

*Mining Poetic Connection*  
*with*  
*Moving Image Practice*  
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Post Mortem

After the death  
There is the grief.  
After the storm, there are the tears.  
After the earth  
Is wet, a seed is  
Awake...

After the pain  
There is a bud that grows,  
Soft, new,  
Vulnerable and strong  
With the story of all  
That has gone before  
In the pattern of its  
Pulse.

Su Ansell ©1994<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Opening to short film: 'Suit & Tie' by S Ansell (1994)

## **Abstract**

This paper is an exploration of what it means for me as a filmmaker/practitioner to create, what I refer to as: 'poetry for the screen'. It examines the implications this has for the interpretation and development of 'experimental film' and looks at this subject in the context of filmmaking by women artists and filmmakers in particular.

This term is taken to include film art, such as the video installation work of the Wilson sisters, or even experiences of enhanced reality using moving image and sound, such as the 'videowalks' of Canadian Janet Cardiff. What it is *not* about, is making visuals to illustrate poetry, nor putting poetic text on screen, though both of these may also occur as part of a poetic film work.

I provide a short summary of many of the elements of poetic filmmaking, and refer to and undertake a brief examination of the theories of semiotics and poetics where they are applicable to the creation of the type of film/art work mentioned above.

I then discuss, giving examples from my own most recent piece and other's films, including the seminal influence of the work of Maya Deren, how films created in this way provide a gateway to the imagination, eschewing many of the morès of conventional narrative structures, e.g. by not necessarily using dialogue, naturalistic performances, or plotting formulae, relying rather on meanings suggested by symbolic connection to convey a message, and express ideas or feelings.

Finally, the impact of new technologies on artistic filmmaking is considered, specifically, the opening up of new possibilities for poetic connection to be made in the future, through immersive and interactive media.

## **Introduction**

I have always found poetry to be a source of inspiration, whether, as a girl empathising with the poignant work of The War Poets, in particular Wilfred Owen, or seduced by the romance of the delicate works of Paul Verlaine, or awakened as a young woman by the power of the written and spoken word poetry upsurge in the 1980's including the work of the Poet Laureate (to come) Carole-Anne Duffy. The visual way I view the world has also been affected by what I refer to as poetic literature, such as the novels of Virginia Woolf or Jeanette Winterson among many others. Indeed, this poetic aspect was (and still is) my passport to the world of the imagination, and the 'imagined', in my view a far better place than an existence within the dominant, and for me, quite alien ideologies of 1980's Britain. I began writing poetry as an undergraduate, in very pared down, image-laden, evocative language. I was a language student, so had been steeped in literature and language all of my educational life. It may seem strange as a moving image-maker to be talking about language, about words, yet for me there is a strong connection between the poetic word and the image, in that both are methods of triggering feeling, of transcending the mundane realm of what we assume to be reality and of reconstructing reality through the filter of the artists' senses and sensibilities. Jeanette Winterson, in her set of essays: 'Art Objects' likens art poetically to the ancient Spanish 'Real' (or sixpence):

The small silver coin of art cannot be spent; that is it cannot be exchanged or exhausted. What is lost, what is destroyed, what is tarnished, what is misappropriated, is ceaselessly renewed by the mining, shaping, forging imagination that exists beyond the conjectures of the everyday. Imagination's coin, the infinitely flexible metal of the Muse, metal of the moon, in rounded structure offers new universes, primary worlds that substantially confront the pretences of notional life...  
(Winterson, 1995)

What I hope for, in creating, both a piece of poetry or a moving image work is loosely to weave various elements together in a delicate fabric of connections. The word 'loosely' is key, as it is crucial that there are gaps in this fabric, gaps into which a reader or a viewer contributes their own frame of reference, their own experience, threads which connect to the imagination, thus enhancing and extending the resonance of the work.

I will look at the elements that make up this 'loose-woven fabric', of how poetic meaning is created via their juxtaposition and layering, illustrating this idea with some examples from my own work. I will

attempt to deconstruct the work and provide some analysis of my creative processes as a poetic filmmaker, which underpin the creation of meaning in my films.

It is perhaps a good time to emphasise that I am a practitioner, hence the frequent use of the 'first person' point of view in this thesis. I hope the reader will forgive me this indulgence, in recognition of the value and integrity of the first-hand experience within artistic practice. However, some reference to the theoretical frameworks of poetics and semiotics will undoubtedly be helpful in providing an understanding of the relationship between the elements with which I am working and the effect I am trying to create with my films. I provide examples of the ways in which my work and that of other practitioners in the field offer a 'gateway' to the imagination of the 'viewer' of the work, through inviting 'non-linear' connections between elements. Could this experience be ameliorated even further by the inclusion of (new) technologies? We have, in effect always 'interacted' with works of art, so will the plethora of new media platforms interfaces and functions enable the artist/filmmaker to further the imaginative participation of the audience with a work through greater engagement of the senses? To explore this subject in full may be the subject of future investigation, which is beyond the bounds of this study, however I will be looking at avenues of poetic expression within moving image pieces created and exhibited outside of the conventional 'cinema' framework.

To return to the subject of language, the elements with which the reader of poetry or poetic literature may be familiar include the use of Metaphor, Symbol and simile, which allude to the potent qualities of words to conjure up images and connections, by their juxtaposition. This visual tapestry can further be embellished with linguistic devices, which play with our sonic memory and imagination, such as onomatopoeia; sibilance; assonance, alliteration, repetition and rhyme. Written and spoken poetry scans and contains phrases, very much like music. As such it is capable of stimulating our senses and evoking powerful emotion.

I am indebted to language teachers who, during my school years, imparted to me a love of poetry, which I carry with me to this day, and attempt to convey through my filmmaking. As mentioned earlier, the work of 19<sup>th</sup> century French poet Paul Verlaine in particular captured my imagination. I was especially taken with the idea that poetry could 'capture the ephemeral' by simply 'opening up the senses' of the writer or artist, that he was fascinated by the 'vagueness' of things, which were misty and mysterious, fleeting

and light. He, as I am when creating film, is interested in the meanings 'in-between'.

A beautifully evocative example of this is the following poem, from his work: 'Romances Sans Paroles' written in 1873, all the more affecting when read in its native French. The sound of the piece is as important as the images conjured up by the words, in creating the overall effect of delicate, nuanced, but above all sensual experience. The poet lingers with longing in a room, after the longed-for woman has left, the fragile strains of a nostalgic tune haltingly played on the piano somehow expressing repressed desire and yearning. 'The piano caressed (or even, *kissed*) by a trembling hand glows faintly in the pink and grey evening...' (My English paraphrasing).

'Ariettes Oubliés

'V'  
(extract)

*'Le piano que baise une main frêle  
Luit dans le soir rose et gris vaguement  
Tandis qu'avec un très léger bruit d'aile*

*Un air bien vieux, bien faible et bien charmant  
Rôle discret, épeuré quasiment,  
Par le boudoir longtemps parfumé d'Elle....'*

Garnier-Flammarian, (1976, p69)

Naturally when I began making films this was the alchemy I wanted to engage in. After all, during the films I enjoyed watching most, I did not feel like I was a spectator, but a participant, with my senses fully engaged in the experience.

For this same reason, I have also been attracted to the connection between theatre and film: the theatricality of film, the filmic qualities of theatre, (I am an ardent follower of the work of French-Canadian Theatre Director/Actor/Set Designer: Robert Lepage).

I experienced this 'cross-pollination' of media in my teens, when I saw a 'stage' adaptation of the traditional American folk legend: 'Johnny Appleseed', which involved the elements of projection, performance/dance, music, sound, narration, and took place on the floor very close to the audience. All of these elements came together for me at that time creating some kind of 'magic connection' between the senses, something that I would later

recognise also come to recognise as a kind of immersive poetry. It was not literal. It was rather, spiritual. It spoke directly to my feelings and created an effect that was far greater than the sum of its parts. It was like entering into another world, a 'fourth dimension' if you like. It is something I have pursued ever since, like some favourite dream, trying to re-conjure the romance, the sense of total engagement in an experience. It is why I write poetry, which in itself attempts to conjure up images, sounds, memories, the essence of experiences, and why later I began to try to translate that for the screen. In a newspaper interview, I would later describe my first film as a 'screen poem'.

In the piece, entitled: '*Suit & Tie*' (1994) I attempted through a series of juxtaposed scenes shot with a variety of women, to create an expression of the diversity of female identities. This was to challenge the monopolised, and fixed stereotypical representations of 'woman' I had experienced on the whole as a cinema-goer, and to which I felt we were all subjected in the wider UK media at the time. The performers in the film selected costumes to wear, in which they felt a sense of their own 'power'. Some chose tuxedo suits and ties, or rock 'n' roll outfits, others wore business suits and eclectic combinations of accessories. They carried out ritualised performances at imaginary 'altars', including placing flowers at the foot of an iconic image of Marlene Dietrich in Tuxedo attire; A soundtrack consisting of playful improvised vocals singing poetry accompanies their performances. This in turn is interwoven with experimental music played by one of the women on saxophone, and snippets of interview with my mother talking about her own successes, her daughters and her memories of her own mother. I saw my work as 'holding up a prism to female existence'. Props and costume were integral to the poetic expressions of what it means to be female.

I was already working instinctively, informed by my own experience, with poetic Metaphor and the idea of the woman as 'signifier', challenging the Hollywood created norm of woman as object rather than the subject of the creative process:

Woman..stands, in patriarchal culture, as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning. (Mulvey, 1989, p15)

I was always drawn to being a 'maker of meaning'. Delving further back into my childhood, to my first cinematic experience as a spectator, reveals perhaps the origins of the desire

to create 'poetry for the screen'. I was five years old and taken on a school trip to see David Lean's *'Oliver Twist'* (1948). The opening scene, despite being shot in black and white had a huge impact on me as a small child, (without, incidentally, a TV at home). Oliver Twist's mother (played by Josephine Stuart), heavily pregnant and in the latter stages of labour battles the elements, traverses a wild, stormy landscape on a moonlit night, towards the workhouse where the beleaguered woman is to be delivered of her baby, only to die after hearing his first plaintive, hungry cries. Wintry branches in the foreground are etched against scudding moonlit clouds and violin strings seem to stretch and screech in pain, echoed visually by the arching of a thorny bramble blown by the wind as the woman clutches her back and stumbles desperately on. The invention of this powerful and emotive opening scene to this iconic film is in fact credited to actress Kay Walsh (who plays 'Nancy'). A David Lean biography reveals that Lean did not find Dickens' original opening in the book visually inspirational so created a competition amongst cast and crew to elicit ideas. Kay Walsh was the only person to respond to the call. She in turn had taken her inspiration from the early days of silent cinema:

From being three or four and sitting in the fleapit. I couldn't read so I don't remember any of the titles. I just remember this girl pulling her shawl around her, and she had those great big eyes with lots of black round them and a tiny mouth and she sank into a ditch and the whole thing was stamped on me forever. (Brownlow, 1996)

Much in the same way, this scene has stayed with me and provided the poetic narrative thread for the opening to my most recent short film: *'Rockabye'* (2010). My film references this scene, but is also loosely based on the existence of a real-life character living in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Derbyshire, a woman known locally as 'Betty Kenny', whose life is said to be the inspiration behind the familiar and ubiquitous lullaby: 'Hush-a-bye-baby'.

Within both scenes, elements act as tropes, in much the same way as the written poetic elements mentioned previously. These would include production design features, incorporating costume, props, location as well as character, and performance. It would also include text, even visual and special effects, and sound, including narration and music. All of which carry or contribute to layers of symbolic or poetic meaning.

The study of these elements has been undertaken in depth within the realms of semiotics and poetics.

Semiosis is the production of meaning: 'an attempt to reconceptualise the world through linguistics' (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992). It was thought initially that film, as a means of communicating complex messages, thus a kind of 'language' could be broken down and codified in exactly the same way as written language.

The first explorations making connections between written language, syntax and film were the Russian Formalists in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In its earliest formulations these theories, were nevertheless not aligned to conventional technical and narrative forms, but stressed the 'poetic' use of film. The authors highlight that nevertheless,

..the Formalist aesthetic was 'anti-grammatical', anti-normative in that it stressed deviation from the aesthetic and technical norms, this it looked with favour on the avant-garde (Stam, et al, 1992, p11).

Later theories of semiotics were to revert to the Saussurian tradition and accentuate the 'literary specificity' of film. (Stam, 1992).

Boris Eikhenbaum in 'Poetika Kino' (1927) stated that cinematic visuals behaved in the same way as 'phrases' in written language, which could be connected together to form 'sentences'. The full meanings could, he concludes, be ascertained via shot-by-shot analysis. He also referred to an 'inner speech' within the audiences' mind. 'The director constructs the film in such a way as to elicit the appropriate speech in the consciousness of the spectator.' (Eikhenbaum in Stam, 1992).

These concepts would be taken up and expanded by theorist Christian Metz and others in the 1960's. Metz and other cine-semiologists were working within the formal framework theorised much earlier by Ferdinand de Saussure, but he refined these ideas by beginning to consider the film as a 'discourse', as a 'text', a 'signifying system'. (Stam, 1992, p34), or sets of interwoven codes, which could be deciphered.

In relation to my own work I am interested in the term 'Ostranie' coined by Russian Formalist: Schlovsky, meaning 'making strange' or defamiliarisation, as I take this to mean a kind of 'awakening' of the audience to view film in an active, rather than a passive way. Schlovsky refers to 'the way a piece of art..simultaneously reveals its own processes of production and those of society.' (Stam, 1992).

Poetic connection seems to me, to be a way of stimulating the brain to consider and, even *enjoy*, many layers of meaning, often simultaneously. Through this 'awakening' by, stimulated by the juxtaposition of filmic tropes, the spectator enters a 'dialogue of the imagination' with the piece, through which connections with individual experience and learning evoke new meaning and a heightened level of awareness within the minds of the audience.

In another, related, albeit theatrical context, nonetheless relevant here, audience members are referred to more recently, as 'spect-**actors**' by Brazilian Theatre Director: Augusto Boal. Theatre, not unlike poetic film in my view, is a multi-faceted, multi-sensory experience, in which the audience plays an active role; For Boal there is an added socio-political dimension to this process:

Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it....What I want is for the spect-actor to take an heroic stance, not the character. (Boal, 1992).

It is no accident that Boal's ideas about the creation of theatre have their foundations in the writings of radical Brazilian educator: Paulo Freire, who, in his radical and influential book: '*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*' (first published in Portuguese in 1968) outlines the concept of 'dialogue' between the teacher and learner emphasising the active nature of the learner in this interaction. Boal saw theatre as a dynamic and fluid exchange between audience and performers, and he, himself never stopped learning within this process. The audience was not, in his world of theatre, purely a passive receiver of spectacle.

These views appear to echo in part at least, the aspirations of German theatre director, playwright and poet, Bertolt Brecht, who, with theatrical devices, anti-plot, suspense, and unthinking passivity attempted to create a heightened awareness in his audiences with what he termed a 'Verfremdungseffekt' (alienation effect), which he also wanted to use to encourage people to think about their own situation in a socio-political way. He wished the audience to concentrate, not on *what* was going to happen next, but the *how?* and the *why?*

As a maker of work, I too am interested in encouraging the audience to think proactively, although for me, emotional engagement is also part of the experience, part of that 'dialogue of the imagination'. I relish, for example the theatricality of Lean's opening scene to '*Oliver Twist*'. The juxtaposition of apparently

disparate objects and images creates a poetic whole, inviting us in to connect to the experience of the woman on the moor.

In *'Rockabye'* (2010) I make little concession to recreating 'reality', but invite the audience into a world with its own signs, symbols and logic. There is little attempt to hide the artifice of costume and props. They act as 'clues', signifiers, which carry meaning by association (historical/cultural/personal). The audience is being asked to suspend their disbelief in the same manner as they would when watching a play.

However, I too have to take issue with the codification of imagery (and sound) in too rigid a manner. As has been well charted by the developments, refinement and theoretical diversification within the related fields of semiotics and poetics, there have been indeed a number of issues with transposing literally and rigidly the structural elements of written language to film. Derrida maintained that language was in any case '..a place of semiotic "play", an indeterminate field of infinite slippages and substitutions..' (Stam, p24)

Thus, from this early 'Structuralist' standpoint, evolved Post-structuralist analyses and interpretations of film, the cinema and cinematic experience. Roland Barthes, with his formative text: *'Mythologies'* (published in 1957) developed the notion of 'polysemy', literally that the juxtaposition of images creating 'many meanings' which are context dependent, and open to many interpretations. (Barthes, 1973)

With the emergence of the idea of 'film as text' came the analyses of relationships between texts or 'Intertextuality' and 'Transtextuality': the application of the meanings of one type of 'text' (e.g. from other creative/art works) to another. Metz increasingly views film as a *dynamic* text, which is 'non-finalised', in a state of 'perpetual displacement', in which codes contained within the filmic tropes continually act, interact with and react to each other (Stam, Burgoyne, Flitterman-Lewis, 1992).

Feminism has had a crucial bearing on these key developments:

A feminist perspective provides ways into a text, poses the kinds of questions asked of a textual analysis. These may include: what functions does a woman character perform within the film's narrative? How are women represented visually? Are certain fixed images of women being appealed to? How do women not function, how are they not represented in the film? And perhaps at a deeper level, a textual analysis might attend

to disjunctions, ruptures or inconsistencies in the text, at the level of narrative or image, or both, and ask whether and in what ways woman as signifier or structure informs or relates to those absences. (Khun, 1982)

Feminist analyses of film have drawn on the influence of psychoanalysis, (in particular, through Lacan's interpretations of Freud) which has taken a pivotal role in deciphering meaning in film 'texts', also in considering the relationship of the audience to the work and the environment in which the work is shown.

In the writings of Julia Kristeva the notion of the 'Sémiotique' defines the fluidity within the creation of meaning as opposed to the rigidity of the 'Symbolic':

We shall distinguish the sémiotique from the realm of signification, which is always that of a proposition or judgement, in other words a realm of positions  
(Kristeva, 1984 in Fuery, 2000)

Central to Kristeva's concerns, drawn from her analysis of the writings of Lacan, was that the 'Unconscious speaks' (Lechte, 1990) but whilst Lacan suggested in his readings of Freud that this was with a communicable language Kristeva's position is that the very act of creation is the formation of subjectivity itself:

It's necessary to see how all great works of art..are..masterful sublimations of those crises of subjectivity which are known, in another connection, as psychotic crises. That has nothing to do with the freedom of expression of some vague kind of subjectivity, which is the basis for all creation, one, which takes as its very precondition the possibility of survival.  
(Kristeva in Lechte, 1990)

Kristeva's theory considers that meaning in film is drawn, not only from the elements within the text of the work, but crucially also from the viewer's relationship to the image, via what is known as the 'thetic' boundary. This is not, as Fuery emphasises (2000) purely the division between the audience and the content of the film, but also dependent on the context in which the audience experiences the film. Fuery summarises Kristeva's hypothesis as follows:

..the thetic has the following attributes: it represents the positioning of subject to object; it demarcates the difference between the two; it marks the threshold of language systems..it presents a certain type of relationship of the

subject to the self, via the image; it provides a line of demarcation between the Symbolic and the sémiotique (as well as containing the moments of disruption between them); it marks the moment of the subject' entry into the Symbolic. (Fuery, 2000)

The method I have employed to 'invite the audience in' to the viewing process is to create a latticework of juxtaposed elements, imbued with my own connections, but also to leave enough 'space' between them to allow for the audience to weave threads from their own imagination, thoughts and experiences, thus completing the creation of the work.

With reference to the approaches taken to interpretations of Freudian ideas, Luce Irigaray takes a diametrical position, and critiques the willingness of Kristeva and also De Beauvoir for working within the confines of a male psychoanalytical definition of female experience, as she states: 'Any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the 'masculine'. (Jones [Ed] 2003 Ch 16, pp119-128). Irigaray critiques Freud and his dream analysis of women, for reinforcing the role of women as passive receptacles, not proactive beings with our own desires. Her critique reads as a rallying cry to female artists, that we will only overcome oppression as by creating our own language and frames of reference:

Turn everything upside down, inside out, back to front. Rack it with radical convulsions, carry back, reimpost, those crises that her "body" suffers in her impotence to say what disturbs her. Insist also upon those blanks in discourse, which recall the places of her exclusion and which by their silent plasticity ensure the cohesion, the articulation, the coherent expansion of established forms. (Irigaray: in Jones[Ed] 2003, p125)

For my part, I trust implicitly my instinctive and fluid way of working, which I believe stems from a female standpoint.

Within the filmmaking process itself I try to create the circumstances which provide fertile ground for the 'chance occurrence', trying not to 'fix' the outcome too early in the creative process, allowing for further 'sculpting' and interpretation and 'weaving' of the gathered material during the editing stages, thereby also allowing opportunity for further meaning to emerge.

I have described the research process for making a film as like the age rings within a tree trunk, as time and the process progresses, layers of significant activity are added, which contribute to the overall creation of the work and its meaning.

The final outcome is like a patterned and textured cloth. The overall effect of layered and interwoven meanings means that the experience of my work is not a linear narrative, but contains loops and spikes and warp and weft within its fabric and is also multi-dimensional, in that there are literal, formal, aesthetic, subliminal, emotional, instinctive, intertextual connections being made at many levels at the same time.

The effect is akin to a type of filmmaking developed and theorised by early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian/American avant-garde filmmaker: Maya Deren. Deren writes of 'vertical moments' within her films, by which she means the distillation of meaning through a layering of connections, such as occurs in poetry, by the juxtaposition of a few well-chosen elements. In written/spoken form these may be words, which suggest images or evoke responses from the senses, when placed adjacent to each other and thereby open up other possible interpretations. An excellent example of this is the Japanese form of poetry: the Haiku, the ultimate compact 'vertical' expression of a moment. Deren presented her ideas to a symposium of Poetry and Film in 1953:

Poetry to my mind is an approach to experience...the distinction of poetry is its construction (what I mean by a 'poetic structure'), and the poetic construct arises from the fact that, if you will, it is the vertical investigation of a situation, in that it probes the ramifications of the moment, and is concerned with its qualities and its depth, so that you have poetry concerned with not what is occurring, but what it feels like or what it means. (Jackson, Renate: *The Modernist Poetics of Maya Deren* in Nichols [Ed] 2001, p.64).

Deren felt that a poem could make visible the invisible, by illuminating the emotional, or 'metaphysical content of the movement'. She contrasts the 'vertical attack' as she calls it of poetry with the 'horizontal attack' of drama, which deals with 'one action leading to another' delineating character. (Nichols, 2001) And highlights the Shakespearean monologues as poetic interludes within otherwise dramatic structures.

Deren went so far as to outline an interpretive theoretical framework by which these types of works might be understood, even organising the theory in a diagrammatic, non-linear form: see: 'An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film' (in McPherson, 2005):

My effort is directed towards discovering what would be the logic of film form as contrasted to the logic of narrative form; to discover this logic- as a poet discovers the logic of one tone

following another-and in which we recognise a melody,  
although it is not narrative. Maya Deren (in McPherson, 2005)

I call this a 'web of meaning', since the viewer is aware of all  
connections almost simultaneously.

Renate Jackson provides a modern example of the application of  
this 'vertical moment' in the work of Sally Potter, namely in this  
instance her short film: 'Thriller' (released in 1979). Based on La  
Boheme, 'Thriller' re-presents Mimi's death:

...through performed song, still photographs, freeze-frames,  
and moving images of dance. The story is told repeatedly, but  
from the woman's voice and point of view, which switches from  
third person to first-person singular, to first-person plural- a  
varied vocal and visual perspective that continually and self-  
consciously questions and revises the very narrative in which  
she is involved.' (Jackson in Nichols 2001, p68).

Potter has her Mimi, unlike Puccini's 'La Boheme', survive, thus  
reversing the stereotypical demise of the woman in conventional  
romantic fiction. As Jackson observes this is both literally and  
figuratively a "vertical investigation of a situation", which questions  
perceived notions of woman as victim.

With reference to the meaning of my work, it is often suggested  
that throughout a writer/director's career, one repeatedly deals with  
the same theme or story. Virtually all of the work I make explores  
the idea of 'transformation'. I look at 'the female condition' from a  
variety of angles and how we overcome the weight of our own  
history, (as Simone De Beauvoir referred to woman) as having been  
consigned to exist as 'the Other'.

...the whole of feminine history has been man-made...Men have  
always held the lot of women in their hands; and they have  
determined what it should be, not according to her interest, but  
rather with regard to their own projects...  
(De Beauvoir, 1949 pp158-9).

This idea of 'transformation' is beautifully encapsulated for me in  
Sally Potter's film: 'Orlando' (1992), when s/he undergoes a  
metamorphosis from male to female form 'overnight'; I will take a  
moment to examine what is happening in this pivotal scene in the  
film.

The reading of this scene manifests itself on several levels. Literally  
we see the character of Orlando who has been a man up to this

point in the film, now in female form. The scene is set up as a reveal. The character awakes from a coma, after his Dr and attendants have departed, and removes the vestiges of her previous identity, much as the shedding of a skin, in this case an elaborate wig worn by 17<sup>th</sup> century noblemen, (the height and complexity of which would have indicating status). She is naked, denoting a certain strength in vulnerability, newness, with nothing to hide, s/he is unmasked, an innocent – reborn.

In the original account of this moment, which occurs about half way through the book, written by Virginia Woolf in 1928, he has been visited in his coma by 3 sisters: Purity, Chastity & Modesty, who are chased away by the blare of the 'trumpets of Truth':

The sound of trumpets died away and Orlando stood stark naked. No human being, since the world began, has ever looked more ravishing. His form combined in one the strength of a man and a woman's grace.(Woolf, 1928)

There are also symbols at work to elicit that: 'conversation in the mind of the audience' by Eikhenbaum referred to earlier. The 'female' Orlando has red hair, traditionally regarded as a sign of a rebellious nature in English culture. This is extrapolated to female characters in European painting, film and literature.

The image is played in slow motion, allowing us to dwell on the moment, thus increasing the significance and 'weight' of the scene. Lighting increases the significance of this moment. The beauty of the sunlight catches the water, radiating and reflecting on Orlando's skin, suggesting transcendence/other worldliness/even divinity. The act of washing the face in a quasi-ritualistic fashion also echoes religious ceremony, a kind of baptism or cleansing.

Sally Potter employs a groundbreaking technique in this film, which subverts 'the gaze', traditionally the male preserve, which objectifies the female, (Mulvey 1989, p19). Potter directs the actor playing Orlando (Tilda Swinton) to look directly into camera and address the audience in a series of 'asides' and 'meaningful' looks throughout the film. This is done with great effect at the end of this scene, where, up to that moment, the audience are essentially 'voyeurs'. The camera then takes the point of view of the mirror, perhaps an allusion and challenge to Lacan's theory of the 'pre-language' mirror phase (see Khun, 1994 p45). We hear the repetitive musical score of soft female voices, a particular timbre, increasing in pitch, moving up a scale, Orlando's voice then breaks the 'silence' making a bold, challenging yet pragmatic statement,

which also breaks the mystery, and reverses the power relationship between the viewer and the viewed:

"The same person, no difference at all, (turns to look into camera) just a different sex." (*Orlando*, 1992).

Whilst there are universal symbols in the works, and so the film 'text' bears deconstruction, they are the keys to inviting the audience into the unknown territory of their juxtaposition and their relationship to the viewer themselves..

What I also am interested in exploring within '*Rockabybye*', which has a connection to the scene in Lean's opening to *Oliver Twist*, is the *struggle*. The *time* it takes to travel distance, both physically, geographically and for women, in progress, in history. The central character of 'Rowan' in '*Rockabybye*', has travelled on foot across a boggy moor to a particular tree (also an ancient Rowan). Unlike that of Lean, mine is not a dark scene, however. It is hopeful. Rowan carries her child (symbol of the future/artistic endeavour) with her and she leaves it in the protection of the Rowan Tree for safe-keeping, while she goes to work, building charcoal kilns in the forest. Like Sally Potter, I am also interested in the effort of women's work. (See Mayer 2009 Ch2 p40).

I chose a Rowan tree as a haven for the central character, as they are associated with the female: 'The rowan is ...prominent in Norse mythology as the tree from which the first woman was made' (Kendall, 2010). They are also a symbol of 'protection' from medieval times, planted to ward off evil spirits. The ranger told us on the shoot that the particular Rowan (adjacent to a sheep pen) featured in the film would not have been cut down as Farmers would regard it as bad luck, and feared the consequences. I named the central character after the tree. (It turned out, in an uncanny coincidence, that the Ranger's daughter was also called Rowan).

In '*Rockabybye*', Rowan becomes transformed when she lets go of her grief at 'losing' her baby, symbolically represented by the 'white crow'.<sup>2</sup> The process can be read as a metaphor for creativity, art and life (specifically of women). It is also how and why she is able to overcome the weight of history, become free and mobile (a 'modern' woman).

This is signified by the act of Rowan climbing the dead tree, her hair loose and her feet bare, clad only in her petticoats. The film is slowed to an extreme, including the sound, which emphasises the

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<sup>2</sup> Said to be the feminist symbol of love, beauty and the moon in Welsh mythology: goddess Bran'wen (lit crow, white); also harbinger of what is to come;

weight of the garments, of history, the strength and power of her movements. The rustle of the petticoat sounds like billowing sails, propelling Rowan forward and upwards into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, much as Orlando arrives in the 20th, pulling up in front of the house (which is to be hers) on her motorbike, significantly with her daughter – the future- in the sidecar...

Rowan acknowledges what has gone before – the history, the birth, the suffering. She senses (and remembers) the basket rocking in a metaphorical tree, like a great pendulum (this effect is enhanced by the slowed 'ticking' of the branch as the cradle sways).

In an attempt to create a new kind of film language (one which she, as a female spectator is able to relate to) Sally Potter extensively uses symbol and metaphor to great effect within her feminist film: '*The Gold Diggers*', which she made 10 years earlier. '*The Gold Diggers*' is a more overt comment on the film industry and women's role within it ruminating on the dearth of recognisable female characters in the dominant Hollywood ideology:

It builds its world by...giving rich new meanings to tropes associated with the feminine: dance, costume, ornamentation, water, gardens, motherhood and dreaming. (Mayer 2009, p65)

In the film, Julie Christie plays 'Ruby', as much a symbol as a 'fleshed out' character. Sophie Mayer explains in her exploration of the Cinema of Sally Potter, that as Christie is such an iconic Hollywood figure, her character can be taken to represent: the cinematic icon, stardom, classical beauty, whiteness, desire, wealth, gold etc. She is as Mayer describes her 'the face' which in Hollywood equates with money:

..at the heart of the film is a story of gold mining that has the look and feel of the California gold rush; the hidden narrative behind Hollywood's location and success. (p62)

'*The Gold Diggers*' is a non-linear, poetic narrative, a cyclical journey (by turns humorous and threatening to the 2 main characters), through an imaginary world, (reminiscent for me of Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland' or 'Through the Looking Glass'),

Defiantly non-realist, the '*The Gold Diggers*' is a fantasy film in the truest sense, but also fantastic because it offers an inventive, inquisitive tour of the feminine and feminist cultural imaginary. (p65)

Theatrical scenarios are revisited and questions concerning women's role in cinema asked visually and repeatedly, turned over from every (Feminist) angle, until Celeste, (formerly a lowly clerk) arrives in style and on (a white) horseback to rescue Ruby from a stilted society ball, in which the male/female relations are symbolically breaking down, as the dance disintegrates...and they gallop off happily into the blue yonder...

Celeste and Ruby... 'develop an alternate economy of the imagination in which they are able to repeat their actions again and again until they get the desired result.' (p65)

Similarly, my aim is to make pieces that move away from traditional linear storytelling through which I explore female experience. '*Rockabybye*' works on many levels or layers. Its structure is cyclical, the whole thing a connection of meanings more like a web, than a plotline. There is no dialogue and mostly, a non-diegetic soundscape. It deals with action, but in a stylised, ritualised, non-naturalistic, even theatrical way.

An outline of the film reads as follows:

In costume reminiscent of the garb of an 18<sup>th</sup> century peasant, a woman crosses a moor and leaves her baby hanging in a basket in a tree, before departing. She is seen working with her husband (Luke, 'Bringer of Light') building a charcoal kiln in a forest clearing, then, sitting with him to watch over it as it smokes. She then senses something and hears a cracking sound in the forest and here the conventional narrative structure ends. She runs to the Rowan tree, grasping the empty blanket, where her baby once was. A storm breaks and an animated white bird hovers overhead. We see a baby fall silently through some branches. She then enters through a 'portal' of dead branches, a nightmarish world in a new strange wood, full of very old and disfigured (yew) trees, and mourns her loss. She settles in despair under a round swollen trunk of an ancient yew. The animated bird sheds a feather, which falls. After a time, a shower of ('real') feathers falls around her and she seems mesmerised, gathering them in her apron and scattering them to the wind. She is seen without her shoes climbing in extreme slow motion up a dead and fallen tree. There are strange sounds, which merge into a pulsing rhythm. Revisiting the round and swollen tree-trunk we are suddenly inside, there are glimpses of bright green through gaps in the trunk (the film has been in monochrome until this point) and we see the woman emerge naked from the tree, seemingly reluctantly and very attached. She moves towards the light...We hear the sound of an airplane engine. The same woman, yet in modern day dress ambles along a path through a wood. The

scene slows and turns monochrome. We hear the creaking of the swinging rope and the cracking of the branches. A basket swings from an ancient yew tree in a wood...

In her future, Rowan (re)views her past...

To summarise, within my own work am trying to create or discover, or provide opportunities for others to discover what I call 'The '3<sup>rd</sup> meaning' via

1. The juxtaposition of elements, which make connections – including through poetry of 'form' (aesthetics).
2. The creation of enough 'space' between them – to allow for audience thought and access to enter a 'dialogue of the imagination' (the possibility of the creation of new meaning should not be limited)
3. Playfulness – or a 'lightness of touch' with which the above is achieved and the artist mind remains open to instinctive possibilities within the process.
4. Economy of expression/distillation of ideas
5. Repetition and development of a theme – poetic 'narrative'
6. Allow for creative 'chance occurrence' – take risk; record elements and interpret through editing.

Rowan is an 'everywoman' symbol. She is representative of the working woman/creative woman/the artist/filmmaker; She ventures into the wood, but is not (as common interpretation of fairytales would have us believe), the danger of being consumed (a la little Red Riding Hood), but instead open to the thrill of the entering unknown territory, of discovery of new knowledge, which draws upon the past, but reaches into the future...

Within the future development of my practice, I intend to extend the reach of these short poetic pieces, either literally, by developing a poetic feature film (as Sarah Turner has done, with her recent film: 'Perestroika'), but also by opening up the poetic 'narrative' within installation pieces, which may have interactive elements. Whilst many artists appear currently to be making forays into the world of feature filmmaking (Steve McQueen, Jane & Louise Wilson and Sam Taylor-Wood, to name a few), my own work appears to be moving in the opposite direction!

Undoubtedly, the impact of new technologies on artistic filmmaking has opened up possibilities for poetic connection to be made, immersing the audience within a piece, enveloping the senses and layering meaning in a more visceral experience for the 'viewer'. One thinks of the body of work of American artist Bill Viola, whose video

art spans decades since the 1970's and more recently an 'epic' multi-screen, surround sound installation by Isaac Julien entitled '*Ten Thousand Waves*', shown at the Hayward Gallery, London in Spring 2011, which contained poetic narrative created from 3 sources: news footage of the Morecambe cockle-pickers tragedy, historical dramatic reconstruction, set in Shanghai, and poetic representation of elements from a mythical legend about a goddess of the sea, drawn from Chinese folklore.

The audience is encouraged to move around these pieces, adding the dimension of 'kinesis' to the spectating experience, something, which no doubt dancers already understand. Sally Potter, of course is a trained dancer and dance features extensively in her films.

There is a strong connection between physical movement and thought processes, which, like music and poetry, I would argue, provides a direct link to the realms of the unconscious.

Key figures in filmmaking as Art are British artists and twin sisters Jane and Louise Wilson. Their art is also often concerned with the 'power of the unconscious mind'. One of their early pieces famously involved having themselves hypnotised publicly together and filming the process.<sup>3</sup> Whilst studying separately they also independently produced the same piece of work for their final degree showpiece.

Recently they have been involved in making a more narrative feature film based on findings within the Stanley Kubrick archive. However it is their installation work, which I am interested in referencing here. Their fascination with the 'imagery of authority' and resulting immersive video installations, play with formal concerns and evoke the visceral poetry of a space, through the artefacts and buildings (often abandoned locations in where power was once concentrated, such as the ex-Stasi headquarters ('*Stasi City*', 1997) or an abandoned Sanatorium in the installation: ('*Erewhon*' 2004) based on Butler's Satire (1872).

The latter work in New Zealand exploits to poetic effect the architectural remains of an era which embraced eugenics. The multi-screen installation (5 plus 2 mirrors) showing features fit and healthy young, women in old-fashioned gymslips performing exercises in this spare and 'Spartan' space. They hold poses for inordinately long periods of time and although their exertions are visible, (the tropes of vigour and uniform, vaguely fetishised) any movement on the part of the performers is only barely perceptible, emphasising the rigid concepts illuminated by the work,

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<sup>3</sup> Mentioned in an article by Tim Adams Sunday 10 October 1999 [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk) (accessed July 2011)

..the installation consists of projected imagery juxtaposed...in an incongruous association of images and ideas...this narrative is not to be taken literally. They create their own account of a fictitious world that bears upon but does not mimic the ideas that Butler expressed. (Thorp, 2008)

Due to the Wilson sisters' treatment of space and spatial relationships, it is worth noting here the nature of the kinds of associations made by the imagination referred to by Gaston Bachelard in his exploration of the 'Poetics of Space'. Bachelard seems to pre-empt Jeanette Winterson's previously cited statement about art, when in 1958, he acknowledges that, '...the imagination...seeks a pretext to multiply images, and as soon as the imagination is interested by an image, this increases its value..' (Bachelard, 1994 p152)

The Wilson sisters through their installations are 'unravelling symbols of power expressed within architecture' (Thorp, 2008). They create their own 'semi-permeable' architectural constructs, within which notions of power relationships are questioned and ultimately subverted: 'Time based media reflect a fluid ambiguous perception of reality. They show the observer, rather than the observed and the subjectivity of experience' (PETRESIN ROBERT in THORP, 2008) Their work presents us with a view of the world, which allows us to see several angles and facets at once in a 'rhizomatic structure, [which] does not privilege any order or interpretation...' (p 13)

We are invited to allow our minds as well as our bodies to 'wander' through the work and remain open to suggestion via the shifting planes and viewpoints linking to our experience and imagination:

..multiple views of a configuration in a single representation depict reality as a state of flux. Our perception oscillates between two equally valid interpretations, neither of them exists as a real object.(p13)

I would argue that the Wilsons are creating a 'poetic reality' in that they invite, through the use of multiple (sometimes moving) screens and mirrors, a layered reading of moving image, which is inflected by the 'viewer's movement through the piece.

..dynamic time-based media such as film redefine the notion of body in space; physical sensations affect the perception of an environment (PETRESIN ROBERT in THORP, 2008)

An artist who has taken as central to her art the idea of 'kinesis' or 'kinaesthesia' and its influence on how we view spaces is Janet Cardiff through her 'Videowalk' pieces. As in her early creations of 'Audiowalks' Janet and her long-term collaborator, Georges Bures-Miller employ the rather old technology of 'binaural recording' (the first recordings by anyone using this technology were undertaken in the late 1800's). Cardiff now combines the recordings with edited video, to create an intimate sonic, visual and significantly kinaesthetic landscape. Cardiff's works are as such, site-specific explorations of dual and multi-layered realities.

Videowalks are so much more fun to make than audio walks because they have this whole aspect of cinema you can play on. You can use the reality of cinema to go into, but then you can also have the reality of the physical<sup>4</sup>

Cardiff's voice is recorded as an intimate commentary, guiding the viewer, via headphones, through a location, and their own experience(s). As she is walking through a given space, the spectator is also watching a video re-played on a small, hand-held camera she is carrying. The journey is mirrored (as a previously recorded POV<sup>5</sup> shot) in the virtual space of the video screen. The location is the same, but another narrative is presented in the filmic space, created at an earlier juncture. Referring to Cardiff's use of technology to enhance the audience interaction with the work, and indeed the space through which they are walking, Miriam Schaub emphasises that for Cardiff technology is a positive poetic cipher through which the imagination can be accessed:

Cardiff consciously inverts those typical uses of technology and broadens the spectrum of sensory experience by forcing the spectator to interact with the surrounding environment. The artist has already experienced the space that the participants visit...she can anticipate what we might see, hear, feel. When forced to synchronise ourselves with the disembodied pre-recorded voice, our sensory impressions are amplified and we want to reassure ourselves about our own bodies as sensory beings. We strengthen ourselves by this experience... (SCHAUB, 2005)

It must be emphasised that the experience of the work lies firmly with the 'viewer' who in turn feels like a participant in the piece,

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<sup>4</sup> From a talk given by Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures-Miller March 2009 at the HAU theatre, Berlin complementing the exhibition of 'Murder of Crows' in Hamburger Bahnhof.

<sup>5</sup> POV = point of view shot (filmmaking term)

Cardiff's walks are highly individual and very personal. The voices are talking to 'you' and you are not an abstract viewer, disassociated from the object of aesthetic perception. You the audience are in a constant process of development, establishing relationships with outer and inner worlds and engaged in a continual metaphorical reading. (P13)

I undertook one of her walks: '*Ghostwalk*' at the HAU<sup>6</sup> twice, within a time-span of about 2 years. Each time the experience was exhilarating, terrifying and stimulating in equal measure! To explore multiple narratives by walking through the entirety of this beautiful and historic old theatre, backstage, up in the box, down into the basement, via unseen corridors and staircases, and finally to arrive on stage to the rapturous applause of an audience only visible on the screen of the palmcorder in my hand, accompanied by Janet's voice, was intoxicating. As Cardiff gently encouraged me forward, questioning, reflecting, adding other aspects of a 'sub-narrative' I passed other 'participants' wandering the corridors with their headphones on, and saw some of them on screen; When I looked up whilst standing on the stage, another individual was standing where I had been, looking down at me from the box. All the while, the character within the narrative remained concealed, ostensibly somewhere in the building. The binaural sound recording was impeccable and the added atmospheric effects added yet another poetic dimension. I was following the instructions from the artist, but the visceral poetic reading via my senses, was entirely mine. Each time, I did not need to know 'what happened' - of greater significance was the re-working of my poetic encounter with the space upon my return.

Cardiff acknowledges that a non-linear way of thinking informs the creation of her work. I relate to this as this is very much the process I engage in with my own filmmaking, alluded to earlier.

I've realised that I have a brain that doesn't function very well in a linear manner...since I think the walks function in a way that I've always tried to express the way our minds jump around all over the place. But slowing down the process of telling a story has allowed me to realise what you need in order to build up a certain amount of intimacy, a certain amount of interest in the narrative, but still make it open-ended... (Cardiff in SCHAUB 2009 p19)

Cardiff too, draws from psychoanalytical influences, such as Lacan, to reinterpret locations with personal poetic narratives.

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<sup>6</sup> HAU = Hebbel Am Ufer Theater, Tempelhof, Berlin

She uses the binaural recording imagined (sub) narratives, and site-specific locations to open up the spectators dialogue with internal and external space, in a type of 'cross-wiring of the senses':

In its skilful exploitation of the fundamental principles of synaesthesia, Cardiff's art reaches a place beyond reality and illusion. Welcome to the realm of the unforeseen, a world of involuntary memory, that form of erratic recollection which allows us to confront ourselves as thinking, (sexual), multi-sensual, and utterly temporal beings. (SCHAUB p27)

Another 'participant' put it thus: 'For me the walk is above all an..illusory installation that becomes a meditation in which I completely lose the sense of what is virtual and what is real' (Matthias Lilienthal in SCHAUB 2009, p302)

On the occasion of their talk at the HAU in 2009, I was fortunate to be able to put the question to Cardiff and Bures-Miller myself: how far would they relate their work to poetry? Their responses bore out my findings in viewing the work:

J: *'Quite closely actually, I think. I think alot of the pieces, especially over the last few years...we thought of various structures as a poetic way of taking one image, visual image where there is just a descriptive of audio and the way that it juxtaposes with the next..line or the next scene and it's a very, very poetic juxtaposition I think.'*

GBM: *'We're definitely related to literature I think, that's where we draw a lot of our influences and a lot of our works - we attempt to make them like reading a book or like reading anyway, so that you have the same headspace that you go into, allowing you the freedom to go into that same headspace.'*<sup>7</sup>

## Conclusion

Throughout this extended reflection, the guiding principle has been the interpretation and integrity of the poetic experience as created and delivered through the medium of moving image. The journey has taken me from my earliest memories of being a 'spectator' of moving image work, via the knowledge I gained as a former language student, through inspiration drawn from independent films and interdisciplinary productions, which challenge and provide

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<sup>7</sup> Interview given by Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures-Miller at the Hebbel Am Ufer Theatre, Berlin, March 2009.

alternatives to the dominant, often formulaic SFX-laden fare supplied by 'mainstream Hollywood' cinema. (Such work appears to allow little room for independent or intuitive thought on the part of the spectator).

I have broadly examined theories, which consider the manner in which meaning is created within moving image. This has included a range of perspectives, touching on both Structuralist and Post-structuralist ideas within the related disciplines of Semiotics and Poetics. I have taken a special interest in the contribution to these debates by Philosopher and Linguist, Julia Kristeva, and the influence of psychoanalysis, also considering the role of women within the framework of moving image making, and the part played by Feminism in analysis of this role.

I pay particular attention to the work of practitioners who bring to bear a poetic vision and artistic language to the medium. Throughout the scope of this exploration, the constant reference point has been the 'dialogue' between the moving image work I make, and the context in which it plays. My work itself adds to the body of poetic film, developing as it does the expression of a 'feminine' position in a form commensurate with its subject matter.

New media and technologies can be harnessed as elements to enhance further poetic connection as we have seen. Cross media Artist, Monika Dutta, adds the element of programming to her work, devising performed art pieces as well as works with instinctive interactive interfaces to invite her audience to engage with the artwork and discover meaning within it for themselves. Examples of her work are '*My Indian Stain*' (2008), which she describes as 'An animation collaged from imagery and ephemera, multi textured and multi contextual, interrogating collective perceptions and preconceptions by reconfiguring relationships through symbol and metaphor'; '*6 Goats*' (2004), drawn animation of architectural artefacts, and silhouettes of goats layered over footage of a train journey, accompanied by harmonica & beats. '*Swallow*' (2007) is a multi media durational performance by the artist.<sup>8</sup>

Modern digital techniques are combined with an artisanal 'hand-made' aesthetic, the lightness and simplicity hiding technical complexity of the pieces. Nowhere does the technology obscure the poetic connections being made within the work as elements are

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<sup>8</sup> 'Swallow' performed by artist Monika Dutta at 12 squared, St George's Hall, Bradford, July 28th 2007. The event was co produced and curated by popup and was part of STIR, Bradford's summer arts festival

deftly woven together with sensitivity, allowing the viewer time and space to consider and mentally 'dance' with the elements. Audience interaction and engagement reaches beyond the physical limits of technology, which can enhance, but not replace the role that the imagination plays within a work to complete those poetic connections.

Independent Filmmaker Sarah Turner engages the theories of Maya Deren amongst others to create a powerful and mesmeric feature-length film poem: '*Perestroika*', a poetic journey on a train across Siberia. Sarah is repeating an actual journey, made 20 years previously with friend Sian who later died in an accident in Siberia. She returns, however, both as a filmmaker, and as her fictional self. The film thus offers up a number of realities for the audience to conjure with. The work was made to be seen in a cinema environment, but watched 'actively', as one might view a piece of art.

*Perestroika*, Sarah Turner's second feature, layers two train journeys through Russia, the first with, and the second in memory of, her friend Sian Thomas. A docu-fiction, a moving memorial and an elegy, the film is part of a fascinating moment that sees British experimental film bringing its memory work from installation and art spaces onto the big screen.<sup>9</sup>

The film, on limited release, has polarised opinion amongst cinemagoers, a small minority of whom, unused to having such intellectual demands made on them within this environment, walked out. Notably, the majority of audiences have stayed the course and have been rewarded by what they have experienced. The effect of litanies of sound and repeated imagery is hypnotic. Slight variations appear over time, like poetic repetition, which accumulates meaning as it progresses.

The narration is in audio-diary form (as if the character is speaking whilst filming, yet it is mostly an internal dialogue with her own dreams and fears). The disjointed nature of this speech alludes to the mental state of the central character, who is rarely seen, and appears to suffer from delusions brought on by medication. The film thus allows the viewer the space to reflect on what is viewed and the time to relate it to their own experiences of e.g love/bereavement/madness/friendship/time/ecology/mortality and crossing 'the thetic threshold' travelling with the artist, yet also on their own psychological journey.

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Sophie Mayer BFI website (accessed July 2011)

Turner describes her fictional surrogate's retrograde amnesia 'as a metaphor and a narrative conceit. Without memory, there is no experience; likewise, without the other, our memory is lost because, when a person dies, we lose their experience of us, how they hold our stories. Memory is no longer a living thing, constantly constructed'.<sup>10</sup>

As we have seen 'immersive technologies' can become elements in the creation of poetic connection. Recalling Jeanette Winterson's statement cited at the start of our journey here, that art 'offers new universes, primary worlds that substantially confront the pretences of notional life...' (Winterson 1995), I would add that from a practitioner's point of view, it is by necessity that I express myself through this poetic vision of life and the world around me. Allowing within a work, a shifting landscape of multi-layered meaning to be entered into by a pro-active audience is the way forward in an era in which culture is all-too-often pre-digested and served up for us, thus removing our sense of self and connection to that world:

Poetry becomes, in Kristeva's analysis, a way of maintaining social bonds through what is destructive of the social and conducive to madness...Poetry is a refusal of a flight into madness. (Lechte 1990 p6)

In an analysis of Joyce's 'Ulysses', John Lechte's description of the reader's relationship with the text strikes a chord with my own understanding of the relationship between audience and poetic film work. I have referred to the loosely woven gaps between elements within the work, which can be inhabited by the viewer's imagination and experience. Creating poetic work with moving image, for me, is an invitation to the audience to travel with me on a journey of discovery into the unknown, for an audience needs courage and openness, to accept what they might find; Lechte suggests that Kristeva's concept of 'identification' depends on an audience being willing to take up that challenge and be 'feminised' (as she posits this as a 'feminine' position, regardless of the gender of the viewer), so then the analytic effects become possible. He understands this through his own reaction to Joyce's 'Ulysses':

Non meaning – the poetry – captures my imagination, grips me from outside myself.. I allow myself to be integrated into what I cannot entirely understand. I accept the challenge of non-meaning; I venture to the edge of the abyss... (p128)

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Sophie Mayer BFI website (accessed July, 2011)

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