Return: A filmic disclosure of its trajectories as poetic

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Attestation of Authorship

'I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.'

Signed:

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8 December 2006

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Return: A filmic disclosure of its trajectories as poetic inscription

My project investigates an ontological disclosure of what *return* might be within the paradigms of experimental filmic video practices, through an enquiry into notions of exile and its legacies, temporality and poetics.

Phenomenological and experiential methodologies have structured research and video data collection during two *return* journeys in 2005 and 2006, which grounded the production of short filmic video works.

The project is concerned with a research process which critically engages with philosophical and critical key 'texts' to articulate possible compulsions for repetitive return, and how a disclosure of the poetics of *return* could be revealed through an installation.

How might an installation of filmic video works situated within a computer classroom site re-inscribe notions of *return*, and perform a disruption of the institutionalised learning space? This questioning reflects the concerns within the project of locating a possible *space of return*.

Introduction

This entire research project and eventual installation, is in effect a writing of my *self* moving through experiences of return and recollection, creating an openness which is reflected in the writing of the exegesis.

An acknowledgement of the continual disintegration of time, discloses the impossibility of *return*. Therefore this 'writing of the project' offers what *return* could otherwise be, if actual *return* is impossible. It can only be 'ways' or trajectories, that cannot return to an origin, but that can be traced as poetic inscription.

Therefore a clear linear chronological progression through the exegesis chapters is not always followed, but sections are threaded together in a manner reflecting the content of the installation video works. There is in this exegesis, an intention to present a "well - spaced reading" (Bass in Derrida, 1978: xiv), as there is with the placement of video works that "emphasises the necessary spaces" (Bass in Derrida, 1978: xiv). Throughout the exegesis I have used Derridian terms such as displacement, substitution, supplement, deferral, spacing. Sometimes I have provided a specific analysis of how Derrida's particular meanings apply to conditions of *return*; the content of the video works, but often I use his terms to signal how the installation may be read as inscription, writing, a text. Similarly I have occasionally used words that express an especial Heideggerian meaning, hinting at that influence without further explanation.

Footnotes have not been used, as a signalling of the position of 'the supplement' within this project. All parts of the writing and video works are supplements and all have equal *footing* as supplements.

The exegesis acknowledges autobiographical origins, genealogy, as an instigator of research, and evidence of this force in the work of Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida travels throughout the length of my writing.

"…One never inhabits what one is in the habit of calling inhabiting. There is no possible habitat without the difference of this exile, this nostalgia" (Derrida, 1998: 58). The irony that only *return* offers the redemption from, or cure for exile (– the *pharmakon* as Derrida would have it) but that *return* is also the malady and the condition of exile, is immersed in Heideggerian 'thinking' at various intervals throughout the exegesis. Heidegger's enquiry into *Being* is also applied in my own

style to the continual movements both around and between the point of departure and the 'destiny' of ongoing *return*.

Through the following sections - 4.1 *Space of Writing*, 4.2 *Sub-titles*, 4.4 *Supplements and Spacing*, 5.2 *Marks of Time*, and 6.1 *Openness, Un-doing knowledge* - I have traversed the performance of written language and it's relation to the structuring of the filmic works, the installation design and to the inscription/writing implicit and actual in both.

Eventually, I have succeeded in producing a series of poetic/ narrative/ filmic descriptions of my experiential path. Ultimately each work has come to reveal an investigation and exploration (often unknown to me at the time of making) of a variety of trajectories in order to comprehend ontologically what return might possibly be, which also implies acknowledgment of the impossibility of *return*.

The final installation has been designed to convey the following: a deconstructing of 'originary' notions of *Return*, an experiment of technology revealing *Poesis*, a disruption of the classroom site, and lastly; an engagement with openness of thinking and research in terms of the cross-disciplinary practices of art installation, film-making, philosophy, language, narrative, poetics and education.

Concluding the exegesis is a brief critique of the potential for the tertiary institution classroom to be the contemporary optimal space for a *return* to questioning and thinking, but despite this, has become increasingly bound to prescriptive frameworks, within which teaching, thinking and learning must adhere to an enframing designed to 'yield' rather than 'reveal'.

Chapter 1. Methodology

1.1 Phenomenological/hermeneutical

An experiential phenomenological methodology attuned to poetic strategies of revealing what *return* might be, has provided the fundamental engagement with both theoretical and studio practice research throughout this project. Heidegger's sense of phenomenology as "a way of letting something shared that can never be totally articulated and for which there can be no indubitable evidence show itself" (Dreyfus, 1991:30), allowed the concerns of this project to be investigated and articulated in terms of Heidegger's notions of research as 'poetics and drama'.

Following a phenomenological methodology has brought about successive encounters with my world of experience and has through practices and theoretical hermeneutical interpretations opened the possibilities of what *is* the essential research and how I am embedded in it. Phenomenology is to "let be seen" (Heidegger, 1993a: 81), that which is concealed. "Ontology is possible only as phenomenology" (Heidegger, 1993a: 82). A phenomenological approach gives 'openness' to the research project: its "essential character does not consist in being *actual* as a philosophical school. Higher than actuality stands possibility. The comprehension of phenomenology consists solely in grasping it as possibility" (Heidegger, 1972: 82).

Initially I examined the 'traditional' sources of *return* from an autobiographical position. By subjecting those sources to hermeneutical interpretation throughout my experiential return and revisiting of literal places of origin, I was able to reflect phenomenologically upon a range of 'beings' which could be characterised as *return*. The video works I then proceeded to construct from the video data gathered during the research trip to Norway in 2005, are a practical outcome within a filmic paradigm of responses to a number of questions posed around the conditions of *return*, particularly in relation to notions of exile, migrant legacy, compulsion and an endless layering of return.

And then, through a (hermeneutical) process of analysis and interpretation of those works I succeeded in uncovering phenomena/ 'beings' ["phenomena - the self showing in itself - a distinctive way something can be encountered" (Heidegger, 1993a: 76*)*.], that were essential to further research.

1.2 Trajectories

Wege nicht Werke, 'ways not works', was Heidegger's choice as the motto for his collected works" (Clark, 2002: 91). Trajectory as a 'way' is an appropriate term for both the finished filmic video works included in the *Return* project installation, and the ways/paths, the research trajectories followed throughout the duration of this project. The phenomenological hermeneutical method remained the predominant force articulating the research and studio practices and led me to encounter a number of unexpected trajectories which I felt obliged to acknowledge, in order to experience an authentic engagement with what I understood to be a Heideggerian style of phenomenology.

Even though Heidegger attempted to follow a hermeneutic phenomenology he never did succeed in 'closing' the hermeneutical circle by proving that "Dasein's way of making sense and… all other ways of *being* could be understood in terms of temporality" (Dreyfus, 1991:38).

The major flaw of this methodology is proved by Heidegger's never solved "hesitation between being open to endless further interpretations and claiming to have found the final horizon…" (Dreyfus, 1991: 38), but is in fact its greatest strength and foregrounds Heidegger's most useful methodological strategy, that is opening '*the clearing*' by an understanding of *Being* in practices, language and works in order to encounter these *beings*, as Being.

Eventually, I succeeded in producing a series of poetic narrative filmic descriptions of my experiential path. Ultimately each work has come to reveal an investigation and exploration (often unknown to me at the time of making), which acknowledges how the continual disintegration of time discloses the impossibility of *return*. Through the experiential tracing of a variety of trajectories in order to comprehend ontologically what return might possibly be, this project offers what *return* could otherwise be if actual *return* is impossible. It can only ever be ways or trajectories that cannot return to an origin, but that can be traced as poetic inscription.

1.3 Poetics

The poetic is capable of touching "again a rawness in both thinking and experience" (Rosenberg, 2005: np). Poetic accumulation, layering, doubling and regression, the elimination of past/present/future boundaries allow disrupted narratives to 'open' horizons of revealing. A way to an *open* traces over dismantled thoughts and concepts. Forms may lean up against each other and link, may cause a synthesis to occur between matter and idea from differing spheres. Terence Rosenberg states in *The Reservoir*. Towards a Poetic Model of Research in Design, "the poetic in research can be seen as an attempt to develop a technicity of the "hunch". The "hunch" being the pull to originality" (Rosenberg, 2005: np).

A poetic methodological approach provided a map for the collation of data and documentation gathered on the research trips (to Norway in 2005 and Melbourne in 2006) and continued to offer the fluidity to make detouring links between apparently discrete paradigms and eventually establish a sound research ground to proceed from in both my video and print practice and written exegesis.

"The poetic process works in paralleling the rational and the irrational […] the poetic pulls outward along a number of erratic trajectories and changes to the project occur according to the routes taken " (Rosenberg, 2005: np)

A process of reflection upon collected data and a major revision of themes under investigation took place, resulting in further intensive theoretical research (following a poetic form of analysis) of a broad variety of interconnecting themes and texts. The revision of key contextual references proved vital in establishing sound methodological processes for video editing and nine research questions were formulated as a framework for thematic exploration of poetic narratives. These questions posed an enquiry into what return *is*, in relation to what, at that time, were the projects key contextual areas of lived experience, migrant legacy, exile and temporality.

But as Rosenberg states; "Poetic research engages with the notion of complexity, weaving together disparate elements in a complex and evolving structure" (Rosenberg, 2005: np), and the form of the video works evolved quite radically from mid-2006 onwards.

A poetic methodology continually informed not only the reflection upon collected data, editing and compiling new works, revision of themes under investigation and

further research and analysis of critical contexts, but also offered the paradigm of filmic poetic narrative in which I situated the video works under construction.

This resulted in the final video works selected for the *Return* installation embracing more radically poetic modes, emphasising fragmentation, spacing, supplementation, multiplicity, the disruptive potential of writing over spoken language … and abandoning the notion of the original planned five discrete filmic works each one examining an earlier formulated research question of *return*.

Towards the conclusion of the project in 2006, a poetic methodology also guided the staging of the installation and how the poetics of notions of *return* might be revealed through the positioning of filmic video works in relation to the technological implications of the computer pod classroom and the 'emacs' (on which the works are designed to be viewed).

Poesis as a mode of disclosure (rather than re-presentation) meant for Heidegger, a way for poetics to 'unconceal truth' by undoing assumptions of what a thing or 'being' was, and thereby revealing (some of) what remains unthought and unexperienced.

"Poetic language may be irreducible to productionist thinking, but it also brings with it, necessarily, a potential destabilization of the institution of all serious values (Clark, 2002: 153). This effect of poetic destabilisation was precisely what was required of the project's final *Return* installation sited within my 'everyday reality'; an Institute of Technology classroom.

A Heideggerian interpretation "should aim to inhabit and understand the mode of *being* projected by the text, i.e. a 'world'" (Clark, 2002: 146). A world that according to Ricoeur is "a *proposed world* which I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost possibilities. This is what I call the world of this text, the world proper to this unique text. […] Through fiction and through poetry, new possibilities of being-in-the-world are opened up within everyday reality" (Ricoeur, 1981: 146).

Chapter 2. Exile & Migrant Legacy

2.1 Exilic prologues in film and print

Within the territory of this research project, the meaning I attribute to 'exile' is an open translation of a broad cultural, psychological, historical and philosophical understanding of the word, rather than a strictly political and geographical definition of exile. Being in a 'migrant state' (meaning both as an inward psychological state and the external politically organised state) implies being in exile. This interpretation clearly derives from my own personal perspective as a member of a migrant family whose two ancestral cultures and languages are foreign to a Pacific nation constructed by British colonialism.

Migration may have been voluntary or conversely, forced through negative political or personal circumstances, but unless the migrant wilfully 'forgets' their migrant state and enacts a new identity conforming to the new location, the migrant state of exile persists. And only *return* offers the redemption from, or cure for exile. But *return* is also the malady, and the condition of exile is perpetuated by an immersion in continual movements both around and between the point of departure and the 'destiny' of ongoing *return*.

Hence my autobiographical correspondence with *return* has driven the phenomenological enquiry into its conditions, initially through the preparation for a data and video-footage gathering journey to Bergen and Sunnfjord in western Norway. I had lived [*jeg bor – I dwell* in Norwegian corresponding to Heidegger's; "*Bauen* originally means to dwell" (Heidegger, 1993b: 349)], in Norway for three previous lengthy periods, my father was a Norwegian migrant and my extended family all continue to live there.

In *An Accented Cinema. Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Hamid Naficy discusses 'accented' filmmakers' predominant choice of thematic content:

> Every journey entails a return, or the thought of return. Therefore, home and travel, placement and displacement are always already intertwined. Return occupies a primary place in the minds of the exiles and a disproportionate amount of space in their films, for it is the dream of a glorious homecoming that structures exile (Naficy, 2001: 229).

At this point in the research I developed the project towards making visible the experience of a return journey as a phenomenon of migrant experience. I intended exploring a sense of cultural displacement through the ruptures and absences in family narratives, the instability of bi-lingual language and the mythologies constructed around the migrant homeland imprinted since childhood. Initially I investigated these possibilities through my studio printmaking practice. The five panel series, *Relic* (Fig.2 :1), recalls forms of visual coding received as a child which imprinted upon me the cultural and family narratives which have arguably conditioned all subsequent responses to notions of *return*.

Fig. 2:1. Petrea Andersen. *Relic*. (3 panels of series of 5). Screenprint on ply, 2005.

These works reference film stills, storyboards and sub-titles and in particular the filmic imagery of Ingmar Bergman, whose oeuvre represented for me from early adolescence a substitute for what I considered my 'true' cultural, historical and linguistic culture to be. Although Bergman's dialogue was always Swedish (rather than Norwegian or Danish) the powerful linguistic and cultural similarities compelled me to respond to his film language with an essential sense of recognition.

The three panel print series *Fjell* (Fig. 2:2) and twelve panel series, *Vegg* (Fig. 2:3) both reflected elements from Bergman; filmic scenes deeply evocative of shared Scandinavian cultural memory, which connect on some primal level with individual cultural memory (in my case a cultural memory I had not experienced in reality).
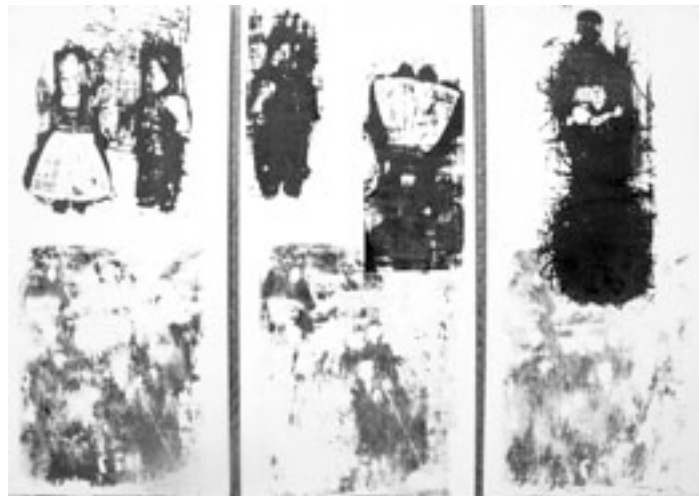
Fig. 2:2. Petrea Andersen. *Fjell*. Screenprint on board, 2005.

Fig. 2:3. Petrea Andersen. *Vegg*. (4 panels of series of 12). Screenprint on board, 2005.

The autobiographical force behind Bergman's films is essentially his childhood;

> I am deeply fixated on my childhood. Some impressions are extremely vivid, light, smell and all. There are moments when I can wander through my childhood's landscape […] remember how they were furnished […] the way the light fell. It's like a film – little scraps of a film, which I set running and which I can reconstruct to the last detail – except their smell (Ingmar Bergman in Bjorkman, 1973: 84).

In the *Vegg* (Fig. 2:3) series, I continued to visually investigate the *return* of childhood cultural imprints, through the small embarrassing kitsch souvenir items; the marginalised obscured visual codes which psychologically embed the psyche of a migrant family more powerfully than the meta-codes of the host culture. This series developed the images of folktale creatures from *Relic* as the background or

'wallpaper' to the re-enactment by the kitsch costumed folk dolls of an obscured, partly erased family narrative. Explorations into bi-lingual narration in the form of sub-titles also suggested cultural coding as background patterning as did the visual metaphor of wallpaper.

The supernatural figures of Norwegian folktale suggests that a more malevolent narrative underlies the 'innocent' doll figures. Residual visual and psychological links are evident in Bergman films such as *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961), *Hour of the Wolf* (1967) and *The Passion of Anna* (1969). The content of the *Fjell* (Fig. 2:2) series in particular focused on *return* as a psychological state, with unconscious eruptions of family and cultural images exploring Lacanian notions of the 'real' disrupting the symbolic order.

Printmaking was a successful medium within which to layer visual meanings in a deliberated and static manner in order to grasp complicated concepts I wanted to trial in later video works.

The three print series made before my experiential trip to Norway in June/July 2005 formed a perspective which conditioned my video-data gathering methodology. This focused initially on filming actual locations where family narratives had physically occurred. These video recordings structured my phenomenological investigation into the *beingness* of my return to Norway.

The video works produced during this project are firmly positioned within the filmic paradigm, as throughout my research I have continually referenced film from the realm of 'foreign' and or, experimental cinema. From the early fascination with Bergman as substitute for my 'fantasised lost' culture, my horizons widened to encompass Tarkovsky's work which not only reflected many Bergmanesque elements but also took homesickness; *Hjemlengsel* – home longing, as a central thematic element. *Solaris* (1972) was a profound and first encounter with Tarkovsky and his filmic 'outer space' engagement with loss, longing, exile and the relationships between perception and memory.

But it was in *Mirror* (1975) that these themes coalesced in the core of this work; an obsessional visual and psychological repetition of return to the traditional rural ancestral home. This held powerful resonance with my own relationship to the return research trip to my rural ancestral home, but other elements of the film helped develop the scope of what I might gather as data on video. Despite the deeply

autobiographical register, *Mirror* also explores a much broader terrain. Tarkovsky wrote; "in *Mirror* I was interested in having shots of newsreel, dream, reality, hope, hypothesis and reminiscence all succeeding one another" (Tarkovsky, 1989: 193). This idea of creating a network of associations from autobiographical visual sources became central to my video data gathering.

Chris Marker's experimental films, *La Jetée* (1962) and *Sans Soleil* (1983) were also influential on the development of my video filming methodology. Both films are complexly montaged literary/filmic essays. "A particular feature of this filmic form is the unusual use of the narrative as a text with literary qualities: the narrative neither dominates nor is subjected to the image track" (van Assche, 2003: 328). This use of text connected with my plans to include sub-titles in future completed video works as a reflection upon bilingualism. Recollection, dislocation and memory are Marker's key themes; "we do not remember," he writes, "We rewrite memory, much as history is rewritten" (Silverman, 1996, 189).

The filmic presentation of temporality in both films was also to be a timely resource during the editing processes of the project video works. Prior to the July 2005 *return* trip, my most recent research included the films of Atom Egoyan, particularly *Calender* (1993) and *Ararat* (2002). Of all Egoyan's films, these two are the most concerned with migrant displacement and addressing emotional family relationships determined in some way by the rupture of earlier exile and migration. Naficy states that "accented" films "encode, embody, and imagine the home, exile and transitional sites in certain privileged 'chronotypes' [Mikhail Bakhtin proposed the term chronotype to analyse the time/space aspects of texts] that link the inherited space-time to the constructed space/time of the exile and diaspora" (Naficy, 2001: 152). The image of the homeland as "uncontaminated by contemporary facts" (Naficy, 2001: 152), is expressed in "open chronotypes" such as rural or natural wilderness, idyllic or utopian landscapes "imbued with structures of feeling that favour continuity, introspection and retrospection" (Naficy, 2001: 153).

 In *Calender* (1993) Egoyan exemplifies the strategy of open and closed chronotypes by contrasting the twelve open shots of the ancient churches with the twelve closed

apartment sequences one year later that accentuate the constructed artificiality of urban contemporary life with dramatic beautiful timeless landscapes and monuments back-dropping the very real emotional bond forming between the characters of Arsinee and the Armenian guide.

Naficy suggests that "despite Egoyan's postmodernist ironic attempts to undermine all authentic formations in the film […] such shots […] express a deep nostalgia for the prelapsarian unity of nature and nation and an underlying sadness at the separation of signs from their referents"(Naficy, 2001: 164).

Two key conditions of return that I had identified in Tarkovsky, Egoyan and Marker were central concerns in my initial completed video works for this project with two works; *Becoming Migrant* (September 2005) and *Mountain* (October 2005). The former examined the obsessive return to re-creating the moment prior to departure; a re-construction of what was prior to the 'originary' exile and prior to the first journey of *return*.

Mountain explores the difficult condition of the *return* journey where one is continually waiting for that moment of epiphany, the actual all-defining moment of experience that can be identified as the singular 'essence' of *return* – which of course never actually arrives; is always perpetually a condition of deferral.

As a prologue phase of the project, the print works; *Relic*, *Vegg* and *Fjell* established with their naïve motifs and sub-titles an engagement with substitutions for cultural loss through filmic references, and sub-titles hinting at a lost 'originary' language. "I think that all the acts of our life are accompanied by a sort of aura of poetic song with visual representation" (Cixous, 1997: 29).

The normalisation of filmic vision relying as it does on hidden fragmentation, revealed in the utilisation of a storyboard format for the prints, the paradoxical necessity for the fragmentation of whole films into individual stills to create the seamless illusion of temporal continuity. And because of this, I had begun to explore disruptions of linear narrative sequence in preparation for video works thats would avoid becoming mere 'story-telling machines'.

Most importantly, there emerges in the print works early indications that language as writing could be the potential space of locating *return*. "I do not think one can write without having benefited in childhood from a gift of language" (Cixous, 1997: 38).

2.2 <u>Displacements, substitutions</u>

"…for what distinguishes a route from a path or from a *via rupta*…is repetition, return, reversibility, iter-ability, the possible reiteration of the itinerary" (Derrida, 1998: 58).

The turn to language as a possible future space of *return* for the later phases of this project, appears in those writings of Cixous and Derrida closest to autobiography, such as *Rootprints, Monolingualism of the Other* and *Portrait of Jacques Derrida as a Young Jewish Saint*. In these writings there are many traces of obsessive returns, re-creating the moment prior to departure - "there is no possible habitat without the difference of this exile and this nostalgia" (Derrida, 1998: 58). Whether in memory, in narrative, in one's research, in one's career choices;

> […] that is why in always doing that one recollects, one troubles oneself, one goes in search of history and filiation. In this place of jealousy, in this place that is divided between vengeance and resentment, in this body fascinated by its own division (Derrida, 1998: 8).

There is the sense of having been displaced from something essential to one's well-being, but also of having gained some strange ability to function well in the world, of making sense of one's self and one's purpose. As Cixous says of Derrida; " There is always a point in his vicinity, a bird as Kafka would say in search of its cage but not to shut itself in, to make it feel its caginess along with its liberty" (Cixous, 2004: 1). These are conditions that quietly linger just below the surface of many migrant existences (*Beings*) but erupt in relationship to language and are articulated so poignantly by Cixous in *Rootprints*: "He has himself made the portrait of his own foreignness. My foreignness is all-powerful in me. When 'I speak' it is always at least 'we', the language and I in it, with it, and it in me who speak." She writes of Derrida:

"*Monolingualism of the Other* tells us everything there is to know about the mental anguish to which we owe our books of memoirs" (Cixous, 2004: 118).

This pervasive sense of displacement is apparently the origin of the desire to replace what is lost through some form of substitution. " …the J…for Jew in my mother's secret wartime language: he's a J she would say, to say it without saying it, J the name of the secret…" (Cixous, 2004: 3). It is often accompanied by the knowledge (or partially acknowledged inference) that a secret *other* family identity has been suppressed, hidden or abandoned.

> What then is this avowal, and the age-old error of originary defect from which one must write? […] to translate the memory of what, precisely, did not take place, of what, having been (the) forbidden, ought, nevertheless, to have left a trace […] As if it were a matter of producing the truth of what never took place by avowing it (Derrida, 1998: 61).

 In Cixous and Derrida's case this was their 'Jewishness' growing up in a French colony in northern Africa. Simplistically analysed, their substitution could be said to have taken the form of a radically subversive mastery of the French language through academic scholarship par excellence. " […] writing is a question of survival: living in spite of, living more, escaping. Multiplying existence […] The refuge-value has always existed" (Cixous, 1997: 95). However although their's is an extreme example, it none the less illustrates the drive to uncover hidden origins and alleviate chronic traces of displacement, by those in a 'migrant state.' "From 1955 on, I adopted an imaginary nationality which is literary nationality" (Cixous, 1997: 204).

A strange example for myself of this sense of displacement (and subsequent strategies of substitution in filmic works) was revealed by the discovery less than a decade ago that my Danish maternal grandmother's family origins were German Jewish. My mother (who died in 1994) had hinted at this once or twice but it had little significance for me at the time.

> Did we not agree to speak here of the language called maternal, about birth as it relates to soil, birth as it relates to blood, and birth as it relates to language, which means something entirely other? And about the relationships between birth, language, culture, nationality, and citizenship? (Derrida, 1998: 13).

Culturally, historically and psychologically this 'covered over' Jewish genealogical element linked me to a sphere of conditions which previously had surfaced within me as unfathomable aspects of my provisional identity. An identity formed within a migrant family in a mono-cultural British colony, a hegemony perpetrated through the state educational system which forcefully and blandly discouraged any acknowledgement of cultural difference throughout my state schooling in the 1960's and early 1970's.

> The monolingualism imposed by the other operates… through a sovereignty whose essence is always colonial, which tends, repressively and irrepressibly to reduce language to the One… this can be verified everywhere, everywhere this homo-hegemony remains at work in the culture, effacing the folds and flattening the text (Derrida, 1998: 40).

The video work (of rolling text only), *At school* (September 2006) recalls two moments of riveting dislocation I experienced at age eight (and later at eleven) in my own provincial classroom. To paraphrase Hélène Cixous's description of herself in *Rootprints*;

"I am profoundly Nordic of body, of appearance [Helene – Mediterranean of body; Nordic imaginary affinities]" (Cixous, 197: 181).

I was pointed out by my teacher as 'German'. As my mother had been pointed at;

Fig. 2:4. Photographer unknown. *Ane Wahlberg*. Photograph, 1922.

as a primary school child in 1920's New Zealand. Teachers with anti-German sentiments from World War 1, focused mercilessly on her strong Danish accent, clothing and 'mannerisms'; she was a 'dirty German' to be bullied and shunned. My own case of mistaken identity was far more ironic. It was not the genealogical secret (which I knew nothing of, at the time) for which I was ''made an example of'', but my 'perfect' resemblance to a 'perfect' Nazi Aryan child.

Fig. 2:5. Ane Andersen. *Petrea Andersen*. Photograph. 1963.

Riveting moments, both times. Deeply excluding decisive moments that positioned my mother and I outside acceptable colonial New Zealand culture. A lesson in projecting dislocation and how language is made to serve the colonial master;

> because language is not his natural possession, he can […] appropriate it in order to impose it as 'his own.' That is his belief; he wishes to make others share it through the use of force or cunning; he wants to make others believe it […] through rhetoric, the school […] (Derrida, 1998: 23).

No mystery that the installation of my poetic inscriptions disrupting a provincial classroom site, should be the final outcome of this research project. So strange that throughout this research project I find myself positioned between Derrida and Heidegger. The Jew and the accused Nazi: the embodiment of Europe's horrifying dislocations of the last century.

But such a relief all the same - that later there was another genealogical linguistic trajectory to trace and reference, despite the numerous Heideggerian resonances of potential with the centuries old dwelling of my paternal Norwegian peasant ancestry in an idyllic mountain valley. The very place and lifestyle (according to Heidegger's faith in the rural myth,) where true *dwelling* may well have existed or might well have been possible.

This uncovering of conditions of 'Jewishness', which were familiar, excessively stereotypical and yet also ringing true in Cixous and Derrida: "*Jew*… What this word represents, with its long history, with everything that everyone can say about it and beyond what everyone can say, volumes and tomes would have to be written" (Cixous, 2004: 4).

Conditions of being a wanderer, a Benjaminesque 'flaneur', being forever displaced, an attitude of scholarliness, a particular variety of melancholy, an ambivalent but constant engagement with a language that is not one's ancestral legacy. In a footnote Derrida quotes from Rosenzweig's topography of the question of Jews and "their" foreign language. They are already "the eternal people" descended from an immigrant. "They have no language that is exclusively their own, only the language of the host: the eternal people have lost their own language" (Derrida, 1998: 79). There is also the 'shudder of recognition'; "Who can say "I am Jewish," without a shudder of the tongue and mind?" (Cixous, 2004: vii). But 'Jewishness' also denotes a nomadic facility to cross borders and boundaries, to be resourceful in times of flight and resettlement. "The Jews were the travellers of Europe. Not because they were expelled, but because they were searching" (Cixous, 1997: 184).

This acknowledgement of alternative exilic family narratives from the maternal line, threw the 'originary' position of the first video work - *Becoming Migrant* (first tested as *Hjemlengsel* in September, 2005) - into dispute. At that point I assumed *Becoming Migrant* to be the re-enactment of the moments prior to the pivotal scene of exile for my Norwegian grandmother and subsequently my father. As an 'originary' moment,

this text had now become displaced, 'written over', disrupted by the supplementary and derivative short works (unforseen at the time) later produced to reveal both the surplus of meanings, around the revealing of the other narratives and the absences and distances from the lost maternal ancestry.

As the films of Bergman and Tarkovsky had earlier been for me a substitute connection with my ancestral 'lost culture', so did the 'family exile' narratives (that I now based my printmaking and planned video works on), serve as substitutes for a secure sense of unifying foundational cultural identity.

> I think we probably love more easily than we write […] But we have more numerous experiences of love than of writing […] that is what living is: the search for love. And its substitutes. Because we also discover how few possibilities there are to exercise love (Cixous, 1997: 112-113).

My video work *Breivikskjenet 8* (January 2006) is all about this.

Fig. 2:6. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Breivikskjenet 8*. 2006.

2.3 Re-Approaching *Return*

For Heidegger, Hölderlin's writing (Hölderlin, 1770-1843) was the exemplary "poetry of poetry" that attempted to disclose the strangeness of that which was all too familiar.

"in a present that was null, companionless, having nothing to say and nothing to do except this very nothing. [Hölderlin] was deeply aware of existing only in waiting, in movement held above it's nothingness" (Blanchot, 1982: 117).

Hölderlin wrote often of lack and longing (almost as a pre-cursor to a twentieth century sense of displacement and alienation) inscribing a space which remained provisional; near but always far. His poem '*Homecoming*' (1802) - which Heidegger so admired, reflects a key moment in my phenomenological *return* research journey to my native ancestral land in western Norway. This correspondence extends to a peculiar experience of my 'turning away' as I once again confronted the mountain (named *Huseklepp*) which enacts a vast over-arching allegorical and physical symbolism of family site/place.

Heidegger speaks of 'Homecoming' and distance together: "Proximity makes the Near near, and yet at the same the sought-after, and therefore the not near. Proximity consists in bringing near the Near, while keeping it at a distance. Proximity is a mystery" (Heidegger, 1993b: 145).

In *Accented Cinema,* Naficy states; "[…] distance is the engine of all exilic identities […] distance propels the [exilic] films' self-reflexive aesthetics, which mediate the acts of seeing and being seen […] presence and absence" (Naficy, 2001: 271).

Both prior to my departure for Norway, and later back in my studio sorting the collected data, I posed a number of questions around "What is *Return*?" as a framework of enquiry into the proliferating nuances of *return* that were being revealed.

The following research questions, which remained under continual investigation were formulated through the application of phenomenological hermeneutical methodology to the experience of my return journey to Norway (June/July, 2005):

Is *return* a phenomenon of migrant family experience?
Has it been encoded in childhood by the imprints of family and cultural narratives?

Is *return* a 'longing' for the rural idyll and peasant ethos made almost extinct by post-industrialism, as posited by Naficy? (Naficy, 2001: 164)

Is *return* compensation for the huge global displacements that makes the 'here and now' seem deficient unless "mediated by time and nostalgia" (Naficy, 2001: 153)?

What, in psychoanalytic terms, resonates with the desire for *return* and the position of exile?

Is *return* a desire for release from 'not being' (after Heidegger) and homelessness?

Is *return* a resistance to "the steady drift towards the inhuman" (Sim, 2000: 19) that Lyotard identifies in the technologically captive culture around him?

Is it always a calling for an ultimate *return* (to a reality) which will always fail in mythic terms?

How could the particular qualities of filmic video be exploited to make works that both further the research (into the above questions) and disclose what and how 'return' *is*?

Initially I had planned to create five filmic essays (in the style of Chris Marker) for the final phase of the project, but this was revised extensively throughout 2006 in the direction of more experimental filmic modes. The writings of Derrida and Cixous suggested several influential approaches to the experiencing and inscription of *return*. In my first completed work; *Becoming Migrant*, I made my way along a poetic path very much as Hélène Cixous describes:

> it always starts from something unexplained, mysterious and concrete […] these are the only important phenomena […] it begins to search in me. And this questioning could be philosophical; but for me, right away it takes the poetic path. That is to say it goes through scenes, moments, illustrations lived by myself or by others, and like all that belongs to the current of life, it crosses very many zones of our histories (Cixous, 1997: 43).

I wanted to make a filmic work of my father re-telling how my grandmother came to be exiled. "The thing that alarmed me at once with its violence and with its strangeness" (Cixous, 1997: 43).

I filmed my father speaking the story in both Norwegian and English in July 2003. (He died in March, 2004). It was my starting point for *return*. And I realised then that it was so much about language. Cixous writes of Derrida writing of his mother: "she is the one who makes him speak, while he believes it is he who is trying to make her speak, this "impassibility of a time beyond time" whom he resembles increasingly" (Cixous, 2004: 30).
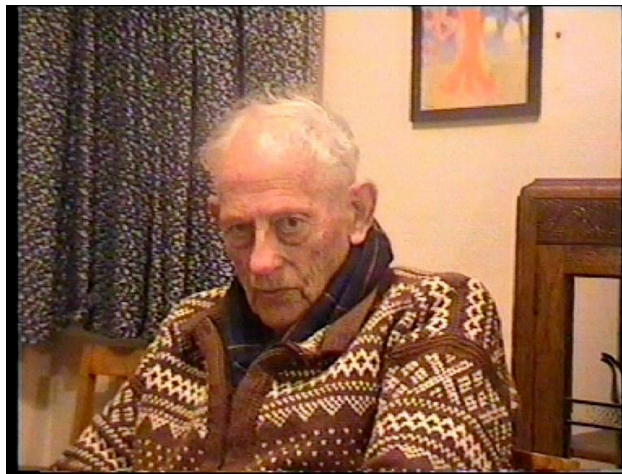
Fig. 2:7. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Becoming Migrant*. 2006.

Eventually I inscribed over my father's spoken narration with my written subtitles. This three-generational re-writing was to me: "Language: forest with all the roots/audible" (Cixous, 1997: 84).

 Also from Hélène Cixous came her identification of the in-'between scenes' as the most essential. "It is in the between-scenes where what are the essential things for us, tormented humans, always take place" (Cixous, 1997: 67). I filmed a lot of 'between

scenes' video footage during my month in Norway, not really knowing quite what I was doing but following a distinctly Heideggerian methodology (further explained in Chapter 4.2). Cixous writes: "The richness of a story is in the interstices. In great theatre, the most moving scenes are always the afters or the befores" (Cixous, 1997: 68). This perception guided the content of video footage selected in the development of later more experimental filmic works, such as *Fjord signs* (June 2006).

Fig. 2:8. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Fjord signs*. 2006.

Chapter 3. Layers of *Return*

3.1 Mountain as Real

I return now to a re-tracing of some key turning points in my filmic practice as the research methodology responded to the questions (refer Chapter 2.3) of what 'return' *is* or might be.

The first key turn occurred precisely at my own core moment of 'homecoming' in July 2005. As in the Hölderlin poem, "everything in the homecoming is familiar but estranged by being seen anew, newly realized in its specific nature in a way imperceptible to a daily inhabitant" (Clark, 2002: 106).

Fig. 3:9. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Mountain*. 2006.

"To bring the familiar nearer by perceiving at a new distance, to cherish what we recognise by acknowledging the resistance of its otherness" (Clark, 2002, 106) is what Heidegger sees as the force of the poetic.

At this point in my research I was attempting to apply Lacanian psychoanalytical interpretations to phenomenological experiences in order to explore the possibilities of visually translating them into the filmic. Those strange moments of unexpected and transfixing emergences from the unconscious, when sites such as the ancestral mountain (Fig. 3:9) are perceived as imbued with significant forces:

> while it is true that any object can occupy the empty place of the Thing, it can do so only by means of the illusion that it was always already there; i.e., that it was not placed there by us but found there as an "answer of the real."
> Although any object can function as the object-cause of desire - insofar as the power of fascination it exerts is not its immediate property but results from the place it occupies in the structure - we must, by structural necessity, fall prey to the illusion that the power of fascination belongs to the object as such (Zizek, 1995: 33).

Fig. 3:10. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Mountain*. 2006.

In Egoyan's film *Ararat* (2002), the mountain occupies similar psychic terrain for the young protagonist as the ancestral mountain Huseklepp, has always occupied for myself.

However on this latest occasion and my most deliberately interrogative encounter with the mountain, a peculiar state of turning away took place, a turning away that resulted in a complete re-focusing of my research and film-making practice.

It caused me soon afterwards to re-enter the interior of my former Norwegian domestic life, to an emotional interiority of return in which I was embedded. Another key turn eventually led to a further trajectory with the recognition of the need for *return* to other sites of deep emotional attachment; to Melbourne, Copenhagen and to where the space may be located for a *return* of my maternal ancestry.

But why this time on this carefully planned research journey did my arrival at the mountain not perform that moment of epiphany, virtually the transcendent 'essence' of *return* which I had so many times in the past experienced in that particular place?
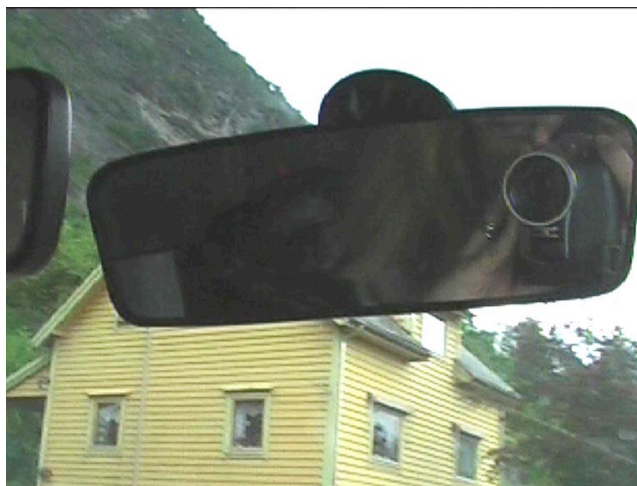
Fig. 3:11. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Mountain*. 2006.

Perhaps the answer was to be found in Lacanian theory: "Why does "the performative effect" take place only on condition that it is overlooked? Why does the disclosure of performative mechanism necessarily ruin its effect?" (Zizek, 1995: 33).

> The Lacanian answer is, of course: because the symbolic field is in itself always already barred, crippled, porous, structured around some extimate kernel, some impossibility. The function of the 'little piece of the real" is precisely to fill out the place of this void that gapes in the very heart of the symbolic (Zizek, 1995: 33).

A provisional explanation: the phenomenological methodology and analysis applied to this particular experience did in fact disclose the mountains performative effect in my psyche and ruined it!

I found this theory 'closes off' rather than 'opens' when applied to a translation of such experience into filmic terms. It gives no space to the poetic. I preferred Heidegger's theory of mood revealing 'throwness', of mood as 'originary transcendence'.

> As Heidegger points out, we cannot get behind our moods; we cannot get clear *about* them, and we cannot get clear *of* them. "Dasein always has some mood" […] I am always already surrounded by objects that matter in some specific way (Dreyfus, 1991: 173-174).

An acknowledgement that moods affect all we experience but are by nature transitory, reflects the openness required for a poetic 'writing' of the experiential. Although unaware of it at that time, my filming methodology and video data selection was already running parallel to and more frequently resembling poetic writing processes. A further reason to be mistrustful of Lacanian theory as applied to a filmic practice, was confirmed by his ignoring of writing's pre-eminent role in the structure of the unconscious. "Lacan's dictum - the unconscious is structured like a language - presumes that language is identical to speech" (Grosz, 1989: 27), whereas Derrida claims that had Lacan understood Freud's theories of the unconscious from *Note Upon a Mystic Writing Pad* (1925) he would also have realised "that the unconscious

is structured like/as writing. The unconscious is graphic rather than phonic" (Grosz, 1989: 27).

Heidegger understood the danger that psychoanalytic theory posed to experiential phenomenology: "Primordial evidence is for Heidegger experiencing something present just as it is" (Dreyfus, 1991: 274). He believed that "primordial evidence arises from our most direct or revealing kinds of encounters with entities" (Dreyfus, 1991: 200). Whereas Heidegger saw in the orthodoxy of Freudian interpretations that " This slide from the truth of primordial pointing out to the untruth of mere correspondence is, of course, a danger to phenomenology itself" (Dreyfus, 1991: 276).

Had I accepted the Lacanian explanation of my 'turning' from the mountain it could have been in terms of a finality, a closure; of divesting the performative role of the mountain of its power as symbolic of the 'real' or the 'thing'. By staying with the Heideggerian approach of proceeding from a direct encounter with the entity (of the mountain) the methodology led the way to projections of the research that proved authentic.

Fig. 3:12. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Breivikskjenet 8*. 2006.

Ultimately I prefer Deleuze's notion that a theory of film philosophically thought, is the appropriate path for the theorising of cinematic film, experimental film and filmic video.

> Cinema itself is a new practice of images and signs, whose theory philosophy must produce as conceptual practice. For no technical determination, whether applied (psychoanalysis, linguistics) or reflexive, is sufficient to constitute the concepts of cinema itself (Deleuze, 1989: 269).

Apart from some interesting ideas linking sound and the 'real' (refer Chapter 6.2), I engaged no further with psychoanalytical theory in my research, because along with Helene Cixous I do not feel it gives the space or the potentiality of knowing, to the enactment of 'writing' or filming: "Psychology is a bizarre invention, about which I understand nothing, a sort of verbal gadget. First of all we are sentient beings" (Cixous, 1997: 18).

3.2 Presencing, the 'step-back' and 'mise-en-abyme'

Proceeding from the first key turn at the mountain, there was a necessity to consider strategies that were more finely attuned to a Heideggerian experiential methodology. Such strategies became apparent when the selection of footage and editing phase began to shape the early video work tests.

The footage that eventually became *Fjord signs* (June, 2006) was a recording of my phenomenological experience of a ferry-boat journey between Sognefjord and Bergen (on Norway's west coast). A length of time (among many during the research trip) when nothing much happened. Long periods of travelling by boat, bus, car and plane. A strange sort of peaceful boredom, of ennui. A time that Heidegger values as a space for the potential experiencing of *Dasein*. These are the times when our consciousness is in such a state of 'letting be' that we may have the possibility of experiencing the *Being* or 'presence' of our being in the world.

Heidegger suggests that normally "our consciousness is so entirely object-directed that we have a natural disposition to focus on the project*ed* thereby missing, completely the project*ing*" (Young, 2001:155).

Fig. 3:13. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Bergen*. 2006.

With the footage of the ferry journey, I attempted to make this representation of time gazing out the boat window conscious, and thereby indicating the gaps and empty spaces where 'presencing' might reveal itself. However, one effect of self-reflexivity on "our own gaze" is that it "slips away from us" in the very same process that it makes it "ours"; it never quite meets itself except in, and as a visible absence (Carroll, 1987: 63).

The video work *Bergen* (May 2006) also engages with those in-between times of simply gazing, waiting, nothing to do, 'letting be' (Fig. 3:13). But there is enormous difficulty in creating a successful translation of this fugitive and transient state into a filmic work: "there seems to be no alternative to representation possible, for it, too, would have to be represented as absent or as present" (Carroll, 1987: 59).

As I continued to test various editing techniques in the studio, I read of Heidegger's discovery of the 'step-back' in Cezanne's late mountain studies – "they allow us to experience the *projected* character of the being ('presence') of our world" (Young, 2001:155). This concept of the 'step-back' seemed applicable to the editing process in terms of achieving the balance between edits of stasis and movement. In his explanation of what Heidegger recognised in the Cezanne studies of Mont Sainte-

Victoire, Young suggests that the experience which 'presences,' is "a flickering alternation between two states" (Young, 2001:155).

Heidegger actually came to this realisation when he spent time in the exact physical location where Cezanne had painted his many *Mont Sainte-Victoire's*, not from the painted works alone. Despite this problematic elision between the actual and the recorded experience I experimented with creating in tests, 'the flickering state' of the 'step-back' through editing strategies.

Fig. 3:14. Petrea Andersen. *Video stills from*: *Hjemlengsel*. 2006.

For *Hjemlengsel* (September 2005) I edited together several sequences where a flickering between two images (the overlapping transition between images briefly visible) where those moments of 'presencing' might be suggested or even experienced whilst viewing.

These experiments did not successfully evoke the essence of 'presencing'. The sequences were too obviously laden with the labour-intensive technology of digital editing and conveyed no sense of subtlety. This precipitated another key development of my studio practice.

The phenomenological aspect of my return journey to Norway in 2005 as being the latest of many previous return journeys (made by both myself and my father), threw into relief the notion of 'mise-en-abyme' - "an infinite process of doubling and regression up to and into the abyss" (Carroll, 1987: 63). Elements of the 'mise-en-abyme' hovered very near to Heidegger's perception of 'presencing' which led to testing editing strategies which held possibilities of revealing the 'mise-en-abyme'.

 In *Breivikskenet 8* (January 2006) I not only attempted a moving between sequences of footage of the same scene taken ten years apart, but also tried to attain a balance between stillness and motion. This was an experiment in presencing the condition of 'clearing" through the notion of 'mise-en-abyme' - a constant process of doubling and regression, which reiterates movement and stasis, negation and accumulation, of moving forward to move backwards again towards an understanding of *return*. The 'abyss' of 'mise-en-abyme' was in *Breivikskenet 8*, the emotional content of the work which was focused on the ultimate loss of a relationship, home and dwelling place that had for a few short years staunched the obsession for returns in search of the paradisiacal balm of originary 'Homecoming'.

The more subtle forms of editing developed whilst working on *Breivikskenet 8* were further utilised for editing two later works that in content dealt directly with conditions of 'mise-en-abyme'.

Selje/Bergen (October 2006) was filmed during the July, 2005 research trip. It follows the return boat journey from Bergen to the island of Selje; a traditional place of pilgrimage (as the first and only Norwegian female saint lived and died here - in a cave). The 'mise-en-abyme' was enacted by my young cousin who substituted for my much younger self in a repetition of the very same return boat journey I had first experienced aged eighteen.
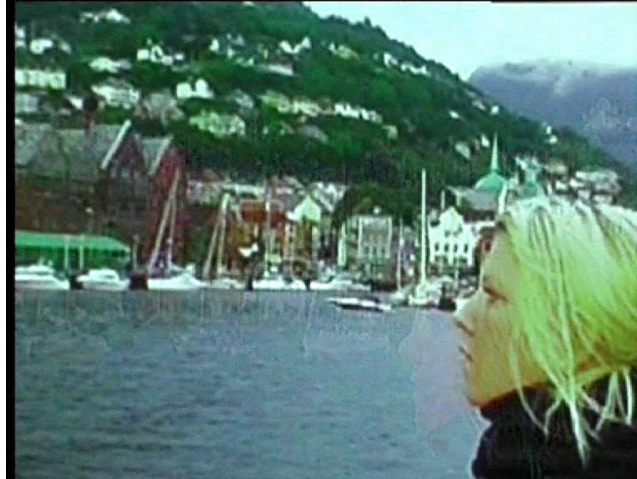
Fig. 3:15. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Selje/Bergen*. 2006.

I can remember at that age and state of perceptive 'openness' that there were moments of experiencing "the *projected* character of the being ('presence') of our world" (Young, 2001:155). *Selje/Bergen* was an experiment in recollection of this first experience of Being as a *return* to the physical location of ancestral origins. *Retrace* (November, 2006) is another key video work, which develops substitution as 'mise-en-abyme' even further, whereby the young woman filmed roaming the streets of Melbourne is not only re-enacting my inhabiting of Melbourne city streets (during a nine-year residence) but Melbourne itself is a stand-in, a substitute for Copenhagen – my Danish grandmother's home city. Melbourne as representing all that seemed to be lost to my grandmother when she gave up Copenhagen for provincial New Zealand. Melbourne representing all the richness of 'fin de siecle' European cultural life that was forsaken, being exiled from the freedom to roam the open cosmopolitan urban space where she

enjoyed the collective 'dwelling' - the life of the city streets that figure in Walter Benjamin's writings.

And yet another step of substitution as 'mise-en-abyme' is staged as Ruby (a current resident of Melbourne and stand-in for my former self as Melbourne resident) suggests a performance of my grandmother's sister, Petrea (for whom I was named – another substitution?) who remained in Copenhagen and continued to inhabit those city streets. The poignancy of the broken connection between the two sisters is also evoked by Ruby and her actual sister in *Ryesgade/Barkly Street* (November, 2006).

3.3 'Rural Idyll', Melbourne/Copenhagen and women's space.

After completing *Breivikskjenet 8* (January 2006) I had recognised that return to other sites of emotional interiority and attachment might reveal how I was embedded in those *returns*. So in April/May 2006 I conducted a further research trip; to Melbourne where I had previously been resident for nine years. This being a location where I had most experienced being 'at home'; a city that had always been more than a substitute for all that the loss of familial connections with Copenhagen represented.

I was aware that my enquiry of *return* up to this point had focused on what Naficy views as stereotypical of 'exilic' filmmaking: "many exiles seem to turn to the structural authority and certainty that only nature seems capable of providing: timelessness, boundlessness, reliability, stability, and universality" (Naficy, 2001: 156).

Because the forces of late modernity have compounded many migrant descendant's dislocation and "originary disruption, [there is an] intensifying [of] the desire to "return" and to become whole again" (Naficy, 2001: 156). Egoyan certainly explores this territory in *Calender* but avoids what Naficy posits as typical of the 'homecoming' filmic work: "What is substituted for the impossibility of return and reunion is the staging of a metaphoric reunion with nature" (Naficy, 2001: 156). Egoyan juxtaposes the idyllic ancient images of old rural Armenia with the banality of his urban interior life filmed within the contemporary cramped space of his inner-city apartment.

In *Breivikskjenet 8,* filming the interior of a small urban apartment was also my signalling that *return* did not require ancestral rural landscapes and mountains as nostalgic visual prompts. In works such as *Selje/Bergen* (October 2006), *Mountain* (January 2006) and *Falling and Saving* (August 2006) natural, rural or seascapes predominate. However my intention here was not to stage return as a substitute

"metaphoric reunion with nature" (Naficy, 2001: 156), but rather to interrogate these locations which were phenomenologically authentic for my purposes in terms of Heidegger's notions of nature as a metaphorical place of thought.

In his installation of twenty-three video monitors - *Between Cinema and a Hard Place* (1991) - Gary Hill explores this Heideggerian idea. But nature as a "place of thought is intervened upon, with images of landscapes and pastoral scenes being interrupted by variable fencing, posted signs and other interventions of spatial temporal limits" (Hill, 1991, in Cooke, 2000:140).

Rather than intervene, *Falling and Saving, Mountain* and *Selje/Bergen* openly present the nostalgic attachment of both myself and Martin Heidegger to the rural, close to nature, peasant farm life that remained true to natural seasonal cycles right up to my uncle's recent (1922 - 1998) farming of the ancestral land. A rural nature based 'dwelling' that was central to Heidegger's life and thinking, as exemplified in *Why do I Stay in the Provinces* (Heidegger, 1977) and his admiration for the simple Black Forest farmhouse he describes in *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* (1954).

Fig. 3:16. *Gamle Stuen; Hytte på Huseklepp*. Photograph, 1974.

The nostalgia embedded in *Falling and Saving, Mountain* and *Selje/Bergen* is also for the time before the violence, loss and exile suffered by my Norwegian grandmother. So the nostalgia is for a specific moment prior to when and why my father became an immigrant and therefore has everything to do with my filmic interpretations of *return,* rather than a generalised 'migrant' nostalgia.

By making the 'nature' located works from an observational rather than an interventionist position, I endeavoured to enquire a little more closely into what still might be authentic in Heidegger's 'nature as a place of thought'. (This notion in relation to Heidegger and Irigaray's allusions to the divine are discussed further in Chapter 3.4.)

But for several key reasons a turn disruptive of the Norwegian rural idyll was necessary. The trajectory of my maternal ancestral origins posed contradictions to the conditions of return I had encountered in Norway.

The inner urban streets of Melbourne were required to stage a re-doubling of *returns*; mine to Melbourne, to a substitute Copenhagen site, a doubling back to my memories of my grandmother's memories of Copenhagen and a false or substitute doubling back by performing a re-tracing of her footsteps or her sister's through the substitute city.

Again, an observational rather than an interventionist approach to gathering video footage allowed for an open exploration of Melbourne as site of an imagined past wherein traces of that earlier imagined city might appear.

Retrace (November 2006) is the video work edited from the footage of Melbourne city streets. It marks a particular key moment in the project and links to issues of gender and spatiality. The observational non-interventionist filming strategy that I had found to be most useful for an experiential (that is phenomenological) methodology was what disclosed the troubling issue of gender and space. The footage of Ruby strolling through Melbourne city locations was filmed with both of us being quite unaware of the actions and movements of other people in the vicinity of Ruby's 'space'. However, on viewing all the footage, it revealed very clearly a young woman's *beingness* in the experiencing of occupying public city space. On four separate occasions (during three hours of wandering and filming) as revealed on video, it appeared that Ruby had been 'set upon' by the gaze of four different male groups (one was a single older man who actually trailed her back

and forth in a shopping mall). In an essay in which Mary-Anne Doane discusses temporality she observes how the webcam may capture 'the unforseen'

> For it is the continuous time, the real time of the long take which allows for the possibility of contingency, the unforseen, the unexpected, in the cinema. In digital media […] it is the webcam site which seems to embody this aspiration. The webcam operator relinquishes, abdicates, even banishes control by situating the camera in place, allowing it to record whatever happens to happen (Doane, 2004: 273).

In effect my non-interventionist filming methodology resulted in the unexpected recordings of a young woman's experience of her space being invaded several times. There also appears in Ruby's facial expressions a flicker of anxiety, as if subconsciously she is registering this advance on her space.

> To reveal *Dasein* simple and whole Heidegger chooses anxiety. Just as the breakdown of a piece of equipment reveals the nature of equipmentality and of the referential whole, so anxiety serves as a breakdown that reveals the nature of *Dasein* and it's world (Dreyfus, 1991: 177).

Heidegger's concept of 'anxiety' was clearly functioning in this video footage as disclosure of Ruby's encounter with spatiality, its collision with the male 'invasions' and Ruby 'being at home' where she retained her small but important control over space: "Everyday familiarity collapses […] In anxiety one feels "unsettled" […] "unsettledness" also means 'not-being at-home'" (Heidegger, 1962: 233).

Fig. 3:17. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Retrace*. 2006.

These four incidents were in fact edited out of the final video work, which could be read as a metaphorical intervention and re-establishment of power over the right to occupying the space of the city streets un-accosted. The filming and editing process of making *Retrace* turned my attention to the fact that the thematic content of all the filmic works linked to narratives of my grandmothers' lives and the spaces they had been exiled from and the spaces they were sanctioned to occupy.

Here was a space within the project where it was appropriate to reflect upon the following: "'Woman', represents a resistance, a locus of excess within certain logocentric/phallocentric texts, functioning as a point upon which the text turns upon itself" (Grosz, 1989: 33).

It was very likely that issues of spatiality and gender would be activated by the filmic content within the installation site. Derrida's positioning of 'Woman' as one of deconstruction's challenges can be construed as a possible subtext of the research project.

Due particularly to the inclusion in this project of several of Derrida's 'writing' references and his reading of Nietzsche's "use of 'Woman' as a metaphor for the unveiling of truth" (Grosz, 1989: 32).

By placing the video works (of which the content touches continually on returning to traces of, and revealing a female genealogy) within the computer pod classroom, a supplementary disruption was signalled. Possibly a filmic intervention of "new means of philosophical expression" (Flaxman, 2000: 3), which questions *again* if a 'space of return' for female genealogy is required, and where might it be located?

3.4 <u>Spaces of *Return*</u>

The issue of a gendered spatiality was not originally formulated as a research question but at this stage of practice development, its impact on the activation of the installation needed to be addressed. It seemed necessary for further research into how and where a *space of return* for a female genealogy might be situated. Initially I referred to Heidegger's notions of 'dwelling' and *Being*: "dwelling is the basic character of *Being*" (Heidegger, 1993b: 362).

Irigaray confronts the improbability of a female subject 'being' because how could she experience 'being', if shut out from the 'space' required for Heidegger's 'dwelling'. In *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* she suggests that the exile of woman is because of the shutting her in (or out of 'free space') by the phallocentric language of male philosophers. It is also the forgetting of the mother – indeed her matricide (which is an extreme form of exile) and also the cultural debt of maternal giving which cannot be repaid and is therefore also forgotten.

"I am trying rather to go back through all those places where I was exiled – enclosed so he could constitute his there" (Irigaray, 1999: 29). Irigaray posits that this 'exile' from woman's own space and time begins with the mother: "Mother is 'space' or 'home' but has none herself" (Grosz, 1989: 173). Woman is considered as the home or dwelling from which man comes, which is his nostalgic place of origin. But which he forgets.

Irigaray clearly means that without a space and time of her own 'woman' is all too easily absorbed into the dominant discourse of 'time and space'.

However for Heidegger, although exile is homelessness - an inability to dwell - later in his career Heidegger suggests that this radical rootlessness is a possibility for "openness, tenacity, gaiety" (Dreyfus, 1991: 38).

Heidegger states in *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1954) that as soon as persons "give thought to homelessness, it is a misery no longer […] It is what calls mortals into their 'dwelling'" (Heidegger, 1993b: 363).

An exile from her own time and space meant for Irigaray that the space and time of 'woman' remains undefined. How can 'woman' establish a place in celestial space – have access to a feminine divine if 'woman's' dwelling has not yet been established? Irigaray links the question of the possibility of female divinity to space and time. In the relations between the way space and the way time are conceived, she discerns the underlying association with the male/female opposition: time is the projection of a (masculine, divine) subject's interior, while space is represented as the exteriorisation of a (feminine) subject. Irigaray is making clear that being exiled from time and space means 'woman' is also exiled from the divine.

This space of the divine is where between Irigaray and Heidegger there exists strife, but also some strange parallels in their thinking.

As Hodge states: "[Nietzsche,] Heidegger and Irigaray are bound together by their insistence on, and transgression of, difference" (Burke, 1994: 199).

A female God is important to Irigaray as "principle or ideal, a projection or perfection of the (sexed) subject" (Grosz, 1989: 159). A concept similar to Feuerbach and Levinas's interpretation of God as a form of alterity affirming the human.

Time as space is the possibility of openness – a place of possible entry for the divine according to both Heidegger and Irigaray. For Heidegger opening '*the clearing*' was the way to understanding *Dasein* in practices, language and works in order to encounter these *beings*, as Being. But, Irigaray contends that Heidegger makes boundaries which enclose this openness – so how can a female divine – the future potential of that which is beyond us now, enter? Irigaray also asks of Heidegger's 'clearings'; "openings and closures for whom?" (Burke, 1994: 195). She believed that inserting a place for women within theory disrupted the unqualified closure of philosophy, because – for some 'it has not even begun'.

However, I would suggest that the ambiguity of Heidegger's 'clearing' can still be a space of exploration – presences can arrive and vanish, openings close and open again, there is a flickering between retreat and advances.

If Irigaray suggests that access to the divine is for 'woman' through time and space, Heidegger suggests it is through language.

In *Building Dwelling Thinking* Heidegger writes of the fourfold: "A happening together […] a gathering of earth, sky , divinities and mortals" (Heidegger, 1993b: 150). He makes clear that his notion of the fourfold - "A happening together" is made possible through language; "language performs an original gathering of the regions together" (Heidegger, 1993b: 150).

Actually, Irigaray already occupies the space of language as a *space of return* for 'woman' by means of her position whereby to speak as a woman was already enough to defy the monologism of phallocentric language. If already Irigaray has opened language as a space for 'woman', this also can be a space of 'return' (from being exiled outside of language). As to the divine: "Irigaray turns to [the divine] as future and space for woman [...] an attempt to develop a sense of the divine specific to women" (Hodge, 1994: 207).

The space of language is of primary importance to both Irigaray and Heidegger, as a space of Being, return from many exiles, and possible *return* to Being.

Both thinkers poetically inscribe the space of language. Irigaray inserted the poetic into serious theoretical writing so that discourses more amenable to re-establishing a genealogy of women through a positive inscription of the female body might occur. Heidegger not only brought poetics to his theoretical and philosophical writing but posited *poesis* as the antidote to the dangers of mass standardisation, and the possible destruction of 'earth'.

In one work only, *Selje/Bergen* (October 2006) did I specifically insert references to questioning the space of the divine as possible 'space' of *return* (as in both Heidegger's divine of the 'fourfold gathering' and Irigaray's divine as an 'aspired towards projected ideal'). There is a gathering of earth, sky and mortals. The divine occurs in the physical setting of the island (and cave) as actual sacred place and the dog figure refers to the chthonic dog companion of many European nature goddesses, particularly those protectresses of the life/death cycle (Green, 1995: 178).

The dog is traditionally associated both with the symbolisms of the mother and of resurrection and is the companion of the dead on their 'night sea crossing'. The sequence of the dog figure on the little island (Fig. 3:18) echoes my grandmother's exile (*Becoming Migrant*, January, 2006) and specifically references "Nehalennia, a goddess of the North Sea" (Green, 1995: 178), who was always accompanied by her dog, symbol of fidelity and protection; her foot placed on the prow of a boat. (second and third centuries, A.D.)

Having acknowledged the divine as a possible space for *return* due to such significant agreement between Heidegger and Irigaray as to its importance, it became clear that the other significant area of agreement between them: 'the space of language' (specifically writing) was the 'space of *returns'* offering the greatest potential for the project's continuing research.

Fig. 3:18. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Selje/Bergen*. 2006.

Chapter 4. Writing Poetics, Filming Poetics

4.1 Space of Writing

Derrida confirms that the 'space of writing' is indeed the *space of return* and through one's language it is always a *return* to self and *home*.

> whatever the story of a return to oneself or to *one's home* [chez-soi], […] no matter what an odyssey or bildungsroman it might be, in whatever manner one invents the story of a construction of the *self* […] it is always imagined that the one who writes should know how to say I (Derrida, 1998: 28).

Cixous expresses all that can be retrieved or *return*ed within the 'space of writing': "all its effort is an effort for rehabilitation or for salvation of what risks being lost or being debased, scorned" (Cixous, 1997: 98).

As I had detected earlier but was not yet fully aware of, my filming methodology and particularly the later selection and editing processes very much parallelled an intuitive writing process, a poetic writing, that Cixous describes the movements of so well: "It is also a writing in effects: it produces itself according to the effects happening in the course of realization. Not by preliminary calculations or predetermined choices of forms" (Cixous, 1997: 47).

The experiential phenomenological research methodology followed throughout the research and data gathering phases of the project fluently accommodated a more intensely intuitive and poetic approach to editing the filmic works. My practice being positioned as 'filmic,' ("It is time for video to assume its place as simply a 'filmic' medium, now that the word 'filming' refers to the many ways in which the moving or animated image is created" [Fifer & Hall, 1991:24].) meant that I was working within the paradigm of "art made with video" (Sarrazin, 2000: 84) rather than the more limiting language of 'video art'. The designation, 'filmic video practice' provided the openness to embrace processes and practices of poetic writing.

Therefore the editing of the eventual filmic works were more and more often created in a very similar way to how I write. "When one has faith in what is not knowable: in the unknown in ourselves that will manifest itself […] It is the secret of the *ability-to-write*" (Cixous, 1997: 47).

I did not refer particularly to any filmic video works I had previously viewed or read of (as was more the case having little access to screenings of 'art made with video' in provincial Hawkes Bay). I had read with much interest of works by Chantal Ackerman - *D'Est* (1993-95) and *To Walk Next to One's Shoelaces in an Empty Fridge* (2000) - and Mona Hartoum's *Measures of Distance* (1988) amongst others. Eventually in May 2006 on the Melbourne research trip, at ACMI I viewed the work of nineteen Commonwealth video artists. Works by Berni Searle, r e a, Isaac Julian, and John Gillies resonated with my project's theme of *return*. I had viewed as much possibly relevant New Zealand work as I could gain access to such as *Desire and Memory* (1998, dir. Niki Caro) and *Wake* (1993, dir. Annie Goldson).

But predominantly I turned to either foreign or 'experimental mainstream' cinema film as references for my own filmic works, reinforcing that much earlier fascination, attachment and substitution I had established in adolescence to the cinema of Bergman and later Tarkovsky, and to old favourites, such as Alain Resnais's *Last Year in Marienbad* (1961), Marguerite Duras' *Aurélia Steiner (Melbourne – Vancouver)* (1979), and Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962). And also more contemporary references such as *Salmer fra Kjøkknet/Kitchen stories* (2003, dir. Bent Hamer), *The Weight of water* (2002, dir. Kathryn Bigelow) *Paris Texas* (1984, dir. Wim Wenders) and *Gerry* (2003, dir. Gus van Sant).

An analysis of the narrative structure of these films and to varying degrees their narrative deconstruction (particularly the use of visual or spoken references to the past as supplements to the present narrative – refer to Chapter 4.3 for further discussion) assisted my translation of narrative elements into poetic filmic imagery.

But constructing the filmic works within the 'space of writing' became the principal means of my practice.

> So, one must leave oneself go. One must not be afraid because when one sets oneself in writing, or sets oneself to writing, one sets off… this phenomenon which always remains disturbing will be produced: the manifestation of a force expressing itself much more powerfully and rapidly than ourselves (Cixous, 1997: 39).

Cixous also expresses a 'writing practice' as a belief in writing "that will come as an ocean, a current that is always there…" (Cixous, 1997: 41). The quantity of oceanic and watery video footage taken on the Norwegian research trip and later made into filmic works testifies as a literal manifestation of this fluid current surging through the project methodology.

In the work *Hands* (May-December 2006) I experimented with the action of hands inscribing - in keeping with the *self* of the filmed family member: my cousin playing the piano and my aunt gathering heather. (Fig. 4:19) It also alluded to my two ancestral lines, symbolically divided as 'culture' and 'nature'. I introduced sequences of my own hand in the act of writing, thereby performing a connection through the space of writing. At the time of writing this work is still in process and experimentation with sequences revealing evidence of 'writing' left by my mother, both grandmothers and great aunt may be inserted or made into another (supplementary) work.
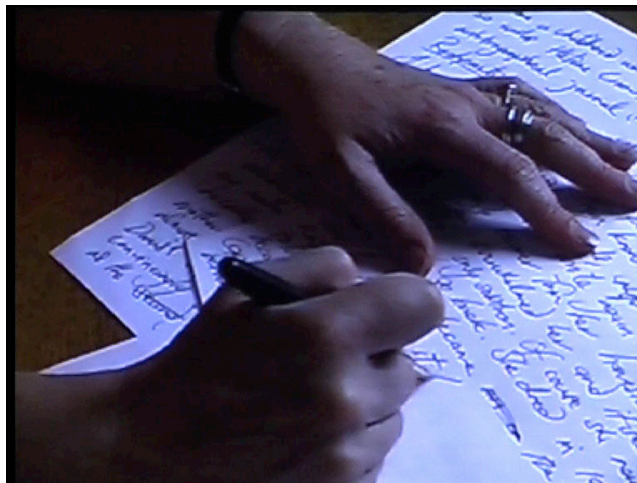
Fig. 4:19. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Hands*. 2006.

In writing there is also a function of raising up what is forgotten, what is scorned. Not only the great things that have been forgotten – not only women – but the little things that have been scorned, seen as detritus. And which are nonetheless part of our lives (Cixous, 1997: 98).

Poetics are to be found in the most mundane and banal aspects of existence, and Cixous and Heidegger both ascribe to waiting and simplicity as the opening to the *Beingness* of experiences: "we are the most poetic beings […] millions of things happen to us every day: it is we who do not receive them" (Cixous, 1997: 60).

In selecting the video footage from which I would compile the final works, I remained attentive to the small events experienced as manifestations of *return*, rather than apply an overly mediated construction of conceptually understood meanings of return. "It suffices to pay attention to see the accompaniment of a departure, of a return being painted the colour of the sky at that moment" (Cixous, 1997: 29).

An example which happily coincides with Cixous's own appreciation and 'writing of' the red squirrel which made a rare appearance on my last morning of attempting to gather some really powerful footage of the mountain, (I never succeeded): "nibbling, going up, going down, busy, very busy squirrels […] dodge, danger, go back to the chestnut tree […]" (Cixous, 1997: 61).

Fig. 4:20. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Mountain*. 2006.

This attention to encounters with small events that later revealed their significance became the rationale for selecting footage for other works, such as *Falling and Saving* (August2006) and *Selje/Bergen* (October 2006) reflecting the return to Norwegian ancestry and place. Both works feature dogs; dogs are a return to continuity, to my grandmothers (who both loved dogs), to the farm in Norway, to animals as a link to older ways of living, to sniffing out the trail to be rescued and returned. "*The* bêtes, *the animals. And we are all* bêtes (*Dreams of Animals*)" (Cixous, 1997: 31).

Fig. 4:21. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Selje/Bergen, Tahppo*. 2006.

4.2 Sub-titles

But there is the question of sub-titles; the significance of sub-titles as the always there but concealed other familial language contained somewhere within the textual components of the video works. So, a return to Derrida's earlier thought: *"…it is always imagined that the one who writes should know how to say I"* (Derrida, 1998: 28). He continues: "It is necessary to know already in what language *I* is expressed, and I *am* expressed" (Derrida, 1998: 28).

He reminds that: "From all viewpoints, which are not just, grammatical, logical, or philosophical, it is well known that the I of the kind of anamnesis called autobiographical […] is produced and uttered in different ways depending on the language in question" (Derrida, 1998: 29).

I began an early investigation into the bilingualism of the project language with the print series of *Map panels* September 2005. This screenprint of a map (dragged too early from the photocopier) of the Norwegian ancestral farm terrain both imitated the appearance of the growth rings of wood grain (growth rings = temporality) and visually linked notions of mapping, psychological concerns and film; "cinema shares a course with psychoanalysis, which is itself a cartography: it's analytic path is also a chart-screening of the subject's relational space" (Bruno, 2002: 396). The *Map panels* became *Ghost panels* 1, 2, & 3 (November 2005).

Fig. 4:22. Petrea Andersen. *Ghost Panel 2*. Screenprint on ply and paper, 2005.

This *I* would have *formed* itself, then, at the site of a *situation* that cannot be found, a site always referring elsewhere, to something other, to another language, to the other in general. It would have *located* [*situé*] itself in a *nonlocatable* [*insituable*] experience of *language* in the broad sense of the word (Derrida, 1998: 29).

Screenprints of images (from the earlier *Fjell* print series) had handwritten notes pinned onto the *Map panels* telling of events that occurred in certain locations. (Fig. 4:22) My re-writing (and re-mapping) in English sub-titles of family narratives told in Norwegian questioned "in what language?" and 'how' should I relate these re-tellings by others? The provisional nature of my re-writings is signaled by the use of scraps of paper attached by map pins.

In what language does one write memoirs when there has been no authorized mother tongue? How does one utter a worth-while "I recall" when it is necessary to invent both one's language and one's "I," to invent them at the same time (Derrida, 1998: 31).

There is always at work the odd paradox when the language one speaks and writes is not 'one's own'. "When I said that the only language speak is not mine, I did not say it was foreign to me" (Derrida, 1998: 5). Derrida writes of the contradictory assertions as to whether one can possibly only have one language, whether there are in fact many languages within one language, whether we utter each known language equally well. One likely certainty is that "a language can only speak itself of itself. One cannot speak of a language except in that language" (Derrida, 1998: 22).
He also points out that for the migrant, the host language very usually becomes the strongest language and becomes the language they inhabit. " The other languages […] are languages I shall never inhabit" (Derrida, 1998: 56).
Selje Text August 2005, (Fig. 4:23) was an early video work in which the use of sub-titles was developed. Already in the print series I had been reconstructing family and cultural narratives in a poetic mode. The 'paring down' of a text appropriate to film

requires brevity with meaning to be effective, and at that stage I focused on strategies to produce texts that were more poetic in form.
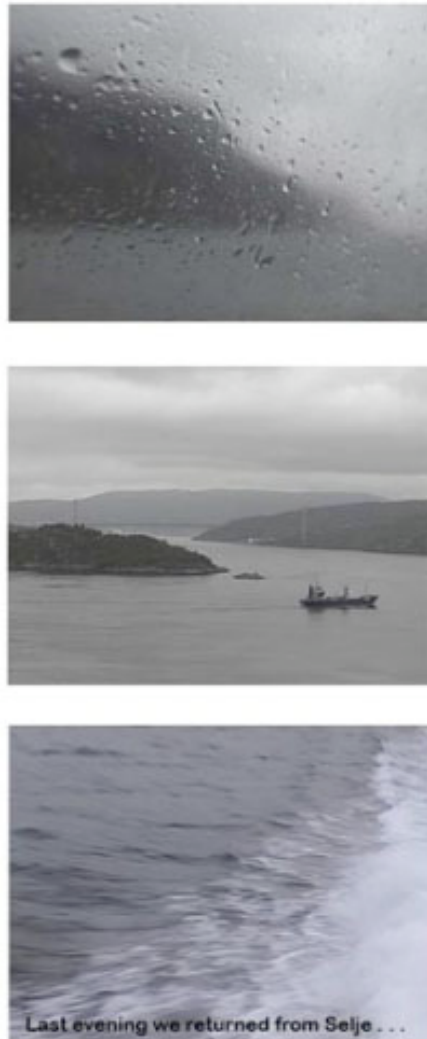
Fig. 4:23. Petrea Andersen. *Video stills from*: *Selje Text*. 2005.

In the video work, *Breivikskjenet 8* (January, 2006) further experimentation with pared down text occurred. (Fig. 4:24) I chose the epistolary texts from the emails I had sent to a close friend during my research trip to Norway. I had hoped that their immediacy (at the time of composition and sending) might inadvertently reveal a poetic sense conveying my phenomenological experience at that time; that is being confronted so emotionally by my past in a present interior, when it was the idyllic mountain I had expected this type of confrontation from.

Fig. 4:24. Petrea Andersen. *Video stills from*: *Breivikskjenet 4*. 2005.

For the completed work I abandoned the use of sub-titles and used only a simple music soundtrack. (Refer Chapter 4.4 for further discussion.)

"In a sense, nothing is untranslatable; but in another sense, everything is untranslatable; translation is another name for the impossible" (Derrida, 1998: 56-57).

In *Becoming Migrant* (January 2006) the challenge of translating my father's bilingual narrative into alternating English and Norwegian sub-titles as he moved from one language to the other, eventually brought about the sole use of English sub-titles and the absence of any spoken soundtrack. (Fig. 4:25)

Fig. 4:25. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Becoming Migrant*. 2006.

The reliance on sub-title text came to signal another strategy of mine to re-write family narratives through an erasure of the original telling; in this case the erasure of the soundtrack of my father's narration. Another layer of narrative erasure is that the event my father is speaking of rendered my grandmother mute, which set forth a condition of family exile. In this context the written English language text proved to be the most subversive by undoing the preserving of linguistic ancestral continuity. But I wanted the presence of Norwegian retained as paternal *spoken* language (rather than the adopted English) and positioned other works in the installation with fragments of spoken Norwegian as the only audible language present.

During the final phase of my studio practice I moved further into the 'space of writing' as 'space of' *return* and began to test 'text only' video sequences. This developed directly from the sub-titled works and signaled also the positioning of English in terms of; "the only language I speak is not mine, [but] I did not say it was foreign to me" (Derrida, 1998: 5). As adopting English is subversive of the historical familial trajectory, so is the privileging of written language over speech subversive of

the Western philosophical tradition.

Gary Hill presented *writing* as the only visual component in several of his video works. In *DISTURBANCE (amongst the jars)*, (1988), although there is a speaking voice; "The manual or electronic writing which now appears on the screen […] bring us back to a spatialization of language, an inscription of the language we speak" (Lageira, 2000: 33). Not only did the use of written text become more than just a supplement to the visual image, but became an image in itself. "Writing becomes an image which reflects itself. In the viewer who reads the words that pass before his eyes […] in the image of a page of text that one reads aloud or to oneself; between two screens" (Lageira, 2000: 34).

As the installation design evolved, it became apparent that the video works of written text only, became central to inscribing the space of the site.

> More than the voice, the written sign spatializes thought, printing it on a page or on the screen, and in the same movement, the thought thus re-transcribed affixes its mark on things and beings […] This is possible because it too is located in space (Lageira, 2000: 35-36).

Paradoxically, the 'text only' works whilst reinforcing the concept of the 'written space' as the *space of return*, also indicated that it is perhaps impossible to locate this space outside of language. (Except perhaps the future potential of Heidegger's and Irigaray's 'divine' – refer Chapter 3.4.): "The installation, which also suggests that language can be defined in a space, points to this fundamental idea that we cannot escape from language, nor exist outside it" (Lageira, 2000: 39).

In *Between Cinema and a Hard Place* (1991), Hill used passages from a Heidegger text. By doing so he is "taking the very road, as it were, of the philosopher when he ends up in the region of being where thinking and poetry are close to one another" (Lageira, 2000: 38). Although I have never viewed Hill's installation, Lageira's review would suggest that Hill does manage to get close to Heidegger's 'technology disclosing poesis'. *Between Cinema and a Hard Place* "makes speech say that it can say itself through technique" (Lageira, 2000: 38).

My own use of a Heidegger text actually occurred before reading of Hill's *Between Cinema and a Hard Place,* but evolved due to several video works filmed in Bergen,

Norway, the extraordinary coincidence of the appropriate meanings of Heigdegger's *bergen*, and my own deep attachment to that particularly (personally) significant place.
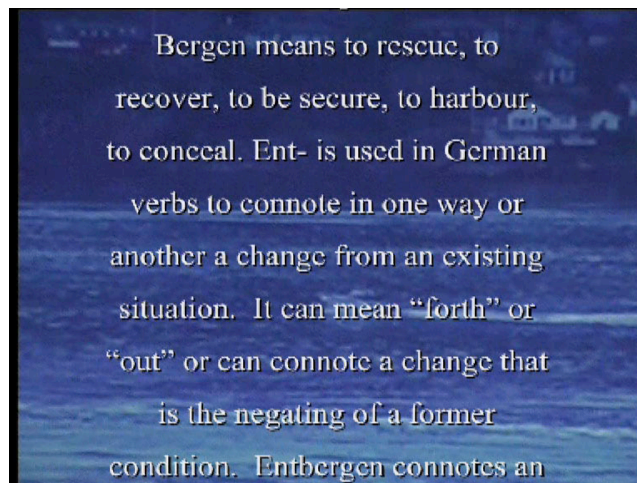
Fig. 4:26. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Bergen.Text*. 2006.

4.3 Methodology of video: Technology disclosing

An open or poetic mode of inscription allows for the abandonment of a narrative temporal trajectory both in the individual filmic works and in the positioning of the works within the installation space. There is no necessity to provide an entry point to 'reading' which eventually leads the viewer/reader through a series of causal influences, building to a point of revelation that resolves the initial event of a narrative.

That the recollection of experience is enigmatic suggests that its inscription must remain open, and poetic strategies are the most likely ways in which that mystery can be left unobliterated.

Both Maurice Blanchot and Heidegger believed that the writer/artist's task is that of "intuiting the potential disclosive force of the work" (Clark, 2002: 48). Heidegger thought of the term *techne,* as the intuiting of, or knowledge of what is at play and emergent in the work and what is to occur in order for the work's disclosure to take place.

Heidegger's turn towards language as an 'art work', as *Poesis*, emphasised the radical potential for poetics as a mode of disclosure rather than a mode of re-presentation. (He specifically applied this to the written practice of philosophy and its 'un-doing'). The Aristotelian notion of poetics (playful disrupting of order) and techne (know-how for making); of techne as a name "for knowing in the widest sense […] as revealing […] a bringing forth" (Heidegger, 1977: 13), was adopted by Heidegger and developed his notion ; "Technology is a mode of revealing" (Heidegger, 1977: 13). In *What is Called Thinking?* (1968) Heidegger outlines the non-interventionist, non-assertive tracing out of the way of disclosing. Revealing what is concealed is a poignant task and requires some attempt at adherence to the authenticity of 'what is'. How is this possible in a poetic sense? "The conjunction of 'letting-lie-before-us' and 'taking –to-heart' first announces what is called thinking" (Heidegger, 1968: 209). Heidegger suggests; "taking is not grasping but letting come what lies before us" (Heidegger, 1968: 211), which was an appropriate register in which to film the trajectories of this project. (that is non-intrusive and non-investigative in an analytical sense.)

"Heidegger's call of thought is "the call to be attentive to things as they are, to let them be as they are and to think them and ourselves together" (J.Glenn Gray; 'Introduction' in Heidegger, 1968: xiv). "Thinking that is truly involved, patient and disciplined" can come to know the hidden (J.Glenn Gray; 'Introduction' in Heidegger, 1968: xi).

The danger of technology such as video is that it can so easily be a means of disclosure which coerces, compels and provokes which obliterates or so over mediates that poetics cannot appear.

My non-interventionist filming hopefully allows a "letting be", "a reflective attunement to being" (Heidegger, 1993b: 164).

Video's assumed inferior quality could instead be regarded as a qualification of its nearness to authenticity and as a disavowal of higher technological means and production values. Certainly for my own purposes, digital video and a non-professional handi-cam were 'what was at hand' in order to research the ontic enquiry into *return*. There was also a deliberate strategy of investigating how some of the inherent biases around high-end production values might be undone, thereby disrupting any possible hierarchical 'film language' readings that might be imposed upon the final works.

The quite pared back presentation of poetic video works on emacs actually reduces the question of whether poetics can be revealed in technology to an unavoidable confrontation. In discussing Gary Hill's work in relation to his engagement with Heidegger, Quasha and Stein state:

> Within the "Frame" (*Gestell*) of the technological, according to Heidegger, only what can be calculated […] counts as real. Technology in this essential sense is not what it appears to be - the hardware, the software, and the […] procedures and apparatuses designed to produce objects on demand. It is rather the underlying ontological assumption that only the calculable is real (Quasha and Stein, 2000, 133).

Gary Hill's "direct invocation of this aspect of Heidegger's work signals 'his pre-empting of ' what would preempt us by turning technical means toward open ontological inquiry" (Quasha and Stein, 2000: 133).

For Heidegger the work of art ' discloses what and how something is'. Strangely he apparently held a dismissive and misinformed view of film which was such an obvious site for a thinking through of technology *revealing*. Young surmises that Heidegger's " insightful yet exaggerated dismissals of film as an art form" (Young, 2001: 150), rested on his belief that 'emptiness' could not be present in film: "Film on the other hand, because it cannot avoid providing a denseness of naturalistic detail, cannot allow anything but objects to presence" (Young, 2001:150).

Presumably this disclosing by the art work of 'what and how something is', of revealing *being* through technological means, is only endangered if poetics is forgotten. Heidegger believed *poiesis* may exist concealed inside technological means, emerging as a 'disclosing'. Therefore an acknowledgement of the mysteries of Heideggeran notions of concealment and proximity was essential for this video production project, intending as it did, to reveal poetics within technology.

It is quite obvious that Heidegger's ignorance of film's potential was due to the filmic possibilities now widely available to contemporary artists working with video and installation, being totally inconceivable in his time. Paradoxically, huge advances in digital technology have now made it possible to explore some of his notions through the actuality of the 'thingness' of video apparatus.

According to Heidegger, in the 'clearing' (or openness of *Dasein* - a being [*return*] in a clearing in which beings could be disclosed) being [*return*] conducts itself as presencing. But not all can ever be unconcealed in this clearing and much can be unconcealed which actually obscures other modes of its presencing.

Heidegger's approach offers the knowledge that a complexity of modes of knowing is possible. He also offers the word, *Geheimnis* (mystery) to describe the ambiguities of concealment.

The ambiguity of Heidegger's clearing can be a space of exploration – presences can arrive and vanish, openings close and open again; there is a flickering between retreat and advances. Editing processes in particular can arrange the video work as a space or 'clearing' for presencing. In the subsequent development of the installation design, the provision for actual 'spaces' in the form of blank computer screens developed from these notions of the 'clearing' and were later further informed by the literary spacings of Blanchot and Derrida.

4.4 Supplements and spacing

Supplements could be "points of paradox or excess, sites of difference, non-identity, where the text spills over its conceptual boundaries" (Grosz, 1989: 28). The supplement also implies "plenitude and lack" (Grosz, 1989: 30), displacements and deferrals within the text.

Supplements can exist as so many different prefaces - as in the preface to Derrida's *Of Grammatology*: "in Derrida's reworking, the structure preface-text becomes open at

both ends. The text has no stable identity, no stable origin, no stable end. Each act of reading the 'text' is a preface to the next" (Spivak in Derrida, 1976: xii).

The video work *Bergen.Text* (October 2006) becomes both a representative of the supplementary derivative meanings of a single word (from Heidegger's footnote on *das Entbergen* [revealing] in *The Question Concerning Technology*, 1977: 11) and representative of the status of all the installation video works as supplements to each other.

As supplements, the works also reiterate the poetics of nuanced and differing revealings of return. The visual 'leaning up against' of repetitions of motifs across the individual works also references a familiar poetic device. The woodpile image (Fig. 4:27) exemplifies several involuntary visual references to many of Heidegger's notions, dealing as they do with a return to visions of an authentic experience of 'Dasein' linked to a rural peasant ethos.

Fig. 4:27. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Becoming Migrant*. 2006.

I intended also that the 'supplement' would enable the simultaneous presentation of many 'pasts' in the present of the installation space. As throughout the project the filmic of both experimental and experimental mainstream cinema has been referenced, I analysed versions of supplements presented as multi-layered disclosures within recent cinematic film.

What exists as the present in the selected films is always supplemented by 'the Past'. In Marguerite Duras' *Aurélia Steiner (Melbourne – Vancouver)*, (1979) it is her spoken narration which provides the excess of multiple explanations for *Aurélia Steiner*. The script for *Aurélia Steiner* also existed as supplements, with a third *Aurélia Steiner Paris* appearing in *Cahiers du Cinema* (June 1980) and later as *Green Eyes*, 1980 (translated by Carol Barko).

 Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) remains an extraordinary example of the present narrative supplemented by scenes from the past. There remains always an ambiguity around the so-called scenes of the past being in fact, 'the reality' and the post-apocalyptic underground Paris as 'supplementary'. The supplement of 'the future' overturns this, but ambivalence is maintained as to what is supplement and what is the main text.

The Weight of Water (2002, (dir. Kathryn Bigelow), parallels the narrative of Norwegian migrants' (in nineteenth-century America) encounter with emotional excess and violence, with a present day investigation of those events by a photographic journalist. The visual movements between past and present are frequently presaged by oceanic or watery imagery, or the letter that provided the one material yet temporal link.

In *Paris Texas* (1984), director Wim Wenders utilises as supplementary to the main text, the very simple and natural device of viewing home movies from happier times by the now dislocated family members. Wenders also includes a scene of characters looking through an old family photo album. Director Gus van Sant reveals little of the two Gerrys' past in

Gerry (2003), but in several later sequences, allusions to the video games (which the viewer knows featured large in their former lives) are activated by the 'game' graphics scenario.

The Sweet Hereafter (1997, (dir. Atom Egoyan) conveys particularly well how equal status has been granted to what could be termed the supplementary 'flashbacks' to the past which provide the explanation to so much that is unexplained in the narrative of

the 'present.' This seamless equality between the supplements of the past and the so-called present narrative have become even more finely tuned in very recent films such as Alejandro Inarritu's *21 Grams* (2004).

Installation provides for short filmic works (such as those produced during this project), the simultaneous presentation of all the works as supplements without a uniting central text or narrative of the present, as must occur in the linear presentation of cinematic film.

However referencing mainstream film (even if experimental and or 'foreign') along with video art, and my own purpose in utilising filmic video as a means of generating poetics, parallels the fine line that Heidegger warns of in his belief that poetic language endangered its authenticity by being placed back into the illusional space it had created.

"Poetic language, as the bringing to word and to issue of its own primordial disclosive power, always risks falling back into more traditional language" (Clark, 2002:117). I turned to the notions of 'spacing' in order to enhance both the poetic forms within the individual works and the installation design.

Derrida on the first page of interviews in *Positions* (1981), speaks of "the necessity of those 'blank spaces'" which we know […] "take on importance" in every text" (Derrida, 1981: 3). Also from *Positions* in a letter, he explicates at length the 'necessity' of spacing:

> …spacing is the impossibility for an identity to be closed on itself, on the inside of its proper interiority, or on its coincidence with itself. The irreducibility of spacing is the irreducibility of the other […] that "spacing" designates not only interval, but a "productive", "genetic", "practical" movement, an "operation"… (Derrida, 1981: 94).

Cixous has spacing occurring even *prior* to writing; "A kind of work takes place in this space that we do not know, that precedes writing, and that must be a sort of enormous region or territory where a memory has been collected" (Cixous, 1997: 28-29). She also allows for plenty of space *in* her writing; "As for space, or the silence which allows vibration: the lack of white space is the weakness of the novel. You have metres, in the poetical sense" (Calle-Gruber in Cixous, 1997: 68).

Language, according to Blanchot is a "giant murmuring of anonymous inchoate power" (Clark, 2002 :55), and a writer is compelled to impose upon it limitations of silence. By inserting blank screened emacs into the installation space groupings, I am both disrupting the notion of this (video works and installation) being all I as writer/artist have to say about *return* by positioning the actual physical forms of the computers as signifying graphemes (written forms of phonemes) to be read potentially as both silences (nothing more, or radically less than has been presenced) and spaces (everything more, or the excess of all absences not presenced). These blank emacs signal a disruption of the notion of formal or narrative 'closure' by performing a re-inscription of the computer pod classroom through which it is made different and unfamiliar by an encounter with its own limitations and boundaries. They are a space for the reader/viewer to experience an 'open' where the provisional quality of the works are communicated as the tensions between the unachievable power of the 'open' and the impossibility of absolute and final completion. Blanchot has described certain 'voids' or openings as spaces which allow "the poet to approach the unapproachable in order to be near the truth which exceeds speech…" (Rapaport, 1989: 175).

4.5 Soundscape

The installation soundscape has been designed so that no narration, commentary or dialogue of spoken voices in English language will be heard. (There are some traces of fragmentary Norwegian dialogue.) This absence (on the video work soundtracks) of recognisable spoken language is to reveal what is not present; the lack of authorial narrative, and also the poignancy of both women central to this project as always remaining unable to claim spoken agency is continually registered.

The absence of the spoken word signals a non-privileging of spoken language (as has traditionally been the case within Western philosophy). Writing/inscription is fore-grounded both as more potentially disruptive (in Derrida's sense) and as the only source of language-based meaning presented by the installation to the viewer/reader.

The fact that English is not my familial/ ancestral language is also acknowledged by its non-utterance vocally. I also intend to have a few fragments of spoken Norwegian uttered at intervals, which may work as minor disruptive elements due to being unintelligible to most. The theme of exile from 'place' is to be inscribed by the naturally occurring background noises of the site where works were filmed (for example, rural noises and city street noises).

A meaningful engagement with contemporary emotional states and particularly the troubled emigrant psyche is a key element of Atom Egoyan's films. His coding of emotion is through music and language. In interviews, Egoyan has stated that he believes one's 'mother tongue' is what gives entry to one's ancestral world and culture, and without it one is alienated from that culture. This is clearly reflected in his use of multiple languages in films such as *Ararat* (2002), and the lack of explanatory sub-titles.

 Egoyan maintains that emotion is what drives his desire to make films and yet his films have been described as 'cold'. However he actually structures the containment and acknowledgement of enormous suppressed emotions through the very careful choice and placement of music. He has said that the music in his films actually 'stands in' for the emotional presence rather than it being an accompaniment to its literal and visual acting out. Piano music recorded live, played by my cousin (maternal line) is the soundtrack to several video works. It is a subtle way of inscribing through sound, a trace of my female genealogy.

Cixous is ever alert to how the poetics of writing are enhanced by the way sound is included. "Poetry works with silence: it writes a verse, followed by a silence… In other words, there is time to hear all the vibrations" (Cixous, 1997, 66).

These 'vibrations' are what guided my choice of soundtrack for many works; for *Fjord signs, Bergen,* and *Becoming migrant. Breivikskjenet 8* finally relied entirely on the visual, and one music track which I believe was much more successful than any inclusion of the tested sub-title text or spoken narration.

Mountain is marked by a soundtrack of naturally occurring sounds particular to the family farm. This developed from the making of *Becoming migrant* in which my father's bi-lingual narration was re-inscribed quite directly as sub-titles but true to his speech patterns. The accompanying soundtrack attempts to evoke a sense of the physical setting in the absence of very few visual references to it. The children

singing, is to evoke a more immediate sense of a child's experience of these events and an elimination of boundaries of past and present.

In this work I aimed to create an aura of *return*/departure/exile out of the network of associations suggested by the most familiar sounds of that particular place, which have not changed in eighty years; the waterfall, the sheep bells, the curlews, the turning of the grinding wheel, dogs barking. Naficy notes the same aural referencing in Egoyan's *Calender*:

> The visual is accompanied by an ancient plowing song and the tolling of the church bells […] The plowing song, the bells, the mountain and the ancient church […] mark Armenia as natural, rural, spiritual, and in the past tense, close to folkloric time (Naficy, 2001: 164).

In *Fjord signs* and *Bergen,* I created soundtracks from my own distorted singing and whistling to signal that the recalling of my actual experiential response to some events of *return* was impossible to articulate in language. It was Savoj Zizek discussing Michel Chion's concept of the soundtrack as offering the possibility of rendering a third representation of 'reality' in cinema, that first prompted testing the distorted noises.

Zizek refers to David Lynch's film *The Elephant Man* and the pulse heard inside the head of John Merrick, being; "closest..to…again the beat of that "grey and formless mist, pulsing slowly as if with inchoate life." These sounds that penetrate us like invisible but nonetheless material rays are the real of the "psychic reality." This massive presence suspends so-called external reality" (Zizek, 1995: 41).

Zizek writes of the Lacanian 'real' in film, under the heading, "Rendering the real". Chion refers to the 'real' as *rendu* which:

> is opposed to the (imaginary) *simulacrum* and the (symbolic) *code* as a third way of rendering reality in cinema: neither by means of imaginary imitation nor by means of symbolically codified representation but by means of its immediate "rendering" (Zizek, 1995: 40).

Chion believes the soundtrack is how this may be done and Zizek expands on this by suggesting the soundtrack can function as the establishing shot or "a universal medium of the sound aquarium" (Zizek, 1995:40), in which images float as fragments of the symbolic order - "it would be difficult to invent a better metaphor for psychosis" (Zizek, 1995:40). *Fjord signs* and *Bergen* both present an authentic experiential response (to a state of *return*) that literally comes from inside my head. Finally – the lack of 'articulated speaking' of and from the installation works, also indicates that thinking through these presented issues of *return* remains at the beginning of thinking and is not yet to be spoken.

Chapter 5. Temporality

5.1 Temporality as authentic care: '*Being* gets to me'

A consideration of time is central to any ontological enquiry, and particularly any examination of the ontology of return by means of the time based media of video and its filmic references. An ontological question concerning the meanings of the 'beings' [conditions of *return*] and being [*return*] itself "finds it's meaning in temporality" (Heidegger, 1993b: 62).

Heidegger expresses temporality as making sense of care ; "Temporality reveals itself as the sense of authentic care" (Dreyfus, 1991: 374), and "The primordial unity of the structure of care lies in temporality" (Dreyfus, 1991: 375**).**

By the term 'care' Heidegger "wanted to name the very general fact that "*Sein geht mich an"*, roughly, that 'being gets to me'. Thus all ontic senses of caring are to be included as modes of ontological caring" (Dreyfus, 1991: 239).

Joan Stambaugh (translator of *On Time and Being,* 1972) reiterates this in her Introduction; "Heidegger states that time is the condition of the possibility of care… It is the unity of the three ecstases of time – past, present and future – that constitutes the fundamental "Outside-itself," the mysterious transparency and openness which characterise human awareness…" (Heidegger, 1972: viii).

Heidegger concludes *Being and Time* (1927) with the thought "that temporality, the basic structure of human being, is perhaps the horizon of Being" and in this sense, "horizon has to do with directionality and openness, not with causality" (Heidegger, 1972: viii).

Or to state a parallel notion of temporality with Deleuze's interpretation of Bergson's later theses on time;

> the only subjectivity is time, non-chronological time grasped in its foundation, and it is we who are internal to time, not the other way round […] Time is not the interior in us, but just the opposite, the interiority in which we are, in which we move, live and change (Deleuze, 1989: 82).

5.2 <u>Marks of Time</u>

The marking of time is an inscribing of temporality, of the signs that moment by moment change and become different from each other. The gathering and recording of raw digital video data is irrefutably defined as 'time-based' and is inevitably embedded in concepts of temporality, but arguably does not become inscription until it is replayed and viewed again after the temporal events it has recorded have become 'the past'. This visual inscription of temporality is the most obvious enquiry of time undertaken by this project.

However the performance of writing as the inscription of time is another aspect of temporality that has occurred in the development of this project initially in the role of sub-text, or literally subtitles as in the first three exploratory print series; *Relic*, *Fjell* and *Vegg*, 2005. One of the earliest video works made, (and included in the installation) *Becoming Migrant*, 2005, also explores the utilisation of subtitles as the inscription of temporality as writing.

Amongst the video works selected for the installation, there are at least four works which are either written texts (created with a digital editing programme as 'rolling text') or filmic records of writing taking place, or evidence of having taken place as in the case of the old letters and postcard apparently being re-read. Another form of inscribing time through the aural sounding of notes, each stroke establishing the different moments of time passing, is indicated by the inclusion of three video works with soundtracks of piano music played live.

Inherent within the construction of the installation there is also the anticipation of the viewer who will experience it and read the space and its inscriptions in a future that is yet to happen.

A poetic or open mode of inscription in both the individual filmic works and in the positioning of the works within the installation space provides no specific entry into the reading of the works and the viewer/reader is not led to a point of revelation that resolves the initial event of an obvious narrative. No *return* occurs in either the content of the filmic works or within the installation space which thereby underlines another aspect of temporality; that there is never a return, that *return* is an impossibility, that time proceeds always in one direction only, into the future. That the video works are looped provides a continual re-run of the search for an 'originary'

moment of essential *return* within each filmic piece rather than a return to an essential 'beginning' as such.

But as the content of the filmic works deals entirely with the events of the past and the repercussions and remembrances of those pasts in relation to a life lived in the present, there remains always the tension between the impossible-to-retrieve absent past and an anticipated future.

The notion that time follows some rational linear progression is also undermined by the multiple presentations of inscriptions of past time events. For example the four works, *Bergen*, *Breivikskjenet 8*, *Bergen text* and *Fjord Signs*, (2006), all refer to my recollection of experiencing a return visit to the city of Bergen and my first and last lengthy residences there. Each work is an authentic re-tracing of aspects of those times and yet no single work is able to convey all the differing registers of my experiences.

It is clear however that more than one type of temporality, more than one representation or thinking of temporality exists across the range of these four works. This instability of reliable memory, of single definitive retellings of the past is continued in other groupings of linked work such as, *Ryesgade/Barkly Street*, *Retrace* and *Melbourne/Copenhagen text* (2006), and *Becoming Migrant* (2005), *Technology/Falling*, *Selje/Bergen* and *Huseklepp text* (2006).

The filmic work, *Hands* (2006), also links the instability of memory to the initial physicality of an event in time and its inscription, and how this physical evidence (recorded by video) still cannot provide any guarantee of a reliable tracing of time. In fact it foregrounds video and film's ability to render temporality as inherently unstable, un-recordable in terms of a definitive narrative recollection and indecipherable in the sense of a *return* to an originary event.

Fig. 5:28. Petrea Andersen. *Video still from*: *Hands*. 2006.

These images of three pairs of hands convey a physicality of the marking of time passing, by the beat of footsteps, the playing of musical notes, the writing of text and of a genealogical (and therefore temporal) progression of family members, but there is no return to a narrative revelation; these physical moments simply move forward.

By including in the installation, video works that reference both my paternal and maternal family lines I have also thrown together content that apparently does not have any connection with each other. It is not possible for the viewer to construct any sense of temporal sequencing when confronted by works that do not link with others. The contrast between rural and urban scenes, between images of faces from the past and contemporary moving figures, is not resolved by the presence of any narrative causality or sequence.

The entire project and installation is in effect a writing of my self moving through experiences of *return* and recollection, creating an openness which has neither a specific work positioned at a point of entry, nor an eventual return to an originating

event. This absence of narrative causality or sequencing is the most significant disruption of the reduction of time to an explanatory device of 'the present'. An acknowledgement of the continual disintegration of time discloses the impossibility of *return*. Therefore this project offers what *return* could otherwise be if actual return is impossible. It can only be ways or trajectories that cannot return to an origin, but that can be traced as poetic inscription.

5.3 <u>Peaks & Sheets</u>

Originally the inclusion was planned in this exegesis, of a temporal analysis of some of the *Return* installation video works in relation to Deleuze's interpretation of the Bergsonian 'simultaneity of peaks of present and coexistence of sheets of past'. Certain of these notions concerning "the past as pre-existence in general [the recollection image] and the present as infinitely contracted past" (Deleuze, 1989: 99), could be quite usefully applied to some aspects of the project's filmic video works. However Deleuze's taxonomy seems to be specifically constructed for an understanding of cinematic film and possibly overly prescriptive for works that are more a hybrid of experimental film and video as a form of inscription within an installation space.

In particular, Deleuze's discussion of two Resnais films; *Last Year in Marienbad* (1961) and *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), is quite applicable to the contrasting origins of the *Return* video works especially when Deleuze cites Resnais's discovery of "the paradox of a memory for two people, or a memory for several; the different levels of past no longer relate to a single character, a single family […] but to quite different characters as to unconnected places" (Deleuze, 1989: 116-117), and his attainment of "a generalised relativity […] constructing *undecidable alternatives* between sheets of past" (Deleuze, 1989: 117).

Deleuze also writes that Resnais's '*undecidable alternatives* between sheets of past' are so "because their transformations are strictly probabilistic from the point of view of the coexistence of ages. Everything depends on which sheet you are located on" (Deleuze, 1989: 120). Later, Deleuze mentions one of the characters from *Last Year in Marienbad*, X, as having recollection of images which "A does not, or only very vague ones, because they are not on the same sheet" (Deleuze, 1989: 123), but, as in a dream, where "there is no longer one recollection-image which embodies one

particular point of a given sheet […] we [can] make use of transformations which take place between two sheets to constitute a sheet *of* transformation" (Deleuze, 1989: 123).

In the video works; *Ryesgade/Barkly Street*, *Fjord Signs*, *Bergen*, *Hands* and *Falling and Saving*, there are elements of Deleuzean 'sheets of transformation', certainly in terms of the possibility "for the work of art to succeed in inventing these paradoxical hypnotic and hallucinatory sheets whose property is to be at once a past and always to come" (Deleuze, 1989: 123).

Chapter 6. Inscription, Installation and Disruption

6.1 Openness, Un-doing knowledge

In order to re-inscribe the institutional 'knowledge' of the installation site (that is, the computer pod classroom) I have adopted the strategies utilised by Derrida, Cixous and Irigaray of a poetic re-writing rather than an analysing of texts to undo that which is constituted as Western philosophical knowledge.

The installation positions 'inscription' as a performing of the critique of the institutional site. I am specifically indicating a deconstructive approach to the power structures and framework of the 'learning' institution through a project which engages with openness to thinking and research across hybridised boundaries; cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional and cross-national. But a project that must none-the-less 'return' to a specific location in order to inscribe and perform the openness of the enquiries into *return*. This paradoxically requires that the project be installed within a provincial institution which is bound by the very intellectual, political and cultural hegemony that the thematic content of the work seeks to 'write over' or re-inscribe.

The 'foreign' content of the works comprising the installation are metaphorical of the 'foreignness' being inscribed in this provincial Institute of Technology site.

The term 'inscription' also implies writing, which as a disruptive mode of language (in comparison to the privileging of speech throughout traditional Western philosophy as Derrida would have it) is the dominant form of language performed in this project –absenting the spoken word. The fragments of spoken foreign language cannot take precedence due to their incomprehensibility in this location.

The family narratives of exile which were inscribed as memory for me through speech and many retellings by my parents, (and later other family members) have also been re-inscribed through writing – my rewriting, possibly subversive of the original narratives.

The surfaces onto which the installation works will be inscribed are the computer screens of twenty emacs which are the teaching/learning equipment in this classroom. As Heideggerian thinking has accompanied each research trajectory of this project, it would be correct to assume that Heidegger's notion of 'projecting' informs the choice of computer screen for the final staging of inscription. The projecting of this project research has travelled a far distance, which manifests the screens on which the final

filmic works are inscribed as points of *return*, of arrival. But a distance is maintained by not delivering to the viewer the filmic works projected in a high-tech 'black box' contemporary moving image gallery which offers optimal cinematic style viewing pleasure and signals the work as completed art object. The filmic works as poetic inscription are complete in terms of final installation, but remain provisional (and therefore remain at a distance) as final products of static inscription. They remain 'in progress' and open to possible re-inscription, which is a normal function of the classroom computer, thereby undoing any notions of unchanging ideas of fixed knowledge.

"To bring the familiar nearer by perceiving at a new distance, to cherish what we recognise by acknowledging the resistance of its otherness" (Clark, 2002: 106): this is the force of the poetic as described by Heidegger.

It is a force which can insist, demand that inscription be performed, take place, occur. The re- inscription of this educational facility, location, site is my insistence of difference. Re-inscription for Cixous, is to remember something foreign to us, (or that we would prefer to be foreign) and to recognise and value it, not let it be erased.

"The loss of that memory [fear and suffering] is impoverishing and the concern of your writing is to reinscribe it" (Calle-Gruber in Cixous, 1997: 22). That re-inscription is also always provisional: "…it begins with this experimental annotation which, what is more, is always taken from life. That is to say always mobile. Which is dated; carries the dates of a certain moment that will not return" (Calle-Gruber in Cixous, 1997: 18).

The re-inscriptions of Cixous are about the 'moments of corrections':

> The recycling is the inscription of displacements, of movements […] The recycling marks the textual differential […] not meaning but rather the re-born meaning [renaît-sens], the resurgence. Reinscribing is writing reduced to its minimal gesture (Calle-Gruber in Cixous, 1997: 68).

Writing inscribed and re-inscribed on the screens of classroom computers accompanied by poetic filmic works created by digital video on those same computers, continue Derrida's proposal for writing; a "patient meditation and painstaking investigation on and around what is still provisionally called writing"

(Derrida, 1976: 4). Trajectories or "wanderings of a way of thinking […] which proclaims itself at present, beyond the closure of knowledge" (Derrida, 1976: 4).

6.2 Intuitive methodology and staging installation

Heidegger's term *techne,* the intuiting of, or knowledge of what is at play and emergent in the work and the following through of those trajectories for the work's disclosure to occur has been a significant methodological approach. In particular the assembling of the video works as an installation within the classroom site, has engaged with the intuitive processes Blanchot describes;

> …it is because, through a radical reversal, he [writer/maker] already belongs to the work's requirements that, looking at a certain object, he is by no means content to see it as it might be if it were out of use, but makes of the object the point through which the work's requirements pass and, consequently […] the given world 'dissolves' (Blanchot, 1982: 47).

The less mediated environment is also in keeping with my intuitive non-interventionist/non-intrusive filming style. I have followed a Heideggerian idea of 'gathering' rather than 'grasping' in order to keep both the filming (and now by extension, the installation space) open to something else happening, allowing more space for reflection rather than calculated mediations of viewer response. Of course these necessarily must occur in filming and constructing any work – but it has been my intention to avoid overly determined interpretations of filmed events. I intend that this installation setting and the visual presentations will elicit some form of philosophical contemplation/questioning in the viewer – and at least signal to examiners that this is the intended purpose of the project.

The designing of the final installation began with a review of the installation I staged for the final Year One Masters examination in January, 2006. The intention of that work was to install a reconstructed space in which to stage a failure to recreate *return*. This was a literal referencing of the rural Norwegian ancestral farmhouse interior, but constructed with makeshift low quality materials, such as cheap ply panels from removal crates substituting for the quality timber panelled walls of the original

dwelling. Naïve and 'kitsch' memories were printed onto the ply panels. Two projected video works substituted as fake windows.

The conceptual elements visually translated, worked well - probably due to my print practice background - but were not projected effectively enough into the spatial aspects of the installation. The intentions of the 2007 installation were planned, tested and refined over a much longer time span. During the developmental phase, I also identified four specific concepts; a deconstructing of 'originary' notions of *return*, an experimental enactment of technology revealing *Poesis*, a disruption of the classroom site and an engagement with openness of thinking and research in terms of the cross-disciplinary practices of art installation, film-making, philosophy, language, narrative, poetics and education.

A definitive focus on framing the 2007 work as an 'event', was a result of analysing the less successful aspects of the Year One installation. The 'installation as event' was also influenced by research into the exhibiting of filmic video works at Melbourne's Screen Gallery at ACMI as well as into several other video installations at the NGV and ACCI which I had undertaken earlier in April/ May 2006.

I analysed closely the staging of filmic works by four Commonwealth artists from the 2006 Contemporary Commonwealth exhibition at the ACMI Screen Gallery. All four works were close in theme to my *Return* project.

Isaac Julien's filmic video, *Paradise Omeros* (U.K., 2003) was at 20:29 minutes of lush colour and performative tableaux, the most cinematic viewing experience of these four works. Berni Searle*'s Home and Away* (South Africa 2003); a double screen video, depicts her floating in the sea between Morocco and Spain. For the viewer it is impossible to view both screens at once, metaphorically reflecting the migrant's plight caught between Africa and Europe.

gins_leap / dubb_speak by r e a, (Australia 2003 - 05) is a multi-screen interactive video and sound installation which traces the spiritual and emotional connections of four indigenous women to their once traditional 'homelands' through the landscape and tracks of their ancestral ranges. John Gillies' black and white single channel digital video work; *Divide (*Australia 2004) examines the 'foundation of Australia', its current fears and neuroses, the intruder as both destroyer and powerless witness, cultural layering and un-reconciled ambiguity.

All these works displayed very high production values, which strongly suggested a

bidding for a high positioning in the 'art object' hierarchy. They were also very enjoyable viewing experiences, but were so close to cinematic entertainment style viewing that any sense of questioning, thinking or critique was sacrificed for 'viewer friendly' comfort.

I decided that staged as 'event'; the *Return* installation (planned for January, 2007) offered more potential in terms of criticality and a more challenging reading.

From his reading of *Time & Being* (1927), Rapaport notes;

> Being [*return*] is sent through an "event" whose moments both appropriate and expropriate "correspondences" so that in the arrival of Being [*return*] there is what Heidegger calls a "turning away" from the truth of Being [*return*], a moment, in other words, in which Being [*return*] is subjected to "demolition" or "destruction (Rapaport, 1989: 16).

This is a moment when the concept of *return* may be appropriately substituted for Being in the above quote.

The staging of the installation refers obliquely to a literalising of Heidegger's notion of *poesis* revealed in technology and how the video work's 'presencing' fragments of what *return* might be, are sent through an event - a technological event of computer screens as equipment in operation.

Derrida's performative writing such as *The Post Card* "literalises Heidegger's notion of 'correspondence' as the postal system's technology" (Rapaport, 1989: 17). It could be said to perform this from an experiential position as "the "letters" Derrida writes are autobiographical, personal effects of the life of the writer" (Rapaport, 1989: 17), which he then 'sends through the postal system'.

Thereby Derrida inscribes Heidegger's notions of language as being the system of events through which *Ereignis* ["experience, event, transport, enchantment" (Young, 2002: 52).] is articulated and subverted as correspondence, technology and the phases of delivery and *return*.

Derrida performs an "imitation" of Heidegger; "that of recollection as strategic forgetting" (Rapaport, 1989: 18). "Heidegger had made the turn from an ontological to a temporal analytic through a consideration of language as metalepsis" [-transference] (Rapaport, 1989: 19). Heidegger's use of "correspondence" refers to a

gathering together of words wherein a radical temporality associated with *Ereignis* occurs (Rapaport, 1989: 20).

6.3 Computer pod as site, Community as *Return*

The choice of computer pod teaching/learning space, signals an avoidance of yet another art institution authorised space imposing limitations (such as a need for sealed completeness as products) on the video works and underlines their being 'under construction'.

Using the emacs as actual 'objects installed' in the site, I am signalling the 'integrating [of] the "object" of technology into the site" (Suderburg, 2000: 18), as many recent installation artists have done. The uniform technological appearance and linear standardised placement of the emacs (as it is with all computers) always immediately identifies them as enframed equipment; as 'standing reserve'. To perceive them as objects in themselves rarely occurs. However the poignancy of their already outdated status and their imminent 'de-commissioning' from service, may give a pause; a space, to briefly contemplate them as objects, things in themselves: the *Beingness* of emacs.

In her essay, *The Space of Electronic Time: The Memory Machines of Jim Campbell,* Marita Sturkin reminds that "the space of installations is inhabited not by the artist but by the viewers" (Sturkin, 2000: 287), and therefore it is for the artist to define the context of how the installation 'performs' for the viewer, possibly even in unexpected ways.

Sturkin notes the paradoxical relationship between electronic technology and memory:

> The idea of the database, what could be seen as an aesthetic or fetishization of the concept of storage, works in tension with the fleeting aspects of the live, transmitted image, at once instant, but then ungraspable and gone (Sturkin, 2000: 288).

Sturkin suggests that "the fascination with memory in computer consumer culture is a reaction to the ways in which we experience our memory [uncontrollable, arbitrary, random, unexpected] as so unlike the supposedly all-knowable database" (Sturkin,

2000: 288). Jim Campbell and other artists have already presented a sophisticated reflection of this notion by programming their digital monitors to record within the site as well as transmit their images.

The presence of the emacs in the 2007 *Return* installation as 'objects of content' continue to signal "these devices [as] conduits for memory's assertions and evasions" (Sturkin, 2000: 291). The ubiquitous presence of computers in virtually all learning sites also signals how technology is inscribed as the dominant mode of contemporary institutionalised education.

Because the works are not being presented in a 'completed' form in an 'authorised optimal' exhibition space, I intend the viewer to recognise that this research project is still being thought, remains 'under-construction' and is provisional. Although for the purposes of the installation, exhibition and examination, this work is 'finished'.

> The books that I love are not masterful narratives but journals of experiences. They are books that have recorded, and indeed left intact, *the emergence* of an experience that has been located and noticed for the first time (Cixous, 1997: 57).

For the two years of this project, an emac has fulfilled the role of journal - in fact, has been my journal. On this emac/journal the video 'data' has been transformed through long editing processes and 'written' into works. The emacs in the installation site are also journals – representative of the writing I value most, the writing that Cixous also appreciates - precisely because journals reveal the preparations, the hesitations, the provisional; "…you are on the side of the journal, of the unfinished, of the preparations" (Calle-Gruber in Cixous, 1997: 61).

It is undoubtedly appropriate to present the results of my research project in this learning/teaching site, as it has been (is) the 'present' ground from which I have ventured and projected out from – beyond known horizons.

This site also is my "community of the question" (Derrida, 1978: 80), which is arguably the only community worth belonging to, according to Derrida in his essay *Violence & Metaphysics*. The questions that come 'after philosophy', where true thinking might begin as Heidegger would have it:

these should be the only questions today capable of founding the community […] of those who are still called philosophers [thinkers? learners? teachers? …] despite the diaspora of institutes and languages, despite the publications and techniques that follow on each other (Derrida, 1978: 79).

The research project themes of displacement, loss of community and a sense of cultural exile also make this particular site appropriate; one cannot replace or re-construct what is lost, the theme of the 2006 Year One studio examination, but one can claim a space in which to think through what can instead be possible. Hölderlin: "everything in the homecoming is familiar but estranged by being seen anew, newly realized in its specific nature in a way imperceptible to a daily inhabitant" (Clark, 2002: 108).

Heidegger believed the work of art to be an irreducibly strange mode of being (due to the element of otherness that makes it resistant to worldly meaning) which was a potential event of 'homecoming', of a possibility for a sense of 'true' *Being*:

> Proximity makes the Near near, and yet at the same the sought-after, and therefore the not near. Proximity consists in bringing near the Near, while keeping it at a distance. Proximity is a mystery. In this proximity is the essence of home and homeland (Heidegger, 1993b: 145).

Whereas Blanchot also viewed art as inherently 'strange', he positioned the writer/poet/artist as belonging to the foreign, as a 'wanderer' and the artwork as a "refusal of the historical place (the *polis*) of a specific people" (Clark, 2002: 148). And therefore 'homecoming' was an 'impossibility' through the work of art. For Blanchot, the 'literary space' was "an anarchic acultural force […] which makes up a perpetual outside to history and the work of meaning" (Clark, 2002: 148).

6.4 Enframing, technology and institutions

However despite the potential for the tertiary institution classroom to be the contemporary optimal space for questioning and thinking, it becomes increasingly bound to prescriptive frameworks, within which thinking and learning and teaching

must conform to (or are at least expected to adhere to) an enframing designed to 'yield' rather than 'reveal'.

Derrida had already realised that his 'community of the question' would also be "a threatened community, in which the question has not yet found the language it has decided to see, is not yet sure of its own possibility within the community" (Derrida, 1978: 80).

Because of this provisional status, the institution as a community is vulnerable, particularly so in being a transitory phase in the lives of both students and teachers. This community is also endangered by the forces of power relations that would harness thinking, learning and questioning to a technologicalised standardisation.

> The limitless domination of modern technology in every corner of this planet is only the late consequence of a very old technical interpretation of the world, the interpretation that is usually called metaphysics (Heidegger, 1975: 91, in Clark, 2002: 30).

Heidegger believed (as explained by enframing) that technology as 'disposing' and 'ordering' did in fact perform a 'revealing' but in a way that obliterates *poesis*. In his essay *The Age of the World Picture* (1938) Heidegger expresses how enframing (technological disposing and ordering) makes 'stock', of the images of what is potentially *Dasein*. Technological disposing reveals entities as being available as stock - to manipulate, to extract, to exploit, to coerce, to compel, to harness them as stock – as 'standing reserve'. His hope was that artists might 'entice' from technology a poetic but hidden 'saving power'. He called this a "letting be":

> …perhaps the great danger of technology also harbours a saving power. For the more apparent it becomes that techno-science and the modes of social organization that go with it are not at our control, then […] the *Gestell* as the aggressive objectification of the world as a resource for human consumption and aggrandizment – will emerge as an object of thought itself (Clark, 2002: 38).

That the saving potential of art would be stifled by institutionalised education and technology was Heidegger's greatest fear for the future.

In a letter from 1968, Heidegger wrote; "Behind the technological world there is a mystery…" (in Clark, 2002: 97), which suggested a way around his earlier thoughts:

> Philosophy is ending in the present age […] The need to ask about modern technology is presumably dying out to the same extent that technology more definitely characterises and regulates the appearance of the totality of the world and the position of man in it (Heidegger, 1972: 58).

Heidegger's early questioning of the nature of technology must also point to a profound critique of the idea of a university or academic institution "whose existence is already an uneasy compromise between political and social forces and intellectual work supposedly dominated by reason alone" (Clark, 2002:139-140).

In the 2007 strategic teaching and learning plans of most New Zealand Institutes of Technology, mention will be made of the role of the "Instructional Designer". These are industry staff positions and the holders design training programmes. They are not teachers or lecturers or academics. They name teachers and lecturers; "instructors", academics become "subject-matter experts". The "instructional designers" will be invited to apply their industrial *Gestell* to the learning environments of the Institutes of Technology and through an 'instructional systems development process' will "yield the most effective course experience for the learners within required parameters."

Clearly a concerted and focused effort is already underway to 'enframe' academic staff as 'standing reserve', to be harnessed, compelled, coerced by the industry trained prescriptive "instructional systems designer", whose previous role was to harness or enframe the standing reserves of industry. Lecturers, teachers, educators - converted and reduced to 'standing reserve', to become merely instrumental in the "yielding" of commodified 'knowledge'.

> The site of installation becomes a primary part of the content of the work itself, but it also posits a critique of the practice of art-making within the

institution by examining the ideological and institutional frameworks that support and exhibit the work of art (Suderburg, 2000: 5).

Conclusion

The art of the open:

> …what the technological does not know how to encompass: The art of the
> open. This is an art of the threshold, the liminal possibility, an art of
> beginnings. It declares a context of radical inquiry and a space of continuous
> presencing before the unknown (Quasha & Stein, 2000: 133).

Presenting the filmic video works in the teaching/learning site signals that an attempt
to really think (as Heidegger would have it) is being made before any further
construction takes place. As Heidegger states in *Building Dwelling Thinking* it is not
possible to build without first really thinking – 'which we have hardly begun to do'.
"poetry can go where philosophy – not where it stops, but … suspends" (Calle-Gruber
in Cixous, 1997; 79).

I consider the teaching/learning environment to be arguably the best option for an
'open space' that contemporary society has access to (Heidegger writes that only in an
"openness" or "clear space" can "unconcealment" have any hope of taking place).

This space where questioning, thinking and research are assumed to be the prioritised
activities, makes it possible for an engagement with the viewer on the basis of
experiencing the provisional results of a visual arts research project as tentative and
multiple in nature.

The content of the filmic installation works also holds disruptive potential for the
provincial status of this site where naïve misconceptions of the role of the visual arts,
thinking and philosophical questioning may be overturned. It may also challenge
provincialism's vulnerability to misunderstanding that complexity, foreignness, the
provisional do not threaten a worthwhile community of the question, but instead
confirms and sustains that community.

Through the ontological investigation of *return* by means of an experiential research
methodology, which traced from the outset an autobiographical trajectory concerned
with unconcealing displacements, substitutions, exile, this project discloses how these
conditions of [the desire to] return necessarily challenge the dominant modes of
thinking *return.*

In this way the installation could be viewed as a reflection of how a *return* of the many registers and strata of 'displacment' may operate as a challenging of the dominant structures of an institutional community.

This project offers the paradoxical inscription of how the trajectories of a cross institutional, cross media, cross national, cross disciplinary research project must operate within those frameworks and yet endeavour to HOLD OPEN an openness to the predetermined site, the institutional community as a space of thinking and questioning and to technology revealing, rather than enframing and coercing.

The alienation of the migrant, the longing and loss of migrant displacement will become the psychic plague of a society which does not resist the expansion of a techno-science that sacrifices the human for the operational efficiency of technological systems.

The desire to return to an "earthly Paradise" (Naficy, 2001: 156), is no longer possible for post-industrial societies (the last phenomenological experiences of it as villagers, tribes people or peasant farmers were lost with my father's generation). But as Derrida made so clear, it is his own sense of displacement and reinscribed genealogy that is the force which projects authentic thinking and questioning.

> But could I explain anything without it, ever? No, nothing of what preoccupies me, what engages me, what keeps me in motion or in "communication," nothing of what summons me sometimes across the silent time of interrupted communications, nothing, moreover, of what isolates me in a kind of almost involuntary retreat (Derrida, 1998: 71-72).

Like Derrida, I also have felt vulnerable, guilty even, in offering my much too obscure sense of displacement as example; "I have just made a scene" (Derrida, 1998: 72).

It is as if I have no right to speak from such an obscure location.

"What I am entertaining doubts about, supposing it is of interest to anyone at all, would be the extent to which that scene betrays me…" (Derrida, 1998: 72-73).

But in dwelling; "There is no possible habitat without the difference of this exile and this nostalgia" (Derrida, 1998: 58).

Post-script

The examination of the final installation took place on 12th February 2007, at 'A' Pod, Visual Arts and Design Department, E.I.T. Gloucester Street, Taradale. The exhibition titled; *RETURN: An installation of 15 filmic video works on emacs*, was opened later that day to public viewing.

The following artist's statement was provided for viewers:

"This entire visual arts and design research project and eventual installation, is in effect a writing of my *self* moving through experiences of return and recollection, an enquiry into notions of exile and its legacies, temporality and poetics and an acknowledgement that the continual disintegration of time discloses the impossibility of *return*. Therefore this filmic video installation offers what *return* could otherwise be, if actual return is impossible. It can only be 'ways' or trajectories, that cannot return to an origin, but that can be traced as poetic inscription.

"…One never inhabits what one is in the habit of calling inhabiting. There is no possible habitat without the difference of this exile, this nostalgia" (Derrida, 1998, 58). The installation has been designed to convey; a deconstructing of 'originary' notions of *Return*, an experiment into whether technology can reveal poetics, (as Heidegger suggested) and an engagement with openness of thinking and research in terms of the cross disciplinary practices of art installation, film-making, philosophy, language, narrative, poetics and education".

The statement reflects the phenomenological event which the staging of the installation so clearly emphasised. The video works were looped continuously on twenty identical white emacs which were positioned on several rows of classroom work tables in such a way that a linear structure was avoided. The viewer entered a darkened room to be confronted by the glowing emacs, each angled so that all screens were immediately visible. This initiated a phenomenological exercise for the spectator which involved an attempt to comprehend the process as a whole.

The viewer was then required to discover how they might connect with particular works, understand how the individual works connected with each other and how the 'soundscape' communicated aspects of the filmic images on screen. Possibilities for moments of revelation to occur were presented through the chance conjunctions of image associations as the differing length of looped video works continually re-configured these juxtapositions. The texts and sub-titles of some works initially gave

the viewer a sense of a narrative to unravel. But a narrative temporal trajectory was ultimately impossible to trace through the installation. This reflected the concerns of the project with such Derridean notions of deferral, displacement, substitution and supplement to disclose the impossibility of return.

The glowing white emacs as emblems of a particular technological 'beingness' was a continual enigmatic presence which was heightened by the flickering on and off of five of the emacs at various unscheduled moments. Subsequently there was the possibility within the installation, of between one and five blank screens disrupting a continual flow of images from every screen. This occurrence subtly reminded the spectator of what was actually happening as an event within that particular space; Heidegger's proposal of poetic revelation through the use of technology.

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