the holiday was to have a break. For her to get away from. She just doesn't understand. Why are they looking at her like that?

- it's just that Pat said earlier he'll probably be out by. So I thought. That's good, innit. He'll have done. Like. What. Six weeks?

D'you want help with the? Oh, did you break something? I wouldn't worry about it I'll help you clear it I wouldn't bother saying anything Miriam'd said they're probably just cheap shit

- Is it remand or detention? They don't really have those anymore do they, I suppose it's just low security

- He's in a Special place with a dependencies unit.

- He can't come out tho' can he he can't like do day trips

She wasn't even going to answer that she's going to sit here until she's calmed down then she's going to flush it and she doesn't care who hears It absolutely stinks in here. The longer she leaves it the worse it's going to make it she's going to have to go back if she finishes the washing up she's done enough, obviously she's tired, she can just go to bed, no-one needs to say anything

She knows they've gone all quiet since she's come back out but she's really quite happy scraping off these charcoally bits she'd just rather they'd pretend to talk put some music on or something. This is much more burnt than it tasted how's she going to get it off she'll have to boil another kettle You can't wash up properly like this

-You shouldn't be doing the washing up.

That cactus can have a good rinse she's not having Miriam scrutinise her burnt bits She's left the tap running sod it she's in no mood for anyone to say anything If she could just get some proper soap this would be a million times easier

- You're clearly enjoying it

She understands that Miriam is just saying this, she is saying it to let her do it as they both understand she's not going back to the table

- Why don't you take the car to the market tomorrow. Choose something for dinner. I'll knock up whatever you fancy

She also understands that she won't be finishing it, she'll get it so far and then she's going to bed she's done the bulk of it she doesn't need to say anything

She wakes during the night with a face that's cracked as tight as a peach tin, her throat's a cage, rustier than the ones those rabbits were in Stop it. She's not going there. Water. She needs water.

She steps onto the terrace without her torch and crosses to the kitchen. There is a full moon, every single star sitting so close on her head it's like a very low ceiling but there's no claustrophobia, it's not musty, it's, she doesn't know what it is, she'd thought freshly cut grass but it's nothing like it, only the feeling is.

She lets the tap pour water over her face, her wrists Sod it. She's been sweating. Pouring. Her hair. It doesn't bear thinking. It feels so good A nice cold bath She'll wake the others Let's just walk a bit. She's never seen a sky like it this was scary before even with a torch this path was rocky, tricky She hadn't wanted to but it's letting it happen for her, it's really quite easy she could run if she wanted

She's going to pull the curtain round her even though there's no-one around to see There's nothing to see anyway She'll push it back behind her ears tomorrow

Miriam knows nothing of dogs They're Great Danes. Brindles

She hasn't got a towel. It doesn't matter.

You (Daughter)

Here of out am I, going keeping I'm where any am I, there of out I'm and breathing
 fucking am I breathing am I, stopping not am I but, shirt my down it's, of back the over
 all, throat my, nose my in pieces there's but, it pulling, gasping, under, up going I'm, in
 it pulling am I, breathe can't I, rolling fucking I'm, rolling I'm, forward falling I'm, heavy,
 sick, drunk I'm because sea the see can't I but keeping I'm, going I'm, here but
 anywhere am I, there of out I'm, going keeping I'm, going keep to got you've, going are
 you but, thing fucking a not, anything see can't you because slipping you're tumbling
 you're, down get can you, there down getting you're, there of out are you, village the,
 lights the, sea the see can you, it fuck, torch no got you've, path this fuck, room
 your, her? To did you what that is, her to anywhere there of out you're running
 you're, there of out you're then and Did you what that is? Her to?

It couldn't be going better really. So far, three things. First thing. You're swimming
 Just swimming. Your fingers split the water and you're pushing up, grabbing it, then
 under, and you're thinking, maybe, maybe could be, maybe what if this is all
 possible, all of it because, this is just brilliant. It is fucking brilliant mum's
 brought us here, it is even more brilliant that it was your idea, you talked her into it,
 and not because of mark and not despite mark, but because it would be good to get
 away, just the three of us and be somewhere that is not, because this is not
 CentreParcs, it is not even Package, and because you can just go out, you can squat

down and take a piss, you're supposed to just go out and take a piss, anywhere, except the toilet unless you have to and because you haven't done that since you were a little kid and then it was just the sides of motorways, behind the car door, everyone faffing and pretending it's not embarrassing, and because even Ralph and Jennie would like it here, even Kiera would like it here because they behave like Fucking grown ups Then you're under, You're gulping, you're pulling yourself gasping your eyes are stinging something's whacked your shoulder, Prick, then you've seen his feet. You make a dive for the rail but he's out of the water well before you reach him.

You hoist yourself out and you just keep walking in a way that you know looks mature and indignant, you are not looking back, you know exactly what his eyes are looking at, there's a nice Fuck You about it, but still you wish they weren't you're his sister for fuck sake

- What have got that face on for you boring bitch.

You do not even answer because if you did you'd regret it (Why do you have to make everything worse? Worse than what?) his face would crack and then you'd know he's just your brother, your cool older brother, real front man of the match a right fucking laugh, but you know there's more to him because you've seen it crack before he was

on his back laughing but you could still see it, him on his bike, you on your skates, he's pulling you along and pedalling faster, harder each time you scream and then the dog's run between you and you're over, you're going down, except you're not, because he's caught it, he's swung you back up and it's him that's over. His face then. The moment before, maybe just a shudder but when he's laughing you still see it.

Instead you have a better idea. You're going to do a barby for your mum and for him and it's going to be better than anything you've had at Ralph and Jennies.

Second thing. You've found Jane, you've done the market, you've got the steaks, the salad, the fish, and then you've got the fire going. Except it's not really going, it's nothing like the one you did at Ralph and Jennie's, You'd started that, you'd seen the wood piled up and said what about it.. you'd got that really burning, everyone sitting round it telling ouji stories, sick jokes about walking on water and jennie not mentioning those excruciating fish fingers, Brilliant we'd forgot to get stuff for the kids, would you like a glass of wine, a fucking bumper pack from Tesco's, think of something else, something Wine. She'd given you wine and then shown you how to do the sea bream, the vegetable parcels, you and Kiers had done the steaks together, they weren't that great as you were far too pished, but no-one had mentioned it, and that's the thing about here, because it is their thing, it is not package, and it was your idea and a better idea would be bringing them here, no, you wouldn't ask, you'd just tell them about it, just mention it, a writer's retreat, totally eco, solar powered, everything,

not package, not at all, much more your thing, and maybe if they wanted to come, and if they did, if you're the one that's told them maybe they'll want to bring you, ask, do you want to come with, because it was Jennie that'd said, don't go schlepping back up to the house just go on the beach, no-one's looking, it's too dark to see, and then you realise everyone's doing it and you've asked to use the toilet and that was excruciating, totally, something else Something Your fire burning, it was really burning, even from the distance, the place where you're pissing, you can barely see the faces, they're all starting to slip, and who was there anyway, you didn't know most of them, maybe Ralph and Jennies friends, just the idea of Ralph and Jennie because you'd never call your mum Cath, your dad Pete, and people just kept coming, just turning up, because Kiers had said to everyone at college it's no big deal, come if you feel like it, because she could, because she's like that, it is just always easy and you're a big part of it, you'd got the fire going, and walking back, from back up the beach, you can see it and it's mesmerising, you look from a certain angle and people's faces are just slipping, almost disappearing, and then you've seen jason, stump legs, muscles all twisted up pulled back behind his knees, a pitbull's got nothing on him

Then your Mum's looking at you as if you've stolen something.

-You'd better put that out.

- why?

- Jane's here. I've just seen her

- i know, she helped me light it. I'm doing a barby.

- But i've got pizzas in

So that's it.. Jane's a private person, she rents to writers mostly, other special cases, that type of thing, did you disturb her? No, you'd just bumped into her, you'd gone down to see what she was doing to the generator, she'd thought the barbeque was a brilliant idea, did you touch anything?, Did you touch anything, what are you, like, three? what if you had, what if you did? actually jane had showed you how to flick the back up before she'd driven you to the market, you've got the steak, the fish, whatever, as no-one's actually interested, they'd rather have a pizza.

You've started on the wine jane's given you, which is not at all rough actually, you've obviously given it enough time to breathe, but none of it's looking as good as when you'd done it at Jennie's You'd pulled off the fire, the vegetable parcels, they were, they were nothing like this, there you were on water, you were walking on fucking water, you had the next morning, well, Kiers had, she'd driven you out to show you, you'd watched her, you're swimming and the part your in's real deep but just beyond you, on the horizon, people are walking on water. Kiera had. Kiers did, but that was the morning after, It was Something else, something The place where you walk on water is a place where two opposing forces meet, the outgoing tide of the river pushes against the incoming tide of the sea and this creates a street to the horizon until the tide comes in and washes over it Jennie'd explained it as she'd wrapped the vegetable parcels but hers weren't, hers didn't taste, they were nothing like this, if they brought you, because it was your idea, if they were coming because you'd told them, then maybe you could move into Kiera's flat permanently, pay rent properly, because then

you wouldn't have to deal with fucking, this, because Kiers wouldn't have to deal with any of it

- where d'you get this?

- Jane said we could have some

- She did did she?

- Yeah she did actually. Everyone has wine with their dinner.

- We're not everyone. He can't have any.

- Actually, he'd rather have a beer

Third thing, because then he's standing over you like it's your fault, like it's your fault he's not going to get a beer or it's your fault he's not supposed to have a drink period
And then the rest of it's happening.

Who's going to be doing the washing up? -

before you've hardly started eating

- Rosa's done the dinner -

(and you've bought the food, lit the Barby and the fire, the fire, you keep starting it but it's hardly taking, Jane'd said the wood on top's unusually wet for the time of year) - it would be nice for you to help her a bit.

He's going to help with the fire, No he's not the fire's your thing. And the vegetable parcels have gone down a treat

Yeah they're quite nice, actually they taste like shit but 'If they're quite nice' why aren't you eating them?

He's eaten his steak, he's had a bit of salad, it doesn't matter does it? You can do what you want when you're on holiday

Precisely so he's having another drink, this stuff's a bit rough, he'd rather have a

beer.

If he's having one you're having one, so you've've both had another (because you've hardly fucking started)

Oh and the best bit, the fucking best bit, the pi-ece de fuck -ing

Your Mum's leaving the table,

Excuse me, Can I get out please,

Where you going?

Toilet.

Why don't you go outside?

Don't be silly.

Well don't flush, you're not supposed to, ours hasn't even got a flush

Perhaps that's why it stinks

Doesn't it's natural.

If you go outside it'll stink less won't it, Innit.

Yeah exactly, that's what I do.

I know I've seen you.

What've you seen?

You.

How've you, when?

I've watched you out there squatting.

You Cunt.

You Prick.

Stop it!

And then she's in there ages pretending none of it's happening.

Fuck it. You go out. You take a piss. And here. (Still here) Here you can hear

a strong wind blowing

you can hear a dog barking on the other side of the mountain

you can hear a sheep baying somewhere

And you can also hear that little bird singing right above your head and the little bird's

telling you that this wasn't one of your better ideas because it couldn't be going

better, because it couldn't be going any worse and the thing is You

can hear it before you see it, you can see it before you know it, but when you know

and then you also know you've known it all along it doesn't just slap you, it punches

you, then kicks you in the stomach the cunt the teeth and then you

What do you do?

You go back in and you fucking deal with it

What is it with this fire? you get a flame, it kind of catches, the stuff on the bottom's lit,

but it won't, it just won't burn, not like really burn like faces slipping off or that cactus

melting Wouldn't it be great if Jason's face had, fat muscles pushing his knees back,

crouched like that his legs all twisted, he could have been, might as well have been,

his face is like a pitbull never mind the rest of him, How come he was there? . . . How

come Jason's here? and Kiers had given you a look, one of her looks, those looks that

often passed between you, meaning, phased, how should I know, you tell me, is he

here with Carol? yeah, they're really close, so probably, (Probably), Right cos he's
 Such a geek, Yeah he is, true, but he can be quite sweet, Right so he's a sweet
 Geek? And then it's later, you've had a swim but there's no wood for the fire, so it's
 just smouldering, dying, like this one really and then you've seen it Kieras head
 on Jasons knees, his fingers on her kneck, wrapped in her hair coiling it, like they're
 comfortable there, like they've been there before (Probably) And you are falling, it's
 black all around you and you're tumbling, you're rolling, you are drunk, sick, heavy with
 it, and you're running, you are out of there, you are anywhere but here, you are
 running but you don't, you're not, instead you've poked the fire, you're stoking it and
 you've just kept stoking it

- she's a mod-ul and she's looking good

- oh piss off mark, which bit's funny?

- I'd like to take her home that's un-der-stood.

Just stoke it, don't get into it.

- She's play-ing hard to get she smiles from time, to time

Fuck this, ignore it none of it's fucking funny so have another glass start clearing the
 plates no-one's finished but this isn't a sitting round the fire chatting kind of thing, he's
 not having this stick, this is your fire, your thing and you're either stoking it or killing it

- Right, Good, lets get this lot cleared up

Yeah, maybe that's a good idea but you do it, i've done it, i am fucking done with it,

- Nah. Do it lata. Do it tomorrow, we haven't even finished

- What you're going to do it are you?

- Yeah. Might as well.

And then Mark's staring your mum out, your mum's staring Mark out, then the familiar
 shrug, whatever, i'll do it myself, But then he's grabbing it off her, he's grabbed it and
 this is (almost) funny, because he's wrestling it, like it's a precious thing between them

and both are them are having it but neither of them want it

- Just fucking leave it

And then she's staring at me, just staring right through him

- Pleased with yourself are you? I told you he can't take his drink

What me? how is this to do with, but her eyes are pleading, stop this, do something

Fine, but you've done it without me, What another plate? another shrug, is that it, is

that fucking it and then he's grabbing her wrist, it's your mum's wrist and he's

snatched it, his eyes are going mad like he's going to twist it, snap it back and break it

and

- GET OFF her.

Her wrist's flat numb on the table

- Is that what you do? Is this what you did?

- Sorry?

He's topping up his wine just staring at you smiling as he takes another sip, it's like

he's calm now but he's not calm because he's got on that fixed grin and that means, go

on, go for it, get it over, wind it up bitch, and you're not going to, you're not because

- Finish it.

You are not going to because

and then he's flicked his wrist. It is over you your whole face you're sitting there

dripping

- I asked you to finish it

To her

Is that what you did

And then you're out of there, you're running you're out of there anywhere

To her, is that what you did to her? Your room, fuck this path, you've got no torch, fuck it, you can see the sea, the lights, the village, you are out of there, you're getting down there, you can get down, you're tumbling you're slipping because you can't see anything, not a fucking thing, but you are going, you've got to keep going, I'm keeping going, I'm out of there, I am anywhere but here, I'm going, I'm keeping but I can't see the sea because I'm drunk, sick, heavy, I'm falling forward, I'm rolling, I'm fucking rolling, I can't breathe, I am pulling it in, I'm going up, under, gasping, pulling it, but there's pieces in my nose, my throat, all over the back of, it's down my shirt, but I am not stopping, I am breathing I am fucking breathing and I'm out of there, I am any where, I'm keeping going I am out of here.

I (Son)

It is not important what anyone else Maybe everyone else does think that but what's important is not what they think it's what you think and I know you don't think that

She was looking at me like I'm mould or I am scum or like she's forcing herself to look at something she'd rather not be looking at. Stop it? I haven't fucking started. Didn't you want me to make a start on the washing up? I'm making a start on the washing up I'm clearing the plates. Scuse me stand back this bit's tricky but it doesn't hurt. It didn't hurt, I'm getting them off the table, all in the sink.. Ok, but that was not deliberate, she's just stood there looking like, *why are you doing this?* I've started, actually, so I'd better fucking finish, I'm picking the bits from the bowl, the glass from

my hand, she's just stood behind me, just stood there saying absolutely fucking nothing then she's gone, out of there Probably off after fucking Rosa.

What can I tell you? Earlier everything was fine and now everything is not. If there's a point where everything turns from being fine to not fine, if there's a single point, then I always seem to miss it. You'd say No there's several points, maybe each has their own, everyone's entitled to their own point of view, there's no point worrying, there isn't a point that I'm not getting. You'd say, go after her, sort it out, it's no big deal, she's your little sister chill it. I did. ha ha. but it was just a little flick, less than half a glass and Rosa needed chilling. She has lost her sense of humour. She is behaving like Debbie. I know you think a lot of Debbie, but Debbie, Debbie, fucking Debbie. Debbie only thinks what anyone else thinks Debbie should be thinking

The door to Rosa's house is shut. She's not here. Fuck her. I'm going back to the kitchen and I'm going to finish the washing up, I said I'd do it, when have I had a problem with that? I've got a problem with Rosa's fucking paddy Are you still speaking to her? In my head you're not. If you were it would be behind my back, you'd be keeping things chilled but you wouldn't want me knowing about it

Mum'll have found Rosa. They're probably washing up together. I promise you, Rosa'll bang on about her special way of rinsing, - (not like that, like what? You can't get soap in the rinsing bowl. So how are you supposed to rinse it?) - Mum'll be doing a bit of drying pretending nothing's actually happening and Rosa'll pretend with her in order to prove a point. She didn't start anything; let's get this lot cleaned up. Fuck Rosa. Fuck Debbie. Maybe Rosa should

Rosa is behaving like a dyke. That's about it The sum of She needs to know that. She thinks she knows everything since she's gone to university but she doesn't know

much, she doesn't know what fucking She thinks she knows but she doesn't, she knows about the phone box but

You'd already got your stuff together We'd said we were moving on. You were totally up for it So how are you then saying you probably weren't coming because Jade's saying she didn't want to go, and, I know this cos I said it, what's Jade got to do with anything, I've met her like, once, when we're out it's just us and the rest of us and she hadn't started out with us, we'd said we'd move on later, we'd had that sorted, discussed, the other's were already in the cab rank, kev and carly were driving as they hadn't dropped anything, we'd get a lift back later, and you're like, Exactly, that's why Debbie's not coming.

- Where's Rosa?

Looking for her sense of humour. Here boy. Over here. Cleaning up the mess she made of the kitchen. Making some more of those delicious vegetable parcels. I hope. Not. How the fuck should I know? I didn't say that I didn't say anything, I'm thinking of something to say but I can't, so I'm shrugging I just shrug and then

-I thought you were looking for her?

She's not even looking She cannot fucking look at me.

Whatever Rosa thinks, Mum thinks. For sure. She's consulted the oracle she's consulted her sleeping dogs, they've confirmed absolutely everything she already thinks despite the fact they're sleeping. Now what? You'd say maybe clean the kitchen I've already said I'm doing that (I know I'm just saying), yeah, you'd be saying, don't let em run with what they're already thinking, it doesn't matter what they're thinking don't live up to it do your own thing. Too late. I've done it. Done what? I can't tell you Well I can, I will, but I need you with me, I need you coming with me.

Michelle hasn't made her mind up, she doesn't mind either way, either that or she's just not saying anything, which is why Jade's saying she doesn't want to go, as Jade wants to get in with Debbie and Debbie's too polite to say anything.

Say what about anything why are you fucking whispering?

She's not staying out if anyone's dropped anything.

I need another drink. I haven't had a drink for Well, Since. I need another drink before I tell you. What? It's not important. It still doesn't hurt Most of my glass is sitting on the table. I'm picking that up and getting that in the bin. This is the organic bin, the biodegradable bin and Rosa will have a problem with that but to be honest I've got a problem with this.

The plates.

In the sink.

Soaking.

Cleaned up.

Nothing's happened.

Everyone has wine with their dinner. We've never had wine with our dinner He can't have any The sum of. Might as well finish it Nice of Rosa to leave it I'm not a fan of wine You don't mind a glass but I'd rather have a beer.

Your look. You know what? All I could hear was that look cos I couldn't hear you saying; she's too polite to say anything. And the others. I wanted to just pull you forward, I wanted to tell you, I wish I'd just turned you to just look at it, it was totally. But I didn't want to move you either I didn't want to break it. The others were just. Fluttering. They literally looked like they were fluttering, quite kind of nice, kind of bird like patterns and any minute something big was gonna land and they're all just gonna ppwoouuw and everyone's pouring out of the pub and they're starting to look like sheep turning one way then another there had to be a collie in there somewhere, Here boy, Over here Wouw It's kicking in already Ok, you're really tight with Michelle, I know that, and Michelle's really tight with Debbie but Jez, Jase and Danny are in the fucking cab rank they are going to be leaving, are you coming, are we going, am I going without you? No. I am not going without you.

What Debbie thinks about anything is not worth knowing. Debbie's not here. What Rosa thinks about anything is not worth knowing. Rosa is here. I need her to know that you don't fucking think that.

What babe? What? I've got a can of lager in my pocket, another one for you, you can't swallow it dry.

I'm not going to finish this I'm going back to Rosa's house I'm going to wait for her and I'm going to sort this No I'm not fucking leaving it, this is not the kind of thing you leave You leave the plates on the table until everyone's finished eating You leave the plates on the table if anyone's thinking about still eating You have a conversation Enjoy a drink. You can't stand it when they take the plates before you've finished You say it's about money They take the plates so you order something else You know You've done it. I know it's because you're not big on eating. I know that It's one of the things I've been thinking We need to talk about it But I'm with you on the plates. Either way it's fucking rude.

Rosa's still not back. Where the fuck? There is nowhere you can go from here Unless you're taking the car She can't drive She probably thinks she's up for it, apparently she's learning but she's had way too much to drink She is really making a piece out of this The face on her since we've got here.

What now babe? What are we saying? Yep Ok I'm waiting for her here Rosa's little casita. She actually calls it that Little Rosa's little house. We're just waiting for her here I can't deal with the look on mum's You should have told her about the rat. I should have. There's a lot of things I should have told her I should have told her about that at fucking dinner She would not have found it funny.

There's a lot of things Rosa would not find funny What can I tell you? Where do I start? Oh love her Love little Rosa in her little casita She's got a stash A sneaky fucking stash A self righteous fucking no wonder she insisted on her little casita and I'd thought it was just about me All about me.

What is this shit? Calvados. Praise be to Rosa Our father in Rosa's heaven give us this day our daily trespasses so we can forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation

Rosa will not find this funny

I know but it's not the lords' fault

It's not funny

Well not all of it maybe but some of it is

No it's not

Ok so it's not but I'm having another fucking drink none of this is funny we'd said we were moving on you hadn't said you're maybe moving on elsewhere, how's that funny when I've already

She's just a fucking bird. 'S'right You coming? No Yeah Hang about Five minutes She's just getting her stuff

You'd already got your stuff together. We were moving on. You and me together Safe.

It was you and me together Are you coming? Are we going? *I'm not going without her.* I'm not going without you You're not just a fucking bird. *What the fuck does it matter?* No We're getting a cab together We're laughing our tits off The two of us Like little kids We're not going with the others. I'm not going with the others. ANOID.

Seriously. We're just going to dance What does it matter? Just you and me *What does it fucking matter ?* Alright, so she's coming Bring her too And the others Alright

It doesn't matter meet 'em there They're not coming in the cab I'm off on one

They're not coming in the fucking cab If I'm going off I'm going off with you.

We need to talk.

I've got another in my pocket, you can't swallow it dry.

Alright they can come in the cab, can we get five in a mini cab? Yeah, alright we'll get five in, I'll just fucking shrink or something I'll lie on the floor at your feet. What do you mean Jade doesn't want to, what about you? it's you and me, I'm out with the boys I'm stuck with the girls but it doesn't matter, it's just you and me, the others have gone, ok, maybe they're in the cab rank, but I'm going off, I can't just go off and find them, if I'm going off I'm going off with you

No, we really need to talk.

We're talking. No You just keep running this Alright if we're really talking you shouldn't, you should never, you should never, you should never have gone into that fucking phone box. Stop Stop it Ok Focus Focus on other things Rosa wouldn't find funny.

The rat

We've already said that I know but I sorted it. She couldn't have kept her head underwater like that Man she was really taking it in I was not going to tell her

There's loads of things I'm going to tell her but I'm not telling her about the rat

Other things? Oh. Just eco conscious nonscoius Nonsceince Wouw Ok There's the bathroom, and there's this sink, yeah. There's no plug in the sink and no sink in the plug Stop it. There's no plumbing. Just a little bucket. Rosa's little bucket. Where you collect the water from having a wash doing your teeth and I've been

No, I haven't I watched her once Yeah, I did think that was funny No I haven't got a thing Can I finish?

Can I fucking finish? I've been pissing in the sink. That's what I've been trying to tell you, that's what I've been trying to say and actually that is funny, it's her eco conscious nonscience It all goes down the same Rosa wouldn't think that No Rosa wouldn't but lying here thinking about it, would you, there's lots of things you wouldn't think

Like?

On my belly, I can smell her, this stuff's kicking in Like? Like this She was the first girl I ever came with

Like?

We're parting company

Have we already? Have we fucking already? It wasn't like that, I was like, 12 we were playing racing cars I was just humping her off I mean bucking her off She had to stay on She didn't know anything She was 8 She still doesn't know anything All she knows is what she thinks she knows but she doesn't know

We were talking

Is there something you want to say

We need to talk We do I wanna fucking talk I wanna talk my pants off, your pants off, with you, later

Seriously

Nothing could be more serious I could not be more serious About you You know what was great? I know you're still listening. You know what was great? I need to tell you anyway. The silence.

It's really silent here You'd like it here I'd like it better if you were here Right now, with the light on, you're looking out and all you can see is you in the glass Your face in the glass and if you look, no I mean really look, if you look and keep looking you start to disappear, your face, it just kind of goes, if you just focus maybe on an eyebrow or an ear, it starts to slip a bit then you're no longer here, it's just the room, and an eyebrow and you only know it's an eyebrow because you used to know, but if you didn't know what you already know and you focus on knowing, you could just, well, you're just you're just not you

What babe? What?

Jade wasn't coming in the unlicensed cab Chelle and Debbie weren't coming anywhere We all had mobiles Nobody had a number.

I know We know this

Why weren't they coming?

We were just going to dance Dance it off.

Excuses excuses (Why weren't they coming?)

What does it matter? *does it fucking matter?*

What happened earlier?

Nothing. It's not important I don't want to talk about it

Why weren't they coming?

We weren't all off our faces.

Why weren't they coming?

Alright I was. We were doing it together I had another one for you A can of lager in my pocket. In my head it was just you and me In my head

Get out of your head, you're off your head

I can't you're in my head and I need you with me I need you coming with me, are you coming, are we going? am I going without you? Fine Fuck this Fuck it I'm out of here I'm not sobering up, what's the point? Rosa isn't the point, Rosa was never the point, the point is we're not fighting about the point, there isn't a point because I've already missed it

See this See it.. Man on Markie Come on, cross it you cunt, cross it We're crossing like Viera See it Did you see it? Man on markie. Pass it you cunt come on fucking pass it.

We're out of there babe We we were flying, we were really moving Did you see it? See the pass? See the sleeping dogs? See anyone else's point of view? There isn't anyone else's point of view it's just about coming round to yours babe isn't it and you know what they say? You know what they say about sleeping dogs? I know what you'd say See how they're lying? Let 'em . Leave em Don't touch 'em They're sleeping.

Did you see that pass ? I'm passing out here I want you to stay with me but you're not coming with me Am I finding Rosa? is Rosa coming ? did Rosa miss the point? she missed the pass, the point was never Rosa, We've passed the point of discussing it, Have we? have we? are we fucking past it? Ok I'm sorry I'm sobering up Course I fucking mean it A cold shower Then Forget about Rosa Forget it Dogs lie

Come on These are just things Things that needed speaking I'm in the back of the
net The post's in my back No it's not funny, I know it's not funny, none of it's fucking
funny, it's just that it's raining The nets round my head and everywhere it's raining.

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Sequence one – (transcript)

Pre title

I... I, I hadn't wanted to comment on this. I'd wanted to reconstruct this film as a document of our process; put the imagery and my voice recordings together as they happened, or at least in the order that they happened, or as near to how I experienced the journey in order to understand it. But it's not helping.

It is now a year since we've returned from Siberia, and a full year and a half since my accident. And because now I can recall that, in fact now as I'm remembering everything, I obviously understand the context of manic and reckless. Because. Yes. Because yes I was manic and reckless as I cycled away from you, from seeing you, in that place, in another time, a place you weren't supposed to be in at that time, with another.... And yes, of course I'd been drinking. And of course this is only part of the story, as it always is, but it was the part that in that instance, determined this particular series of events. And in hindsight, the only part that made sense. As I knew I was going to hit that car door long before he opened the door, but when I hit it -as I hit it - I knew as I somersaulted over it that I was already dead. Long before my head hit that lamppost. I could never explain how, even now, but I watched it happening and I knew as it was happening that a light was going out and I was – also - strangely grateful for it.

There's nothing more to say here. Maybe it's easier to just let it play out. Or, as near to the feeling as possible, - all of it now seems unimaginable. Water burning. Losing the people closest to you.

Political will changing lives and places beyond recognition.

I know that all these things are probable, if not inevitable. But I'd like to imagine a world where they're not

.....

29th December 2007. I've had absolutely no sleep, but I'm supposed to be talking about last night – the 28th - arriving in Moscow. So, for the record: Some hands. An escalator. The boy with that very particular haircut.. and then, the cake...

I can't do this: I need to say this now - maybe I'll understand it later: When I look at you I know this is a face I can trust. I know that I've always known this. What I no longer know is how I know this.

This is what I really remember from the airport:

We'd got off the plane. There was hours and hours to kill before the train would leave. We're sitting in the lounge. And then I'm crying. I don't know why I'm crying but I'm used to that. I've had months of it. You sat it out, your arm gripped round me. I focused on the food display, narrowed it to the cake: It didn't matter that it was just a piece of cake, .. it didn't matter what it was, it was just the thing that blocked the image of Matthew and Helen and Colin, - and as long as I held onto it, I was confident that you knew what was happening.... that this was part of the process that you not only trusted but had actually envisaged. Then, the cake's disappearing. I knew that I had to concentrate, I knew I had to stay focused. But as soon as I heard myself saying focus, I knew I'd already given into it. I'd focused on my peripheral vision. I was concentrating – fully - on the others discomfort, their nervous pretence that this wasn't happening or maybe if it was, the pretence was they weren't unnerved by it.

And then the waiter's clearing our table; but he's not looking at me, his nervous glances are at you. Which somehow meant that you weren't gripped round me - you were gripped on to me. You weren't sitting it out. You were holding out. Do you know less than I do?

I got my camera out. Photographed the cake. The boy with the haircut. Some hands. An escalator. You followed me. Asked if I'm ok.

I said I'm fine. It's just the others made me feel like a freak.

We've now left Moscow for Irkutsk, Siberia, which means another 3 days on the train but I can't breathe in this heat. Would I have remembered the heat..?.

.....

ok. For the record: Lights. Then tower blocks. Then lights. Stations which aren't quite stations, darkness broken by white panelled fencing,... It 's madness to try to recall what I was looking at. But fixing those lists in my head is what got me through the evening.

More lights. Lights. Lights. Lights. Then a passing train that blocks your view. Blocks whatever you're looking out at, seeing into, then the realisation that anyone can also see in; they're looking in at you, me. Us. I am back in a trauma room again and I don't want the others watching.

You said, you're ok. Ok.? You're just overloading. You need to be away from other people and we need to structure in time for you to do this. Just structure in down time. Ok? Trust me, you said.

and I said: fine, but trust the fact that I KNOW I won't sleep in this heat: I'm going to have to take the Zopiclone.... But you weren't happy with that. You felt it would interfere with my capacity to do this...

You've given me some very simple rules.... All the stuff we agreed before leaving. I'm to leave a day or half a day between seeing and remembering, between photography and these voice recordings. Matthew will keep the media, log and digitise all imagery. I cannot review it and I cannot make notes. Your goal is some imaginary moment when I've recovered - and this film is somehow a tool of that process. For you it's both time travel and a memory work; we're going back to Siberia - the site of Sian's death - in the hope that if I can recover the horror of that,... I'll recover all of it,.. Or maybe some of it...

You've now left for breakfast, happy with the fact you're giving me down time and happy that when you left I'd set the camera clicking. AND yes, I know I'm talking about now and I'm not supposed to be talking about now, now. But I also know this won't work: I can't think from no sleep and I can't think in this heat ...

Why are we doing this? It just feels like a game.

You keep telling me that before the accident I'd talked endlessly about repeating this trip. It was important to repeat it twenty years to the day and it was equally important for you to be here with me. So, we're doing this because it was my project before the accident and since the accident you've worked for months to realise it. For you these recordings are a document of process, the journey of recovery that we'll reconstruct when we get back home. For me they're a document of my incoherence and I'm not sure I want to let you hear them.

.....

29th December. This is the log of earlier. Or, ... what I remember of it.

You said the others are waiting in the dining carriage. They weren't... I'm not sure what you said to them. But then I'm not sure what I'd have said to them, or, what I'd liked to have said to them..

How did you sleep? Fine. You? Good. Yea? Well. No. Actually. Do you want me to tell you what that feels like ... lying there, fully medicated, waiting for paralysis to kick in, and you've no way of knowing if it has done, just a nasty metal feeling at the back of your teeth, so you start to count,... six, seven, eight, nineteen, twenty three ... squeeze your finger, ... can you feel your finger? You test that, you test feeling, maybe make the toilet, maybe that's what's stopping it. You swing your legs off the bunk, and you know what, your legs don't work, so, now you're half on the floor - but you don't panic... Seventeen, eighteen.... forty seven... seventy three... Your heart is pounding, there's that throbbing down your left arm, it's wet under that arm, No, all your clothes are wet and you still haven't worked out how to pull your legs back up.... Can you? No. You're on the floor... Does that matter, No. Because it's better on the floor, heat rises and the floor is below the heat line..

Then you wake on the floor and you've no idea where you are, why you're on the floor or even why you're here.... But then there's the familiar stabbing pain.

So, that's it. That's the full effect of the zopiclone.

Then you begin the bartering.

Can I take another? Can I sleep during the day?

For the record: fir trees, then fir trees, more fir trees, other fir trees.

Does it matter if I miss it when I'm filming it? Yes. Why? Without the image of the thing I can't remember the feeling, and without the feeling I can't remember the moment. . . . This is what we're doing here. This is the project....

You want us to look at the archive together.... You want to see how it feels different, different to now or different to this ... And the images from that time are important. They're a record. A fact of something that I went through then But I don't want to look at the past, if I'm looking at the past I can't hold earlier and I can't hold earlier because I'm thinking about this. And then I can't hold now. I can't hold now... I can't even hold this....

Fir trees, ... more fir trees, ... a small house, .. a train passes. The problem is encoding. The problem is retrieval... I've had months of being tested on these things.. A small house, another train, - what kind of train - there's been loads of trains?

Then you're back and you're smiling sweetly. You kiss me, you can see that I'm panicked but you don't know that I'm panicing because I'm saying these things. But I wasn't saying them. Then I was just thinking them. Now I've said them and I can't let you hear them because when you kissed me you looked right into me and said: It's amazing isn't it, amazing that we're doing this... Isn't it amazing we're able to be here...

You said, go on, go, the others are waiting in the dining carriage. They weren't. But, did I expect them to be? What saddens me is that sitting there alone I can imagine the conversation I'd liked to have had with Helen, Colin and Matt, but I couldn't imagine a conversation that I would have had with Sian , or Pat... It was just you. Sitting with the equipment. Back in our carriage. So yes, it is. It is amazing that we're able to be here because it's amazing that they're not.

.....

Still the 29th. Much later.

And, ... I'm not sure if it was even sleep. I'd drifted, but, it wasn't deep sleep.. Overwhelmed by the heat. I'd made a note that the teddy bears were pink. That was the end point. Earlier. Matt was filming. I was filming. Then matt was digitizing. Even hotter with the lap top's heat. . . . The problem

is you can't open a window. The problem is that looking at that footage I didn't feel a thing. My voice sounded different. When I'd gone through it before I'd questioned why I shot it like that. No people. Just patterns in landscape. As if I'd just stuck the camera out the window.

Alright, I was furious that you thought I needed help, furious with the pretence of the station stop when it was clear you were going off to talk to the others, Even more furious when you returned with Matt. But, whatever you said to them, . . . I'm too embarrassed to go to into whatever I thought about it, actually, I can't remember what I thought.... – Whatever you said, helped. Worked. Matt and I sitting there with 3 cameras clicking. Matt talking about shutter speeds, calmly, without needing to say 'I know you used to know this'.

It was starting to go well. I was starting to enjoy the process. The problem is I've cheated – I'm looking at the footage, and yes, I know it's the first rule that we agreed – but I might as well have just stuck the camera out the window, because I can't remember detail, the facts or the images, the feeling of anything other than heat...

That's why she's taking in air. In such a thin shawl. There's something really beautiful in how she stands there so stubbornly. Something very necessary about it. . . .

Maybe she's the lady in the hospital ward, who almost died, who should have died. She's cold, she knows she shouldn't be standing there in such a thin shawl, but she stands as it's amazing to be standing, life is amazing, amazing to be standing there able to take it all in...

.... Maybe she's standing there because she knows she's ill but she doesn't know how ill. This journey is important ... She needs to see her grandchildren. . She thinks they're doing fine but she's not sure how fine and she wants them to understand the possibility of elsewhere. She didn't leave.. She didn't want to leave. She wants to tell them this and also tell them that the journeys you take in your head are sometimes the most important, and also, somehow, the hardest to imagine.

She doesn't have any grandchildren.

..... She's the lady in the hospital ward whose family didn't visit her. Her family should have visited her. People are pushing past her. She needs to get back in.

The problem is I can't open a window. Everything's sealed in. The problem is you've gone off drinking with the others - I can't just go out and get some air. The problem is I've cheated; – but I wouldn't have known we'd caught her on 3 cameras if I hadn't ... This is downtime, 29th December. It's very, very late. I know I won't sleep.

.....

You'd have known from the look on my face. She was dying from the cold. You could tell from the look on her face. She doesn't have any grandchildren. She needed to leave. I know it was an ecological consciousness-raising trip. They weren't with her in the hospital. No one was allowed in. She was very cold before she died. I know it was through former sites of soviet pollution. One. Two. Three.... Four. Hi baby. You sleeping? Nasty metal at the back of my teeth. You went through the packet. I heard you counting the tablets. You don't trust me. Clearly visionary. You'd have known from the look on my face. I took two. Because I'd cheated. Because she was dying. Because I was told that. She was clearly visionary. And then I said it. I know what I've been told. I know that I remember. I remember everything I've been told, But there's a difference between remembering and knowing. The difference is feeling. I need to check the facts. Because you don't trust me. Because of the feeling. I need to note this. Downtime. 30th. Because if I can make up stories about her, you could have made up the stories about me.

.....

Later. You're right about the zopiclone. It's muddling. I'm going to read this out loud. Because I need to speak it. Because speaking somehow fixes things. And I thought about them earlier.. Because that's what we'd agreed. And because I needed to return to my facts.

20th of August, 1991. It's the front page of The Independent. It says, 'Sian Thomas reports from the Moscow streets.'

'By 11 o'clock there were huge queues outside the bread shop. In times of crisis, it seems, the Soviet population's first reaction is to hoard in case things get worse. Meanwhile the tanks rolled by. Most people, however, did not even pay attention.

At the Russian parliament there was a long chain of people of all ages standing in the pouring rain handing bricks to one another. They said they were building barricades.

Driving back through Moscow, nearly every tank on the roadside was surrounded by people trying to reason with the soldiers. 'How can you take part in this military coup?' 'We won't fire,' one said. We haven't even got any bullets. But we wouldn't fire on our own people.' Fuck.

Friday 25th June, 1993. Letter - to me - from William Raban.

'Dearest Sarah by the time you read this letter - You may - or may not - have already heard the tragic news of Siân's death.

All we know is that Siân died on Wednesday 23rd June in KAMAROVA, Siberia. Apparently a lorry hit the cyclists. Siân we believe was killed instantly. Another 5 were seriously injured.

We are seeking strength from all the wonderful times we enjoyed together - knowing that this courageous journey was what Siân most wanted to be doing.

She will always be here with us - alive in our thoughts

With all our love, and a very big hug

Begonia, Alethea and William.'

.....

The thing that I feel most is that she was clearly visionary. This is the same journey, at the same time. But there's no evidence of that. Everything is different and it all looks the same. I'd like to say that. Fix it. But everything is different and nothing looks the same. I see the frost on the window. But all I feel is the heat. All I see is the heat. It is the 30th of December, the middle of winter, and they're harvesting wheat. The sun dances on the birches. The birches dance in the sun. I'm not doing this anymore. I'm just speaking, because that's what we agreed.. There were some tractors. One was lost in the snow. There wasn't any snow. She didn't have any grandchildren. I made that up. I feel bad about making that up, as speaking somehow fixes things.

I've had some sleep. Just some sleep.. If I say sleep, will I fix it? Will I be asleep? Can I tell myself a story that will make me fall asleep? What about all the stories you've told me? All my stories that I've remembered to know. All that I remember is all that I know. But what if you've made up the stories about me?

Versions of them. I gave her three: She was taking in air. Because it was cold. She was dying. Because she was cold she went back in. She shouldn't have been in such a thin shawl, but it was amazing to be standing there. Life is amazing. Amazing to be standing there taking it all in. Because they're not here. Because I'm not dying. And somehow you're taking it all in.

Because I'm not in the hospital ward. Because I was. Because I was 'manic and wreckless', because two separate and completely independent witness statements said so. Because I had high blood alcohol. Because I was drunk. Because I was often drunk. Very drunk. Because one of your favourite stories is that I went out. Was out, at a party, some film launch, some, some thing, and, I was walking home, through the park, St James's park, and I heard the sound of the beautiful birds, the beautiful bird song, that's what I'd told you, it was so beautiful - I wanted to lie down next to it, go to sleep hearing it. And I woke with Maurice licking my face. And it was terrifying for you. You'd spent hours searching. Only a dog would have found me. Hidden in the bushes, covered in leaves. But what if the birds were singing me to sleep? I can understand that. I couldn't understand that before but I get it here. It's how you frame things.... But what if you've framed me? Just how you do. .. What you do. What if that wasn't important before, but now it is. She was taking in air. Because she needed to. The

birds were singing me to sleep. Because I needed them to. You framed all my stories. Because you needed to. What if you made them up? Because I needed you to?

.....

And now you're off again... drinking with the others. Because I need to be alone. Because that's what we agreed. Downtime. 30th December. It was such a relief to see the bridge On all three cameras.

It's very very late. I know I won't sleep. I'm going to take two.

I had to turn the light out. I can't bear them looking in. I have given up filming. You sit in with me as you say you know I've lost faith. I know that you're monitoring me. I humour you. Set up the camera. Press record. I don't tell you that I've kept the lens cap on, that I can't take in anything that I'm seeing, that I no longer feel anything in relation to any of this. I've asked Matthew to continue filming for me. It's important to be seen to be playing the game.

There is very little evidence. Because the others aren't here to corroborate my versions. I have hardly any images of me. Because I was always behind the camera, because I just stuck the camera out of the window, because I was interested in patterns and how patterns form the shape of things. And how the shape of things is formed by the feeling you find in the pattern.

She fixes me, then walks away. She photographs me filming her and I have that image, framed on my wall, but I have no idea how I came to have it or when she gave

it to me, if I framed it or she framed it for me. I'm framed, she's leaving the frame. I'm fixed and she walks away. I understand that here. All of us are ghosts. Some of us are singing

I'm watching the camera, the person that holds the camera, how the camera's fixing me.

The only thing that's important to me is sleep. But it's important for everyone else that I stick the camera out the window.

.....

I've... I've a very dry mouth. Even the water is boiling. I'm not supposed to drink... I hadn't wanted to leave our room but it is New Year and it is important to be seen. Because we gained an hour we lost an hour. We missed the moment. Slorom gorom. *May old acquaintance be forgot ...* The staff thought that was hilarious. They hate us. I can understand that here.

Colin translated the facts. It's possible that much was lost in mis translation. Noted it. Methane leaks from the peat bogs and the perma frost has melted. Putin re routed it in 2006. But it was planned for within half a mile of Baikal. Baikal contains one fifth of the world's fresh water..... It absorbs 26% of the world's carbon emissions..... But it is leaking. There is evidence of this.

Matt wanted me to watch what he had filmed. A very good excuse to leave. You're still drinking with the others again.. Because that's what we agreed.

.....

Watching it has confirmed everything. It is terrifying.... It is the end of something....

it is the last sunset. I listen to the beautiful singing that Sian gave me and feel
strangely euphoric. Noted this. New year, 31st December 2007. First of
January, 2008.

.....

There's a fresh snowfall. A new dusting on everything. Obviously I'm relieved but I
need to speak this very quickly, fix it, whilst you're washing. Nothing that is fixed
makes sense, but I'll watch it later. I left the camera running on you in case he came
back in, because there needs to be evidence. I tried to reach you, tried to scream,
'what's he doing here, this is really dangerous' A man in our room and you're on
your knees, screaming, then I realise that the screaming is in fact talking, shouting,
maybe, drunken shouting, but you're on your knees, your head is on his knees, I
was shouting, words came out but I couldn't hear them, you couldn't hear them, I
couldn't move my legs, paralysis had kicked in.

I couldn't reach you. I drifted. But I'm not sure if it was even sleep. I was on the
floor. He'd gone. I asked you - why was he here, why did you bring a stranger in,
why were you on your knees shouting at him.....

.....

We haven't spoken about it again. You said you weren't. You said maybe it was
Colin, maybe you brought Colin back to give him the passports or the map for the
hotel. You can't remember. You were very drunk.

I have been asleep. I left the camera running in case he came back in.

We don't know if this is the same hotel. All your research indicates it is. There's no evidence in my footage. But we've been told that this was the only intourist hotel near Irkutsk in 1987 and therefore the only hotel that westerners could have stayed in. It feels wrong and it could be as there is some doubt about this. It seems that there was another hotel. Also here. That closed in the late eighties. No one can remember. You want to take me there to see if I have a feeling about it.

.....

I have been here before. I don't know how and I don't know when but I recognise the patterns in the tiles. The folds in the fabric. There's a pattern emerging, the shape's telling me something. Something horrible has happened here. The outside is inside. This isn't a dream. I understand that. This is the shape of things. There is no shape to things.

.....

It is reassuringly cold. Everything is calm. I heard children's voices. I think I heard singing.

.....

I was burning up. Euphoria that you can open a window here. Euphoria that you can step on to the balcony. I stepped on to the balcony. My body was on fire. And

so was the lake. I could see it. For a while I just watched it, taking in the heat. Then I needed to step in, move away from it, but there was no, absolutely no, no difference, no separation between outside and inside and then I knew what was happening. A light was going out. I've been here before. And I knew that I was watching it all over again, and I knew that I needed to feel it, I had to get down there. Because no one would believe me. And I'm speaking this over it, because I'm fixing the evidence and because I couldn't just watch. Because I needed to feel it. I have two cameras running on a timer upstairs. All of the ice is breaking. Can you hear it? Can you hear me? Can you hear it? Can you hear this?

.....

Everything shaking. Everything I don't remember and everything that is. A light went out. Is going out. It's happening now. No-one cares to see it. The children smiling. Innocents playing. Life goes on. More documenting of it. Recording the facts. The evidence of their own existence.. All those photographs that say nothing. I watched it happening because I needed to fix it. I can understand that here. We carry on as normal. A collection of stories that we tell ourselves. Pictures that we make that reinforce our stories. But the pictures are not a record. The pictures are not telling it like it is. I feel this for you now. My version. I will watch the sun set later. Because I know it will.

PERESTROIKA: RECONSTRUCTED © Sarah Turner 2009/12*Sequence Two (transcript)*

“look at me standing.... Here on my own again.... ... up straight in the sunshine....”

I want to remember...

remember what it felt like....

Then...

How I felt - then - that you could hold my story

Did I frame you? Or did you frame me?

As now. . . . it's a few years later. And I can't, I can't begin again....

*I left you. and then my father died. Which somehow means that - both of you - are now -
a collection of stories...*

Stories that I'd told you,... you told back to me

Remember

This is how you told my story back to me.

Then

it's how you held me...

.....

It was the 31st December 1989, or New Years Eve 1990 - And you were in a very bad mood. You were with both of your best friends, you were about to leave London for a whole week in Cornwall but you'd wanted to leave much earlier than six. It wasn't your fault, in fact, you said you'd kept saying, we need to leave by lunchtime, we need to leave by mid afternoon at the latest, we need to leave no later than 5 or we'll hit traffic, ... to be honest, even five's pushing it.

One of your friends was working and couldn't get out of it, the other had just returned from Moscow and wouldn't go anywhere without a week's supply of anything.

You'd spent over an hour loading the car with crates of sparkling water, sparkling wine, a whole salmon, soya yoghurts, soya milk, .. etc , etc... all of your clothes, a vhs player and the tape of *it's a wonderful life*. You had three hundred and twenty miles to drive in a very overloaded Citron Diane, it was ten past six and you immediately hit traffic. Even then, London had traffic and if you hit it, you were stuck in it.

It took two and a half hours to reach the first service station on the M4, just 30 miles west of London. You had no hope of reaching the cushy hired cottage in time to drink in the new decade and the others wanted a toilet break, and, more frustratingly, something hot to eat. You were sulking, but you knew it wasn't fair to, knew you needed to snap out of it. You watched while they ate, you smoked, then got even more furious when you realised you'd left your hat in the toilet and someone had taken it. Your friend asked you to take over the driving. You'd planned to share it and she needed to get some rest in. You were happy with this as you reasoned you might make up some time or at the very least you'd be in control of the next few hours. No more stopping. No more distractions. Your friend insisted that you do a practice circuit round the car park, - you hadn't driven the car before and you needed to get used to the feel of the gear stick on the dashboard thing. You were offended because you'd been driving for years. Still, you were in a bad mood. You knew it. You were trying to snap out of it.

You get in. Ignition, mirror, clutch, shove. Clunky, a little bit of gas, bad biting point but you'll be cruising in 4th, how hard is this? Clutch, deeper this time, pull it toward you till it bites for second, pull it towards you, it's not biting, just pull it till it clicks, it's not clicking, just pull it. You pulled it, then you're holding it. It clicked. The gear stick's in your hand. The gear stick is no longer attached to the dashboard, you're stuck in second driving in circles round the car park, .. you had to stall it to stop it. You look at your friends face. It's her car you've broken. And all you can say is sorry.

There were no options. There was not a single hire car available that side of London, you could have got a cab to a station, but you had a car full of sparkling water, sparkling wine, all your clothes, a whole salmon, a crate of fruit and vegetables, the vhs player, etc, etc, and even if you got all this into a cab and out of a cab onto a station platform, it was New Years Eve, it was after nine and there were no trains to the west country. You worked that out after you'd called the cab. Maybe after you'd loaded it. Details were hazy here, you were probably crying. The AA couldn't fix the car, to be honest love it's not worth fixing, and it was probably that that did it, as your friend who'd been living on a petty cash account in Moscow, - the rouble was crashing, the black market was plentiful, the rouble was effectively worthless, - your very generous friend said, fuck it. Do it.

You were told to get in the front to help with directions, the others were by now exhausted and intended to sleep, had already got out the spare blankets and snuggled down in the back seat, and it wasn't until you were pulling on to the motorway that you fully worked out what *do it* means, what had actually been agreed. This cab driver was going to be driving you to Lands End. Cash in hand. He was grinning. The meter was ticking. Your punishment was to sit up front with him and watch it.

So. It was New Years Eve 1990, the beginning of the end of the last decade of the twentieth century. The Berlin wall had come down, apartheid was being dismantled, Nelson Mandela would shortly be released, the middle east was making some progress towards peace, it would be a few years before the Oslo accord, another few years before the murder of Yitzak Rabin, the UK would finally elect a labour government after one false start and a lot of false promises, that to be fair, were the shape of things to come, the road map if you like, for them, but did you sit there and ponder the significance of the moment whilst you're friends were deservedly sleeping in the back seat, did you consider the potential of any of these things?

No. You sat there and worried about money. You sat there and counted.

Fifty eight pounds ten, Fifty eight pounds twenty, Fifty eight pounds thirty, and you're still the wrong side of Bristol. You didn't have any money, you'd never had any money, this whole trip was down to the kindness of friends, you'd already ruined it and now you're counting the ruin. It was sitting there blinking at you from the red LED. Eighty four pounds twenty, Eighty four pounds thirty, Eighty four pounds forty. You couldn't talk to the cab driver as all he could talk about was how much money he

was making, how this was a whole way better than a whole night of hen parties, - you had some mileage with the hen parties - , then he reminded you it was double time because it was New Years Eve. You couldn't play music as the others were sleeping, you couldn't shut out the soundtrack playing in your own head, there was absolutely nothing to distract yourself with. So you opened your own special contribution to the party. And proceeded to drink it. A whole bottle of cognac.

One hundred and four pounds ten, one hundred and four pounds twenty, one hundred and four pounds thirty.

You pass something you're convinced you've already seen, you've been here before, maybe a hill littered with a very particular clump of trees, you don't know how but you somehow know it. As if he's driving in circles. Then again, and then you know it, the very particular clump of trees looks exactly the same but somehow different. You start to count the road kill. You always do. You always did. Anything other than: one hundred and twenty two pounds twenty, one hundred and twenty two pounds thirty, one hundred and twenty two pounds forty. A hedgehog. Another hedgehog, a badger – you were upset about the badger – a fox, a pheasant. Another hedgehog. Another fox. You've lost count. It's not helping. You can't go back to the beginning. You begin bartering. You ask him to turn the metre off, he can't turn the metre off, if the engine's on the metre's running, you ask him to think about stopping, fixing the metre, you'd make it worth his while with some extra cash if you could agree a fee. It's only off if we're stopped. You want to put something over it, there's nothing to hang over it, you wish you hadn't left your hat in the toilet, and that's all your thinking when he says – happy new year. Yep, happy new year, do you want a slug of brandy?, he can't while he's driving, he says he'll have one when he gets he you there. You look at your friends sleeping in the back seat – they've missed the moment and you wish you'd missed it with them, you hadn't been looking at the clock, you hadn't wanted to look at the clock, as the clock was next to the meter.

One hundred and thirty three pounds forty, one hundred and thirty three pounds fifty, one hundred and thirty three pounds sixty. At Exeter you ask him to turn it off again. . You offered to sleep with him. You said that you were serious. He pulls into the next service station. Another car pulls up alongside you. The interior light's on. Another family argument over directions, over a map, sleeping bodies in the back seat, oblivious to the tensions of time, geography and money. He said - I need a piss and you need a coffee. Will I get you one or do you want to come with me.... You do need a piss but you say

you'll wait, go after him, you can't leave your friends sleeping in the back seat. You contemplate going by the car door and it was never clear if you were more worried that he'll drive off with them, or they'll drive off without you.

One hundred and sixty eight pounds ten, one hundred and sixty eight pounds twenty, you're no longer clear about what you're seeing, but you've got one eye shut in order to read the meter, you're on an A road, a no road, a winding road with roundabouts, no car lights, no no one, no nothing, then there's a shape looming, a big one, loads of wheels, parked up, a light on as you pass it. You note it. Then note, what the fuck's a lorry doing parked up on New Years Eve. Then you get it. It's their own private party, then as you get it you're immediately furious. They should be at home with their wife, their children, not shagging in a lay by on New Years Eve. Then you see another one. This time you fix it in your head, speak it out loud, under your breath, it was near some trees, maybe the top of a hill, maybe the bottom, you're not sure, everywhere's hilly and you're not sure if you made that up but now you know he's taking you for a ride. The ride of his life. And then there's another one. And he's saying something. He's saying, d'you see these poor guys parked up, sleeping, all of them working on New Years Eve.

And then you feel horrible. Horrible because you made up their own private party, horrible that anyone's sleeping in the middle of nowhere, horrible that everyone's working and no-one's with their families and no-one's driving in circles on New Years Eve and horrible, mostly, because you've nearly finished the brandy and still: one hundred and eighty eight pounds eighty, one hundred and eighty eight pounds ninety, . . .still you're not there.

And then you're seeing stars. They're real stars but what would you know, you're an urban kid, they're sitting on your head. Like a roof. Like a shelf. Like a revelation that's been there all along and you've only just noticed it, the profundity of it, but you're very drunk and you're not sure that you're not hallucinating it. You want the stars to go on for ever. For ever and ever, for ever, until two hundred and two pounds ten, two hundred and two pounds twenty; you want it to stop. You want the stars to stop. You try to count in Russian, because you can't really count in Russian, because adin dva tre, it always goes back to the beginning, adin natzat, adin, adin, adin.

You've stopped. And your very generous friend is counting the money, you're unloading the car, you're all unloading it as you're not very good at it and then the driver is enjoying a glass of sparkling

wine with both of them. Slorom Gorom. Apparently he's got a cash in hand back to Plymouth. Fantastic. What a night. What a journey. But you don't care as you've laid down in the damp back bedroom, pulled the damp back curtains and wrapped the damp pillow case round your head. You slept. The pillow case made your hair go curly. But you didn't even care about that. You didn't get up for the rest of the night. The rest of the day. You slept. Until they made you get up and get in to the back of another car, a new car, that a local friend had driven over to see you all in and then you drove up the road to Lands End. As you weren't quite in Lands End, just the nearest village. And when this car pulled up, they made you get out, made you walk across the horrible paved over bit with your head completely splitting and then said, look. Get over it. And there you were. The end of England. The edge of the world. Nothing out there for miles and miles and miles.

And you looked. And there was a very thick mist rolling in off the water. And despite your splitting head, despite the fact you could see nothing but mist, maybe because of it but also despite any and all of it, you said that it was the most beautiful thing that you'd ever seen.

